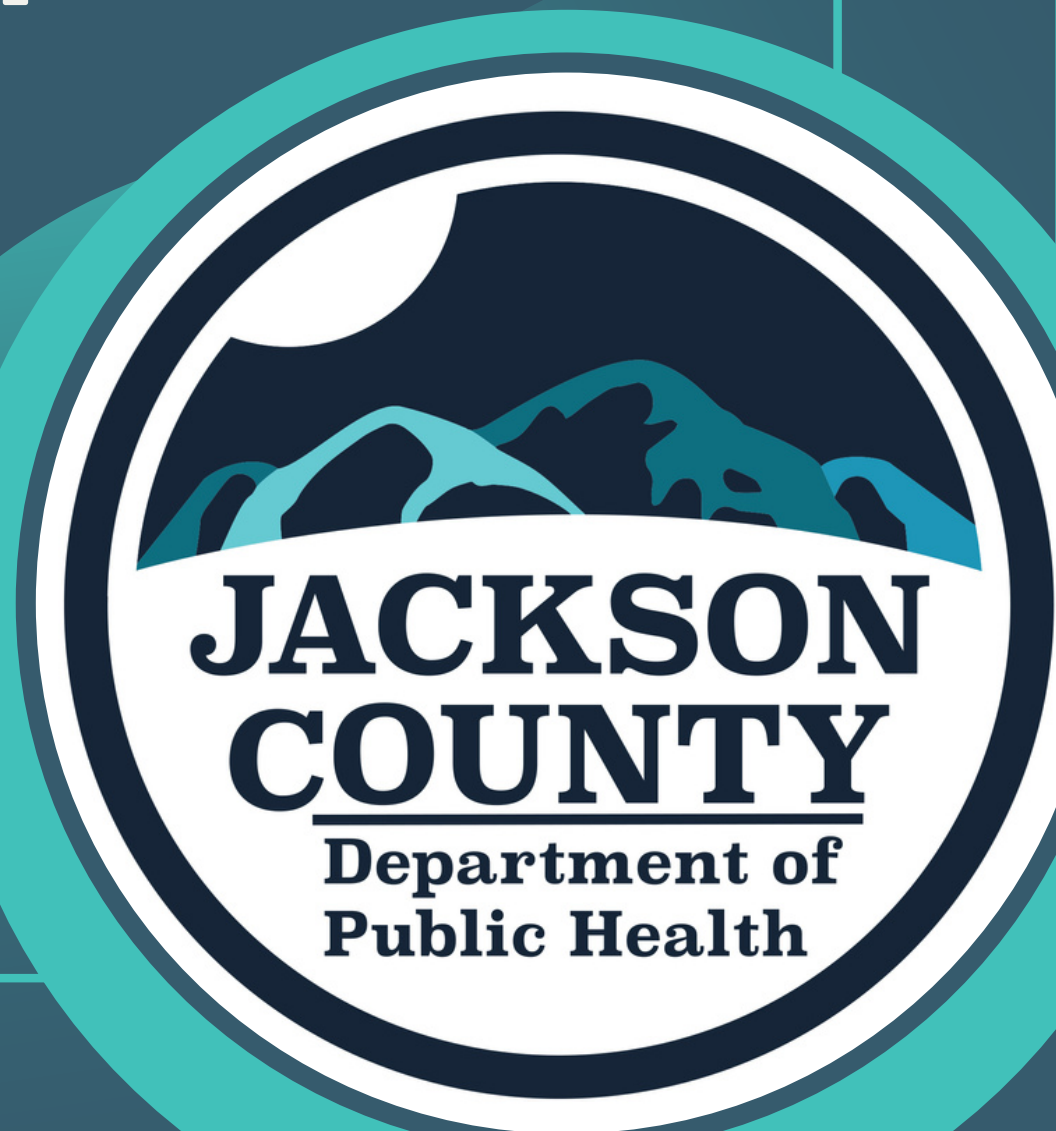


**2023-2026**

**Jackson County  
Department of Public Health**

# **Strategic Plan**



# Purpose

The Jackson County Department of Public Health engages in strategic planning activities every four (4) years in alignment with the accreditation cycle. These activities are used to set priorities, focus efforts and resources, strengthen operations, and to assess and adjust the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. The agency strategic plan sets forth what the agency plans to achieve, how the agency will achieve it, and how the agency will know if it has achieved it.

This plan includes priorities, strategies, and activities that provide the direction for the future state of the Jackson County Department of Public Health. The plan shall be approved by the Jackson County Board of Health and will be reviewed annually by Management Team. Progress towards activities will be documented on the Strategic Plan Annual Evaluation document. This plan will be renewed in 2026.

# Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles

## OUR MISSION

To ensure, enhance, promote, and protect the health of our residents through prevention and education

## OUR VISION

Fostering a healthy and thriving community in which all living things are able to live up to their full potential in an ever changing world

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Health Equity: Advocating for accessible health services for all

Community Partnerships: Collaborating with others to enhance our community

Evidence-based Practices: Delivering quality, best-practice services to improve population health

Outreach: Promoting population health and disease prevention through education

Responsiveness: Adapting and responding to the health needs and priorities of our community

# Strategic Planning Team

The Strategic Planning Team was comprised of staff members across various sections of the agency and met numerous times during 2022 to develop this plan. This year the team did a complete renew of the agency's strategic plan.

- Reviewed and updated the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles
- Reviewed the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan
- Reviewed and considered the results of the 2021 CHA
- Reviewed Customer Satisfaction and Community Input surveys
- Discussed requirements of the NC Local Health Department Accreditation Program
- Considered the Public Health Core Competencies
- Considered mandated Public Health Services per the NC Administrative Code
- Considered program requirements from the Division of Public Health Agreement Addendums
- Completed a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis

Thank you to the strategic planning team for leading our strategic planning process. We appreciate the experience, knowledge, and commitment of the members as we identified who we are and who we want to be.

**Emily Jenkins**

**Anna Lippard**

**Janelle Messer**

**Travis Monteith**

**Gretta Phillips**

**Cassie Rogers**

**Martha Smith**


# Community Health Assessment

The 2021 Community Health Assessment (CHA) was completed and submitted to the state in March 2022.

After reviewing data, survey results, and community forum results, three (3) health priorities were selected:

1. Healthy Living (physical activity and nutrition)
2. Substance Use Prevention
3. Mental Health

Results from the CHA were reviewed and used in the development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.



**COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT  
JACKSON COUNTY 2021**

**HEALTH PRIORITIES & LOCAL DATA REGARDING ADULTS**

**HEALTHY EATING & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

- At a healthy weight 28%
- Get at least 150 minutes/week of physical activity 23%
- Participate in weekly strength training 31%
- Consume the recommended servings of fruits & veggies 5.5%
- Prevalence of diabetes 19%
- Prevalence of heart disease 6%
- Prevalence of high blood pressure 35%

**SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION**

- Excessive drinking 21%
- Used an illicit drug in the past month (self or someone they know) 17%
- Life has been negatively affected by substance use 55%
- Smoke cigarettes 14%
- Use smokeless tobacco 6%
- Use vaping products 6%
- Smoke while pregnant 13%

**MENTAL HEALTH**




- More than 7 days of poor mental health in past month 20%
- Self-reported mental health status is fair or poor 21%
- Typical day is extremely/very stressful 12%
- Dissatisfied with life 11%
- Did not get mental health care or counseling that was needed in the past year 24%
- Have considered suicide in the past year 12%
- Ability to stay hopeful in difficult times 74%

**WHAT IS IT?**

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) leads to a better understanding of the health of our county's residents.

The CHA helps local agencies and organizations working on health issues be certain that the most pressing health concerns are being addressed. Further, it helps them plan and coordinate efforts. It is also used by our Health Department in its strategic planning process.

Agencies working together in WNC repeat this cycle every three years.

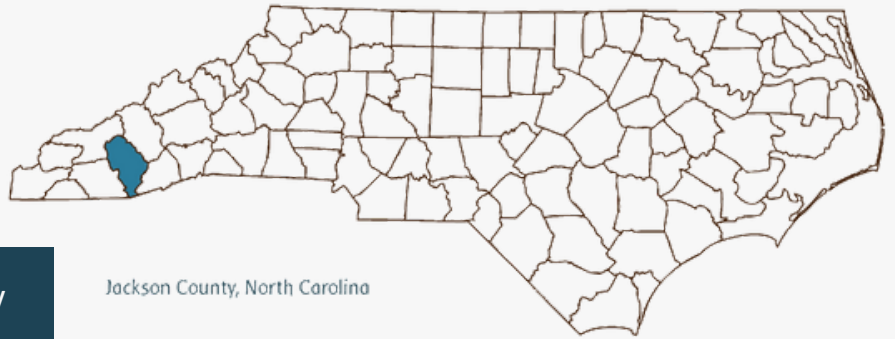




THE CHA IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE JACKSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HARRIS REGIONAL HOSPITAL, LED BY THE HEALTHY CAROLINIANS STEERING COMMITTEE

For more information or to get involved, contact Janelle Messer at [janellemesser@jacksonnc.org](mailto:janellemesser@jacksonnc.org) or (828) 587-8238

Support of this process was provided by WNC Healthy Impact

# Our Community

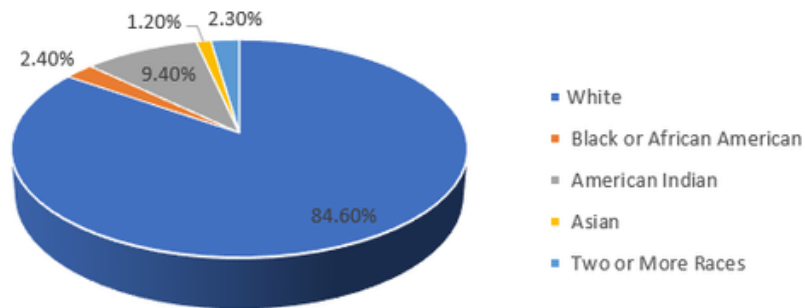


Jackson County is a mostly rural community in the mountains of Western North Carolina.

43,109 people live in Jackson County.

6.6% are Hispanic or Latino  
80.0% are not Hispanic or Latino

Population Demographics-Race



The median household income for the period of 2016-2020 was \$46,820.

13,540 people are employed in Jackson County.

The largest industries are educational services, health care & social assistance, and accommodation & food service.

The median age for county residents is 37.7 years.

16.6% of persons live in poverty.

20.2% of persons under the age of 65 do not have health insurance.

Data from 2021 Community Health Assessment, NC Commerce Report\_run 10.6.22, US Census Bureau Quick-facts 2021

# SWOT Analysis

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

## Strengths

- Accessibility/availability to the community
- Accredited with Honors
- Knowledgeable workforce
- Opportunities for training and furthering education
- Strong relationships with community partners
- Newly remodeled building and new animal shelter soon to be complete
- Interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration
- Welcoming and friendly environment
- Personable care
- Innovative ideas are encouraged

## Opportunities

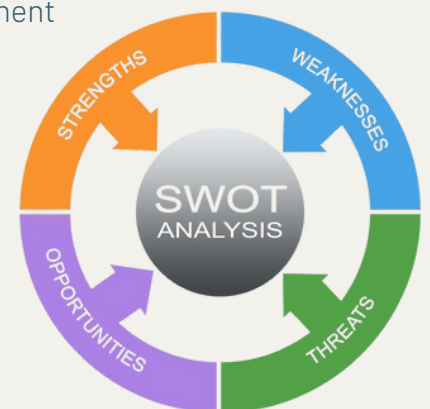
- Extend clinic hours to meet the needs of the community
- Restructured Management Team
- Regular staff meetings—share what's happening in sections
- County salary study and pay plan
- Learning from COVID—opportunity to evaluate the way we do things
- Outreach
- Advance equity for staff and clients
- Nationwide support for Public Health
- Medicaid expansion in NC

## Weaknesses

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Public Transportation
- Disconnect with Cashiers (southern end of the county)
- Staff turnover; loss of institutional knowledge
- Extended learning curve for new staff
- Staff responsible for many programs
- Communication between sections
- Inventory management

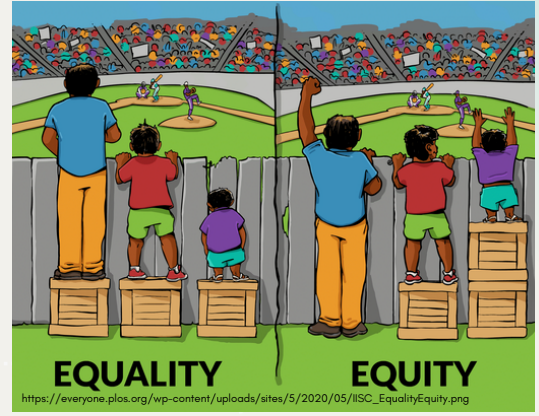
## Threats

- Recruitment and retention
- Pandemics and natural disasters
- Misinformation
- Public mistrust of the government
- Uncertain economy
- Resource shortages—locally and nationally
- Mental health and substance use
- Uncertainty of managed care with Medicaid Transformation
- Potential funding cuts—state and federal



# Priority 1

Advocating for accessible health services for all



## Strategy 1

**Recruit and retain qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds to cultivate a work culture that is inclusive and rooted in cultural humility.**

### Activities

- 1.1.1a: Hiring practices that are designed to recruit and retain qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds will be integrated into department processes.
- 1.1.1b: Implement review of qualified candidate through an anonymous process to minimize biases.
- 1.1.2: All department staff will complete on-line or in-person cultural humility training within 1 year of hire and annually thereafter.
- 1.1.3a: Policies and plans will reflect accurate and appropriate accessibility and language used by individuals from various community backgrounds.
- 1.1.3b: The department will partner with a representative from the office on disability and health to complete an accessibility assessment.

## Strategy 2

**Reduce health disparities in communities that experience a disproportionate burden of disease.**

### Activities

- 1.2.1a: All public spaces in the department will be assessed for a welcoming environment.
- 1.2.1b: Explore opportunity for local artists to display their craft in an effort to enhance our environment.
- 1.2.2: Signage will be visibly welcoming, linguistically and culturally appropriate.
- 1.2.3: Incorporate desired health equity outcomes into annual customer satisfaction surveys.
- 1.2.4: Outreach and marketing opportunities will be utilized to engage community individuals in their own environment.
- 1.2.5: Establishment of or membership in a community coalition with membership composed of at least three individuals from historically marginalized populations and/or community organizations that represent or are led by historically marginalized populations.



# Priority 2



Monitor and assess community health data, agency strengths and weaknesses, and implement evidence-based practices to meet community needs.

## Strategy 1

**Develop and publish State-required health reports to guide evidence-based activities for the purpose of enhancing the health of Jackson County residents.**

### Activities

- 2.1.1: In December 2022 and 2023, complete the State of the County Health Report (SOTCH) and submit to the State for approval.
- 2.1.2: By March 2025, complete the tri-annual Community Health Assessment (CHA) and submit to the State for approval.
- 2.1.3: By September 2025, complete the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and submit to the State for approval.
- 2.1.4: Implement evidence-based and community-guided Community Health Improvement Plans at the conclusion of each CHA cycle.

## Strategy 2

**Review internal and external agency programs through auditing processes**

### Activities

- 2.2.1: The Quality Improvement (QI) team members will be nominated every 3 years by the respective Supervisors. The QI team will meet monthly to systemically review and improve services across the agency. The QI team aims to complete one project per fiscal year.
- 2.2.2: The Quality Assurance (QA) team is comprised of section supervisors and program managers. The QA team meeting monthly, in accordance with the QA calendar, to assess care and services of the agency programs.
- 2.2.3: The QA team participates in internal audits with program-specific monitoring to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and make corrective action plans when necessary. If any corrective action is deemed necessary, programs will be re-audited within 3 months.
- 2.2.4: Program staff will participate in external audits with program-specific monitoring to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and make corrective action plans when directed by the State.

# Priority 2-continued



Monitor and assess community health data, agency strengths and weaknesses, and implement evidence-based practices to meet community needs.

## Strategy 3

**Maintain full North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation status.**

### Activities

- 2.3.1: Review accreditation benchmarks and activities regularly, while gathering evidence throughout the 4-year cycle
- 2.3.2: Use the new NCLHDA Dashboard and attend trainings provided by the State

## Strategy 4

**Ensure services provided to the community are achieved in an efficient customer and community focused manner.**

### Activities

- 2.4.1: Annually assess the satisfaction of agency and Environmental Health customers through the Customer Satisfaction & Community Input Surveys
- 2.4.2: Ensure both surveys are offered in English and Spanish, as well as electronic and paper form

## Strategy 5

**Conduct Employee Appraisals annually to review job performance.**

### Activities

- 2.5.1: Employee Appraisals shall be guided by the Strategic Plan
- 2.5.2: Section supervisors meet with employees annually to review job performance and set professional and personal development goals

# Priority 3

Enhance community collaboration, partnerships, and engagement.



## Strategy 1

**Identify new desired partnerships in the community.**

### Activities

- 3.1.1: Identify organizations or sectors that would add value to current programs and coalitions.
- 3.1.2: Engage with at least 2 new organizations or agencies and secure their active involvement.

## Strategy 2

**Strengthen current community partnerships.**

### Activities

- 3.2.1: Expand staff participation on community coalitions, boards, committees, etc. that have the potential to influence health outcomes.
- 3.2.2: Co-host an event or program in collaboration with at least one other partner organization each year.
- 3.2.3: Clearly define participant roles and expectations in community partnerships.

## Strategy 3

**Support a framework of empowerment and engagement.**

### Activities

- 3.3.1: Assure priority populations experiencing health inequities are included in program planning and assessment.
- 3.3.2: Explore opportunities for staff to give back to the community with community service hours.

## Strategy 4

**Foster collaboration to connect the community with resources, services, and information.**

### Activities

- 3.4.1: Educate community partners about public health and our services. Recognize how our goals align with our partners' goals to streamline services.
- 3.4.2: Increase our community and partner's awareness of the agency's digital communications (website, social media, etc.) to improve information sharing.

# Priority 4

Promoting population health and disease prevention through education and outreach.



## Strategy 1

**Based on the Community Health Assessment (CHA) priorities, agency education and outreach will be driven by the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).**

### Activities

- 4.1.1: As defined in the CHA, agency outreach and education will target the under-served, at-risk, and vulnerable populations in the community.
- 4.1.2: Host at least one health fair or outreach event annually, in collaboration with two or more agency departments, to meet the needs suggested in the CHA and Community Input Surveys.

## Strategy 2

**Increase education and outreach opportunities within different areas of the county, including more rural areas for better accessibility to health services.**

### Activities

- 4.2.1: Plan and host biannual mobile clinics in under-served areas of the county, rotating locations each time to better serve the rural areas of the county.
- 4.2.2: Partner with other community organizations to provide mobile clinics in order to meet the overall health needs of the community (i.e. Vecinos, Jackson County Public Schools, Safe Kids, Tribal Public Health)
- 4.2.3: WIC Program will participate in a pilot program and research study through Tufts University and NC WIC to launch telehealth services in the county. Services will be provided using an accessible kiosk.

## Strategy 3

**Utilize text alerts, radio advertisements, social media, and press releases to promote community events and health information.**

### Activities

- 4.3.1: Explore available platforms that have the ability to inform county residents of community events and health information.
- 4.3.2: Promote platform through traditional media, outreach, and programs to encourage residents to sign up for alerts.

# Priority 4-continued

Promoting population health and disease prevention through education and outreach.



## Strategy 4

**Host professional development and training opportunities for regulated entities on how to better serve the overall population.**

### Activities

- 4.4.1: Environmental Health staff will offer trainings such as Serve Safe (biannually) and Septic Installers (annually).
- 4.4.2: Child Care Health Consultants will offer required health and safety trainings to local child care facilities.
- 4.4.3: Environmental Health staff and Child Care Health Consultants will collaborate to host an annual WNC Early Care and Education Summit.
- 4.4.4: Encourage additional agency departments to provide educational and training opportunities to the public.

# Priority 5

Responding to the health needs and priorities of the community.



## PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

### Strategy 1

**Ensure staff and partners are properly trained and equipped for a constant readiness to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond and recover in the event of an emergency.**

#### Activities

- 5.1.1: Staff will participate in an annual emergency preparedness drill, real life situation, or table top exercise on a rotational basis.
- 5.1.2: Organize the Local Emergency Planning Committee, at least once annually to train and inform other county agencies in emergency preparedness exercises.
- 5.1.3: Emergency Preparedness Coordinator shall attend monthly Regional Public Health Preparedness and Response Team meetings and other training opportunities.

### Strategy 2

**Provide accurate and appropriate information in a timely manner so that the community and partners are well informed.**

#### Activities

- 5.2.1: Compile an email list of all organizations in Jackson County to replace the current JCDPH Surveillance Partners fax list. Review and update the email list annually.
- 5.2.2: Generate QR codes to promote the agency's website and social media platforms on all external materials
- 5.2.3: Utilize regular media releases and social media posts to provide the community and partners with accurate information
- 5.2.4: Increase the number of residents that are enrolled in the Code Red Alert system.

### Strategy 3

**Enforcement of state adopted laws and rules which safeguard the community's health and well-being.**

#### Activities

- 5.3.1: Environmental Health staff will complete all required inspections within the fiscal year.
- 5.3.2: Communicable Disease Nurse will provide local health care providers with reportable communicable disease information annually.
- 5.3.3a: Establish staff development opportunities and increase the number of staff that are cross-trained in multiple areas.
- 5.3.3b: Designate specific staff to become experts in at least one program regarding rules and regulations.

# Implementation and Tracking

Implementation and tracking will begin in July 2023, following plan approval by the Jackson County Board of Health (BOH). Successful implementation of the strategic plan will take participation from all health department staff.

It is the responsibility of each section manager to designate persons responsible when their section is directly affected by the strategy and activities. The Plan will be tracked based on fiscal year. Throughout the year, Managers will track strategy progress on the Strategic Plan Annual Evaluation document for their respective section. Managers will report progress annually during Management team meeting. Leadership Team will present progress updates on specified strategies and activities annually to the BOH.

At the end of the three years, an evaluation will be done on each strategy and activity to assess how successful the plan was, any barriers encountered, and begin planning for the next three years.

# Appendix A

## Strategic Plan Annual Evaluation

FY 23/24

FY 24/25

FY 25/26