

2012 Rowan
Health and Human Services
Needs Assessment
Five-Year Action Plan

July 2012



Background

The 2012 Rowan Health and Human Services Needs Assessment was undertaken to develop an understanding of the health and human services needs in Rowan County and to help inform the participants in the second phase of the Needs Assessment. Strategies would then be determined to meet the most pressing needs identified in the County. This needs assessment is updated periodically to establish a five-year action plan for the Rowan County United Way (RCUW).

The 2012 Needs Assessment process differed slightly from the 2006 process in that the RCUW was joined by the Rowan Regional Medical Center, City of Salisbury, and Rowan County to help guide its development so that the Needs Assessment would also meet their respective requirements for a comprehensive assessment of the needs of County residents. The RCUW contracted with the Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG) to oversee the development of this year's Needs Assessment. CCOG was chosen, in part, because they served in a similar capacity for the development of the 1999 and 2006 United Way assessments. While much has changed in the County over the past 13 years since the first needs assessment was conducted, a similar format has been used for all three Needs Assessments.

This Assessment, which started in December 2011, included the following steps:

1. Develop a Steering Committee comprised of funding partners and key stakeholders representing medical, health, social service, and civic agencies in Rowan County as well as City and County officials to oversee the study and provide feedback on specific milestones in the needs identification phase of the project. Bob Lippard, Executive Director of the RCUW, served as liaison to the Steering Committee and oversaw the work produced by CCOG. This group met four times between December 2011 and March 2012 to develop the Phase I data report on the status of Rowan County on a variety of social issues.

Funding Partners

- Rowan County United Way
- Rowan Regional Medical Center
- City of Salisbury
- Rowan County

Key Stakeholders Represented

- Rowan-Salisbury School System
- Ruffy-Holmes Senior Center
- Rowan County Department of Social Services
- Rowan County Health Department
- Blanche & Julian Robertson Foundation
- Smart Start Rowan

2. Explore Secondary Data (i.e., 2010 U.S. Census data and other supporting data that addressed health and human service needs) to provide perspective on the County's needs in relation to five to ten years ago, as well as when compared to North Carolina as a whole. The data showed that over the past ten years, Rowan County has experienced:

- Increasing poverty
- Aging population
- Higher than average mortality rates for disease
- Lagging number of college graduates

However, the data also indicates that Rowan County has made significant progress in reducing the rates of teen pregnancy and child abuse.

3. Conduct a Telephone Survey of Rowan County residents to solicit their perceived health and social service needs, what services and agencies they used in Rowan County to address their problems, and what roles the RCUW and 211 played in addressing family needs. The survey was conducted by the Winthrop University's Survey and Behavioral Research Lab (under a subcontract with CCOG) between February 15-29, 2012. Over 1,100 interviews were conducted. More than 500 of these focused specifically on Salisbury. The demographics of the survey respondents matched those of the County and Salisbury. Survey results for Rowan County as a whole had a maximum sampling error of +/- 3.98 percent and +/- 4.22 percent for Salisbury. Both percentages are for the 95 percent confidence level.

The survey indicated that the top five problems facing Rowan County include, by order of perceived priority: unemployment, abuse of illegal drugs, teen pregnancy, prescription drug abuse, and lack of activities for teenagers after high school. Medical and dental care was overwhelmingly identified as the types of service most needed by households.

4. Create Focus Groups comprised of citizens, elected officials, and professionals involved in the County's health and social service agencies to review the data and survey results and give recommendations as to how the County's health and human needs should be addressed. The Steering Committee solicited persons to serve on the following seven (7) focus groups:

- a. Older Adults
- b. Business Leaders
- c. Low Income
- d. Mental Health
- e. Public Service Agencies
- f. Young Mothers
- g. Schools and Education

These focus groups were held in January and February of 2012, and were attended by a total of 70 residents, with between 7 and 13 citizens per session. The attendees overwhelmingly identified "Health Care Access" as the most pressing issue for County residents, followed by

education, employment, poverty, and public attitudes and perceptions toward work, entitlement, academic achievement, elite class, receiving assistance, and teen pregnancy.

5. Review Survey, Secondary Data, and Focus Group Results and determine what linkages existed between the data, survey and input from the focus groups. The Steering Committee reviewed these results at their monthly meetings to request clarification on data analysis, inform next steps in the Assessment process, and provide perspective on the overall assessment.

The steering committee recognized the roles poverty and an aging population play in the way the United Way and other agencies address health and human service needs in Rowan County. There are no specific strategies identified meant to address poverty or older adults; instead, agencies are encouraged to consider these issues wherever possible when working to address the issues identified in this needs assessment.

Data from the 2010 Census details the growth of the older adult population in the past ten years. In Rowan County, the population aged 60 and older increased in aggregate almost three times as much as the total growth rate for the County as a whole (6.2%). Those aged 60 and older now comprise 20% of the total population. Due to the aging of the "Baby Boom" generation, this growth rate is expected to continue through 2030. Because this growth occurs gradually, it may not be noticeable to many. However, this changing demographic will have a significant impact on the community, both in terms of need for services and in opportunities for civic engagement. Community leaders will need to recognize this situation in various planning initiatives.

Rowan County, like North Carolina and the nation as a whole, has seen increasing poverty rates over the past decade. A recent national report stated that poverty has risen to rates not seen since the 1960s, when the "War on Poverty" began. While the percent of individuals 65 or older living in poverty has decreased slightly (from 11.4% to 9.8%), the number of individuals 18 and younger living in poverty has increased from 14.2% in 2000 to 31.7% in 2010. This dramatic rise in youth poverty is also shown in the number of students receiving free and reduced lunches. The percentage of students in 2005 receiving free or reduced lunches in Rowan County was 47%. By 2009 this had increased to 55% and the school system states that in 2012 it is over 60% of all students. Poverty affects all facets of life, including educational attainment, health, and home stability. Rather than simply focusing on "reducing poverty", which the steering committee members felt was too broad a topic, the selected issues and strategies in this needs assessment focus on the causes and symptoms of poverty, which were seen as more manageable.

The results of these varied data collection methodologies were used to develop an overall assessment of the human service needs of Rowan County residents. These results were provided to the Steering Committee as they developed a set of strategies to address the identified needs between April and July 2012. The Steering Committee was assisted by a second round of focus groups in late April, where selected members from the first round of focus groups met to review the results of the data collection process. The focus group members were asked to identify the most pressing needs and feasible strategies for Rowan County and affected organizations to help meet those needs. A total of 24 citizens attended the two focus groups held in late April in Salisbury. The participants together identified approximately 100 strategies to address the primary and secondary issues detailed below.

The Steering Committee reviewed these proposed strategies at three meetings between May and July of 2012. The Steering Committee finalized its recommendations and five-year Action Plan based on this input. They ultimately recommended 37 strategies for inclusion in the report. This process was completed by August 1, 2012.

2012 Rowan Health and Human Service Needs Assessment Issues Matrix			
<i>The following issues were identified through one or more input methods as a part of the 2012 Rowan Health and Human Service Needs Assessment. These issues were used in the second round of focus groups to assist participants identify high-priority issues in the County and identify strategies to address them.</i>			
Issues Identified (Primary and Secondary issues in bold)	Where Issues Were Identified		
	Phone Survey	Secondary Data Sources (Census, School District, State Agencies)	Focus Groups
Dental Care			
Medical Care			
Unemployment			
Educational Achievement			
Child Care Cost and Availability			
Youth Poverty			
Chronic Disease Frequency			
Crime			
Teen Pregnancy			
Physical Fitness			
Illegal Drug Abuse			
Prescription Drug Abuse			
Mental Health Services/ Counseling			
Improving Perceptions			
Mental Health Issues			
Bullying in School			
Transportation			
Hispanic Issues			

Primary Issues: The first three issues listed (*Medical and Dental Care, Unemployment, and Educational Achievement*) were identified by the Steering Committee as the most pressing concerns in Rowan County. They were designated as primary issues because they had strong secondary data support and were identified as issues by focus group participants as well as by telephone survey respondents.

Secondary Issues: *Child Care Costs and Availability* and *Teen Pregnancy* were identified as secondary issues due the responses submitted through the telephone survey and by focus group attendees. *Prescription Drug Abuse* was identified through the telephone survey and by steering committee members as an important issue to address.

1. Issue: Medical and Dental Care

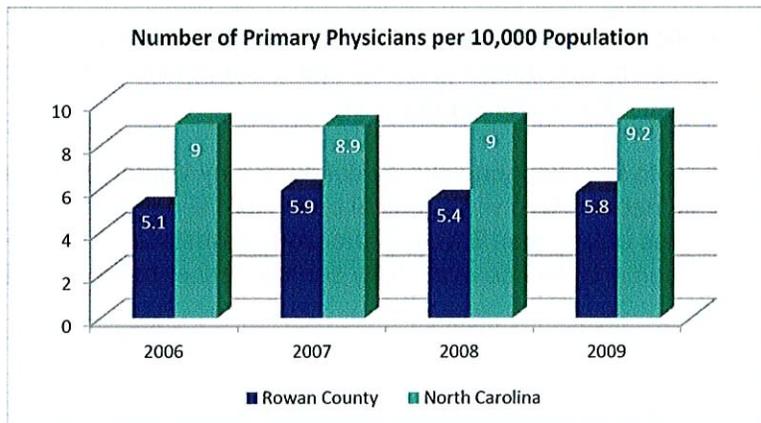
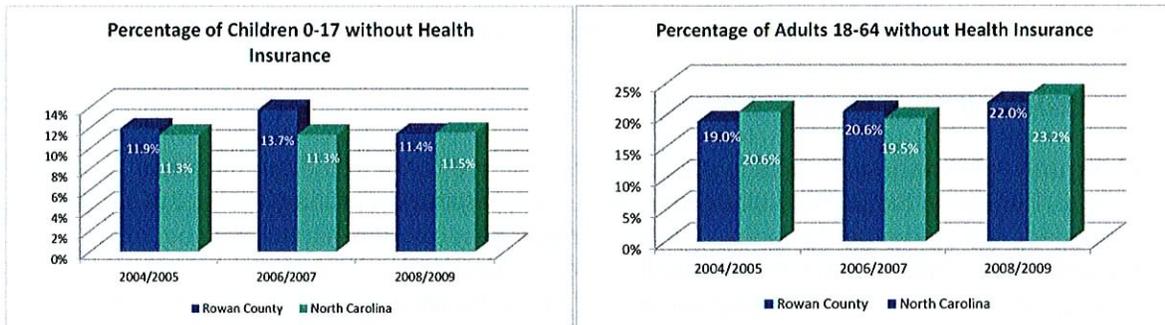
Background Information: Access to affordable health care ranks at the top of critical concerns. For many, the primary place to receive care, regardless of the character of health care needed, is the emergency room. There are many associated reasons: the cost of insurance, qualifications for subsidized health care, the lack of knowledge about existing health care services, or the limited hours and services of public health care agencies. Preventative health care is often neglected due to perceived or actual costs, particularly dental care. Lack of exercise and neglect of basic care for chronic diseases exacerbate the demand on medical services. While no specific strategies were identified through the focus groups, this is an issue that merits additional review by the United Way and affected agencies due to its impact on medical costs, employability, and overall quality of life.

75.4% of the respondents to the telephone survey conducted by Winthrop University Social and Behavioral Research Lab needed help with medical care. 74.1% needed help with dental care. In households with incomes of less than \$35,000, the biggest obstacle to the needed help was expense, with transportation and service availability seen as lesser but still notable issues.

Needed help with:	% Needing Help	% Not Able to Get Help *	Main Reason Could Not Get Help
Q27 Medical care other than dental care for a household member	74.4	20.7	Expense - 64% Transportation - 14% Service Availability 7% Other Reason - 14%
Q24 Dental care for a household member	71.3	37.7	Expense - 74% Transportation - 8% Service Availability 18% Didn't know how to get help - 4% Other Reason - 3%

* Based on the number of those who needed help.

The percentage of adults without health insurance is increasing. In addition, the County's number of primary care physicians per 10,000 population continues to lag behind the state average. According to the Center for Health Services Research, the numbers in 2009 were 9.2 physicians per 10,000 for North Carolina and only 5.8 per 10,000 population for the County. The Rowan Regional Medical Center is currently applying for status as a Medically Underserved Area, which will provide incentives for Primary Care Physicians to work in the area in exchange for forgiving their medical school debt. These high debt levels often serve as an impediment to working as a Primary Care Physician, particularly in more rural areas.



Medical and Dental Care Strategies

Support or Expand Capacity and Access to Existing Programs

- A. Continue to provide and better publicize the free medical screenings that are offered by the Rowan Regional Medical Center.
- B. Expand existing dental programs (e.g., Community Care Clinic and Good Shepard's Clinic), where dentists and hygienists provide dental care for the uninsured, particularly for adults.
- C. Provide more accessibility to medical and mental health services particularly at schools, churches, and other community centers.
- D. Increase the number of nurses present in Rowan County schools.
- E. Work with medical professionals to expand volunteer services that they provide in the community.
- F. Implement Community Medicine grant proposal by the County to train 12 paramedics.

Medical and Dental Care Strategies

Provide Citizen Outreach and Education

- A. Educate County residents on how to access medical resources in order to lower unnecessary usage of hospital emergency room and 911 services.
- B. Examine "211" usage specific to issues identified. Reintroduce/reinforce the County's "211" program to the general public as awareness of this program may have waned since it was first inaugurated.
- C. Educate residents on role of personal choice and behaviors in chronic disease frequency.

Medical and Dental Care Strategies

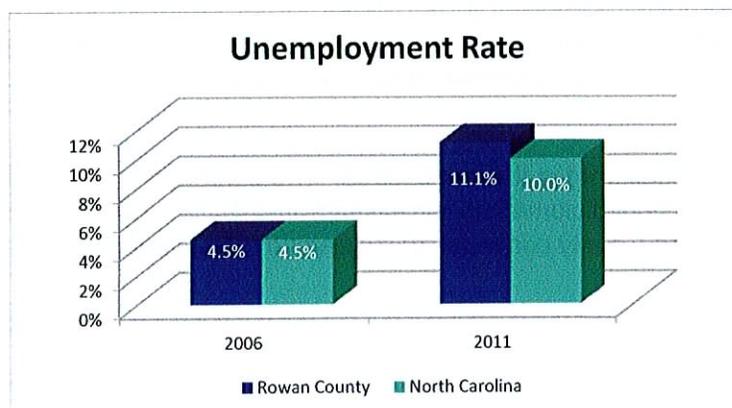
Advocate to Modify Existing Programs

- A. Advocate to state and federal legislative delegations to allow dental costs to be a permitted Medicare expenditure.
- B. Require recipients of social service benefits to attend classes on how to access medical care and benefits in order to eliminate abuse.
- C. Work with the community to support and advocate for the health care services that are needed for residents.

2. Issue: Availability of and Access to Jobs

Background Information: More than half of the respondents to the telephone survey conducted by Winthrop University Social and Behavioral Research Lab considered unemployment to be a very serious problem. The local unemployment rate is a result of many interrelated factors. The national economy influences the local economy and the availability of job positions. Employers may prefer particular skills and training, and search for potential employees they feel will be committed to the job. The focus group composed of local business leaders emphasized the need for jobs to employ young people and recent graduates.

Rowan County employment rates have closely mirrored North Carolina rates over the years.



After reaching a ten-year low of 4.4% in April of 2006, unemployment in the County continued to rise. In 2011 the Rowan County unemployment rate exceeded the state average. It reached a high of 15% in February of 2010 but has since dropped to 9.6% in April of 2012.

Rowan County needs to improve marketing itself for employment opportunities, both for high school and college graduates. Marketing is a community effort that involves many different partners and organizations who have an interest in the County.

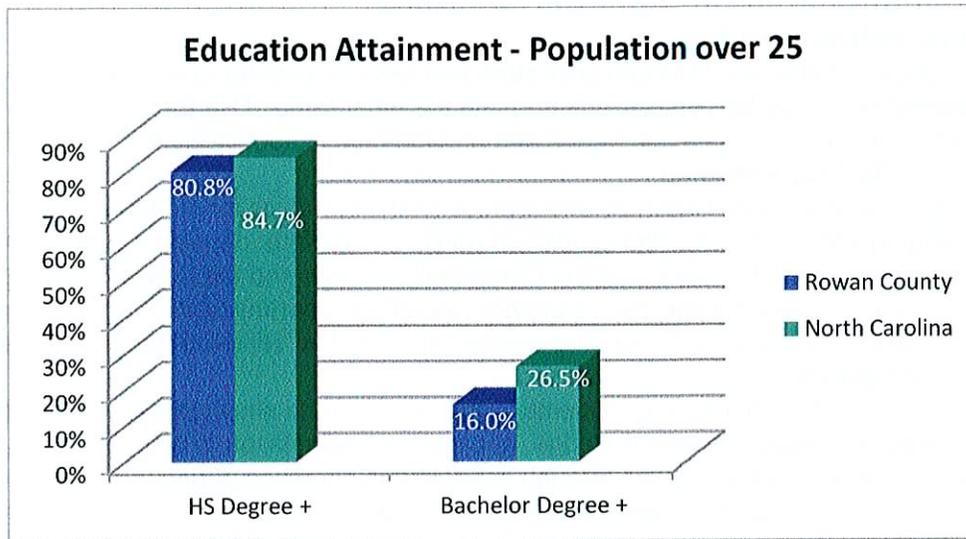
Availability and Access to Jobs Strategies

- A. Encourage unemployed and underemployed persons to attend Employment Security Commission (ESC), Career Connections, and Salisbury- Rowan Community Action Agency classes.
- B. Encourage employers to hire persons through the ESC, DSS, Job Links, and other resources.
- C. Increase the number of job fairs held in Rowan County where participating firms have jobs to fill in area.
- D. Work with local transit and para-transit providers to expand public transportation accessibility for persons looking for a job. Better educate persons on transportation options available for commuting both in and outside of Rowan County.
- E. Increase support for proven economic development programs in Rowan County.
- F. Advocate to state and federal legislative delegations to allow persons who receive unemployment assistance to start their own businesses without losing their benefits.
- G. Explore the establishment of a volunteer-led disability rights and resources initiative to assist with legal issues dealing with persons with disabilities.

3. Issue: Educational Training and Achievement

Background Information: Employment rates go hand in hand with educational achievement levels. Lower educational achievement within the County means fewer available workers for skilled jobs, and a consequent increase in poverty rates. While programs are available to help residents acquire the skills they need for employment, as well as an improved quality of life for themselves and their children, widespread knowledge of and access to these opportunities remains a challenge.

Some improvements have occurred in the last decade. The percent of the population 25 and older with at least a high school diploma has increased from 74.2% in 2000 to an estimated 80.8% in 2010; however, the County continues to lag behind the state in percent of adults with college degrees.



In addition to lagging adult education levels, Rowan County third and eighth graders score below State levels in both reading and math.

End of Grade Scores				
Percentage of Students Scoring at or Above Grade Level				
	Reading		Math	
	08-09	09-10	08-09	09-10
3rd grade				
Rowan County	59.8%	60.3%	75.0%	80.0%
North Carolina	65.5%	66.4%	81.3%	81.9%
8th grade				
Rowan County	61.5%	62.7%	75.3%	77.2%
North Carolina	66.6%	69.5%	80.4%	83.9%

In low income areas, young people may often lack the support of parents who can provide a stable environment that will help the child learn important life skills and succeed in school. Teen pregnancy is more likely to occur in such environments, contributing further to dropout rates. School representatives questioned also cited bullying and gang activity as significantly erosive elements.

Educational Training and Achievement Strategies

Educational Achievement

- A. Have consistent dialogue between educators and local employers to see what the employers' needs are for persons entering into the labor force. Use this information to link K-12 education to address those needs and provide high school graduates with the skills needed by the local workforce.
- B. Provide vocational apprenticeships and professional internships for students of all ages (including unemployed and under-employed adults). Therefore, develop a program with the Rowan Chamber, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College and the Employment Security Commission to have local companies provide vocational apprenticeships and internships.
- C. Expand student tutoring and mentoring service, such as the "Nine-Up" program in the 3rd, 7th and 9th grades.
- D. Bring employers to schools, and students to the worksites, to show/develop real world connections with students for knowledge, application, and relation to work potential.
- E. Provide credit restoration classes through schools and churches during the evening as good credit scores are often essential parts of job requirements.
- F. Educate students on high-demand career fields, such as for certified nursing assistants and pharmacy technicians.
- G. Support new programs for high-demand career fields at area colleges and universities.

Educational Training and Achievement Strategies

Educational Environment

- A. Support efforts to reduce bullying in schools.
- B. Advocate for competitive pay to lower educator attrition rates.
- C. Sustain and expand the "Adopt-a-school" program throughout all of Rowan County. Involve churches and businesses in this effort. Consider using "Communities in Schools" framework as a model.
- D. Offer parenting classes through the school district.

4. Issue: Child Care Cost, Quality, and Accessibility

Background Information: The lack of quality, affordable child care can present another contributing factor to unemployment rates. For single parent families, where the sole provider must work or attend school, finding child care that they can access and afford is critical to their livelihood and the welfare of their child.

As the poverty rate has increased dramatically since 2000 in both Rowan County and the State overall, the number of individuals 18 and younger living in poverty has increased likewise, from 14.2% in 2000 to 31.7% in 2010. Families with a female head of household are more likely to struggle to provide for that household. The percent of families with a female head of household has increased since 2000, and the poverty rate for such families is 47%.

Per the telephone survey conducted by Winthrop University Social and Behavioral Research Lab, of those households needing help with child care but unable to get that help, the biggest

obstacle was expense. 77.1% of respondents considered the affordability of child care to be a problem. The average annual cost of care for an infant/toddler in Rowan County is \$7,748. For a preschool age child, it is approximately \$6,602. The median income in the County is \$42,787, which means that a family with two young children could spend approximately 32% of their available income on child care.

Child Care Cost, Quality and Accessibility Strategies

- A. Increase availability of quality (based on NC standards), affordable and accessible child care.
- B. Increase availability of accessible child care, supported by transportation.
- C. Provide and promote more affordable and innovative child care, such as the YMCA summer day camp program and enrichment activities, to help alleviate poverty by allowing parents to work or go to school during the summer.

5. Issue: Teen Pregnancy

Background Information: Teen pregnancy has been an ongoing issue in Rowan County, with pregnancy rates that historically exceeded the state average. In 2009, the most recent year available, both Rowan County and North Carolina saw reductions in the teen pregnancy rate, but Rowan County saw a significant reduction from 70.4 to 48.1 pregnancies per 1,000 population between 2008 and 2009. The tentative data for 2010 supports the continued downward trend, but respondents to the telephone survey and participants in the focus groups, particularly those in the education focus group, identified this issue as a priority for the county. The focus group attendees felt it was seen as "normal" to many of their peers to have a child in their teens, and there was little consideration to the long-term impacts of having a child at such a young age.

Teen Pregnancy Strategies

- A. Develop programs that teach parents on how to talk to their teenage children on teen pregnancy issues. Use Family First as a source for such education.
- B. Develop peer group educational programs on teen pregnancy in local schools.

6. Issue: Prescription Drug Abuse

Background information: Prescription drug abuse has emerged as a significant issue in Rowan County over the past decade. This issue is not confined to the county, or even North Carolina, but Rowan County does have an unintentional poisoning mortality rate twice the state average (21.3 per 100,000 residents compared to the NC and US averages of 11 per 100,000 residents). In addition, 73 percent of telephone survey respondents stated prescription drug abuse was a problem in Rowan County.

Prescription Drug Abuse Strategies

- A. Educate all students and their parents/caregivers on the dangers of all drugs, both prescription and non-prescription. Use "Operation Medicine Cabinet" and "Project Lazarus" as models for such educational programs.
- B. Advocate to state and federal legislative delegations to encourage the synchronization of medical records between pharmacies in order to identify potential prescription drug abuse.

7. Issue: Chronic Disease Frequency

No strategies were discussed regarding this secondary need.