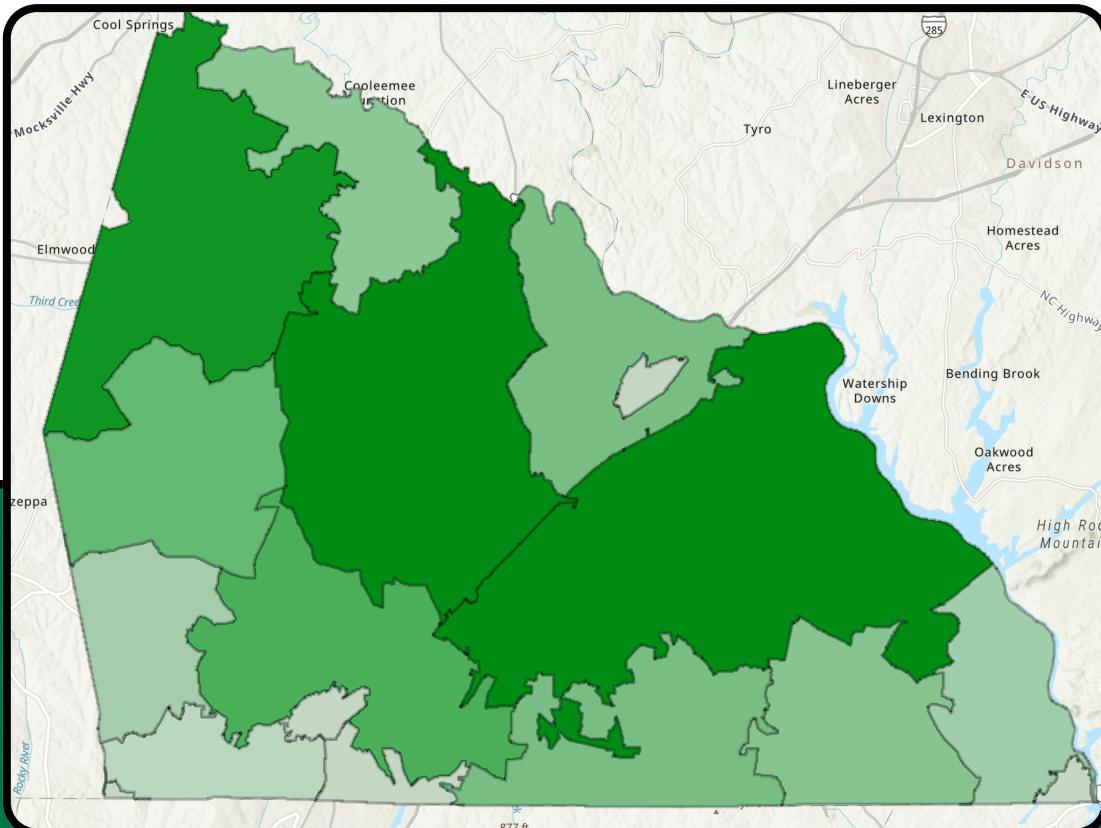


# SOTCH

## State of the County Health Report

# 2024



*Prepared by:*  
Courtney Meece MPH, CHES  
Rowan County Public Health  
Community Health Manager

**Rowan County**  
**PUBLIC**  **HEALTH**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.  
*Be an original.™*

# WHAT IS THE SOTCH?

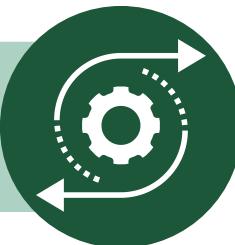
- State report that is required for accreditation
- Every year that there isn't a community health needs assessment (CHNA), counties must submit a SOTCH
- The purpose of the SOTCH is to inform the state and the community about the progress that has been made since the CHNA



## Report Components



Community Health Improvement Plan Updates



Significant or notable changes in morbidity and mortality

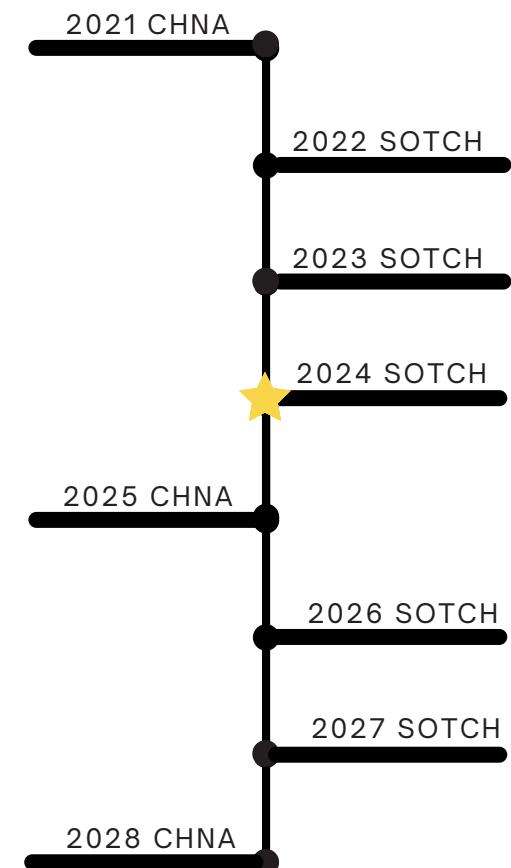


Emerging Issues



New and Continuing Programs

## State Report Timeline

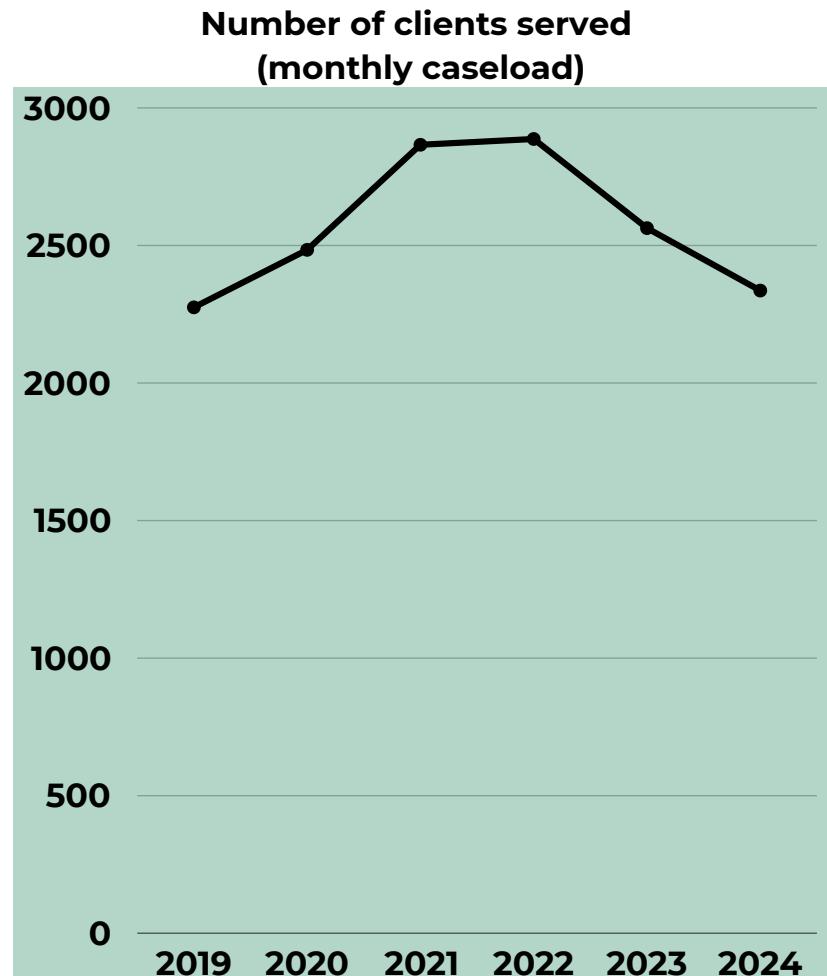


# COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

## HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

### Women, Infant & Children (WIC)

Rowan County Public Health has been actively collaborating with community partners to raise awareness about the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program and help residents understand how to apply for these vital services. To reach a broader audience, the department has leveraged social media and other digital marketing strategies, including geofencing areas with low WIC participation to target specific neighborhoods and communities in need of information. These efforts ensure that eligible families are informed about the benefits of the WIC program and how to access healthy food, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support. By using these innovative outreach methods, Rowan County Public Health is working to connect more residents to the resources they need for a healthier future.



Data Source: Rowan County Public Health: WIC

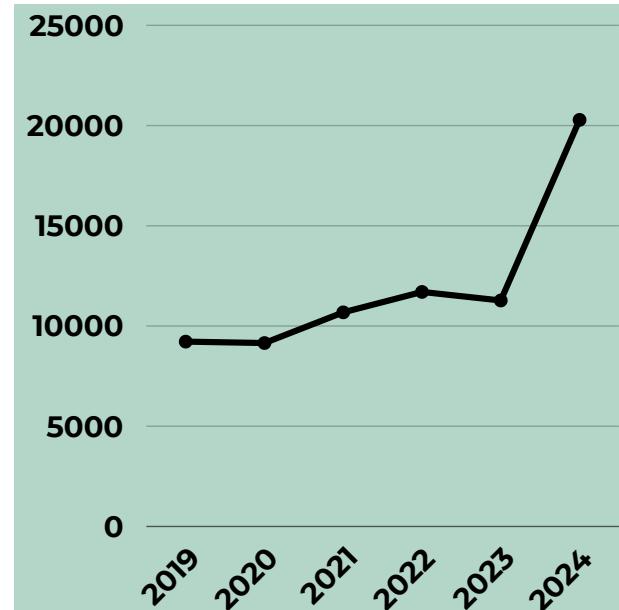


## Rowan County Department of Social Services

In December 2023, Medicaid expansion officially took effect in North Carolina, opening the door for hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians to access vital health care services. This expansion extended Medicaid coverage to more low-income adults, helping individuals and families who previously fell into a coverage gap — earning too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid but too little to afford private insurance. In 2024, Rowan County Public Health helped spread awareness about the expansion by sharing information at various community events, ensuring residents knew how to apply and access care. Additionally, the Healthy Rowan Coalition dedicated one of its monthly meetings to a special presentation on Medicaid expansion, helping local organizations and community partners better understand its impact and how to support eligible individuals.

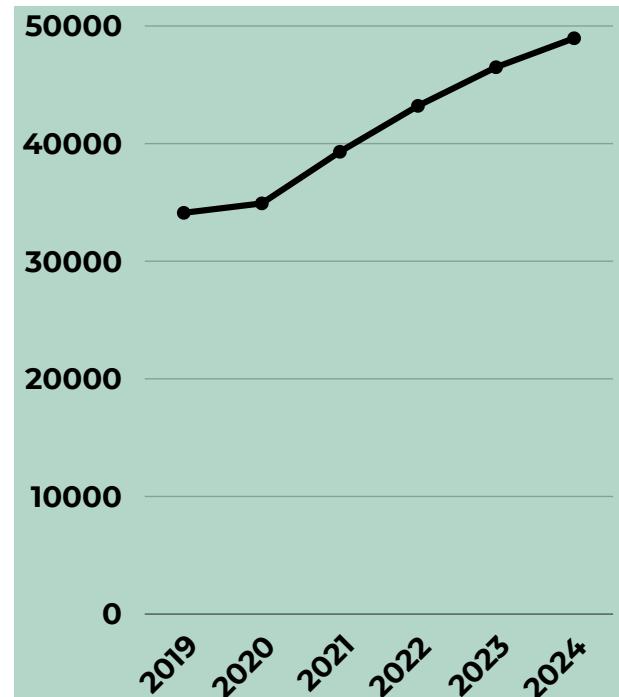
With the implementation of Medicaid expansion, more North Carolinians also became eligible for SNAP benefits, increasing access to essential food assistance for individuals and families across the state. In Rowan County, this created an important opportunity to connect residents to healthy food options. Through support from the REACH grant, Rowan County Public Health developed and distributed a variety of marketing materials to encourage eligible residents to apply for SNAP and learn how these benefits can support healthier eating. To further build community capacity, the Healthy Rowan Coalition hosted a Navigating SNAP: Understanding Benefits, Application, and Access training for coalition members. This training equipped local organizations, healthcare providers, and community partners with the tools and knowledge needed to help their clients and patients successfully apply for and use SNAP benefits.

**Number of households receiving SNAP benefits**



Data Source: Rowan County DSS

**Number of Rowan County residents who are enrolled in Medicaid**

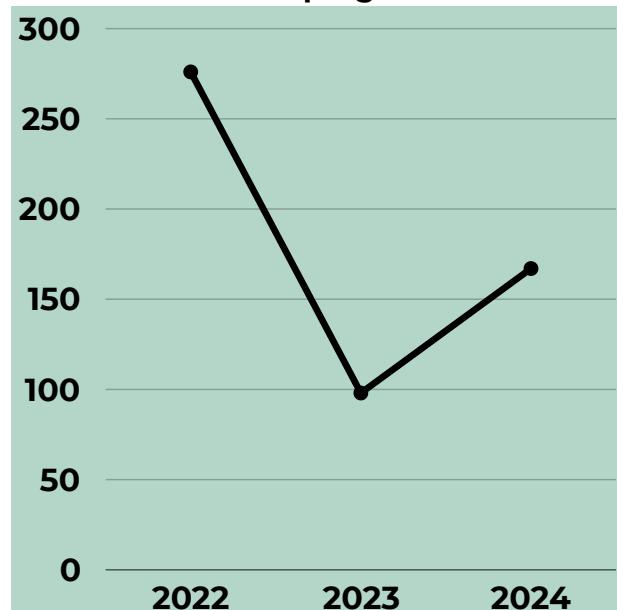


Data Source: Rowan County DSS

## Food and Farm Network

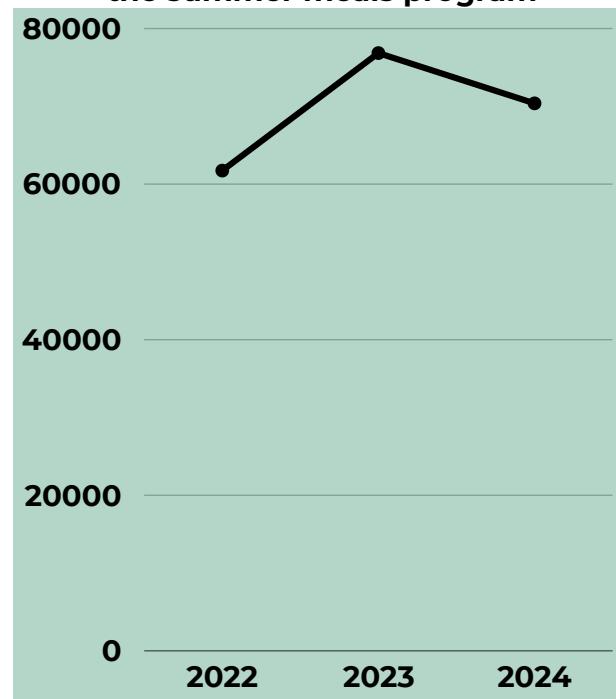
The Rowan Food and Farm Network continues to serve as an active collective of organizations working together to address food insecurity in Rowan County. This network brings together partners from public health, local farms, non-profits, and community organizations to collaborate on solutions that increase access to healthy, local food. By combining their efforts, the network works to secure grants and implement initiatives that support food access, such as providing farmers market vouchers to seniors and WIC participants. Through these collaborative efforts, the Rowan Food and Farm Network helps ensure that more residents, especially those most at risk for food insecurity, have the opportunity to access fresh, nutritious foods grown right here in Rowan County.

**Number of individuals who participate in the Farmer's Market voucher program**



Data Source: Rowan Food and Farm Network

**Number of students who participate in the summer meals program**



Data Source: Rowan Salisbury School System: School Nutrition Services

## Rowan Salisbury School System: Nutrition Services

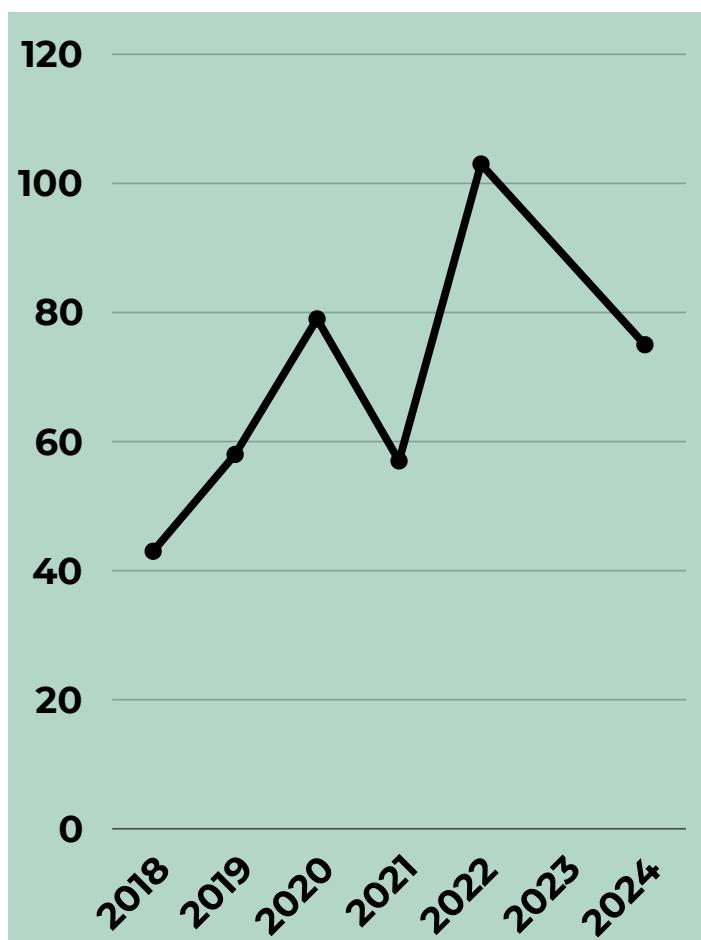
The Rowan-Salisbury Schools Summer Meals Program continued to play a vital role in addressing child hunger during the summer months when school was out of session. In June 2024, the beloved "Yum Yum" Bus operated for 18 days, followed by another 18 days in July, providing meals to children across Rowan County. Over the course of those 36 days, the program served more than 70,000 meals to local children. While this was a decrease compared to the number of meals served in 2023, this decline may be partially attributed to the introduction of the NC SunBucks program, which provided families with additional funds to purchase groceries over the summer. Despite the slight decrease, the Summer Meals Program remains a critical resource for ensuring Rowan County children have access to nutritious food when school is not in session.

# MENTAL HEALTH

## Rowan County Department of Social Services

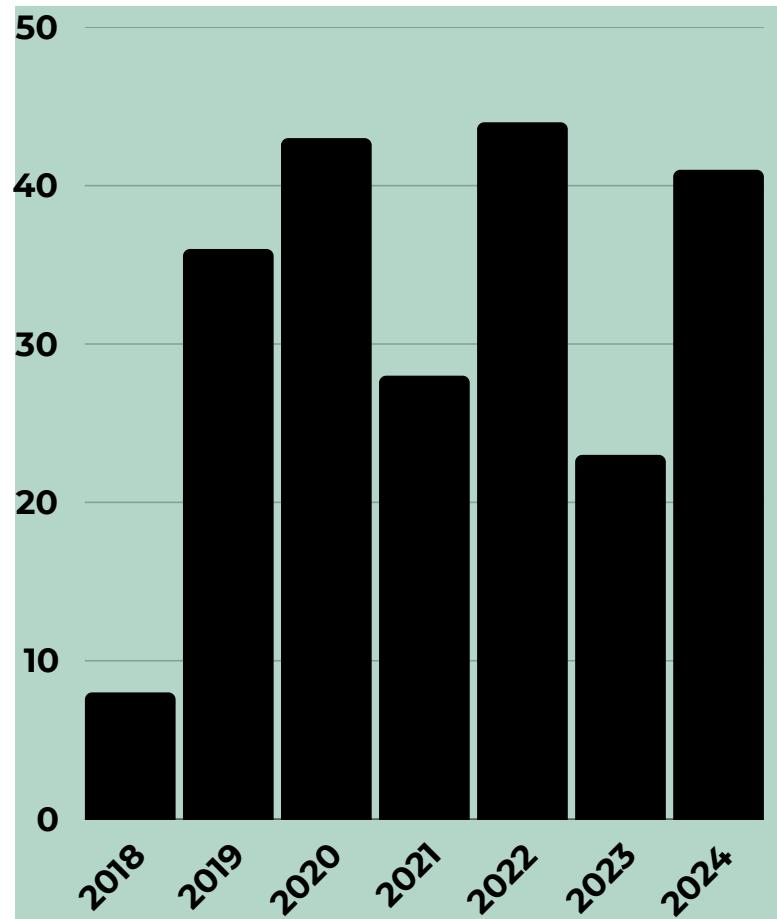
Rowan County Department of Social Services (DSS) plays a vital role in protecting children and supporting families by working closely with other organizations throughout the county to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect. Through community events, educational campaigns, and collaborative efforts with local partners, DSS helps ensure that families, service providers, and the broader community understand the signs of abuse and the importance of early intervention. In addition to their awareness efforts, DSS actively makes referrals to evidence-based parenting programs, such as Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), which provides parents with practical strategies to manage behavior, build strong relationships, and create safe and nurturing environments for their children. By connecting families to these valuable resources, DSS helps strengthen family units and promotes healthier, safer homes for children in Rowan County.

**Number of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect**



Data Source: Rowan County DSS

**Number of children who have been reunited with their families after being placed in foster care**

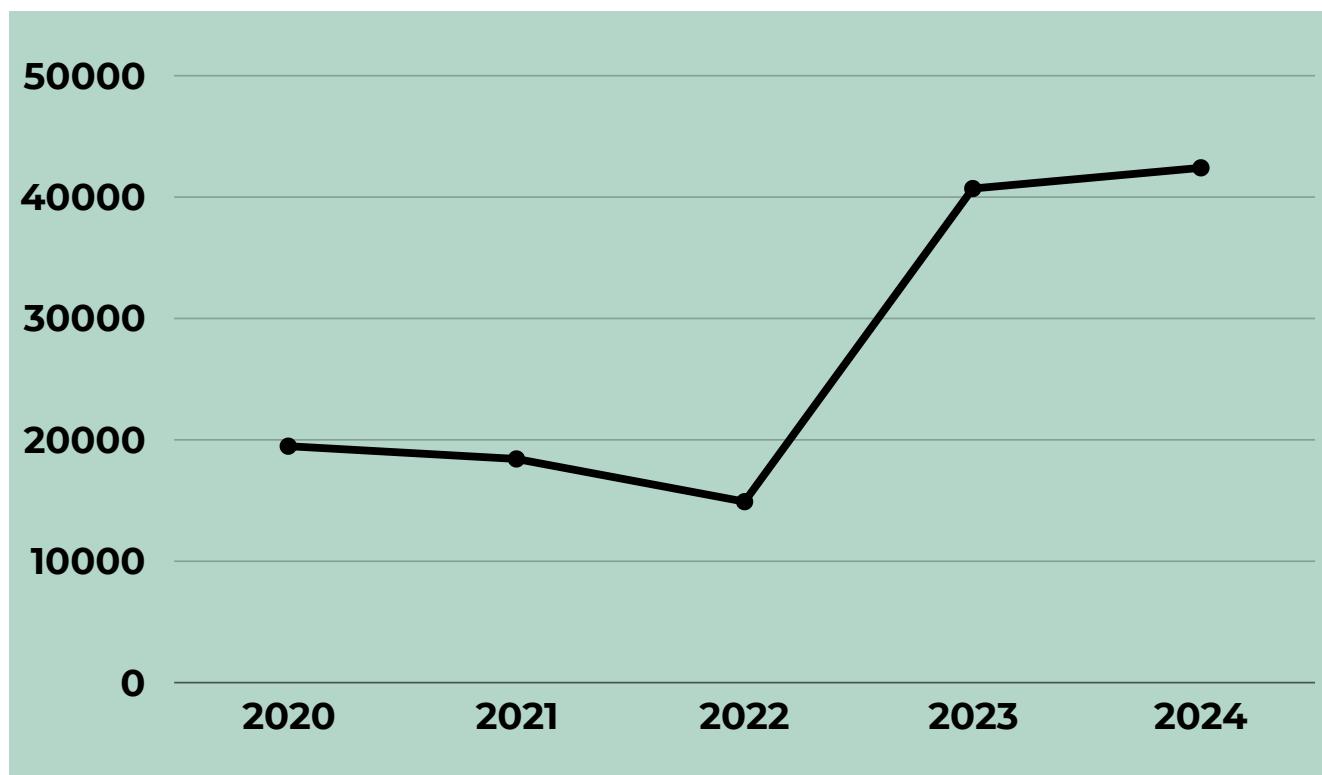


Data Source: Rowan County DSS

## Novant Health Rowan Medical Center

Novant Health Rowan Medical Center has continued to be a strong champion for mental health in Rowan County, playing a key role in supporting a wide range of mental health initiatives. Their commitment goes beyond simply showing up — Novant actively participates in community events focused on mental health awareness and has also provided financial support to help fund local programs aimed at improving mental wellness. In addition to their community efforts, Novant has embedded mental health screenings into routine care by ensuring that all patients are asked important mental health questions at every visit to their medical providers. This proactive approach helps identify individuals who may need support earlier, connecting them to critical resources and reducing stigma around seeking help for mental health concerns.

**Number of total behavioral health encounters**



Data Source: Novant Health Rowan Medical Center

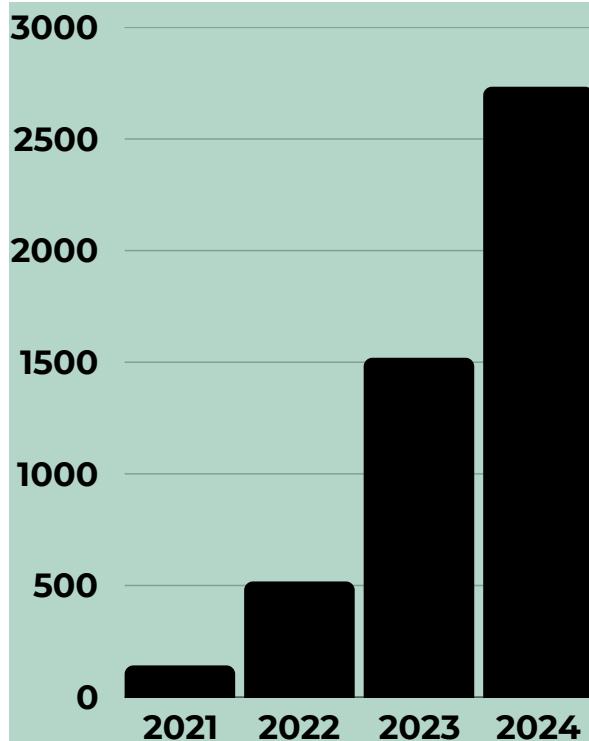


# SUBSTANCE USE

## Rowan County Public Health: HOPE Program

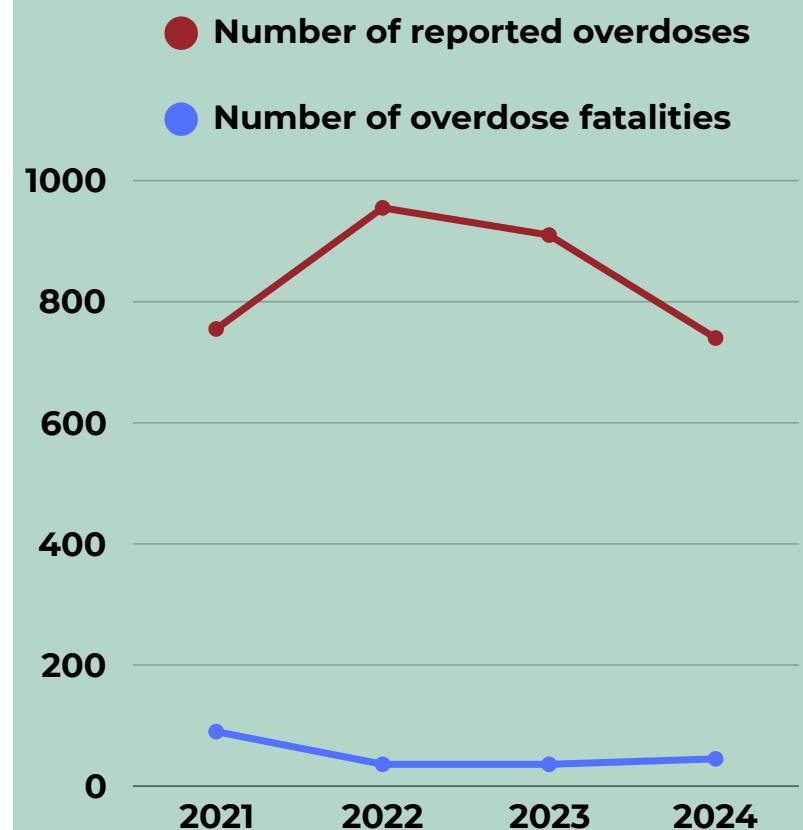
In December 2023, the HOPE program launched its Safe Syringe Program, which quickly became a key source for distributing Narcan, a life-saving medication used to reverse opioid overdoses. This initiative, along with the installation of two Narcan vending machines in the county jails in September 2023, has significantly expanded Narcan availability in Rowan County. Thanks to these efforts, 2024 has seen a notable increase in Narcan distribution across the community. Throughout the year, HOPE worked alongside community partners to establish four new mobile Narcan sites throughout the county, further enhancing access to this vital resource. In addition to Narcan distribution, HOPE has also been collaborating with law enforcement to receive dead-on-arrival (DOA) cases, helping address missed DOA calls when EMS was canceled. Though this process is still evolving, it has already led to more DOA cases being reported. With the expanded distribution through the Safe Syringe Program, mobile Narcan sites, and vending machines, we believe the rise in Narcan availability has played a crucial role in the decrease in reported overdoses in the county.

**Number of Narcan kits distributed to the community**



Data Source: Rowan County Public Health HOPE Program

**Number of reported overdoses**



Data Source: Rowan County Public Health HOPE Program



# MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY CHANGES SINCE LAST CHNA

Morbidity and mortality data for Rowan County reveal distinct trends when comparing causes of death across different racial and ethnic groups, as well as when comparing local rates to state averages. Overall, the county's age-adjusted death rate of 1,037.1 per 100,000 residents significantly exceeds the North Carolina average of 849.4 per 100,000. Heart disease and cancer remain the leading causes of death in Rowan County, aligning with statewide trends. However, the county's mortality rates for unintentional injuries (including motor vehicle crashes), chronic lower respiratory diseases, pneumonia and influenza, and nephritis (kidney disease) are all notably higher than state averages, indicating potential gaps in preventive care, chronic disease management, and injury prevention.

## 2018-2022 NC Resident Race/Ethnicity and Sex-Specific Age-Adjusted Death Rates

Rank	Cause of Death	Number of Deaths	Rowan county Rates	NC Rate
1	Disease of the Heart	1,924	206.3	161.2
2	Cancer	1631	165.5	152.1
3	Unintentional Injuries	571	75	52.5
4	Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	500	51.5	39.8
5	Cerebrovascular Disease	415	44.8	44.4
6	Alzheimer's Disease	337	37.3	36.6
7	Diabetes Mellitus	271	28.4	27.0
8	Nephritis, Nephrotic Syndrome, and Nephrosis	231	24.7	16.5
9	Pneumonia and Influenza	229	24.4	13.8
10	Motor Vehicle Injuries	148	20.1	16.1
<b>Total Deaths between 2018-2022 - All Causes</b>		9,443	1,037.1	849.4

Data Source: NCDHHS, Division of Public Health, NC State Center for Health Statistics

## EMERGING ISSUES SINCE LAST CHNA

Several emerging issues are shaping the health landscape in Rowan County, highlighting both ongoing challenges and new concerns that impact community well-being. Issues such as trust in public health messaging, vaccine hesitancy, rising communicable diseases, respiratory illnesses, and sexually transmitted infections reflect growing public health threats, while child and adolescent wellness, vaping, marijuana use, social isolation, and mental health point to critical behavioral and social health needs. Additionally, early childhood education, affordable childcare, environmental health, air quality, and housing affordability demonstrate the interconnected nature of health and the social determinants influencing outcomes across the county. Addressing these emerging issues will require collaborative, community-centered approaches that bridge healthcare, education, housing, and environmental policy.

### Trust in Public Health Messaging

### Vaccine Hesitancy

### Communicable Diseases

- Respiratory Illness
- Sexually Transmitted Infections

### Child & Adolescent Wellness

- Vaping
- Marijuana Use
- Social Isolation
- Mental Health

### Early Childhood Education

- Affordable Childcare

### Environmental Health

- Environmental Burden (Air quality, pollution, and built environment)

### Housing

- Affordable housing

## NEW/PAUSED/DISCONTINUED INITIATIVES SINCE LAST CHNA

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

- **Community Care Clinic of Rowan, Inc. (CCCoR)**

- CCCoR provides healthy recipes and shelf stable ingredients as well as prescriptions for whole food, plant pre-dominant eating in alignment with Lifestyle Medicine for low-income patients.
- CCCoR also hosts a "Blessings box" of canned and boxed food for those in need.

- **Salisbury Farmers Market**

- The Salisbury Farmers Market began accepting SNAP benefits.
- Salisbury Farmers Market established a food donation station.

- **Rowan County Public Health (RCPH)**

- RCPH has begun collaborating with Rowan Cooperative Extension and Main Street Meeting and Market Place to offer reoccurring cooking classes.
- RCPH has expanded their LifeStyle Medicine program by initiating various new approaches which include post visit Lifestyle Medicine resource packets.

- **Community in Schools (CIS)**

- CIS has expanded their reach by placing one of their staff at Koontz Elementary School.
- CIS has started a food pantry at Koontz Elementary

- **Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority** has started distributing CHIP bags, which are non-perishable food bags, to Koontz Elementary School and Essie Academy.

- **Rufty-Holmes Senior Center**

- Rufty-Holmes has expanded their weekly lunch club program by adding a Hispanic lunch club.

- **Bread Riot**

- Bread Riot has started a new program called Grow a Farmer which services as an internship program for county residents who are interested learning how to farm and cultivate their own food.
- Bread Riot has expanded their reach by adding an additional mobile market location.

- **Rowan County Cooperative Extension**

- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) position has been dissolved.

## MENTAL HEALTH

- **Rowan County Public Health**

- RCPH has begun offering a wider variety of mental health awareness trainings.
  - Community Resiliency Model (CRM)
  - Question Persuade Refer (QPR)
  - Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM)
  - LivingWorks Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
  - Mental Health First Aid

- **Rowan County**

- Rowan County has begun offering a four-week mental health training for employees called Start the Conversation.

- **Rowan County United Way**

- Rowan County United Way has begun offering a Suicide Support Group for friends and family members to have been lost to suicide.

- **Rowan Helping Ministries**

- Rowan Helping Ministries has partnered with S&H Youth and Adult Services (SHYAS) to open the SHYAS Peer Support Living Room.
- In partnership with Cabarrus-Rowan Community Health Centers, Rowan Helping Ministries has begun offering group sessions for their residents.

- **Nazareth Child and Family Connection**

- Nazareth has expanded their services by extending their services to include Youth Respite for male participants.

## SUBSTANCE USE

- **Rowan County Public Health**

- Harm Reduction, Outreach, Prevention, Education (HOPE)
  - While HOPE's Safe Syringe Program technically began in December 2023, during 2024 the program began establishing a reoccurring clientele.
  - HOPE has also expanding their reach into the Rowan County Detention Center by adding another Peer Support Specialist to their team.

- **BrightView**

- Rowan County has a new substance use treatment facility called BrightView. This facility offers a variety of treatment options including:
  - Medically Assisted Treatment
  - Drug, Alcohol, Heroin, Opioid, Fentanyl, and Meth Addiction Treatments
  - Addiction Relapse Program
  - Outpatient Programs