

PUBLIC HEALTH

General Information

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| Department Head: | Susan Hayes | |
| Location: | McDowell Center, 2222-B S. Fayetteville St., Asheboro, NC 27205 | |
| Phone Numbers: | Main Number: | 318-6200 |
| | Animal Control: | 683-8235 |
| | Communicable Disease: | 318-6882 |
| | Dental Health: | 318-6220 |
| | Environmental Health: | 318-6262 |
| | Family Planning: | 318-6882 |
| | Health Education: | 318-6196 |
| | Immunization Line: | 318-6882 |
| | Vital Records: | 318-6192 |
| | WIC/Nutrition: | 318-6171 |
| | Fax (Administration): | 318-6234 |
| | Fax (Environmental): | 318-6265 |
| | Fax (Nursing): | 318-6241 |

Mission

To preserve, protect, and improve the health of the community by the collection and dissemination of health information, education and service programs aimed at the prevention of disease, protection of the environment, and improvement of the quality of life for our citizens.

Summary

The Health Department has many functions that include monitoring health status to identify community health problems, developing strategies for addressing problems independently and in partnership with other community entities, informing, educating and empowering people about health issues, enforcing laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety, assuring the provision of health care in the community, and guaranteeing that a competent team of public health professionals is available to the community. This department has a total of 94 positions.

Overview

Organized public health began in Randolph County in 1927, when an influenza epidemic forced the County Government to close down a session of court. At that time the Randolph County Board of Commissioners hired Dr. George Sumner, a physician from Franklinville, to be the first Health Officer for the County.

Dr. Sumner started work in a small room in the basement of the Courthouse and had only a hallway for a waiting room. He worked alone until 1931, when he hired a secretary. In 1933 he added an environmental health sanitarian and a public health nurse to the staff.

Dr. Sumner was very aware of the many public health issues facing the county. As programs to meet these needs were funded and staff were added, the basement room in the Courthouse became too small to house the established Randolph County Health Department.

Dr. Sumner had dreams of a new and spacious health center. He worked hard to raise public awareness of the need. His dreams were realized in 1953 when he saw the construction begin for the original Health Department building on North Cox Street. The construction cost was \$70,000, but the County paid only 26.8 cents on the dollar for construction. The North Carolina Medical Care Commission and the U.S. Health Department paid the other 73.2 cents. J.D. Ross Company won the contract for office equipment and furniture at \$2500. The new 4,000 square-foot building included offices, treatment rooms, and combination X-ray department and library. Unfortunately, Dr. Sumner died in December of 1953 before the building was actually completed, and Dr. H.C. Whims replaced Dr. Sumner as County Health Officer. The building was finished in August of 1954 and was named the Sumner Health Center in Dr. Sumner's honor. This building later housed the Sheriff's Department but was torn down in 1999 to make way for the new courthouse.

As Randolph County grew, so did the increase in public health needs. By 1976, the Health Department, along with the County Board of Education, Agricultural Extension (now Cooperative Extension), and the Department of Social Services had outgrown the facilities in which they were operating. The problem was alleviated in 1977 when the citizens of Randolph County passed a bond referendum to build a complex of County agencies at 222 South Fayetteville Street, behind the old County Rest Home building.

In January of 1981 the Randolph County Health Department began operations in the newly completed Ira McDowell Governmental Center, where it is still located today (2006). The commemorative plaque from the Sumner Health Center hangs in the conference room of the current Health Department. With a budget of over \$5.4 million dollars and eighty-two employees, the Health Department continues to provide excellent public health services to the citizens of Randolph County.

Service Area: Administrative – Community Health Assessment

Mission

To assess the community's public health needs and adapt programs and services accordingly.

Summary

The most current Randolph County community health assessment was completed in 2016 and was completed in collaboration with Randolph Hospital. Additional assistance is provided by community institutions, businesses, agencies and individuals with an interest in improving the health status of Randolph County residents. The purpose of the community health assessment is to:

- Evaluate the health status of each county in relations to the State's health objectives as well as peer counties;
- Identify and prioritize health issues that may pose a threat to the health of the community;
- Develop strategies to address priority community health concerns.

Operations

The North Carolina Community Health Assessment, required by the N.C. Division of Public Health (commonly known to the public as the State Health Department), is a process by which community members gain an understanding of the health concerns and health care systems of the community by identifying, collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on community assets, strengths, resources, and needs. A community health assessment culminates in a report and a presentation that includes information about the health of the community as it is today and about the community's capacity to improve the lives of residents. A community health assessment can provide the basis for discussion and action.

The required public health community assessment is on a three-year cycle. Each year a group of counties/local health departments will engage in community assessment. During the two interim years, the local health department will issue a State-of-the-County Report that will provide updated information about priority health issues specific to the county.

Service Area: Administrative – Program Support

Mission

To provide managerial, secretarial and financial support for all Health Department programs.

Summary

The Health Director and administrative staff facilitate staff relations, program planning and evaluation, selection of personnel and in-service training, purchasing of Health Department equipment and supplies, and laboratory support for all programs.

Operations

The Health Director and other administrative staff hold and participate in monthly meetings with Supervisors and staff to discuss concerns and improvements in Health Department programs.

The Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments of 1988 (CLIA) is a federal act that requires local health department labs to be inspected and recertified periodically. The Division of Facility Services (DFS) oversees this process for North Carolina. Auditors from DFS do an inspection every two years to recertify our lab to continue to operate at the same level. The auditors conduct their audit based on the lab's current level of certification. If they find a deficiency, they may do one of two things: request a corrective action plan for the deficiency and come back for a review after the deficiency has been corrected; or they could lower the certification level, which would dictate which tests could and could not be performed in this lab.

Annual hazard communication training is conducted each year for all Health Department employees. New employees receive this training shortly after they are hired. Administrative staff checks the Chemical Hygiene Manuals annually to make sure they are up-to-date. Manuals are located in Administration, Environmental Health, the lab, and the animal shelter.

Service Area: Administrative – Public Relations

Mission

To provide quality public health service in a manner that exceeds the client's and the community's expectations.

Summary

Public relations, client service and satisfaction are integrated into all aspects of the Health Department. Some components of the Health Department Public Relations Policy include regular staff training, telephone operations standards, maintaining client dignity and privacy, annual customer satisfaction surveys and complaint resolution. Administration has developed processes that enable it to monitor the agency's public relation activities and client satisfaction status on an ongoing basis and report that status to the Health Director and Board of Health. The Health Department is constantly working to improve public relations.

Operations

Each program in the Health Department is required to do at least an annual client satisfaction survey. Many programs survey client satisfaction more often than annually. Some surveys are mailed out, and some are handed to clients who visit the department. Survey results are summarized, shared with staff and given to the Health Director. Client feedback is used to plan, adjust and improve program services and activities.

Administration also handles complaints and requests for help where staff members may have failed to assist the client or workload prohibits the employees in that area from responding. Usually either the Health Director or the Assistant Health Director will respond to these complaints or requests. Those deemed to be high priority, such as a dangerous dog or a failing septic system, are investigated the same day, if possible. Complaints and requests are also used to improve agency operations when appropriate.

All new staff receives customer service training which includes communication, attitude, telephone etiquette, dealing with the dissatisfied customer, taking ownership and helping customers get the services they need in a timely and pleasant manner. The Health Department addresses customer service skills at annual employee performance reviews as well.

Service Area: Administrative – Quality Assurance

Mission

To evaluate public health programs on a continual basis in order to (1) provide the best service possible to clients and the community, (2) allow staff to do the best job possible, and (3) adhere to state and local requirements.

Summary

Quality assurance is a continual process in the Health Department. Formal and informal avenues for improvement discussions include administrative program reviews, regular staff quality improvement meetings, client satisfaction surveys, special task force teams, and an ongoing client compliment/complaint process.

Operations

All Health Department programs are required to submit a written quality assurance plan. Each plan must contain at least quarterly multidisciplinary meetings and record reviews. Many programs meet more frequently. Meeting minutes and record audit results are kept on file and submitted to the Health Director following the meeting. Corrective action plans are developed for any discrepancies found during the record audits.

Annually, Administration holds quality assurance review meetings with each program. During these meetings, program policies and procedures are reviewed for timeliness and to ensure that programs are compliant with public health law, state agreements and program guidelines. In addition, quality assurance plans are also reviewed, as well as annual client satisfaction survey results for each program.

Service Area: Animal Control – Field Operations

Mission

To respond to animal control complaints and enforcing the Ordinance to Control Animals in Randolph County. To prevent the spread of rabies in Randolph County.

Summary

Animal control officers respond to complaints received by the animal shelter or after hours through the 911 Dispatchers. They assist the Health Director in the enforcement of animal control laws.

Operations

Animal Control Officers are appointed by the Health Director to enforce the Randolph County Animal Control Ordinance and to perform related duties and functions, all under the authority granted by NCGS 67-30 and NCGS 130A Part 6, Article 6, NC Rabies Control Law.

Animal Control Officers report to the animal shelter each day to get assignments for the day. The daily assignments are determined from complaints received. Calls that come into the shelter during the day are relayed by cell phone to the appropriate Officer and added to that day's assignment.

All vehicles used by the Health Department are for the Animal Control Program. These vehicles generally remain at the shelter when not in use. However, the on-call Officer takes his vehicle home.

Officers respond to a variety of complaints: dangerous dogs, nuisance violations, animals running at large, animal abandonment or cruelty, damage to traps, wild animals, violation of quarantine, suspected rabies, and others. The County's Animal Control Ordinance has civil penalty fees for substantiated violations.

Complaint forms are initiated in the office when complaint calls are received at the animal shelter. Animal Control Officers complete these forms as they respond to each call.

When an Officer responds to a complaint about an owned animal, and no one is at home, he/she will leave a door hanger detailing the complaint and a copy of the County's Animal Control Ordinance. If the problem persists, the Officer may cite the owner for violations.

Animal Control Officers may have to euthanize stray, rabid, or vicious animals that may be endangering people at that moment. However, they never euthanize animals in the field until they have exhausted every reasonable effort to capture them.

Service Area: Animal Control – Shelter Operations

Mission

To create and maintain a healthy environment for impounded animals and to assure rabies prevention in the community.

Summary

Shelter operations include shelter management; humane euthanasia of animals that are unwanted, sick or suspected of having rabies; bite investigation; assurance of bite animal confinement and follow-up on confirmed or possible rabies cases, response to animal complaints from the community; reclaim or owned animals and adoption of animals and the provision and maintenance of animal traps for use by the public.

Operations

The County's animal shelter is located at 1370 County Land Road in Randleman, adjacent to the County's solid waste facility. The shelter is open to the public from 9 to 4 Monday through Friday and on special open house dates in the fall.

This shelter was originally built in 1973 and was renovated with a significant addition in 1995. Over the years it has been managed primarily by the Health Department. For a period of time in the 1990's, the Sheriff's Department had responsibility for the animal control program, but it was subsequently determined that the animal control program should revert to the Health Department. Animal shelters operate under rules of the Department of Agriculture.

The shelter staff take in dogs and cats primarily, but occasionally they take possession of a goat, a pig, or some other animal. Some animals are dropped off at the shelter and the rest are picked up by the Animal Control Officers responding to animal complaints from the community. Animals placed in the shelter are kept a minimum of 72 hours. If an animal has an identification tag or a microchip, every attempt is made to locate the owner. If unidentified animals appear to have been owned, they may be kept longer than 72 hours. After 72 hours dogs and cats are evaluated and a determination is made about their temperament and suitability for adoption. The shelter staff work closely with area rescues to place as many animals as possible.

Any animal bites reported from citizens are investigated by animal control staff. The owner must confine his animal for ten days from the date of the bite, and the location of the confinement is up to the discretion of the Health Director. If the owner is directed to take his animal to a veterinarian for confinement and he refuses, the Health Director can seize the animal and confine him at the animal shelter at the owner's expense.

The Randolph County Animal Control Ordinance (attached) provides detailed information on procedures, guidelines, and penalties associated with enforcement of the animal control program in Randolph County.

Service Area: Child Health – Childcare Nurse Consultant

Mission

To provide preventive health services to children enrolled in licensed childcare and Head Start classes in Randolph County.

Summary

This service area provides appropriate public health services to pre-school children and serves as a consultant/liaison. It provides special screenings for disease prevention and assists child cares in meeting immunization and health assessment requirements.

Operations

A nurse visits all the licensed child care centers and child care homes in Randolph County to consult with operators on health and sanitation issues. With written permission from the parents, nurses perform hearing, vision, speech-language, and developmental screenings on children enrolled in these facilities. They also check the immunization records of every child enrolled in child care. If the immunizations are not complete, they assist bringing them up to date. They provide training (CPR, handwashing techniques, safety and sanitation procedures, etc.) and general support to the child care staff.

Service Area: Communicable Disease – Public Health Preparedness and Response

Mission

To protect the public's health through planning for and responding to a possible bioterrorism, communicable disease or natural disaster event in Randolph County.

Summary

Staff prepares and responds to emergencies caused by disasters, terrorist events, communicable disease outbreaks and other public health threats through plan development, training, exercise, and evaluation. Staff receives appropriate training and education in preparedness for and response to bioterrorism, as well as, communicable disease outbreaks, and other public health threats. Plans are exercised at least annually. Staff collaborates and partners with other response agencies such as Emergency Medical Services, fire departments, law enforcement, and others, so that we will be prepared to prevent problems when possible or to react to problems as they occur.

Operations

Primary operations responsibilities involve a Public Health Preparedness Coordinator and a Public Health Preparedness and Response Team. The program coordinator is responsible for planning and coordinating the Health Department's response to public health threats. The Public Health Preparedness and Response Team is a critical component of the means that the Health Department has to respond to public health threats and consists of the Health Director, the Assistant Health Director, the Public Health Preparedness Coordinator, nursing supervisors, nursing staff, a health educator, environmental health supervisors, laboratory staff, administrative staff, and an animal control supervisor. The team deals with preparedness, surveillance, outbreak investigation, and response to disease outbreaks, natural disasters, man-made disasters, and bioterrorism. The team is required to have scheduled meetings quarterly, but generally meet at least twice a quarter and are activated anytime public health threats occur that require investigation, surveillance or response. At regular meetings the team discusses many issues, such as flu clinics, communicable disease outbreaks, Homeland Security grant funds, National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, and develops plans of action in response to various events. They are required to conduct a terrorist response exercise annually.

Service Area: Communicable Disease – Disease Prevention & Control

Mission

To prevent disease through screening, referral, outbreak preparedness, employee safety and infection control and to control disease through screening, proper identification, treatment, follow-up, and implementation of control measures.

Summary

Communicable and some chronic disease screening and referral is provided. Staff prepare for disease outbreaks and public health disasters and work to prevent employee accidents and exposures to communicable disease in the work setting. Disease control provides immunizations, screening, preventive treatment, testing, surveillance, and follow-up for communicable disease.

Operations

Disease Prevention – Clients are screened in the general clinic at the Health Department for a variety of conditions/diseases. Clients will typically receive test results during the same visit. If a problem is found, clients will be referred to a doctor. A few tests are free, but most have a set fee. A current list of charges is available by calling the department.

Disease Control – Screening and testing for communicable disease such as sexually transmitted diseases or tuberculosis are provided in the Health Department, most free of charge, from nurses who have standing orders from the department's medical consultants. The treatment protocols are based on guidelines from the National Center for Disease Control and the State of North Carolina, Communicable Disease Branch. The staff identify and alert contacts of clients that may have been exposed and request that they come in for testing and/or treatment as well. If they have difficulty in getting names of contacts, they can request help from the Communicable Disease Branch. All communicable diseases listed on the state communicable disease report card are to be reported to the Health Department then forwarded to the communicable disease section in Raleigh. Most of these will require follow up by the communicable disease nurse to ensure the clients are aware of their condition, are following control measures if any are necessary, and are receiving proper care from their physician.

The Communicable Disease Division maintains a registry of children born to Randolph County residents and tracks these children up to age two to make sure they are age appropriately immunized. This age group is the State's target population.

Service Area: Dental Health – Clinical Services

Mission

To provide restorative treatment and follow-up for school-age children with dental needs.

Summary

This service area provides clinical treatment, education, and follow-up for children in need.

Operations

Students in Randolph County Schools and Asheboro City Schools receive an oral health screening each year. Those found to have a dental need are referred to their private dentist. Those without a dentist can receive care from the health department or MERCE Dental Care, the local federally qualified health center. To be eligible for the Health Department's dental clinic, clients must be (1) Medicaid eligible, (2) a client of NC Health Choice, or (3) at or below 200% of poverty level (based on a sliding fee scale).

During a child's first visit to the dental clinic, he receives no treatment except for teeth cleaning. The child and his family receive education on oral hygiene, diet, and the like. The child gets an oral hygiene score during this initial visit. On subsequent visits his oral hygiene will be assessed for improvement. If there is no or little improvement, additional education is provided. Also during this initial visit, a treatment plan will be drawn up. The parents must sign that they understand the plan and that they give their consent to treat.

On the second and subsequent visits, the child receives treatment such as fillings, sealants, crowns, or extractions. The Health Department contracts with local dentists to work in the dental clinic. After treatment is completed, the child is seen every six months for follow-up until he graduates or until his family's financial situation changes to make him ineligible. (Financial eligibility is checked at each visit.)

Service Area: Dental Health – Education & Screening

Mission

To screen and refer children found to have dental needs and to educate children and adults how to prevent dental problems and improve dental health.

Summary

Dental Health provides education, screening, and referral for preschool and school-age children (Kindergarten).

Operations

The Dental Hygienist and Dental Assistant go to all the Randolph County Schools and Asheboro City Schools for dental screening and education of all students in kindergarten. During the screenings the Hygienist checks for obvious dental needs and notes if students have received any previous dental treatment, such as fillings, sealants, or extractions. When a dental need is determined, Dental Health will notify the parents by a letter in a sealed envelope that is sent to the school.

The Dental Health staff work with the school nurses, who follow up on letters that are sent to parents by determining which of those students actually received dental treatment. The school nurses keep a record of those receiving treatment and provide that number to the Health Department at the end of the school year. In addition, a school nurse may occasionally refer to Dental Health a high school student who has a particular dental problem.

During the screenings, students receive educational information relating to dental health, such as oral hygiene, diet, and regular visits to the dentist. The Dental Health staff also present educational programs to classrooms at other times.

All the statistics related to dental screening are assimilated into an annual report to the state. Each county gets a child health report card each year. Randolph County's score for dental health (based on access to dental care) has been good.

Service Area: Environmental Health – Food, Lodging & Institutions

Mission

To assure the public of sanitary conditions in foodservice establishments, lodging facilities, and institutions and to eliminate or decrease the spread of communicable disease.

Summary

Staff inspect facilities according to law and post inspection grade cards for public view. They provide education to food handlers on proper technique, investigate complaints and foodborne illness outbreaks, and conduct environmental investigations to determine the source of lead in children who have been reported to have high blood lead levels.

Service Area: Environmental Health – On-site Wastewater & Well Program

Mission

To protect the public health and groundwater through the proper construction, abandonment, and monitoring of private well water supplies and to prevent the spread of disease through the proper treatment and disposal of wastewater.

Summary

This service area permits private well construction, regulates well repair and abandonment, and inspects newly constructed wells. Staff monitor groundwater through well water sampling and educate individuals and the community of the importance of proper well construction and proper treatment and disposal of wastewater. They assist Emergency Services in evaluating the impact of spills on well-water supplies and the local environment, conduct soil evaluations to determine suitability of property for subsurface wastewater treatment and disposal, design and permit subsurface wastewater treatment and disposal systems and inspect final system installations. Aboveground inspections of existing wastewater treatment and disposal systems are conducted before authorizing new connections to these systems. Complaints concerning wastewater are investigated.

Operations

Wastewater – The Health Department is authorized by NC General Statute 130A-333 to oversee non-municipal wastewater systems in the county. Environmental Health works with installation of new septic systems, expansion of existing systems, repair of failing systems, new connection to an existing system, and complaints.

- **Installation of a new septic system**—When installing a new septic system a citizen must first go to Central Permitting in the Planning and Zoning Department to apply for a new septic system. At this time, the applicant is provided written instructions to (1) submit to Environmental Health a site plan showing where the house and the driveway will be and (2) stake off the corners of the property and mark the property lines. Central Permitting forwards the application to Environmental Health. An Environmental Health Specialist will do a site evaluation (including soil and topography) to determine the best location of the septic system and for a 100% repair area.
- **Expansion of an existing system**—When a septic systems need to be expanded the citizen applies for an expansion permit. An environmental health specialist makes a visit to the property to determine if an expansion can be installed within the rules of the program.
- **Repair of a failing system**—A septic system must be repaired when the system is failing. After verification of the problem, Environmental Health mails a written notice of violation by certified mail to the owner or occupant, who has thirty days to have the system repaired. The installer calls Environmental Health for an inspection after repair is completed.
- **New connection to an existing system**—This generally occurs when one mobile home is moved off a lot and another one brought in.

- Complaints—Environmental Health receives many calls from citizens complaining that their neighbors have a problem with their septic system. Either sewage is seeping through the surface and running onto the neighbor’s property or is causing an offensive odor. An Environmental Health Specialist responds to all complaints and takes appropriate action.
- New well inspections— Prior to installing a new well, a citizen must go to Central Permitting to apply for a permit. The application is forwarded to Environmental Health. Generally the location of the well has already been determined by the field staff who were previously on-site to do septic evaluations. The Environmental Health Specialist and Environmental Health Technician working in this program inspect the installation of wells, including the grouting, well seal, air vent, and faucet.
- Mobile Home Park Program—The Randolph County Zoning Ordinance requires that mobile home park owners provide safe, potable, and adequate water supply. Safe is defined as free of bacteria and chemicals that are detrimental to public health. Environmental Health is charged with enforcing these requirements. One employee in Environmental Health does mobile home park inspections twice a year. He has a master file of mobile home parks in Randolph County, which total around 190. While he is checking the water supply in a mobile home park, he also looks for septic system problems and other violations of the zoning ordinance, such as junked vehicles, solid waste issues, or loose animals.

Service Area: Health Education – Community Health

Mission

To organize community resources and provide community education in a manner that allows the greatest impact on multifaceted health problems.

Summary

This service area provides health promotion and disease prevention in the community and promotes the services of the Health Department.

Operations

In 2002 the State initiated a program designed to encourage local health departments to implement public health policy changes in their communities (chronic disease: nutrition, physical activity, substance abuse, etc.). Health departments sign an annual agreement with the State to work on three specified policy changes each year in exchange for the State funding they receive.

Health Educators market Health Department services through presentations, clinics, tours, health fairs, and media publicity. Their audiences include schools, churches, clients of other human services agencies, civic organizations, radio listeners, and others.

The Health Department works with Randolph Hospital to conduct a countywide Community Health Assessment every three years. In between complete assessments, Health Educators complete a “State of the County Health” report to the State each year.

The Health Educator Supervisor serves as media coordinator for the Health Department for matters relating to any emergency management issue involving the media (an outbreak or epidemic, flu shots, any community health issue).

The Health Educators are responsible for ensuring that limited-English-proficiency clients have access to information in their own language and that sight- or hearing-impaired clients are accommodated.

Service Area: WIC/Nutrition – Women Infants & Children

Mission

To provide nutrition services to pregnant women, postpartum women, and infants and children up to age five at nutritional risk.

Summary

This program determines eligibility and certifies clients for nutrition, breastfeeding support and education.