

Community Health Assessments

Community health assessments (CHA's) are countywide assessments, which are conducted by county health departments, and varying county partners that are concerned with the health of their citizens. The focus of each CHA is determinant upon county needs; most are focused on addressing health and wellness barriers that county citizens face. Each county can choose their concentration within their CHA. However, most information that is included concerns the county profile, quality of life issues, environmental health concerns, community health, and emergency preparedness. Some county CHA's choose to involve information on food safety, food security, and local foods. Below are NC resources, which showcase county CHA's along with reports that are focused on nutrition through the incorporation of food safety, food security, and local food practices.

North Carolina CHA Reports

The North Carolina Department for Health and Human Services, has recently compiled all participating counties CHA's into a website <http://publichealth.nc.gov/lhd/cha/reports.asp>. This website features each counties CHA, some include information on food, local foods, food security, and food safety issues. Each county CHA falls within an assessment cycle, meaning that they will conduct a county CHA every 48 months.

Nutrition & Community Health Assessment's (CHA'S)

Most CHA's are limited in their reference to nutrition through the means of food safety, food security or local foods. If nutrition is mentioned in the CHA's it is usually in reference to reducing the obesity burden in each county. Food safety as a means of increasing nutritional access is mentioned in Alamance and Buncombe counties. Caswell, Burke, and Anson County mention food insecurity issues as a barrier to their citizens having adequate nutritional intakes. The CHA's in Lee and Randolph County refer to accessing local farmers markets as a means to reduce obesity, increase nutrition education, reduce diabetes, and address food insecurities.

More in depth information on local foods (barriers and triumphs) as a means to address nutritional needs, will be published in the upcoming years. Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) currently have research underway looking at how communities are affected by local foods, how local food can be increased, and how barriers can be negated. ASAP has begun publishing reports on local food and farm assessments; the results of these assessments are focused on aiding in the development of local food economies. The beginning of ASAP's research on local food and farm assessments can be found at <http://asapconnections.org/local-food-research-center/>

CEFS publication *From Farm to Fork* showcases the importance of investing in local NC food. The report states that, "if all North Carolina residents spent 10 percent of their food dollars on local foods (\$1.05 per day), approximately \$3.5 billion would be available in the local economy every year, and part of that would flow back to farmers and food businesses." Increasing access to and encouraging consumption of fresh, healthy foods are important ways to address disease incidence and health care expenditures, particularly in underserved communities throughout our state. The publication can be found here <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/stateactionguide2010.pdf>