



Cherokee County Community Health Improvement Plan

October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2025





About Cherokee County

Located in the northwest corner of South Carolina, Cherokee County is the 44th largest county in the state by land area and the 24th largest by population with a population density of 140 people/square mile. Anchored by the city of Gaffney – home to the Giant Peach - the county covers 393 square miles. Most of the county is considered rural, with 39% of its area deemed urban or suburban.

Established in 1897 from parts of three existing counties, the county has transitioned several times throughout its history from a productive iron industry in the 1700s and 1800s to railroad construction and agricultural peach crops near the turn of the 20th century. A textile center in the early 1900s, Cherokee County now boasts a diversified manufacturing industry.

There are a total of 56,216 residents in the county, with a growth rate of two percent from 2010. Supporting that growing population, the top industries in Cherokee County are manufacturing, educational services, health, social assistance, and retail trade.

According to 2022 County Health Rankings, Cherokee County ranked 30th out of 46 counties in South Carolina for health factors and 31st in the state for health outcomes (length of life and quality of life).

We believe there is still room for improvement.



We love Cherokee County and want our home to be an even better place for our family, friends and community. We believe that by working together on a shared vision and shared goals, we will be closer to that dream in the year 2025. This Community Health Improvement Plan sets the stage for action.

Won't you join us?

What is a CHIP?

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is a three-year plan of ACTION to make significant progress in specific areas. This CHIP is designed to offer key strategies and direction to improve four areas in Cherokee County, which include: **access to care, behavioral health, chronic health conditions, and resilient children and families.** This document provides goals, strategies, and outcome objectives that will be used by teams to develop detailed implementation plans.

What's ahead for Cherokee County?

Intentional action is what is ahead for Cherokee County.

We support efforts to improve the overall health and well-being of residents living in our county. We would love to come alongside and work with you.

Together, we can achieve health equity.



FOREWORD

Building off the Community Health Needs Assessment

A comprehensive Cherokee County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was completed in 2020. The report examined a wide range of factors and issues impacting health in Cherokee County and was developed using both quantitative data and significant community input through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with residents.

In 2021, a Cherokee County Racial Equity Index (REI) report, which provides a comprehensive analysis of well-being data through the lens of racial equity & community indicators was produced.

In Aug 2022, Ten at the Top, KNOW(2), and South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (SC DHEC) hosted a Cherokee County Data Walk to share state and county-level data, national benchmarks, and a wide range of related health metrics and factors to provide attendees a deeper understanding of the needs and gaps in Cherokee County. Attendees walked from one data station to another, each of which had large posters grouped by category. SC DHEC experts were posted at each station to provide detailed information and to answer questions.

Because no single metric is an adequate reflection of the well-being of a community, multiple measures should be considered across various sectors. Information from the CHNA, REI, and feedback from the Cherokee County Data Walk were used to develop this Community Health Improvement Plan.

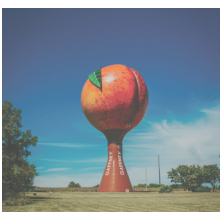
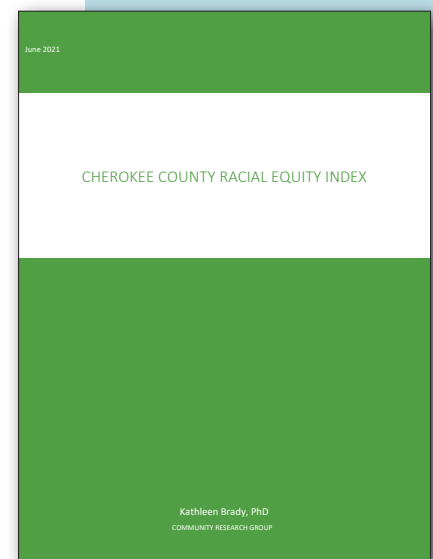
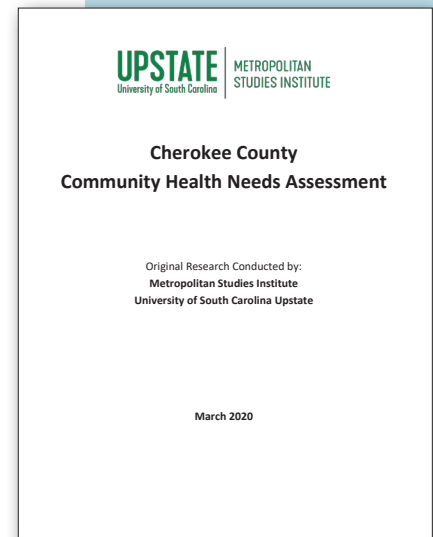
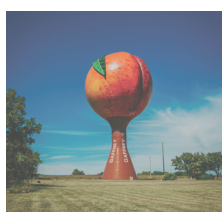


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Mission	5
Access to Care	7
Behavioral Health	10
Chronic Health Conditions	14
Resilient Children and Families	18
Call to Action	21
Acknowledgments	22



OUR MISSION

Cherokee County is building a community where everyone has a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being.

We are identifying and removing the barriers that hinder that goal. We believe collaboration is essential to creating a community of health, so we are connecting the organizations that can make that happen.

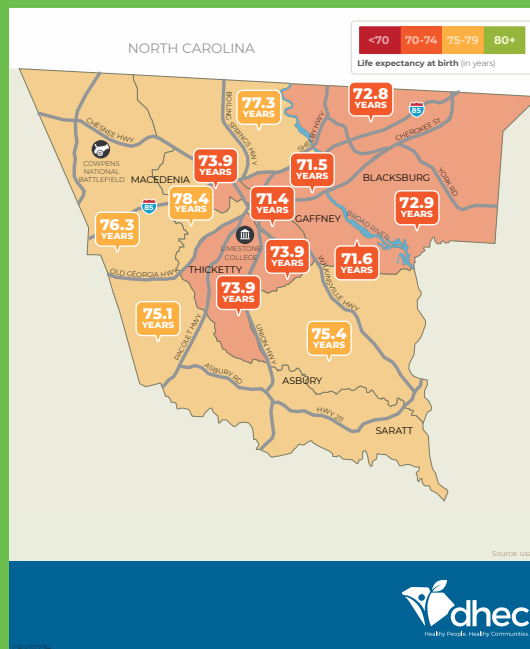
By nurturing those relationships, we can access a deep well of expertise that will identify problems, measure what matters, and catalyze change. So, let's build a community of health — **together**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cherokee County has a wide gap in life expectancy, ranging from 71.5 years for some groups, to 78.4 years for others.

It's a short distance to a wide gap in life expectancy. Let's work to close that gap.

CHEROKEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA



Our Priorities

As identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment, our priorities include:

- Access to Care
- Behavioral Health
- Chronic Health Conditions
- Resilient Children and Families



PRIORITY - ACCESS TO CARE

DEFINITION: The ability to obtain timely, affordable personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes.

THE AIM: Increase access to quality healthcare regardless of insurance status or ability to pay for all Cherokee County residents.

Goal 1

Increase community awareness and utilization of affordable healthcare services and providers.

STRATEGIES

- Expand outreach efforts of health organizations and provider of medical, oral/dental, vision, mental and behavioral health care throughout Cherokee County.
- Promote coordinated communication among safety net providers.



Goal 2

Increase screenings to identify and address barriers to healthcare and health and wellness resources.

STRATEGIES

- Increase number of support positions and volunteers (Community Health Workers, Community Resources Coordinators, Neighborhood Ambassadors, etc.) available to complete screenings and provide education about and connection to resources.



ACCESS TO CARE

Goal 3

Increase points of access to integrated health services throughout Cherokee County.

STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with community partners to establish mobile clinic sites.
- Coordinate with community partners to increase access to transportation.
- Coordinate with community partners to increase access to quality translation and interpretation services.

OUTCOME OBJECTIVES:

- Decrease the number of Cherokee County residents that delay care due to cost.
- Increase the number of Cherokee County residents connected to primary care.
- Decrease the percentage of non-emergent hospital visits in Cherokee County.

DID YOU KNOW?

Lack of transportation was one of the top barriers to accessing medical care and other resources identified by Cherokee County residents?

Source: 2020 Cherokee County Community Health Needs Assessment



ACCESS TO CARE

Bringing Care to Communities

Access to Care Bright Spot

A common barrier to accessing health care is lack of transportation. ReGenesis Health Care is addressing this barrier with two new services, a Mobile Medical Center, and a fleet of vehicles to provide our patients transportation to appointments.

Mobile Medical Center

A 36-foot customized trailer, equipped to provide medical and dental care, and mental health counseling for patients aged two and up, our Mobile Medical Center has enabled us to provide health screenings and vaccines to dozens of businesses and at community locations throughout our service area of Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union counties. We have also reached hundreds of agricultural farm workers who might not have received care otherwise.



Patient Transportation

In early 2022, we strengthened our transportation program and now have the capacity to offer full time, non-emergency transportation services to any ReGenesis Health Care patient in need of transportation to medical or specialist appointments. We ask for at least 24-hour notice and strive to ensure all requests can be accommodated. There is no charge for this service.



We consider these services “**Care in Motion**”.

– Provided by ReGenesis Health Care

ACCESS TO CARE



PRIORITY - BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

DEFINITION: Behavioral health describes the connection between behaviors and the health and well-being of the body, mind, and spirit, and includes both mental health, mental illness, substance use, and disorders.

- **Mental health** includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
- **Mental illness** is a behavioral or mental pattern that causes significant distress or impairment of personal functioning.
- **Substance use** is the continued use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs with negative consequences.

THE AIM: Ensure all Cherokee County residents have access to quality mental and behavioral health services and resources.

Goal 1

Coordinate with partners to share information about crisis mental and behavioral health resources.

STRATEGIES

- With partners, host community-wide events promoting mental and behavioral health awareness and resources.
- Share information about relevant resources through schools, businesses, and public buildings.

Goal 2

Increase access to mental and behavioral health care and resources for youth.

STRATEGIES

- Expand partnerships with schools to raise awareness and provide support and resources.
- Support awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Goal 3

Reduce substance use in Cherokee County.

STRATEGIES

- Promote campaigns to increase awareness about substance use treatment.
- Expand prevention education in schools and through youth-serving organizations.

OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Decrease the number of deaths by suicide in Cherokee County.
- Decrease the number of overdose deaths in Cherokee County.
- Decrease the number of poor mental health days reported by Cherokee County residents.

DID YOU KNOW?

In Cherokee County, the rate of deaths by suicide are higher than the state.

Source: SC DHEC Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, 2015-2020; SC DHEC Vital Statistics, 2011-2020.



Bringing Mental Health Help to Local Schools

Behavioral Health Bright Spot

Thrive-U

Thrive-U was developed by educators in response to feedback from Cherokee County youth about their experiences in the education system. With the mission to humanize education and with the added complications of the COVID-19 pandemic, Thrive-U provided youth a platform to connect virtually with peers and adults.



A spin-off of the well-established FIT2gether collective, Thrive-U focused on providing support and highlighting the struggles—particularly related to mental and behavioral health issues—which so many were facing. Unable to participate in school activities and feeling disconnected from friends and trusted adults, Thrive-U members focused on connecting with each other virtually to highlight youth voice, youth empowerment and healthy decision making.



In May 2021 the group hosted a virtual event on social media called the **Thrive-U Community State of Young People Summit** and another event for parents. More than 500 people participated. The discussions were so successful that students have shared information about the experience and about the needs and concerns expressed through panel discussions and at local board meetings.

– Provided by Thrive-U

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



Bringing Mental Health Help to Local Schools

Behavioral Health Bright Spot

Expansion of Mental Health Services

Cherokee County School District responded to the increased need for mental and behavioral health services by adding partnerships with local providers. The Cherokee Mental Health Center Has long provided school-based mental health services, but the need was greater than one agency could deliver. Partnerships were established with ReGenesis Health Care and Innovation Counseling Services to expand capacity and to increase access for students and staff on site. Having therapists in schools has increased access to mental health services and removed transportation barriers for students and families. These partnerships are currently serving approximately 200 students, with that number growing consistently.



– Provided by Thrive-U



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



PRIORITY - CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

DEFINITION: Chronic health conditions are conditions that last one year or more and require ongoing medical attention, and/or limit activities of daily living.

THE AIM: Partners take action to promote healthy lifestyles and environments that prevent chronic health conditions in Cherokee County.

Goal 1

Increase participation in Healthy Eating/Active Living (HE/AL) programming in schools, faith-based communities, and youth-serving organizations.

STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with community partners to introduce and promote events that encourage active living.



Goal 2

Increase policy, systems, and environmental approaches that support health behaviors.

STRATEGIES

- Promote development of Cherokee County trails system.
- Increase the adoption of healthy food policies in businesses, organizations, and public buildings.



Goal 3

Increase access to and utilization of services and resources to prevent, and improve treatment and control of chronic health conditions.

STRATEGIES

- Increase access to and number of quality preventive screening opportunities across the county.
- Increase access to and participation in chronic-disease management programs for Cherokee County residents.



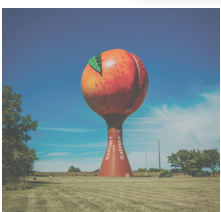
OUTCOME OBJECTIVES:

- Decrease the rate of obesity in Cherokee County.
- Decrease the rate of hypertension in Cherokee County.
- Increase percentage of Cherokee County residents who get the recommended amount of physical activity.

DID YOU KNOW?

The overweight and obesity rates for Cherokee County primary school students are 37.2% for 1st graders, 44.1% for 3rd graders, and 47.0% for 5th graders.

Source: SC DHEC BMI Project



PAVE (Partnering for Vaccine Equity) Promotes Teamwork Chronic Health Conditions Bright Spot

As COVID-19 vaccination appointments began to roll out, many Cherokee County seniors found the sign-up process cumbersome and difficult. Community advocates also noticed members of the Black community were experiencing concerns and hesitations about the COVID-19 vaccine.

While DHEC's new centralized online system was improving the process, community members Dr. Carol McFadden and Christina Cody began mobilizing their networks to identify seniors in need of assistance.

The Neighborhood Ambassadors, a task force coordinated by Dr. McFadden, reach a broad base of the community, mostly in low-income areas of risk. They have built trusting relationships in the community, helping where needed and inspiring adults and children.



Working alongside the Neighborhood Ambassadors, Dr. McFadden has become the trusted voice in that community carrying messages forward about vaccines and vaccine safety. By publicizing the shots she received, there has been a significant boost in vaccine acceptance within her community.

Christina Cody is Cherokee County School's Districts Project Lead for a student-driven initiative designed to affect positive health outcomes through empowerment and action. Also a well-known advocate in the community, she assisted Dr. McFadden in helping folks through the sign-up system, following up to confirm appointment times, and ensuring that transportation was in place. The Neighborhood Ambassadors stood by on hand to help as needed.

The Upstate Region viewed the vaccination process as an opportunity to develop new partnerships and leverage available resources through teamwork and community engagement.

– Provided by Upstate DHEC Partnering for Vaccine Equity (PAVE)



FoodShare Cherokee Provides Fresh, Affordable Food Chronic Health Conditions Bright Spot

FoodShare Cherokee started operations in April 2021 and is one of 20 hubs in the FoodShare SC network. FoodShare Cherokee produces a fresh Food box every two weeks which contains 9-12 fresh produce items and weighs 15-20 pounds. To date, this hub has produced over 3,000 Fresh Food boxes, which has placed more than 52,000 pounds of fresh, healthy, affordable food into the community.

The Fresh Food box costs SNAP-EBT recipients \$5 on their card, and cash customers pay \$15. The program is open to all — orders simply must be placed by Friday on the week before delivery. The Fresh Food Box program addresses healthier eating by making fresh produce affordable and easily accessible. It also eases food insecurity by allowing SNAP-EBT customers access to fresh produce at greatly reduced prices.

FoodShare Cherokee is unique among the hubs in that we have partnered with the Cherokee County School District to develop and implement the program. Students at the Ola Copeland Academy, the local alternative school, pack the Fresh Food boxes during the school year. Their participation encourages the development of real-life skills and reinforces academic skills, such as practical math. In the summer months, volunteers from the community get the opportunity to pack the boxes and learn first-hand about how the program works. Cherokee



Cherokee Medical Center employees packed FreshFood boxes this summer.

Medical Center staff

packed boxes twice during the summer of 2022 and have recently joined the FoodShare network as a partner site, so that employees can order boxes at work and have them delivered to the hospital.

– Provided by FoodShare Cherokee/KNOW(2)



PRIORITY - RESILIENT CHILDREN & FAMILIES

DEFINITION:

Resilient children and families have the necessary skills to respond to stressful life circumstances and thrive.

THE AIM: Build resilience in Cherokee County's children and families through safe and supportive environments and evidence-based resources.

Goal 1

Increase access to resources and activities that build resilience.

STRATEGIES

- Increase access to quality childcare and after school care.
- Advocate for added evidence-based programs to be implemented in schools, the faith-based communities, and community organizations.



Goal 2

Increase education to prevent and address domestic violence and sexual assault.

STRATEGIES

- Coordinate with community partners to introduce and promote evidence-based violence prevention programs.



RESILIENT CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Goal 3

Increase access for youth-serving professionals to receive training on evidence-based screenings and interventions that build resilience and improve health and well-being of children and families.

STRATEGIES

- Encourage school personnel, medical providers, and faith communities to participate in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training.
- Provide trauma-informed care resources to community partners.

OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Decrease rate of teen pregnancy in Cherokee County.
- Increase high school graduation rate in Cherokee County.

DID YOU KNOW?

Children who are exposed to ACEs have health outcomes linked to issues such as increased risky behaviors, chronic health conditions, suicide attempts and teenage pregnancy.



Fit2Gether Creates Youth-Led Change Agents

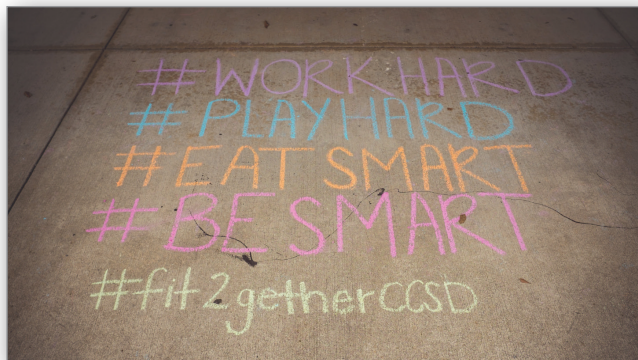
Resilient Children & Families Bright Spot

FIT2Gether is a student-driven initiative designed to catalyze a culture of health through empowerment and collective action. Started during the 2014-15 school year, the group has raised more than \$800,000 through local, state, and national grants and private funding to support wellness efforts throughout Cherokee County to date.

Teams of students called “Change Agents” are working in each of the Cherokee County School District schools to identify barriers to health and well-being. They then work to address those barriers by designing solutions to make healthier school environments - inside and out!

For solutions that require funding, such as new playground equipment and recreational facilities, students help to research and write grants.

When grants or other funds are awarded, the Change Agents are responsible for planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project(s).



Not all initiatives have a big price tag. Morning programs to promote physical activities have been added at some schools, and Change Agents initiated a collaboration with Cherokee County School District Food Services to incorporate a wider range of healthy options on the school cafeteria menus.

More than 300 students have served as Change Agents in their schools and community. They are learning valuable leadership skills and improving health and well-being not only for themselves, but for their friends and families, teachers and school staff, and their community at large.

– Provided by FIT2Gether

RESILIENT CHILDREN & FAMILIES



Now the real work begins.

This is a three-year Community Health Improvement Plan. Not a six-month plan or even a one-year plan. It's easy to get started...just follow these steps.

1. Pick a priority you would like to support.
2. Review the strategies and see which one you can help with.
3. Get with a small group, with the help of Cherokee County leadership, and put together an implementation plan. Just start with the first 90 days.
4. Meet every 90 days to share progress, identify roadblocks and barriers, and then plan the next 90 days. **We will be on our way to success!**

90-DAY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR _____		PRIORITY _____
Milestone Accomplishment _____		
Start Date: _____	Strategy we are focusing on: _____	
End Date: _____		
Implementation Steps	When	Who
<div>Our very first step will be:</div> <div>We will achieve victory in 90 days, when THIS happens:</div>		
	Team Members and Collaborators:	Budget/Resources Needed:

CALL TO ACTION



This Community Health Improvement Plan would not be possible without the support and cooperation of our public and private partners.

Community/Collaborating Partners

AccessHealth
Cherokee County Commission on
Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Cherokee County Family YMCA
Cherokee County First Steps &
Talk To Me
Cherokee County Public Library
Cherokee County School District
Cherokee County Services to the
Aging
Cherokee Medical Center
Cherokee Mental Health Center
Church of the Incarnation
City of Gaffney
Clemson SNAP-Ed
Concord Baptist Church
FoodShare Cherokee
Free Medical Clinic of
Cherokee County
Gaffney Housing Authority
Gaffney Ledger
Hamrick Mills
Healthy U
Innovations Counseling Services

Iron City Ministries
KNOW(2)
Limestone University
Meals on Wheels
Mission Grace
Neighborhood Ambassadors
Peachtree Ministries
ReGenesis Health Care
SC Department of Health and
Environmental Control
Salvation Army & Soup Kitchen
Spartanburg Community College
Spartanburg Regional
Healthcare System
Ten at the Top
The Fullerton Foundation
Thickety Mountain Baptist
Association
United Way of the Piedmont
Upstate Workforce Board
Vitality Chiropractic
Wholespire Cherokee
Veterans Affairs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**For more information or to find out how you or
your organization can get involved, contact:**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS





Let's build a community of health - **together.**

