

RANDOLPH COUNTY



Public Health

Annual Report 2021

Randolph County Public Health FY2020-21 Annual Report

When reflecting on Fiscal Year 2020-21, positive cases, contact tracing, isolation and quarantine, updated guidance, executive orders, vaccine availability, appointment line, face coverings, teleworking, limited clinic services, teamwork, and staff departures/retirements are a few things that come to mind. For much of the year, members of the public health team continued COVID-19 response in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). As vaccine became readily available, the team shifted gears, transitioned case investigation to the Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative (CCTC), de-escalated the EOC, and returned to the main public health facility to provide vaccine support and resume other public health related duties.

COVID-19 continued to greatly impact “normal” department services during the first half of the year. Many programs temporarily scaled back services or provided services remotely to reduce the risk of acquiring or spreading the virus. A wide variety of staff assisted with COVID-19 vaccine clinic operations, also reducing the number of staff available to provide the usual public health clinical services. As the year progressed, program services gradually increased to serve more clients and better meet the needs of the community.

The year not only brought COVID-related changes but staffing changes as well. During Fiscal Year 2020-21, a total of 18 team members left Randolph County Public Health (RCPH). Five of those team members retired from long careers at RCPH. The majority left for other job opportunities or as a result of burnout from the stress of the COVID pandemic. Even with these changes, the RCPH team remains a strong, resilient team that is dedicated to doing the best job possible to serve Randolph County citizens.

Childcare Health Consultant

The childcare health consultant was dedicated to supporting childcare facilities with COVID-19 guidance to maintain a safe and healthy environment for staff, children, and families. The consultant ensured facilities were implementing best practices provided by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) toolkit for childcare facilities. As guidance changed, the consultant followed up with facilities to ensure they were aware of any required modifications.

Along with providing support related to current guidance, the consultant helped facilities regarding isolation and quarantine. If a child or staff member tested positive, reported exposure, or developed symptoms, the consultant would determine who needed to quarantine or isolate and length of time. Additionally, information regarding cleaning and disinfecting was shared. When it was safe to visit facilities, the consultant observed and reinforced proper sanitation practices. Childcare owners reported feeling grateful for the support and encouragement through such a difficult time.



Care Coordination for Children / Pregnancy Care Management

Care Coordination for Children (CC4C) and Pregnancy Care Management (OBCM) case management programs started the fiscal year with staff working remotely until mid-August. Per NCDHHS guidelines, staff provided services over the phone until June 2021.

Staff prepared for Medicaid transformation by participating in various training sessions provided by NCDHHS. The staff became familiar with the various prepaid health plans approved by the state for individuals receiving insurance coverage through Medicaid. In addition, they reviewed the new benchmarks set by NCDHHS. The staff kept donations on hand to provide support for families. Donations included formula, baby clothing, diapers, wipes, food, and pack 'n plays.

CC4C and OBCM staff were critical in supporting the department's emergency response efforts during the pandemic. Despite experiencing staff shortages, they assisted with screening patients at the department entrance and participated in vaccine clinics onsite as well as offsite.

Communicable Disease

At the beginning of the fiscal year, the communicable disease staff was faced with rising COVID-19 cases. In the midst of the pandemic, staff also managed two tuberculosis (TB) investigations and rising hepatitis A cases. NC DHHS has identified high-risk groups that may acquire the disease which includes men who engage in sex with men, people who are homeless, and people who use drugs. To educate the community on disease transmission and provide prevention tools, department staff assembled 1,025 kits containing hepatitis A information, hand sanitizer, and safe sex supplies. These kits were shared with community partners that serve high-risk groups for distribution. Clinical staff provided vaccines at Shelter of Hope. In addition, the health department ordered a vaccine refrigerator for Randolph County Detention Center to allow their medical provider staff to offer hepatitis A vaccine on intake of detainees. COVID-19 response and construction delayed the transfer of the refrigerator and initiation of hepatitis A vaccine administration.

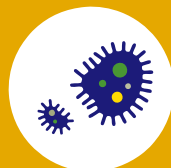
Per general statute, there are a large number of communicable diseases that are required to be reported to local health departments. Due to the pandemic, communicable disease rates were significantly different in some respects. Gonorrhea cases were much higher than the previous year. In addition, there was an increase in syphilis cases. Reported pertussis and salmonella cases were significantly lower than previous years.

General statute also requires all animal bites and rabies exposures to be investigated by public health. While Randolph County Animal Services became an independent department in 2019, RCPH continued to collaborate with the staff on reported animal bites, rabies exposure investigations, and coordinating countywide rabies vaccine clinics.

During the pandemic, clinic staff offered some no cost COVID-19 testing for the community. In late December 2020, clinical staff transitioned to providing COVID-19 vaccines. The clinics were operated daily utilizing a drive-through model. To accommodate the demand for testing and vaccines, general clinic services were reduced to two days a week. To limit contact between staff and clients, phone visits were offered to provide essential services to clients. To ensure access to care, clients in need of an evaluation for sexually transmitted infections were referred to partner medical clinics. Clinic was faced with challenges such as staff turnover and absences due to isolation and quarantine. Despite all challenges, clinic staff rallied to meet the needs of Randolph County citizens with a smile.

Communicable Disease Control July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

- Hepatitis A cases increased 3,133%
- Gonorrhea cases increased 41%
- Syphilis cases increased 125%
- Pertussis cases decreased 700%



Immunizations

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

- 1,862 total immunizations were given to 863 individuals
- 1,314 total immunizations were given to 446 children and adolescents under 18 years of age
- Influenza vaccines administered – 449
- Hepatitis A vaccines administered – 103
- Rabies pre-exposure vaccines administered – 40



Clinic Lab

During FY2020-21, the laboratory manager performed Hazard Communication training with 81 public health staff to meet Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA) standards while COVID-19 was still progressing in our county.

Beginning August 21, 2020, mass COVID-19 specimen collection clinics were held at RCPH on Fridays, 7:00-11:00 am. These clinics operated through December 4, 2020. Nasopharyngeal specimens were collected by the nursing staff and were shipped to the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (NCSLPH) to test for COVID-19. A total of 734 specimens were tested during this time frame. Also, during this period, 189 specimens were collected for Randolph County employees/others screened for COVID-19.

November 2020 through February 2021, the RCPH laboratory manager collaborated with Randolph County Detention Center to process and ship 2,809 specimens to NCSLPH to test for COVID-19. In late February, the state lab provided support by allowing detention center staff to order their own collection supplies and ship specimens directly to NCSLPH. Collaboration was critical to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among staff and detainees.

With the focus of the year being on COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, there was a reduced number of other specimens collected and shipped for testing. On average, the lab reflected a 50% reduced number of blood lead and sexually transmitted infection sample collection.

Dental Health

At the beginning of FY2020-21, the dental clinic resumed services with safety precautions in place. Appointments were spread out and staff continued to implement best practices for infection control when seeing patients. Dr. Mustafa reported a steady increase over time of patients returning for regular dental care.

In addition, the dental clinic collaborated with school nurses to provide dental screenings in schools. However, COVID-19 restrictions delayed the scheduled screenings. Randolph County School System (RCSS) allowed the dental staff on-site beginning in February 2021 to complete the initial dental screenings and follow-up visits. While the projected number of screenings was lower than expected due to remote learning and student absences, Dr. Mustafa reported a significant increase in tooth decay among children.

The dental clinic received a Duke Endowment/Blue Cross Blue Shield School-Based Oral Health grant totaling \$65,000. The grant purchased new electronic health record software to improve reporting and manage patient treatment outcomes. A second Duke Endowment grant was awarded totaling \$375,000 to span two years. The grant will fund school-based oral care to eligible students in Asheboro City Schools and RCSS. The project is anticipated to begin in fall 2021 provided dental equipment and supplies are available and COVID-19 metrics have improved.

Additionally, our dentist and dental hygienist completed the North Carolina Dental Public Health Leadership Institute program. The leadership program consists of a 10-month mentoring and leadership program. The program supports peer-networking, learning adaptive leadership, advocacy, and practice management. These intentional efforts expanded the skills of our team and strengthened our dental program.

Dental

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

- Patients seen for dental emergencies – 176
- Patients seen for routine dental care – 326
- Adult patients – 334
- Pediatric patients – 661
- New patients enrolled – 113



Vital Records Processed July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

- 1,327– Death Certificates
- 639– Birth Certificates



Family Planning

As COVID-19 response expanded, more team members were mobilized to provide support. This included clinic staff dedicated to family planning services. From November 2020 to May 2021, family planning services included addressing immediate birth control needs and provided limited evaluations as needed. The program served 568 clients during FY2020-21 which was a 24% decrease from the previous year.

Environmental Health Food and Lodging

Due to COVID-19, the food and lodging staff continued to operate under reduced inspection frequencies during FY2020-21. These reduced frequencies were put in place to account for time staff spent providing support for COVID-19 response. Food and lodging staff were critical in the broader response by assisting with COVID-19 vaccine clinics in various capacities. In addition, food and lodging staff were responsible for responding to a higher volume of complaints. Many of those complaints were directly related to lack of compliance with COVID-19 mandates in regulated facilities.

The food and lodging staff also continued participation in the Food and Drug Administration National Retail Food Regulatory Standards. The previous year, the department was awarded a \$14,000 grant to participate in the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Mentorship Program to work on Standard 9 of the program standards. During the grant period, RCPH created a handwashing campaign that included handouts and videos to educate restaurant operators and employees.



During the first half of year, the health education team remained in the EOC. With an interdisciplinary team, the staff manned COVID-19 hotlines and supported case investigation. Health education staff diligently worked to combat misinformation regarding the pandemic and to provide the public with reliable, trustworthy information while also handling complaints coming into the hotline.

Two new staff were hired, a bilingual public health educator and a public health education and outreach support specialist. Both of these positions were instrumental in providing dependable and consistent communication to county residents. In January 2021, health education staff began answering the vaccine appointment line and scheduling appointments.

In May and June 2021, RCPH participated in the Bring Summer Back campaign. This campaign was created by NC DHHS in an effort to help organizations and individuals in North Carolina stop the spread of COVID-19 by urging friends and neighbors to get vaccinated. Health education staff worked with consultants from two different media platforms to promote the campaign. In addition, the staff worked with community partners to record videos for social media. There were 11 videos recorded with approximately 35 partners. The team was an essential part of COVID-19 response throughout the year.

Environmental Health Groundwater and Onsite Wastewater

The Onsite Wastewater and Groundwater (OSWW) staff continued to serve clients throughout the pandemic. A new process was developed for receiving and processing applications to accommodate limited access to in-person services. Staff issued 1,264 wastewater permits which included 387 improvement permits, 491 construction authorizations, and 386 operation permits.

Well program services remained stable as well. Staff issued 325 well permits which included new, repair and abandonment permits. Staff conducted 414 grouting inspections. These inspections ensure that wells are constructed to the most current standards. In addition to well permits and inspections, water samples are offered and collected for all newly constructed wells and per citizen request. A total of 122 water samples were collected per citizen request and sent to the NCSLPH for analysis.

The pandemic affected other program areas overseen by OSWW including public swimming pools and lead investigations. There was a reduced number of pool permits issued and annual inspections due to pool closures. Fifty-three pools were permitted. The state issued a temporary cessation of lead investigations. Once lead inspection protocol was reinstated, the staff inspected three dwellings. The number of permitted tattoo artists remained consistent throughout FY2020-21.

OSWW staff also played a critical role in COVID-19 response. Rotating with food and lodging staff, they assisted when RCPH hosted vaccine clinics in various capacities. Additionally, the staff provided pool operators and tattoo establishments guidance on safe operation during this time.

Health Education

WIC

As FY2020-21 began, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program experienced a leadership change. With the previous director retiring, Jodi Meier was selected to lead the program as the new director. In addition, a new nutritionist joined the team. The team also has three bilingual staff which are helpful in supporting Spanish-speaking families. Due to COVID, staff worked remotely on a rotating schedule for the majority of the year.

Throughout the year, WIC operated on numerous waivers approved by the federal and state governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One waiver suspended the requirement for in-person services which allowed flexibility for families. However, shifting to all communications by phone limited staff's opportunity to conduct nutrition assessments with required measures. Typically, WIC staff measure height, weight, and iron levels of children/mothers participating in the program. In addition to program enrollments and communications being conducted by phone, the breastfeeding peer counselor also provided support services by phone. The team also supported COVID-19 response by providing phone support to health department staff.

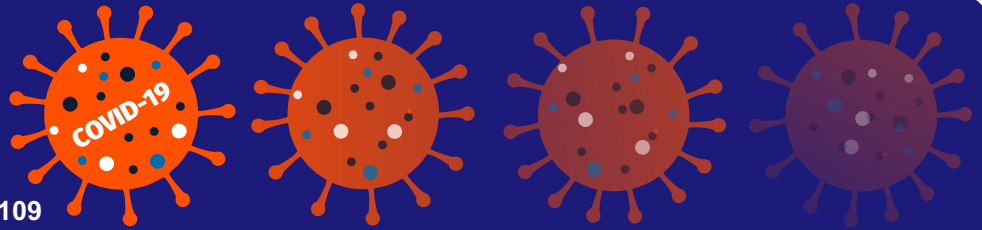
Additionally, the state WIC office began automatically issuing food benefits to certified WIC participants who missed appointments. This policy ensured WIC participants continued to receive WIC foods, but also reduced communications. Nutritionists were unable to accurately determine how many individuals were actively participating in the program. Despite the challenges, the team maintained a positive attitude and adapted rapidly to evolving procedures.



COVID-19

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

- Laboratory confirmed cases – 9,219
- Probable cases – 4,743
- Associated deaths – 176
- COVID-19 vaccines administered – 29,109



RCPH Revenues

Program	FY2021	FY2020
County Appropriations	\$2,105,044.71 (33%)	\$2,520,701.95 (44%)
Federal & State Grants	\$2,386,406.92 (38%)	\$1,555,530.48 (27%)
Fees & Fee Reimbursements	\$1,685,015.95 (27%)	\$1,490,740.08 (26%)
Other Revenues	\$146,451.20 (2%)	\$127,866.46 (2%)

RCPH Expenses

Program	FY2021	FY2020
Administration	\$982,476.94 (15%)	\$852,209.03 (15%)
Child Health/Smart Start	\$78,727.52 (1%)	\$85,920.57 (2%)
Care Management for At-Risk Children	\$263,887.87 (4%)	\$295,347.39 (5%)
School Nurse	\$250,000.00 (4%)	\$250,000 (4%)
Communicable Disease/COVID	\$1,688,435.30 (27%)	\$683,662.43 (12%)
Dental Health	\$419,084.84 (7%)	\$289,761.68 (5%)
Environmental Health	\$996,081.16 (16%)	\$981,068.20 (17%)
Health Education	\$164,587.93 (3%)	\$194,145.79 (3%)
WIC	\$594,843.59 (9%)	\$673,634.51 (12%)
Family Planning	\$617,771.22 (10%)	\$743,252.33 (13%)
Care Management for High-Risk Pregnancies	\$267,022.41 (4%)	\$331,844.81 (6%)

Public Health Preparedness

Due to the ongoing pandemic, designated staff were located in the EOC at Randolph County Emergency Services Headquarters for most of the year. From the EOC, an interdisciplinary team monitored the COVID-19 situation within the county. As cases increased, and upon the request of RCPH, Community Care of NC assigned CCTC staff to join the team in the EOC to assist with case investigation and contact tracing. In late December 2020, vaccine clinics were established at RCPH to offer vaccines at no cost to the community.

In January 2021, as RCPH staff shifted focus to vaccine administration, CCTC staff assumed case investigation, contact tracing and the identification of and linkage to clusters. In February 2021, the EOC was scaled back and staff relocated their work to their respective offices. In May 2021, RCPH entered into an agreement with On Target Preparedness (OTP). OTP provided Public Health Preparedness Program assistance and ensured that all program requirements were met.

Throughout the year, RCPH staff worked closely with community partners and businesses to provide COVID-19 guidance on best practices and ensure access to vaccines. The department hosted vaccine clinics onsite as well as offsite. In addition, teams provided support for COVID-19 information and vaccine hotlines. Collaboration was key to keeping Randolph County citizens well informed and safe.



COVID-19 Response in Randolph County (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

- August 2020 – Offered testing events at RCPH
- August 2020 – Partnered with StarMed to offer testing events
- November 2020 – Sponsored a billboard campaign supporting wearing masks
- December 30, 2020 – RCPH partnered with Emergency Services to hold a closed point of dispensing (POD) to administer vaccines to first responders and RCPH staff
- January 2021 – RCPH began scheduling vaccine appointments
- FY2020-21 a total of 29,109 vaccines administered (14,775 first doses; 14,334 second doses)
- January 4, 2021 – CCTC began overseeing case management
- February 3, 2021 – EOC de-escalated
- March 2021 – Resumed limited health department clinic services
- May 2021 Partnered with school systems to administer vaccine to students and staff
- May 2021 – Launched Bring Summer Back campaign
- EOC operations:
 - Case management – all positive cases contacted and interviewed
 - Provided isolation and quarantine instructions
 - Disseminated new and updated guidance from NCDHHS with providers, businesses, schools, restaurants, various other entities as it became available
 - Contacted/consulted with businesses regarding positive cases and close contacts
 - Compiled information and data for situation report, Facebook and public health website
 - Issued press releases and public service announcements
 - Responded to Executive Order complaints about noncompliance
 - Had designated points of contact for long-term care facilities, childcare centers, detention center, courthouse, schools, business, restaurants, faith-based organizations, major industries, local housing authority, etc.
 - Continued efforts to expand COVID-19 diagnostic testing in Randolph County
 - Assembled/provided resources for those in need (groceries, lodging, diapers, etc.)