

Chapter 9: Assessment of the Aging Population and African Americans in Rockingham County

Rockingham County Healthy Carolinians and the Rockingham County Department of Public Health collaborated with the Department of Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to bring two graduate teams to Rockingham County. During 2007 and 2008, graduate teams worked with Rockingham County Seniors and Rockingham County African Americans to facilitate an Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis (AOCD). The AOCD process provided an in-depth community assessment for both populations. Each AOCD team spent two semesters with the community attending local church services, social events and interviewing community members. Major strengths and concerns were identified for each community from information collected from three different sources: community interviews, focus groups, and existing public data. Community Forums were convened for Rockingham County Seniors in April 2007 and for Rockingham County African Americans in April 2008. During each forum, AOCD teams presented the top five community concerns, and also presented major strengths. During the forum, community members divided into small groups to brainstorm possible solutions for concerns that had been identified during the AOCD process. Each AOCD team compiled a complete report of major findings, disseminated the report throughout the county, and then placed the report on the webpage of UNC School of Public Health. Executive summaries of each assessment are provided below, and complete reports are available online at www.hsl.unc.edu/Phpapers/phpapers.cfm

Rockingham County Seniors

The Rockingham County Senior Community Assessment project was conducted from October 2006 through April 2007 by a five-member student team from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Public Health, Department of Health Behavior and Health Education. The student team worked under the guidance of two preceptors from the Rockingham County Department of Public Health who assisted the team throughout the duration of the project. The Rockingham County Senior Community Assessment (RCSCA) was conducted using a health education tool known as Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis (AOCD) (Eng, 1991). The AOCD process addresses a wide variety of factors in the community that contribute to health, such as social and economic factors as well as community dynamics, with the goal of generating community-owned action steps for positive change (Shirah, 2006).

This report presents a synthesis of the multiple steps taken in completion of the RCSCA, beginning with collection and analysis of secondary data that provided an overview of what life was like for seniors in the community. Getting to know the community, or “gaining entrée” to the community itself, was an ongoing process that began with a county tour and continued with team attendance at important community meetings and events. The team also collected primary data through interviews and focus groups with 16 local service providers and 22 community members, who possessed a broad knowledge of community functioning. From this data, the team identified four community strengths and ten community challenges. The

strengths were family and senior relationships, religion, caring community, and an abundance of resources available for seniors. The prioritized challenges, listed below as theme, or summary, statements, included awareness of services, Alzheimer's and dementia, transportation, the insurance gap, and streamlining services. Findings were presented to the community through the Rockingham County Senior Community Forum, held on April 20, 2007. Topics explored in-depth were based on identified challenges. The forum marked the end of the student team's work in Rockingham County and was primarily intended to transfer ownership of findings to the community. Specific action steps for change were generated through a discussion of important themes selected by the Forum Planning Committee:

Theme 1: Awareness of Services – Seniors are often unaware of the services and events that are available to them throughout the county.

Action Steps

- Initiate a letter writing campaign, working with the Council on Aging and potentially the News and Record, to help make the needs and desires of seniors known
- Contact Home Healthcare and Caregivers of Rockingham County as a way of spreading awareness to homebound seniors
- Contact ministerial groups of Eden and Reidsville to investigate working with church groups to increase service awareness

Theme 2: Alzheimer's and Dementia –Although the county offers some mental health services, adequate care does not exist for the growing concerns surrounding Alzheimer's and dementia among seniors and support for their families.

Action Steps

- Heavily advertise an upcoming information session at the Carolina House of Reidsville for those affected by and those interested in learning more about Alzheimer's
- Acquire a list of county services and distribute at nutrition sites and senior events, specifically the Senior Games, to educate Rockingham County community members about the services that are currently offered in the county for seniors.

Theme 3: Transportation – Given Rockingham County's geographic layout and the shortage of consistent, low-cost transportation, seniors have difficulty using transportation to access services and activities.

Action Steps

- Include information on available transportation options/rates for seniors from Council on Aging transportation services in the next Center for Active Retirement newsletter
- Attend and present information about available transportation options at upcoming meetings with both the Service Providers Network and the Rockingham County Planning Meeting for Services to the Elderly
- Call WLOE about a potential radio spot to discuss transportation
- Investigate potential advertising options for transportation services in local utility bills

- Contact local newspapers and churches to post transportation information in their bulletins
- Help create flyers to be distributed to advertise Council on Aging transportation services
- Contact the Council on Aging to get information on their transportation services to discuss collaboration options

Theme 4: Insurance Gap – Due to age and income restrictions for current health insurance options, seniors may fall into a gap where they do not have sufficient health insurance to cover medical costs.

Action Steps

- Take this theme to the Rockingham Senior Service Providers meeting
- Create a resource guide focusing on insurance issues and advice for seniors
- Distribute resource guide at churches, physician’s offices, Meals on Wheels, pharmacies, and through home health services
- Create a resource team to present information about resources at local organizations such as churches, Meals on Wheels, pharmacies, and home health services
- Vote for candidates who want to address the insurance gap

Theme 5: Streamlining Services – While many service providers work together efficiently and productively, communication and service delivery are not always streamlined.

Action Steps

- Contact Region G Agency on Aging to host an online resource
- Look into creating a free Rockingham community page, network, and bulletin board online
- Create a list of resources that promote, advertise, and publicize events for seniors
- Create a senior newspaper
- Secure funding for the senior newspaper

Following the analysis of all collected data, the findings were presented to the community through the Rockingham County Senior Community Forum, held on April 20, 2007. Based on the process as a whole, the team makes the following recommendations for future in the Rockingham County senior community:

- The term “senior” may include individuals younger than 65, and care should be taken to recognize that some members of the county who are not 65 or older identify themselves as members of the senior community.
- County demographics are changing, and attention should be paid to the senior members of different ethnic groups, especially the Latino population.
- Future work with seniors should include a focus on isolated and homebound seniors.
- Given the number of existing quality services for seniors in the county, efforts should include building upon what is already available.

- Service providers and community members should place increasing awareness of services and events at the forefront of all efforts.
- Communication technologies, including the internet and email, will be an important component of raising senior awareness in the future and should be considered in service and health promotion efforts.
- Grassroots networking among seniors, with the purpose of sharing resources, should be recognized and increased, utilizing the informal ties that already exist.
- Religion is an important component of life, and church networks should be investigated as a channel for improving life for seniors.
- Broader participation in the county's two existing senior service provider groups/networks should be encouraged, making coordination key.
- Collaboration on developed action steps will be crucial in moving towards their successful implementation, especially given the overlap in many of the steps that were developed.

This document is intended to be a working document for the senior community and service providers. It provides the foundation from which the senior community can move forward into the future. The background summary, methods used in the Rockingham County Senior Community Assessment, detailed findings from the primary data, and a discussion of the forum and resulting action steps can be found at www.hsl.unc.edu/Phpapers/phpapers.cfm. The team hopes that positive change can be made for the senior residents of Rockingham County and those who are dedicated to enrich and improve their lives.

Table 53 shows the distribution of Rockingham County Seniors by age category and gender. In Rockingham County, about 1 in 4 residents are age 50 years or older. Figure 73 shows the proportional breakdown of the population 50 years and older.

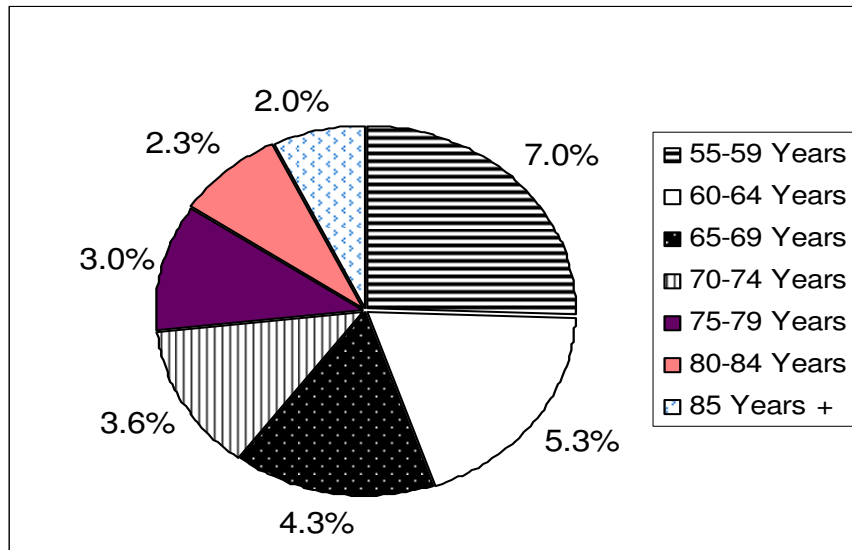
Table 53.
Distribution of Rockingham County Population 55 Years and Over

	Total	Male	Female
Total Population	93,063	44,938	48,125
55 to 59 years	7.0%	6.7%	6.8%
60 to 64 years	5.3%	6.3%	5.6%
65 to 69 years	4.3%	3.8%	3.8%
70 to 74 years	3.6%	2.9%	4.3%
75 to 79 years	3.0%	2.4%	4.0%
80 to 84 years	2.3%	1.3%	3.5%
85 years and over	2.0%	1.0%	2.5%
Total	27.5%	24.4%	30.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006^b

Figure 73.

Distribution of Rockingham County Population Ages 50 and Older, 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006^b

Table 54 shows trends in growth of the aging population in Rockingham County since 1990, and provides projected estimates through 2020. Between 1990 and 2005, the proportion of adults over the age of 60 increased by only 1 percent, but is expected to increase by 6 percent by 2020. It is important that service providers are prepared to care for the needs of an increasingly aged population, so as to provide the right quality and quantity of needed services. Figure 74 shows the concentration of elderly on a Rockingham County map.

Table 54.

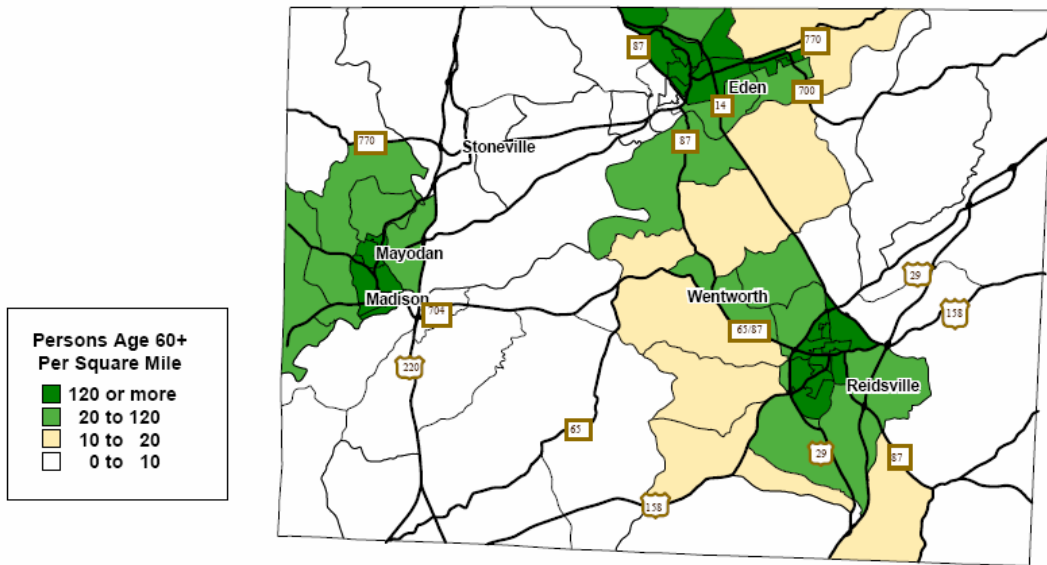
Population Trends in Older Adults 1990-2020 in Rockingham County

Older Adults in Rockingham County					
	1990 Census	2000 Census	2005 Census	2010 Projected	2020 Projected
Age 60+					
Number	16,584	17,966	18,614	20,334	24,940
% of Total	19.3%	19.5%	20.3%	21.9%	26.4%
Age 65+					
Number	12,276	13,616	13,836	14,552	18,333
% of Total	14.3%	14.8%	15.1%	15.7%	19.4%
Age 75+					
Number	5,016	6,319	6,658	6,658	7,655
% of Total	6.9%	6.9%	7.3%	7.2%	8.1%
Age 85+					
Number	1,052	1,638	1,766	2,041	2,326
% of Total	1.2%	1.8%	1.9%	2.2%	2.5%
Total Population	86,064	91,928	91,817	92,779	94,561

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2007)

Figure 74.

Concentrations of Older Adults Rockingham County, NC



Source: 2000 Census of Population & Housing.

Committee Updates

At the Rockingham County Senior Community Forum, five groups formulated action steps that were needed to address identified concerns. During 2008, the Service Providers Group of Rockingham County formed four committees to address priority issues:

The Transportation Committee is chaired by Robert Broom of Joyce A. Shabazz Center for Independent Living. Thus far the group has printed a brochure and distributed it to doctors' offices and case workers. The committee conducted a Rockingham County Transportation Forum to promote awareness for transportation services available provided by Rockingham County Public Access and Pelham Transportation Services. The brochure is currently being translated into Spanish and various groups are being contacted to help with the dissemination.

The Insurance Gap Committee is chaired by Hazel Post of Rockingham County Department of Public Health. The committee meets regularly and is working with the Service Providers Group of Rockingham County to educate the community about the importance of maintaining health insurance coverage during the aging process. They hope to publish flyers that are simple and to the point, especially on early retirement and the problems / solutions surrounding early retirement. The group is looking at distributing information via doctors' offices, pharmacies, churches and business groups.

The Alzheimer's Care Committee is chaired by Alice Ward of Unified Home Care. This committee is in the process of compiling a resource guide for providers of Alzheimer's care services. They are collecting surveys and performing a comparative study to assess current services available. The group hopes to create a chart of caregivers and services that will be

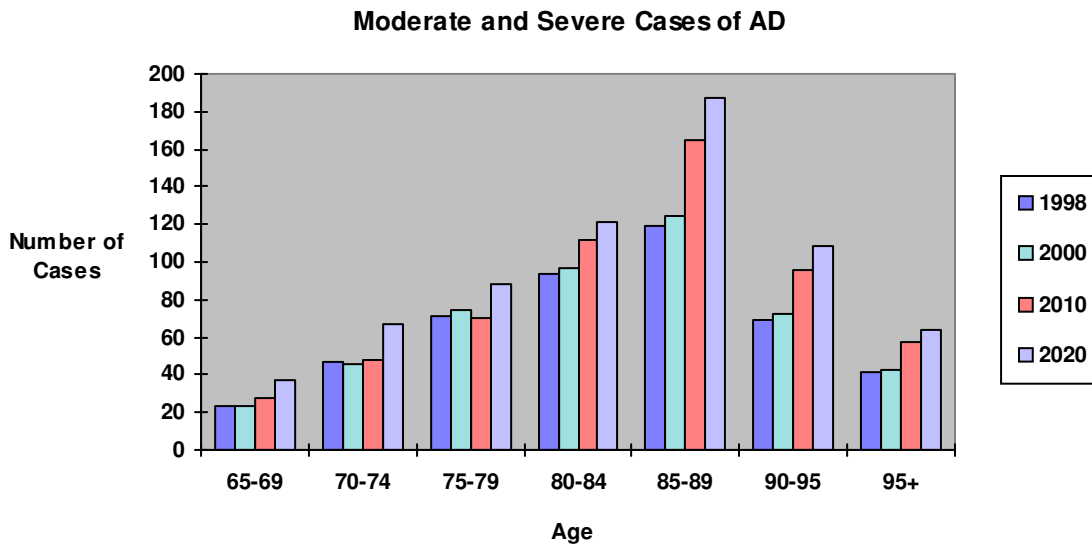
easy for service providers and consumers to use. Figures 75 through 76 shows county level prevalence of Alzheimer’s dementia, trends in the disease since 1998, and projections through 2020.

Table 55.
Rockingham County Alzheimer’s Prevalence and Projections

Age	Moderate and Severe AD							Mild, Moderate, and Severe AD						
	1998	2000	% Change	2010	% Change	2020	% Change	1998	2000	% Change	2010	% Change	2020	% Change
65-69	23	23	0	28	+21.7	37	+32.1	41	42	+2.4	51	+21.4	68	+33.3
70-74	47	46	-2.1	48	+4.3	67	+39.6	80	78	-2.5	81	+3.8	113	+39.5
75-79	71	74	+4.2	70	-5.4	88	+25.7	130	137	+5.4	130	-5.1	161	+23.8
80-84	94	97	+3.2	112	+15.5	121	+8.0	170	175	+2.9	202	+15.4	217	+7.4
85-89	119	124	+4.2	165	+33.1	187	+13.3	211	221	+4.7	294	+33.0	332	+12.9
90-94	69	72	+4.3	96	+33.3	108	+12.5	116	121	+4.3	161	+33.1	182	+13.0
95+	41	43	+4.9	57	+32.6	64	+12.3	61	64	+4.9	86	+34.4	97	+12.8
Total	464	479	+3.2	576	+20.3	672	+16.7	809	838	+3.6	1005	+19.9	1170	+16.4

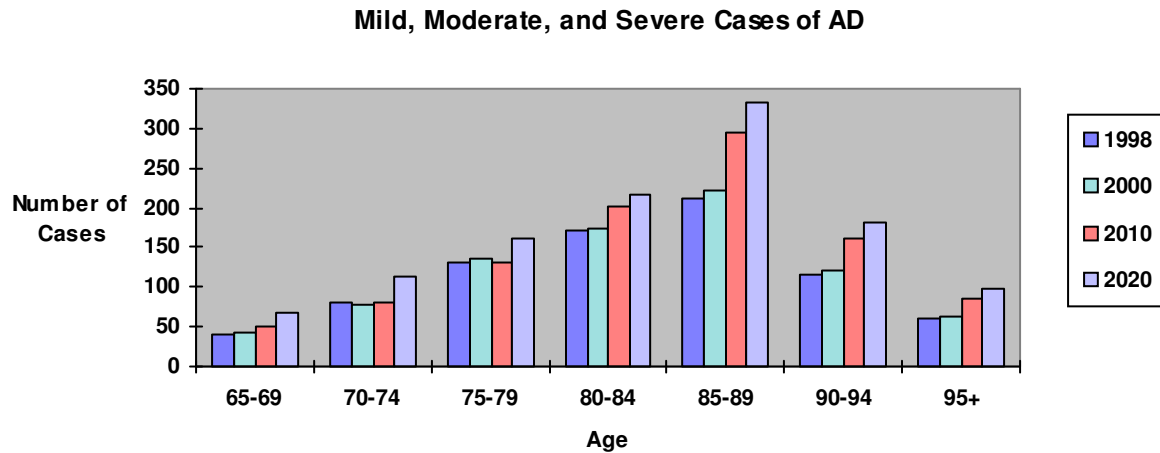
Source: NC-DHHS, (n.d.)

Figure 75.



Source: NC-DHHS, (n.d.)

Figure 76.



Source: NC-DHHS, (n.d.)

The Streamlining of Services Committee is chaired by Deborah Maryland of Rockingham County Caregivers. This committee is gathering information about services available and is looking at the most effective means for creating a resource guide or booklet that would include telephone contact information. They are hoping to disseminate this beyond city limits and reach out into rural areas where less information is available.

The committees will be working together to construct a regular newsletter focusing on varying issues specific to Rockingham County seniors. This would allow resources to be pooled and place information in a concise format. The newsletter could then be disseminated via physician practices and places of business, with a focus of reaching the rural areas of the county.



Rockingham County African Americans

In October 2007, a team of five graduate students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health began an Action-Oriented Community Diagnosis (AOCD) with the African American community in Rockingham County. An AOCD is a community-based process by which the resources, strengths, needs, and challenges of a community are identified. After identification, the process transitions to generating dialogue and creating action steps to build on community strengths and address challenges. Guided by two preceptors from the Rockingham County Department of Public Health, the student team spent the next seven months attending community events, examining data about Rockingham County from websites and government documents, and conducting interviews and focus groups with both service providers and community members regarding community strengths and community challenges. After analyzing the responses, the team identified thirteen common themes.

With the help of a community advisory committee (CAC), the team planned and held a public forum, Community Dialogue for Change, on April 14, 2008. The CAC selected five of the original thirteen themes for focused discussion at the forum based on their importance to the community and how easily they could be addressed. Five themes were chosen so that the five student team members could each lead a discussion group on one theme. At the forum, the team highlighted the community's strengths such as churches and spirituality, caring people, and leadership capacity as well as challenges related to the five themes chosen for discussion. The approximately 70 people in attendance broke into smaller discussion groups and generated action steps to address each theme. The following challenges and action steps were presented at the Community Dialogue for Change forum:

Theme 1: Employment – The lack of job opportunities for African Americans within the county is a concern. This affects both adults who have lost jobs and youth seeking jobs.

Action Steps

- Develop a mentoring program that would place youth in government, corporate, and small business environments.
- Survey students to determine their career interests so that job fairs and career programs would be more appealing.
- Create a resource listing of employers willing to hire ex-offenders.

Theme 2: Attitudes Toward Education – There is concern that education is not a priority in the county, as seen by high drop-out rates and not enough students going to college.

Action Steps

- Approach the school board about offering diversity training to teachers and other employees.
- Approach local colleges that train teachers about offering diversity training in their curricula.

Theme 3: Guidance for Youth – Too many African American youth, especially young men, lack positive guidance for their futures.

Action Steps

- Set up a forum for youth-adult conversation as a starting point for better understanding.
- Use the media, church newsletters, and organizations to spread the word about the need to come together for better guidance for youth.
- Find out what mentoring programs churches currently have in place, and increase the number and quality of these programs.
- Include volunteering for school mentoring programs in regular church service projects, with an emphasis on peer mentors.
- Establish programs to re-train parents and include professionals in the community with different skill sets for parenting.

Theme 4: Racial Discrimination – Community members noted various ways in which racial discrimination happens in the county, such as differences in pay, ability to get loans, and treatment of students.

Action Steps

- Create a forum to increase dialogue between parents of school children to address issues such as racial discrimination in schools.
- Increase parental and community involvement in volunteer opportunities in schools.
- Create guidelines for fair treatment of students for use by teachers and administrators.

Theme 5: Preventive Healthcare – Low use of preventive healthcare services for conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure leads to an increased need for treatment and poor health.

Action Steps

- Form a group in charge of developing educational flyers with health messages to be placed in grocery stores, doctors' offices, child cares, churches, schools, and recreational facilities. This education campaign would also incorporate the use of nutritionists to develop health messages for church newsletters.
- Form a "take a friend to the doctor" program to assist those without their own personal transportation in getting to preventive healthcare appointments. This would build upon existing resources available in the community such as Caregivers of Rockingham County and Pelham Transportation in order to make transportation to medical appointments more convenient for community members.

A final report is given to the African American community of Rockingham County and other concerned individuals as a tangible resource that presents the findings of the community assessment as well as a report of the discussions and action steps which emerged at the community forum. It is divided into six sections: Introduction; Background on Rockingham County; Primary Data Findings; Methods; The Forum; and Recommendations and Conclusions. The full document is a tool which all community members can continuously refer to as they address various challenges and work towards progress, and is available online at www.hsl.unc.edu/Phpapers/phpapers.cfm

Committee Updates

A follow-up meeting of committees has been conducted and contact lists exchanged to begin working on action steps created during the *Community Dialogue for Change* forum.

