

# West River Health Services Service Area

## 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment

December 2021

Each Critical Access Hospital must conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) once every three years, as mandated by law. Local public health units seeking to gain/maintain accreditation conduct an assessment every five years. CHNAs completed by Center for Rural Health (CRH) include secondary data review, community focus groups, key informant interviews, and a community survey. This fact sheet presents key community strengths and opportunities from the West River Health Services (WRHS) service area 2021 CHNA.

The WRHS service area is comprised of the towns of Bowman, Scranton, Reeder, Bucyrus, Hettinger, Haynes, Mott, New England, and Dickinson in North Dakota, and Lemmon, Bison, and Buffalo in South Dakota. This area includes the counties of Adams, Bowman, Hettinger, and Slope in North Dakota, and Perkins County in South Dakota.

### Community Strengths

The top three assets identified in the community survey included the community being a safe place to live, with little to no crime, healthcare in this community is accessible, and the community is family friendly, meaning people are friendly, helpful, and supportive.

### Health Outcomes and Factors

In review of secondary data, 16% of WRHS North Dakota service area\* residents and 12% of Perkins County, South Dakota residents reported poor or fair health. This service area had a greater percentage of residents reporting excessive drinking, physical inactivity, adult smoking, and obesity than the top 10% of U.S. counties. See Table 1 for more data.

**Table 1. Health Factors by % of Population, 2020**

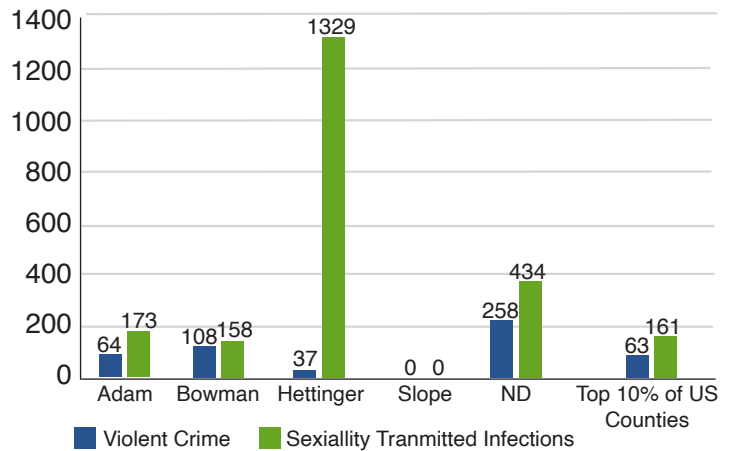
	Hettinger Service Area*	ND	Top 10% U.S
Uninsured	12%	9%	6%
Excessive drinking	21%	24%	13%
Access to exercise opportunities	44%	74%	91%
Physical inactivity	26%	24%	20%
Adult obesity	31%	33%	26%
Adult smokers	16%	18%	14%

\*The Hettinger services area is a weighted average of Adams, Bowman, Hettinger and Slope counties.

Incidence of violent crime was less prevalent in all counties compared to the North Dakota average, but higher than the top 10% of the U.S. counties with the exception of Hettinger County. For incidence of sexually transmitted infections, Hettinger County was higher than North Dakota counties,

while Adams and Bowman counties were lower. Slope county had no record for either topic. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Cases per 100,000 Population, 2020**



In 2019, data shows children in poverty (ages 0-17) was 15% in the WRHS service area\*, while ND was 10.9%. Medicaid recipients were 22.5% which is lower than the North Dakota average of 10.9%. See Table 2 for more information on children's health factors.

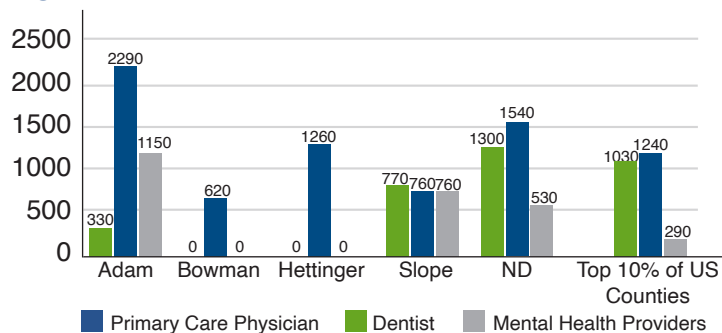
**Table 2. Children's Health Factors by % of Population**

	Hettinger Service Area*	ND
Children uninsured (2018)	11%	6.3%
Children in poverty (ages 0-17) (% of pop.) (2019)	15%	10.9%
Medicaid recipients (2019)	22.5%	26.6%
Children enrolled in Healthy Steps (2019)	0.9%	1.6%
Receiving SNAP (2019)	11%	16.9%

### Healthcare Access

Based on the provider to population ratio, Traill and Steele Counties have more residents per single dentist than the state's average and the top 10% of U.S. counties (1,280 residents per one dentist). The same is true for both counties for the ratio of population per primary care provider and mental health provider. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Provider to Population Ratios, 2020**



In a survey conducted by CRH, residents identified up to three primary community concerns. The top two concerns were attracting and retaining young families to the area (65%) and the ability to retain primary care providers and nurses (44%). Alcohol use and abuse with youth, depression/anxiety among adults, and cost of long-term /nursing home care made the top five. See Table 3.

**Table 3. Community Concerns, 2021**

Community Concern	%
Attracting and retaining young families	65%
Alcohol use and abuse - adults	52%
Alcohol use and abuse—youth	48%
Depression/anxiety among adults	47%
Ability to retain primary care providers	44%
Cost of long term/nursing home care	41%
Not enough jobs with livable wages	39%
Depression/anxiety among youth	38%
Depression/anxiety among seniors	37%

In January 2021, a community focus group identified their top concerns as:

1. Attracting and retaining young families
2. Alcohol use and abuse - adults
3. Alcohol use and abuse - youth
4. Depression/anxiety - adults

In the survey, community members also identified perceived barriers (up to three) specifically related to accessing local healthcare. The top five barriers were:

1. Not able to see same provider over time (35%)
2. Not enough providers (28%)
3. No insurance/limited insurance (27%)
4. Not able to get appointment/limited hours (26%)
5. Not enough evening or weekend hours (23%)

Individuals also indicated which specific healthcare services, if any, they felt should be added locally. The most often cited service was oncology.

## Steps Undertaken Since 2017/2018 CHNA

WRHS has taken steps to address all five of the top concerns identified in the 2017/2018 assessment. To combat obesity in the area, the hospital’s rehab center donated all of their fitness equipment to the city of Hettinger, an annual fun run has been implemented, and fit camps for all ages have been presented to the community, as well as the Hettinger Pool hosting free-of-charge swim times. The hospital’s respiratory therapist was trained to hold smoking cessation classes, and WRHS has worked with local churches and support groups to allow options for patients unwilling to seek medical care for substance abuse. In response to concerns over cancer rates in the community, WRHS continues to work with larger facilities to provide chemotherapy for patients, and a local non-profit organization donated gas cards to ease patients’ travel costs. Staff at the hospital have been encouraged to be more involved with the community in order to attract and retain younger families, implementing “community benefit time” for employees to be more active. Sign on bonuses continue to be offered to new staff hires, and a Dakota Nursing Program was started at the hospital to bring the nursing staff up locally. WRHS has also worked to reduce adult alcohol use and abuse by working with the Nighthawk Drug and Alcohol Coalition to provide fun, alcohol-free activities for youth in the area.

## Implementation Strategies

Hospitals and local public health units prepare implementation strategies as a blueprint for meeting needs identified in a CHNA. Access the complete and community-specific CHNA Reports and Implementation Strategies at, [ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/community-health-needs-assessment/reports](http://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/community-health-needs-assessment/reports).

### Full Report

Nissen, K. & Breigenzer, A. Hettinger Service Area: Community Health Needs Assessment, 2021.

### For More Information

Visit the website, [ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/community-health-needs-assessment](http://ruralhealth.und.edu/projects/community-health-needs-assessment) or contact:

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