

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 the 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 Devils Lake service area 2021 CHNA.

The Devils Lake service area comprises Ramsey, Benson, Pierce, and Eddy counties. The percentage of residents, ages 65 and older, is higher than the North Dakota average (15.7%) for Ramsey (20.3%), Pierce (23.8%), and Eddy (23.7%), and lower in Benson County (14.4%). The median household income in all of the counties are significantly lower, compared to the state average for North Dakota (\$64,894): Ramsey (\$58,910), Benson (\$47,667), Eddy (\$54,868), and Pierce (\$55,660).

Community Strengths

The top three assets identified in the community survey, include people are friendly, helpful, and supportive; the community is family-friendly; and the closeness to work and activities. Another community asset was the recreational and sports activities that were available.

Health Outcomes and Factors

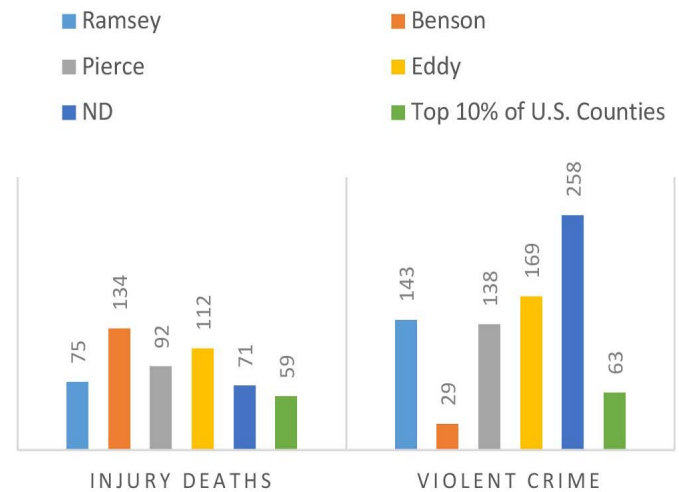
In review of secondary data, Ramsey, Pierce, and Eddy counties reported 16% of residents reporting poor or fair health and Benson reporting 28%. Both North Dakota and the top 10% of U.S. report 14%. All four counties had the same or greater percentage of residents reporting physical inactivity, adult smoking, and obesity than the state. See Table 1.

Table 1. Health Factors by % of Population, 2021

	Ramsey	Benson	Pierce	Eddy	ND
Uninsured	9%	13%	8%	9%	8%
Excessive drinking	24%	21%	23%	24%	24%
Access to exercise opportunities	77%	63%	72%	70%	74%
Physical inactivity	28%	34%	26%	33%	23%
Adult obesity	34%	42%	40%	34%	34%
Adult smokers	20%	33%	21%	21%	20%

Injury deaths (deaths per 100,000 residents) were more prevalent in Ramsey (75), Benson (134), Pierce (92), and Eddy (112) county than in the state overall (71 per 100,000 residents) and the top 10% of U.S. counties (59 per 100,000 residents). See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Chlamydia Cases per 100,000 Pop., 2019



The rate of victims of child abuse and neglect, requiring services, was higher in Ramsey, Pierce, and Eddy counties, compared to the state average. Data also show child food insecurity for all counties was higher than North Dakota. See Table 2 for more information on children’s health factors.

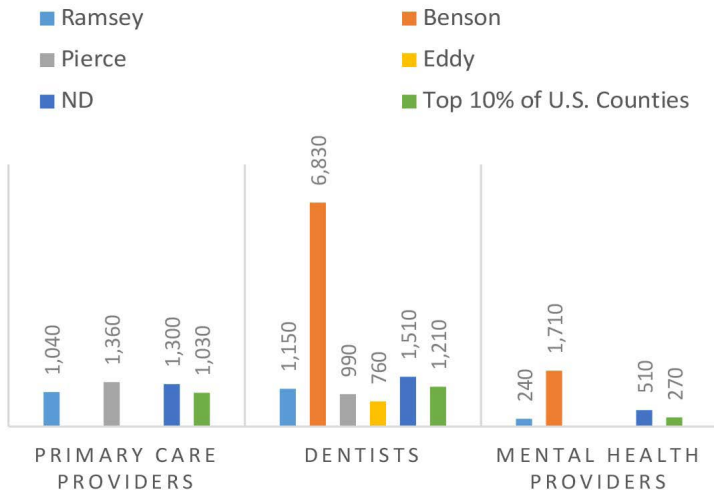
Table 2. Health Factors by % of Pediatric Population

	Ramsey	Benson	Pierce	Eddy	ND
Child food insecurity, 2019	12.1%	26.1%	15%	13.7%	9.6%
Victims of child abuse and neglect requiring services, 2019	31.34	5.54 (2017)	24.44 (2018)	16.67 (2018)	9.98
Medicaid recipients, 2020	36.4%	76.7%	27.5%	25.1%	26.0%
Children enrolled in Healthy Steps, 2020	2.1%	3.0%	2.4%	3.7%	1.7%
Receiving SNAP, 2020	23.9%	54.1%	13.3%	18.4%	17.0%
Adult smokers	20%	33%	21%	21%	20%

Healthcare Access

Based on the provider to population ratio, Benson County had the highest need for dentists and mental health providers. No data was present for primary care providers for Benson and Eddy counties along with mental health providers for Pierce and Eddy counties. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Provider to Population Ratios, 2021



Community Concerns

In a survey conducted by CHI St. Alexius Health Devils Lake, residents identified up to three primary community concerns. The top three concerns were child abuse or neglect, bullying/cyberbullying, and drug use and abuse in youth. Alcohol use and abuse in adults and alcohol use and abuse in youth made the top five. See Table 3.

Table 3. Community Concerns, 2021

Community Concerns	%
Child abuse or neglect	66%
Bullying/cyberbullying	63%
Drug use and abuse – youth	58%
Alcohol use and abuse—adult	56%
Alcohol use and abuse—youth	55%
Drug use and abuse – adult	53%
Having enough child daycare services	45%

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

1. Having enough child daycare services
2. Ability to retain primary care providers and nurses
3. Availability of mental health and substance use disorder treatment services
4. Suicide
5. Drug use and abuse (including prescription drugs) (all ages)

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 get appointments/limited hours (41% of respondents)
2. Not enough specialists (39%)
3. Not enough evening or weekend hours (38%)
4. Not able to see same provider over time (34%)
5. No insurance/limited insurance (31%)

Individuals also indicated which specific healthcare services, if any, they felt should be added locally. The most often cited service was specialty medicine and mental health services.

Steps Undertaken Since 2019 CHNA

CHI St. Alexius Health Devils Lake Hospital has taken steps to address all four of the top concerns identified in the 2019 assessment. A focus was put on substance abuse and use (all ages), teen vaping, and marijuana abuse. My Life My Quit campaign was implemented in the schools and the community, and a substance abuse prevention team was created. Another priority identified was the expansion of hours for appointments with primary care, mental health, and outpatient dialysis appointments. An attempt was made to have Altru Health System expand their walk-in clinic hours to accommodate this community need, but staffing shortages created issues. The shortage of low-density medical specialties, and surgical and sonography technicians was another concern. The recruitment process is ongoing. Last, the expansion and renovation of hospital emergency department has been on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local and national executive teams have budgeted for the expansion, starting in the fiscal year of 2022.

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.

Full Report

Walter, A., & Nissen, K., CHI St. Alexius Health Devils Lake Hospital Service Area: Community Health Needs Assessment, 2021.

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For More Information

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