

## National Public Health Week Proclamation

Whereas, the week of April 6, 2026, is National Public Health Week, and the theme is “**Ready. Set. Action!**”, highlighting that public health actions occurring through scientific discoveries, legislation, and community initiatives have significantly improved the health of all Americans:

Whereas, significant strides have been made in public health since the inception of National Public Health Week in 1994, including the following public health successes in **North Carolina**:

- (1) **Childhood mortality** in North Carolina, which was at a rate of 13.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1994, fell to 6.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023, the latest year when data is available. This is attributed to vaccines, better health care access, and improved nutrition;
- (2) **Smoking rates**, which stood at 25.7% in 1994 when North Carolina was a top tobacco producer, fell to 11.5-13.2% in 2024, though total tobacco use (including vaping) remains high at roughly 21.6%;
- (3) **HIV/AIDS mortality** in North Carolina, which peaked at 1,047 deaths in 1994, dropped to 189 deaths in 2023, as medical advancements transitioned the virus from a terminal illness to a manageable chronic condition;
- (4) **Childhood lead poisoning** in North Carolina, which affected 18.4% of children in 1994, has fallen to around 1% of children tested in the most recent surveillance data. This reduction, even under today’s stricter blood lead standards, reflects decades of aggressive paint remediation, housing interventions, and environmental monitoring.
- (5) Health impacts of climate change, such as rising heat-related deaths, were underrecognized before the new millennium but are now being mitigated by actions such as public health campaigns, local adaptation plans including cooling centers, and other preparedness plans to protect the public from extreme weather, wildfires, and other regional threats;
- (6) Pandemic preparedness has improved rapidly, especially through scientific advancements, including mRNA technology and global vaccine deployment, and communities have increased investments in infrastructure, stockpiles, and global surveillance—all of which must be sustained.

Whereas, racial and ethnic minority populations in the United States continue to experience disparities in the burden of illness and death as compared with the overall population of the United States;

Whereas, a person’s health status can differ drastically by ZIP code due to differences in the built environment, environmental quality, community context, access to healthy food, access to education, and access to health care;

Whereas, public health organizations use National Public Health Week to educate public policymakers, public health professionals, and the public on issues that are important to improving the health of the people in North Carolina and the United States;

Whereas, public health professionals help communities prevent, prepare for, withstand, and recover from the impact of a full range of health threats, ranging from infectious disease outbreaks to natural disaster preparedness; and

Whereas, efforts to adequately support public health and the prevention of disease and injury can continue to transform a health system focused on treating illness into a health system focused on preventing disease and injury and promoting wellness.

Now, therefore, the **Association of North Carolina Boards of Health** do hereby proclaim the week of **April 6–12, 2026**, as **National Public Health Week**, and call upon the people of North Carolina to observe this week by helping our families, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and leaders recognize the contributions of scientists; local, city, and state legislators; community activists; and public health workers in (1) adopting initiatives that have significantly improved the health and longevity of the people of our state, and (2) encouraging continual vigilance to promote health and well-being for all citizens, as the theme states, “Ready. Set. Action!”

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 6th day of April, two thousand twenty-six.

**Signature**



Karl Johnson, PhD  
Assistant Professor, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health  
President, ANCBH

[Insert city/state or other official seal]