



Association of  
North Carolina Boards of Health

Over the last month, many of you in local public health have asked for ideas regarding issues or topics that your governing boards could possibly address over the next 12 months or longer. This idea is very worthy of your efforts! For this reason, this issue of the ANCBH newsletter will feature issues or topics that are a focus in NC Division of Public Health at this time. This list is in no way exhaustive, it is simply a way of starting your brainstorming as you decide where your upcoming focus might begin.



## Chronic Disease Prevention

Like most Americans, residents of North Carolina are living longer, but chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and cancer are taking a growing toll on our health. (edited from The American Public Health Association report, July 2024).

In many ways, these leading causes of death are also to varying degrees preventable. Public health, being on the “preventive end of medicine” aims to help reduce our populations’ risk factors by engaging in such actions as promoting physical activity; improving access to healthy, affordable foods; expanding science-based ways to prevent and control the onset of chronic conditions; and promoting access to early diagnosis and treatment.

Public health and chronic disease are connected through public health’s focus on preventing disease and promoting health—many chronic conditions result from environmental factors and health behaviors that contribute to chronic conditions. For example, the health risk factors of physical inactivity, tobacco use and exposure and poor nutrition are the leading causes of chronic disease.

# Gun Violence Prevention (Violence is a public health issue)

The scope of gun violence includes suicide, homicide, and unintentional deaths, as well as nonfatal gunshot injuries, intimate partner homicides and threats, and exposure to gun violence in communities and society.

Gun violence affects the well-being and public safety of all Americans, including North Carolinians. According to statistics from the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the U.S. Guns kill more than 48,000 people a year, and firearm injuries were among the five leading causes of death for people ages 1-44 in the U.S in 2022. These deaths are preventable. Many public health advocates and researchers recognize that a comprehensive public health approach to addressing this growing crisis is necessary.

The public health community-based approach brings together a wide range of experts to determine the problem, identify key risk factors, develop evidence-based policies and programs, and ensure effective implementation and evaluation. Through a public health approach to gun violence, we can save thousands of lives, and aim to make gun violence in North Carolina rare and abnormal.

## Public Health Approach



# Environmental Health

## **Background: What is environmental health?**

Environmental health centers on the relationships between people and their environment or surroundings. The environmental health field advances policies and programs that reduce chemical and other environmental exposures in air, water, soil and food.

When people are exposed to hazards like polluted air and lead in their drinking water, they can develop serious conditions, such as asthma, heart disease, cancer and even dementia. (AMA)

Many times, low-wealth communities are disproportionately burdened by environmental health hazards, systemic and structural inequality and disinvestment, negatively impacting their health and well-being.

A key part of any comprehensive public health system, environmental health ensures conditions where our populations have a safe place to live, learn, work and play.

## **Children's Environmental Health**

Children are particularly vulnerable to environmental health hazards. For their size, they breathe more air and eat more food than adults. Even low levels of environmental health pollutants, like lead, particulate matter or pesticides, can affect children's physical and mental development and negatively impact their health for the remainder of their life.

## **Climate Change: Why Is Climate Change a Public Health Issue?**

As rising global temperatures disrupt the interconnected systems in our environment, we are vulnerable to catastrophic conditions. Extreme heat, severe storms, air pollution, wildfires and the spread of mosquito- and tick-borne diseases threaten the physical and mental health of all communities.

In North Carolina, our local health departments use their resources to address many environmental health issues, and many focus on environmental justice, lead contamination, water quality and even climate change.

## Extreme Heat & Your Health

North Carolina is experiencing unprecedented temperatures this summer. Extreme heat can be very dangerous and it is important to take measures to prevent against heat related deaths and illnesses. Click below to learn more from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Help keep yourself and your communities safe by sharing this information.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### BEAT THE HEAT: Extreme Heat

Heat-related deaths are preventable

**WHAT:** Extreme heat or heat waves occur when the temperature reaches extremely high levels or when the combination of heat and humidity causes the air to become oppressive.

**WHO:** Children, Older adults, More males than females are affected, Outside workers, People with disabilities

**WHERE:** Houses with little to no AC, Construction work sites, Cars

**HOW to AVOID:** Stay hydrated with water, avoid sugary beverages, Stay cool in an air conditioned area, Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothes

Outside Temperature 80°		
Inside 109°	Inside 118°	Inside 123°
Time Elapsed: 20 minutes	Time Elapsed: 40 minutes	Time Elapsed: 60 minutes

## Upcoming Events

### Board of Health Governance Network Meeting

Monday, September 23, 2024 at 7pm via Zoom

**Topic:** Results from NCIPH's BOH Training Task Force

**Speaker:** Karl Johnson, PhD Assistant Professor UNC Gillings School of Public Health and Associate Member of ANCBH

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Thank you for reading this newsletter, we hope that these quick ideas will generate more thoughts of how your public health programs can promote and protect the health of all people and our communities.

For more information, visit us on the web at [www.ancbh.org](http://www.ancbh.org).

## Contact Us

**Jean Douglas, ANCBH President:** [jjmdouglas@aol.com](mailto:jjmdouglas@aol.com)

**Merle Green, ANCBH Executive Director:** [merle.green@alamance-nc.com](mailto:merle.green@alamance-nc.com) or [mgreen4@triad.rr.com](mailto:mgreen4@triad.rr.com)