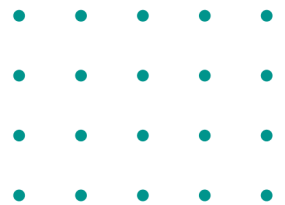


# NORTH COUNTRY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2025

Prepared By:



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# Acknowledgements

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Tri-County Community Action Program

Androscoggin Valley Home Care

Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital

Androscoggin Valley Hospital

Weeks Medical Center

Coos County Family Health Services

NH AHEC/Geisel School of Medicine

Cottage Hospital

North Country Public Health Advisory Council

Grafton County Human Services

North Country Community Health Committee

Indian Stream Health Center

Haverhill Area Substance Misuse Prevention Coalition

Littleton Regional Healthcare

North Country Regional Coordinating Committee

New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition

North Country Substance Misuse Coalitions

North Country Healthcare

North Country Community Residents

North Country Home Health & Hospice

University of New England

Northern Human Services

Haverhill Area Substance Misuse Coalition

UNH Cooperative Extension

## Executive Summary

The North Country Health Consortium, North Country Regional Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC), North Country Public Health Network, and regional partners share the collective vision of making the North Country a healthy, safe, and thriving region where all residents enjoy physical, emotional, social, and economic well-being through access to health care, healthy lifestyles, and strong community connections. As participants in the local health system, we recognize effective partnerships are essential for community-based solutions that advance health equity through shared visions, increasing the community's capacity to shape outcomes and foster multi-sector collaboration.

In November 2021, North Country Public Health Network completed a Community Health Assessment in a joint effort between the Public Health Network, North Country Health Consortium, North Country Public Health Advisory Council, and regional partners. Results gleaned from the Community Needs Assessment were utilized by North Country Public Health Network and regional partners to inform this comprehensive Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

Using the health priority areas identified by the Community Needs Assessment, North Country Public Health Network and its partners have created a strategic plan that includes objectives and strategies focused on achieving measurable impact on health issues in the region. This plan highlights a collective approach to improving health at the local level. Over the next three years the North Country Public Health Network is committed to advancing these objectives and strategies to create healthier communities in the North Country.

The North Country Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is an action-oriented, living document to mobilize the community and regional partners in areas where we can be most impactful in improving the health of all North Country residents where they live, learn, work and play, particularly those most vulnerable. The CHIP is a long-term plan, describing how the regional public health network and a broad set of community partners can address health needs identified by stakeholders, focus groups, community health improvement committees, and the most recent community health needs assessments.

The CHIP serves as a comprehensive set of policy and program recommendations for our community based on the most current information available regarding the health status of our communities. The North Country CHIP provides a framework for action that can be used by stakeholders from a variety of sectors including business, education, health, safety, municipalities, faith-based and community support. Each sector can play a valuable role in addressing the factors that influence health outcomes in the North Country.

The community health priorities identified within this plan are too complex for one organization or sector to resolve on its own. The North Country CHIP provides a foundation for collective action by multiple sectors to systematically address shared priorities to achieve improved health outcomes in North Country communities.

The 2022-2025 North Country Regional Community Health Improvement Plan is an update to the 2018-2020 North Country Regional Community Health Improvement Plan. Having been in place for three years, progress

and achievements for each health priority area have been reviewed by community focus groups, committees, and the PHAC. The previously identified health priority areas have not changed, each being a significant area of concern that requires both short-term and long-term strategies to address. In the CHIP update, the health priority areas have been broadened to be more inclusive of the population's identified needs. Objectives and strategies have been updated and added to reflect the current assets and gaps in our communities and include the global pandemic's regional impacts on population health in the North Country.

New to this document is the addition of Social Determinants of Health as a health priority area. While Social Determinants of Health have long been recognized as barriers to achieving optimal health and wellness, the COVID-19 pandemic has created unique stresses in these social inequities that have profoundly and unevenly impacted the lives of North Country residents. The COVID-19 pandemic wielded negative shifts in Social Determinants of Health across the population by disrupting the social, economic, and healthcare systems of the North Country residents, and impacting their ability to get and stay well – so much so that partners throughout the region agree that, at least in the short term of pandemic recovery, Social Determinants of Health require intentional focus and intervention.

New Hampshire is regarded as one of the healthiest states in the nation. However, regional disparities exist within the State, including in the state's northernmost region, inclusive of Coos and Northern Grafton counties, referred to as the North Country. This rural population suffers geographic and economic barriers to accessing health care and higher rates of mortality and morbidity than the state and national averages.

In the rural North Country of New Hampshire, residents disproportionately have higher rates of chronic disease or disability than the state. North Country health behavior data for youth and adults reveals a population that is more likely to use tobacco and engage in other risky health behaviors that contribute to poor health outcomes.

North Country residents are less likely to have insurance or to have seen a doctor in the last 30 days. Family and individual incomes in the North Country are, on average, lower than in NH and the US. The travel distance from most North Country communities to a health care provider is twenty-five miles or more.

People are less able to afford the health care they need. Shortages of health care providers, dentists, mental health clinicians and other health professionals in the North Country compound these problems. Overall, people in the North Country are more likely to be sick and less likely to have the care they need to treat or manage their illness.

The North Country of New Hampshire has a total population that is comparably lower than the rest of the State - approximately nineteen persons per square mile- but disparately experiences a lack of services, economic instability, geographic isolation, generational poverty, and access to needed medical, dental, and mental health care.

Collaborative initiatives that address health disparities in the North Country have the most impact and make the best use of community and organizational resources. Public health, healthcare and social service agencies

rely on population health data for planning effective strategies and interventions to address identified health priorities. Conducting the CHIP update during the global pandemic hindered access to new data from sources previously used to inform the CHIP. Data collection cycles were significantly delayed and decentralized during the timeframe the CHIP update was conducted.

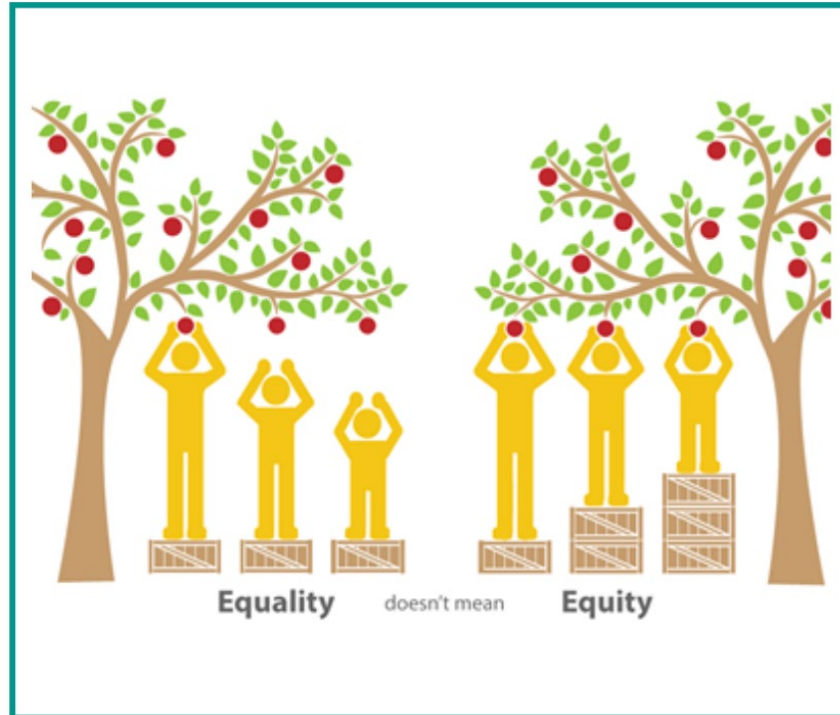


FIGURE 1: EQUITY VS EQUALITY

The North Country Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) serves as a guide for the improvement of health indicators in the North Country region. Outlined within the CHIP are five priorities specific to the North Country’s health needs:

- Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease, including food access and healthy living, healthcare access, and increasing physical activity
- Oral Health
- Wellness and Emergency Preparedness, including Medical Reserve Corps, Individual Preparedness and Community Preparedness
- Mental Health and Substance abuse, including Substance Misuse Prevention, Substance use Disorder, the Continuum of Care, mental health, and suicide prevention
- Social Determinants of Health

These five health priority areas are based on primary and secondary data collection methods including surveys, community health needs assessments, and County Health Ranking data, in which Coos County



ranked ten out of ten in health outcomes when compared with New Hampshire’s nine other counties during the assessments conducted in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

All available data make the case for the North Country Region to have a well-established plan to address the identified health issues and to establish methods to bring about the desired change. This health improvement plan is a three-year community-driven plan that outlines the goals, objectives, and strategies that will be used by coalitions, task forces, organizations, and citizens to address the identified health priorities in the region.

## Introduction

### North Country Health Consortium and North Country Public Health Network

In the Fall of 2013, the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) formed the North Country Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC). The PHAC includes all members of the NCHC Board of Directors as well as representatives from local business, education, and government sectors. The PHAC functions in an advisory capacity to the NCHC.

The North Country Public Health Network is one of 13 regional public health networks in New Hampshire. The North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) is the host agency that contracts with the NH Department of Health and Human Services to convene, coordinate, and facilitate public health partners in the region. These partners collectively are the Public Health Network.

North Country Health Consortium provides leadership to the regional Public Health Advisory Council (PHAC). Additionally, NCHC is responsible for leadership and coordination of Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Substance Misuse Prevention services and activities. The North Country PHAC has provided guidance in the development of this Community Health Improvement Plan.

## Missions and Visions

### The North Country Health Consortium

#### Mission:

To lead innovative collaboration to improve the health status of northern New Hampshire

#### Vision:

A strong public health system through which all residents of Northern New Hampshire have the opportunity to access and enjoy health and wellness.

### The North Country Public Health Network

#### Mission:

To improve the health status indicators of the population of Northern New Hampshire through a Public Health approach to wellness and emergency preparedness.

#### Vision:

Working together to create healthier communities for our children and families

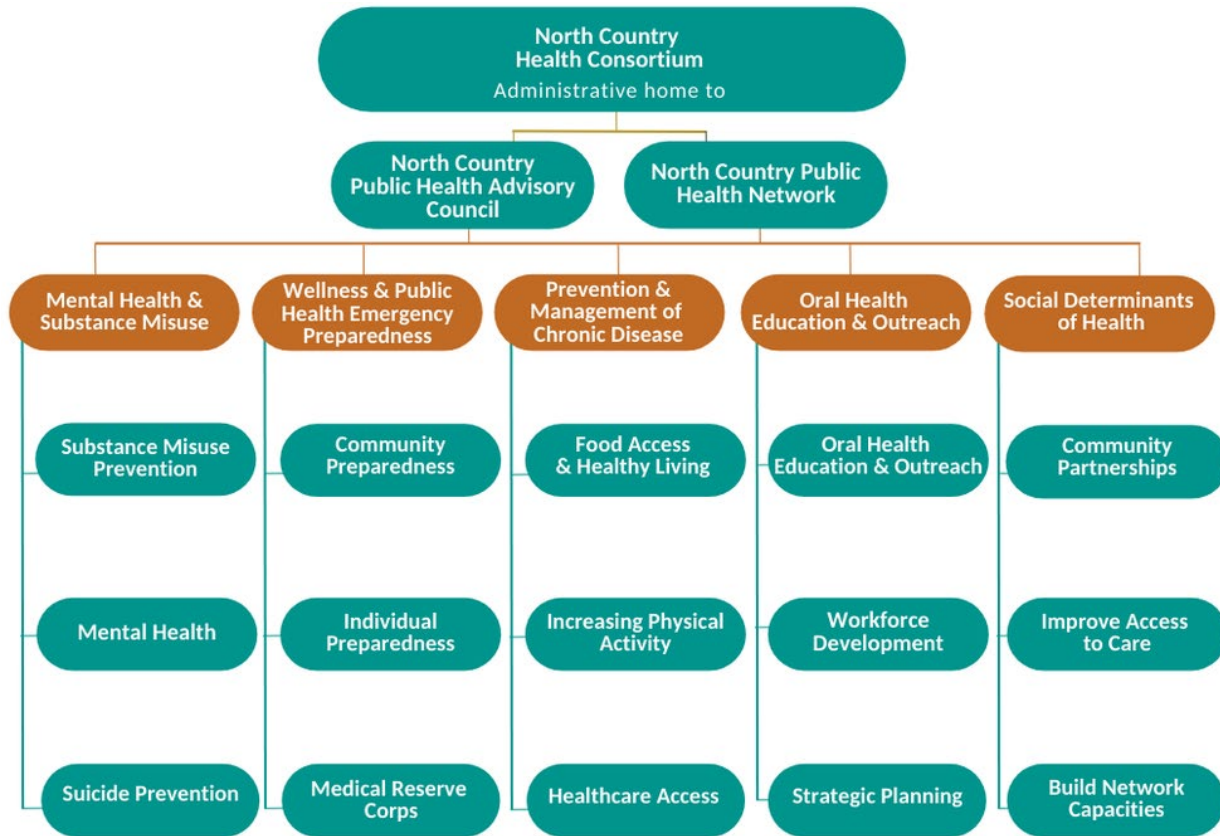


FIGURE 2: NORTH COUNTRY PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK

### Community Profile

The North Country Public Health region includes thirty-eight municipalities and five unincorporated areas and serves approximately 54,000 people living in the community. The geographic area includes Coos and Northern Grafton Counties, which is referred to as The North Country.

The North Country service area includes Coos County and fourteen towns in Northern Grafton County. This area is bordered on the west by northern Vermont, on the east by western Maine, and on the north by Quebec, Canada. The North Country is noted for its spectacular vistas and mountainous terrain lending immense beauty to the region, but simultaneously creating economic and geographic barriers. More than 37 percent of the North Country lies within the boundaries of the White Mountain National Forest. Over 50 percent of the total area is forested and, for all practical purposes, is unpopulated.

Table 1: Communities of the North Country PHN

City, Towns, and Unincorporated Places Served by the North Country PHN:			
Bath	Benton	Berlin	Bethlehem
Cambridge	Carroll	Clarksville	Colebrook
Columbia	Dalton	Dixville	Dummer

City, Towns, and Unincorporated Places Served by the North Country PHN:			
Easton	Errol	Franconia	Gorham
Haverhill	Jefferson	Kilkenny	Lancaster
Landaff	Lisbon	Littleton	Lyman
Mansfield	Milan	Millsfield	Monroe
Northumberland	Odell	Pittsburg	Randolph
Shelburne	Stark	Stewartstown	Stratford
Sugar Hill	Whitefield		

## Community Health Improvement Planning

The purpose of the North Country PHAC is to perform the following functions for the North Country Region:

- Identify local community and public health needs and priorities.
- Encourage the development and coordination of appropriate community and public health services.
- Coordinate and sponsor various forums on public health issues.
- Advise the North Country Public Health Region in policy matters concerning the nature, scope, and extent of community and public health concerns and responses.

In support of these functions, the North Country PHAC:

- Provides input to periodic community health needs assessments completed for the purpose of identifying health-related trends, emerging threats, and community concerns.
- Reviews and comments on regional health profiles based on needs assessments and provides input on regional health priorities and plans for improvement.
- Reviews the work and recommendations of committees addressing public health matters, including public health emergency planning and substance misuse prevention activities.
- Makes recommendations for developing and improving the delivery of public health programs and policies.
- Facilitates, when appropriate, the review of funding opportunities for federal and state funding.

During the fall of 2020, the Health Improvement Working Group, a subcommittee of the North Country PHAC, reviewed data from the most recent regional Community Health Needs Assessments. The Health Improvement Working Group and regional partners also engaged in a CHIP Regional Update Survey. Information from the regional Community Health Needs Assessments and CHIP Regional Update Survey were reviewed and assessed to:

- determine progress and relevance of each health priority identified in previous iterations of the CHIP,
- assess how each health priority has been impacted by the global pandemic on a regional level, and
- determine if any new health priority areas may have risen to importance since the development of the 2018-2020 CHIP.

The purpose of this process was to engage partners to:

- Review regional community health needs assessments and surveys
- Review relevant regional data
- Provide information to community members
- Build new and strengthen existing partnerships and coalitions
- Identify emerging issues
- Identify impact of the pandemic on health priority areas
- Prioritize regional public health priorities
- Develop a new Community Health Improvement Plan

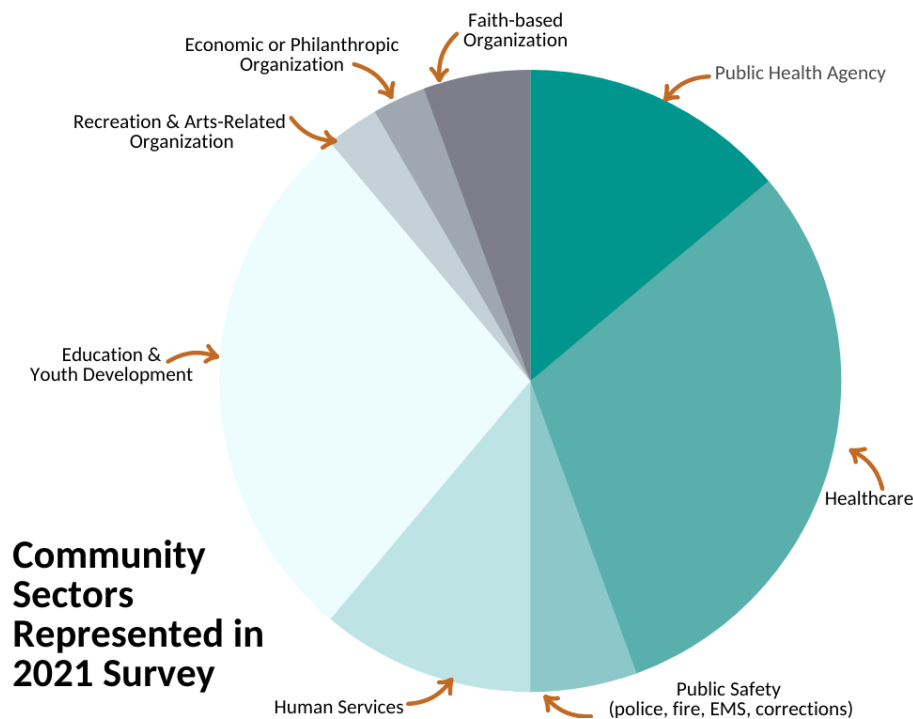


FIGURE 3: PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM SURVEY PARTICIPANT SECTORS

To benchmark progress made in the 2018-2020 CHIP and adequately assess current health priority areas, the CHIP update process included a thorough examination of health equity in the region. Analyses of the data revealed that, while health priority areas identified in the 2018-2020 CHIP remain completely relevant, achieving health equity in any or all these areas is impacted by more broad factors. For North Country residents to achieve their full health potential we must look at the impact of socially defining circumstances such as the consequences of rurality, poverty, access to care and services, as well as social, health, and economic disparities that create barriers to improving health outcomes for individuals and communities in the North Country.

## Community Health Assessment (CHA)

In the Fall of 2019, North Country PHAC partners and community members participated in a Community Health Needs Assessment with Littleton Regional Healthcare, Ammonoosuc Community Health Services and Coos County Family Health Services to determine the health needs of the Greater Northern New Hampshire Region. In 2019, Cottage Hospital also conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment to evaluate its community's input and identify key health needs. In March 2021 North Country Hospital conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment to build an accurate picture of the current community and its health needs. Collection of this data was far reaching to include all subregions within the North Country Regional Public Health Network. The resulting assessments and their key findings both identified and confirmed gaps and assets in the region, and in some instances revealed the regional impact of the global pandemic.

## Planning Steps

Between March 2021 and September 2021, the North Country Health Consortium Board of Directors/North Country PHAC met monthly. During the same period, the Health Improvement Working Group, the North Country Regional Coordinating Committee, and various substance misuse prevention coalitions and groups met regularly. These groups reviewed and discussed existing and potential priority areas, frequently providing information and recommendations for relevant strategies and activities. In addition, regional data was reviewed and utilized to identify gaps in data and services. Overall goals, objectives, and strategic approaches were presented to the PHAC for review and comment.

This plan was created to not only inform the community about the health status of the region, but to also serve as a functional document that guides the health decision making of individuals, health departments, hospitals and clinics, and community partners to align with program development, activities, and resources that collectively improve community health status over the next two years and beyond. The 2022-2025 North Country CHIP provides a common vision and shared approach for local communities to conduct this work. More importantly, it is a foundation to stimulate strategic new partnerships towards a broad agenda of collectively influencing a healthier North Country region. The CHIP has been designed as an actionable document that will be flexible as the needs of the region change.

When updating and reviewing data since the 2018-2020 CHIP, there has been an overall decrease in availability. Most data come from national organizations, such as the CDC or Census bureau, however some data is collected locally. National, state, and regional data scheduled to be collected in the years between 2020 and 2021 encountered delayed data collection cycles, creating a significant gap in data sources that have previously been readily available to inform the CHIP.

## Community Health Priority Areas

Based on data analysis, community surveys, and input from community partners, the North Country Health Consortium Board of Directors and the North Country Public Health Advisory Council has identified five health priority areas for the 2022-2025 North Country Community Health Improvement Plan:

### Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease

- Food access and healthy living
- Healthcare access
- Increasing physical activity

### Oral Health

### Wellness and Emergency Preparedness

- Medical Reserve Corps
- Individual Preparedness
- Community Preparedness

### Mental Health and Substance abuse

- Substance Misuse Prevention
- Substance use Disorder and the Continuum of Care
- Mental health
- Suicide Prevention

### Social Determinants of Health

The remainder of this plan provides more in-depth information about each of these five identified health priority areas. Through community-based processes and convening local partners and the North Country Public Health Advisory Committee the 2022-2025 CHIP's goals, objectives, and a strategic approach for each priority area were identified and are described in the following pages of this plan.

# Health Priority Area 1: Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease

Food access and healthy living

Healthcare access

Increasing physical activity

## State and Regional Assets

- North Country Health Consortium
- Ways to Wellness Community Health Worker Program
- Health Improvement Working Group
- Critical Access Hospitals
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- NH Department of Public Health Services

## Partners working on this priority

- Northern New Hampshire Area Health Education Center
- Northern Human Services
- Ammonoosuc Community Health Services
- Coos County Family Health Services
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Grafton County Senior Citizens Council
- Adaptive Sports Partners of the North Country
- Littleton Food Co-Op
- Androscoggin Valley Hospital
- Cottage Hospital
- Littleton Regional Healthcare
- Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital
- Weeks Medical Center



## Goals and Objectives: Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease

Goal 1: Reduce prevalence of chronic disease in Northern New Hampshire	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase education opportunities for chronic disease prevention and self-management to reduce the overall proportion of North Country adults and children experiencing chronic health conditions</li> <li>• Convene partners across government, business, education, and nonprofit sectors to address chronic disease</li> <li>• Contribute resources and support for interventions and initiatives that encourage healthy eating and physical activity</li> <li>• Encourage policies, systems, and environmental changes that help citizens become more active and eat well</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with PHN partners and Marketing and Communications team to improve health literacy of population by creating and communicating information that is accessible, comprehensible, and informative, and that improves health across the life span.</li> <li>• Convene multisector groups including the Health Improvement Working Group and North Country PHAC to work on initiatives that address and prevent chronic disease in the region.</li> <li>• Support regional and state policies to improve and reduce prevalence of chronic disease in the North Country by building and maintaining relationships with key decisions makers across the state.</li> </ul>

Goal 2: Increase food security in communities of Northern Grafton and Coos Counties	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with state, regional, and local representatives to improve policies that reduce the overall burdens associated with food insecurity</li> <li>• Collaborate with and convene local partners in municipalities, business, nonprofit, and education with national and state organizations to address impacts of food deserts and food insecurity in the North Country</li> <li>• Support interventions and programming that address food sustainability in high-risk subregions of the North Country</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 2: Increase food security in communities of Northern Grafton and Coos Counties</b>	
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with health systems and food system providers to increase access to healthy foods and improve community health</li> <li>• Support regional programs that share referrals across systems for federal benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, nutrition programs for Women, Infants, and Children, and Medicaid interventions like nutrition counseling and produce prescriptions.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 3: Promote community-based educational opportunities focused on health and wellness to decrease the risk factors for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand chronic disease self-management programs throughout the North Country region that are accessible in a virtual format</li> <li>• Work with local businesses, organizations, and agencies to increase the number of worksite wellness programs</li> <li>• Convene community stakeholders to support improvement of multi-generational activity friendly communities through human-power recreational initiatives</li> <li>• Support interprofessional training opportunities that educates primary care providers with evidence-based strategies such as motivational interviewing and integrating screening the social vital signs during preventive visits</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness around signs and symptoms related to heart disease, stroke in public places/gatherings.</li> <li>• Collaborate with regional partners to leverage existing and new human-powered recreation initiatives that are practical and accessible to North Country residents</li> <li>• Engage multiple sectors including schools, faith-based, senior centers, restaurants to include messaging around risk factors and prevention recommendations associated with chronic disease</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 4: Integrate Community Health Workers (CHW) into health care teams</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase knowledge of regional primary care provider teams about the role and value of CHWs among health care providers</li> <li>• Increase the number of trained CHWs in the North Country</li> <li>• Expand opportunities for population engagement with trained community health workers</li> </ul>

**Goal 4: Integrate Community Health Workers (CHW) into health care teams**

**Strategic Approach**

- Provide interprofessional training to health care providers and health profession students to introduce the skills and efficacy of integrated care teams that include CHWs
- Engage primary care providers to positively reinforce healthy behavior, provide health prescriptions (like walking, healthy snacks, community health events)
- Collaborate with trained CHWs at regional public health network at public events to reduce disparities and support healthcare access, education, and equity for North Country residents

## Health Priority Area 2: Oral Health

### State and Regional Assets

- New Hampshire Medicaid
- New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition
- Local WIC programs
- New Hampshire Dental Society
- New Hampshire Children's Health Foundation
- DentaQuest Foundation
- Local Dental Providers
- Federally Qualified Health Center Dental/Oral Health Centers
- North Country Health Consortium Oral Health Program
- NH Department of Health and Human Services Oral Health Program

### Partners Working on This Health Priority

- North Country Health Consortium Oral Health Program
- Northern New Hampshire Area Health Education Center
- Coos Country Family Health Services
- Ammonoosuc Community Health Services
- Grafton County Senior Citizens Council
- Tri-County Community Action Program Head Start
- NH Dental Association
- NH Oral Health Coalition
- Regional Critical Access Hospitals
- Cottage Hospital
- Littleton Regional Healthcare
- Androscoggin Valley Hospital
- Weeks Medical Center
- Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital

## Goals and Objectives: Oral Health

<b>GOAL 1: All North Country residents across the lifespan have access to equitable, appropriate, and affordable oral health care</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2025, increase the number of residents in the region who have received oral health care within the past year</li> <li>• Increase the number of children, adults, and seniors who have established a dental home.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote outreach and collaboration with childcare providers, daycares, and early school-based programming to encourage establishment of dental home</li> <li>• Provide targeted outreach at regional public health network events and activities that educate adults and seniors on the importance of establishing a dental home</li> <li>• Promote accessible and safety net dental programs available throughout the North Country region</li> <li>• Collaborate with FQHCs, RHCs and other healthcare system partners to increase utilization of accessible oral health services</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 2: Identify, support, and expand evidence-based programs and best practice approaches that promote oral health education for North Country residents</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2025, increase dissemination of evidence-based oral care guidelines including benefits of routine care, use and application of fluoride releasing sealants, and silver diamine fluoride to decrease prevalence of caries in vulnerable populations.</li> <li>• Support oral health programming that reduces the percentage of children with dental caries experience in their primary and permanent teeth.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate opportunities for oral health education across the population.</li> <li>• Support school-based oral health education programs throughout the region.</li> <li>• Provide community-based oral health interventions and educational opportunities.</li> <li>• Convene partners across government, municipalities, businesses, education, and nonprofit sectors to address public health benefits of water fluoridation.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Goal 3: Strengthen and support programming that increases dental workforce development throughout the region</b></p>	
<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote opportunities to establish Career Technical Education (CTE) Programming that trains future dental professionals</li> <li>• Collaborate with AHEC to improve recruitment and retention of dental professionals to the region</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local CTE programs to increase opportunities for students to train as dental assistants through internships with local providers and collaboration with NH Community College System.</li> <li>• Educate students on dental career pathways and training opportunities to introduce and recruit dental professional workforce.</li> <li>• Expand programming with AHEC to increase opportunities for dental students to engage with North Country dental providers for regional career experiences.</li> <li>• Promote programs such as NH Student Loan Repayment Program to incentivize dental providers to practice in the North Country.</li> </ul>

## Health Priority Area 3: Wellness and Public Health Emergency Preparedness

### State And Regional Assets

- North Country RPHN's partnerships with twelve other RPHNs
- Five Regional Hospitals and Supporting Health Centers
- NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Local Emergency Management Directors
- North Country Public Health Regional Coordinating Committee
- Northern NH Medical Reserve Corps
- New Hampshire Disaster Behavioral Response Team

### Partners Working on this Priority

- Littleton Regional Healthcare
- Cottage Hospital
- Weeks Medical Center
- Androscoggin Valley Hospital
- Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital
- Grafton County Sheriff's Department
- Coos Country Family Health Services
- North Country Municipalities
- Local Health Officers
- Public service providers: Law Enforcement, Fire Service, Emergency Medical Services, and Public Works Departments

## Goals and Objectives: Wellness and Public Health Emergency Preparedness

<b>Goal 1: Leverage existing resources to support expansion of training opportunities and geographically balanced distribution of closed POD agreements</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2025 expand funding in North Country to extend closed POD agreements and supportive training that improve access and reduce barriers of rurality through strategic geographical POD distribution</li> <li>• Leverage existing and new relationships to educate local businesses, organizations, school administrators, and municipalities on the benefits becomes a closed POD</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate POD distribution based on catchment areas to include towns, residential, shopping/grocery stores, and commuter distance, as well as evaluation of paved and commutable roads within the catchment areas.</li> <li>• Collaborate with municipalities, healthcare organizations, long-term care, education centers, businesses, and community-based and faith-based organizations to provide closed POD toolkits that expand closed POD opportunities in the North Country region.</li> <li>• Collaborate with long term care and other facilities to assist in their preparedness and exercise requirements.</li> <li>• Promote training and education for expansion of closed POD agreements throughout the region, including support of Medical Reserve Corps.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 2: Increase the awareness of municipal officials to enhance their planning capacity for providing emergency assistance to individuals in the North Country including those who rely on electrically dependent durable medical equipment</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with regional partners to include public safety, emergency management, and municipal officials to integrate health equity and education about social determinants that create barriers to individual and community emergency response</li> <li>• Distribute and provide community-based data to regional partners to improve response capacity</li> </ul>



**Goal 2: Increase the awareness of municipal officials to enhance their planning capacity for providing emergency assistance to individuals in the North Country including those who rely on electrically dependent durable medical equipment**

<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with municipalities to share preparedness information with North Country residents to include communication and information sharing strategies.</li> <li>• Collaborate with long term care and other facilities to assist in their preparedness and exercise requirements.</li> <li>• Ensure effective rapid information sharing to inform response actions with key partners about meaningful results from epidemiologic investigations, laboratory collection information, medical countermeasures, and information to and from the health care system.</li> </ul>
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**Goal 3: Expand and develop overall regional capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from public health emergencies**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase individual and family preparedness and response through education, awareness, and training activities.</li> <li>• Recruit, train, and retain volunteers to assist with emergency preparedness training, planning, and response to public health emergencies.</li> <li>• Expand training of volunteer and community workforce to increase response capabilities.</li> <li>• Collaborate with regional partners (e.g., worksites, faith-based groups, community groups, public schools, colleges, home health care, Medical Reserve Corps) to improve the ability of individuals and families to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies through education, awareness, and training activities.</li> <li>• Improve population preparedness by offering age-appropriate resources that educate individuals in personal preparedness to include campaigns using social media, website, and print.</li> </ul>
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**Goal 3: Expand and develop overall regional capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from public health emergencies**

<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to family emergency preparedness trainings throughout the region</li> <li>• Support emergency preparedness in schools and childcare agencies via organized assemblies, electronic messaging, wellness committees, through Student Assistance Professionals and Substance Misuse Prevention Coalitions</li> <li>• Collaborate with the organizers of annual health, wellness, and safety fairs in the region to participate in presentations, demonstrations, and displays of preparedness information and volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Utilize local media and social media outlets to promote emergency readiness, and promote public information and risk communication</li> <li>• Collaborate with municipalities to share preparedness information with North Country residents</li> <li>• Participate in and promote National “September is Preparedness Month” campaign</li> <li>• Collaborate with long-term care and other facilities to help with their emergency preparedness and exercise requirements</li> </ul>
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## Health Priority Area 4: Mental Health and Substance Misuse

### State and Regional Assets

- Regional Public Health Networks
- North Country Health Consortium
- Northern Human Services
- Network of Student Assistance Professionals
- Youth Leadership Groups
- Northern New Hampshire Area Health Education Center
- Collaboration with the Governor’s Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention Intervention and Treatment
- Community coalitions and task force groups with representation from community sectors including education, businesses, local law enforcement, and health care
- Use of evidence-based practice by community health centers (such as SBIRT) to identify, reduce, and prevent use, abuse, and dependence on alcohol and illicit drugs
- Promoting collaboration between primary care physicians and alcohol and other drug treatment providers in the treatment of opioid, including heroin, addiction
- Project AWARE through the Berlin Public Schools
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation/Tillotson Fund
- North Country Suicide Prevention Implementation Team
- Health Improvement Working Group
- National Alliance on Mental Illness- New Hampshire

### Partners working on this priority

- Northern Human Services
- Gorham Family Resource Center
- North Country ACO
- Critical Access Hospitals
- North Country Health Consortium/Northern New Hampshire AHEC
- Region 7 Integrated Delivery Network
- Public Health Network Leadership Teams
- Local police departments
- Northern Human Services
- Tri County Community Action Program
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Local municipalities
- Regional hospitals
- Local legislators
- Schools and other Educational Institutions
- NAMI New Hampshire

## Goals and Objectives: Mental Health and Substance Misuse

Goal 1: Increase awareness of mental issues and associated risk factors	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase collaboration and education with agencies, individuals, and the public to address specific issues including suicide, depression, and feelings of hopelessness and isolation</li> <li>• Convene partners and stakeholders from regional communities to address suicide prevention, intervention and postvention activities implement activities and support leadership development</li> <li>• Reduce stigma associated with mental health, substance use disorder, and suicide</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish guidelines for safe media messaging with regional partners and stakeholders</li> <li>• Use social media to disseminate public health information about inclusive community activities</li> <li>• Increase awareness and education about co-occurring substance and mental health disorders</li> <li>• Provide public health education relating to the connection of mental health and overall health</li> <li>• Incorporate mental health into chronic disease and substance misuse prevention efforts</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention training in the region</li> </ul>

Goal 2: Increase access to mental health, suicide prevention, and substance misuse services for North Country residents	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update assessment of behavioral health service delivery including telehealth options</li> <li>• Identify the regional barriers that exist for receiving mental health services</li> <li>• Increase access to mental health, suicide prevention and substance misuse services using comprehensive resource repository and community health workers</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with schools to implement and support programs that can provide identification, early intervention, and referral for students with mental health issues</li> <li>• Increase access to services that reduce barriers and maximize use of telehealth services</li> <li>• Align with the State of New Hampshire 10 year for implementation of Mental Health Plan</li> </ul>

**Goal 3: Strengthen the capacity of the North Country Prevention Network to address mental health substance misuse**

<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase collaboration with agencies and individuals at all points along the continuum of care</li> <li>• Support implementation and enforcement of alcohol and drug control policies</li> <li>• Maintain data collection, analysis, and reporting to support development of quality programs and policies</li> <li>• Support existing programs that limit access to substances</li> <li>• Increase access to support by increasing number of schools where Student Assistant Professionals are available to students</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor youth drinking behaviors through the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and other reliable instruments</li> <li>• Leverage existing regional capacities to improve data collection, analysis and reporting relative to problems and effective responses to alcohol and other drug misuse.</li> <li>• Increase the knowledge and skills of the network member’s relative to current and emerging drug trends in the region</li> <li>• Reduce risk factors like binge drinking and substance use by reinforcing healthy ways for coping</li> <li>• Partner with North Country Public Health Network to host overdose identification/Narcan administration training and drug recognition event(s)</li> <li>• Assist local law enforcement agencies in the acquisition and use of drug collection boxes</li> <li>• Provide healthy, multi(inter)generational alternatives/activities in community environments</li> <li>• Disseminate behavioral health and housing insecure resources</li> <li>• Investigate transportation options to community events, shelters, assistance/clinical agencies</li> </ul>

**Goal 4: Increase public awareness of substance misuse, treatment, and recovery support services, including resources and treatment for co-occurring disorders**

<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce and disseminate effective messaging campaigns for prevention, intervention and treatment of substance use disorder and mental health issues</li> <li>• Collaborate with media outlets and retailers to reduce alcohol marketing to youth</li> <li>• Increase the knowledge and skills of regional network members relating to current and emerging drug trends in the region</li> </ul>
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**Goal 4: Increase public awareness of substance misuse, treatment, and recovery support services, including resources and treatment for co-occurring disorders**

<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate individuals and the community about treatment resources in the area by leveraging local media and directing traffic to nhtreatment.org</li> <li>• Collectively utilize social media and podcasts to actively message prevention and treatment to public</li> <li>• Increase Prescription Drug Monitoring Program utilization among major area healthcare providers</li> <li>• Increase collaboration with agencies and individuals located at other points along the continuum of care</li> </ul>
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**Goal 5: Increase participation in youth leadership prevention initiatives focused on alcohol and other drug misuse prevention**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve sustainability and portability for Youth Leadership Through Adventure (YLTA) initiative</li> <li>• Increase number of schools participating in YLTA programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain Active and Committed Youth Leadership Through Adventure Groups Who Will Create and Implement Prevention Action Plans for their Schools and Community</li> <li>• Achieve recognition for YLTA as a national evidence-based prevention program</li> </ul>

## Priority Area 5: Social Determinants of Health

### Goals and Objectives: Social Determinants of Health

**GOAL 1: Align regional efforts to address Social Determinants of Health to maximize impact of existing programs and services**

<p><b>Objectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form community partnerships that advance integration and address the social determinant of health needs of patients</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek out and strengthen partnerships with organizations beyond the health and human service sector that are recognized by the CDC as part of the public health system (i.e., neighborhood organizations, faith institutions, law enforcement, schools, civic groups, etc.)</li> </ul> <div> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit and engage people with lived experience as members of committees and advisory groups</li> <li>Whenever possible, include consideration of the “built environment” and its impacts during health-related assessments</li> </ul>

<b>GOAL 2: Investigate funding opportunities to increase resources for the region.</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with political leaders to inform and educate current health status of north country residents and need to address barriers that contribute to negative health outcomes</li> <li>• Collaborate with existing programs to coordinate connections with community health workers</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase public understanding of health disparities by developing partnerships and communicating in new ways to encourage organizations to put the issue prominently on their agendas.</li> <li>• Build the capacity to create community solutions, improve coordination of funding, and set priorities. Invest in youth, preparing them to be future leaders.</li> <li>• Improve the availability of high-quality care, especially children’s services for mental health, oral health, vision, hearing, nutrition and physical activity, and services for older adults. Address social factors that affect health; for example, by improving high school graduation rates and creating social, physical, and economic environments in which children can succeed.</li> <li>• Improving access to health care services</li> <li>• Increasing health care workforce diversity and cultural competence</li> <li>• Addressing disparities in chronic diseases and other health conditions racial and ethnic minorities experience</li> <li>• Supporting task forces, committees or research focused on health disparities</li> <li>• Addressing social determinants of health</li> </ul>



## Moving Forward

North Country Public Health Network and its partners will work to implement, monitor, and document strategies outlined in this Community Health Improvement Plan. The North Country Public Health Network will continue to work to improve and maintain capacity and infrastructure present in North Country communities, and to assist with implementation of local strategies that address identified health priority areas throughout the region. This plan will be used to guide North Country Public Health Network, North Country Health Consortium the North Country PHAC, and local community partners to work collectively in engaging key stakeholders and community members to take ownership, participate in, and document strategies identified to meet the objectives outlined in this plan.