**Next Steps:** As a part of the Affordable Care Act, hospitals must complete a CHA. During 2012, we are working with our local hospitals and the region on a Regional Community Health Assessment. Action Plans will be developed on each of the three health priorities in conjunction with hospital priorities during 2013. Work groups consisting of county residents and representatives of agencies/organizations with special expertise or interest in the issue, and/or those who are affected by the issue will be formed.

If you would like to serve on the Community Health Assessment Action Teams, please contact the Henderson County Department of Public Health at 828-692-4223. To read the complete CHA report, contact our office or visit our website.
1. Obesity — Being overweight or obese is a major factor in increasing one’s risk for chronic disease such as diabetes and hypertension. In Henderson County, the percent of children 2-4 years of age who are obese dropped significantly from 16.5% in 2009 to 14.1% in 2010. In listening sessions, obesity received the most attention. Residents expressed concern about the sedentary lifestyle, the high cost of nutritious foods, and the lack of safe walking and biking areas in the county. All of these factors make it difficult for people to make healthy behavioral choices.

2. Substance Abuse/Prescription Drug Abuse — Methamphetamine is the leading illegal drug of choice for not only Henderson County but for Western North Carolina. Tobacco is a gateway drug to other drug use. Prescription drugs are also leading the area in addiction and abuse in the county. Over-prescribing, doctor shopping, and kids having access to prescription drugs in their parent’s and grandparent’s medicine cabinets are all contributing to the problem.

3. Access to Mental Health Care — Mental health services and substance abuse treatment for low-income clients became more difficult in 1999 when the state implemented mental health reform. Efforts to privatize and regionalize services have been hampered by insufficient funding and capacity. Several innovative programs have been developed, but the need continues to exceed the capacity of the systems in place.