



The founding of Cherokee County Community Health Coalition (CCCHC) was 17 years ago in 1994, as a small informal group of area health care providers gathered to begin a dialogue to address the health needs of the area. Through their vision, and with grant funding from the Robert Wood Johnson and Kellogg Foundations in 1998, this coalition became one of three pilot programs for Oklahoma Turning Point. The purpose of the CCCHC is to provide a forum whereby its independent members may join together to plan, share resources, and develop strategies to assist in the implementation of programs addressing the health status and health care needs of Cherokee County citizens. Partners include:

- ◇ Cherokee Nation, Healthy Nation
- ◇ Cherokee County Health Department
- ◇ OSU Extension Service
- ◇ Northeast Area Health Education Center
- ◇ Tahlequah Public Schools

- ◇ Cherokee County Health Services Council
- ◇ Northeastern State University
- ◇ Cookson Hills Community Action
- ◇ Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control Program
- ◇ NEO Health
- ◇ Tahlequah Daily Press
- ◇ Health Services Council
- ◇ Boys & Girls Club of Tahlequah
- ◇ Go Ye Village
- ◇ Tahlequah City Hospital
- ◇ Chamber of Commerce
- ◇ The Current Alternative News
- ◇ Help In Crisis

The Secure Medical Records Transfer Network (SMRTNET) is a publicly managed HIE (Health Information Exchange) designed to assist health-care providers by facilitating swift and secure access to their patient's health information from other member providers at the point of care. SMRTNET originated in Cherokee County as a result of the dedication and hard work of the Cherokee

About Us...

County Health Services Council and the Cherokee County Community Health Coalition. Over one hundred local and national experts have developed SMRTNET over four years at a cost of over \$4 million based on an AHRQ (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality) grant and Oklahoma sources in the Cherokee County area. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality featured SMRTNET in a report published in September 2010 highlighting eight quality improvement stories and their application of health IT across the country.

Cherokee County lies in the heart of the Illinois River Valley, with miles of shoreline on Lake Tenkiller and access to Fort Gibson Lake.



Cherokee County Community Health Coalition



Partnership Priorities

- Health Education (Physical Fitness & Nutrition)
- Tobacco Prevention
- Health Information Technology



Cherokee County, OK

County Seat: Tahlequah

Tribal Headquarters of the Cherokee Nation and Keetoowah Band of Cherokees

Northeastern State University

Cherokee Heritage Center

Murrell Home

“Through the work of this dedicated coalition; barriers to healthful living due to use of tobacco have been actively removed.”

-Carol Choate, Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control Coordinator



Community Profile: Strengths and Challenges

Cherokee County, in North-east Oklahoma has a population of 46,987. With the Capital of the Cherokee Nation as well as the United Band of Keetoowah Cherokees positioned here, there is a large Native American population, comprising 34% of the County’s population. 52.3% of the population is White, 1.3% is Black, and 6.3% are Hispanic or Latino.

The High School graduation rate is 80.7%, with 23.6% attaining a Bachelor’s degree or higher, which is above the state’s average.

There are two incorporated townships in Cherokee

County, which are Tahlequah, the County Seat, and Hulbert. Many residents of Cherokee County live outside city limits in rural communities, with little access to public transportation. Outlying communities include Keys, Cookson, Briggs, Shady Grove, Welling, and Woodall. Due to the rural nature of many communities, there are ten rural school districts in addition to Tahlequah Public Schools. Additionally, there is a private High School for Native American students. Tahlequah is home to Talking Leaves Job Corps, Northeastern State University’s Main

campus, Tahlequah City Hospital, and W.W. Hastings Hospital. The County’s population grew by 10.5% in the last decade.

Although there is an abundance of educational and healthcare resources, the number of persons living below poverty level was at 22.1% in 2009.

Within Cherokee County, the number of adults diagnosed with diabetes is estimated to be 12.4% (BRFSS), despite the fact that 83% of the population has access to healthy foods.

Description of Assessments

According to the 2011 County Health Rankings by the University of Wisconsin Health Institute, Cherokee County ranks 66 out of 77 for Health Factors and 45 out of 77 for Health Outcomes. Health Factors include health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment.

Thirty-three percent of the adults in Cherokee County are reported as having a Body Mass Index greater than 30.

Adults in Cherokee County use tobacco at a rate of thirty percent, compared to the state average of twenty-five percent.

According to the BRFSS, (2003 & 2005), 82.9% of Cherokee County adults did not eat the recommended 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

Physical inactivity contributes to health declines and escalates chronic disease. BRFSS data from 2003-2008 states that 35.7% of people in Cherokee County

had no leisure activity in the past month, and over half the adults did not reach the recommended physical activity level.

The leading cause of death in Cherokee County is heart disease, which costs the county over \$17 million a year. By addressing the flagship issues of the Oklahoma Health Improvement Plan, Reducing obesity and tobacco use and improving Child Health, we can see a drastic change in our County and State.

Featured Intervention / Project

The Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control program in Cherokee County is currently in its seventh year of funding. Over the span of this time, this program has worked with various agencies and individuals to achieve the passage and implementation of

- ◇ 24/7 Tobacco Free Campus policies in 8 school districts
- ◇ Prevention of Youth Access to Tobacco ordinances in Tahlequah and Hulbert. Tahlequah updated in 2011
- ◇ Clean Indoor Air ordinance in Tahlequah
- ◇ Tobacco Free Parks Ordinance in Tahlequah, 2010
- ◇ Provided technical assistance to W.W. Hastings and Tahle-

quah City Hospitals for tobacco free policy implementation

- ◇ Tobacco Free NSU policy

The program leverages grant funding with local resources to promote the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline through print, radio and outdoor advertising.

One of the group's objectives this year was to reinforce the need to protect youth from having easy access to tobacco, by conducting educational visits to local retailers who have been in violation in the past, or are located near schools. Program staff, coalition members, and youth Students Working Against To-

bacco (SWAT) members conducted these visits, with 4 retailers attempting to sell tobacco products to minors. All retailers were given a reminder of the importance of following state laws and of protecting our youth.

Two Legislative Breakfasts were

hosted in Hulbert this year, giving the coalition an opportunity to engage community stakeholders and elected officials.

And a new SWAT team was formed in Hulbert, for a total of 11 teams. The coalition has continued to promote awareness of the Tobacco Free Parks ordinance in Tahlequah by hosting Movies in the Park, and organizing cleanup events in County Parks.



Coalition members and SWAT youth with Senator Jim Wilson and Representative Mike Brown



The Cherokee County CX program staff received a Community Advocate award at the Seventh Generation Conference

Funding

- ◇ **Communities of Excellence in Tobacco Control**
- ◇ **Purpose: Tobacco Use Prevention/Cessation**
- ◇ **Funding Period: October 2010– September 2011**
- ◇ **Funder: Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust**
- ◇ **Funding: \$173,412**

Impact

The Cherokee County Community Health Coalition, and all its many partners, are working to ensure continued collaboration and communication, while supporting current efforts that impact the population.

Members have been very involved with policy work, both at the local and state level, regarding tobacco, alcohol, Health Information Technology, and physical activity.

The coalition continues to support the growth of SmartNet, providing a strategy to share Health information among health-care agencies and physicians. This program has been very successful and is now self-sustaining.

Next steps for Cherokee County will include increased community involvement and community assessments to form a strategic health improvement plan for the County.

Contact Information



Oklahoma Turning Point

Oklahoma State Department of Health

Louise Micolites
Regional Turning Point Consultant
906 S. College
Tahlequah, OK 74464

Phone: 918-458-6547
Fax: 918-458-6592
E-mail: Louisem@health.ok.gov



Joanna Walkingstick, Chair
Cherokee County Community Health Coalition
joannawalkingstick@smrtnet.org

Val Dobbins, Vice-Chair
Tahlequah Public Schools
dobbinsv@tahlequah.k12.ok.us

Carol Choate, Coordinator
Cherokee County Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control
carolchoate45@yahoo.com

George Foster, Chair
Cherokee County Health Services Council
Fosterge@nsuok.edu

Mary Beth Murray, Administrator
Cherokee County Health Department
MaryBM@health.ok.gov

Partnership Outcomes

There is a saying that timing is everything, but in reality, timing is only a part of the equation for success. To insure success, a group must not rely solely on timing, but must add the right place and the right people to the mix. Cherokee County was fortunate to have the Right Time, the Right Place and the Right People. In 1994, health care organizations in Cherokee County formed an alliance to address health care issues. These entities, a sovereign nation, and national, state and local health providers, realized that working together was the way to effectively impact health indicators and quality of life in

Cherokee County. The alliance be-came a coalition and moved forward to implement programs and projects that would improve the health and well being of Cherokee County citizens. However, their concerns did not stop there. Later, programs and projects would be developed and implemented to help all the citizens of Oklahoma. The lynch pin, over the last 17 years, has been the willingness of the people in Cherokee County to maintain their continuity while working toward a common goal, A Healthier Oklahoma.

- ◇ 1994– Creation of Coalition
- ◇ 1998- Became one of three

pilot Turning Point partnerships in Oklahoma

- ◇ 1999-Began process of obtaining funding for Federally Qualified Health Care Center
- ◇ 2002– Worked with State Legislature to create Oklahoma Center for Rural Development
- ◇ 2004– Launch Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control grant.
- ◇ 2005– AHRQ planning grant -SMRTNET
- ◇ 2007– SMRTNET is live and operational
- ◇ 2010– 8th School District and NSU adopts 24/7 Tobacco Free campus policies



Opportunities for physical activity abound in all seasons!