

I. County Description



Carter County is located in the Northeast Tennessee region bordered by the counties of Unicoi, Washington, Sullivan, and Johnson and the state of North Carolina. With an estimated 1997 total population of 53,082 people, Elizabethton (the county seat) is the residence of approximately 13,289 people while 428 reside in Watauga. Carter County has a land area of 341.1 square miles supporting almost 156 people per square mile. From 1990 to 1997, the county recorded a 3.1% growth in population. Carter County's total minority population is 1.5%. With regard to the age distribution of the population, Carter County has higher percentages of residents in the 60 & above age group and in the 45-59 age group as compared to the Northeast Region (this rural region excludes Sullivan). All other age groups in Carter County are represented in lower percentages than the region.



The county has four major highways and three major railroads running through it. The county has no bus service. Elizabethton is around eleven miles from the nearest large city of Johnson City (population of approximately 55,600).



Carter County had a per capita income of \$13,903 in 1994 and \$15,270 in 1996 for a 9.8% change. The median household income for 1993 was an estimated \$22,849. In 1993, an estimated 10,492 people (19.9% of the population – third highest percentage in the region) were living in poverty.



Carter County is home to one hospital and approximately 19 full-time-equivalent primary care physicians. With almost 48% of the population considered low-income (<200% poverty),

Carter County was designated a federal Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for primary care for the low-income population in June 1999, replacing its previous partial geographic designation as a federal HPSA. Carter County is similarly designated a federal HPSA for dental care for the low-income population and the whole county is designated a federal Medically Underserved Area.

II. Needs Assessment Data

A. Community Stakeholder Survey

The Stakeholder Survey provides a profile of perceived health care needs and problems facing the community stakeholders who respond to the survey. We see council members and other residents alike as having a stake in the overall improvement of this county's health status and health care. This survey includes questions about the adequacy of availability, accessibility, and level of satisfaction regarding health care services in the community. The Community Stakeholder Survey is not a scientific random sample of the community; rather, its purpose is to obtain subjective perceptions of health care from a cross section of the community. It is one of two sources of primary data used in the community diagnosis process.

Of more than 200 surveys distributed, 121 were collected for analysis. Respondents represented a variety of subgroups as listed and in the following percentages: *employer-based-60%*, *Health Dept. clients-10%*, *parents of school children-8%*, *homeless-8%*, *senior citizens and homebound elderly-7%*, and *Dept. of Human Services clients-6%*. Various members of the Carter County Health Council were instrumental in the distribution and collection of the surveys. The stakeholders included both the users and providers of health care services.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the respondents were female (8% did not respond to this question). Fifty-eight percent (58%) identified themselves as white while 36% did not respond.