

Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center  
2016 Annual Report to the Cancer Committee

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***Our Demographics and Needs***

Our most recent community needs assessment was conducted in July 2016. St. Lawrence County is a large and predominantly rural county. As of 2015, it had a population of 110,007. The county's population has changed very little since 1960, remaining between 110,000 and 115,000 for the past 55 years.

St. Lawrence County is the largest county in New York State by size and the most populous county in New York State that lacks direct access to an interstate highway within its borders. The county comprises 32 towns and a single city. The largest county subdivisions are the city of Ogdensburg and the towns of Potsdam, Massena, Canton, and Gouverneur. About half of the county's population (52%) live within these five subdivisions, with the remaining half spread across 28 other towns.

St. Lawrence County is served by five hospitals: Canton-Potsdam Hospital, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center, Clifton-Fine Hospital, Gouverneur Hospital, and Massena Memorial Hospital. As of 2014, Canton-Potsdam and Claxton-Hepburn were responsible for the largest number of inpatient and outpatient visits for residents of St. Lawrence County.

The median age in St. Lawrence County is 37.8. 15% of residents – or about one in seven - are over 65. The county has an especially large number of young adults, especially in the vicinity of its four-year colleges and state prisons: 15% of its residents are 18 to 24 years old. St. Lawrence County's population is 50.8% male and 49.2% female.

87% of St. Lawrence County residents over age 24 have a high school diploma or equivalent. 22% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 11% have a graduate degree. There is a strong correlation between educational attainment and poverty: 36% of those without a high school diploma or higher in St. Lawrence County live in poverty, compared to 18% of high school graduates, and 15% of those with a four-year degree.

However, the poverty rate has remained at or near 20% since 2008, its highest level since the 1960s, and it exceeds 25% among children. St. Lawrence County has the fifth highest poverty rate among New York State's 62 counties, and the thirteenth highest rate of poverty among 221 counties in the northeastern United States. As of 2014, the poverty rate in St. Lawrence County was 19%, and the poverty rate for children was 26%. Median household income is \$43.5k, and has not shown a sustained increase in real terms since before the 2008 recession. It remains lower than the national median of \$53.7k, the statewide median of \$58.7k, and the median household income in most neighboring counties. The most recent available unemployment rate for St. Lawrence County is 5.4%, which is higher compared to the statewide average of 5.1%.

***Health Summary***

Over the most recent five years of available data, St. Lawrence County's age-adjusted mortality rate has declined by 12.6%. This decline occurred primarily because of reductions in age-adjusted mortality within the region's three leading causes of death, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and respiratory disease. Furthermore,

age-adjusted mortality rates within almost all disease categories remain higher than statewide benchmarks, including mortality for heart disease, cancers, respiratory disease, and digestive disease.

For people in their forties, who account for 3.1% of all deaths in the county, cardiovascular disease (25%) and cancer (26%) are the leading causes of death, followed by external causes (24%). For people in their fifties, who account for 15.2% of all deaths in the county, cancer (37%) is the dominant cause of death, followed by cardiovascular disease (25%), with external causes remaining the third most common cause of death. People in their sixties, who account for 15.2% of all deaths in the county, cancer remains most important (37%), followed by cardiovascular disease (26%) and respiratory disease (13%). People in their seventies or older are responsible for nearly two-thirds of all deaths in St. Lawrence County, with cancer (32%), cardiovascular disease (29%), and respiratory disease (16%) combining to account for over three-quarters of deaths in this age group. For people age 80 or older, who account for 43.6% of all deaths in the county, cardiovascular disease is responsible for a near-majority of deaths (46%), followed by cancer (14%), respiratory disease (12%), and mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders (7%).

### ***Health Status***

78% of St. Lawrence County residents report that their physical health is excellent or good compared to 22% who say that their physical health is poor or fair. 15% of St. Lawrence County residents report that they have been diagnosed with either diabetes (11%) or prediabetes (4%). 6% report that they have been diagnosed with COPD, 6% report that they have been diagnosed with heart disease, and 29% report that they have been diagnosed with high blood pressure. Most St. Lawrence County residents agree that they are working to improve their health. An even larger percentage (72%), report that they are confident that they can improve their health.

As of 2013-2014, 33% of St. Lawrence County adults are obese. This is higher than most other counties in Upstate New York, and above the statewide rate of 25%. This is an increase relative the previous survey, in 2008-2009, which found an adult obesity rate of 29% for St. Lawrence County. When overweight adults are included, the rate increases to 71%, also above the statewide rate of obese or overweight adults of 61%. The rate of obesity among children and adolescents is 20%, exceeding the statewide-excluding-NYC average of 17%. This was true in 14 of the county's 17 school districts. St. Lawrence County ranks within the uppermost quartile of New York State counties for child obesity.

### ***Access to Care***

St. Lawrence County has fewer primary care clinicians per population compared to the statewide rate. As of 2013, the most recent year for which data were available, there were 167 physicians practicing in St. Lawrence County, or one per 670 residents. There were 61 primary care physicians practicing in St. Lawrence County, or one per 1,835 residents. The statewide rate was 1,183 residents per practicing primary care physician, or 55% fewer people per primary care physician. St. Lawrence County also contained 53 practicing physicians' assistants (one per 2,112 residents), 58 practicing nurse practitioners (one per 1,930 residents). Both were about 20% worse compared to their respective statewide ratios. Both the Tug Hill Seaway 2016 Community Health Survey and the 2013-2014 NYS EBRFSS survey show that about one-fifth of St. Lawrence County residents do not have a regular health care provider. This is somewhat higher than the statewide rate of 16%, and well short of the Prevention Agenda 2018 objective of less than 10%.

## ***Health Behaviors***

Supermarkets and grocery stores are the usual source of food for 95% of St. Lawrence County residents. Seventy eight percent of county residents say that they usually eat at least one serving of fruits per day and 85% say that they usually eat at least one serving of vegetables per day. 25% of residents report that they always stop eating before they feel full, compared to 46% who sometimes stop and 22% who never do.

14% of St. Lawrence County adults are current smokers, 59% have never been smokers, and 27% are former smokers. The widest disparities in rates of current smokers are by income and education: Among those with four-year degrees, 3% are current smokers, compared to 17% of those with no college or some college. 22% of adults in households with less than \$25 in income per year are smokers compared to 6% in households with incomes in excess of \$50k. 14% of St. Lawrence County adults report that someone smokes inside of their home at least weekly and an additional 2% report that someone smokes inside their homes at least monthly.

Among St. Lawrence County residents 55 or older, 76% have had a colorectal cancer screening. Among adult women in St. Lawrence County, 66% have had a mammogram, including 91% of women age 45 or older. The burden of cancer in New York State is high. According to the 2012-2017 New York State Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, cancer is the second leading cause of death in New York State. Approximately 288 New Yorkers are diagnosed with cancer each day and more than 96 New Yorkers die each day from cancer. Some cancers can be prevented. About one-third of cancers can be attributed to tobacco use, while another one-third can be attributed to poor nutrition, physical inactivity and obesity.

The 2013-2014 EBRFSS survey found that one third of St. Lawrence County adults were obese, several percentage points higher than the statewide average. Another third of adult residents were overweight. The percentage of overweight and obese children also exceeds the statewide average. Obesity is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, many forms of cancer, diabetes, and kidney disease, and could overtake smoking as the leading cause of preventable death within the next decade. The share of obese adults in St. Lawrence County is growing, and this trend threatens to reverse progress that the county has made over the past decade toward reducing its rate of deaths before age 65 to less than the statewide average.

## ***Screening Programs***

**Colorectal Cancer Screening** - We work with many local human services agencies, including the New York State Cancer Services program to seek out and screen these individuals. For those that are uninsured or underinsured, we have grant that provides screening free of charge to the patient. In 2016 we provided seven free colonoscopies, with no cancer detected, but several people had polyps that followed. We will be applying for the grant again in 2017.

**Breast Cancer Screening** - Annually we work with the New York State Cancer Services Program to provide a minimum of two free breast cancer screenings to eligible women in our region. In 2016, one was held in June and another will be held in December. One women was screened in June with negative findings. Three others that were scheduled were no-shows and were contacted to reschedule. We will continue this screening in 2016 as it is estimated that there are about 800 women in our region who are eligible for mammography screening but have not done so. With the addition of Ashley Peggs, mammography navigator at the Richard E. Winter Cancer Center, we hope to increase our mammography screening rates dramatically.

**Skin Cancer Screening** - We held our annual county-wide skin cancer screening in April through our health centers. Although statistics do not show skin cancer to be a burden in our population, our free screening results show that there is a higher incidence of abnormal skin lesions in our community. We screened 42 people, 29 women and 13 men. 23 required follow up for suspicious findings. Based on a 2015 NYS DOH report, basal and squamous cell carcinomas are the most common types of skin cancer. However, due to the lack of population-based surveillance data, the skin cancer incidence rate in New York State is not known. It is generally believed that the rate has been increasing during the last several decades nationwide. Melanoma is among the top ten cancer diagnoses for New York State residents as a whole and among the top five diagnoses for young adults, 20 to 34 years of age. Over the last 30 years, the melanoma incidence rate has also been increasing.

**Lung Cancer Screening**- Thanks to generous grant funding from a local source, we are able to provide low cost and free lung cancer screenings. In 2016 we performed 13 free lung cancer screenings and 22 \$99 screenings using low-dose CT. We have found aneurysms, lesions, nodules and opacities that are being followed as well as cases of COPD, CAD and emphysema. St. Lawrence County continues to rank above the state and federal rates for lung cancer incidence. According to the 2012-2017 New York State Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, about one-third of cancers can be attributed to tobacco use, while another one-third can be attributed to poor nutrition, physical inactivity and obesity.

### ***Prevention Programs***

**Colorectal Cancer Screening** – As part of our prevention efforts this year, we created a video featuring Dr. Galvan talking about the importance of colorectal screening. The video is on YouTube and our website. We also put together an informational brochure on colorectal cancer screening that we hand out at community events and health fairs. We participated in Go Blue Day, encouraging our employees and community to dress in blue to raise awareness of the importance of colorectal cancer screening. Our focus for screening and prevention for 2017 will be on increasing colorectal screening rates to align with the “80% by 2018” initiative spearheaded by the National Colorectal Cancer Roundtable. The initiative includes dozens of organizations who have committed to eliminating colorectal cancer as a major public health problem and are working towards the shared goal of reaching 80% of adults aged 50 and older screened for colorectal cancer by 2018.

**Tobacco Cessation** – In 2016, through generous support and grant funding from the Tobacco Cessation Center of Central New York, Claxton-Hepburn’s Shannon VanHouse, RN, CTIS, provides free inpatient and outpatient tobacco cessation counseling. Although St. Lawrence County has seen a decline in smoking rates from 27% to most recently 14%, it still remains as one of the most contributing factors to several types of cancers. In 2016, tobacco intervention was provided to 52 individuals.

**Diabetes Prevention Program** In 2014, Claxton-Hepburn began offering the free CDC evidence-based National Diabetes Prevention Program. The lifestyle modification program is for people with pre-diabetes or who are at risk for developing pre-diabetes or diabetes. Participants are expected to lose 7% of their total body weight and work up to 150 minutes of activity a week, over a 16-week period. We held 4 sessions with a total of 64 participants finished the program and garnered a total weight loss of over 400 pounds. Participants are surveyed pre and post program about their lifestyles. Many noted the positive impact the small weight loss had on their overall health.