## Women with Disabilities in North Carolina

Approximately 25 million American women have a disability, such as hearing loss, psychiatric disability, or a physical limitation. Historically, people with disabilities have not been recognized as a distinct population and there has been a lack of data on their health status. Presenting data on disability can aid in targeting resources and interventions toward populations in need. Factors such as lack of access to healthcare, low socioeconomic status, and environmental barriers contribute to poor health status of women with disabilities.

Defining Disability – Increasingly, the definition of disability is based on the limitation of daily activities such as the ability to work, provide self-care, or go outside the home alone. A person is considered to have a disability if she needs help to perform the activity, uses adaptive or assistive equipment, or requires standby help. Furthermore, these limitations are expected to be permanent or long-term in duration.

Women & Disability <sup>1</sup>				
	2001	2005		
All	26.9%	29.8%		
Non-Hispanic, White	26.8%	29.2%		
Non-Hispanic, Black	29.7%	35.3%		
Hispanic	21.8%	18.4%		

<sup>•</sup>The percentage of women with disabilities is increasing among white and African American women.

Chronic Disease	2001	2005
Percentage of women age 18+ with high blood pressure <sup>1</sup>		
ALL	28.9%	30.3%
Disabled	48.0%	45.9%
Non-Disabled	22.0%	23.9%
Percentage of women age 18+ with high cholesterol <sup>1</sup>		
ALL	30.5%	36.5%
Disabled	44.1%	47.4%
Non-Disabled	25.2%	31.8%
Percentage of women age 18+ with diabetes <sup>1</sup>		
ALL	6.7%	8.5%
Disabled	14.7%	17.7%
Non-Disabled	3.7%	4.7%
Percentage of women age 18+ who are obese (BMI 30.0+) <sup>1</sup>		
ALL	23.2%	26.6%
Disabled	34.0%	36.7%
Non-Disabled	19.4%	22.3%

- Women with disabilities have higher rates of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes than women without disabilities. These are major risk factors for heart disease and stroke.
- The obesity rate for women with disabilities is more than twice that of the Healthy People 2010 objective to reduce the proportion of adults who are obese to 15%.

Barriers to Health	2001	2005
Percentage of women age 18+ with no health insurance coverage <sup>1</sup>		
ALL	13.0%	16.6%
Disabled	13.4%	16.1%
Non-Disabled	12.2%	16.6%

Percentage of women age 16+ who are unemployed and looking	g for work (2002, 20	005) <sup>2</sup>
ALL	36.1%	35.9%
Disabled	59.3%	67.3%
Non-Disabled	32.0%	30.8%
Percentage of women age 5+ below the federal poverty level (2	002, 2005) <sup>2</sup>	
ALL	15.7%	16.5%
Disabled	22.9%	25.7%
Non-Disabled	14.2%	14.7%

 Women with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed compared to women without disabilities. A Healthy People 2010 objective is to reach a target employment rate of 82% among adults with disabilities.

Preventive Health Practices	2001	2005
Percentage of women age 50+ who did not have a mammogram within the pa	ast 2 years (20	00, 2004) <sup>1</sup>
ALL Disabled Non-Disabled	19.7% 22.4% 17.7%	19.0% 21.6% 17.0%
Percentage of women age 18+ who did not have a Pap smear within the past 2 years (2000, 2004)		
ALL Disabled Non-Disabled	17.0% 22.0% 15.4%	11.3% 16.7% 9.4%
Percentage of women age 50+ who have never had a sigmoidoscopy of (2001, 2004) <sup>1</sup>	r colonoscop	y exam
ALL	53.2%	46.8%
Disabled Non-Disabled	52.7% 43.6%	44.4% 48.5%
Percentage of women age 18+ who did not meet the minimum recomme	ended physic	cal activity <sup>1</sup>
ALL Disabled Non-Disabled	61.1% 71.9% 56.7%	61.7% 71.9% 57.5%
Percentage of women age 18+ who have not visited a dentist within th (2001, 2004) <sup>1</sup>	e past 12 mo	onths
ALL Disabled Non-Disabled	26.9% 40.1% 22.2%	30.1% 40.0% 25.7%
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Women with disabilities are less likely to engage in regular physical activity, yet they often have
greater need for health promotion activities. Strategies to address this disparity include improving
access to fitness facilities, exercise equipment, and outdoor trails, as well as targeting women with
disabilities in public health campaigns.

## **Data Sources:**

- 1. NC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), State Center for Health Statistics
- 2. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey of the civilian, non-institutionalized population, ages 5 years and older, North Carolina

## **Contact Information**

North Carolina Office on Disability and Health North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health 1928 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1928 http://wch.dhhs.state.nc.us/cay North Carolina Office on Disability and Health FPG Child Development Institute Campus Box 8185 The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185 http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh

