



**Wills Memorial Hospital**  
**Community Health Needs Assessment**

**April 2013**

**Lincoln, Taliaferro, & Wilkes Counties**



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## **Introduction**

The Community Health Needs Assessment completed by Wills Memorial Hospital is a federal requirement of non-profit hospital organizations under section 9007(a) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It was designed to help hospitals better understand the populations in which they serve, to identify current needs within the community, and also to recognize existing assets. By completing this needs assessment, Wills Memorial Hospital can learn how to respond to these needs within the scope of our services and partnerships.

Under the recently passed federal health reform bill, all non-profit hospitals are required to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment every three years and make it available to the public. The Assessment should take into account input from “persons who represent the broad interests of the community served by the hospital facility, including those with special knowledge of or expertise in public health”. Through surveys, interviews, and group meetings with local community leaders, as well as individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, we feel that the 9007 (a) assessment standards have been satisfied.



## **CNA Leadership Committee Members:**

Jane Echols, RN & WMH CEO

Kelly Powel, RN & Practice Manager of Community Medical Associates of Washington and Lincoln

Susan Duncan Pope, WMH Community Relations Director

Tracie Burris, WMH CFO

Mandy Jackson, WMH Administration Assistant

## **Community Advisory Council:**

Polly Fievet, Family Connection Board, Communities in Schools of Wilkes County Board, Hospital Authority of Wilkes County

Carolyn Reynolds, Family Connection Board, Communities in Schools of Wilkes County Board, God's Marketplace Board, WMH Auxiliary, Kiwanis Member

Jennifer Jackson, RN & Wilkes County Health Department Nurse Manager

Dr. Rosemary Caddell, Superintendent of Wilkes County Board of Education, Wilkes County Board of Health

Blake Thompson, Director of Wilkes County EMS/EMA, Wilkes County Coroner, Rotary Board Member

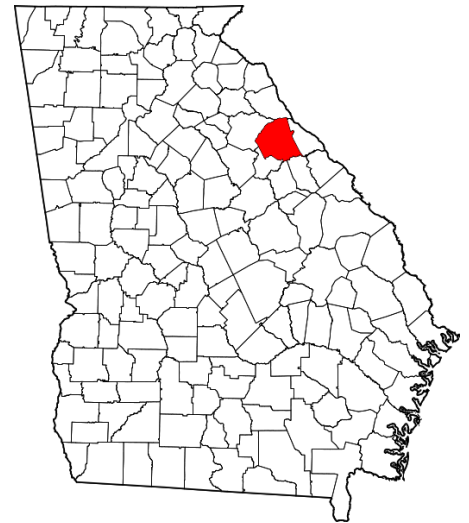


### **Wills Memorial Hospital and the Community in which it Serves:**

Wills Memorial Hospital is a 25 bed acute care hospital located in Washington, Georgia. It is governed by the Hospital Authority of Wilkes County. WMH is accredited by the Joint Commission and is designated a critical access hospital. The facility serves the counties of Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes. It is the only hospital located in this tri-county area. All three counties are rural and designated “medically underserved” by the State of Georgia’s Rural Health Division of the Department of Community Health (DCH).

According to the 2010 census, the total combined population of these counties is 20,306. The following figures represent the breakdown of county populations served by Wills Memorial Hospital in 2012: Wilkes 69%, Lincoln 17%, Taliaferro 17%, and other counties 7%.

The original facility opened in 1924 as Washington General Hospital. In 2012, a new inpatient wing, pharmacy, respiratory therapy department, registration, emergency room, reception, main entrance, specialty clinic, and physical therapy/occupational therapy facilities were completed. Wills Memorial Hospital focuses on providing complete medical care for Wilkes, Taliaferro, and Lincoln County residents.



Washington is a beautiful town, touted as a retirement haven and tourist destination due to the many antebellum homes and the town’s rich civil and revolutionary war history. However, poverty in WMH service areas is higher than the Georgia average. Many socioeconomic groups face disparities due to poverty and the issues that arise from it. Several area manufacturing facilities have closed or experienced a reduction-in-force over the last decade leading to higher than average unemployment rates. Due to these factors, a high percentage of Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes residents are uninsured and, as a result, not as healthy as their insured counterparts.



### **Process**

The WMH's Community Needs Assessment is a process that identifies the health needs of the communities of Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes through qualitative and quantitative data from various sources. The secondary data was obtained through several national and state demographic studies, while the primary data was derived from surveys, interviews, and focus groups that included many local community members. The format reflects the standard Community Needs Assessment format presented by Draffin & Tucker, LLP.

The assessment began with the collection of qualitative data from various Georgia and U.S. studies. This data includes demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, health data and vital statistics, as well as general county health rankings. After this secondary data was collected, a comprehensive survey was completed by community members who are knowledgeable about health care in the WMH service areas. These community members have an expertise or a vested interest in the health of our community. Many interviews were also conducted with individuals from differing socioeconomic backgrounds to gather primary data. Once the primary and secondary data was collected, a meeting was held with several key community members to discuss the findings and determine how Wills Memorial Hospital would respond to the needs of the community. Finally, the WMH Community Needs Assessment leadership committee met to determine which needs the hospital can financially and physically undertake. The Hospital Authority of Wilkes County was presented the analysis in the June 2013 meeting and the assessment was posted on the WMH website: [www.willsmemorialhospital.com](http://www.willsmemorialhospital.com).



### **Primary/Qualitative Data/Community Input**

Qualitative data was collected from community members who are knowledgeable about health care in the WMH service areas. These community members have expertise and/or a vested interest in the health of our community. Data was also collected from targeted socioeconomic groups in the Lincoln-Taliaferro-Wilkes area that are known to have unmet health needs. A comprehensive survey, as well as interviews and written correspondence, was collected from the following individuals:

- Polly Fievet, Family Connection Board, Communities in Schools of Wilkes County Board, Hospital Authority of Wilkes County
- Carolyn Reynolds, Family Connection Board , Communities in Schools of Wilkes County Board, God's Marketplace Board, WMH Auxiliary, Kiwanis Member
- Jennifer Jackson, RN & Wilkes County Health Department Nurse Manager, Health & Wellness Coalition member
- Brenda Goolsby, RN & Lincoln County Health Department Nurse Manager
- Kenya Smith, RN & Nurse Manager of Taliaferro County Health Department
- Dr. Rosemary Caddell, Superintendent of Wilkes County Board of Education, Wilkes County Board of Health
- Blake Thompson, Director of Wilkes County EMS/EMA, Wilkes County Coroner, Rotary Board
- Amethyst Wynn, Executive Director of Wilkes County Family Connection, Leader of Health & Wellness Coalition
- Ray Hardy, RN BSN, Administrator of CSRA Private Duty, Inc.
- Pete Gartrell, Wilkes County Parks and Recreation Director
- Renee Brown, Taliaferro County Board of Health, Mayor of Sharon, WMH Foundation



## **Secondary/Quantitative Data**

- University of Georgia
- Georgia State Government
- Federal Government
- Other Sources





**Demographic Data**

The 2010 census data reports the combined populations of Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes Counties as 20, 306. The 2030 projected population for the three counties combined is 18, 518, which is an 8.8% decrease over the 20 year period.

Age

Race/Ethnicity (2011)	Lincoln	Taliaferro	Wilkes	Georgia
Median age	45.8	46	44.4	38.4
Age 65 and over	17.9%	20.3%	18.8%	14.0%

Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity (2011)	Lincoln	Taliaferro	Wilkes	Georgia
Black	32.4%	59.7%	42.4%	28.4%
White	65.8%	37.8%	55.2%	68.6%
Other	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.7%
Hispanic/Latino	1.4%	2.5%	3.6%	6.0%

Household Information

Households (2011)	Lincoln	Taliaferro	Wilkes	Georgia
Married Couple	67.8%	48.2%	60.0%	70.8%
Married Couple with children < 18	20.9%	7.1%	15.2%	27.7%
Male Household with children <18	1.6%	3.7%	3.6%	3.1%
Female Household with children <18	12.8%	12.4%	14.4%	12.4%



# WMH Community Needs Assessment

## Education Level

Education Level (2010)	Lincoln	Taliaferro	Wilkes	Georgia
Not Completing High School	22.6%	41.7%	28.2%	16.5%
High School Grad/GED	42.3%	37.5%	38.3%	29.6%
Some College	25.4%	14.0%	18.0%	26.7%
Bachelor's Degree	6.4%	4.5%	8.4%	17.5%
Graduate/Professional	3.3%	2.3%	7.1%	9.7%

## Public Education

Public Education (2011)	Lincoln	Taliaferro	Wilkes	Georgia
High School Drop Out Rate (per 100 enrolled)	1.9%	1.4%	6.3%	3.3%
Completion Rate (2011)	75.7%	40.0%	66.7%	70.3%
Economically disadvantaged	66.2%	93.6%	75.6%	66%
Students retained in a grade	5.4%	6.5%	6.8%	3.7%
Students with disabilities	14.3%	14.1%	12.4%	12.3%
Students in Gifted Program	3.2%	0.0%	7.5%	6.7%
Grads with college prep diploma	64.4%	38.5%	51.1%	66.0%



**Socioeconomic Characteristics**

A significant percent of the population of Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes Counties lives below the poverty level. The percentages range from 20%-30%, which are higher than the state average of 21.7%. The population without a high school diploma/GED in the WMH service area ranges from 22.6% to 41.7% and is higher than the state average of 16.5%. The unemployment rates are above the 9.8 % state average in Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes Counties. The median household income in all three counties is much lower than the state average of \$46, 252.

**Social and Economic Indicators**

	Persons Below Poverty 2010	Children Below Poverty 2010	Single Female Children 2011	No High School Diploma 2010
Lincoln	20.8%	32.0%	12.8%	22.6%
Taliaferro	30.3%	48.9%	12.4%	41.7%
Wilkes	24.9%	38.7%	14.4%	28.2%
Georgia Average	21.7%	31.2%	12.4%	16.5%

	Minority 2011	Unemployed 2011	Uninsured 2010	Median Household income 2010
Lincoln	34.6%	10.8%	25.1%	\$35,201
Taliaferro	63.1%	12.6%	26.3%	\$26,863
Wilkes	46.9%	12.0%	22.6%	\$30,451
Georgia Average	36.1%	9.8%	22.5%	\$46,252



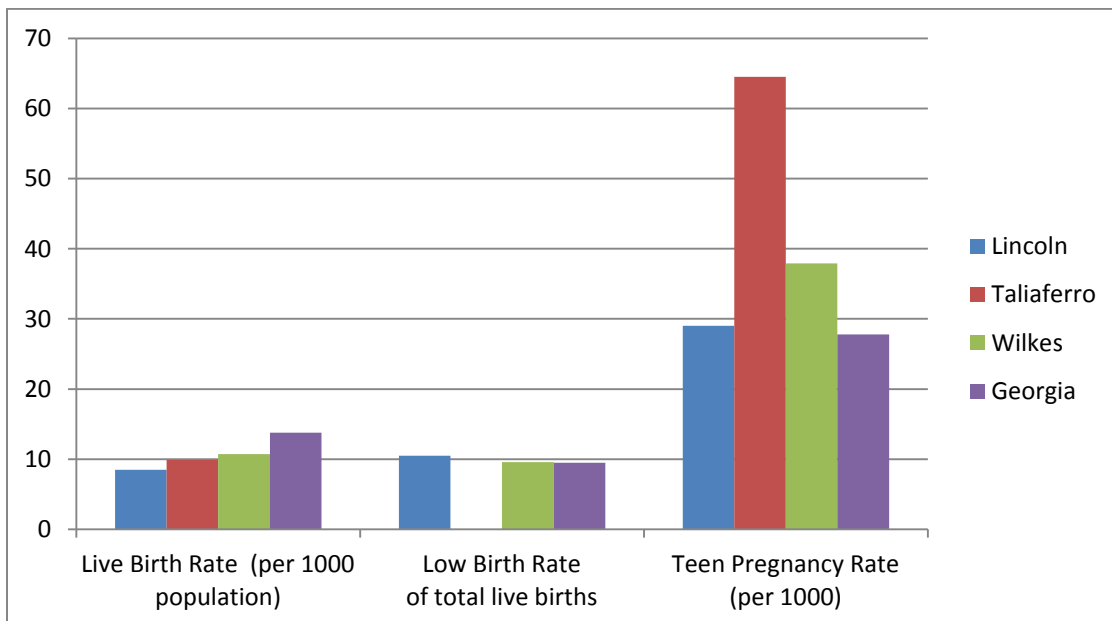
## Health Data

The County Health Rankings report premature death as a measure of mortality. In 2012, the Lincoln County rate of premature death was 9532 per 100,000 of the population. In Taliaferro the rate was 13, 295 and in Wilkes it was 9, 933 per 100, 000. Premature death represents the years of potential life lost before the age of 75 (rate is age adjusted). The overall Georgia premature death rate in 2012 was 7, 697.

A vital statistic that is important to include in health data is the death rate. The Lincoln County death rate in 2010 was 1138.1 per 100, 000 population. In Taliaferro the death rate was 1863.7 and in Wilkes it was 1406.6 per 100, 000. The average county in Georgia's death rate in 2010 was 923.5 per 100, 000.

The following graphs give information about several vital statistics and health indicators:

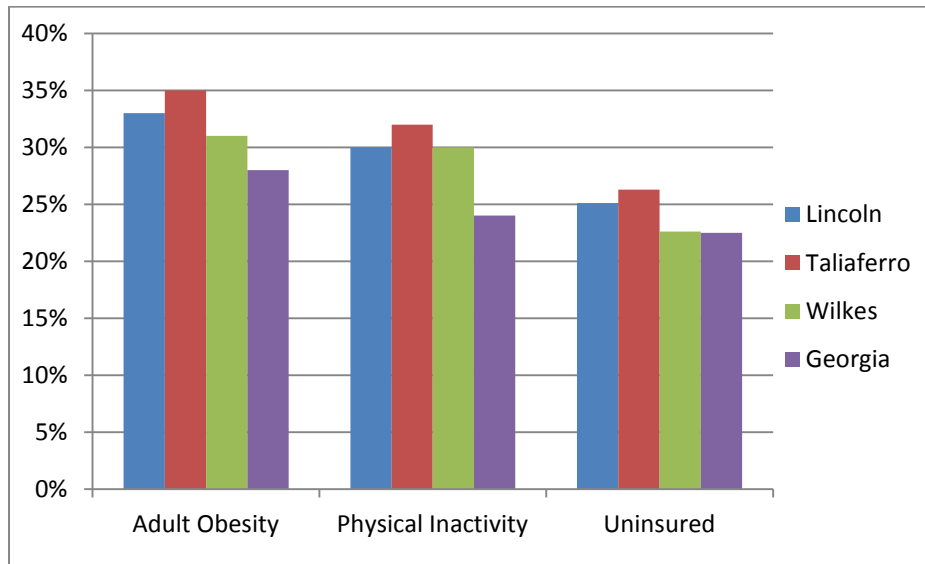
### 2012 Vital Statistics



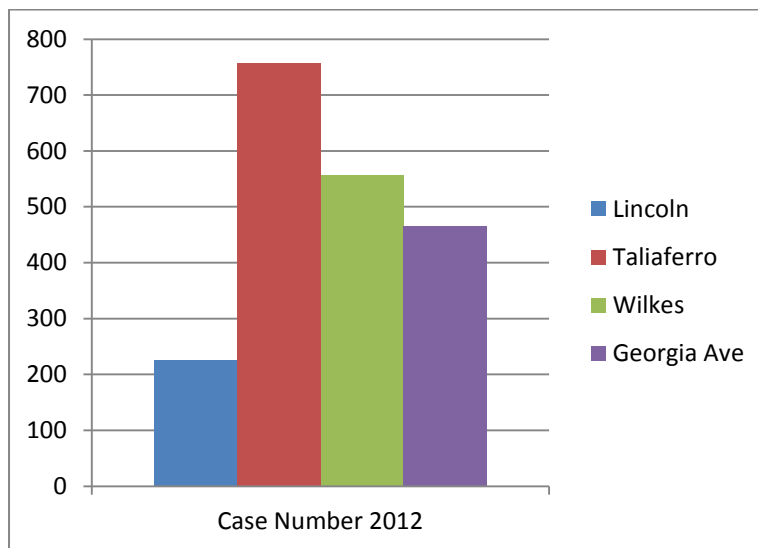
The rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases reported in a county is an indicator of the population's health. The cases in 2012 in Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes were 225, 757, and 557 respectively. The Georgia average in 2012 was 466. The percentage of the population that is uninsured is also an indicator of the general health of a community. The uninsured rates in the WMH service areas are higher than the Georgia average of 22.5%.



## Health Indicators



## Sexually Transmitted Infections



The County Health Ranking report also identifies “health behaviors” and ranks each county in the state in numerical order from 1 to 159 in this category. Included in health behaviors are: adult smoking, adult obesity, physical inactivity, excessive drinking, motor vehicle crash death rate, sexually transmitted infections, and teen birth rate. Lincoln County ranks 87<sup>th</sup> in health behaviors, Taliaferro ranks 140<sup>th</sup>, and Wilkes ranks 94<sup>th</sup> out of 159 Georgia Counties.



### Identified Needs

- **Obesity:** Obesity in adults, children, and teens was overwhelming identified as a major health concern in our community. According to the National Institutes of Health, the obesity epidemic is the cause of an estimated 300, 000 deaths per year. Obesity leads to many other chronic health issues, such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, sleep apnea, high cholesterol, and heart disease, it is a major obstacle to leading a healthy life.
- **Lack of access to basic primary health care:** This may be due to the high population of uninsured people within our service area. Many do not have primary care physicians and use the Emergency Room for routine care.
- **Teen pregnancy/STD rates:** Teen pregnancy and STD rates in Wilkes and Taliaferro are much higher than in the average Georgia County.
- **Survival of our rural hospital:** Without Wills Memorial Hospital in our community, access to primary and specialty health care would be even more difficult for the aging and poor populations. One respondent noted, “Our hospital is the link in the health care chain of our community,” without it our population would suffer dire health consequences. Another respondent from Taliaferro County noted that there is not a single physician practicing in Taliaferro County since the closing of the Tri-County facility. Many people noted “transportation” as a barrier to receiving health care in our community. If residents were forced to drive to the nearest major city for health care, many of our elderly and poor would simply not be able to get care that they require.



### **Prioritization Process**

Wills Memorial Hospital used the following process to prioritize and address the needs identified in the 2013 Community Needs Assessment.

- A. All data, primary and secondary, were read and analyzed
- B. Reoccurring issues were identified and noted
- C. Information was presented to the Community Advisory Council
- D. The Advisory Council discussed the all findings
- E. The Advisory Council made their recommendation to the CNA Leadership Committee that the reoccurring health issues that impacted the community the most be focused on by the Wills Memorial Hospital CNA team.
- F. The identified health issues/needs were presented to the Hospital Authority of Wilkes County to make the final decisions based on our human and financial resources.



## **Community Health Resources**

**Wills Memorial Hospital:** Wills Memorial Hospital is a non-profit, community, 25 bed, acute care hospital that has been serving the area since 1924. It is designated a critical access hospital. The campus includes: inpatient wing, pharmacy, outpatient surgery, laboratory, radiology, respiratory therapy, emergency room, specialty clinic, and physical therapy/occupational therapy facilities. Also available through our emergency room are telemedicine services for early stroke recognition and intervention. Specialty services provided in Wills Memorial Hospital focus on providing complete medical care for Wilkes, Taliaferro, and Lincoln County residents. These specialty services include: general surgery, cardiology, urology, ENT, orthopedics, and podiatry. Our current Medical Staff consists of an Active Staff of 5 physicians and Courtesy, Consulting, and Affiliate Staffs consisting of 57 physicians and midlevels.

**Community Medical Associates Lincolnton:** A subsidiary of WMH, CMA is a growing primary care clinic that accepts Medicare, Medicaid, and privately insured patients. The full-time provider staff consists of one family medicine physician and one nurse practitioner.

**Lincoln County Health Department:** The Lincoln County health department offers many services to the public including screening and treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes, TB, and sexually transmitted diseases, immunizations, family planning services, environmental health services, outbreak investigation, and is a provider of the WIC food supplementation program for low-income children.

### **Two Private Family Medicine Practices in Lincoln County**

**Taliaferro County Health Department:** The Taliaferro County health department offers many services to the public including screening and treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes, TB, and sexually transmitted diseases, immunizations, family planning services, environmental health services, outbreak investigation, and is a provider of the WIC food supplementation program for low-income children.

**Community Medical Associates Washington:** A subsidiary of WMH, CMA is a growing primary care clinic that accepts Medicare, Medicaid, and privately insured patients. The full-time provider staff consists of two internal medicine/pediatricians and one nurse practitioner.





## **Community Health Resources**

**MedLink Washington:** A Federally Qualified Health Center that provides primary care to uninsured, as well as insured individuals. Medicare, Medicaid, and payment on a sliding fee scale is accepted.

**Wilkes County Health Department:** The Wilkes County health department offers many services to the public including screening and treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes, TB, and sexually transmitted diseases, immunizations, family planning services, environmental health services, outbreak investigation, and is a provider of the WIC food supplementation program for low-income children.

**Three Private Primary Care Physician Practices in Wilkes County; two of which are internal medicine and one family medicine practice.**



### **Conclusion**

The Community Needs Assessment has provided Wills Memorial Hospital with clear evidence that many of the health issues that we see and treat on a daily basis are indeed, the most prevalent health concerns among our population. The responses from the panel of health professionals from Lincoln, Taliaferro, and Wilkes counties nearly mirrored one another. Obesity in children and adults, lack of access to primary health care, teen pregnancy/sexually transmitted disease rates, and the survival of Wills Memorial Hospital and its subsidiaries were identified time and time again by respondents.

Wills Memorial Hospital is a non-profit, community hospital that focuses on serving our community's needs. The information that has been gathered in this CNA will direct our community outreach efforts. It will serve as the foundation for fostering new partnerships within our community and outside as well. It will provide an outline for us as we work to generate new ideas, approaches, and educational programs to help solve these issues. This tool has provided much useful information that we can use to better understand and serve our community.



### References

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- County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Available at: [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)
- 2013 Georgia County Guide, Carl Vinson Institute of Government and Georgia Cooperative Extension, The University of Georgia. Available at: [www.countyguide.uga.edu](http://www.countyguide.uga.edu)
- Georgia Department of Community Health. Oasis Population Data 2013. Available at: [www.oasis.ga.us](http://www.oasis.ga.us)
- Georgia Department of Public Health. Health and Data Information. Available at [www.health.state.ga.us](http://www.health.state.ga.us)



# WMH Community Needs Assessment

## Wills Memorial Hospital Implementation Plan 2013-2016

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Needs Identified</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
1. Obesity	<p>Obesity in adults, children, and teens was overwhelmingly identified as a major health concern in our community. Obesity leads to many chronic health issues such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, sleep apnea, high cholesterol, and heart disease.</p>	<p>A. In 2013 WMH Registered Dietitian, Kathryn Filipiak began offering Nutritional Educational Services to adults and children in our community.</p> <p>B. The Washington-Wilkes Primary &amp; Elementary Schools have applied for and were awarded the USDA's Fresh Fruit &amp; Vegetable grant. This program provides fresh fruit and vegetables as snacks to students 3 times per week.</p> <p>C. The Wilkes County School System is currently participating in the Farm to School program. The Farm to School program incorporates as much fresh, locally grown food as possible into the school lunches and breakfasts.</p> <p>D. The 21st Century Summer Program, along with the Family Connections and Communities in Schools (FCCIS) host a summer youth program during the month of July. The children take part in physical activities including swimming, basketball, Zumba, cheerleading, and park playtime.</p>
<b>Priority</b> 2. Access to Primary Health Care	<p><b>Needs Identified</b></p> <p>Lack of access to basic primary health care may be due to the high population of uninsured people within our service area. Many do not have primary care physicians and use the Emergency Room for routine care.</p>	<p><b>Action Plan</b></p> <p>Community Medical Associates of WMH added Dr. Cary Hefty, who specializes in pediatrics and internal medicine, in August of 2013.</p>



## WMH Community Needs Assessment

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3. Teen  
Pregnancy/  
STD Rates

Teen pregnancy/STD rates in Wilkes and Taliaferro are much higher than the average Georgia County.

Our local health departments recently lost Title 10 federal funding for family planning. However, the health departments expect that teens will be exempt from the new fee structure and will continue to receive free exams.

4. Survival  
of  
Rural  
Hospital

The loss of WMH to our community would significantly reduce access to primary and specialty health care in our aging and poor populations.

WMH administration and the Hospital Authority Board has contacted Stroudwater Associates to broker a partnership/affiliation deal. Wills Memorial Hospital is looking to establish a partnership of some type in order to continue to serve our community for generations to come.