



Akron
Children's
Hospital





Akron Children's Hospital has always been a champion for children, and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 has affirmed our commitment to serve our patients, families and community in times of need.

This past year presented unique challenges for patients and caregivers alike. By relying on each other and with the support of many community partners, we successfully navigated the changes brought on by these unprecedented times.

Our health care system played an essential role in the regional response to the pandemic. Like our adult hospital partners, we provided testing and treatment for patients with COVID-19. During the shutdown, our nurses, providers and support staff found creative ways to safely continue delivering necessary services to our patients.

We rapidly expanded telehealth services across our primary and specialty care offices to ensure children would not fall behind in their care, especially those with behavioral and chronic health issues. Our School Health nurses worked to keep students and teachers safe by staying in contact with students at home and providing guidance on how to safely reopen schools for in-person learning.

As we saw unanticipated needs arise, we reached out through our pediatrician offices, churches and other community organizations to identify vulnerable children and bring food, supplies and activities directly to families in their neighborhoods.

In addition to our pandemic response, our teams made considerable progress addressing the priorities established by the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), focusing on behavioral health and the impact of adverse childhood experiences, infant mortality and birth outcomes, and asthma and respiratory care.

As we prepare to launch a new CHNA in 2021, we expect to find that existing inequities and family hardships have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The timing of this assessment is critical to shine a light on the true impact of COVID-19 on our children's health, education and well-being. Based on the results of the assessment, due in 2022, we will adjust our priorities to meet the evolving needs of our community's children.

Many events throughout the course of last year caused our hospital employees to pause, reflect and renew our commitment to enhance the diversity of our workforce and ensure a culture of inclusion surrounds all those who come through our doors. Our community benefit efforts are an essential component of our hospital's mission, and we will continue working to ensure equitable access to care for children and abundant opportunities for the families we are privileged to serve.

Grace Wakulchik

President and CEO
Akron Children's Hospital

Bennett L. Williams

Vice President of External Affairs
Akron Children's Hospital

What is Community Benefit?

Community benefit is a means of measuring the investments we make in the health and well-being of children and families within the communities we serve. As a not-for-profit hospital with a commitment to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable, Akron Children's engages in a variety of activities that go above and beyond the traditional, core functions of a health care organization.

Through community benefit reporting, we document costs we incur to support efforts that:

- Improve health care access
- Enhance community health
- Advance medical or health knowledge
- Reduce the burden on government and community-based efforts

We exclude from community benefit reporting any activities designed for marketing or fundraising purposes. We remove external grants and contributions that support community benefit efforts.

Unreimbursed Medicaid & Uncompensated Care

The unreimbursed portion of services for Medicaid patients and financial assistance for families unable to pay for all or part of medical expenses

Research, Advocacy & Community Partnerships

Non-proprietary research supported by internal or eligible grant funds

Advocacy for community health improvement

Cash and in-kind donations to community organizations with missions that align with our own

Health Professional Education

Training, clinical rotations, internships and continuing education for practitioners

Community Programs & Services

Community health education, outreach programs, and support services that do not generate revenue

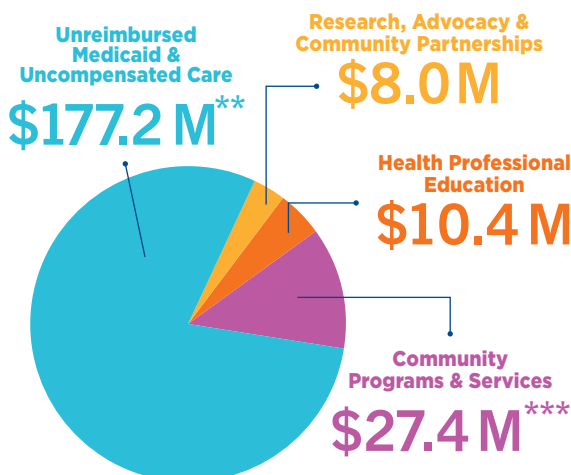
Initiatives that address identified health needs

2020 Community Investment



TOTAL COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
\$223 M*
 *unaudited

M = millions



* Finances in the report are pending IRS review.

** We saw a greater Medicaid shortfall due to decreased revenue and increased costs as a proportion of revenue.

*** The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in decreases in patient volumes and higher proportionate costs, creating deficits in several clinical service lines.

For questions or more information, please contact
ExternalAffairs@akronchildrens.org.

Community partnerships are strengthened to meet families where they are

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the at-risk families we serve were at even greater risk. Through new and strengthened community partnerships, we developed creative ways to meet their needs and keep children healthy and safe.

Food insecurity is an issue we've been addressing at Akron Children's through our Social Determinants of Health Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Joel Davidson, a pediatrician in our Locust Pediatric Care Group and Bennett L. Williams, vice president of External Affairs. During the pandemic, these efforts took on greater significance.

"When basic needs, such as food, aren't met, families are more likely to miss annual wellness visits for their children, so food insecurity is also something we're addressing as part of primary care," said Michelle Mizda, director of Social Work, who co-chairs the Food Insecurity Sub-Committee of the Social Determinants of Health Committee with Heather Wuensch, director of Community Benefit, Advocacy & Outreach, External Affairs.

During the pandemic, we worked with the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank (ACRFB) to hold events at Arlington Church of God and ACRFB. In addition to providing boxes of food and produce to families in attendance, we offered on-site well child visit scheduling. We also partnered with ACRFB and Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) to provide boxes of produce to families attending Akron Children's community outreach events in neighborhoods throughout Summit County.

"Food insecurity can be invisible, but it's an issue many of our families face. Our goal is to address urgent food needs while referring families to long-term solutions."

**BERNETT L. WILLIAMS,
VICE PRESIDENT OF
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**



293

produce boxes
distributed



Through collaborative community based outreach events, we partnered with local churches, AMHA and other agencies to meet families’ other needs in the midst of the pandemic, such as by providing hygiene kits with hand sanitizer, face coverings and other essential personal care items.



DISTRIBUTED
2,464
OUTREACH KITS



DISTRIBUTED
1,939
SUMMER ACTIVITY KITS

In collaboration with the City of Akron’s Parks and Recreation Department, we launched Jump Into a Healthy Summer, providing summer activity kits to give children fun and creative ways to stay active at home. We also worked with Summit Developmental Disabilities Board to create adaptive activity kits for children with disabilities. Kits were distributed at outreach events and via home delivery.



Improving access to fresh produce

Akron Children’s increased access to healthy foods for at-risk families through two new initiatives in 2020. Through a partnership with Produce Perks Midwest, we distributed coupon books that can be redeemed for \$40 worth of fresh produce to eligible families living in Mahoning Valley, as well as Summit and Portage counties, through community events and various hospital departments. Produce Perks coupons were redeemed for fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers’ markets, and in Mahoning and Trumbull counties, they were also redeemed at participating grocery stores.

PRODUCE PERKS FRUIT AND VEGETABLE COUPON BOOKS

496 DISTRIBUTED
\$19,840 VALUE

We also conducted a grant-funded project, in partnership with Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and United Way of Summit & Medina 2-1-1, to provide DoorDash food box delivery for families of children with complex medical needs to reduce transportation barriers that limit access to food.



156
DoorDash
Deliveries

“Through improved coordination with our community health workers who work directly with at-risk families, we can help ensure that more families are receiving these services and we are making an impact in reducing food insecurity in our community.”

HEATHER WUENSCH,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY BENEFIT,
ADVOCACY & OUTREACH, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

School Health Services keeps children and faculty safe throughout the pandemic



Our School Health Services staff played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic by guiding local school districts in creating a safe school environment leading up to the state-wide closure of schools, then through a safe return once schools were reopened. This included daily briefings with school superintendents.

“When schools were closed to in-person learning, people were still in the buildings, including families who relied on free meal programs and picked up food each week. We continued to advise school personnel on implementing COVID protocols to keep everyone safe,” said Michele Wilmoth, director of nursing, School Health Services.

While schools were closed, displaced school clinic staff were remobilized to provide COVID screenings at Akron Children’s facilities and were ready to assist with a potential influx of adult COVID patients treated at Akron Children’s. Not only did this help with our COVID response, it also ensured we retained our school clinic staff for the eventual reopening of schools.

School Health nurses continued to stay in touch with students who have special needs or chronic conditions to ensure their health care needs were met, often using telehealth to connect families with resources at Akron Children’s.



School Health nurses used telehealth to connect families with resources at Akron Children’s.

2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

211,689 STUDENTS CARED FOR IN SCHOOL CLINICS

> 89% OF STUDENTS ABLE TO RESUME LEARNING IN CLASS

COVID-19 IMPACT

7,102 STUDENTS WITH A POSITIVE COVID-19 SCREEN AND SENT HOME

“Throughout the pandemic, the voice of nursing has been valued and we’ve been able to take the lead in ensuring a safe school environment. We’ve also forged stronger partnerships with our school districts and state leaders that will help us continue to advocate for the health and safety of all schoolchildren.”

MICHELE WILMOTH,
DIRECTOR OF NURSING, SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES



Beyond our local community, our School Health Services administrative team worked with state leadership and the Ohio Department of Health’s Regional Healthcare Coalition in developing guidelines for schools to bring students back safely.

“Since there was no universal plan for reopening the schools, it became a challenge for each school district to decide whether to continue with remote learning, return with all students in-person or offer a hybrid of both,” said Wilmoth. “Throughout it all, we were advocates for following the science.”

Initially, local health departments were charged with contact tracing when students or faculty were diagnosed with COVID, but when this became too burdensome due to capacity, Akron Children’s School Health nurses stepped in to do it.

“Throughout the pandemic, the voice of nursing has been valued and we’ve been able to take the lead in ensuring a safe school environment,” said Wilmoth. “We’ve also forged stronger partnerships with our school districts and state leaders that will help us continue to advocate for the health and safety of all schoolchildren.”



Paying it forward in training future generations of respiratory therapists

The COVID-19 pandemic gave us all a greater appreciation for those who work on the frontlines of health care, including respiratory therapists who treat patients with serious conditions of the heart and lungs.

Just like the vital care they provide to patients, our respiratory care staff also play a vital role in training future generations of respiratory therapists. During their senior year, respiratory therapy students from The University of Akron, Stark State College and Youngstown State University complete semester-long rotations at Akron Children's, where they are trained in all aspects of pediatric respiratory care – for infants through young adults.

“We also provide training in respiratory care to our pediatric and critical care residents, as well as nurses in our special care nurseries and burn center,” said Nhi Haines, education coordinator for the Department of Respiratory Care. “This includes training in intubation techniques, neonatal resuscitation and pediatric advanced life support.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, our respiratory therapists played an important role in Akron Children's COVID preparations, ensuring our staff was ready to treat adult COVID patients, including those who required critical care.

“My passion for pediatric respiratory care started when I trained at Akron Children’s. It’s a fast-paced and rewarding field, especially when you know you are making a difference in the life of a child.”

CURTIS GURBAL,
RESPIRATORY THERAPIST AND INSTRUCTIONAL
ASSISTANT IN RESPIRATORY CARE



When tracheotomy-dependent patients leave the hospital, our respiratory therapists are there to provide families with essential education so they can manage their child’s respiratory needs at home.

While there is a nationwide shortage of respiratory therapists, Akron Children’s has continued a legacy of training not only future respiratory therapists, but also the next generation of teachers and trainers.

Twenty years ago, Haines completed her training at Akron Children’s before joining our respiratory care

team. Among the students she has trained is Curtis Gurbal, who serves as both an Akron Children’s respiratory therapist and an instructional assistant in respiratory care at Stark State College.

“My passion for pediatric respiratory care started when I trained at Akron Children’s,” Gurbal said. “It’s a fast-paced and rewarding field, especially when you know you are making a difference in the life of a child.”

Easing the financial burden of health care

Akron Children’s Hospital’s financial counselors keep abreast of evolving regulations regarding financial assistance and entitlement programs, as they guide families in determining eligibility and applying for various programs based on their individual circumstances. Our financial counselors also work with our health care providers to assist families in anticipating the cost of care.



6,542
APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROCESSED

TOTALING MORE THAN
\$8.2 MILLION IN REDUCTIONS FOR FAMILIES

Expansion of telehealth reduces barriers to behavioral health care services

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, technology offered new ways for us all to safely connect.

For children and teens with mental and behavioral health needs, this was especially critical. As our hospital expanded its telehealth services, we were able to ensure more kids received essential mental health services without any interruptions in care. This was also achieved without hiring any additional staff.

“Our behavioral health providers have traditionally relied on face-to-face interactions to develop patient relationships, so initially there were concerns that telehealth would impact their ability to develop rapport with our patients,” said Doug Straight, clinical operations director, Division of Pediatric Psychiatry and Psychology. “Instead, we found that behavioral health aligns extremely well with telehealth and it was embraced by our providers, as well as patient families who continue to request it.”

When patient volumes began dropping at the start of the pandemic, the shift to telehealth allowed our behavioral health providers to meet patients’ needs, while eliminating barriers associated with geographic distance or lack of transportation, and missed time away from school or work.



As our behavioral health providers saw more patients virtually, there were fewer appointment cancellations and greater adherence to treatment plans. For those patients at greatest risk, in-person visits never stopped.

“Between telehealth and in-person patient appointments, we were one of a few departments that increased units of service in 2020 compared to 2019. This resulted in better health and timelier access to care,” said Straight. “Looking ahead, we’ll continue to explore how we can use telehealth to better serve our patients in new and innovative ways.”

**Social isolation.
Disruptions in
daily routines.
Fear and uncertainty.**

In a year full of challenges, telehealth allowed us to meet the increased demand for behavioral health services.



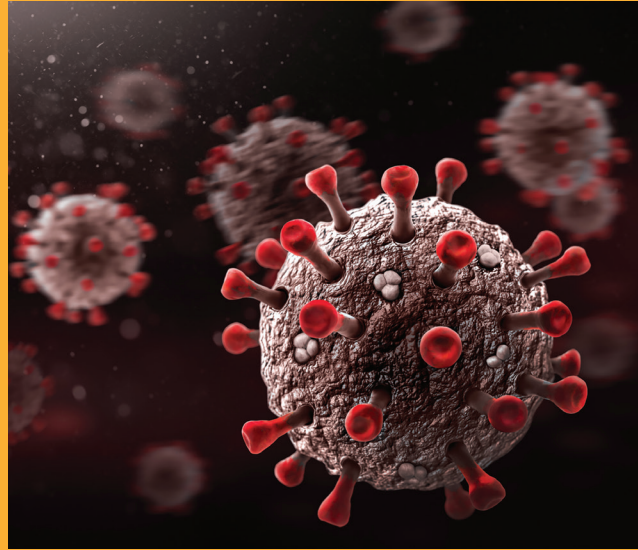
18,270

TELEHEALTH VISITS



42%

OF PATIENT VOLUMES



Understanding the impact of COVID-19 in children through research

In a year that was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers from Akron Children's explored various facets of the coronavirus and how it affects our pediatric patients. This included participation in national studies with other centers, as well as studies led by our own researchers.



9
COVID-RELATED
RESEARCH STUDIES

Blood donation drives

Our staff continued to participate in blood donation drives, helping to address the national shortage exacerbated by the pandemic.



866
EMPLOYEE DONATIONS TOTALING
928
PINTS



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[AKRONCHILDRENS.ORG](https://akronchildrens.org)

