



2023-2025

Akron Children's Hospital - Mahoning Valley
CHNA Implementation Strategy



INTRODUCTION

Akron Children's Hospital has been caring for children since 1890, and ranked 22nd on Newsweek's list of World's Best Specialized Hospitals in 2023. We are verified as a Level 1 Children's Survey Center and Level 1 Trauma Center and our pediatric specialties are ranked among the nation's best by U.S. News and World Report. With two hospital campuses in Akron and Boardman, six regional health centers, and more than 50 urgent, primary, and specialty care locations throughout Ohio, we make it easier for today's busy families to find the high-quality care they need close to home.

OUR PROMISES:

To treat every child as we would our own.

To treat others as they would like to be treated.

To turn no child away for any reason.

Akron Children's Hospital serves patients from birth through adulthood, including infants, children, teens, burn victims of all ages, and adults with congenital, genetic, and maternal/fetal conditions. In 2021, our health care system provided nearly 1.3 million patient encounters. While Akron Children's services are not exclusively limited to children, this CHNA Implementation Strategy focuses on our pediatric and adolescent population ages birth to 18, who make up the majority of patient encounters.

Between November 2021 and September 2022, Akron Children's Hospital carried out a comprehensive community health needs assessment (CHNA) to identify important health needs for children and families in communities served by our organization. The Center for Community Solutions, an Ohio-based, non-partisan research and policy think tank with a focus on social, economic, and health issues, was contracted to facilitate this process.

This Implementation Strategy is focused on improving health conditions of the community served by our Boardman facility, defined as the three-county region of northern Ohio known as the Mahoning Valley including: Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull counties. The CHNA Implementation Strategy for the rest of Akron Children's Hospital will focus on families residing within the nine counties served by our facility in Akron, Ohio and includes: Ashland, Medina, Lorain, Portage, Richland, Stark, Summit, Tuscarawas and Wayne counties.

The tri-county region served by Akron Children's Hospital Mahoning Valley includes children of all ages. The total population of the region is over 530,000 people, including over 107,000 children ages 18 and under. Collectively, these counties are home to over 4 percent of Ohio's children.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

CHNA Approach

The results of the CHNA informed this Implementation Strategy. The CHNA used a mixed-methods approach which relied heavily on primary sources, underpinned by secondary data. To get an accurate picture of current circumstances facing children and their families, we engaged more than 1,000 individuals, hearing from parents, caregivers, and those who work closely with children in the community, representing medically underserved, low-income, and minority populations and the broad interests of children in the region.

Throughout the assessment, our exclusive focus was on the health of children. We sought to consider underlying factors that may prevent children from thriving to take a wider look at aspects of well-being. Unfortunately, the pandemic disrupted data collection of some sources we relied on in the past, so we cast a wide net, compiling indicators from more than 20 varied data sources. Thanks to a partnership with Ohio Hospital Association, researchers received access to discharge data on over 99,000 inpatient and outpatient hospital encounters covering children ages 18 and younger living in the twelve counties surrounding the Hospital's Akron and Mahoning Valley facilities. The assessment recognized that conditions do not occur in isolation, so all data and information was grouped into issue areas.

Development of the Implementation Strategy

To develop the Implementation Strategy, the health needs identified through the CHNA were evaluated based on relative importance to children's health and well-being and the resources available in the community and within Akron Children's Hospital to address them. The Center for Community Solutions facilitated this process with the CHNA Steering Committee comprised of providers and hospital administrators, community partners, and representatives from local public health departments. The CHNA Steering Committee recommended overarching health priorities and commitments for approval by the Hospital's Board of Directors, which were approved on October 27, 2022.

The full CHNA Report is
available at:

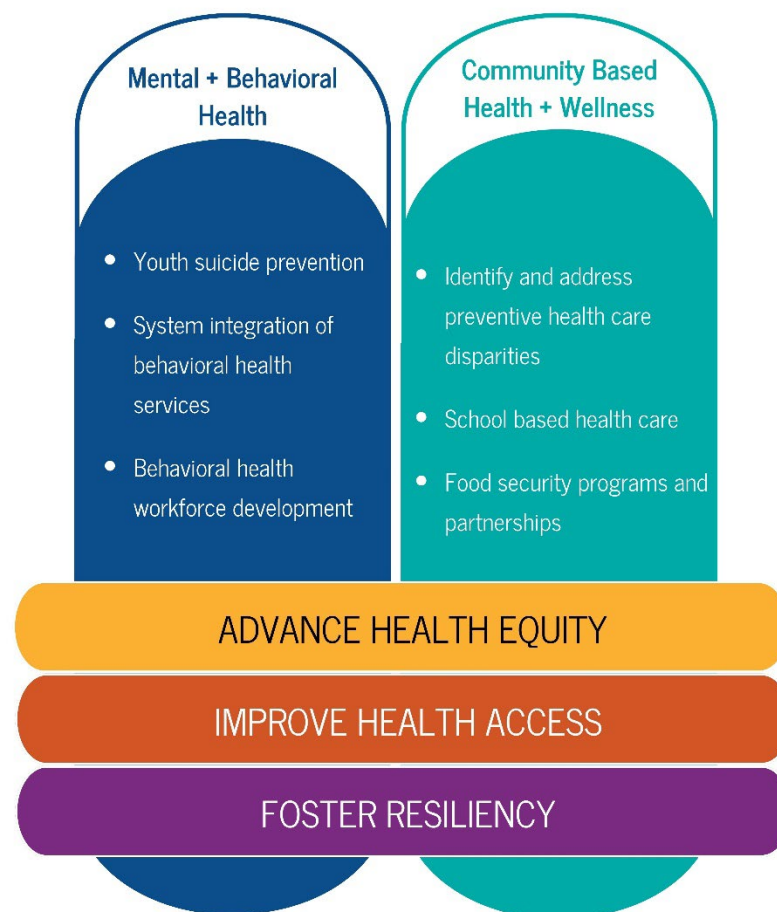
[www.akronchildrens.org/pages/
Community_Health_Needs_
Assessment.html](http://www.akronchildrens.org/pages/Community_Health_Needs_Assessment.html)

Priority Health Needs Identified

The CHNA identified three overarching commitments: Advancing Health Equity, Improving Health Access, and Fostering Resiliency. These represent cross-cutting factors which underpin the health and well-being of children in the region, but are larger than a single health issue or condition. Implementation of these commitments will center on two priority health needs which were selected via the prioritization process: Mental + Behavioral Health and Community Based Health + Wellness. Each priority health need contains three areas of focus for CHNA implementation over the next three years.

During the CHNA process, seven additional topics were identified as significant causes of health challenges in the Mahoning Valley Region: Adolescent Health, Asthma, Communicable Disease, Family Stability & Community Conditions, Healthy Lifestyle, Infant & Maternal Health, and Social Determinants of Health. All were examined by the CHNA committee and evaluated based on their Scope + Severity and Fit + Feasibility. Under Scope + Severity, the committee considered the magnitude and severity of the problem relative to others faced by children in the region and whether addressing the issue was likely to reduce health disparities or have co-benefits from improving outcomes for other organizational and/or community priorities. Whether the issue was within a children's hospital's ability to influence, if it was logistically feasible to reach enough people to make an impact, and momentum and alignment with other community initiatives was considered under Fit + Feasibility.

Many of the health needs examined were not considered to be as urgent or severe as mental and behavioral health, and several are woven into implementation plans for the priorities and commitments. Reasons for not targeting the areas include being beyond the current scope of the hospital, requiring inputs that exceeded time and resource constraints, or being more appropriate for other community agencies to address. Regardless, Akron Children's is committed to supporting these areas as they relate to existing hospital programs, efforts and partnerships.



Implementation Strategy for Priority Issues

In developing the detailed plans to address each priority issue, Akron Children's CHNA team identified key staff working within each of the disciplines represented in the framework. This included individuals who have been involved in the CHNA process in previous cycles as well as new contributors. Meetings were conducted to introduce these staff to the core processes and objectives surrounding CHNA implementation, and to brainstorm current and prospective efforts that could impact outcomes within each of the identified priority areas. In this process, participants were encouraged to incorporate the three cross-cutting commitments of Advancing Health Equity, Improving Health Access, and Fostering Resiliency within their work plans wherever relevant. These linkages are noted within the tables below.

While the strategies involve a variety of inputs both internal and external to Akron Children's, they do not represent the full gamut of hospital and community-based initiatives relating to each priority health issue. As additional funding and resources are identified to be in alignment with these strategies, they may be incorporated.

Priority Health Need: Mental + Behavioral Health

During the assessment process, it became clear that children's social and emotional health is an urgent and critical need. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to stop the spread of the disease, mental and behavioral health issues were by far the most mentioned concern by stakeholders. These issues were also rated highest in both Scope + Severity and Fit + Feasibility by the CHNA committee. Not only is the need urgent; Akron Children's Hospital has the resources and expertise to directly impact it, and the relationships with community behavioral health agencies to create a more effective continuum of care.

Three areas of Mental + Behavioral Health were identified to be the focus for implementation of this priority health need: youth suicide prevention, system integration of behavioral health services, and behavioral health workforce development.



YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

Global Aim: Advance integrated approaches to youth suicide prevention

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the complexity of issues which impact youth suicide at the community level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the stigma of youth reaching out for help • Train Akron Children's staff and community members as to how to recognize warning signs of suicide and respond effectively • Educate the community as to the importance of decreased access to lethal means for at-risk youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that best practices youth suicide prevention resources are available to vulnerable populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify emerging issues affecting vulnerable populations • Obtain the voices of youth and families to inform youth suicide prevention activities • Collaborate with and support agencies who currently serve vulnerable youth in the community

Cross-Cutting Commitment Linkage



Advance
Health
Equity



Foster
Resiliency



Improve
Health
Access

Key Resources & Partnerships

Ohio Children's Hospital Association Zero Suicide Collaborative
Ohio Department of Health Child Injury Grant
Ohio Department of Health's Child Injury Action Group's Youth Suicide Subcommittee
Mahoning County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Additional state, regional, and/or local coalitions/partners



SYSTEM INTEGRATION OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Global Aim: Increase access to behavioral health services in communities where resources are limited and underserved youth populations exist

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to creating a comprehensive behavioral health continuum of care by providing behavioral health services in communities where gaps exist and where youth may go without services due to various social determinant of health barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring needed behavioral health services into communities and closer to where patients and families reside Engage with community partners to identify and address community needs in the delivery and reach of behavioral health services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate behavioral health services in primary care and local adult emergency departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide integrated behavioral health services in primary care Expand Psychiatric Intake and Referral Center (PIRC) services to remote adult emergency departments utilizing telehealth

Cross-Cutting Commitment Linkage



Foster
Resiliency



Improve
Health
Access



Key Resources & Partnerships

Local mental health & recovery boards
 Local community mental health agencies
 Adult emergency departments in our service area
 Hospital resources to open regional behavioral health centers



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Global Aim: Build capacity within the behavioral health workforce through education, training, and strategic recruitment strategies

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and fill internships and fellowships in behavioral health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community learning institutions and training programs to promote and support careers in behavioral health Expand psychiatry fellowships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop career pathways for Akron Children's staff interested in behavioral health careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Human Resources on staff development structure Provide opportunities for staff and college students to meet and shadow behavioral health providers
Cross-Cutting Commitment Linkage	
 <p>Advance Health Equity</p>	 <p>Improve Health Access</p>
Key Resources & Partnerships	
<p>Local colleges and universities Akron Children's Hospital Human Resources support</p>	

Priority Health Need: Community Based Health + Wellness



The pandemic disrupted standard care for children, and, according to the assessment, some are finding it difficult to get back on track with regular well visits and health screenings. We also uncovered racial disparities, including the fact that Black respondents were significantly less likely to say they have the services and supports they need in their community to be a good parent. Meanwhile, the rapid rollout of COVID-19 vaccines provided an opportunity to examine how health services can better reach the most vulnerable residents.

The Community Based Health + Wellness priority encompasses basic health services, such as well visits and regular health screenings, which are tailored to the needs of the community. Akron Children's Hospital has the resources and partnerships in place to address these needs, which rated near the top for Fit + Feasibility, as well as Scope + Severity. Implementation will focus on ensuring the appropriate services to address many of the significant health needs are in place. The three specific areas identified are preventive health care disparities, school-based health care, and food security programs and partnerships.



IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE DISPARATIES

Global Aim: Identify and address key disparities in children's health and well-being using an equity lens

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly analyze clinical and patient experience data by race and other equity variables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop infrastructure for data collection of key domains of diversity Develop infrastructure for data reporting of key disparities in preventive care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot an intervention aimed at closing an identified disparity gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine opportunities to share data and collaborate with hospital and community partners on improving key disparity indicators
Cross-Cutting Commitment Linkage	
<div>  <div>Advance Health Equity</div> </div> <div>  <div>Improve Health Access</div> </div>	
Key Resources & Partnerships	
<p>Hospital-based data analytics support team Child Opportunity Index American Hospital Association, Institute for Diversity and Health Equity</p>	



SCHOOL BASED HEALTH CARE

Global Aim: Improve child health and academic outcomes by integrating comprehensive and equitable care to meet the needs of the whole child, family, and school community through school partnerships

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high quality equitable access to care through school-based health (SBH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase preventive well care Increase SBH telehealth for minor sick care Increase coordination of care for students with chronic health issues Ensure financial sustainability of school-based health operations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster resiliency in school communities through education, training, support, and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide education, training, and resources on trauma informed care and practices in schools Develop health and wellness focused youth led/peer groups in SBH schools Develop a consultation process for students in behavioral health crisis at school Address gaps in behavioral health support, training, and resources in partnered schools

Cross Cutting Commitment Linkage



Foster
Resiliency



Improve
Health
Access


Key Resources & Partnerships

Partnered school districts
Ohio Departments of Health and Education
Hospital resources to support SHB clinics and operations



FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Global Aim: Promote and improve access to food resources for patient families and employees

Specific Aims	Core Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a system-wide food security strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to identify patient families and employees with emergent food needs and refer them to the appropriate resources Develop a plan to provide food resources and/or information to patient families and employees identified as having emergent food needs
Cross Cutting Commitment Linkage	
	
Key Resources & Partnerships	
<p>Regional foodbanks and/or pantries Community Development Corporations 2-1-1 and Hospital resources to support on-site food security and connect families with services</p>	

Conclusion and Next Steps

In addition to the aims and strategies outlined above, each priority health issue has a more thorough workplan which details key actions, measures, and responsibilities. These workplan documents serve as the evaluation framework which will be used to measure progress toward the aims. While the aims and strategies will remain constant over the next few years, activities and tactics may be adjusted as needed.

Quarterly check-ins with the implementation teams will examine recent activities and determine where guidance, support, or adjustment is needed. Progress will be shared more broadly during a community meeting and report-out, held each year during the three-year CHNA cycle. These annual meetings will include the Akron Children's Hospital teams working on implementation, as well as community partners and stakeholders.

The priorities issues selected by Akron Children's Hospital – mental and behavioral health and community-based health and wellness, and the commitments made in this CHNA to advancing health equity, improving health access, and fostering resiliency, build on work undertaken and lessons learned over the course of the previous three years. They reflect Akron Children's ongoing commitment to improving the health of children through outstanding quality patient care, education, advocacy, community service and research.

The CHNA Implementation Strategy was approved by Akron Children's Hospital Board of Directors' Executive Committee on March 23, 2023. Akron Children's Hospital and The Center for Community Solutions are responsible for the accuracy of this report.

This report is publicly available on the
Akron Children's Hospital website at
akronchildrens.org

To request a printed copy, or for
questions/comments about this report,
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