

Community Health Improvement Plan | 2022



Our mission is you.

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Letter from the President



A Letter from our President:

It was because of a call to respond to critical health needs that two courageous Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth women, Sister Mary Balbina Ferrell and Sister Mary Louisa Madden, traveled to the small, rough, western Colorado town of Grand Junction to open a hospital in May of 1896. Their pioneering spirit lives on in the extraordinary people who continue to serve at St. Mary's Medical Center today. Though the challenges we face today are different, the mission of responding to identified community health needs remains the same.

As part of our ongoing commitment to community health improvement, the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is conducted every three years in collaboration with the Mesa County Department of Public Health and other community stakeholders. This continued pledge calls us to work in partnership with a wide range of organizations who are equally focused on addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those within our geographic boundaries.

As healthcare delivery continues to transform, we remain guided by our Mission to “reveal and foster God’s healing love by improving the health of the people and communities we serve, especially those that are poor or vulnerable.” As we carry on the tradition of the Sisters who came to Western Colorado over 125 years ago, we continue to look forward to the good that is yet to be.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bryan Johnson", is written over a white background.

Bryan Johnson President St. Mary's Medical Center

Introduction

A Community Health Needs Assessment is a critical tool used to understand the health status of a population or community. It presents information and analysis on important data measures and identifies areas where action and intervention can make a difference. The three primary goals of the assessment are to provide a current snapshot of the health status of Mesa County, to bring attention to areas of concern needing community action, and to fulfill assessment needs for all collaborating partners.

Working with its health partners and community health stakeholders around Mesa County, St. Mary's Medical Center (SMMC) has completed its 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment and identified three priority areas for health improvement programming from 2022 through 2024:

- Education
- Health Implications (Health Behaviors and Health Outcomes)
- Healthcare & Access

The assessment steps taken by SMMC considered the results of the collaborative report along with the hospital's current programs and capacity to impact overall community health improvements.

SMMC has collaborated with Mesa County Public Health and other local healthcare organizations for the past three cycles of conducting the community health needs assessment (CHNA). This approach emphasizes a “*one community*” philosophy and a mission to understand shared interests to improve the health of our communities. To that end, local non-profit hospitals and public health agencies release one comprehensive document every three years. In 2020, St. Mary's Medical Center partnered with Mesa County Public Health, Colorado Canyons Hospital & Medical Center, Community Hospital, West Springs Hospital and the VA Western Colorado Health Care System Center to conduct the collaborative assessment. In 2021, the hospital completed its assessment by identifying priority health needs utilizing the results of the collaborative assessment.

Access the full CHNA collaborative report [here](#).

Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP):

The Community Health Improvement Plan is the second step in the community health engagement and improvement process. Health issues prioritized during the CHNA are further evaluated to consider available resources, community partners and evidence-based interventions that could deliver the most meaningful impact. The CHIP report summarizes specific goals, metrics, partners and desired outcomes that will be pursued during the three years of implementation. Each year, care sites have the opportunity to provide updates on progress, statistical changes and any shifts in strategic focus.

About Us

Background and Purpose

St. Mary's Medical Center (SMMC) is a non-profit, fully-accredited facility with more than 350 beds. SMMC is a Level II trauma center with air emergency transport services, Level III neonatology center, acute rehabilitation, open-heart surgery, brain and spine surgery, and labor and delivery services. SMMC is a certified stroke and chest pain center, as well as an accredited comprehensive community cancer program. The hospital and its associated clinics are also the largest economic contributor to the community of Western Colorado with a \$750 million impact annually. SMMC is the second-largest employer and the highest payroll contributor in the community.

Mesa County Public Health, formed in 1948, provides a wide range of public and environmental health services to Mesa County residents. Its mission, to maintain and improve health through assessment of community health status, policy development to support effective programs, and assurance of high quality, effective education and service, is the driving force behind its programming and community collaborations. Mesa County Public Health values Wellness, Excellence, Empowerment, and Community. Mesa County Public Health is an essential partner to St. Mary's in conducting the community health assessment.

The passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires tax-exempt hospitals to conduct Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) every three years, and to adopt Improvement Strategies to meet the priority health needs identified through the assessment. The CHIP report provides a summary of the planned programs and activities that will be directed toward the selected priorities.

Service Area

For the purposes of this assessment Mesa County was designated as the community served. It accounts for over 70% of all patient care delivered by St. Mary's and is considered St. Mary's Primary Service Area (PSA). Mesa County is located on the western border of Colorado, 250 miles west of Denver. The County spans 3,313 square miles. The County seat, Grand Junction, is the largest city in Western Colorado. Mesa County also includes the towns of Collbran, DeBeque, Palisade, the city of Fruita, and smaller unincorporated areas

Access the full CHNA collaborative report here [May 2021 V2_Condensed_Smaller\(2\).pdf](#)

Project Oversight

The CHIP process was overseen by:

Gretchen Gore, VP of Mission Integration
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Victoria Grasmick, Manager of Mission Integration & Spiritual Care
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Data Collection Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, described below, were used to identify the community health needs.

Secondary Data Collection

SMMC leveraged the approach of the collaborative CHNA process which examined the current status of residents across five key areas – economic stability, education, health care and access, neighborhood and built environment and social and community context. This approach provided comparison data for like communities (e.g. Bozeman, MT, St. George, Utah, and Bend, Oregon) which highlighted areas of strength and areas of action.

SMMC Community Benefit leaders utilized the five areas as the basis for key stakeholder conversations to gather additional insights on how St. Mary's Medical Center might best position its efforts and resources toward impacting the areas of action. Stakeholders representing nonprofit, education, mental health, social services, healthcare, and public health organizations were asked to provide feedback on the following questions: *When thinking about this area of action, what is the hospital's role to impact? Do you know of other organizations that are actively working on this area/issue? Who? How? Are there populations for this area of action that are important for hospitals to target outreach? How would you prioritize these areas of action specifically thinking about the hospitals' role, as well as resources, existing community efforts and the overall ability to impact?*

Identification of Significant Health Needs

The following represents a summary of stakeholder recommendations:

- Continue strong work with colleges and the nursing program as well as other applied sciences. Look for engagement possibilities for students prior to college to help explore healthcare career paths, including non-traditional careers. Trade school opportunities, career track development not only in healthcare, but the business side of hospital as well. Workforce development. Consider the lack of childcare options. Need for early (preschool age) screening for cognitive disabilities.
- Support transportation needs and lack of speciality care/providers with regard to health care access. Expand mental health options for care, including stigma reduction. Training for all health workers to integrate mental health with general health to make it a normal part of one's overall health.
- Vaccination trust building, as well as a need to improve vaccination documentation. Healthy behaviors that are accessible, such as taking medications appropriately, but are not being utilized due to lack of resources and barriers.

A summary of the stakeholder feedback and results from the collaborative CHNA process was presented to SMMC executive leaders at a meeting held on November 9th, 2021, for additional analysis, input and prioritization.

Priority Health Needs

Working with its health partners and community health stakeholders across Mesa County, St. Mary's Medical Center (SMMC) has identified three priority areas for health improvement programming from 2022 through 2024:

- Education
- Health Implications (Health Behaviors and Health Outcomes)
- Healthcare & Access

The assessment results and proposed action steps are organized under the five key areas of the social determinants of health – Economic Stability, Education, Health Care and Access, Neighborhood and Built Environment and Social and Community Context. Social Determinants of Health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks. Each of the five social determinant areas includes a list of identified action steps as a guide for prioritizing efforts in the community.

- Economic Stability
 - Household Stability
 - Industry and Occupation
- Education
 - P-12 Education
 - Higher Education

- Health Care and Access
 - Access and Utilization
 - Mental Health
- Neighborhood & Built Environment
 - Assess rates of infractions that impact public safety
 - Explore opportunities to increase food access
 - Determine gaps in housing assistance
- Social and Community Context
 - Conduct survey and focus groups to assess personal relationships and social networks
 - Identify strategies to boost social resources in unincorporated areas
 - Work to address higher levels of bullying among specific sub-groups
 - Improve voter participation in low-turnout precincts

Resources to Address Significant Health Needs

One of the methods used to select prioritized needs was to conduct a review of other community based organizations that are working in various need areas. Identifying these additional resources helps to inform potential collaborative strategies and efficiencies. It also recognizes the importance of leveraging existing expertise and trusted community leaders whether individual or organizational to advance health change. A list of community resources potentially available to address the significant health needs are presented in Appendix 1.

Public Comment

In compliance with IRS regulations for charitable hospitals, a hospital CHNA and Community health Improvement Plan (CHIP) Implementation Strategy are to be made widely available to the public and public comment is to be solicited. The previous CHNA and CHIP Implementation Strategy were made widely available to the public on the website

<https://www.sclhealth.org/locations/st-marys-medical-center/about/community-benefit/>

Public comment was solicited on the reports; however, to date no comments have been received.



Acknowledging Our Community Partners

Thank you to our community partners and members. You are an important voice and ally in our efforts to improve the health of our communities.

Needs Not Prioritized

Each of the health needs identified in the CHNA process are important and St. Mary's along with numerous partners throughout the community are addressing these needs through various program interventions and initiatives. We have selected three need areas for priority over the next three years as a strategy to maximize resources and to accelerate impact.

Community Health Improvement Plan

There are five community health improvement core strategies that support program development. They are:

- Leverage community benefit investments toward the greatest area of impact to achieve our mission (*alignment with CHNA and vulnerable populations*)
- Utilize intervention strategies that are evidence-based and work to answer the sustainability question during program build
- Encourage innovation pilots that can address “dual” or disparate health needs
- Expand collective impact opportunities by engaging multi-sector partnerships
- Improve community engagement by highlighting community impact stories, increasing digital-based communication and attention to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives

In addition, whenever possible we want to align measurement objectives with other community improvement efforts locally, regionally and nationally.

Priority: Education

Mesa County has significantly lower rates of residents 25 years and older who have completed any higher education when compared to Colorado and other communities. Within Mesa County, as the level of education increases, rates of homeownership and median household earnings increase and rates of poverty, unemployment, and uninsurance decrease.

Within Mesa County, rates of a bachelor’s degree or higher vary widely in different census tracts - from 9.5% in Clifton, to 53.9% in the Redlands. While there are many educational paths that lead to economic stability and resilience besides bachelor’s degrees, it’s important to examine potential barriers for students who do desire to pursue this level of education and ensure that the education system is effectively equipping students to meet this goal.

CHIP Priority: Education

Vision: Support Mesa County residents in identifying optimal education opportunities that align with individual gifts, talents, and goals while continuing to support our current educational commitments.

Outcome Goal(s):

- Support Students who will be the first in their families to pursue higher education. (CHNA 2021)
- Support D51, WCCC, and CMU in expanding student engagement in concurrent enrollment opportunities by increasing awareness, addressing parent concerns, and identifying strategies to motivate parent engagement without presenting a potential financial burden. (CHNA 2021)
- Strengthen community partnerships with educational institutions to align priorities and direct resources toward closing the gap in educational outcomes with particular focus on early childhood education, elementary proficiency and the pursuit of higher education and training. (CHNA 2021)
- Work with employers to provide internships and practical experiences for students. Consider having employers offer “special projects” to departments so that professors and students have access to “real world” problems and can ensure that learning and training match the job skills needed. (CHNA 2021)

Need Indicator(s):

- 34.2 % of Mesa County Residents without a High School Diploma are uninsured. (CHNA 2021)
- Students who qualify for need-based financial aid are less likely to complete their degree than students who do not. (CHNA, 2021)
- 27 Occupations in Health Care earn a desirable income. There are 3,650 persons employed in desirable occupations. However, there are no pathways that don't require formal education. Only 6 of the 27 occupations have training programs available in Mesa County. Many students must often leave the area if they desire advanced training. Among available programs, the Bachelor's of Science in Nursing is the most popular.(CHNA, 2021)

Objective:

- Create educational opportunities within our community that demonstrate the many varieties of employment outside of nursing within the medical field of work.
- Fund services that will benefit the overall educational opportunities in our community.
- Expand the building of community partnerships that enables student exposure to real world problems creating an increase in job skill proficiency.

Community Partners:

- Colorado Mesa University (CMU)
- Colorado Christian University (CCU)
- Western Colorado Community College (WCCC)
- Mesa County School District 51
- Community Transformation Group (CTG)

CHIP Priority: Education (continued)

Tactic(s)	Community Partner(s)	Metric	Status
Build collaborative relationships between non nursing hospital occupations for the purpose of job shadowing and, if applicable, clinical rotations	Colorado Mesa University (CMU) Colorado Christian University (CCU) Western Colorado Community College (WCCC)	Establish shadowing program for 3 non nursing occupations (not currently existing)	Assessment of Opportunities Q4 2022
Participate in Job Fairs within District 51 with full demonstration of all fields of work possible in the hospital	Mesa County School District 51	Active participation in career fairs throughout the year with District 51.	Q2 2023
Promote career opportunities through community events	GJ Downtown Convoy of Hope Event Community Transformation Group	Participate in 12 weeks of Market On Main plus community events as scheduled.	Annual Events through 2024

Priority: Health Implications (Behaviors)

Health Implications include health behaviors and health outcomes. Health behaviors are actions individuals take that affect their health. They include actions that lead to improved health, such as eating well and being physically active, and actions that increase one’s risk of disease, such as smoking, excessive alcohol intake, and risky sexual behavior. The impact of health behaviors and the Social Determinants of Health can be seen in health outcomes such as rates of disease and causes of death. In general, Mesa County has higher rates when compared to Colorado

By addressing the Social Determinants of Health to improve quality of life in our community, we believe we will positively affect these health behaviors and outcomes.

CHIP Priority: Health Implications (Behaviors)

Vision: Impact health behaviors through our screening of Social Determinants of Health, providing community education, and sponsorship of social services.

Outcome Goal(s):

- See improvement to the Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL) (CHNA 2021)
- Reduce the number of accidental deaths in Mesa County (CHNA 2021)
- Mesa County can significantly improve the health of our community by addressing upstream factors such as increasing access to preventive health care and mental health services, improving the environment and context for community members to choose a healthy lifestyle, strengthening economic resilience through an economy that supports the local workforce, and building social connectedness across the neighborhoods.

Need Indicator(s):

- The top three causes of YPLL are not caused by disease, but instead by intentional self-harm and accident. (CHNA 2021)
- Suicide is a critical public health issue in Mesa County as we consistently see rates higher than both Colorado and the United States. The suicide rate for all ages as well as the rate for teens is more than double the national rate. (CHNA, 2021)
- Other accidents such as falls and accidental poisonings are the second leading cause of YPLL in Mesa County. (CHNA, 2021)

Objective:

- Through sponsorship of our social programs impact the current YPLL.
- Provide assessment of Suicidal Idation through the Emergency Department

Community Partners:

- Mesa County Health Department
- Mesa County School District 51
- Colorado National Collaborative (CNC)

Tactic(s)	Community Partner(s)	Metric	Status
Build the Zero Suicide initiative in the Emergency Department and within our PET Team	Colorado National Collaborative (CNC)	Effective program established for suicide assessment in the Emergency Department	Q4 2023
Provide education to all ages with regard to trauma prevention (bike safety, gun safety, driving awareness).	Mesa County Health Department Mesa County School District D51	Scheduled education opportunities through trauma services coordinator throughout the community.	Q3 2022

Priority: Healthcare Access

Mesa County is a regional health care hub with a variety of providers and specialists. However, it's important to look beyond the presence of services to see whether residents are actually able to access the care they require. In Mesa County, nine out of ten people are insured and have a regular source of care. Nonetheless, rates of utilization are lower than the state, largely because of cost barriers and lack of access to timely services.

CHIP Priority: Healthcare Access

Vision: All members of our community would be able access health care in alignment of needs and in a timely manner.

Outcome Goal(s):

- Barriers to obtaining healthcare can be assessed and mitigated through strategic partnership among healthcare providers.(CHNA 2021)
- Investigate availability of specialty care in Mesa County to understand current gaps. (CHNA 2021)
- Investigate provider barriers to timely care, since one in four Mesa County residents was unable to get an appointment as soon as they thought one was needed. (CHNA 2021)
- Improve access to transportation for health care appointments by aligning public transportation resources with health care needs and increasing social connections that might improve the likelihood of a car or a ride being in a person's network. (CHNA 2021)

Need Indicator(s):

- Barriers to health care in Mesa County can be broken into three categories - cost, availability of timely services, and personal obstacles.(CHNA 2021)
- Providers who work with many of Mesa County's uninsured patients report that finding specialty care for them can be especially challenging. (CHNA, 2021)
- 13% of Mesa County residents experienced attempting to get an appointment but the clinic was not accepting new patients. 10.4% of Mesa County residents experienced attempting to gain health care access but their insurance was not accepted. (CHNA, 2021)
- A personal obstacle that prevents people from accessing care is lack of transportation. 3.7% of Mesa County residents went without needed care because they lacked transportation to their appointment. This seems like a small percentage, but it represents roughly 6,000 Mesa County residents who went without care. (CHNA 2021)

Objective:

- Investigate the barriers within our healthcare system that could be prohibiting Mesa County residents from accessing healthcare.
- Build a strategic plan to address some of the personal obstacles to obtaining healthcare.

Community Partners:

- Mesa County Public Health Department
- Marillac Clinic
- Rocky Mountain Health Plans
- Quality Health Network

CHIP Priority: Healthcare Access (continued)

Tactic(s)	Community Partner(s)	Metric	Status
Identify specialty care gaps within Mesa County	Mesa County Public Health Department	Statistics of patients that have had to be transferred to other facilities outside of Mesa County to obtain care.	Q4 2024
Clearly define the patient to provider ratio and how health insurance plays a role in accessing care.	Rocky Mountain Health Plans Marillac Clinic Quality Health Network	Demonstrate our patient to provider ratio along with insurance acceptance policy	Q2 2023
Build relationships with community residents who lack connections that enable them to access care.	Mesa County Public Health Department Marillac Clinic Rocky Mountain Health Plans Area Agency On Aging 211 RSVP	Report yearly statistics of Mesa County residents served through our community connections program.	Ongoing to Q4 2024

Areas of Continued Work Improvement

Food Security - SMMG continues to sponsor Meals On Wheels Mesa County, feeding on average 600 seniors 5 days a week. We participate fully in the Hunger Alliance and have been a part of the Blueprint to End Hunger. In the coming months, Meals on Wheels will be joining Foodbank of the Rockies in a new warehouse space on 23 Road and G Road. In this partnership a new commercial kitchen will enable Meals on Wheels the ability to increase production of meals to serve an even greater number of our seniors. In addition, our partnership with Homeward Bound continues in providing food for the homeless population through our Food Recovery Program led by the hospital food services department.

Community Transformation Group - We are active participants in the Community Transformation Group which began in 2017. To learn more about the work being done within this group, click: <https://healthymesacounty.org/health-care/transformation/#1486471485016-6a590618-250b>

Education - The priorities listed above are an extension of goals and programs that we have advanced over many years. Our efforts will continue to collaborate with local and state universities to offer nursing students a facility to gain experience within the clinical setting. We will also continue the family medicine physician residency program with an average of 30 new physicians in the

program at any given time. This program provides continued physician presence at the day center that is led by Catholic Outreach.

Access to Primary Care - In our last CHIP, we focused on building a new Primary Care Facility to support additional Primary Care options for residents of Mesa County. With the completion of the building on Patterson Road it became clear that more work is needed in this area. The new building quickly reached provider and space capacities upon completion. Further work will be done to evaluate where additional supports can be located as Mesa County continues to grow.

Appendices



Appendix 1. Community Resources

SMMC identified resources potentially available to address the significant health needs. These identified resources are listed in the table below. This is not a comprehensive list of all available resources. For additional resources refer to 2-1-1 Colorado at <https://211colorado.communityos.org/cms/node/142>.

Significant Needs	Community Resources
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colorado Mesa University (CMU) • Colorado Christian University (CCU) • Western Colorado Community College (WCCC) • Mesa County School District 51 • Community Transformation Group (CTG)
Health Implementation (Behaviors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mesa County Health Department • Mesa County School District 51 • Colorado National Collaborative (CNC)
Healthcare Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mesa County Public Health Department • Marillac Clinic • Rocky Mountain Health Plans • Quality Health Network

Appendix 2. CHNA Prioritization Meeting Participants

Community Health Needs Assessment Prioritization, September 28, 29 and 30, 2021

Attendee	Title	Organization
Mike Stahl	Chief Executive Officer	Hilltop
Will Hays	Chief Operating Officer	Hilltop
Hali Nurnberg	Executive Director	Counseling Education Center (CEC)
Kristy Schmidt	Chief Development Officer	MarillacHealth
Patty Simpson	Dental Case Manager	MarillacHealth
Dr. Amy Bronson	Program Director Physician Assistant Program	Colorado Mesa University (CMU)
Derek Wagner	Vice President External Relations	Colorado Mesa University (CMU)
Sarah Johnson	Senior Community Health Planner	Mesa County Public Health Department (MCPHD)
Heidi Dragoo	Epidemiology Program Manager	Mesa County Public Health Department (MCPHD)
Shae Lynn Zastrow Watt	Data Analyst	Mesa County Public Health Department (MCPHD)
Dr. Ona Ridgeway	Clinical Lead, Pathways Family Wellness Center	Homeward Bound