

Ascension St. Mary's Hospital

Implementation Strategy for the 2022 CHNA Saginaw County, Michigan

Hospital Tax Year: 2022



Ascension



The purpose of this implementation strategy is to describe how the hospital plans to address prioritized health needs from its current community health needs assessment. The significant health needs that the hospital does not intend to address are identified and a rationale is provided. Special attention has been given to the needs of individuals and communities who are more vulnerable, unmet health needs or gaps in services, and input gathered from the community.

Ascension St. Mary's Hospital

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<https://healthcare.ascension.org/en/locations/michigan/misag/saginaw-ascension-st-marys-hospital>

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The 2022 Implementation Strategy was approved by the Ascension Michigan Board of Trustees on November 14, 2023 (2022 tax year), and applies to the following three-year cycle: July 2023 to June 2026. This report, as well as the previous report, can be found at our public website.

We value the community's voice and welcome feedback on this report. Please visit our public website (<https://healthcare.ascension.org/chna>) to submit your comments.

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	3
Introduction.....	4
About Ascension.....	4
About Ascension St. Mary's Hospital.....	4
Certifications and Accreditations.....	5
Overview of the Implementation Strategy.....	6
About the Implementation Strategy (IS).....	6
IRS 501(r)(3) and Form 990, Schedule H Compliance.....	6
Acute Community Concern Acknowledgement.....	6
Health Disparities and Inequities.....	6
Process to Prioritize Needs.....	7
Needs That Will Be Addressed.....	7
Needs That Will Not Be Addressed.....	8
Action Plans.....	9
Prioritized Need 1: Mental Health/Substance Use.....	9
Prioritized Need 2: Obesity & Related Chronic disease.....	10
Prioritized Need 3: Racial and Ethnic Discrimination.....	11
Conclusion.....	12
Approval and Adoption by Ascension Michigan Board of Trustees.....	12
Evaluation.....	12
Written Comments.....	12

Introduction

As one of the leading non-profit and Catholic health systems in the United States, Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable.

About Ascension

Ascension is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As of June 30, 2023, Ascension included approximately 134,000 associates and 35,000 aligned providers, supporting our sites of care – including 140 hospitals and 40 senior living facilities – in 19 states and the District of Columbia, while providing a variety of healthcare-related services.

Ascension's Mission provides a strong framework and guidance for the work done to meet the needs of communities across the U.S. It is foundational to transform healthcare and express priorities when providing care and services, particularly to those most in need.

Mission: Rooted in the loving ministry of Jesus as healer, we commit ourselves to serving all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. Our Catholic health ministry is dedicated to spiritually-centered, holistic care which sustains and improves the health of individuals and communities. We are advocates for a compassionate and just society through our actions and our words.

For more information about Ascension, visit <https://www.ascension.org/>.

About Ascension St. Mary's Hospital

Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is a regional leader in advanced specialty care, offering comprehensive services in cardiac science, neuroscience, cancer care, orthopedics, emergency and trauma care. With 268 beds and 25 specialty centers, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital has established itself as a technological pioneer and patient advocate throughout the state.

Since 1874, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital has provided high-quality care to individuals from 70-plus counties, primarily the central, northern and thumb regions of Michigan. More than 60% of patients come from outside Saginaw County. Ascension St. Mary's Hospital also includes Ascension St. Mary's Towne Centre, located in Saginaw Township. The care center offers a wide range of services, including an emergency center that is open 24/7, outpatient



surgery, digestive care, infusion therapy and chemotherapy, wound care, imaging and laboratory services, a sleep center, and a short-stay unit.

Certifications and Accreditations

- Ascension St. Mary's Hospital earned Comprehensive Stroke Center (CSC) certification from The Joint Commission, a national healthcare accreditation organization. Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is one of 13 hospitals in Michigan and 300 hospitals in the United States to earn this designation.
- Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is a Level II Trauma Center, delivering high-quality care to trauma patients across the continuum of care, from injury prevention to rehabilitation.
- Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is recognized as a Blue Distinction+ Center for Cardiac Care by Blue Cross Blue Shield.
- Ascension St. Mary's Hospital Seton Cancer Institute is fully accredited by the Board of Chancellors of the American College of Radiation Oncology (ACRO), and accredited by the Commission on Cancer (CoC) from the American College of Surgeons.
- Ascension St. Mary's bariatric program is nationally accredited by the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery as a Comprehensive Center under the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP). The program is also a Blue Distinction+ Center in Bariatric Surgery.
- Ascension St. Mary's Sleep Center is Joint Commission-approved to diagnose and treat sleep-related disorders.
- Ascension St. Mary's Hospital has Joint Commission full accreditation and Gold Seal of Approval.

For more information about Ascension St. Mary's Hospital, visit

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/en/locations/michigan/misag/saginaw-ascension-st-marys-hospital>.

Overview of the Implementation Strategy

About the Implementation Strategy (IS)

An implementation strategy (IS) is a hospital's response to the health needs prioritized from the community health needs assessment (CHNA); it describes the actions the hospital will take to address prioritized needs, allocate resources, and mobilize hospital programs and community partners to work together. This approach aligns with Ascension St. Mary's Hospital's commitment to offer programs designed to address the health needs of a community, with special attention to persons who are underserved and vulnerable.

IRS 501(r)(3) and Form 990, Schedule H Compliance

The CHNA and IS satisfy certain requirements of tax reporting, pursuant to provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, more commonly known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As part of the ACA, all not-for-profit hospitals are required to conduct a CHNA and adopt an IS every three years. Requirements for 501(c)(3) Hospitals Under the Affordable Care Act are described in Code Section 501(r)(3), and include making the CHNA report (current and previous) widely available to the public. In accordance with this requirement, electronic reports of both the CHNA and the current IS can be found at <https://healthcare.ascension.org/CHNA> and paper versions can be requested at Ascension St. Mary's Hospital's administrative offices.

Acute Community Concern Acknowledgement

A CHNA and IS offer a construct for identifying and addressing needs within the community(s) it serves; however, unforeseen events or situations, which may be severe and sudden, may affect a community. At Ascension, this is referred to as an acute community concern. This could describe anything from a health crisis (e.g., COVID-19), water poisoning, environmental events (e.g., hurricane, flood) or other event that suddenly impacts a community. In which case, if adjustments to an IS are necessary, the hospital will develop documentation, in the form of a SBAR (Situation-Background-Assessment-Response) evaluation summary, to notify key internal and external stakeholders of those possible adjustments.

Health Disparities and Inequities

Health equity is a state in which everyone has the opportunity to achieve full health and well-being, and no one is prevented from achieving this because of social position or other socially determined circumstances ([CDC, 2022](#)). Unfortunately, many populations experience health inequities and negative health outcomes due to factors beyond individual behaviors and choices. These inequities are produced by systemic racism and other forms of historical and ongoing oppression within social and economic systems, such as the political system, housing, the workplace, education, and the criminal justice system. Health inequities are observable and measurable through differences in factors such as

length and quality of life, rates of disease, disability, and death, as well as differences in access to services and treatments.

Ascension is addressing health disparities and inequities through the following initiatives:

- Establishment of regional ABIDE (“Appreciation-Belongingness-Inclusivity-Diversity) councils in 2020
- Standardized REaL data collection
- Screening for Social Determinants of Health
- Utilization of Neighborhood Resources to connect patients and individuals to services
- Ascension Medical Group health disparities goals/metrics in clinical screenings (colorectal, etc.)
- The Joint Commission Requirements to Reduce Health Care Disparities

Process to Prioritize Needs

Included in Code Section 501(r)(3) is the requirement that hospitals must provide a description of the process and criteria used to determine the most significant health needs of the community identified through the CHNA, along with a description of the process and criteria used to determine the prioritized needs to be addressed by the hospital. Accordingly, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital in partnership with the Saginaw BWell Partner Coalition, used a phased prioritization approach to identify the (significant) needs of Saginaw County. The first step was to determine the broader set of identified needs. Through the CHNA, identified needs were then narrowed to a set of significant needs which were determined most crucial for community stakeholders to address. Significant needs were further narrowed down to a set of prioritized needs that the hospital will address within the IS. Ascension has defined “prioritized needs” as the significant needs which have been prioritized by the hospital to address through the three-year CHNA cycle. To arrive at the prioritized needs, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital used the following criteria to further examine the significant needs:

- Scope of problem (number of people impacted, severity)
- Health disparities (by income and/or race and ethnicity)
- Feasibility (existing resources, known interventions, capacity)
- Momentum/commitment (existing partnerships, community readiness)
- Alignment (organization's strengths and priorities)

Needs That Will Be Addressed

Ascension St. Mary's Hospital understands the importance of all the health needs of the community and is committed to playing an active role in improving the health of the people in the communities it serves. Following the completion of the current CHNA, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital leadership team has selected the prioritized needs outlined below for its 2022 implementation strategy:

- **Mental Health & Substance Use** - This need was selected because people, including children and adolescents, with untreated mental health disorders are at high risk for many unhealthy and

unsafe behaviors, including alcohol or drug abuse, violent or self-destructive behavior, and suicide. Mental health disorders also have a serious impact on physical health and are associated with the prevalence, progression, and outcome of some of today's most pressing chronic diseases. Mental health and substance use challenges have been increasing since the pandemic, and the community has clearly expressed the need for more support and resources.

- **Obesity & Related Chronic Disease** - This need was selected because chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States ([CDC, 2022](#)). Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both.
- **Racial and Ethnic Discrimination** - This need was selected because racism negatively affects the mental and physical health of millions of people, preventing them from attaining their highest level of health, and consequently, affecting the health of our nation. The data show that racial and ethnic minority groups, throughout the United States, experience higher rates of illness and death across a wide range of health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, obesity, asthma, and heart disease, when compared to their White counterparts ([CDC, 2023](#)).

Needs That Will Not Be Addressed

Maternal and Child Health, Transportation, Neighborhood Safety, Housing and Homelessness, Employment, and Food Access were not selected by Ascension St. Mary's Hospital as prioritized needs in the 2022 IS. While critically important to overall community health, these specific needs did not meet internally determined criteria that prioritized needs by either continuing or expanding current programs, services, and initiatives to steward resources and achieve the greatest community impact.

For the needs not chosen for the 2022 IS, there are other service providers in the community better resourced to address these priorities. Ascension St. Mary's Hospital will work collaboratively with the other service providers in the community better resourced to address these priorities to ensure optimal service coordination and utilization, and may consider investing resources in these areas as appropriate, depending on opportunities to leverage organizational assets in partnership with local communities and organizations. To find a list of resources for each need not being addressed, please refer to the 2022 Saginaw County Community Health Needs Assessment:

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/CHNA>.

Action Plans

The action plans below are based on prioritized needs from the hospitals' most recent CHNA, and describe where the hospital will focus its community efforts over the next three years. While these remain a priority, the hospital will continue to offer additional programs and services to meet the needs of the community, with special attention to people who are living in poverty/with low income or otherwise made vulnerable.

Prioritized Need 1: Mental Health/Substance Use	
Strategy: Increase access to mental health and substance use services and resources for community residents seeking or needing care in Saginaw County	
OBJECTIVE By June 2026, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital will have contributed to improved mental health and substance use health outcomes in Saginaw County.	
MEASURES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and/or percent of patients screened • Number of BWell Saginaw meetings attended • Process outcomes of community investment and engagement activities 	
PRIORITY POPULATION Patients presenting to Ascension St. Mary's Hospital seeking mental health and substance use care; individuals and groups that are experiencing disparities; un- and/or underserved	
COLLABORATORS AND RESOURCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension St. Mary's Hospital: Staff time; quality improvement initiatives; cash donations to community organizations • Collaborators: Saginaw County Health Department - facilitate and coordinate implementation of the county-wide strategy; BWell Partner Coalition members - engage as appropriate to support the county-wide strategy 	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Improve access to behavioral healthcare for vulnerable populations through a coordinated and transformational approach in collaboration with Ascension Michigan's behavioral health service line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement enhanced behavioral health screening to all primary care sites
Support the BWELL Saginaw Partner Coalition's community-wide mental health/substance use strategy through continued collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to build/expand community health workers as navigators • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to develop a comprehensive county wide response to reduce overdoses in Saginaw County, including prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery
Increase involvement in and support of community health activities to address mental health & substance use-focused needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial support to community organizations addressing mental health-focused needs within Saginaw County • Participate in/on community-based forums and coalitions, with focus on increasing involvement in community health activities and raising awareness of the (aligned) services offered by Ascension St. Mary's Hospital
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
The anticipated impact of these actions is improved mental well-being for community members in Saginaw County.	

Prioritized Need 2: Obesity & Related Chronic disease	
Strategy: Improve chronic disease care and prevention resources in Saginaw county	
OBJECTIVE By June 2026, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital will have contributed to improved chronic disease related health outcomes in Saginaw County.	
MEASURES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of outreach screening events • Number of BWell Saginaw meetings attended • Process outcomes of community investment and engagement activities 	
PRIORITY POPULATION Patients presenting to Ascension St. Mary's Hospital; community members in Saginaw county served by the BWell Saginaw Partner Coalition initiatives; individuals and groups that are experiencing disparities; un- and/or underserved	
COLLABORATORS AND RESOURCES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension St. Mary's Hospital: Staff time; quality improvement initiatives; cash donations to community organizations; coordinate & conduct screenings • Collaborators: Saginaw County Health Department: facilitate and coordinate implementation of the county-wide strategy; BWell Partner Coalition members: engage as appropriate to support the county-wide strategy 	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Provide outreach screenings for underserved populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase community awareness among patients and community members of the importance of early detection screenings through health education presentations • Offer no-cost screening events to all eligible community members
Support the BWELL Saginaw Partner Coalition's community-wide obesity and related chronic disease strategy through continued collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to define healthy body status and collect data. • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to develop and implement county wide awareness messaging with a focus on health literacy • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to develop toolkit for healthcare providers to use with patients • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to expand ongoing efforts to improve food access and affordability
Increase involvement in and support of community health activities to address obesity & related chronic disease-focused needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial support to community organizations addressing obesity & related chronic disease-focused needs within Saginaw County • Participate in/on community-based forums and coalitions, with focus on increasing involvement in community health activities and raising awareness of the (aligned) services offered by Ascension St. Mary's Hospital
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
The anticipated impact of these actions is to lessen the chronic disease burden in Saginaw County.	

Prioritized Need 3: Racial and Ethnic Discrimination	
Strategy: Contribute to tangible change to overcome racism and intolerance to achieve a (more) inclusive, diverse and equitable community in Saginaw County	
OBJECTIVE	
By June 2026, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital will contribute to the strengthened capacity of the Saginaw community to develop and deliver health care programs and services specifically to reach those who are impacted disproportionately.	
MEASURES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process outcomes of health care disparities requirement • Number of healthcare personnel completing training • Number of BWell Saginaw meetings attended • Process outcomes of community investment and engagement activities 	
PRIORITY POPULATION	
Patients presenting to Ascension St. Mary's Hospital; community members in Saginaw county served by the BWell Saginaw Partner Coalition initiatives; individuals and groups that are experiencing disparities; un- and/or underserved	
COLLABORATORS AND RESOURCES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension St. Mary's Hospital: Staff time; quality improvement initiatives; cash donations to community organizations • Collaborators: Saginaw County Health Department: facilitate and coordinate implementation of the county-wide strategy; BWell Partner Coalition members: engage as appropriate to support the county-wide strategy 	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Address health care disparities by understanding individual patients' health-related social needs (HRSN) through the development of one (1) hospital-wide action plan to screen and assess, then identify resources most needed by those cared for by Ascension St. Mary's Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Joint Commission's Reduce Health Care Disparities requirement
Support the BWELL Saginaw Partner Coalition's community-wide Maternal/Child Health strategy through continued collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage as appropriate in community efforts to train healthcare personnel on implicit bias, health literacy, workforce culture, and culturally appropriate messaging to drive more equitable care
Increase involvement in and support of community health activities to address Racial and Ethnic Discrimination-focused needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial support to community organizations addressing Racial and Ethnic Discrimination within Saginaw County • Participate in/on community-based forums and coalitions, with focus on increasing involvement in community health activities and raising awareness of the (aligned) services offered by Ascension St. Mary's Hospital
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
The anticipated impact of these actions is to address health disparities in underserved and rural populations to improve gaps in healthcare.	

Conclusion

As a Catholic health ministry, Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is dedicated to spiritually centered, holistic care that sustains and improves the health of not only individuals, but the communities it serves. With special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable, we are advocates for a compassionate and just society through our actions and words. Ascension St. Mary's Hospital is dedicated to serving patients with compassionate care and medical excellence, making a difference in every life we touch.

Approval and Adoption by Ascension Michigan Board of Trustees

To ensure the Ascension St. Mary's Hospital's efforts meet the needs of the community and have a lasting and meaningful impact, the 2022 IS was presented and adopted by the Ascension Michigan Board of Trustees on November 14, 2023. Although an authorized body of the hospital must adopt the IS to be compliant with the provisions in the Affordable Care Act, adoption of the IS also demonstrates that the board is aware of the IS, endorses the priorities identified, and supports the action plans that have been developed to address prioritized needs.

Evaluation

Ascension St. Mary's Hospital will develop a comprehensive measurement and evaluation process for the IS. The hospital will monitor and evaluate the action plans outlined in this plan for the purpose of reporting and documenting the impact these action plans have on the community. Ascension St. Mary's Hospital uses a tracking system to capture community benefit activities and implementation. To ensure accountability, data will be aggregated into an annual Community Benefit report that will be made available to the community.

Written Comments

This IS has been made available to the public and is open for public comment. Questions or comments about this IS can be submitted via the website: <https://healthcare.ascension.org/chna>.