

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital

**Implementation Strategy for the 2024 CHNA
White County, Tennessee**



Ascension



The purpose of this Implementation Strategy (IS) is to describe how the hospital plans to address prioritized health needs from its current Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The significant health needs 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 at increased risk for poor health outcomes or experiencing social factors that place them at risk.

Hospital legal name: Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital, LLC (Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital)

Hospital Address: 401 Sewell Drive, Sparta, TN 38583

Hospital website: [Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital](https://www.ascensionstth.org)

Hospital phone: 931-738-9211

Hospital EIN/Tax ID: 47-4063046

The 2024 Implementation Strategy (IS) was adopted by the Ascension Saint Thomas East Regional Hospitals Board of Directors on September 22, 2025 (2024 tax year) and by the Ascension Saint Thomas Board of Directors on October 24, 2025 (2024 tax year) and applies to the following three-year cycle: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028. This report, as well as the previous report, can be found on Ascension's 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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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 impoverished and vulnerable persons.

About Ascension

Ascension is one of the nation's leading non-profit and Catholic health systems, with a Mission of delivering compassionate, personalized care to all with special attention to those most vulnerable. In FY2024, Ascension provided \$2.1 billion in care of persons living in poverty and other community benefit programs. Across 16 states and the District of Columbia, Ascension's network encompasses approximately 106,000 associates, 26,000 aligned providers, 105 wholly owned or consolidated hospitals, and 34 senior living facilities. Additionally, through strategic partnerships, Ascension holds an ownership interest in 26 other hospitals.

Ascension's Mission provides a strong framework and guidance for the work done to meet the needs of communities across the US. 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/>.

Ascension Saint Thomas

Ascension Saint Thomas is a leading health care system with a 125-year history of providing care to the community, and is the only faith-based, non profit health system in Middle Tennessee. Today, the health system offers a highly comprehensive system of care, with more than 320 sites of care that cover a 45-county area in Tennessee consisting of 18 hospitals and a network of affiliated joint ventures, medical practices, clinics and specialty facilities. Across the state, Ascension Saint Thomas and its partner organizations employ more than 13,000 dedicated associates who care for millions of patients each year.

Ascension Saint Thomas operates 16 hospitals in Tennessee and a comprehensive network of affiliated joint ventures, medical practices, clinics and rehabilitation facilities that cover a 45-county area and provided more than \$136 million in community benefit and care of persons living in poverty in fiscal year 2024. Across the state, Ascension Saint Thomas and its affiliates employ more than 13,165 associates. The health system has a 125-year history in Tennessee.



Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital strives to make a difference in the lives of our community by providing quality, compassionate care. Proudly serving White County and the surrounding communities since 1929, the Joint Commission accredited facility is part of the Saint Thomas Stroke Network. This 60-bed facility offers a full range of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, behavioral health, and rehabilitation services.

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital operates one hospital campus, and employs more than 130 associates. The doctors, nurses, and staff are committed to providing the expert, personalized care that the residents of Sparta deserve. The specialty areas include cardiology, orthopedics, senior health care, breast health, stroke care, radiology, surgery, physical therapy, and rehabilitation.

For more information about Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital, visit [Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital](#).

Overview of the Implementation Strategy

Needs Prioritization

Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, more commonly known as the Affordable Care Act (ACA), requires all not-for-profit hospitals to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and adopt an implementation strategy every three years. 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 Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital used a phased prioritization approach to identify the needs of White County. The first step was to determine the broader set of community identified needs. The CHNA assessment narrowed community identified needs to a group of needs determined most crucial for community stakeholders to address.

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital identified additional criteria to prioritize the needs including:

- Magnitude: How many individuals does the problem affect?
- Seriousness of consequences: What would happen if the issue were not made a priority? What level of burden on the community (economic, social or other)?
- Feasibility: Is the problem preventable, and what is the community's capacity to address?
- Equity: Is one group of people being affected more than other groups? Are health outcomes different for different groups?

After completing the CHNA, community significant needs were further narrowed down to community prioritized needs that the hospital will address within the Implementation Strategy (IS). To arrive at the community prioritized needs, Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital collaborated with the White County Health Department and the Highlands County Health Council to facilitate a discussion during a



White Health Council meeting on September 24, 2024 to prioritize the top three needs in the community.

The needs listed below were voted as top community prioritized needs by Community Key Stakeholders in White County.

- Access to Care
- Mental Health
- Substance Misuse

Needs That Will Be Addressed

During the Implementation Strategy (IS) brainstorming phase, Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals, Community Benefit and leaders agreed to a collective impact model toward addressing needs that appeared in multiple counties. This model is an effort to allocate resources in ways that can more meaningfully impact priority areas. Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital has selected the prioritized needs outlined below for its 2024 Implementation Strategy (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:

- **Access to Care** - This need was selected because Access to Care is in alignment with the organizational strengths and priorities, and was identified as a top priority by most Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals and voted as a top priority need by the White County Health Council.
- **Mental Health** - This need was selected because Mental Health was one of the overall top needs identified by Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals during the 2024 CHNA process and voted as a top priority by the White County Health Council.
- **Substance Misuse** - This need was selected because Substance Misuse was one of the overall top needs identified by Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals during the 2024 CHNA process and voted as a top priority by the White County Health Council.

Needs That Will Not Be Addressed

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital will be addressing all community prioritized health needs listed above.

Written Comments

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



Approval and Adoption of the IS by Ascension Saint Thomas East Regional Board of Directors

To ensure the Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital's efforts meet the needs of the community and have a lasting and meaningful impact, the 2024 Implementation Strategy (IS) was presented and adopted by Ascension Saint Thomas East Regional Hospitals Board of Directors on September 22, 2025 (2024 tax year) and by the Ascension Saint Thomas Board of Directors on October 24, 2025 (2024 tax year). Although an authorized body of the hospital must adopt the IS to be compliant with the provisions of 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.

Action Plans

The IS below is based on prioritized needs from the hospital's most recent CHNA. These strategies and action plans represent where the hospital will focus its community efforts over the next three years.

Strategy: Build a Bridge Between Communities and Healthcare	
Prioritized Health Need: Access to Care	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Collect and analyze data on social factors	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Providers, Spiritual Care
2. Identify, recommend and/or implement actions/interventions to address social factors	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Providers, Spiritual Care
3. Collaborate with community based organizations and nonprofits through data sharing on social factors	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Providers, Spiritual Care
4. Invest in community based organizations that are addressing social factors.	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Providers, Spiritual Care
5. Continue to strengthen and expand navigation workforce	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Providers, Spiritual Care
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Significant and positive impact on various aspects of individual and community well-being	

Strategy: Enhance Sexual Assault Infrastructure for the Community	
Prioritized Health Need: Access to Care	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Implement a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner float pool	Hospital Leadership, Nursing
2. Develop and implement comprehensive training, educational materials and resources on sexual assault and human trafficking	Hospital Leadership, Nursing
3. Collaborate and engage with stakeholders and community partners	Hospital Leadership, Nursing
4. Invest in community based organizations and nonprofits who focus on addressing sexual assault, challenge harmful norms and promote a culture of consent and respect	Hospital Leadership, Nursing
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Improved health outcomes and reductions in health disparities	

Strategy: Improving the Health of Postpartum Mothers	
Prioritized Health Need: Access to Care	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Explore collecting and analyzing data on postpartum moms social factors/needs	Hospital Leadership, Nursing, Case Management
2. Identify and recommend actions to address postpartum moms social factors/needs	Hospital Leadership, Nursing, Case Management
3. Explore providing educational materials and resources to women and their families about pre-pregnancy care, during pregnancy care and after pregnancy care	Hospital Leadership, Nursing, Case Management, Marketing and Communications
4. Collaborate, invest and provide support to community organizations and efforts that will improve maternal health outcomes during postpartum	Hospital Leadership, Nursing, Case Management
5. Address maternal mental health needs by providing connections to support groups and community connections	Hospital Leadership, Nursing, Case Management
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Healthier mothers, babies, and families	

Strategy: Strengthen the Healthcare Workforce	
Prioritized Health Need: Access to Care	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Participate in community activities and forums that promote reduction in healthcare workforce shortages.	Hospital Leadership, Workforce Development, Human Resources
2. Expand access to healthcare career pathways for students, community members, and internal associates	Hospital Leadership, Workforce Development, Human Resources
3. Explore scaling school-based Certified Clinical Medical Assistance (CCMA) programs to incorporate a total of 8 counties for training	Hospital Leadership, Workforce Development, Human Resources
4. Invest in community based organizations and nonprofits that focus on education, job skills training, and address social factors that influence workforce development	Hospital Leadership, Workforce Development, Human Resources
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Increased health outcomes, increased productivity and economic growth	

Strategy: Improve Overall Well-being Of Older Adults	
Prioritized Health Need: Mental Health	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Collect and analyze data on social factors impacting older adults	Hospital Leadership, Behavioral Health, Nursing, Quality
2. Identify and make recommendations to address the needs of older adults	Hospital Leadership, Behavioral Health, Nursing, Quality
3. Invest in community based organizations and nonprofits that are addressing the needs of older adults and their caregivers	Hospital Leadership, Behavioral Health, Nursing, Quality
4. Actively partner, engage and serve on community based organizations and nonprofits whose mission is to support older adults and their caregivers	Hospital Leadership, Behavioral Health, Nursing, Quality
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Improved health and well-being of older adults	

Strategy: Strengthen Social Infrastructure to Increase Community Connections	
Prioritized Health Need: Mental Health	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Assess and build knowledge about social infrastructures that build community connections	Hospital Leadership, Providers, Quality, Behavioral Health, Spiritual Care, Mental Health Practitioners
2. Identify and create a communication plan that will increase community connections	Hospital Leadership, Marketing and Communication, Providers, Quality, Behavioral Health, Spiritual Care, Providers, Mental Health Practitioners
3. Engage with local community based organizations and nonprofits partners who are strengthening social infrastructures that increase community connections	Hospital Leadership, Providers, Quality, Behavioral Health, Spiritual Care, Mental Health Practitioners
4. Invest in organizations that are creating social infrastructures that are increasing community connections	Hospital Leadership, Providers, Quality, Behavioral Health, Spiritual Care, Mental Health Practitioners
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Improved well-being and resilience	

Strategy: Support Substance Misuse Prevention and Education Efforts	
Prioritized Health Need: Substance Misuse	
Collaborators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascension Saint Thomas Hospitals • Community Partners • Government Agencies • Providers 	
Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Talent • Dollars 	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
1. Explore launching the infrastructure to support Harm Reduction Services	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Spiritual Care, Providers, Pharmacy
2. Explore opportunities for collaborations with community based organizations and nonprofits on harm reduction training and services	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Spiritual Care, Providers, Pharmacy
3. Promote harm reduction resources both locally and regionally	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Spiritual Care, Providers, Pharmacy
4. Invest in community based organizations and nonprofits efforts addressing harm reduction programs and negative consequences of drug use	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Spiritual Care, Providers, Pharmacy
5. Engage with community based organizations and nonprofits by serving on councils, boards and forums	Hospital Leadership, Case Management, Spiritual Care, Providers, Pharmacy
ANTICIPATED IMPACT	
Reducing the harms related to drug use for individuals and the community	



Evaluation

Ascension Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital will develop a comprehensive measurement and evaluation process for the Implementation Strategy (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 Saint Thomas Highlands Hospital uses a tracking system to capture community benefit activities and implementation.