

# Ascension Seton Highland Lakes

**Implementation Strategy for the 2024 CHNA  
Blanco, Burnet and Llano Counties, Texas**



**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.

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<https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/texas/txaus/burnet-ascension-seton-highland-lakes>

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The 2024 Community Health Needs Assessment report was approved by the Board of Directors of Ascension Seton on May 22, 2025, 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 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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## 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 Texas

Serving Texas for more than 120 years, Ascension Texas operates 12 hospitals and 222 sites of care, employing 16,000 associates across Central Texas. Ascension Texas operates Ascension Providence in Waco and Ascension Seton, which includes Dell Children's Medical Center, the region's only comprehensive children's hospital and pediatric Level I trauma center, and Dell Seton Medical Center at The University of Texas, the region's only Level I trauma center for adults. Ascension Seton partners with Dell Medical School at The University of Texas at Austin and shares a common vision of transforming healthcare through a focus on quality and value. On average, Ascension Texas provides \$562 million annually in charity care and community benefit across Central Texas. Visit [www.ascension.org](http://www.ascension.org) and [www.dellchildrens.net](http://www.dellchildrens.net).

## **Ascension Seton Highland Lakes**

As a Ministry of the Catholic Church, Ascension Seton is a non-profit hospital system governed by a local board of trustees represented by community members, medical staff, and sister sponsorships. Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is one of 11 hospital campuses in the 11-county Ascension Seton service area.

Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is located in the heart of the Hill Country in Burnet, Texas, roughly 50 miles northwest of Austin and provides convenient and comprehensive 24-hour emergency health services for the community. Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is a 25 bed Critical Access Hospital, providing inpatient acute services, including surgical and medical procedures, with satellite healthcare centers throughout the region.

Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is proud to maintain the highest standards and is designated a Level IV Trauma Center.

Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is continuing the long and valued tradition of responding to the health needs of the people in our community, following in the footsteps of legacy Seton hospitals. Ascension Seton is a faith-based nonprofit healthcare system founded by the Daughters of Charity. Called to be a sign of God's unconditional love for all, Ascension Seton has consistently strived to expand access to high-quality, low-cost, person-centered medical care and services.

For more information about Ascension Seton Highland Lakes, visit

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/texas/txaus/burnet-ascension-seton-highland-lakes>

## **Overview of the Implementation Strategy**

### **Needs Prioritization**

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. Ascension has defined "prioritized needs" as the significant needs that the hospital system has prioritized to address through the three-year CHNA cycle. Accordingly, Ascension Seton used a phased prioritization approach to identify the community health needs. The first step was to determine the broader set of identified needs. The CHNA assessment narrowed identified needs to a group of significant needs determined most crucial for community stakeholders to address.

After completing the CHNA assessment, significant needs were further narrowed down by the Ascension Seton CHNA Steering Committee to the prioritized needs which the network of Ascension Seton hospitals will address. To arrive at the prioritized needs, Ascension Seton leaders used

rank-choice voting based on criteria including alignment with Ascension's mission and capacity to impact followed by group discussion and final discernment.

Following the completion of the current CHNA, Ascension Seton has selected the prioritized needs outlined below:

- Healthcare Access and Quality
- Mental and Behavioral Health
- Social Determinants of Health
- Maternal and Child Health

## **Needs That Will Be Addressed**

Ascension Seton understands the importance of all the community's health needs. It is committed to playing an active role in improving the health of the people in the communities it serves. As a system, Ascension Seton will address all of the prioritized needs. However, individual hospitals may not address all four needs. Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will address all of the needs prioritized by Ascension Seton.

## **Written Comments**

This 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 the Board of Directors of Ascension Seton**

To ensure the Ascension Seton's efforts meet the needs of the community and have a lasting and meaningful impact, the 2024 Implementation Strategy was presented and adopted by the Board of Directors of Ascension Seton on August 28, 2025. 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.

Prioritized Need: Healthcare Access and Quality	
<b>Background</b> Access to quality healthcare is critical for addressing health needs that are acute, chronic or preventive. Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will address Healthcare Access and Quality by focusing on health literacy to promote health and prevent disease, improving access to clinical services and reducing financial barriers to healthcare and pharmaceuticals.	
<b>Collaborators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Injury Prevention, Trauma, Medical Response Unit, Community Impact, Rural Health Pedi-van, Pharmacy and others.</li> <li>Collaborators: To support healthcare access and quality, Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will collaborate with community partners and organizations for external, community-facing initiatives.</li> </ul>	

<b>STRATEGY 1:</b> Offer hospital and community-based health education to improve health literacy and prevent disease	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Increased community knowledge/awareness of factors that affect health	
<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate time</li> <li>Educational materials (creating, finding, printing)</li> </ul>	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
Develop relationships with community partners who host events and gatherings appropriate for health trainings, education booths or education distribution	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes and Ascension Texas leadership in partnership with other internal leaders
Provide health training or education at a minimum of one community-based event in Blanco, Burnet and/or Llano county	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership in partnership with other department leaders
Participate in collaborative learning environments with community health and service leaders to plan for access to care in Blanco, Burnet and/or Llano county	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes and Ascension Texas leadership

<b>STRATEGY 2:</b> Improve access to high quality health services in the community with a focus on community members who experience high barriers to care	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Community members receiving access to healthcare services who otherwise may not have	
<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate time</li> <li>Medical supplies as appropriate</li> </ul>	
ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
Operate rural health clinics to provide high quality primary and specialty care access in rural communities	Rural Health Clinics Director

Offer free or reduced cost health screenings and/or services at a minimum of one event in Blanco, Burnet and Llano counties	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership in collaboration with various internal department leaders
Collaborate on community workforce development initiatives to develop future healthcare professionals	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes and Ascension Texas leadership
Educate policymakers on healthcare access and quality	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership in collaboration with Ascension Texas Advocacy

**STRATEGY 3:**

Improve access to medications for patients who experience financial barriers

**Anticipated Impact**

Community members receiving access to needed medications

**Resources**

- Associate time

**ACTION STEPS**
**ROLE/OWNER**

Connect eligible patients with internal and external pharmaceutical assistance programs

Case Management, Pharmacy

Education for providers on available options for patients who cannot afford medications

Case Management, Pharmacy

**Prioritized Need: Mental and Behavioral Health**
**Background**

Mental health is a key component of overall health and is closely linked to physical health. Mental health conditions are among the most common health conditions in the United States. Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is a critical partner in the community for addressing mental and behavioral health concerns as hospital emergency departments are often a front door for people experiencing mental health crises.

Access to mental healthcare includes similar components as access to physical healthcare, however there are also unique aspects. Some of the unique concerns of mental healthcare access include: appropriate reimbursement for services, growing and maintaining a qualified and specialized workforce and the ability to meet the demand for appropriate levels of care including long-term care.

**Collaborators**

- Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Trauma, Case Management, Community Impact and Ascension Texas Advocacy.
- Collaborators: To support mental and behavioral health, Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will collaborate with community partners and organizations for external, community-facing initiatives and to ensure that care is provided at the right place and time within the mental healthcare network.



<b>STRATEGY:</b> Promote mental wellbeing and support the network of care for mental and behavioral health with a focus on underserved populations	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Community members who maintain mental health and are able to receive mental healthcare in the right setting for the appropriate level of care needed	
<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate time</li> <li>• Educational and program materials</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>ROLE/OWNER</b>
Partner with community mental and behavioral health organizations to understand and enhance the network of mental and behavioral health services available so that services and supports are available at the right time and level of care for patients and community members	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes and Ascension Texas leadership
Enhance community responsiveness to mental health challenges and increase awareness of resources through training and education for associates and the community	Human Resources, Community Impact and others
Pursue continued learning on community mental and behavioral health interventions	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership, Community Impact
Educate policymakers on mental and behavioral health system needs	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership in collaboration with Ascension Texas leadership

<b>Prioritized Need: Social Determinants of Health</b>
<b>Background</b> Social determinants of health (SDOH), sometimes referred to as nonmedical drivers of health, are the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship and age that affect a wide range of health outcomes. They are grouped into five categories: economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context. SDOH can affect health outcomes in varied ways. Some SDOH include the ability to meet immediate needs and engage in health maintenance behaviors such as access to job opportunities that pay a living wage, access to healthy food and safe spaces to exercise. Other SDOH can affect longer-term and even generational health outcomes such as educational attainment, socioeconomic factors, and localized environmental pollution.
<b>Collaborators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Case Management, Community Impact and Ascension Texas Advocacy.</li> <li>• Collaborators: To support social determinants of health, Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will collaborate with community partners and organizations for connections to social services and opportunities for education related to social determinants of health.</li> </ul>

<b>STRATEGY 1:</b>	
Support improved health outcomes that are caused or influenced by non-medical factors in the community	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b>	
Reduce poor health outcomes that are associated with non-clinical social factors	
<b>Resources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate time</li> <li>• Neighborhood Resource referral platform</li> <li>• Data analytics dashboard</li> <li>• Supplies and materials</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>ROLE/OWNER</b>
Identify the greatest social needs of patients through analysis of SDoH screening data	Community Impact
Promote the Neighborhood Resource, a tool to help find community resources	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership, Community Impact
Pursue continued learning and development of relationships with community-led organizations to meet social determinants of health needs	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership, Community Impact, Case Management

<b>STRATEGY 2:</b>	
Support initiatives that strengthen access to healthy food for patients and for the community	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b>	
The anticipated impact of these actions is improved access to food for patients who screen positive for food insecurity	
<b>Resources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate time</li> <li>• Materials and supplies (including food if appropriate)</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTION STEPS</b>	<b>ROLE/OWNER</b>
Develop partnership with food access organizations in the community	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership
Providing food at discharge to patients who screen positive for food insecurity	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership
Create a strategy for connecting patients to benefit programs they may be eligible for (WIC, SNAP)	Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership

### Prioritized Need: Maternal and Child Health

#### Background

Improving the well-being of mothers, infants and children is an important public health goal for the United States. Their well-being determines the health of the next generation and can impact future public health challenges for families, communities, and the healthcare system.

Ascension Seton Highland Lakes is located in a rural community on the west side of the Ascension Seton service area. During the community health assessment members of the community expressed a lack of providers for prenatal care serving the area.

Although Ascension Seton Highland Lakes does not provide maternal health services, the hospital is an emergency provider and part of the Ascension Seton system that provides maternity care. This strategy was selected to better understand the expressed need for perinatal providers at all stages in the rural areas of the Ascension Seton service region.

#### Collaborators

- Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Women's Health and Community Impact.
- Collaborators: To support Maternal and Child Health, Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will collaborate with community partners to understand available services in the community.

#### STRATEGY 1:

Support families through the perinatal period with a focus on positive health outcomes for all mothers, babies and families.

#### Anticipated Impact

Positive outcomes for mothers and babies

#### Resources

- Associate time
- Technology tools for data analysis
- Supplies and materials

#### ACTION STEPS

Conduct a landscape assessment for maternal healthcare

#### ROLE/OWNER

Community Impact and Ascension Seton Highland Lakes leadership

## Evaluation

Ascension Seton Highland Lakes will develop a comprehensive measurement and evaluation process for the implementation strategy. 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.