

Ascension Seton Northwest

Implementation Strategy for the 2024 CHNA Travis County, 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.

Ascension Seton Northwest

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<https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/texas/txaus/austin-ascension-seton-northwest>

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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 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 and www.dellchildrens.net.

Ascension Seton Northwest

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 Northwest is one of 11 hospitals in the 11-county Ascension Seton service area.

Ascension Seton Northwest in Austin, Texas is a full-service hospital with 24/7 emergency care. Ascension Seton Northwest offers a wide range of minimally invasive procedures, imaging, lab tests and rehabilitation services, all on one campus and is a destination for specialty care - including orthopedic, maternity and women's health, general surgery and urology.

Ascension Seton Northwest is proud to maintain the highest standards and is a designated Level IV Trauma Center and Level II Specialty Care Nursery.

Ascension Seton 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 Northwest, visit

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/texas/txaus/austin-ascension-seton-northwest>.

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 Northwest 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	
Background	Access to quality healthcare is critical for addressing health needs that are acute, chronic or preventive. Ascension Seton Northwest 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.
Collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Injury Prevention, Trauma, Medical Response Unit, Community Impact, Rural Health Pedi-van, Pharmacy and others.

- Collaborators: To support healthcare access and quality, Ascension Seton Northwest will collaborate with community partners and organizations for external, community-facing initiatives.

STRATEGY 1:

Offer hospital and community-based health education to improve health literacy and prevent disease

Anticipated Impact

Increased community knowledge/awareness of factors that affect health

Resources

- Associate time
- Educational materials (creating, finding, printing)

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 Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership in partnership with other internal department leaders

Provide health training or education at a minimum of one community-based event in Travis county

Ascension Seton Northwest 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 Travis county

Ascension Seton Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership

STRATEGY 2:

Improve access to medications for patients who experience financial barriers

Anticipated Impact

Community members receiving access to needed medications

Resources

- Associate time
- Cost of medications when applicable

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. Northwest 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 Northwest 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.

STRATEGY 1:

Promote mental wellbeing and support the network of care for mental and behavioral health with a focus on underserved populations

Anticipated Impact

Community members who maintain mental health and are able to receive mental healthcare in the right setting for the appropriate level of care needed

Resources

- Associate time
- Educational and program materials

ACTION STEPS
ROLE/OWNER

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 Northwest 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 Northwest leadership, Community Impact

Educate policymakers on mental and behavioral health system needs

Ascension Seton Northwest leadership in collaboration with Ascension Texas Advocacy

Prioritized Need: Social Determinants of Health

Background

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.

Collaborators

- Ascension Seton hospitals and departments such as Case Management, Community Impact and Ascension Texas Advocacy.
- Collaborators: To support social determinants of health, Ascension Seton Northwest will collaborate with community partners and organizations for connections to social services and opportunities for education related to social determinants of health.

STRATEGY 1:

Support improved health outcomes that are caused or influenced by non-medical factors in the community

Anticipated Impact

Reduce poor health outcomes that are associated with non-clinical social factors

Resources

- Associate time
- Neighborhood Resource referral platform
- Data analytics dashboard
- Supplies and materials

ACTION STEPS
ROLE/OWNER

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 Northwest leadership, Community Impact

Pursue continued learning and development of relationships with community-led organizations to meet social determinants of health needs

Ascension Seton Northwest leadership, Community Impact, Case Management

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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 4 in 5 pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. are potentially preventable.¹ Within the U.S., disparities in maternal health outcomes based on race and ethnicity reflect profound care inequalities. Black women are reported to be more than 3 times more likely than White women to die from a pregnancy-related cause.²

The leading causes of maternal death in Texas between 2016-2019 were cardiac events (17% of maternal deaths), drug poisoning (16%), homicide (15%) and suicide (10%) and the majority of maternal deaths occur 61+ days postpartum (61% of maternal deaths) followed by 0-7 days postpartum (15%) and 8-42 days postpartum (13%).³ Some risk factors for maternal mortality include birth spacing, mental health, pre-pregnancy weight status, hypertension and diabetes and smoking.

Collaborators

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

STRATEGY 1:

Support mothers and families through pregnancy, delivery and postpartum with high quality clinical services, community outreach and social service connections and a focus on ensuring the best outcomes for all mothers, babies and families

Anticipated Impact

Positive outcomes for mothers and babies

Resources

- Associate time

ACTION STEPS	ROLE/OWNER
Monitor internal maternal health data and implement process improvements to reduce severe obstetric complications and adverse outcomes	Perinatal leadership forum and Women's Health leaders
Strengthen relationships with community partners who provide wraparound support for all stages of maternal health	Ascension Seton Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership in partnership with Breastfeeding Success, The United Way and others
Pursue continued learning and training on maternal and infant health with a focus on understanding health disparities in partnership with community-led initiatives	Ascension Seton Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership, in partnership with Austin Public Health, The Maternal Health Equity Collaborative, The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and others
Support NICU families with social and emotional needs around breastfeeding, discharge, and bereavement.	Ascension Seton Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership in partnership with Hand to Hold and others

¹ CDC Newsroom. (2022). Four in 5 pregnancy-related deaths in the U.S. are preventable.

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0919-pregnancy-related-deaths.html>

² Njoku, A., Evans, M., Nimo-Sefah, L., & Bailey, J. (2023). Listen to the whispers before they become screams: Addressing black maternal morbidity and mortality in the United States. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36767014/>

³ Texas Department of State Health Services. 2023. Texas Health Data, Maternal Health, Maternal Death Causes and Timing.

<https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/dashboard/maternal-and-child-health/maternal-health/maternal-health>

Provide families with resources to promote newborn health and safety	Ascension Seton Northwest and Ascension Texas leadership in partnership with Dell Children's Medical Center experts
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Evaluation

Ascension Seton Northwest 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.