

# Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus

**Implementation Strategy for the 2021 CHNA  
Winnebago County, WI**



**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 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, to unmet health needs or gaps in services and to input gathered from the community.

**Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus**

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920-223-2000

The 2021 Implementation Strategy was approved by the Board of Directors of Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus, on July 12, 2022 (2021 tax year) and applies to the following three-year cycle: July 2022 to June 2025. 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 at <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 persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable.

### **Ascension NE Wisconsin, Inc. - Mercy Campus**

As a Ministry of the Catholic Church, Ascension Mercy is a non-profit hospital governed by a local board of directors and provides medical care to Winnebago County and the surrounding communities. In Wisconsin, Ascension operates 17 hospital campuses, more than 100 related healthcare facilities and employs more than 1,200 primary and specialty care clinicians from Racine to the Fox Valley.

Serving Wisconsin for about 150 years, Ascension is continuing the long and valued tradition of addressing the health of the people in our community. Following in the footsteps of our founders, Ascension Wisconsin was formed in 2016 when sponsorship transitioned from four health systems: Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, Ministry Health Care, Columbia St. Mary's and Affinity Health System.

For more information about Ascension Mercy, visit:

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/wisconsin/wiapa/oshkosh-ascension-ne-wisconsin-mercy-campus>

## Overview of the Implementation Strategy

### **Purpose**

This implementation strategy (IS) is the hospital's response to the health needs prioritized from its current 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 Mercy'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 implementation strategy 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 implementation strategy can be found at

<https://healthcare.ascension.org/CHNA> and paper versions can be requested at the hospital.

## Needs That Will Be Addressed

Following the completion of the current CHNA, Ascension Mercy has selected the prioritized needs outlined below for its 2021 implementation strategy. Ascension has defined “prioritized needs” as the significant needs which have been prioritized by the hospital to address through the three-year CHNA cycle:

- Alcohol and Drug Use was selected because substance use, particularly alcohol abuse, continues to be a significant problem in the Fox Valley region. While excessive drinking is a cultural norm in the state of Wisconsin, numerous community organizations have committed to addressing the issue through collective efforts. Ascension Wisconsin is also committed to improving screening and treatment processes.
- Diet and Exercise was selected because prevention is an important step toward a healthier community. A healthy lifestyle through consumption of healthy foods and exercise can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases, lessening the need for medication or other treatments. This priority will give special attention to communities lacking access to healthy foods due to structural barriers relating to poverty.
- Mental Health was selected because mental health challenges are increasing during the pandemic and the community has clearly expressed the need for more support and resources. Mental health issues can lead to numerous physical health complications. Ascension Wisconsin is committed to expanding access to mental health providers and partnering with community organizations to address this health priority.

In alignment with these priorities and the voice of the community, strategies addressing these health issues will focus on equity, working to address the root social causes of health disparities in our communities and giving special attention to people who have been made vulnerable by historic disadvantages.

Ascension Mercy 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. For the purposes of this implementation strategy, Ascension Mercy has chosen to focus its efforts on the priorities listed above.

## Needs That Will Not Be Addressed

The following needs were not selected for the 2021 CHNA cycle: Safe and Affordable Housing, Social Connectedness and Belonging and Economic Stability and Employment. These social determinants of health were not prioritized due to hospital and staff capacity. However, as part of this implementation strategy, several of the tactics designed to address the prioritized needs also encourage social connectedness. In addition, Ascension Mercy is committed to participating with partners in addressing the identified social needs and will continue to look for opportunities to do so.



This report does not encompass a complete inventory of everything Ascension Mercy does to support health within the community. To find a list of resources for each need not being addressed, please refer to the Ascension Mercy's 2021 CHNA: <https://healthcare.ascension.org/CHNA>.

## **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. If adjustments to an IS are necessary, the hospital will develop documentation to notify key stakeholders of possible adjustments.

## **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 by the Board of Directors of Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus**

To ensure Ascension Mercy's efforts meet the needs of the community and have a lasting and meaningful impact, the 2021 implementation strategy was presented and adopted by the Board of Directors of Ascension NE Wisconsin - Mercy Campus on July 12, 2022. 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 the board is aware of the IS, endorses the priorities identified and supports the action plans 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. 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.

<b>Priority 1: Alcohol and Drug Use</b>
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Alcohol and Drug Use was ranked as the number two health condition/behavior issue by key stakeholders who highlighted substance use treatment barriers and a need for more collaboration among those doing prevention and treatment work. The percent of the county's population partaking in excessive drinking is almost double that of the top U.S. counties and the rate of deaths by drug overdose is nearly 50% higher than top U.S. counties (<a href="#">CHRR, 2021</a>). Substance use disorders can involve illicit drugs, prescription drugs, or alcohol and are linked to many health problems such as lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, or mental health conditions (<a href="#">Health People, 2030</a>). Social attitudes such as stigma can keep people from seeking care for their substance use disorder (<a href="#">CDC, 2021</a>). Political and legal responses to the consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs make substance misuse one of the most complex public health issues (<a href="#">Healthy People 2020</a>).</p>
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>By 2025, the excessive drinking rate will begin to decrease in Winnebago County (baseline: 28%) and there will be no growth in drug overdose rates (baseline: 16).</p>
<p><b>Healthy People 2030 Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SU-01- Increase the proportion of people with a substance use disorder who received treatment in the past year</li> <li>● SU-DO2 - Increase the proportion of people who received a referral for substance use treatment after an emergency department visit</li> <li>● SU-05 - Reduce the proportion of adolescents who used drugs in the past month and SU-R01- Increase the proportion of adolescents who think substance abuse is risky (<a href="#">Healthy People 2030</a>)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaborative Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current: United Way, REACH coalition, schools, health departments, Samaritan Counseling, Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin, <a href="#">Neighborhood Resource</a></li> <li>● Potential: Additional schools, law enforcement, organizations that support stigma reduction</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy 1: Expand Treatment and Substance Use Prevention in the Community</b>
<p><b>Anticipated Impact</b></p> <p>Increased awareness and decreased stigma around substance misuse and improved recovery opportunities for Fox Valley residents.</p>
<p><b>Resources Committed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff time, funding, education materials, IT infrastructure for tracking, prescription drug collection materials</li> </ul>

INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Increase Community Initiatives for Alcohol and Drug Misuse Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Partner with other organizations to increase community-based treatment and support programs</li> <li>-Engage with coalitions on important access to treatment issues</li> </ul>
Partner on Prevention in the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work closely with coalitions to support stigma reduction around substance use disorders</li> <li>-Direct funds and efforts to important prevention activities in the community, including in schools</li> <li>-Support Prescription Drug Take Back events to reduce opioids within the community</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process outcomes of community engagement activities to respective tactics</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategy 2: Increase Opportunities for Patients to Engage in Substance Use Treatment</b>	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Increased access to alcohol and drug misuse services for Ascension Wisconsin patients and expanded support services for those in recovery.	
<b>Resources Committed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time, funding, education materials, IT infrastructure for tracking, volunteer coordination, facility space</li> </ul>	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Increase Access to Alcohol and Drug Misuse Services for Ascension Wisconsin Patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Screen patients to determine if they have excessive alcohol consumption and connect these individuals with local resources</li> <li>-Increase access to a variety of substance use treatment including medication-assisted treatment and innovative models of care</li> </ul>
Provide Holistic Support Services for Ascension Wisconsin Patients in Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Screen patients for social needs during healthcare visits and refer them to resources to support their whole health through mitigating social barriers that influence alcohol and drug use</li> <li>-Connect patients with Peer Recovery Coaches when receptive</li> <li>-Reduce healthcare stigma by encouraging associate awareness on nonjudgmental compassionate care for those struggling with substance misuse disorder</li> </ul>
<b>Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of patients screened</li> <li>• Number of patients referred to support services</li> <li>• Process outcomes to respective tactics</li> </ul>	

## Priority 2: Diet and Exercise

### **Background**

Chronic conditions are responsible for the majority of deaths in the United States ([CDC, 2020](#)). Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity was identified as the third top priority health condition/behavior issues by key informant respondents in Fox Valley. The percentage of people reporting obesity is 42% higher in Winnebago County than the top U.S. counties ([CHRR, 2021](#)). A healthy lifestyle reduces risk of several chronic diseases, risk factors and illnesses ([CDC, 2022](#)). Furthermore, health disparities exist within chronic disease prevalence: individuals with low income and some racial and ethnic minorities have higher rates of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol and blood pressure and stroke. Older adults are also disproportionately affected by chronic conditions, with 80% managing at least one chronic condition ([NCOA, 2022](#)) and food insecurity can contribute to diet-related chronic diseases, which adds to the complexity of prevention and health disparities ([USDA, 2017](#)).

### **Objective**

By 2025, fewer residents will report a BMI of 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (obese) (baseline: 37%) and are not physically active (baseline: 20%).

### **Healthy People 2030 Alignment**

- NSW-01 - Reduce food insecurity and hunger
  - NSW-03 - Reduce the proportion of adults with obesity
  - HDS-01 - Improve cardiovascular health
  - HDS-04 - Reduce the proportion of adults with high blood pressure
- ([Healthy People 2030](#))

### **Collaborative Partners**

- Current: United Way, BeWell Fox Valley coalition, Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin, hospital volunteers
- Potential: Schools, local food pantry, hospital volunteers, various community based organizations (CBOs) offering healthy foods

## Strategy 1: Implement Healthy Lifestyle and Education Activities Within the Community

### **Anticipated Impact**

Increased access to healthy foods and education on the benefits of healthy living activities for community members in Winnebago County.

### **Priority Populations**

- Families and individuals living in poverty and/or with low income; Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx individuals and families; older adults

### **Resources Committed**

- Staff time donated to numerous organizations, cash donations to community organizations, materials to build community gardens, education collateral, healthy food snacks for schools, transportation, marketing resources and others

INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Engage and Educate Community Members on Health and Prevention	-Actively participate in healthy living collaboratives that strive for collective impact on the community's whole health -Contribute to community education sessions on healthy living activities within the community, focusing on early interventions, particularly with children and older adults -Provide chronic disease prevention and support in rural settings with a focus on groups that have been historically marginalized
Expand Opportunities for Community Members to be Engaged in Healthy Living Activities	-Fund community-based organizations (CBOs) that increase access to healthy foods and provide outreach to populations that have gaps in healthy food access -Donate fresh produce and other healthy foods through various channels
<b>Measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process outcomes of community engagement activities to respective tactics</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategy 2: Actively Engage Patients and Associates in Healthy Living Activities</b>	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Increased access to healthy foods and increased education on the benefits of healthy living activities for Ascension Wisconsin patients and associates.	
<b>Priority Populations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patients experiencing barriers to healthy foods, particularly those with low-income; patients who are under/uninsured</li> </ul>	
<b>Resources Committed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff time, rooming standard updates, IT infrastructure for tracking, funding as needed for food support, community garden materials, volunteers</li> </ul>	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Promote Screenings and Interventions for Chronic Conditions	-Develop a food insecurity screening, tracking and referral program for patients -Improve processes statewide to provide referrals to nutritionists and other resources as needed for elevated healthy weight/BMI screenings -Connect food insecure patients with chronic conditions to condition-specific food, education and support
Educate Patients and Associates about Healthy Foods and Physical Activity	-Hold healthy living demonstrations within Ascension Wisconsin healthcare facilities, particularly around specific chronic conditions
<b>Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percent/number of patients screened</li> <li>Number of patients referred to support services</li> <li>Process outcomes to respective tactics</li> </ul>	

Priority 3: Mental Health	
<p><b>Background</b>            Mental Health was rated the number one issue by key stakeholders in the Fox Valley counties. Numerous key stakeholders identified the biggest barrier as a shortage of mental health providers. Winnebago County has limited access to mental health providers with 59% fewer mental health providers per population than the top U.S. counties (430:1). Twelve percent of the county's population report mental distress (<a href="#">CHRR, 2021</a>). Mental health issues are associated with increased rates of smoking, physical inactivity, obesity and substance abuse (<a href="#">Healthy People 2020</a>). As a result, these physical health problems can lead to chronic disease, injury, disability and death (including overdose or suicide) (<a href="#">Healthy People 2020</a>). At Ascension Wisconsin, mental health includes prevention, treatment and access to mental health care services.</p>	
<p><b>Objective</b>            By 2025, fewer individuals will report mental health distress in Winnebago County (baseline: 12%).</p>	
<p><b>Healthy People 2030 Alignment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MHMD-07- Increase the proportion of people with substance use and mental health disorders who received treatment for both</li> <li>• MHMD-08 - Increase the proportion of primary care visits where adolescents and adults are screened for depression</li> <li>• MHMD-01 - Decrease the suicide rate (<a href="#">Healthy People 2030</a>)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Collaborative Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current: Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin, United Way, NAMI, Rural Health Initiative, Samaritan Counseling, Catalpa Health</li> <li>• Potential: First responders, schools</li> </ul>	
Strategy 1: Support Positive Mental Health in the Community	
<p><b>Anticipated Impact</b>            Increased access to mental health services, support on the social needs that contribute to mental health issues and reduced stigma on behavioral issues for community members in Winnebago County.</p>	
<p><b>Priority Populations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families and individuals living in poverty and/or with low income; Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx individuals and families; older adults</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resources Committed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time donated to numerous organizations, cash donations to community organizations, education collateral, storage space and others</li> </ul>	
INITIATIVES	TACTICS
Support Community-Based Initiatives that Create an Environment for Mental Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participate in stigma reduction campaigns</li> <li>-Partner with schools to administer education on mental health wellbeing</li> <li>-Support initiatives that foster social connectedness</li> <li>-Provide mental health outreach to groups that have been historically marginalized</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Actively participate in suicide prevention coalitions</li> <li>-Promote bystander interventions that recognize and support individuals who are struggling with trauma, abuse and/or mental health issues</li> </ul>
Increase Community Initiatives for Mental Health Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Contribute funding to CBOs that increase mental health care access</li> <li>-Partner with other organizations to enhance community-based treatment and support programs</li> <li>-Teach mental health first aid for first responders</li> </ul>
<b>Measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process outcomes of community engagement activities to respective tactics</li> </ul>	
<b>Strategy 2: Improve Mental Health Programs and Services for Patients and Associates</b>	
<b>Anticipated Impact</b> Increased access to mental health services, support of the social needs that contribute to mental health issues and reduced stigma on behavioral issues for Ascension Wisconsin patients and associates.	
<b>Priority Populations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patients experiencing behavioral health conditions; patients that are under/uninsured and have underlying trauma</li> </ul>	
<b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff time, rooming standard updates, IT infrastructure for tracking, funding as needed</li> </ul>	
<b>INITIATIVES</b>	<b>TACTICS</b>
Promote Early Detection and Treatment for Mental Health Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improve standardized processes statewide according to the US Preventive Services Task Force Guidelines for depression screenings and provide referrals to resources as needed</li> <li>-Implement and evaluate different models of care to increase access and timeliness to outpatient mental health providers and prescribers, including telehealth</li> <li>-Improve mental health support efforts for associates</li> </ul>
Deliver Comprehensive, Compassionate Care to those that Have Experienced Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coordinate Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Human Trafficking response programs to expand capacity for trauma-informed care</li> <li>-Assist patients and associates who have experienced trauma with spiritual care and basic needs support that encourages healing</li> </ul>
<b>Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of patients screened</li> <li>• Number of patients referred to/served by support services</li> <li>• Process outcomes to respective tactics</li> </ul>	



## **Evaluation**

Ascension Mercy will develop a comprehensive measurement and evaluation process for the implementation strategy. The Ministry 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 Mercy uses a tracking system to capture community benefit activities and implementation. To ensure accountability, data will be aggregated and reported on in the next CHNA.