

# Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus

**Implementation Strategy for the 2024 CHNA  
Milwaukee County, WI**



**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.

**Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, Inc.  
d/b/a Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus  
39-0806315**

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The Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, Inc. Board of Directors approved the TY2024 Implementation Strategy on October 29, 2025 and applies to the following three-year cycle: July 2025 to June 2028. This report, as well as the previous report, can be found on 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.**

## Table of Contents

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>4</b> |
| About Ascension  | 4        |
| Ascension Wisconsin  | 4        |
| Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus  | 5        |
| <b>Overview of the Implementation Strategy</b>   | <b>5</b> |
| Needs Prioritization   | 5        |
| Needs That Will Be Addressed   | 6        |
| Needs That Will Not Be Addressed   | 6        |
| Written Comments   | 8        |
| Approval / Adoption of the IS by Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, Inc. Board of Directors | 8        |
| <b>Action Plans</b>  | <b>9</b> |
| Evaluation   | 13       |

## 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 to persons living in poverty and other community benefit programs. Across 16 states and the District of Columbia, Ascension's network encompasses approximately 99,000 associates, 23,000 aligned providers, 94 wholly owned or consolidated hospitals, and ownership interests in 27 additional hospitals through partnerships. Ascension also operates 30 senior living facilities and a variety of other care sites offering a range of healthcare services.

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 Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, Ascension delivers care through 16 hospitals, 12 of which are wholly owned, and four which are jointly operated. Ascension also operates over 100 related healthcare facilities with more than three million patient visits each year. Ascension Wisconsin is a non-profit and Catholic health system with a Mission of delivering compassionate, personalized care to all with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. Ascension sites of care in Wisconsin have been serving patients and their communities since 1848. Ascension employs more than 12,000 associates, serving communities in Southeastern Wisconsin and the Fox Valley region. In FY2024, Ascension provided more than \$250 million in community benefit in Wisconsin.

Visit [healthcare.ascension.org/wisconsin](https://healthcare.ascension.org/wisconsin)

## **Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus**

As a Ministry of the Catholic Church, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus is a critical care hospital with advanced specialty care services, delivering specialty and 24/7 emergency care. The hospital provides advanced surgical care for serious and life-threatening injuries and illnesses, and is a destination for 24/7 comprehensive stroke care, cardiac surgery and surgical oncology. The hospital also has the region's only burn center – verified by the American Burn Association. With a Level III NICU and a 24/7 OB emergency department, the Women's Medical Center at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus offers comprehensive obstetrical and gynecological care for community members.



For more information about Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, visit <https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/wisconsin/wimil/milwaukee-ascension-columbia-st-marys-hospital>

## **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. Accordingly, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus used a phased prioritization approach to identify the needs of the Milwaukee County community. 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 to prioritized needs that the hospital will address within the IS. To arrive at the prioritized needs, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus used a process based upon the AHA Community Health Improvement's (ACHI) key components for prioritizing community health issues to identify the needs on which the hospitals would focus. Following the completion of the community health needs assessment, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus leadership and stakeholders considered the following criteria in choosing the significant needs:

- Scope of problem
- Health disparities
- Feasibility
- Momentum/commitment

- Alignment

## **Needs That Will Be Addressed**

Following the completion of the current CHNA, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus in collaboration with leadership from other Ascension hospitals in Milwaukee has selected the prioritized needs outlined below for its 2024 IS. Ascension has defined "prioritized needs" as the significant needs that the hospital has prioritized to address through the three-year CHNA cycle:

- Mental health was prioritized due to its increasing challenges and strong community demand for support. Mental health disorders affect thinking, emotions, relationships, and daily life, and are linked to higher rates of smoking, inactivity, obesity, and substance misuse. These issues contribute to chronic illness, disability, overdose, and suicide. Given the close link between mental health and substance misuse, both will be addressed together in the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). Ascension Wisconsin hospitals are dedicated to expanding access to mental health and addiction services within their facilities and the broader community.
- Access to Care was identified as a priority due to its vital role in supporting physical, mental, and social health. Community members expressed the need for improved access to various types of medical services. Ascension Wisconsin is committed to enhancing all aspects of care access—including affordability, geographic availability, and trustworthy providers. As a Catholic healthcare system, ensuring care for all individuals, regardless of their ability to pay, is a core mission of Ascension Wisconsin.
- Chronic Conditions were chosen as a priority due to the importance of prevention in building a healthier community. Residents highlighted the link between chronic diseases and overall wellbeing. Effective treatment and management can improve quality of life, while healthy lifestyles—supported by access to nutritious food, physical activity, and stress reduction—can lower disease risk and reduce reliance on medication. This priority emphasizes support for communities disproportionately impacted by structural barriers to healthy living.

Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus 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. For this implementation strategy, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus has focused its efforts on the above priorities.

## **Needs That Will Not Be Addressed**

Based on the prioritization criteria, the health needs identified through the CHNA that Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus does not plan to address at this time include:

- Substance Misuse was not selected in this CHNA cycle as a stand alone priority. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will focus efforts incorporated under the Mental Health priority as these issues are often interrelated.
- Maternal and Child Health was not selected as a separate priority because Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus already places a strong emphasis on improving outcomes. This includes access to care, high-quality clinical services, and family support. Maternal health will instead be addressed through existing priorities such as healthcare access, mental health, and social support. The hospital will continue partnering with community organizations to advance maternal and child health outcomes.
- Economic Stability was not selected as a standalone priority, but Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus recognizes its strong connection to chronic conditions and mental health. Factors such as housing, access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity impact overall health. These economic influences will be addressed through the hospital's efforts to prevent and improve chronic conditions and mental health support.
- Healthy Living was not selected as a standalone priority; however, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus understands the interconnection between healthy living and chronic conditions. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will consider how to support healthy living such as access to healthy foods, physical activity and healthy weight in addressing chronic conditions, particularly for populations with limited opportunities to engage in healthy living.
- Community Safety was not selected because Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus understands that community safety is a complex social issue requiring a systems approach led by experts in these respective areas. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus also understands the relationship between mental health, substance misuse and exposure to community violence, therefore, the hospital will continue to seek future opportunities and develop partnerships to support and promote community safety.

While these needs are not the focus of this Implementation Strategy, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus may consider investing resources in these areas as appropriate, depending on opportunities to leverage organizational assets in partnership with local communities and organizations. Also, this report only encompasses a partial inventory of everything Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus does to support health within the community.

To find a list of resources for each need not being addressed, please refer to the Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus's 2024 CHNA: <https://healthcare.ascension.org/CHNA>.

## **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 Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, Inc. Board of Directors**

To ensure the Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus's efforts meet the needs of the community and have a lasting and meaningful impact, the TY2024 Implementation Strategy was presented and adopted by the Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Milwaukee, Inc. Board of Directors on October 29, 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.

| <b>STRATEGY #1: Behavioral Health Care and Promotion</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Hospital</b> - Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus  |   |
| <b>Prioritized Health Need #1-</b> Mental Health   |   |
| <b>Objective</b><br>By the end of the three year IS cycle, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will have; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. increased the number of individuals receiving needed mental/behavioral health care in Ascension clinical settings and in the community</li> <li>2. increased their outreach efforts by supporting community-based organizations (CBO) which support mental health prevention and promote mental well-being</li> </ol> Baseline for this metric will be established   |   |
| <b>Strategy</b><br>Decrease behavioral health stigma and increase access to mental health and substance misuse clinical care both within the healthcare setting and within the community   |   |
| <b>Collaborators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals (which include Ascension St. Francis Hospital, Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital - St. Joseph Campus, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus, and Ascension SE Wisconsin Hospital - Franklin Campus)</li> <li>• Ascension Employed Clinical Network (AECN) clinics</li> <li>• Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (MHCP) which includes all nonprofit hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), municipal public health departments and free community clinics in Milwaukee County.</li> <li>• Multiple community-based organizations (CBOs)</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals' behavioral health programs and inpatient care</li> <li>• AECN clinics behavioral health programs</li> <li>• Various community-based organizations that provide expertise in stigma reduction and access to care</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>ACTION STEPS</b>  | <b>ROLE / OWNER</b>   |
| 1. Collaborate with partners to increase access to behavioral health services in the community   | 1. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals  |
| 2. Increase capacity and expand innovative and successful Ascension Wisconsin Behavioral health programs and medical care.   | 2. Ascension Wisconsin Behavioral Health Service Line, All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals and AECN clinics |
| 3. Connect patients that present to the emergency department with substance misuse to peer support services.   | 3. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals' Emergency Departments   |
| 4. Collaborate with partners to decrease stigma around mental and behavioral health  | 4. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals  |
| <b>ANTICIPATED IMPACT</b>  |   |
| A reduction in the burden of mental health conditions and addiction and improved overall well-being of communities   |   |

| <b>STRATEGY #2: Increase Engagement With Health Care Services</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Hospital</b> - Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus  |   |
| <b>Prioritized Health Need #2</b> - Access to Care   |   |
| <b>Objective</b><br>By the end of the three year cycle, Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will increase the number of individuals who are connected and engaged in primary health care and have access to other needed health care services.   |   |
| <b>Strategy</b><br>Increase access to primary care and other health care services both within the healthcare setting and within the community  |   |
| <b>Collaborators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals</li> <li>• AECN</li> <li>• MHCP</li> <li>• Multiple community-based organizations (CBOs)</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ascension Wisconsin Community Investment Council</li> <li>• Ascension Wisconsin Community Services and Community Engagement</li> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals</li> <li>• Various CBOs which focused on connecting community members to health care.</li> <li>• Neighborhood Resources / Impact 211</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>ACTION STEPS</b>  | <b>ROLE/OWNER</b>   |
| 1. Strengthen partnerships with FQHCs and/or Community-based Clinics by supporting specialty care, ancillary services and funding to enhance access to care and increase healthcare workforce.   | 1. Ascension Wisconsin Community Investment Council, all Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals and AECN clinics |
| 2. Assess social barriers to care for patients and connect to resources, including expectant families.   | 2. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals and AECN clinics   |
| 3. Expand community outreach for Ascension Wisconsin health programs and engagement, including expectant families.   | 3. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals' Community Services and AECN clinics                               |
| <b>ANTICIPATED IMPACT</b>  |   |
| Improved overall health and well-being of communities through improved health outcomes and quality of life that lead to increased social capital and economic strength   |   |

| <b>STRATEGY #3: Health Promotion and Chronic Condition Prevention</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Hospital</b> - Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus  |   |
| <b>Prioritized Health Need #3</b> - Chronic Conditions   |   |
| <b>Objective</b><br>By the end of the three year cycle; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will have increased its participation and support for community-level access to healthy foods and health promotion education.</li> <li>2. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus will increase support for patients with one or more chronic conditions.</li> </ol> |   |
| <b>Strategy</b><br>Promote/enhance access to nutritious foods to support overall health, prevent chronic conditions, and provide ongoing support for individuals living with chronic illnesses   |   |
| <b>Collaborators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee Hospitals</li> <li>• MHCP</li> <li>• AECN Clinics</li> <li>• Multiple community-based organizations (CBOs)</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ascension Wisconsin Community Investment Council</li> <li>• All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals</li> <li>• Various CBOs which focus on supporting access to healthy foods and community education on healthy living</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>ACTION STEPS</b>  | <b>ROLE/OWNER</b>   |
| 1. Participate in and support community-level initiatives that promote healthy living and increase access to healthy foods.<br><br>2. Actively engage communities in healthy living education and chronic condition screening and prevention<br><br>3. Expand successful programming that supports patients living with a chronic condition(s)   | 1. Ascension Wisconsin Community Investment Council, all Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals and AECN clinics<br><br>2. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals, AECN and Ascension Wisconsin Community Services<br><br>3. All Ascension Wisconsin Milwaukee hospitals, AECN clinics and Ascension Wisconsin Community Services |
| <b>ANTICIPATED IMPACT</b>  |   |
| A reduction in the burden of chronic health conditions and improved overall well-being of communities  |   |

## **Evaluation**

Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus 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. Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus uses a tracking system to capture community benefit activities and implementation.