

Every three years, as part of its mission to serve communities, Mercy Hospital conducts a federally required Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to examine health in the communities it serves, identify health priorities and develop an action plan to address them.

Though the hospital serves patients from a wide geographic area, its primary service area (and focus of the CHNA) is Anoka County—a suburban area in the Twin Cities' north metro.

## Community Health Needs Assessment Process

The priorities identified in the previous cycle were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and require long-term effort to see significant, measurable improvement. As a result, the 2022 CHNA goals were to refine our understanding of 2019 priorities and identify new or emerging community needs that may not be addressed through existing work. For the first time, Allina Health and each of its hospitals also identified prioritized communities in addition to prioritized health topics.

As a community partner, Allina Health collaborates with community members, organizations and policymakers to improve the health of all people in our communities and to focus our community health improvement initiatives and investments to improve health equity. These commitments served as the guiding principles of our CHNA approach, including the process, implementation, and evaluation methods.

Mercy Hospital collaborated with Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services to complete its CHNA. A community advisory team of 50 community stakeholders was established and a modified version of Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model was used to assist with this community-driven strategic planning process. This model includes six phases: Organizing, Visioning, The Four Assessments, Identifying Strategic Issues, Formulating Goals and the Action Cycle. For the purposes of this report, the phases are condensed to data review and prioritization, community input and implementation plan. The process began May 2021 and was completed in December 2022.

### Data Review and Prioritization

Mercy Hospital and Anoka County Public Health and Environmental Services staff led community stakeholders in reviewing county-specific data related to demographics, social and economic factors, health behaviors, prevalence of health conditions and health care access. Sources included patient data; the Minnesota Student Survey; Anoka County Adult Health Survey; and Anoka County Violence Prevention Community survey and Minnesota Housing Partnership, among others. Where possible, data were disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

To identify priorities the advisory team reviewed all data but took into consideration the status of CHNA priorities that had been identified in the previous cycle. Special consideration was given to how COVID has impacted the health of the community and the importance of addressing health related social needs.

#### Based on this process, Mercy will pursue the following priorities in 2023–2025:

- Chronic disease and health habits
- Mental health and well-being
- Drugs and substance use
- Relationship violence

#### Additionally, the following communities have been prioritized for system action:

- People living in or near poverty
- Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities
- People with disabilities
- Adolescents aged 12–17 (mental health and substance abuse focused)
- People who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Queer and/or Questioning, and other historically underserved sexual and gender identities (LGBTQ+) (mental health priority)

## Community Input

To understand community members' perspectives on identified health issues and ideas for addressing them, Mercy Hospital and Anoka County contracted with Wilder Research to collect feedback via a survey and four focus groups.

Food insecurity, poverty and a lack of disease management knowledge were cited as barriers to healthy habits. Stigma, a limited number of providers, and language and cultural needs were identified as barriers to accessing effective mental health and substance use services. Additionally, an increase in opioid use and overdose deaths were mentioned as concerns.

## 2023–2025 Implementation Plan

Based on this input, Mercy Hospital, in partnership with Anoka County Public Health developed strategies and activities it will pursue in 2023–2025. The hospital will continue to collaborate closely with Anoka County Public Health, public entities, community organizations, community residents and the Allina Health System office to implement an effective plan. The following reflects identified goals and strategies within each of the four priorities.

### Chronic Diseases and Health Habits

**Goal 1:** Improve access to community resources.

**Goal 2:** Improve the long-term social, physical and economic conditions in community.

**Goal 3:** Increase access to healthy foods.

**Goal 4:** Increase understanding of chronic disease prevention and access to programs and services that are culturally specific, honoring and appropriate.

#### Strategies

- Build a sustainable network of trusted community organizations that can support social needs.
- Reduce community resource gaps.
- Operate as an anchor institution by using the strength of Allina Health as a care provider, employer, purchaser and community partner.
- Identify and promote the most effective methods to address food insecurity in our community.
- Establish partnerships and leverage existing resources to maximize the impact on food insecurity.
- Increase access to care for all through utilization of consumer convenient accessibility methods and reduction of barriers for prevention and treatment.
- Support and promote health efforts aimed at preventative care and education.
- Improve cultural responsiveness of Allina Health programs and services.
- Improve access to culturally responsive community resources.
- Increase diversity of Allina Health workforce, with a focus on leadership.

## Evaluation of 2020–2022 CHNA implementation plan

Between 2020 and 2022, Mercy conducted activities to pursue the health priorities identified in its 2019 CHNA: chronic diseases and health habits, mental health and addiction and relationship violence in addition to Allina systemwide priorities.

With community partners, Mercy implemented community health improvement initiatives, advocated for health-promoting policies and made charitable contributions to community organizations. Highlights included:

- Hospital staff chaired the of Community Resiliency Committee which partnered with the Anoka County Children & Family Council (ACCFC) to conduct a Change to Chill workshop at the Oromo Resource Center. Twenty-seven youth ages 8–18 years old participated.
- Partnered with Anoka Hennepin School District leadership to provide mental health education to district staff. Mercy Foundation provided \$50,000 to expand this support to additional school districts.
- Provided \$30,000 to Alexandra House, Hope for Youth and Stepping Stone Homeless Shelter to promote healthy activities and care to people experiencing homelessness.
- Partnered with Anoka County to develop an Anoka County Violence Roundtable group to review data, identify gaps, set goals and plan for violence prevention and service improvement activities in the community.

A complete description of 2020–2022 achievements is available online at [allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments](https://allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments).

## Mental Health and Well-Being

**Goal 1:** Reduce the stigma around mental health & increase resilience and healthy coping skills in our communities.

**Goal 2:** Increase access to mental health services.

### Strategies

- Improve social connections and social cohesion in our community.
- Address stigma and the issues of suicide and self-harm through existing community collaborations.
- Increase resilience and support the creation and maintenance of environments that contribute to positive mental well-being among youth.
- Improve adults' confidence and skills around talking with youth about issues affecting mental well-being.
- Support public policy and advocacy efforts to improve access to mental health services.
- Address the issue of homelessness and its impact on individuals in crisis or with mental illness.

## Drugs and Substance Use

**Goal 1:** Decrease substance misuse.

**Goal 2:** Decrease harm and deaths related to substance misuse, with a focus on opioids

### Strategies

- Improve environmental factors and knowledge and skills associated with decreased substance misuse,
- Improve adults' confidence and skills around talking with youth about issues affecting their well-being.
- Decrease youth access to substances.
- Decrease access to opioids.
- Improve access to continuum of substance use disorder care.

## Relationship Violence

**Goal 1:** Decrease the number of people experiencing violence in Anoka County.

### Strategies

- Reduce stigma around relationship violence
- Increase knowledge of healthy relationships, relationship violence resources, and the importance of addressing relationship violence
- Reduce barriers to accessing relationship violence services and fill resource gaps

## Evaluation Plans

Hospitals will monitor the general health and wellness of the community. Additionally, each hospital will monitor reach and progress on planned activities. Where possible, Allina Health will also assess outcome metrics to evaluate the effects of its initiatives on health and related outcomes.

## Conclusion

Through the CHNA process, Allina Health hospitals used data and community input to identify health priorities and priority communities for action in 2023–2025.

Full 2023–2022 Community Health Needs Assessment reports for each hospital are available on the Allina Health website: <https://www.allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments>.

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