

Every three years, as part of its mission to serve communities, River Falls Area Hospital (River Falls) 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.

The hospital's primary service area, and the subject of its 2022 CHNA, are Pierce and St. Croix Counties.

## 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.

River Falls completed its 2022 CHNA as a member of Healthier Together — Pierce & St. Croix County (Healthier Together), a community coalition working to create and maintain healthy communities and provide a strategic framework for local health improvement activities. The CHNA process occurred in three steps: community input, data review and prioritization and the development of a three-year implementation plan. The impact of these efforts will be tracked and evaluated over the three-year cycle. Healthier Together convened a group of more than fifty community stakeholders to participate in the process, including providing input and reviewing data. The process began in June 2021 and was completed in December 2022.

### Community Input

To understand community members' perspectives on health issues and ideas for addressing them, Healthier Together conducted a survey with residents. Participants were asked to think about what has changed in the community in the past year or two and their fears and hopes for the future of the community. Next, the coalition conducted 12 focus groups and key stakeholder interviews to better understand community health strengths and concerns. Focus

### Community Input Results

Many of the concerns identified in 2019 were described as being exacerbated by current events such the COVID-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and corresponding civil unrest, experiences of racism, increased gun violence and increased political division. Communities of color have been disproportionately impacted by these events.

**Based on this process, River Falls, in partnership with Healthier Together, will pursue the following priorities in 2023–2025:**

- Mental, social and emotional wellness
- Thriving and livable communities for all

**Additionally, the following communities have been prioritized for action:**

- People living at or near poverty
- People with disabilities
- People who identify as Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color (BIPOC)
- People who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and/or Questioning, and other historically underserved sexual and gender identities (LGBTQ+)
- Older adults

Survey respondents identified “good place to raise children,” “good schools” and “low crime/safe” as top community strengths. “Mental health”, “affordable housing” and “COVID-19-related concerns” were the most commonly identified concerns. As part of the focus groups, community members mentioned community division and increased mental health challenges as trends that arose over the course of the last few years. There was a noticeable change in how people access care, programs and do work compared to previous years. For example, residents are delaying medical care, and the community is dealing with more complex social situations. Focus group participants identified the need for more food resources and better access to healthcare.

## Data Review and Prioritization

To supplement the feedback gathered directly from community members, Healthier Together convened the community stakeholder group to review select county-specific data related to demographics, social and economic factors, health behaviors, prevalence of health conditions and health care access. Healthier Together used the County Health Rankings model to organize the assessment data and focus on the factors that influence health rather than solely focusing on health outcomes. Where possible, the data were reviewed at the zip code data and disaggregated by race and ethnicity to better understand opportunities to increase health equity in the community and among the patients seen at Allina facilities. Meaningful geographic disparities in health outcomes were displayed on a map.

To prioritize needs, stakeholders participated in a multi-voting process to reach an agreement on top priority areas for focus during the next three years. The menu of priorities was based on the community health survey’s top six needs identified. After two rounds of prioritization exercises, the top two priorities were identified.

## 2023–2025 Implementation Plan

Based on community input, River Falls, in partnership with Healthier Together, developed strategies and activities it will pursue in 2023–2025. The hospital will collaborate closely with residents and other agencies. This plan reflects contributions from community partners, River Falls Area Hospital, Healthier Together and Allina Health System Office. The local Healthier Together implementation plan is as follows:

### Mental, Social, Emotional Wellness

**Goal 1:** Enhance workforce resiliency and well-being.

**Goal 2:** Build healthy coping skills and stress reduction strategies for youth and their caregivers.

**Goal 3:** Improve local access to meet the needs of residents seeking mental health care.

## Evaluation of 2020–2022 CHNA implementation plan

Between 2020 and 2022, River Falls Area Hospital and Healthier Together conducted activities to pursue the health priorities identified in its 2019 CHNA: mental health and substance use disorders (SUD) in addition to Allina systemwide priorities.

As part of Healthier Together, River Falls Area Hospital implemented community health improvement initiatives, advocated for health-promoting policies and made charitable contributions to community organizations.

Highlights included:

- Provided 11 Mental Health First Aid virtual trainings, resulting in 86 individuals becoming certified.
- Completed Narcan overdose trainings for 73 individuals in Pierce County and 38 in St. Croix, including law enforcement and human services partners.
- Secured funding for county park passes for the library park backpack program available at libraries in both counties to facilitate connecting children and families to nature in our local park system. Families checked out the park backpacks more than 130 times in 2021
- Started the Healthier Together Health Equity workgroup.
- Hosted mental health provider meetings focused on networking and system improvement.
- Expanded mental health resources within River Falls High School through a partnership with St. Croix Valley Restorative Services by developing the Restorative Youth Leadership program for at-risk teens.
- Completed two resiliency-building series (Taking Care of You and WeCOPE).
- Launched a free weekly self-care community of practice called Practicing the Pause.

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).

## Thriving and Livable Communities for All

**Goal 1:** Improve social, environmental, and economic conditions that influence health.

**Goal 2:** Increase equitable access to health care.

In addition to the work conducted as Healthier Together, River Falls Area Hospital will implement Allina Health's systemwide strategies and activities. By developing systemwide initiatives to address these priorities, Allina Health ensures efficient use of resources across its service area and provides hospitals with programs they can adapt to meet their community's unique needs. Allina Health systemwide priorities are as follows:

- Mental health and wellness
- Substance use prevention and recovery
- Social determinants of health and health-related social needs
- Access to culturally responsive care

A complete description of 2023–2025 Allina Health systemwide efforts is available online at [allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments](https://www.allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments).

## Evaluation Plans

Hospitals will monitor the general health and wellness of the community. Additionally, each hospital will establish or continue evaluation plans for specific programs and initiatives (e.g., HRSN Program). Evaluation plans will include process measures, such as participant or partner satisfaction, goal completion, people served and dollars contributed, to 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 2023–2025 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>.

## Acknowledgements

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- The many community members who offered their time and valuable insights;
- Healthier Together Coalition and its' partners whose leaders worked diligently to perform a joint assessment and plan in partnership with River Falls Area Hospital;
- Partners from organizations who met to review and prioritize data and develop implementation plans, and the individuals who contributed their expertise and experience to ensure a thorough and effective outcome, especially staff from local public health agencies;
- Allina Health System Office staff and interns who supported the process;
- Other staff at Allina Health and River Falls Area Hospital who provided knowledge, skills and leadership to bring the assessment and plan to fruition.

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