

Every three years, as part of its mission to serve communities, United 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.

In August 2022, United Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Regina Hospital in Hastings, Minnesota, aligned under one hospital license (United Hospital) with two east metro campuses. United Hospital, which includes both campuses, annually serves more than 250,000 patients and their families and employs more than 3,000 employees. United Hospital's primary service area (and the focus of the CHNA) are Ramsey and Dakota 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.

United developed its CHNA with support from the Center for Community Health. The CHNA process occurred in three steps: data review and prioritization, community input and the development of a three-year implementation plan. The impact of these efforts will be tracked and evaluated over the three-year cycle.

Data Review and Prioritization

Throughout 2021 and early 2022, United Hospital staff and community partner groups reviewed secondary health and economic data specific to Ramsey and Dakota Counties. Along with representatives from local public health, United reviewed county-specific data related to demographics, social and economic factors, health behaviors, prevalence of health conditions and health care access. Where possible, the data was disaggregated by race and ethnicity to better understand opportunities to increase health equity in the community and among the patients seen at Allina Health facilities. United also participated in or analyzed several other organizations' data and information collected during multiple community engagement sessions.

Following data review, United chose to continue its priorities identified via the 2019 CHNA. In doing so, the hospital considered issues community members emphasized as most important, the effectiveness of interventions and staff capacity to address each need.

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

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

Additionally, the following communities were prioritized for action:

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

Community Input

To understand community members' perspectives on identified health issues and ideas for addressing them, United staff gathered insight from community members in a variety of ways. United, HealthPartners and MHealth Fairview collaborated on a community dialogue that included parish nurses and other faith-based health service providers and community health workers in the east metro. United's staff also attended community dialogues facilitated by other organizations and participated in regular community meetings. Additionally, to supplement these learnings, United staff conducted 16 key informant interviews with community-based service providers.

In the community dialogues and interviews, participants described social isolation, caregiving of seniors and inability to meet basic needs as negatively affecting mental health. Significant shortages in mental health providers, especially multi-cultural and multi-lingual providers, and a complex system of mental health services were described as barriers to accessing care. Dakota County community members highlighted the increased use of opioids, specifically Fentanyl, especially among youth. The challenges surrounding opioids include ease of access, misinformation regarding the dangers, and Fentanyl's toxicity. Access to healthy food and affordable housing were also commonly discussed and were described as connected to other priorities such as access to transportation and mental health and substance use.

2023–2025 Implementation Plan

Based on community input, United 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, United and Allina Health System Office.

Mental Health and Wellness

Goal 1: Increase resilience and healthy coping.

Goal 2: Increase access to mental health services.

Strategies

- Improve social connections and social cohesion.
- Increase resilience and support the creation and maintenance of environments that contribute to positive well-being.
- Improve adults' confidence and skills around talking with youth about issues affecting their well-being.
- Support public policy and advocacy efforts to improve access to services.

Evaluation of 2020–2022 CHNA implementation plan

Between 2020 and 2022, United conducted activities to pursue the health priorities identified in its 2019 CHNA: mental health and substance use, social determinants of health and healthy eating and active living (United) and mental health, support services for the aging continuum and healthy weight (United Hospital — Hastings Regina) in addition to Allina systemwide priorities.

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

- Provided more than \$150,000 in charitable contributions to mental wellness programs and initiatives in 2020–2022, including \$45,000 to the East Metro Mental Health Crisis Alliance (EMHCA).
- Provided \$24,000 in charitable contributions to community programs that focus on improving mental health services such as the Hastings High School Peer Helper program, Hastings Family Services.
- United Hospital provided more than \$84,000 in charitable contributions to programs and initiatives addressing social determinants of health in 2020–2022.
- Hastings Regina Campus employees donated more than 925 lbs. of food, personal hygiene products, and school supplies to Hastings Family Services and Prescott Food Pantry between 2020–2022.
- Provided \$146,000 in charitable contributions to community partners who offer programs that provide access to healthy food and an additional \$104,000 to those who offer physical activity opportunities.

A complete description of 2020–2022 achievements is available online at allinahealth.org/about-us/community-involvement/need-assessments.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Recovery

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 individual 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.

Social Determinants of Health and Health-Related Social Needs

Goal 1: Improve access to community resources.

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

Strategies

- Build a sustainable network of trusted community organizations that can support patients with social needs.
- Reduce community resource gaps.
- Operate as an anchor institution by using the collective strength of Allina Health as a care provider, employer, purchaser and community partner to eliminate systemic inequities and racism.

Access to Culturally Responsive Care

Goal: Increase access to care, services and programs that are culturally specific, honoring and appropriate.

Strategies

- Improve cultural responsiveness of programs and services.
- Improve access to community resources that specialize in meeting the unique needs of prioritized communities.
- Increase diversity of Allina Health workforce.

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>.

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