

Every three years, as part of its mission to serve communities, New Ulm Medical Center (NUMC) 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.

Annually, the medical center serves 25,000 patients. Its primary service area (and focus of the CHNA) is Brown County, a rural community in southern Minnesota.

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.

NUMC collaborated with Brown County Public Health and the [Heart of New Ulm](#) (HONU) to complete its CHNA. In collaboration with more than 60 community representatives, they used a modified version of the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model, a community-driven strategic planning process which includes six phases: Organizing, Visioning, The Four Assessments, Identifying Strategic Issues, Formulating Goals and Strategies 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 March 2021 and was completed in December 2022.

Data Review and Prioritization

NUMC and Brown County engaged the MAPP committee members to reviewed 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; surveys conducted by local public health; and Minnesota Housing Partnership, among others. Where possible, data were disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

To prioritize needs, members considered preexisting CHNA priorities and goals from Brown County in light of the data. 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, NUMC will pursue the following priorities in 2023–2025:

- Obesity, including healthy eating and active living
- Mental health and well-being
- Substance use, including tobacco use

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

- People living in or near poverty (all three priorities)
- Specific age groups:
 - Obesity priority: ages 25–44
 - Mental Health priority: all ages — youth to senior citizens
 - Substance Use priority: youth and ages 25–44

Community Input

To incorporate additional community feedback, staff from NUMC developed a Conversation in a Box guide used by HONU leadership and NUMC staff to facilitate community conversations with approximately 100 individuals representing the broad interests of the community.

Through these conversations, community members described transportation, limited services, cost and stigma as barriers to accessing mental health services. Busy schedules, lack of childcare, transportation and cost were listed as barriers to physical activity and healthy eating. Improved community connections and resilience and access to services were identified as ideas for reducing substance use. Participants described many of the concerns identified in 2019 as being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2023–2025 Implementation Plan

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

Obesity, including Healthy Eating and Active Living

Goal: Increase access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity.

Strategies

- Provide worksite networking and training opportunities to promote employee health and wellness.
- Improve the safety for walking and biking by making improvements to the built environment.
- Improve the availability and affordability of healthier food choices in a variety of different venues throughout New Ulm.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Recovery

Goal: 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, with a focus on youth, adolescents, and older adults.
- Decrease youth access to substances.
- Decrease access to opioids within community.

Evaluation of 2020–2022 CHNA implementation plan

Between 2020 and 2022, NUMC conducted activities to pursue the health priorities identified in its 2019 CHNA: obesity, including healthy eating and active living; substance use, including tobacco use; and mental health in addition to Allina systemwide priorities.

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

- The HONU Worksite Wellness Action Team provided quarterly workplace wellness trainings that focused on healthy eating/active living, to 48 local businesses.
- Assisted the city of New Ulm to update their tobacco policy, using best practices from Public Health Law Center
- As part of Brown County Chemical Health Action Team, offered naloxone training to 18 community members and created a responsible drinking marketing campaign which consisted of printed material, billboards and educational resources for community members.
- Created an online mental health resource directory, which transitioned onto the newly expanded HONU website in 2022. The directory lists local mental health resources available to community members.
- Hosted two Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) trainings with 22 community participants during Suicide Prevention Awareness month in September and October 2021.
- As part of the Mental Health and Wellness Action team, organized the People Project, a five-month project that provides simple and effective tools to individuals, organizations and communities to promote health through happiness.

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

- Improve access to continuum of substance use disorder care.

Mental Health and Well-being

Goal 1: 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 the Brown County area.
- Increase resilience and support the creation and maintenance of environments that contribute to positive mental well-being.
- Improve adults' confidence and skills around talking with youth about mental health, substance use and other issues affecting their mental well-being.
- Support public policy and advocacy efforts to improve access to mental health services.

Additionally, while not explicitly identified as priorities by NUMC, social determinants of health, health-related social needs and access to culturally responsive care were identified as key factors in health across all Allina Health regions. These priorities will be pursued via systemwide efforts. A complete description of 2023–2025 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>.

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- Heart of New Ulm Leadership Team.

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