Community Health Improvement Plan

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas Fiscal Year 2026







# **Our Mission**

As the Sisters of Mercy before us, we bring to life the healing ministry of Jesus through our compassionate care and exceptional service.

# **Our Values**

Dignity
Excellence
Justice
Service
Stewardship

# Contents

Introduction 4

Implementation Plan by Prioritized Health Need

Prioritized Need #1: Access to Care
Prioritized Need #2: Behavioral Health
Prioritized Need #3: Maternal Health

**Prioritized Need #4: Food Insecurity** 

Other Community Health Programs Conducted by the Hospital Significant Community Health Needs Not Being Addressed



# Introduction

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas is a 245-bed acute-care hospital located in Rogers, Arkansas. As part of Mercy, a large Catholic health system headquartered in St. Louis, the hospital is committed to meeting the health needs of the growing Northwest Arkansas region. Mercy NWA offers a wide range of services, including a heart and vascular center, inpatient rehabilitation, a Level IIIA neonatal intensive care unit, outpatient surgery, and emergency care.

The hospital serves the four-county area of Benton, Carroll, Madison, and Washington Counties, home to 619,151 residents. Northwest Arkansas has experienced rapid population growth and increasing diversity, particularly among Hispanic and Marshallese communities. While the region ranks among the healthiest in the state, disparities in income, insurance coverage, and health outcomes persist, especially among non-White populations.

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas is actively engaged in community partnerships and initiatives that advance health equity, improve access to care, and promote overall wellbeing. These efforts reflect Mercy's mission to deliver compassionate care and exceptional service, with special attention to those who are underserved and most vulnerable.

# Introduction (continued)



Mercy's mission is to deliver "compassionate care and exceptional service" to every community member. In alignment with this mission, Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas completed a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2024, which was formally adopted by the Board of Directors in April 2025. The CHNA was developed in collaboration with the Benton and Washington County Health Departments, local organizations, and community stakeholders, including underserved populations.

This Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) outlines Mercy Northwest Arkansas' strategy to address identified priorities through coordinated programs, partnerships, and evaluation efforts. Together, the CHNA and CHIP provide a framework for improving health outcomes and reducing disparities in Northwest Arkansas.

This summary also serves as documentation that Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas is meeting IRS requirements for conducting a CHNA and CHIP. The full CHNA report is available electronically at <a href="mailto:mercy.net/about/community-benefits">mercy.net/about/community-benefits</a>.

# Introduction (continued)

The CHNA identified eight top-priorities and of the eight, four have been chosen as health needs for the Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas community. We will strive diligently to address these needs with a Health Equity lens over the next three years:



As always, we seek to develop a rich and rewarding network of partnerships with our neighbors. We welcome any thoughts you may have on ways to achieve our goal for a healthier community.



# Improvement Plan by Prioritized Health Need











Community Health Improvement Plan | 2026



**GOAL 1** 

Increase access to health care and community resources for uninsured and at-risk persons.





### Program 1 of 3: Community Health Worker Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Community Health Worker (CHW) initiative is dedicated to improving health care access and outcomes for underserved communities by bridging gaps between healthcare systems, social services, and the individuals they serve. CHWs engage directly with underserved communities to identify barriers related to social drivers of health, such as transportation, housing, and financial instability, that impact access to care. By fostering trust and cultural humility, this initiative aims to reduce disparities, enhance patient advocacy, and ensure equitable access to comprehensive health care for all community members.

### **ACTIONS MERCY INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:**

Mercy staff will identify uninsured and at-risk patients who cannot afford discharge medications, transportation, or durable medical equipment, and will coordinate timely prescribing, delivery, and access to needed supplies. Patients will be referred to a Community Health Worker (CHW) for ongoing support, including assistance with establishing care with a primary care provider and connecting to additional community resources as needed.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Reduce 72-hour return rate
- Reducing readmission rates for focused populations

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES MERCY PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Compensation and benefits for Community Health Workers.
- Mileage and travel expenses required for CHW work.
- Office space and indirect expenses dedicated to CHW work.
- CHW Training-Offered by Ministry (or through community partnership)

- Mercy Primary Care Clinic
- People Helping People





### **Program 2 of 3:** Forensic Nursing Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

A partnership with three Northwest Arkansas advocacy centers to provide coordination, collaboration, and oversight of Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNEs) providing forensic examinations to adult and child victims of abuse and assault. These nurses play a vital role in ensuring victims' proper medical care and that evidence is preserved for prosecution. Mercy employes a Forensic Nursing Manager whose salary is subsidized by the centers, and provides benefits, expenses, oversight and support for the manager.

### **ACTIONS MERCY INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:**

The Forensic Nursing Manager will lead a coordinated forensic nursing program across three Northwest Arkansas advocacy centers to ensure consistent, high-quality care for victims of abuse and assault. The role will maintain a trained roster, oversee compliance and education, implement ongoing training for nurses and hospital staff, and align regional initiatives with state-level efforts. Additionally, the position will strategically plan for future growth by developing protocols, expanding partnerships, and strengthening long-term impact through alignment with statewide priorities.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Ensure coverage for all medical forensic exams at the three advocacy centers to guarantee timely access for victims of sexual assault.
- Improve response times and care coordination so victims receive prompt, dignified treatment that minimizes trauma.
- Build regional capacity through standardized protocols and training to deliver consistent, high-quality care aligned with state best practices.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES MERCY PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Fringe benefits and expenses for Forensic Nursing Manager.
- Office space and indirect expenses for program needs.

- Children and Family Advocacy Center
- · Children's Safety Center of Washington County
- NWA Center for Sexual Assault





### Program 3 of 3: Patient Assistance Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Provides support for uninsured or underinsured patients by assisting with transportation, durable medical equipment, and essential medication needs following hospital discharge. The program is funded through donations to the Mercy Foundation and supports patients who meet established Mercy eligibility criteria. This initiative helps reduce barriers to recovery and continuity of care by ensuring patients have access to necessary resources after leaving the hospital.

#### ACTIONS MERCY INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Identify uninsured and at-risk patients who cannot afford discharge medications, durable medical equipment, intravenous antibiotic treatments, or transportation. Collaborate with inpatient case management and Community Health Workers (CHWs) to provide ongoing support, including assistance with establishing care with a primary care provider.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Reduce 72-hour return visits and hospital readmission rates among at-risk and uninsured patients
- Strengthen coordination between in-patient case management, CHWs, and primary care teams, improving continuity of care and patient outcomes.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES MERCY PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Indirect expenses related to managing program.
- Compensation and benefits for Community Health Workers.
- Patient Assistance Program costs are reimbursed by Mercy Foundation

- · Debbie's Family Medicine
- · Delta Medical
- Tri-State Vital Care





### **GOAL 2**

Enhance access to safe, affordable, and effective medications for at-risk patients through pharmacy resident-led initiatives.





### Program 1 of 1: Pharmacy Residency Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Mercy Northwest Arkansas Pharmacy Residency Program is a Postgraduate Year One (PGY1) residency accredited by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP). This one-year program prepares pharmacists for clinical practice in hospital and ambulatory care settings, emphasizing medication optimization, patient safety, and interdisciplinary collaboration to improve health outcomes. Residents also engage in research and practice advancement initiatives, provide continuing education to clinical staff, and develop precepting skills to prepare for future roles in pharmacy education and mentorship.

#### **ACTIONS MERCY INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:**

Mercy will train pharmacy residents to provide evidence-based medication management and patient education, integrate them into care teams to improve medication safety and adherence for high-risk populations, and lead quality improvement projects to reduce medication-related hospital readmissions while expanding the role of the clinical pharmacist in hospital settings to advance patient outcomes in alignment with Mercy Research. Pharmacy residents also collaborate with Mercy Research on practice advancement initiatives, including evaluating medication changes, improving access or administration of therapies, and applying research findings to enhance clinical care

### **ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):**

- Ensure timely access to safe and effective medications for patients, reducing preventable complications.
- Improve continuity of care through pharmacist-led interventions during transitions of care.
- Develop a pipeline of highly skilled pharmacists to strengthen regional healthcare capacity.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES MERCY PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Dedicated program leadership and clinical preceptors.
- Training sites across inpatient settings.
- Access to advanced pharmacy technology and medication management systems.
- Plan to expand training opportunities into ambulatory clinical settings
- Exploration of a Postgraduate Year Two (PGY2) Specialized Clinical Program to further advance resident training and expertise.

- American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
- Mercy clinical departments
- Mercy Research





# Prioritized Need #2: Behavioral Health

### **GOAL 1**

Increase access to behavioral health services in both the emergency and primary care setting.





# Prioritized Need #2: Behavioral Health

Program 1 of 2: Virtual Behavioral Health (vBH)

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Mercy's Virtual Behavioral Health (vBH) program provides integrated, regional support for patients with behavioral health needs. Based out of local and centralized Ministry locations, vBH co-workers provide virtual and telephonic behavioral health assessments to establish patients' level of care, and facilitate referrals for inpatient, intensive outpatient (IOP), and outpatient services, as well as for basic social needs in their home communities. vBH also provides virtual psychiatric consults to help with medication stabilization related to the exacerbation of behavioral health conditions.

### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Operate a hub-based model of virtual care, where clinical vBH co-workers respond to incoming referrals, conduct telephone behavioral health assessments, and facilitate outgoing referrals for ongoing diagnosis, treatment, and support. Collaborate with external partners and behavioral health service providers to ensure a strong regional network for care coordination and social service navigation.

### **ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):**

• 10% decrease in hospital readmissions and ED visits by FY28

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Cost of coworker and clinical time, including Regional Resource Behavioral Health RNs and LPNs and Patient RN Advocates
- Operational budgeted support as appropriate
- · Indirect expense related to EMR and clinic operations

- Mercy Behavioral Health Service Line Leadership
- Mercy Virtual Behavioral Health (vBH)
- Substance Abuse Recovery Program (SURP)





# Prioritized Need #2: Behavioral Health

### Program 2 of 2: Collaborative Care

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Supporting primary care providers (family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics & gynecology, and pediatrics) in providing mental and behavioral health services to patients in need. The model provides a behavioral care manager to interact directly with patients, perform assessments, initiate treatment, and communicate and collaborate with primary care physicians. Concert Health provides a psychiatric consultant who meets with care managers regularly, reviews patient charts, and makes recommendations for medication and ongoing treatment.

### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy will continue training and educating providers on the use of the care approach, identify gaps in care, and refer patients to Concert Health.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Increase patient referrals by 5% each year
- Increase patient satisfaction assessment participation by 10% from previous CHIP cycle

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Cost of coworker and clinician time, including Regional Resource Behavioral Health RNs and LPNs and Patient RN Advocates
- Operational budgeted support as appropriate
- Indirect expenses related to EMR and clinic operations

- Mercy Behavioral Health Service Line Leadership
- Mercy Virtual Behavioral Health (vBH)
- Substance Abuse Recovery Program (SURP)





### **GOAL 1**

Improve maternal and infant health outcomes by increasing access to high-quality prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care.





### **Program 1 of 2:** Centering Pregnancy

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Centering Pregnancy is an evidence-based model of group prenatal care that integrates traditional health checkups with interactive group sessions to improve health outcomes for mothers and babies. This patient-centered and relationship-focused approach combines essential clinical care with facilitated discussions, educational activities, and peer support. Mercy's Centering Pregnancy program empowers expectant mothers to actively engage in their healthcare, build trust with their care team, and foster a sense of community with other participants. By providing extended time with healthcare providers and promoting birth preparedness and confidence, the program supports culturally responsive, community-centered care that aligns with broader goals to advance maternal health equity.

### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy will deliver group prenatal care through English and Spanish cohorts, pairing prenatal visits with interactive group sessions for expectant mothers that provide education on pregnancy and postpartum care in a supportive setting while encouraging partner participation.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Lower risk of preterm births and reduce low birth weights.
- Increase breastfeeding rates and improve maternal confidence.
- Enhance social support and patient engagement during pregnancy.
- Improve overall birth outcomes through evidence-based group care.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Dedicated clinical staff and facilitators for group sessions.
- Educational materials and structured curriculum for prenatal care.

- Mercy Family Medicine and Obstetrics
- University of Arkansas Medical Science





Program 2 of 2: Milk Depot Program

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

Mercy Northwest Arkansas, in partnership with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), serves as the only designated Milk Depot in Northwest Arkansas for the Arkansas Milk Bank. As a collection site, Mercy NWA provides a safe and convenient location for approved donors to drop off human milk, which is then sent to UAMs for screening, pasteurization, and distribution to hospitals statewide. Through this partnership, Mercy NWA helps ensure critically ill and premature infants have access to lifesaving nutrition and evidence-based neonatal care.

#### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy NWA will operate an on-site collection facility for approved donor milk, ensuring safe storage and timely delivery to the UAMS Milk Bank for processing. The hospital will enhance donor recruitment and awareness through targeted outreach, including informational materials in hospital and clinic settings and education during postnatal care visits, to support increased access to safe, donor human milk for infants in need statewide.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Increase access to safe, pasteurized donor human milk for premature and critically ill infants across Arkansas.
- Promote maternal health and well-being through opportunities for milk donation and breastfeeding support.
- Increase the total volume of human milk donated to the Milk Depot.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Clinical oversight and staff time for screening and handling donor milk.
- Indirect expenses for Milk Depot operations, including program administration and compliance.
- Operational budget support for essential supplies.

- University of Arkansas Medical Science Milk Bank
- University of Arkansas Medical Science Northwest Arkansas





### **GOAL 2**

Advance health equity by reducing disparities in access, quality, and outcomes of care among underserved and marginalized populations, ensuring culturally responsive and community-centered approaches.





Program 1 of 1: Maternal Life 360

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Mercy plans to implement the Maternal Life360 Program to provide home visits during pregnancy and up to two years postpartum for mothers and babies. The program will focus on high-risk pregnancies and families with financial need, offering evidence-based home visiting services and connections to medical, behavioral health, and community resources.

### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy intends to enroll eligible high-risk patients, verify eligibility through the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), obtain consent, and administer health-related social needs screenings. Once launched the program will deliver home visits directly or through contracted partners, coordinate medical services, and link families to culturally relevant supports and community resources.

### ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):

- Improve maternal and child health outcomes by reducing complications and promoting positive parenting practices.
- Enhance continuity of care and reduce preventable hospitalizations for high-risk mothers and infants.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Dedicated staff for enrollment, coordination, and documentation.
- Funding distribution to contracted home-visiting partners.
- Screening tools for maternal health, child health, and social needs.

- Healthy Families
- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- Family Network





# Prioritized Need #4: Food Insecurity

**GOAL 1** 

Decrease food insecurity among persons at risk in Northwest Arkansas.





# Prioritized Need #4: Food Insecurity

## **Program 1 of 2:** Food Boxes Program

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Food Boxes Program at Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas, in partnership with Mercy Clinics, provides shelf-stable food boxes sourced from community food drives to support patients facing food insecurity. This initiative aims to improve health outcomes by addressing food insecurity, a key factor linked to chronic disease management. While not a cure, access to essential nutrition helps patients better manage chronic conditions, enhancing their overall health and well-being. Potential future collaboration with the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank may further strengthen the program's impact.

#### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas will screen patients for food insecurity in hospital and clinic settings, identify a central area to safely store food pantry items, and supply patients in need with shelf-stable food boxes at no charge. The hospital will also collaborate with internal and external partners to source food products and connect patients with local food-related resources through referrals.

### **ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):**

- Supply food-insecure patients with pantry items and local food resource referrals.
- Link repeat patients to community food resources for ongoing support.
- Improve patient well-being and chronic disease management by reducing food insecurity.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Cost of coworker time for program planning and evaluation.
- Appropriate space for food pantry.
- Indirect expenses related to organization of pantry items.

- Mercy Clinics
- Northwest Arkansas Food Bank





# Prioritized Need #4: Food Insecurity

Program 2 of 2: Mom's Meals

#### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas is exploring a partnership with Mom's Meals to deliver medically tailored, home-delivered meals to eligible patient's post-discharge or with chronic conditions, enhancing nutrition access across Arkansas. This initiative will integrate rapid meal delivery with discharge planning and chronic care management, targeting improved health outcomes for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. By leveraging Mom's Meals' expertise, the program aims to address food insecurity and support long-term patient well-being.

### ACTIONS THE HOSPITAL INTENDS TO TAKE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEED:

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas will screen patients for Mom's Meals eligibility during discharge planning, collaborating with Mom's Meals to facilitate referrals, verify eligibility, and coordinate meal deliveries.

### **ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF THESE ACTIONS (OBJECTIVES):**

- Reduce hospital readmissions by providing medically tailored meals for 2-3 weeks post-discharge.
- Improve chronic disease management for conditions like diabetes and heart disease through consistent nutrition.

### PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THE HOSPITAL PLANS TO COMMIT:

- Cost of coworker time for program planning and evaluation.
- Incorporate screening and referrals into hospital discharge workflows.
- Dedicate resources to monitor program outcomes.

- Mercy Case Management
- Mom's Meals



# Other Community Health Programs

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas conducts other community health programs not linked to a specific prioritized health need. These programs address a community health need and meet at least one of the following community benefit objectives: improve access to health care services, enhance the health of the community, advance medical or health care knowledge or relieve or reduce government burden to improve health. The need for these programs was identified through documentation of demonstrated community need, a request from a public health agency or community group, or the involvement of an unrelated, collaborative tax-exempt or government organization as partners in the activity or program carried out for the express purpose of improving community health. Although this is not an exhaustive list, many of these programs are listed on the next page.



### Other Community Health Programs (Continued)

Community Benefit Category	Program	Outcomes Tracked
Community Health Improvement Services	Dialysis services for indigent patients	Persons served, cost of services
	Transportation assistance programs	Persons Served
	Flu vaccines	Persons Served
	Health Fairs, Screenings, Education	Persons Served
Health Professions Education	Health professions student education including nursing, imaging, therapy, pharmacy, medical student, lab, emergency medical technician and advanced practice nursing	Number of Students





### Other Community Health Programs (Continued)

Community Benefit Category	Program	Outcomes Tracked
Financial & In-Kind Contributions	First Aid and EMS Standby for community walks and runs	Cost of services
Community Building – Workforce Development	Bentonville High School Ignite Program	Number of students
	M.A.S.H program for high school students	Number of students
	Teen and college student volunteer programs	Number of students





# Significant Health Needs Not Being Addressed

In any case of prioritization, there will be some areas of needs that are identified that are not chosen as a priority. Because Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas has limited resources, not every community need will be addressed. Throughout the CHNA process, the following need arose as a community concern. However, it will not be addressed as a top priority because other organizations are more appropriate to address this need.

### Aging Problems

Mercy will engage in collaborative efforts to address aging-related health challenges through education, preventative care, and support programs in partnership with community organizations and aging-focused initiatives. While recognizing the significant impact of aging on chronic disease management and quality of life, Mercy will not lead these efforts, as specialized aging services and public health entities are better positioned to drive comprehensive, long-term solutions for older adults.

### Nutrition and Weight

Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas will collaborate with community organizations to address nutrition and weight-related health issues through education, preventive programs, and support initiatives promoting healthy eating and lifestyle changes. While acknowledging the critical role of nutrition and weight management in preventing chronic diseases, Mercy will not lead these efforts, as community-based programs and public health entities are better equipped to drive sustainable, population-wide impact.



# Significant Health Needs Not Being Addressed

### **Next Steps**

After carefully reviewing the data and mapping existing resources, Mercy Hospital NWA is developing an implementation plan with evidence-based strategies. The plan will be submitted to a committee of appointed members from Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas, for their approval. The final version of the CHNA and Implementation Plan will be available to the public on the Mercy Hospital NWA website, www.mercy.net/communitybenefits.

