

Mental Health Emergency Center Community Health Implementation Strategy

January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2028

Community health improvement is an effective tool for creating a shared vision and supporting a planned and integrated approach to improving health outcomes. The basic premise of community health improvement is that entities identify community health issues, prioritize those that can be addressed, and then develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to address those issues. Tax-exempt hospitals are required to conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA) and develop an implementation strategy to document how the hospital will address prioritized community health needs. The following outlines a summary of the CHNA process and provides details on how the Mental Health Emergency Center (MHEC) plans to address their prioritized community health needs.

SUMMARY OF CHNA PROCESS

In 2025, Mental Health Emergency Center (MHEC) participated with the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership (MHCP) collaborative in Milwaukee County to conduct a collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which consisted of a comprehensive presentation and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The MHEC CHNA relies on two sources of primary data information, gathered through the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership:



Community Health Survey: An online survey of more than 6,200 Milwaukee County residents that addressed adult and child health risk factors, health behaviors and perceptions of pressing community health needs.



Community Partner Interviews: Conducted by health system community benefit leaders with 42 individuals representing 36 organizations and 11 focus groups to identify community health needs, root causes and contributing social factors. Interviewees offered insight on effective health improvement strategies currently in place as well as suggestions for future opportunities.

Additionally, Aurora Health Care analyzed secondary data, or existing information gathered from various sources, to provide valuable insights and context from the following sources:



Metopio: Aurora Health Care has a contract with Metopio to provide an internet-based data resource for their hospitals. This robust platform offers curated data from public and proprietary sources for information on health behaviors and health risks, health outcomes, health care utilization, demographic, and community-level drivers of health like economic, housing, employment, and environmental conditions. Data for each indicator is presented by race, ethnicity, and gender when the data is available. All data collected through Metopio was quantitative and included data comparisons between county, state and United States data.




County Health Rankings & Roadmaps – Milwaukee County: A program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) provides a snapshot of health for nearly every county in the nation, based on a variety of public health data. CHR&R advocates for an understanding of data and evidence to develop methods to improve health and equity. (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, About Us, 2024)

The top health issues identified in the Mental Health Emergency Center’s CHNA were:

- Access to Care
- Chronic Disease
- Economic and Housing Opportunities
- Food Insecurity
- Maternal and Child Health
- Mental Health
- Safety and Violence
- Substance Use

The top health issues identified were presented to the Mental Health Emergency Center team, and members were asked to rank the issues based on the following criteria: size and seriousness of the problem; effectiveness of available interventions; available resources to address the health issue; whether the health care system is adequately positioned to address the issue; alignment with a defined community need identified through data; potential for the issue to impact other health and social issues; and the ability to effectively address or impact the issue through collaboration.

Using these criteria, MHEC has prioritized the significant health needs to address in 2026-2028:

Significant Need	Implementation Strategy Selection Reasoning
 <p>Mental Health</p>	<p>Mental health was selected as a priority because it was voted as the most important health issue affecting our community during the survey process. Emergency departments across the system continue to see patients experiencing mental health crises. Mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression affect a significant portion of the population and are closely associated with poor overall health. As a specialty hospital with expertise in mental health care, MHEC is committed to advancing access to care, improving health outcomes and supporting community-based preventative initiatives.</p>

For the prioritized health need, the hospital plans to commit resources, which may include staff time, information technology systems, outreach, promotions and educational materials, funding, medical supplies, and other resources as available.

PRIORITY: Mental Health

IMPACT: Expand capacity to provide accessible, high-quality mental health crisis care with a resilient workforce.

DESCRIPTION OF HEALTH NEED DATA:

- Mental health emergency department (ED) visit rates are much higher in Milwaukee County compared to the state average.
- Depression rates in the county and the state have been increasing since 2020; suicide mortality rates have also been steadily increasing.
- The suicide and self-injury ED visit rate is highest among children ages 5-17 compared to other age groups in the county.

ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING STRATEGIES

LOCAL: MKE Elevate

- Improve availability and uptake of behavioral health resources.

STATE: Wisconsin State Health Improvement Plan

- Pursue population-level prevention of and intervention for mental health and substance use issues.
- Increase accessibility of mental health and substance use intervention and recovery services.

NATIONAL: Healthy People 2030

- Improve mental health.

STRATEGY #1: Increase access to innovative mental health services

Planned Interventions	Collaborative Partners	Intended Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide constant coverage for emergency mental health services for adults, children and adolescents • Expand care coordination for robust discharge planning and transition care management • Collaborate with area emergency departments (EDs) for seamless facilitation to open inpatient beds • Strengthen coordination with the county to support lower-cost, timely access to mental health crisis care for individuals facing coverage or affordability gaps • Enhance treatment by supporting patients’ social needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local nonprofit health systems’ hospitals • Federally qualified health centers • Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services • Granite Hills Hospital • Law Enforcement • Community-based organizations within the FindHelp platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to mental health services • Improved coordination for mental health care • Increased referrals to resources and follow up care • Reduced mental health crisis ED visits • Reduced length of emergency stays

Measures

- Number of Mental Health Emergency Center admissions by voluntary/involuntary status
- Number of voluntary community-based discharges by type (inpatient or community)
- Number and rate of voluntary and involuntary inpatient admissions
- 48-hour and 72-hour return to MHEC readmissions data
- Progress Milestones

**Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.*

PRIORITY: Mental Health (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY #2: Strengthen the mental health workforce through training, education, and engagement to support effective care

Planned Interventions	Collaborative Partners	Intended Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand Mental Health Emergency Center medical student and resident training • Enhance training and education to support a resilient, well-prepared mental health workforce • Encourage staff participation in community service and giving to support mental health and community well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical College of Wisconsin • Community-based organizations • Milwaukee Health Care Partnership • Continuing education programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved response to mental health crises • Enhanced learning and training experiences • Increased staff engagement and sense of connection to the organization’s mission • Strengthened relationships with the community
Measures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of residents and resident MHEC service hours • Number of certifications and memberships received through trainings and continuing education • Progress Milestones • Number of community-based organizations supported; number of events; total hours of employee time provided 		
<p><i>*Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.</i></p>		

Note: Plans to address selected CHNA priorities are dependent upon resources and may be adjusted on an annual basis to best address the health needs of our community.

Adoption of the Implementation Strategy

This Community Health Implementation Strategy focuses on the above priority health needs selected by the hospital based on community input, available resources, and alignment with organizational and community partner capacity. The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) also identified additional significant health needs, including substance use, access to care, chronic disease, economic and housing opportunities, food insecurity, maternal and child health, safety and violence and substance use. These needs are not directly addressed in this CHIS because the hospital is a specialty psychiatric hospital and has limited capacity to implement strategies outside its primary area of focus. MHEC will continue to collaborate with community partners and share resources, when appropriate, to support progress on these needs within the community.

Adoption of the Implementation Strategy

The Community Health Implementation Strategy report was presented to the Board of the Mental Health Emergency Center, the authorizing body of the hospital. The board approved the report on April 27, 2026.