

Hospital Implementation Strategy | 2022-25



PURPOSE STATEMENT

This document serves as the facility specific implementation strategy for Swain Community Hospital and addresses the community health needs identified in Swain County through a collaborative community health needs assessment (CHNA) process conducted with local and regional partners in western North Carolina. This document outlines plans for Swain Community Hospital to support specific community benefit efforts as part of a larger community-wide plan.

Paper copies of this document and the CHNA may be obtained at Swain Community Hospital at 45 Plateau Street, Bryson City, NC 28731 or by phone 828-488-2155. This document is also available electronically via the hospital website www.myswaincommunity.com.

OVERVIEW

Swain County faces several significant health challenges, as highlighted in the data. Chronic disease, particularly related to obesity, is a longstanding issue in the community, with limited access to nutritious food and barriers to physical activity contributing to this problem. Substance abuse, including high rates of opioid use, is another major concern, with easy access to illegal substances, poverty, and lack of treatment facilities exacerbating the issue. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to these challenges, with a significant percentage of residents experiencing job loss, wage reduction, and loss of health insurance.

Key populations at risk include low-income residents, pregnant women who use illicit substances, and the elderly population. Cultural factors, such as the increasing acceptability of alcohol, vaping, and marijuana, also play a role in substance abuse trends. Lack of employment opportunities, especially for youth, and a perceived lack of overall education contribute to these issues.

Despite these challenges, there are several health resources available in the county, including COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and treatment options. Efforts to increase community awareness of these resources and improve communication among organizations providing services are ongoing. Collaborative planning with community partners aims to address these challenges through evidence-based strategies and innovative programs.

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In conclusion, Swain County faces complex health challenges related to chronic disease, substance abuse, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach involving community partnerships, increased access to resources, and targeted interventions to support vulnerable populations.

Swain Community Hospital is well-positioned to aid in addressing the health challenges faced by Swain County. The hospital can continue to expand its services and programs aimed at chronic disease management, particularly in relation to obesity. Initiatives that include community education components can further promote healthy living and physical activity. Swain Community Hospital's involvement in substance abuse prevention efforts, such as offering medication take-back events and behavioral health services, demonstrates a commitment to addressing substance misuse in the community. Additionally, the hospital's provision of COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination services plays a crucial role in managing the pandemic's ongoing impact on the county. By collaborating with community partners and leveraging its resources, Swain Community Hospital can continue to be a key player in improving the health and well-being of Swain County residents.

OUR COMMUNITY AND KEY PARTNERS

Swain Community Hospital's Community



Since 2010, Swain County has experienced relatively stable population growth, with a slight increase recorded in recent years. The county's population is characterized by a diverse age range, with a significant portion being over the age of 65, reflecting an aging population trend. However, there has been notable outmigration of younger age groups, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, potentially due to limited employment opportunities and a lack of activities for youth. Jobs held by various age groups in Swain County vary, with older residents often engaged in healthcare, retail, and service industries, while younger individuals are more likely to be employed in industries such as tourism, education, and healthcare. These demographic trends highlight the importance of addressing economic and social factors to ensure a balanced and sustainable population in Swain County.

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Our community health needs assessment process and products were supported collaboratively by **WNC Healthy Impact**, a partnership between hospitals and health departments to improve community health in western North Carolina. This innovative regional effort is coordinated, housed and financially supported by **WNC Health Network**, the alliance of western NC hospitals working together to improve health and healthcare. Learn more at www.WNCHN.org.



2022-2025 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Key Findings and Data:

1. **Chronic Disease and Obesity:** Identified as key health priorities since 2009, with limited resources due to funding constraints.
2. **Substance Misuse:** Identified as the most critical health issue, influenced by easy access to illegal substances, poverty, and lack of treatment facilities.
3. **COVID-19 Impact:** Roughly 22% of residents lost their jobs during the pandemic, with 26% experiencing wage or hour reductions.
4. **Unintentional Injuries:** A significant cause of mortality, with falls being the leading cause among the elderly.
5. **Opioid Misuse:** A significant concern, with high rates of overdose deaths and emergency department visits.
6. **Tobacco Use:** Declining but still prevalent, with efforts focused on reducing smoking rates.
7. **Healthcare Resources:** Limited but expanding, including telemedicine and wellness programs.
8. **Community Resources:** Available through 2-1-1, but gaps exist, especially for substance abuse and mental health services.
9. **Population Dynamics:** Stable population growth, with outmigration of younger age groups and an aging population.
10. **Employment:** Diverse job market, with older residents in healthcare and retail, and younger individuals in tourism and education.

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Corresponding Resource Gaps:

1. **Substance Abuse Services:** Insufficient treatment facilities and support services for individuals struggling with substance misuse.
2. **Mental Health Services:** Limited access to mental health specialists and facilities, exacerbating substance abuse and other health issues.
3. **Employment Opportunities:** Lack of diverse job opportunities, especially for younger residents, contributing to economic challenges.
4. **Health Education and Awareness:** Need for increased education on substance abuse, mental health, and chronic disease prevention.
5. **Transportation:** Access to resources in neighboring counties is hindered by limited transportation options for residents.
6. **Community Engagement:** Lack of communication and collaboration among organizations providing health and social services.
7. **Youth Programs:** Insufficient recreational and educational programs for youth, leading to boredom and potential substance abuse.
8. **Healthcare Access:** Limited access to healthcare services, including telemedicine, especially for rural and low-income residents.
9. **Substance Abuse Prevention:** Need for more prevention programs targeting youth and adults to reduce substance misuse.
10. **Health Insurance Coverage:** Increasing loss of health insurance among residents due to job loss during the pandemic, highlighting the need for affordable coverage options.

Existing Resources and Strengths:

1. **3D Mammography** - Swain Community Hospital offers services such as advanced imaging to aid in preventing and diagnosing chronic diseases.
2. **Swain Summits** - A community-wide wellness program involving Swain Community Hospital, Swain County Health Department, and MountainWise, which has had a positive impact on participants' health.

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3. **Food relief agencies** - Organizations like MANNA Food Bank, The Giving Spoon, The Restoration House, and United Christian Ministries help provide food assistance.
4. **Cooperative Extension** - Provides food safety and cooking education.
5. **Behavioral Health Services** - Provided by Meridian Behavioral Health and Appalachian Community Services.
6. **Catch My Breath Program** - Implemented in Swain County Schools for tobacco prevention.
7. **Health education programs** - Offered by Swain County Health Department and Swain Community Hospital for youth and parents, focusing on physical activity and substance abuse prevention.
8. **Emergency Department Services** - Swain Community Hospital provides 24/7 emergency care services, with the ability to provide emergency care and access to a transfer center which can move patients to trauma centers via ambulance or air when needed.
9. **COVID-19 Resources** - Swain Community Hospital and Swain County Health Department offer COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccine services.
10. **NC 2-1-1** - An information and referral service linking people to community health and human services, available 24/7.
11. **Community Resource Meeting Group** - A quarterly meeting hosted by Swain County Department of Social Services, gathering community partners to share resources and better serve citizens.

Corresponding Recommendations for Swain Community Hospital:

1. **Expand Chronic Disease Management Services:** Increase access to 3D Mammography and telemedicine services to aid in chronic disease management, particularly for conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Increase subspecialty access by providing clinic days for Harris subspecialists to round at Swain. Continue recruitment efforts in conjunction with Harris Regional Hospital to bring additional subspecialists to the region, thereby increasing access for all western counties of NC.
2. **Community Education Programs:** Expand and promote programs like Swain Summits to address obesity, physical activity, and nutrition education, helping to prevent and manage chronic diseases, in partnership with Swain County Department of Public Health.
3. **Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment:** Collaborate with local agencies to enhance substance abuse prevention programs, increase awareness about available mental health services, and support the development of more local in-patient treatment centers.

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4. **COVID-19 Response:** Continue to offer COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination services to support the community's health during the pandemic and afterwards.
5. **Health Screenings and Education:** Continue offering free community health screenings and education programs to address various health issues, including substance abuse prevention and mental health awareness.
6. **Partnership and Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with local agencies, community organizations, and educational institutions to address health disparities, improve access to care, and promote overall community wellness.
7. **Emergency Department Services:** Ensure that the emergency department is equipped to handle unintentional injuries, including falls among the elderly, by providing specialized care and resources for this population. Provide specialized training to emergency department providers and staff around caring for the elderly. Continue to foster relationships with long-term care facilities in the county and establish routine check-ins to gauge needs of residents.
8. **Resource Accessibility:** Improve community awareness about available resources, such as NC 2-1-1, to help residents access needed services and support.
9. **Continued Assessment and Adjustment:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of these initiatives and adjust strategies based on community feedback and health outcome data to ensure they are meeting the needs of Swain County residents.

Evaluation and Monitoring Recommendations:

- **Health Outcome Tracking:** Continuously monitor key health indicators, such as obesity rates, chronic disease prevalence, and substance abuse rates, to assess the impact of hospital programs and initiatives on community health.
- **Patient Feedback:** Solicit feedback from patients and community members through surveys or focus groups to assess the effectiveness and accessibility of hospital services, including chronic disease management, substance abuse prevention, and COVID-19 response.
- **Data Analysis:** Regularly analyze data on emergency department visits, health screenings, and community education program participation to identify trends and areas for improvement in health service delivery.
- **Partnership Assessment:** Evaluate the effectiveness of partnerships with local agencies and organizations in addressing community health needs and explore opportunities for collaboration to enhance services.

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- **Resource Utilization:** Monitor the utilization of resources, such as 3D mammography, telemedicine services, and community health screenings, to ensure efficient allocation and address any gaps in service delivery.
- **Compliance and Accreditation:** Ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and accreditation standards related to patient care, safety, and quality improvement.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY PLAN FOR SWAIN COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Goal: Improve the overall health and well-being of the Swain County community by addressing key health issues identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA).

Priority Areas:

1. **Chronic Disease as it relates to obesity**
2. **Substance misuse prevention and reduction**
3. **COVID-19 prevention**

Objectives & Corresponding Implementation Strategies

1. **Chronic Disease as it relates to obesity:**
 - **Objective:** Reduce the prevalence of obesity and related chronic diseases in Swain County.
 - **Implementation Strategies:**
 - Offer Healthy Living Workshops focusing on nutrition and physical activity.
 - Collaborate with local schools and community centers to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles.
 - Provide resources and support for weight management programs.
 - Conduct community-wide awareness campaigns on the importance of healthy lifestyle choices through use of hospital media channels, including social media.

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2. Substance misuse prevention and reduction:

- **Objective:** Reduce substance misuse and its associated harms in Swain County.
- **Implementation Strategies:**
 - Offer education and prevention programs targeting youth and adults.
 - Provide resources for addiction treatment and recovery support.
 - Collaborate with local law enforcement and community organizations to address substance misuse by hosting medication take-back events and educational opportunities.
 - Increase access to mental health services for individuals at risk of substance misuse through expanded telemedicine access and training for emergency department personnel.

3. COVID-19 prevention:

- **Objective:** Reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on Swain County residents.
- **Implementation Strategies:**
 - Provide COVID-19 testing and vaccination services.
 - Educate the community about COVID-19 prevention measures, such as mask-wearing and social distancing.
 - Collaborate with local health departments and government agencies to implement public health guidelines.
 - Support initiatives to address socioeconomic factors contributing to COVID-19 disparities.

Resources Needed:

1. **Staffing:** When hiring, note the need for an increase in healthcare professionals specializing in chronic disease management, substance abuse treatment, and COVID-19 care.
2. **Facilities:** Dedicated use of facilities for outpatient care, substance abuse treatment programs, and COVID-19 testing and treatment.
3. **Technology:** Upgrades in telemedicine capabilities to reach remote areas and provide virtual consultations, such as iPads on inpatient units and in the emergency department to increase access to telemedicine services.
4. **Education and Outreach:** Funding for community health education programs focusing on obesity, substance abuse prevention, and COVID-19 safety.

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5. **Partnerships:** Foster ongoing relationships and collaboration with local organizations and agencies to enhance access to resources and support for residents.
6. **Equipment and Supplies:** Ensure availability of necessary medical equipment and supplies for chronic disease management, substance abuse treatment, and COVID-19 care.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

1. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Define specific KPIs for each strategic objective, such as the number of patients served, patient satisfaction scores, and reduction in readmission rates.
2. **Data Collection:** Regularly collect relevant data to track progress towards each objective, including patient outcomes, resource utilization, and program effectiveness.
3. **Benchmarking:** Compare performance against established benchmarks or best practices to identify areas for improvement and measure success.
4. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Solicit feedback from patients, staff, and community partners to assess the impact of initiatives and identify areas for enhancement.
5. **Regular Reporting:** Provide regular reports on progress towards strategic objectives to stakeholders, including hospital leadership, staff, and community members.
6. **Adaptation and Improvement:** Continuously review and adjust strategies based on evaluation findings to ensure alignment with the hospital's goals and community needs.

Timeline

Year 1 Goal: Implement and assess new programs to address health priorities.

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of current hospital programs and services.
- Establish a multidisciplinary team for program development.
- Launch Healthy Living Workshops, expand substance abuse education, and prevention efforts.
- Implement telemedicine services and recruit additional physicians.
- Evaluate program effectiveness and plan for year two initiatives based on feedback and evaluation.

Year 2 Goal: Expand and enhance existing programs while developing new initiatives.

- Expand the Healthy Living Workshop series and enhance substance abuse prevention efforts.
- Launch a mental health outreach program and continue monitoring existing programs.
- Develop a community garden initiative and expand telemedicine services.

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- Conduct a mid-year review and plan for year three initiatives based on evaluation findings and community needs.

Year 3 Goal: Consolidate efforts, strengthen partnerships, and ensure sustainability.

- Strengthen partnerships with community organizations and launch a social media campaign.
- Expand mental health outreach and evaluate the community garden initiative.
- Continue monitoring and evaluating programs and develop a sustainability plan.
- Conduct a final evaluation and prepare a comprehensive report outlining achievements and recommendations.

Conclusion

Swain Community Hospital plays a pivotal role in addressing the health challenges identified in Swain County. By implementing targeted programs and services, such as Healthy Living Workshops, substance abuse education, and mental health outreach, the hospital can directly impact the community's health. Through telemedicine services, the hospital can improve access to care for rural residents. Additionally, initiatives like the community garden program and partnerships with local organizations can promote healthier lifestyles and better overall well-being. By continuously evaluating and adapting its strategies, Swain Community Hospital can make a lasting impact on the health disparities in the county and improve the quality of life for its residents.

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