

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY  
TO ADDRESS LINN COUNTY  
COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
Mercy Medical Center  
*2021 – 2023 Tax Years Covered***



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## **I. Organization Mission**

The mission of Mercy Medical Center (Mercy) is to care for the sick and enhance the health of the communities we serve, guided by the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy.

## **II. Community Served by the Hospital**

Mercy serves a primary service area of Linn County and a secondary service area of eight counties (Benton, Buchanan, Cedar, Delaware, Iowa, Johnson, Jones and Tama). The majority of Mercy's patients – for both inpatient and outpatient services – live in Linn County. Additionally, the community includes counties adjacent to Linn within reasonable driving distance of the hospital.

## **III. Implementation Strategy Process**

This document describes the work Mercy will do during the 2021 through 2023 tax years to address the health needs identified in the 2021 Linn County Community Health Assessment (CHA). *For Mercy's CHA report, please visit: <https://www.mercycare.org/about/community-benefit/community-health-needs-assessment/>.*

Between May and December of 2021, the Together! Healthy Linn collaborative began the current iteration of the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process. The CHA and CHIP were led by Linn County Public Health and conducted in partnership with community partners, including both Linn County hospitals (Mercy and UnityPoint-St. Luke's Hospital) and Eastern Iowa Health Center (Linn County's federally qualified health center). The alignment of the CHA and CHIP for all four entities in Linn County minimizes duplication and maximizes the effect. A wide variety of community members and partners within the local public health system were engaged to inform and guide the process. The CHIP is a community-wide action plan for addressing strategic issues identified in the CHA over the next three years.

The Together! Healthy Linn collaborative uses the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework to guide the CHA and CHIP process. The MAPP is a nationally recognized framework for conducting community-wide strategic planning to improve community health. This framework balances quantitative data about health trends with the experiences of community members and insight from content experts in the agencies within the local public health system. MAPP currently consists of six phases and emphasizes social determinants of health and health equity as key factors that influence the overall health of the community. The six phases of the MAPP framework include:

1. Organize for Success & Partnership Development
2. Visioning
3. MAPP Assessments (Community Health Assessment)
4. Identifying Strategic Issues
5. Identifying Goals and Strategies (Community Health Improvement Plan)
6. Action (Implementation, Evaluation)

The 2021 CHA consisted of two unique assessments – the Community Themes and Strengths and Community Health Status. Each assessment measures aspects of the health of Linn County and existing assets available within the county.

The 2021 Community Health Assessment identified mental health, lifestyle barriers, including access to food and equitable opportunities to be active; community safety; safe and affordable housing; access to healthcare; chronic disease; sexually transmitted infections; and substance use. Since the development of the 2019-2021 CHIP, Linn County has experienced significant changes; increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation were described following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 derecho. Likewise, these events exacerbated the accessibility of healthy and affordable foods, particularly for middle to low-income residents, and the derecho placed an emphasis on an already struggling system of safe and affordable housing.

During the last round of the CHA in 2018, The Together! Healthy Linn Steering Committee used a series of prioritization tools in combination with data reflection; asset and community mapping; small and large group discussion; and an agreed upon set of prioritization criteria to determine which three issues needed to be addressed before the community vision could be realized. The steering committee was limited to the top three issues to maintain a realistic, focused scope of work. The prioritization criteria for strategic issues were:

- The issue is data driven, appearing in two or more of the assessments
- Addressing the issue requires a collaborative, multi-sector approach
- Alignment with the Together! Healthy Linn Vision
- Assets are available within the local public health system to affect the issue
- The issue reflects a need that Together! Healthy Linn can influence
- The size and significance of the issue has significant impact

At the end of this prioritization session, three broad issues were identified in rank order: mental health, obesity and safety. Using data from the mid-cycle assessment conducted in 2021, the Together! Healthy Linn Steering Committee convened on March 10, 2022, to review results of the assessment and evaluate what adjustments, if any, should be applied to the extended 2019-2023 Community Health Improvement Plan. Following review of the assessment findings, the MAPP core team presented some recommendations for the steering committee to consider for modifications, including extending the 2019-2021 plan to 2023; hone in on the underlying factors driving the issues of obesity and safety; gather additional data to target planned strategies, populations impacted and geographic location; and make modifications to the plan based on the additional data findings. Recommendations were unanimously accepted for continuation and adjustment of the Community Health Improvement Plan. **The priority areas for the 2021 Linn County CHA are mental health, lifestyle barriers (including access to food and opportunities to be active), community safety, and safe and affordable housing.**

*For the full community health assessment reports prepared by Linn County Public Health, please visit: <http://www.linncounty.org/613/Reports-and-Publications>.*

During late summer 2022, Mercy participated in the development of the Linn County Community Health Improvement Plan as part of the Together! Healthy Linn steering committee and priority issue meetings. Mercy will continue to work collaboratively with this group. In creating this implementation strategy, Mercy's goals are to help close gaps and/or reduce barriers with the identified priority needs.

Mercy acknowledges the health of every individual is influenced by the conditions in the places where individuals live, learn, work and age, along with their socioeconomic status and race. Mercy recognizes the significant downstream influence of community conditions on an individual's health. In February 2022, Mercy's CHA and strategic plan was shared with the planning committee of Mercy's Board of Trustees. Mercy's commitment to addressing social determinants of health and advancing health equity was reviewed. For the remainder of 2022 and into 2023, Mercy plans to work to understand on a deeper level the available community data and make a concerted effort to listen to community members in the areas Mercy serves. These steps will inform our next actions related to health equity.

Current efforts to advance health equity and address the priority needs identified in the 2021 Linn County CHA include:

- Expand social determinant of health (SDoH) screening within Epic across Mercy's care settings
- Explore options for operationalizing referral and connection of patient's non-medical needs to community resources
- Strengthen community partnerships to address nonmedical needs
- Evaluate our collection process for Race Ethnicity and Language (REaL) Data
- Stratify data based on social risk factors, experience of care and/or patient demographic data to identify disparities in care
  - Continue work to close the gap on preventative screenings
- Explore additional opportunities to improve access to insurance coverage for our uninsured patients
- Maintain or increase dollars attributed to Mercy's Health Equity Fund which provides support to community-based organizations working to address the needs identified in the CHA

For each significant health need identified in the CHA, or through other means, Mercy has included in the implementation plan:

- Description of the actions the hospital intends to take to address the health need and the anticipated impact of these actions.
- Resources the hospital plans to commit to address the health need.
- Description of any planned collaborations between the hospital and other facilities or organizations to address the health need.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: MENTAL HEALTH**

| ACTIONS   | ANTICIPATED IMPACT  | RESOURCES                         | PARTNERS   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| <p>Explore options for more psychiatric consultative roles within other MercyCare clinics. <i>Mercy currently employs therapists in seven MercyCare clinics.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of psychiatric consults within primary care office</li> </ul>   | <p>Increased mental health access</p>   | <p>Staff</p>                      | <p>Mercy; MercyCare Clinics</p>  |
| <p>Provide Linn-Mar and Prairie students access to mental health services each fiscal year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referred students seen within 24-48 hours</li> <li>• Referred students receive up to three sessions with counselor</li> <li>• Evaluate opportunities for expansion or adapted models at additional schools at least once annually</li> </ul> | <p>Increased and timely access to mental health services</p>                      | <p>Staff; funding for program</p> | <p>Mercy; Linn-Mar School District; Prairie School District</p>  |
| <p>Offer telehealth mental health appointments to patients.</p>   | <p>Increased mental health access</p>   | <p>Staff</p>                      | <p>Mercy</p>   |
| <p>Continue participation in the steering committee of the Linn County Mental Health Access Center.</p>   | <p>Access to 24/7 high quality crises behavioral health treatment and support</p> | <p>Staff</p>                      | <p>Mercy; Abbe Center for Community Mental Health; Area Ambulance; Area Law Enforcement; Foundation 2; Linn County Community Services;</p> |

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| <p>Increase early intervention services for suicide by assessing hospital patients' risk for suicide and intervening to prevent suicide in those identified as at risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes assessment, appropriate placement, ongoing treatment/safety plan and interventions (providing education, appropriate referrals or follow-up appointments and suicide helpline resources)</li> </ul> | <p>Earlier identification of suicidal patients and creation of safety plan and interventions</p> | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Penn Center; UnityPoint Health – St. Luke's</p> <p>Mercy; National Suicide Prevention Lifeline; Foundation 2 (including Mobile Crises Outreach); Iowa Help Line; Crises Text Line</p>   |
| <p>Provide at least two behavioral health outreach offerings each fiscal year. Provide Drug Free Workplace Training internally and for the community at large.</p>  | <p>Increased knowledge of behavioral health and well-being</p>                                   | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy; community organizations</p>  |
| <p>Continue participation in community collaborations, partnerships or initiatives focused on addressing mental health and substance abuse issues.</p>  | <p>Improved mental health access through collective impact</p>                                   | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Together! Healthy Linn Mental Health group; Linn County Family Treatment Court; Linn County Suicide Coalition; LAP-AID Mental Health Response; Linn County Child and Youth Mental Health Committee; Linn County SED Wraparound Advisory Committee; Mercy representation on nonprofit boards (i.e., Four Oaks)</p> |

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| <p>Screen all patients for substance abuse and provide follow up education and referral to treatment as appropriate. The nurse or social worker completes initial screening and flags social worker if positive screening.</p>   | <p>Earlier identification of substance abuse issues and connection to resources</p> | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy</p> |
| <p>Ensure a support system is in place to ease the transition for individuals recovering from substance abuse issues following treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide discharge care planning to all patients recovering from substance abuse issues to ease transition post-treatment</li> <li>• Offer weekly aftercare support group to patients who complete treatment at Sedlacek or another facility</li> <li>• Offer weekly family program support group to encourage individuals with loved ones addicted to alcohol or other drugs</li> </ul> | <p>Improved transition from treatment to post-treatment</p>                         | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy</p> |

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: LIFESTYLE BARRIERS (ACCESS TO FOOD AND OPPORTUNITIES TO BE ACTIVE)**

| ACTIONS   | ANTICIPATED IMPACT   | RESOURCES | PARTNERS   |
|---|--|-----------|--|
| Provide nutrition education and counseling through Mercy’s Nutrition Services’ Outpatient Counseling.   | Increased knowledge of nutrition and benefits of eating a healthy diet | Staff     | Mercy  |
| <p>Provide opportunities for Mercy employees to be healthy as part of the Mercy Wellness Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer Mercy Weight-Loss Program, a 10-week program utilizing science-based strategies at least four times per fiscal year</li> <li>• Deliver the Mercy Wellness Challenge annually (includes financial wellness, weight loss/maintenance and nutrition-based programming)</li> <li>• Offer the Mercy walking club every spring through summer</li> <li>• Partner with local farmers to provide organic produce at an affordable price</li> </ul> | Decreased obesity, increased healthy habits and activity               | Staff     | Mercy  |
| Continue participation in community collaborations, partnerships or initiatives focused on addressing lifestyle behaviors.  | Decreased obesity, increased healthy habits and activity               | Staff     | Together! Healthy Linn obesity CHIP group; Linn County Food Systems Council; municipal well-being committees |



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| Continue to purchase and utilize local fresh produce for patients, visitors, and staff.   | Improved access to healthy foods  | Staff;<br>cost of food | Mercy; local farmers           |
| <p>Screen patients for food insecurity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For patients that screen positive, partner with HACAP to provide short- and long-term food supports</li> <li>• Hardwire and expand model</li> </ul> | Understand nonmedical needs of patients and community resource connection | Staff                  | Mercy; HACAP Food Reservoir    |
| Provide food resource onsite (Catherine's Cupboard) to Mercy employees and volunteers in need.  | Improved access to healthy food   | Staff; cost of food    | Mercy; HACAP Food Reservoir    |
| Provide in-kind space (food pantry) for Metro Catholic Outreach in Mercy's Sr. Mary Lawrence Community Center.  | Improved access to healthy food   | Space                  | Mercy; Metro Catholic Outreach |

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: COMMUNITY SAFETY**

| ACTIONS  | ANTICIPATED IMPACT                                  | RESOURCES                  | PARTNERS   |
|--|---|----------------------------|--|
| Enhance efforts as short-term victim advocate to identify potential human trafficking victims and connect them to community services and/or resources. | Improved access to victim services                  | Staff                      | Mercy; Chains Interrupted; Friends of the Family; Riverview Center; Waypoint   |
| Build relationships with, and make referrals to, long-term advocate agencies involved in anti-human trafficking work.                                  | Improved and coordinated access to victim services  | Staff                      | Mercy; Chains Interrupted; Friends of the Family; Riverview Center; Waypoint   |
| Continue participation in community collaborations, partnerships or initiatives focused on community safety.   | Improved community safety through collective impact | Staff                      | Mercy; Together! Healthy Linn safety CHIP group; community efforts as part of the Group Violence Intervention or Safe Equitable and Thriving Communities; Sexual Health Alliance; Sexual Assault Response Team |
| Support efforts of McKinley STEAM Academy faculty, staff and community partners to offer restorative justice programming.                              | Increased awareness and support                     | Staff; funding for program | Mercy; McKinley STEAM Academy; Kids First  |

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| Assess patients for the possibility of physical and/or sexual assault; sexual molestation; domestic abuse; adult or child abuse; and neglect. Connect patient with community organizations or Mercy's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners as appropriate. | Improved access to victim services      | Staff | Mercy; St. Luke's Child Protection Center; Waypoint |
| Ensure widespread use of the Safety Response Algorithm and Inpatient Unit Threat Response/Safety Guidelines and continue to educate Mercy team members.  | Increased awareness and improved safety | Staff | Mercy   |
| Expand implementation of Mercy's emergency communication system, to strengthen organization-wide safety response.  | Increased awareness and improved safety | Staff | Mercy   |
| Offer classes on de-escalation techniques at least once quarterly to Mercy staff or community-based providers.   | Increased awareness and improved safety | Staff | Mercy; community-based organizations                |
| Offer active threat response training at least once monthly to Mercy staff or community-based providers.   | Increased awareness and improved safety | Staff | Mercy; community-based organizations                |
| Create, refresh or update every department's active response plan and educate team members by December 31, 2022.   | Increased awareness and improved safety | Staff | Mercy   |

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|---|--|------------------------------|--|
| Continue implementation of physical environment safety improvements across Mercy campuses to ensure the security of our patients, visitors, volunteers and staff.   | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff                        | Mercy  |
| Expand proactive efforts of Mercy's security department to build rapport with patients and visitors.  | Prevent escalation or potential for violence | Staff                        | Mercy  |
| Continue the work of Mercy's Workplace Violence Prevention Committee which meets regularly to review list of workplace violence prevention best practices and consider implementing those we have not done yet. | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff                        | Mercy  |
| Continue employee, provider and volunteer education related to workplace violence prevention.   | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff; providers; volunteers | Mercy  |
| Expand annual Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training to more clinical staff members.   | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff                        | Mercy  |
| Provide annual training on anti-discrimination/harassment and workplace violence prevention.  | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff                        | Mercy  |
| Work with external partners to assess threat and determine next steps for security at a Mercy location.   | Increased awareness and improved safety      | Staff                        | Mercy; area law enforcement; community-based organizations |

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

| ACTIONS  | ANTICIPATED IMPACT   | RESOURCES    | PARTNERS   |
|--|--|--------------|--|
| <p>Participate in community collaborations, partnerships, or initiatives focused on safe and affordable housing. Explore options for Mercy to support these efforts. <i>Historically, Mercy has increased access to and provided support of affordable housing community development initiatives, including the procurement of property and/or provided financial assistance in the development of low-income housing.</i></p> | <p>Improved opportunities for safe and affordable housing</p>  | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy; Continuum of Care; Alliance for Equitable Housing; Community Shelter &amp; Wellness; Willis Dady Homeless Services</p>       |
| <p>Screen patients for housing needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For patients that screen positive, have housing limitations or a need for other living arrangements upon discharge, partner with community-based organizations to provide housing assistance</li> </ul>   | <p>Understand nonmedical needs of patients; connecting to community resources; discharged to safe home environment</p> | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy; Heritage Area Agency on Aging; Waypoint; Willis Dady Homeless Services; area assisted living and nursing home facilities</p> |
| <p>Work with OT to complete a safety assessment at home for patients as appropriate.</p>   | <p>Discharged to safe home environment</p>   | <p>Staff</p> | <p>Mercy</p>   |

## **Other Strategic Issues**

There were other strategic issues reviewed that were not identified as the top four priority areas for the CHA. The information below lists the initiatives Mercy is working on to address these other community needs.

- Access to Healthcare
  - Mercy supplies providers as in-kind support at a local free health clinic and donates in-kind lab and radiology services for the two local free health clinics.
  - Mercy provides a financial assistance program for patients who qualify.
  - Mercy offers 24/7 virtual visits through urgent care.
  - Mercy's annual *Epecially For You*® Race Against Breast Cancer raises monetary support for breast- and female-cancer services for those in need.
  - Mercy's Patient Matters program and the ED Coordinators work to assist uninsured patients get access to Medicaid.
  - To increase access to medical care in rural Iowa, MercyCare Mount Vernon, MercyCare Center Point and MercyCare Monticello offer primary care services. Cancer, heart, surgery and urology specialists also travel to clinics outside Cedar Rapids to create easier access for patients in Manchester, Vinton, Anamosa and Tama.
  - Mercy provides Epic to Metro Care Connection at school-based health centers within the Cedar Rapids Community School District.
- Chronic Disease
  - The Family Caregivers Center of Mercy is a comprehensive center for family caregivers. It provides support for family members whose loved one is living with a chronic health condition.
  - Mercy's Center for Memory Health evaluates and treats people who are exhibiting signs of dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other degenerative brain disorders. Mercy's creating an Innovation Center for Aging & Dementia, which will provide support to people living with dementia, care partners and families as well as where best practices in aging and dementia are discovered, evaluated and piloted. HallMar Village will be an advanced, medically integrated community for older adults, including those living with dementia, and provide healthy living unlike other options available today. This new senior living community will provide a full range of housing and services.
  - Mercy has services and programs dedicated to a variety of chronic diseases, including but not limited to, diabetes, cardiac disease and cancer.
- Sexual Health
  - Please refer to the Safety Implementation Strategy table for Mercy's work related to anti-human trafficking.
  - Mercy has Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners located in the Emergency Department and they participate on the Linn County Sexual Assault Response Team. Mercy supports the work of Linn County Public Health (LCPH). LCPH offers services related to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Services provided at LCPH include offering HIV tests and free STD examinations and treatment; conducting

STD partner tracking follow-up services; providing offsite STD/HIV testing to high-risk community agencies and events with high-risk populations; and monitoring population health changes through public health surveillance.

- Substance Use
  - Please refer to the Mental Health Implementation Strategy table.
  - Mercy's Sedlacek Treatment Center offers the highest level of comprehensive, outpatient treatment for those with substance use disorders in the community.
  - Mercy implemented an early-recovery-after-surgery program to decrease the use of prescription opioids linked to longer hospital recovery times. Mercy collaborates with a community task force to help address the opioid concerns locally.

***This implementation strategy was reviewed and adopted by the MercyCare Service Corporation Board of Trustees Healthcare Equity Study Group on September 12, 2022. It was adopted by MercyCare Service Corporation's Board of Trustees on September 22, 2022. The implementation strategy was posted to Mercy's website on October 12, 2022.***