

Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Strategy for Lindsborg Community Hospital

2022

Background and Process

In 2022, the leadership of McPherson Hospital in McPherson, Lindsborg Community Hospital in Lindsborg, Mercy Hospital in Moundridge, and the McPherson County Health Department chose to collaborate in creating a community health needs assessment (CHNA). Provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) require charitable hospitals to conduct community health needs assessments every three years, and adopt implementation strategies to meet identified needs.

Further, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) defines public health accreditation as the development of a set of standards, a process to measure health department performance against those standards, and reward or recognition for those health departments who meet the standards. This accreditation process also requires a periodic community health assessment.

The service area assessed was McPherson County, Kansas. The assessment combines existing secondary data with information gleaned from a survey made available to county residents and workgroup feedback representing a broad cross section of organizations from throughout the target area. After reviewing this data and compiling and reviewing existing resources, a list of prioritized needs has been developed. Furthermore, the data was also broken down by zip code. Thus the responses from the Lindsborg Community Hospital primary service area of the 67456 and 67464 zip codes were also analyzed.

Needs Identified and Prioritized

Results of the survey indicated perceived health issues in the county. The identified needs were reviewed and supported by a focus group comprised of a cross section of stakeholders from throughout the county. This group met to discuss survey results and explore relevant county secondary data from various sources indicated in this report. The workgroup examined the top health issues gleaned from the survey to arrive at a prioritized list.

The prior survey and prioritization processes, we looked at three main areas: 1) Barriers to Access 2) Risky Behaviors and 3) Health Problems. A change in this year's survey included dividing the question related to the most significant health issues in the county into two separate questions. The first asked what the three most important health issues in the county are from a provided list while omitting the previous years' identified needs, and offering an "other" option for them to write in anything not included in the provided list. Interestingly, those writing in responses in the "other" field overwhelmingly wrote that drug use, mental health issues and obesity were significant issues, in that order; the same issues that had been identified in the prior assessment. The next question then asked which needs from the prior years were still significant. Those responses indicated that mental health, obesity and cancers were the top three, with drug abuse following.

In reviewing the data from the zip codes most encompassing the LCH service area (123 responses), the opinions typically mirrored the county-wide data. The top three most important health issues were Aging Problems (hearing/vision loss, falls, etc) for 86/123 (70%) of respondents, high blood pressure for 50/123 (41%) of respondents and Other for 40/123 (33%) of respondents. Included in Other were nine (9) responses for weight loss/obesity, seven (7) for mental health and four (4) for substance abuse.

For the question about prior health issues and what issues the respondent still feels are important, the LCH area responses also mirror the county-wide data. Obesity had the most responses as 98/123 (80%) of respondents listed it. Cancers were next in responses with 90/123 (73%) of respondents listing it and 87/123 (71%) responses listed Mental Health Problems. At the county level, Drug Abuse was a close fourth place but it didn't rate as high for the LCH service area for this question.

However, in the final question of “What worries you when you think about health in our community,” Drug Abuse is a close 3rd for overall responses as 64/123 (52%) of respondents listed it while Poor Eating Habits is 2nd for responses at 65/123 (53%) of respondents listing it. Texting/Cell Phone While Driving was 1st in responses as 69/123 (56%) of respondents listed it as what worries them.

The Community Health Needs Assessment was approved in the summer of 2022 by the Board of Trustees of each of the three hospitals mentioned above. On March 12, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the SARS COV-2 virus (COVID-19) a global pandemic and the United States and the state of Kansas followed. Since that time, most of all resources have been focused on preventing, diagnosing, treating and vaccinating for COVID-19. This has dominated what our community “needs” in 2020, throughout 2021 and early into 2022 With increased immunity from vaccination and previous COVID-19 illness, the numbers of cases and spread of the disease has decreased. We hope to be able to return our focus to these other needs.

Action Plan for Health Issues

The health issues listed from two of the questions in the survey process include Aging Problems, High Blood Pressure, Obesity, Cancers and Mental Health Issues. Each will be further discussed below.

Aging problems can be difficult to address, as many of the challenges are often thought to be a “normal” process of aging. Two issues of aging that LCH will try to address is falls and dementia. To reduce the chance of falls, LCH will be offering Stepping On classes at regular intervals over the next year. These classes have been on hold during the height of the pandemic but will now resume. Stepping On provides education in fall prevention strategies and teaches exercises with provided weights to those willing to participate in the free class.

Dementia is a condition that is affecting an increasing number of Americans, especially as life expectancy has increased. LCH, and specifically the Family Health Care Clinic, is participating in the Cognitive Care Network with the University of Kansas Health System. The Network will provide education to LCH providers and staff on the diagnosis and management of dementia. It will also provide resources, including social services to affected patients and families. These are resources not previously provided to area residents experiencing this condition.

High blood pressure can be a precursor to more serious related cardiovascular issues, including heart attacks and strokes. Through the electronic medical record, the family medicine providers and staff in the Family Health Care Clinic will receive lists of their patients with blood pressure measurements outside of acceptable limits. Medication management and other interventions will be attempted to reduce the number of patients with high blood pressure. The Chronic Care Management program in the FHCC is also providing home blood pressure monitoring devices, in an attempt to improve management of this condition. It assumes better home monitoring will aide provider management and general reduction in the rate of high blood pressure.

Obesity is a top issue based on survey responses and also based on overall state health rankings. It often is a by-product of two other issues that are seen as concerns – Poor Eating Habits and lack of Exercise Options. As stated above, Poor Eating Habits ranked in the top three of what worries respondents when thinking about the health of their communities. When asked if the community has enough resources to meet wellness needs, 47/123 (38%) disagreed. Another question asked if the community has enough places where a person can exercise and 49/123 (40%) said no. A final question on exercise asked about affordability and 28/123 (23%) said they were not able to easily afford to exercise.

Poor eating habits can often occur from a basic lack of knowledge of what foods and food preparation techniques are better than others. The Dietician and Food Service Manager are going to begin providing education to LCH employees on better food choices and preparation. These education opportunities will be filmed and placed on the website for the general population. Planning will also begin to see if classes can be provided directly to the community, in person, via social media or a technology platform.

To add to the exercise and wellness opportunities, LCH has recently opened their Wellness Center back up to full hours (6a-10p Mon.-Fri. and 8a-10p Sat.-Sun.). The hours had been reduced for safety concerns during the pandemic. The Wellness Center is available to the public at no cost to patrons. It appears many in our survey are unaware of that so increased publication will be attempted. LCH will also make a sizeable donation to the Lindsborg Community Health Care Foundation to assist in the construction of the Fredrickson Family Fitness Park. In partnership with the City of Lindsborg, this outdoor fitness park will be available 24/7/365 and at no cost for use. The park will be completed in the fall of 2022. Another sizeable donation from LCH went to the Lindsborg Child Development Center to assist with completion of the outdoor playground area and equipment. This gift will assist with the health and wellness of children in our community, in hopes of preventing obesity at a young age.

Cancer continues to affect people throughout our society, either as a patient, family member or friend. Prevention and treatment can be challenging to say the least, depending on the type of cancer. LCH aids in the attempts at early diagnosis or even prevention through the mammography and colonoscopy services provided, along with other diagnostic testing services. The providers and staff in the Family Health Care Clinic receive and monitor lists of their patients in need of cancer screening services as recommended by the appropriate agencies. They work with the patients to refer to the appropriate screening services. When asked if they have a primary care provider, 114/123 (93%) survey respondents said yes. Regardless of where they receive services, having a primary care provider to encourage and refer to cancer screening services should aid in at least early diagnosis, which often can assist treatment.

LCH also offers financial assistance to LCH patrons through the Smoky Valley Cares Fund. The fund has established criteria to provide grant assistance to those in need of cancer screening. The fund also has grant assistance for those with a cancer diagnosis, to aid in covering medical or other expenses.

Mental health issues, often intertwined with substance abuse issues, continue to rise to the top of community health issues. LCH works with Prairie View mental health services to screen and assist in appropriate placement or follow-up in emergent cases. Referrals are also made to Veridian, CKF Addiction Treatment and other mental health and/or substance abuse treatment centers as needed, at any access point at LCH. The reality is that it is not enough, here or anywhere. A further action plan in this area is not developed at this time as resources are limited across the healthcare spectrum, even with the known need.

In Closing

The past two and a half years have been times of trying to make whatever adjustments were necessary to prevent, diagnose, treat and vaccinate for COVID-19. We hope that we will continue to see COVID-19 becoming more endemic and services returning to a more normal feel. This enables us to better focus on the other needs of the communities and people we serve. This includes the needs identified with the Community Health Needs Assessment along with those that pop up in the every-day provision of health care.

The next Community Health Needs Assessment will be performed in 2025. Between now and then, we will work to develop and complete action plans such as this. Hopefully measurable progress will be made. With the assistance of groups listed in this action plan along with those unnamed and the patients themselves, we will continue to work towards completing our Mission of *Partners, Caring for the Health of the Smoky Valley Communities*.