



## Overview

A Community Health Needs Assessment offers a snapshot of health and well-being in a locale, region, state, or other geography. In the following chapters, you will read about the current state of health in the community served by UNC Health Caldwell. The 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) includes data, statistics, and community voice.

This year, UNC Health Caldwell collected primary data via community surveys and individual community interviews. For the survey, UNC Health Caldwell dispersed and collected survey questions from community members that were admitted to the hospital or passed through our facility via outpatient or emergency services. The questions were developed by the CHNA Committee and were different from prior years.

The survey revealed that the community feels strongly about three primary factors that impact people's ability to manage their health and well-being. These issues identified were Substance Abuse/Misuse, Mental health Services, and Transportation Services. The challenge then becomes interpreting what it all means and how we work together with the community to address identified needs through a health equity lens.

Health inequities occur when people cannot achieve optimal health because of unjust and avoidable conditions, such as barriers to food, transportation, housing, and health care. Achieving health equity requires recognizing and addressing a confluence of factors that are complex to untangle. While the relationship between health disparities and historical barriers in education, employment, wealth, and housing can be difficult to unravel, they are also readily identifiable in the lived experiences of our patients and community members.

In this assessment, we took a close look at some of the most significant and important disparities identified by our community. They are significant because the data shows material differences in rates of disease, income, access to needed services and more. They are important because these disparities influence and impact both the quality and length of life. There is no health-related issue more urgent than rectifying the current situation, where social factors are so influential that they determine the health and life expectancy of our friends, families, and neighbors. The following implementation plan seeks to address the amalgam of responses and how our organization can work towards better community health.

The Implementation Plan for 2023 – 2025 is a bold step toward offering a combination of immediate remedies and future goals. Ideally, approaching our community's needs from every angle will be what changes the landscape of health for people in a big way.

## **Priority Determination**

On November 1st, 2022, the Community Health Assessment Advisory Committee reviewed all data collected from numerous outside sources and the community health assessment opinion survey to determine Caldwell County's top three health priorities for the next three years. Each member ranked the priorities from 1 to 5 based on the magnitude, seriousness of consequences, and overall feasibility (5 being the priority with the highest magnitude, seriousness, and overall feasibility). There was an open discussion following the rankings. The top three priorities chosen for the 2022 Caldwell County Community Health Assessment are:

1. **Substance Abuse/Use:** The World Health Organization refers to substance misuse as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Substance abuse or substance misuse is concerning in Caldwell County. Substances can be classified as Opiates, including heroin, morphine, and opium; Amphetamines including methamphetamine; barbiturates, marijuana, and cocaine, prescription drugs, narcotics, alcohol, and tobacco.
2. **Mental Health:** Mental Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can contribute to her or his community. Mental Health can be recognized as anxiety, stress, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism, Bipolar Disorder, depression, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, etc. (from NAMI). Mental health is also correlated with suicide. Caldwell County will also focus on decreasing suicide rates as part of the mental health priority.
3. **Transportation:** Transportation choices we make play an important role in building and maintaining healthy communities. For example, safer roadways and traffic patterns reduce crashes. Streets, where walkers and bikers are protected from motor vehicles, encourage people to get more exercise as part of their daily routines. Increasing the transportation options available in a community helps reduce congestion and air pollution. Transportation services are also necessary to transport patients to and from doctor's appointments and the hospital. We utilize transport services upon discharge and upon transfer to another facility.

## **Approach to Improve Care related to Substance Abuse/Misuse**

While UNC Health Caldwell does not have resources currently to provide direct care for those needing detox or rehab for substance abuse, we maintain relationships with the following organizations in our service area:

- Caldwell County R.E.S.T.A.R.T
  - Resources, application, and transportation assistance for detoxification, rehabilitation, in-patient treatment facilities
  - Medication Assistance Treatment options (suboxone, etc.)
  - Recovery housing
  - Help with Medicaid/Food Nutrition Benefits applications.
  - Free medical testing for HIV, Hepatitis C, and pregnancy
  - Access to our Peer Support Specialists to walk hand in hand with you on your own personal recovery journey.
- RHA Behavioral Health Services
  - Substance Abuse Treatment for Medicaid/Medicare/uninsured
  - Inpatient Detox Services
  - Medication Assisted Therapy (suboxone, etc.)
  - Mobile Crisis Services
  - Peer Support Services (comparable to a “Sponsor” for Alcoholic Anonymous)
    - Motivational support for those thinking about misusing drugs.
- Synergy Recovery in Wilkes
  - While not in Caldwell County, we do refer some patients to Synergy Recovery in Wilkes County
- Bethel Colony of Mercy
  - Faith Based Recovery services. Participants do reside here when going through the program.
- McLeod Center
  - Medication Assisted Therapy (suboxone, etc.)

Any patient needing or showing interest in these services will be provided information on these organizations and how to get started. Our in-hospital case management team has access to these resources and information to provide to patients that may need them. They work closely with patients and families to ensure the best possible treatment options for the situation. UNC Health Caldwell also collaborates with “Hope for Caldwell”, a collaborative group consisting of other organizations including Caldwell County Schools, church communities, law enforcement, and more. This group meets monthly and discusses issues surround substance abuse/misuse. It

is also important to note that through the Behavioral Health Service Line, Jonas Hill Hospital and Clinic plans to explore the possibility of training providers for Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT). This would allow providers to treat more comprehensively those suffering with substance abuse/misuse.

## **Approach to Improve Mental Health Services**

UNC Health Caldwell currently offers inpatient behavioral health services at our Jonas Hill Hospital and Clinic. JHH (Jonas Hill Hospital) also offers outpatient behavioral health treatment for those who seek it. JHH outpatient services can see up to 10 patients at one time, one of the highest if not the highest number in the region. There are many initiatives set for the growth and expansion of UNC Health Caldwell and JHH Behavioral Health Services. These initiatives and goals will be outlined in the following:

- JHH recently partnered with UNC School of Medicine (UNC SOM) Psychiatry services to increase our ability to serve the community. A new Medical Director for Jonas Hill Inpatient (JHIP), a new full-time in-person Psychiatrist, and multiple virtual Psychiatrists for part time work are being onboarded and oriented to provide mental health services to our community.
- These additions to the team increase the ability for JHH to see more patients, both inpatient and outpatient. They started with 1 provider and have increased that number to 3 MDs and 2 Advanced Practice Providers (APPs). Another APP is being sought. This effectively increases both virtual and in-person access to these services.
- Jonas Hill offers the ONLY Psychiatry Residency, partnered through UNC SOM Psych, in a rural area such as Caldwell County. This is a partnership that hopefully continues in the years to come with the hope to grow the residency program.
- JHH has increased the number of therapists working. The hospital started with only 1 therapist and has now expanded to 5 therapists with plans to add an additional to total 6. This increase in therapists is in efforts to explore expansion of therapy services into CPN Clinics (primary care). This expansion targets some of our primary care offices, including pediatric offices.
- There are plans to explore space expansion based on the new providers JHH is adding. Inpatient services have increased from an average daily census of 20 to averaging 26 for the month of August (2023). JHH has an inpatient capacity of 27 patients.
- The Behavioral Health Service Line is also exploring services growth through Medication Assisted Therapy (MAT). An initiative that would see providers trained in MAT services to provide to individuals struggling with substance abuse/misuse. This goal is currently slated for FY25.
- Continue collaboration with Caldwell County Restart, RHA, and Caldwell Crisis Response Team.
- UNC Health Caldwell has also been in collaborative sessions with Caldwell County Schools to ensure any school-age adolescents that are receiving extended behavioral health treatment in our facility receive the educational resources and curriculum they need to keep up with their education.

## **Approach to Improve Transportation Services/Resources**

UNC Health Caldwell currently utilizes several different transportation services to help our patients upon their discharge home or transfer to another facility. The relationships with these organizations are crucial to ensuring appropriate care following discharge or transfer. Services provided range all the way from cab services for the more mobile, independent patients, to Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) transports. We collaborate with the following transportation services:

- **ACLS/BLS Services:**
  - Caldwell County EMS
    - Serves the community and assists the hospital in transfer of critical patients.
  - WFBH Air Care
    - Critical Air and Ground Transports
  - MED Center Air (Atrium Health)
    - Critical Air and Ground Transfers
  - Catawba NICU Transport
    - For the transport of babies that are delivered within our ER
  
- **Non ACLS/BLS Services:**
  - Miller's Ambulance Service
    - Will take patients requiring minimal intervention.
  - Abby Cab
    - For those patients able to ambulate
  - Foothills Medical Transport
    - Usually used to transport patient back to skilled nursing facilities or home. They manage minimal medical devices such as oxygen tanks.

UNC Health Caldwell is exploring other transportation options to provide to patients needing transport from our hospital to other facilities or home. As a method of continuous improvement, we are always assessing for the most efficient, safe, and reliable ancillary services to provide to our patients and community.

## **Summary**

UNC Health Caldwell is dedicated to providing the best care to our community as possible. We appreciate the collaboration with Caldwell County Health Department and all other entities that assisted in the Community Health Assessment. Through the Community Health Assessment, the three primary areas of concern in the eyes of the community were selected. This document provides insight as to how UNC Health Caldwell plans to address these issues through our own services and collaboration with multiple organizations. This implementation plan also provides the community a look into the future of the services we hope to provide. Through growth of our mental health service line, plans to explore medication assisted therapy, and through continuous collaboration with medical transportation services, we strive to serve our community in the best possible way. Healthcare is an ever-changing industry; however, it is the medical community's obligation to provide continuous assessment of the needs of a community, and methods to address those needs. We hope that our Community Health Implementation Plan provides clarity to the individuals residing in, working in, and visiting our amazing county. It is our goal to continue improving the services we provide, the resources we have available, and our effort in collaborative work.