

Southwestern Vermont Health Care Community Health Needs Assessment Annual Implementation Report Update 2022

Southwestern Vermont Health Care

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Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	3
Priority Health Needs	4
Implementation Plan	5
Implementation Focus for 2020	8
Report Dissemination	9

Executive Summary

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process identified the priority health needs for the 75,000 individuals living with Southwestern Vermont Medical Center's (SVMC) service area. Through five community forums, a digital survey, insight from subject matter experts, and secondary data, a variety of health needs were identified and researched. These needs were scored and prioritized using a framework that considered the scope and severity of the need, SVMC's ability to impact the need, and the existence of evidence-based interventions that can affect change to meet the need. This scoring resulted in the priority health needs listed and detailed below. The need across all four priorities is greatest within youth and young adults (ages 13 to 34) who, across all data sources, indicated challenges with meeting basic needs, a high rate of psychological distress, struggles with substance use, barriers to healthy behaviors, and difficulties accessing health care.



The priority health needs are underscored by multiple complex challenges facing SVMC's service area. The strategies in SVMC's implementation plan will impact multiple priorities simultaneously and have been organized around a framework for advance community efforts. While this plan is a general guide for impacting the priority health needs identified, it is a living document. Changes to the specific activities will be made based upon effectiveness of the effort, budgetary constraints, and evolving community partnerships.

Priority Health Needs

The Community Health Needs Assessment of SVMC's service area identified 4 priority health needs.



1. Mental Health Supports

Mental health conditions were consistently identified as an area of top concern in all methods used to gather community insight and data. Depression and anxiety impact large portions of the population SVMC serves, particularly youth and young adults; more than 80% of individuals aged 13-34 experienced some level of challenge with depression or anxiety. Challenges with mental health can critically affect an individual's ability to make healthy behavior choices, to financially support oneself, and to enjoy life.

2. Promotion of Healthy Behaviors and Primary Prevention Activities

Much of an individual's health is determined by their behaviors, habits, and choices. Over time, behaviors such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, and poor diet can negatively affect one's wellbeing, resulting in chronic conditions and early mortality. Individuals within SVMC's service area face significant challenges consistently performing healthy behaviors and developing healthy habits, in particular maintaining physical activity. SVMC understands that making healthy behavior choices is not always easy or even possible, given environmental, financial, and other constraints. Influencing behavior cannot simply be accomplished through education and didactic lecturing from subject matter experts. Instead, change at the individual level can be seen after removing community-level barriers to good health, particularly when paired with tailored support.

3. Accessibility of High-Quality, Convenient, and Affordable Care

Provision of exceptional care and comfort is intrinsic to SVMC's commitment and service to the community. Ensuring access to quality care for all people is at the heart of the hospital's mission, strategic plan, and population health efforts. Though much of an individual's health outcomes are determined outside of the clinical setting, connection to the health system is paramount to maintaining good health, detecting early signs of illness, and connecting individuals to appropriate resources and supports. A number of barriers to care were identified including challenges securing fast and convenient appointments, particularly for primary care, and the high cost of health care.

4. Substance Use Prevention, Harm Reduction, Treatment, and Recovery Resources

Substance use has had a wide-ranging impact on the health of SVMC's service area and many individuals aged 13 to 24 years old indicated a personal struggle with substance use disorder. Use of tobacco, particularly electronic vaping among youth, is alarmingly prevalent, as is binge drinking. Opioid use is resulting in an increasing number of fatal and non-fatal overdoses. No single intervention can alleviate the suffering and mortality caused by substance use. Harm reduction programming and support is essential for individuals currently struggling with substance use disorder who are not yet able to take steps towards treatment and recovery. Availability of treatment resources, whether through medication, counseling, or other means, is critical for encouraging and supporting individuals in recovery. Finally, long-term resources are crucial for sustained recovery, including housing, support groups, and employment.

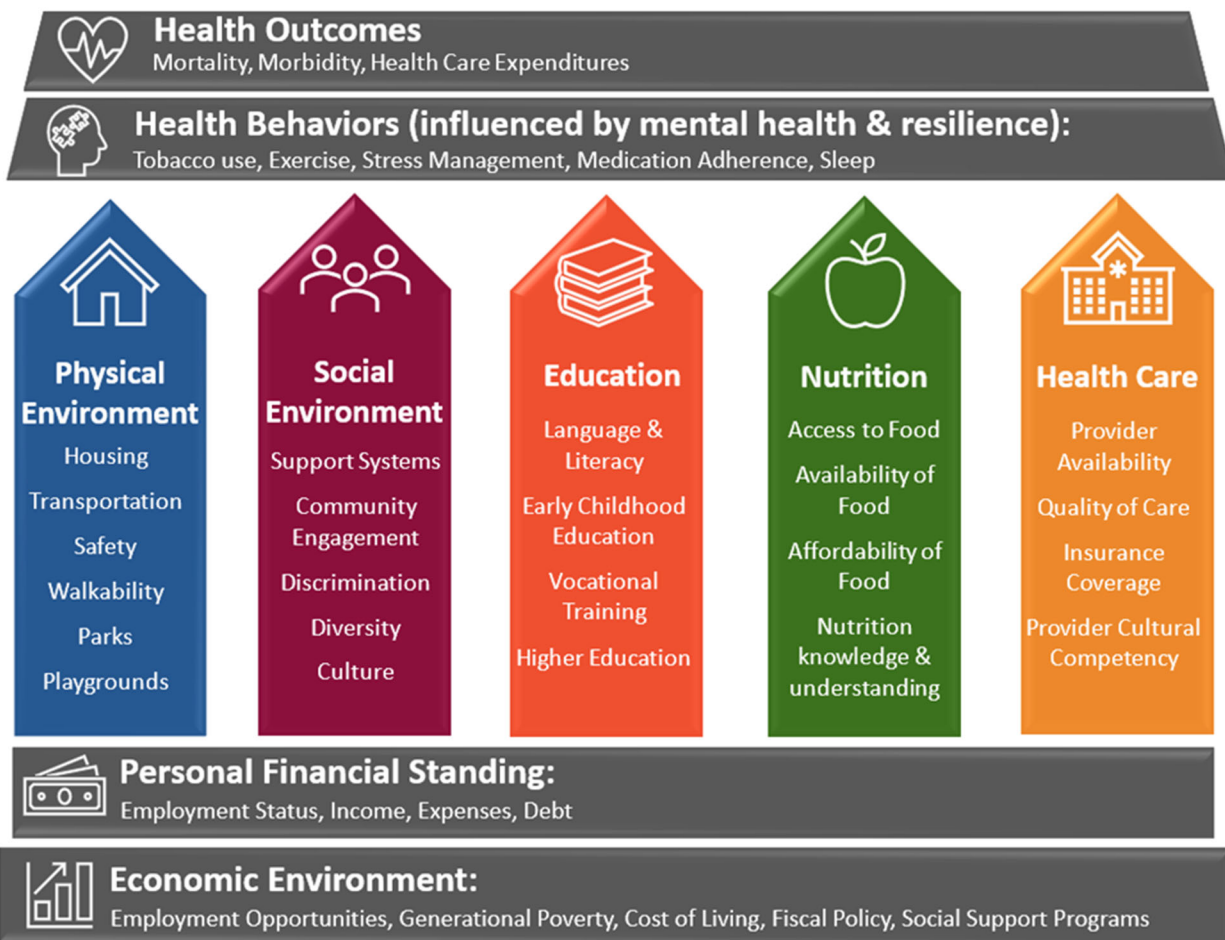
Implementation Plan and Community Health Initiatives Framework

The identified priority health needs are underscored by multiple complex challenges facing SVMC's service area and each warrants careful use of dedicated resources to affect positive change. SVMC's Implementation Plan considers programming and initiatives that will serve to meet the health needs prioritized by the CHNA process. Nearly all of the strategies listed will impact multiple priorities. For instance, youth resiliency programming can serve to prevent substance use, while also promoting healthy behaviors such as physical activity, thereby affecting three priorities (1, 2, and 4). While this plan is a general guide for impacting the priority health needs identified, it is a living document. Changes to the specific activities will be made based upon effectiveness of the effort, budgetary constraints, and evolving community partnerships.

Fiscal Year 2022 CHNA Implementation Plan

Program or initiative	Priority Health Need			
	1. Mental Health Supports	2. Healthy Behaviors / Primary Prevention	3. High-quality Care	4. Substance Use Prevention and Treatment
Clinical-Realted Efforts				
Universal screening for mental health concerns	✓		✓	✓
Intensive outpatient program for children and adolescents plan	✓		✓	✓
Adolescent inpatient psychiatric unit plan	✓		✓	✓
Community screenings for chronic disease and cancer		✓	✓	
Chronic disease self-management content		✓	✓	
COVID-19 Testing, vaccination, and community education		✓	✓	
Supported Bennington Free Clinic		✓	✓	
Free and subsidized care			✓	
Substance use treatment hub launch assistance	✓		✓	✓
Rapid access to medication assisted treatment			✓	✓
Speak Sooner, aiding community on difficult medical conversations			✓	
Donations to regional rescue squads/ambulance services	✓		✓	✓
Community Initiatives				
Woebot- AI driven mental wellness app for adolscents	✓	✓		✓
Youth resiliency programming	✓	✓		✓
<i>Healthy+</i> , SVMC's quarterly health tips magazine	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medical Matters Weekly- SVMC's weekly podcast	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fresh Markets- local produce in neighborhood stores		✓		
Population Health Internship Program		✓		
Messages for Me- texting platform for folks in recovery	✓	✓		✓
Putnam Downtown Redevelopment project investment				
Elementary school backpack drive with thank you cards	✓	✓		
Americorp VISTA Fellows support	✓	✓		✓
SVMC walking trail maintenance and upgrades		✓		
Scholarships and Community Event Giveaways		✓		
Downtown murals creation	✓	✓		
Full STEAM Ahead- science and art kits		✓		
Art Backpacks for underprivileged elementary students		✓		
STEM/Tennis Bubble initiative	✓	✓		
Berkshire Family YMCA	✓	✓		✓
Donations to regional soup kitchens targeting food insecurity	✓	✓		
Support for Bennington Food Hub		✓		

The implementation plan has been built upon SVMC’s framework for organizing community health initiatives, shown below. This framework has health outcomes, including mortality and disease burden at the top. The overarching drivers of health outcomes are influential health behaviors tempered by mental health. These behaviors are supported by 5 pillars that influence one’s ability to conduct and sustain healthy behaviors. The pillars sit upon a foundation of personal finances in recognition that income, expenses, and debt set pace for realizing opportunities. Grounding the whole framework is the region’s economic status in appreciation of the large body of literature that demonstrates that place (ex. zip code) is a strong and consistent driver one’s health outcomes.



SVMC’s efforts to address the priority health needs identified by the CHNA are broad and multifaceted. A comprehensive description of each initiative is beyond the scope of this report. Rather this report attempts to show how SVMC’ diverse initiatives are organized into a coordinated plan using the framework above. Many initiatives are cross-functional, affecting multiple drivers of health outcomes.

Fiscal Year 2022 CHNA Implementation Plan

Program or initiative	Community Health Initiatives Framework								
	Healthy Behaviors	Physical Environment	Social Environment	Education	Nutrition	Health Care	Personal Finances	Regional Economics	
Clinical-Related Efforts									
Universal screening for mental health concerns			✓			✓			
Intensive outpatient program for children and adolescents plan		✓				✓		✓	
Adolescent inpatient psychiatric unit plan		✓				✓		✓	
Community screenings for chronic disease and cancer	✓			✓	✓	✓			
Chronic disease self-management content	✓			✓	✓	✓			
COVID-19 Testing, vaccination, and community education		✓				✓			
Supported Bennington Free Clinic						✓			
Free and subsidized care		✓				✓	✓	✓	
Substance use treatment hub launch assistance		✓				✓		✓	
Rapid access to medication assisted treatment						✓			
Speak Sooner, aiding community on difficult medical conversations				✓		✓			
Donations to regional rescue squads/ambulance services						✓		✓	
Community Initiatives									
Woebot- AI driven mental wellness app for adolescents	✓		✓	✓					
Youth resiliency programming	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Healthy+, SVMC's quarterly health tips magazine	✓		✓	✓		✓			
Medical Matters Weekly- SVMC's weekly podcast	✓		✓	✓		✓			
Fresh Markets- local produce in neighborhood stores	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Population Health Internship Program	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Messages for Me- texting platform for folks in recovery	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
Putnam Downtown Redevelopment project investment		✓						✓	
Elementary school backpack drive with thank you cards	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Americorp VISTA Fellows support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
SVMC walking trail maintenance and upgrades	✓	✓						✓	
Scholarships and Community Event Giveaways	✓		✓	✓	✓				
Downtown murals creation	✓	✓	✓					✓	
Full STEAM Ahead- science and art kits	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
Art Backpacks for underprivileged elementary students	✓		✓	✓			✓		
STEM/Tennis Bubble initiative	✓		✓	✓			✓		
Berkshire Family YMCA	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Donations to regional soup kitchens targeting food insecurity	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Support for Bennington Food Hub	✓	✓			✓			✓	

Alignment of SVMC CHNA initiatives with the framework for organizing community efforts shows strong impact across the drives or health outcomes. Changes to the specific activities will be made based upon effectiveness of the effort, budgetary constraints, and evolving community partnerships.

Report Dissemination

The report will be made available to the public as a PDF file from the institutional web page (<http://svhealthcare.org>, as 2022 implementation report update). Members of the public can also request a print copy of this report by contacting James Trimarchi via e-mail (james.trimarchi@svhealthcare.org) or phone (802.440.4051).