

## **Executive Summary**

This is the 2022 CHNA for Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital (PHRMH), conducted in collaboration with other health organizations in the Columbia Gorge region.

- The assessment identified the following significant health needs in the community:

1. Homelessness and housing instability
2. Access to health care services
3. Economic insecurity
4. Chronic health conditions
5. Access to behavioral health services
6. Food insecurity
7. Access to dental care
8. Affordable childcare and preschools

- PHRMH prioritized the following needs to address:

1. Mental health and substance use disorders
2. Health-related social needs (housing, food insecurity, transportation, etc.)
3. Economic security
4. Access to care and services

- Key findings from community input:

- Strong community partnerships are a major strength
- Housing affordability and availability is a critical issue
- 69% of survey respondents reported feeling socially isolated/lonely at times
- Youth mental health and suicide risk are significant concerns

- The hospital will use this CHNA to develop a 3-year Community Health Improvement Plan to address the prioritized needs.

- The assessment used both quantitative data and qualitative input from community stakeholders and residents to identify and prioritize community health needs.

## **Biggest Gaps in Service**

1. Mental health and substance use disorder services: The report identifies this as a high-priority need, with long wait times for care and slow crisis response times. There's a particular need for more services for people without insurance or with low incomes.

2. Culturally responsive care: There's an ongoing need for more bilingual and bicultural providers, particularly to serve the Spanish-speaking community.

3. Access to care in rural areas: Transportation is a significant barrier to accessing care, especially for people living in rural areas.

4. Primary care and specialty services: There's a need for more primary care providers to meet local needs, as well as increased care coordination services. The report also mentions long wait times for appointments and few specialists in the region.

5. Care for specific populations:

- Youth: There's a need for more school nurses and pediatric mental health services.
- Older adults: There may be barriers to accessing needed care for stress, anxiety, and depression.

6. Dental care: 38% of survey respondents were not able to afford or were worried about affording needed dental care.

7. Behavioral health workforce: There are challenges in filling open behavioral health positions, leading to long wait times and slow crisis response.

8. Routine and preventive care: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people delayed routine care and elective procedures, leading to a backlog of needed care.

These gaps suggest that while PHRMH provides a wide range of services, there are still significant unmet needs in the community, particularly in mental health, substance abuse treatment, and accessible care for rural and marginalized populations.

### **Greatest Barriers to Care**

1. Cost of care: The high cost of care is a significant barrier, particularly for those without insurance. 34% of survey respondents who needed medical care were not able to afford it or worried they would not be able to afford it.

2. Transportation: This is repeatedly mentioned as a major barrier, especially for people living in rural areas. Lack of transportation makes it difficult to access care, particularly specialty services.

3. Lack of insurance: About 12% of survey respondents reported not having health insurance. The primary reason given for lack of insurance was cost.

4. Language and cultural barriers: There's an ongoing need for more bilingual and bicultural providers, particularly to serve the Spanish-speaking community.

5. Long wait times: The report mentions long wait times for appointments, especially for behavioral health services.

6. Workforce shortages: There are challenges in recruiting and retaining healthcare providers, particularly in behavioral health, which leads to reduced access to care.

7. Limited availability of specialists: The report notes there are few specialists in the region, making it difficult for patients to access specialized care.

8. Technology barriers: For some patients, especially older adults, telehealth visits have created technology-related barriers to care.

9. Lack of awareness or understanding: Some people don't know where to go for care or how to navigate the healthcare system.

10. Economic insecurity: This affects people's ability to afford care, transportation to appointments, and other health-related needs.

11. Housing instability: The lack of affordable housing in the area indirectly impacts healthcare access by making it difficult to recruit and retain healthcare workers.

### **The Unique Needs of the Community**

1. Affordable housing: There's a desperate need for affordable housing as the cost of housing continues to increase without a corresponding increase in average household income.

2. Mental health and substance use services: There's a growing crisis related to behavioral health, with increased needs and staffing challenges making it difficult to meet those needs.

3. Culturally responsive care: There's a need for more bilingual and bicultural providers, particularly to serve the Spanish-speaking community.

4. Economic security: Many families are struggling to meet basic needs due to the high cost of living and lack of living wage jobs.

5. Youth mental health support: The report notes alarmingly high rates of depression and suicidal ideation among youth in the area, higher than state averages.

6. Services for rural populations: Many residents face challenges accessing care due to living in rural areas with transportation barriers.

7. Food security: The region has higher rates of food insecurity than state averages, with a need for a more resilient local food system.

8. Chronic disease management: There's a need to support people in developing healthy lifestyles and managing chronic conditions.

9. Workforce development: The community needs better-paying jobs and educational opportunities, particularly for the Spanish-speaking community.

10. Community connection: There's a need for more community-building events and activities to combat social isolation, which 69% of survey respondents reported experiencing.

11. Climate change preparedness: The community needs support in dealing with the health impacts of climate change, such as wildfire smoke affecting those with respiratory conditions.

12. Affordable childcare: 36% of respondents who needed childcare were not able to afford it or worried about affording it.

### **What the Hospital or CCO is Doing Well**

1. Community partnerships: The hospital has strong partnerships with agencies and organizations in the community, participating in coalitions like the Coast to the Cascades Community Wellness Network.

2. Addressing previous priorities: PHRMH has taken actions to address needs identified in previous assessments, including offering health fairs, workshops, and classes on issues like child abuse, homelessness, oral health, substance abuse, and mental health.

3. Improving access to care: The hospital has worked to improve access by providing transportation, interpretive services, increasing medical office hours, expanding urgent care site hours, adding SamCare Express sites, and offering screenings and exams in schools, Boys & Girls Clubs, and senior centers.

4. Community support: PHRMH provided more than \$2 million to non-profit organizations through direct financial support or in-kind contributions.

5. Equity focus: The hospital's parent organization, Providence, has prioritized equity and inclusion as one of its focus areas, adopting an equity and inclusion statement and examining internal data to improve care for diverse populations.

6. Collaborative approach: The report highlights a long history of collaboration and partnership among various organizations and agencies to improve and promote health in the region.

7. Prevention programs: The county has strong tobacco ordinances and other population-based prevention care programs that reduce the onset and incidence of many illnesses.

8. Diverse care options: The area offers excellent choices in medical care, dental care, vision care, elder care, medical clinics, and alternative medicine.

9. Social support: The county provides specialized support for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and addictions, as well as for at-risk school children and teens.

10. COVID-19 response: The hospital and its partners have adapted to meet community needs during the pandemic, including providing safe places for people experiencing homelessness to isolate and quarantine.

These points suggest that while there are still significant health needs in the community, PHRMH and the broader health care system are actively working to address these needs and provide comprehensive, accessible care to the community.

### **Strengths of the Community**

1. Strong community partnerships: There's a culture of collaboration among non-profit service providers, health care organizations, schools, and other community groups.

2. Community engagement: The community is described as very caring, with people wanting to help one another and be involved. There are strong relationships in the small communities within the Gorge.

3. Diversity and inclusion: The diversity of residents is seen as a strength, with many resilient communities and efforts to support inclusivity.

4. Latino/a community: This community is identified as having strong cultural connections, relationships, and effective support structures.
5. Strong social networks: Many people have lived in the area for years and have strong networks of family and friends.
6. Community health workers: These workers leverage strong community relationships to help address health barriers.
7. School staff: Local school staff are described as very knowledgeable about families in the schools and committed to ensuring the best for local children.
8. Natural environment: The beautiful outdoor spaces are seen as an asset for recreation and physical activity.
9. Adaptability: The community has shown resilience and adaptability in responding to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.
10. Cultural competence efforts: There are community-wide efforts to commit to plain language and translation of materials into Spanish.
11. Workforce development: There are efforts to train and promote people who speak Spanish, Russian, and other languages, creating a more diverse workforce.
12. Commitment to health: The report notes that Benton County (which includes part of the service area) ranks highly for health factors and outcomes, suggesting a community-wide commitment to health.

### **Priorities**

#### **1. Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder:**

- Focus on prevention and treatment
- Address social isolation
- Community building related to safe spaces and recreation
- This priority area refers to the challenges of accessing care due to workforce shortages, lack of culturally responsive care, and affordability issues.

#### **2. Health-Related Social Needs:**

- Focus on housing stability
- Navigation of supportive services
- Address food insecurity
- Improve transportation access
- This priority area refers to the unmet social needs that exacerbate poor health and quality-of-life outcomes.

#### **3. Economic Security:**

- Focus on affordable childcare
- Improve education opportunities

- Support workforce development
- This priority area affects nearly every aspect of a person's life and refers to the challenge of affording basic living expenses and obtaining affordable education.

#### 4. Access to Care and Services:

- Focus on chronic disease management and prevention
- Improve oral health access
- Expand virtual care options
- This priority area refers to the lack of timely access to care and services due to physical, geographic, and systemic limitations.

The report also notes three consistent cross-cutting themes that affect all four priority areas:

- Racism, discrimination, and inclusion
- Culturally responsive care and services
- Trauma-informed care and services

These priorities were identified based on the collaborative health priorities from the broader Gorge Collaborative CHNA process, and were selected considering PHRMH's unique capabilities, community partnerships, and potential areas of collaborative community impact.