

Executive Summary

1. Sky Lakes Medical Center published its most recent Community Health Needs Assessment in April 2022 and Community Health Improvement Plan in December 2022.

2. Top health needs identified include:

- Food insecurity/hunger
- Health promotion: Access to services
- Mental health
- Physical activity
- Substance use
- Equity

3. The hospital engaged in numerous community benefit activities to address these needs, including:

- Programs to address food insecurity
- Initiatives to improve access to healthcare services
- Mental health services and strategic planning
- Efforts to increase physical activity opportunities
- Collaboration on substance use prevention and treatment
- Various community partnerships and funding initiatives

4. Sky Lakes Medical Center supported 157,985 encounters through community benefit programs, with a net community benefit expense of \$31,233,952.

5. The hospital addresses both individual health-related social needs (e.g., expanding primary care access, establishing a mobile clinic) and systemic issues (e.g., initiatives to end generational poverty, addressing root causes of health inequities).

This summary covers the main points of the report, focusing on the identified health needs and the hospital's efforts to address them through various community benefit activities.

Biggest Gaps in Service

1. Mental Health Services: The report indicates a high prevalence of mental health problems in Klamath County, coupled with a shortage of mental health providers. It states, "There is a high prevalence of mental health problems and few mental health providers in Klamath County."

2. Primary Care: The area is identified as a health professional shortage area for primary care providers, particularly for low-income clients. This is evidenced by the statement: "In 2020, Klamath County was a health professional shortage area for primary care providers for low income clients."

3. Dental Care: The report mentions a shortage of dental providers, particularly for low-income, migrant farm worker, and homeless clients.

4. Access to Healthcare: In general, access to healthcare services appears to be a significant issue. The report cites a 2022 US News & World Report that scored Klamath County 57 out of 100 for hospital bed availability, people with no health insurance, and primary care doctor availability.

5. Behavioral Health: The report mentions efforts to expand behavioral health services, suggesting this is an area of need.

6. Specialty Care in Rural Areas: The establishment of a mobile clinic to serve outlying communities indicates a gap in specialty care access for rural populations.

7. Substance Use Treatment: While not explicitly stated as a gap, the high focus on substance use prevention and treatment in the community benefit activities suggests this is an area of significant need.

Greatest Barriers to Care

1. Provider Shortages: The report identifies Klamath County as a health professional shortage area for primary care providers, dental providers, and mental health providers. This shortage directly impacts access to care.

2. Financial Barriers:

- 13% of Klamath County adults were uninsured, with 4% of children uninsured.
- The median household income in Klamath County (\$57,219) is significantly lower than Oregon's state average (\$86,780), suggesting potential financial barriers to accessing care.
- Sky Lakes provided over \$3 million in charity care, indicating a significant need for financial assistance to access healthcare services.

3. Geographic Barriers:

- The report mentions plans for a mobile clinic to serve outlying communities, suggesting that geographic distance is a barrier for some residents.
- The service area covers more than 10,000 square miles across four counties, indicating potential transportation and distance issues for rural residents.

4. Mental Health Stigma: The report suggests that mental health issues often lead to other social and physical health problems, implying that stigma or lack of mental health awareness might be a barrier to seeking care.

5. Food Insecurity: With 15% of residents experiencing hunger and 13% having limited access to healthy foods, nutritional barriers could impact overall health and healthcare needs.

6. Lack of Health Education: The significant investment in community health education by Sky Lakes (\$90,000) suggests that lack of health knowledge is a barrier that needs addressing.

7. Substance Use: High rates of substance use, including excessive drinking (20% of adults) and smoking (19% of adults), represent barriers to overall health and potentially to accessing appropriate care.

8. Limited Specialized Services: The expansion of services like palliative care and behavioral health clinics indicates previous gaps in specialized care options.

9. Social Determinants of Health: The report's focus on addressing systemic issues and root causes of health inequities suggests that broader social and economic factors are significant barriers to health and healthcare access.

The Unique Needs of the Community

1. Diverse Population Demographics:

- The region has a strong American Indian presence, making up 5% of the population.
- There's a growing Hispanic or Latino population, rising from 10% in 2010 to 14.9% in 2024.
- A significant elderly population, with 22.1% of residents aged 65 and older.

2. Economic Challenges:

- Lower median household income compared to the state average.
- High rate of children (65%) eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

3. Food Insecurity:

- 15% of residents experiencing hunger.
- 13% with limited access to healthy foods.
- 64% of children eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches.

4. Mental Health:

- 17% of residents experiencing frequent mental distress.
- Residents experiencing an average of 5.1 poor mental health days each month.

5. Substance Use:

- High drug overdose death rate (41 per 100,000 people).
- 20% of adults reporting excessive drinking.
- 19% of adults are smokers.

6. Physical Activity:

- 29% of residents not physically active.
- Only 53% having access to exercise opportunities.

7. Healthcare Access:

- Shortage of healthcare professionals, especially in primary care, dental care, and mental health.
- 13% of adults and 4% of children uninsured.

8. Child Welfare:

- Need for child abuse response and evaluation services (CARES program).

9. Rural Healthcare:

- Need for mobile clinics to serve outlying communities.

10. Career Development:

- Need for local healthcare career pipelines to address generational poverty.

11. Community Development:

- Need for improved parks, trails, and recreational facilities to promote physical activity.

12. Chronic Disease Management:

- Need for group medical visits and support for conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and chronic pain.

What the Hospital or CCO is Doing Well

1. Collaborative Approach:

- Partnering with various organizations to form the Healthy Klamath Network, a multi-sector partnership for community health improvement.
- Working closely with Klamath County Public Health, Klamath Health Partnership, and Cascade Health Alliance (the local CCO).

2. Addressing Food Insecurity:

- Offering nutrition programs through the Sky Lakes Wellness Center.
- Supporting initiatives like the Produce Connection program and mobile food delivery services.
- Collaborating with schools to improve nutrition education and access to fresh produce.

3. Improving Healthcare Access:

- Operating the Cascades East Family Medicine Residency program to train new physicians.
- Investing in the development of interns, residents, fellows, nurses, and other health professionals.
- Providing substantial charity care (over \$3 million) to ensure access for those who can't afford it.

4. Mental Health Initiatives:

- Operating a Behavioral Health Clinic and expanding its services.
- Developing a mental health strategic plan for the community.
- Collaborating closely with Klamath Basin Behavioral Health.

5. Promoting Physical Activity:

- Developing extensive area trails for hiking and protected bike lanes.
- Raising funds for playground development and park improvements.
- Sponsoring children's running series events.

6. Substance Use Prevention:

- Actively participating in the Local Alcohol and Drug Prevention Council.
- Developing a comprehensive Behavioral Health Strategic Plan.
- Creating a detailed resource map of available behavioral health and substance use support services.

7. Community Education and Outreach:

- Investing over \$90,000 in community health education and outreach programs.
- Hosting community health fairs and wellness programs.

8. Supporting Youth and Education:

- Sponsoring high school and community college programs for healthcare career training.
- Supporting the Klamath Promise organization to provide scholarships.
- Funding the CARES program for child abuse response and evaluation.

9. Innovative Healthcare Delivery:

- Expanding palliative care services to include clinic and outpatient visits.
- Launching group medical visits at the Wellness Center for chronic disease management.
- Planning to establish a mobile clinic to serve outlying communities.

10. Addressing Social Determinants of Health:

- Working to end generational poverty through improved health career pipelines.
- Implementing clinic-based food kits to address immediate food insecurity needs.

11. Community Investment:

- Providing significant financial support for various community programs and initiatives.
- Contributing to the development of green spaces and recreational areas in the community.

Strengths of the Community

1. Strong Collaborative Spirit:

- The community has formed the Healthy Klamath Network, a multi-sector partnership involving various organizations, agencies, and businesses.
- There's evident cooperation between healthcare providers, public health agencies, educational institutions, and local government.

2. Cultural Diversity:

- The community has a strong American Indian presence (5% of the population) and a growing Hispanic/Latino population.
- This diversity can contribute to a rich cultural environment and varied perspectives on health and wellness.

3. Educational Resources:

- Presence of Oregon Health & Science University's nursing program at Oregon Institute of Technology.
- Cascades East Family Medicine Residency program indicates a commitment to medical education.

4. Community Engagement:

- Active participation in initiatives like the Blue Zones Project suggests a community willing to engage in health improvement efforts.

5. Volunteer Support:

- The presence of programs like Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) indicates a strong volunteer base in the community.

6. Youth Focus:

- Multiple initiatives focusing on youth, including scholarships, sports programs, and child health services, suggest a community invested in its younger generation.

7. Outdoor Recreation Potential:

- The development of hiking and biking trails indicates natural resources that support outdoor activities and physical health.

8. Local Government Involvement:

- Participation of City of Klamath Falls and Klamath County governments in health initiatives shows civic engagement in community wellbeing.

9. Faith-Based Community Support:

- Mention of multi-faith council involvement in feeding the homeless indicates active participation of religious organizations in community welfare.

10. Grassroots Health Initiatives:

- Programs like "Everyone Swims" show community-driven efforts to address specific local needs.

11. Resilience:

- Despite facing significant health and economic challenges, the community appears to be actively working towards solutions, indicating resilience.

Priorities

1. Food insecurity and hunger:

- Addressing issues related to access to sufficient and healthy food.

2. Health promotion: Access to services

- Improving availability and accessibility of healthcare services.

3. Mental health:

- Addressing mental health issues and improving access to mental health services.

4. Physical activity:

- Promoting and increasing opportunities for physical activity among residents.

5. Substance use:

- Addressing issues related to drug and alcohol use, including prevention and treatment.

6. Equity:

- Ensuring fair and just opportunities for health across all population groups.