

Executive Summary

Community Overview

Tillamook County is a rural coastal Oregon county with approximately 27,000 residents. The population is predominantly white (80%), with 15% Hispanic/Latino representation. The county has an aging population, with 25% over age 65. Key economic drivers include dairy farming, timber, tourism, and fishing. The county faces economic challenges with 13% of residents living in poverty and median household income below state averages.

Health Status

Tillamook County residents experience higher rates of chronic disease, premature death, and poor mental health compared to Oregon overall. Leading causes of death include heart disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and unintentional injuries. The county has elevated rates of diabetes, obesity, and substance use disorders. Mental health challenges are significant, with high rates of depression and suicide.

Key Health Care Issues

Primary concerns include access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment, lack of specialty care providers, long wait times for appointments, and workforce shortages across all health care sectors. Transportation barriers prevent residents from accessing care, particularly in remote coastal areas. Dental care access is limited, especially for Medicaid patients. The county has only one hospital and limited outpatient services.

Social Determinants of Health

Housing affordability and availability represent critical challenges, with limited affordable housing stock and high rental costs relative to local wages. Food insecurity affects vulnerable populations, though community food assistance programs exist. Educational attainment is below state averages. Transportation infrastructure is limited, with no public transit in many areas. Child care availability is insufficient for working families.

Community Strengths

Tillamook County has strong community collaboration, with active partnerships between health care organizations, social service providers, schools, and community groups. Adventist Health Tillamook demonstrates commitment to community health through charity care and community benefit programs. The county has dedicated public health services, community health centers, and robust emergency medical services. Community members show resilience and mutual support.

Biggest Gaps in Service and Barriers to Care

Health Care Service Gaps

- Mental health and behavioral health services: insufficient providers, long wait times
- Specialty care: unavailable locally, requires travel to Portland or other cities for cardiology, oncology, neurology
- Dental care: inadequate access, especially for Medicaid and uninsured patients
- Primary care: constrained capacity due to provider shortages
- Substance use disorder treatment: insufficient detox and residential treatment services

Barriers to Health Care Access

- Geographic isolation and transportation challenges, particularly in remote coastal areas
- Provider workforce shortages across all disciplines
- Insurance coverage gaps for uninsured and underinsured residents
- Language barriers for Spanish-speaking populations
- Limited clinic hours creating scheduling conflicts for working families

- High cost of care and out-of-pocket expenses
- Lack of awareness about available services and how to access them

The Unique Needs of the Community

Geographic and Rural Challenges

- Remote coastal location with limited transportation infrastructure and no public transit in many areas
- Long distances to specialty care and advanced medical services in urban centers
- Isolated communities with poor road conditions and seasonal weather impacts on access
- Limited cell phone and internet connectivity in some areas

Economic Vulnerabilities

- High poverty rate (13%) with median household income below state average
- Seasonal employment in tourism and agriculture creating income instability
- Housing affordability crisis with limited affordable housing stock and high rental costs relative to wages
- High cost of living in a rural area with limited economic opportunities

Demographic Considerations

- Aging population (25% over age 65) requiring increased chronic disease management and long-term care services
- Growing Hispanic/Latino population (15%) needing culturally and linguistically appropriate services
- Agricultural and fishing workforce with occupational health risks and irregular work schedules

Social Service Needs

- Insufficient child care for working families
- Food insecurity among vulnerable populations despite existing food assistance programs
- Mental health and substance use challenges exacerbated by rural isolation and limited treatment options
- Educational attainment below state averages impacting health literacy

Health Care Workforce

- Difficulty recruiting and retaining providers in rural coastal setting
- Limited specialty care requiring residents to travel long distances
- Need for expanded telehealth services given geographic barriers

Strengths of the Community

Community Collaboration and Partnerships

- Strong partnerships between health care organizations, social service providers, schools, and community groups
- Active community engagement in health improvement initiatives
- Collaborative approach to addressing community health needs across sectors

Health Care and Social Services Infrastructure

- Adventist Health Tillamook providing comprehensive hospital and outpatient services with commitment to charity care and community benefit programs
- Tillamook County Community Health Centers offering primary care and dental services
- Tillamook County Public Health Department delivering preventive services and health promotion programs

- Robust emergency medical services and first responder network

Community Resources and Support Systems

- Food assistance programs including food banks and meal programs serving vulnerable populations
- Active faith-based organizations providing social support and services
- Community organizations focused on specific populations and needs
- Volunteer networks supporting neighbors in need

Community Resilience and Connection

- Strong sense of community identity and mutual support
- Residents demonstrate resilience in facing geographic and economic challenges
- Close-knit communities with neighbors helping neighbors
- Dedication to preserving quality of life in rural coastal setting