Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center Community Health Implementation Strategy

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2027

Community health improvement is an effective tool for creating a shared vision and supporting a planned and integrated approach to improving health outcomes. The basic premise of community health improvement is that entities identify community health issues, prioritize those that can be addressed, and then develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to address those issues. Tax-exempt hospitals are required to conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA) and develop an implementation strategy to document how the hospital will address prioritized community health needs. The following outlines a summary of the CHNA process and provides details on Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center's plans to address their prioritized community health needs.

SUMMARY OF CHNA PROCESS

In 2024, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in Wilkes County, which consisted of a comprehensive presentation and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

The Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center CHNA relies on three sources of information:

Community Health Survey (primary data): Online and phone surveys conducted from January through June 2024, with 201 Wilkes County residents completing questions related to the top health needs in the community. Residents were also asked about perception of their overall health, access to health services, and social drivers of health, including opportunities for a healthier community.

Stakeholder Interviews (primary data): Conducted by health system community benefit leaders with 54 individuals to identify the community's most pressing health issues and effective health improvement strategies.

Metopio (secondary data): Atrium Health has a contract with Metopio to provide an internet-based data resource for their hospitals. This robust platform offers curated data from public and proprietary sources for information on health behaviors and health risks, health outcomes, health care utilization, demographic, and community-level drivers of health like economic, housing, employment, and environmental conditions. Data for each indicator is presented by various demographic characteristics when the data is available (Metopio: https://public.metop.io).

Top Health Issues Identified

- Access to Health Care Services
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Disabling Conditions
- Heart Disease and Stroke
- Injury and Violence
- Mental Health
- Nutrition, Physical Activity and Weight
- Oral Health
- Substance Abuse
- Tobacco Use

Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist

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The top health issues identified were presented to the Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center's Steering Council, and members were asked to rank the issues based on the following criteria: size/seriousness of the problem, effectiveness of available interventions, available resources to address the health issue, health care system adequately situated to address the health issue, meets a defined community need as identified through data, potential for issue to impact other health and social issues and ability to effectively address or impact health issue through collaboration.

Using these criteria, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center has prioritized these significant health needs to address in 2025-2027:

Significant Need	Implementation Strategy Selection Reasoning
Access to Healthcare Services	Data indicates that access to care is a top concern for Wilkes County. With a significant shortage of providers in the county it is impacting the hospital readmissions and emergency department visits due to lack of appointment availability. This is also driving sicker patients to urgent care, who often must transfer to the emergency department for further elevation and treatment.
Behavioral Health: Mental Health and Substance Use	Mental health and substance use continue to be top concerns in Wilkes County. Stakeholders have reported a lack of mental health professionals, particularly for individuals who use drugs and non-English speaking community members. Additionally, very long wait times to be seen by a provider and general mental health stigma and shame prevent individuals from seeking care. Addressing these issues is essential because mental health is integral to overall health. Prioritizing mental health care can lead to improved quality of life, reduced substance abuse, and better social and economic outcomes for the community. By increasing the availability of mental health services and reducing stigma, we can ensure that everyone can lead a healthy and fulfilling life.
Chronic Disease: Heart Disease, Stroke and Cancer	Prioritizing the management and prevention of heart disease, stroke and cancer, is essential for improving overall public health and reducing the burden of these serious conditions. Heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death locally and globally, necessitating early detection, lifestyle modifications, and access to effective treatments to mitigate risks. Cancer, with its diverse forms and complex treatments, requires robust screening programs, research advancements, and patient support systems to enhance survival rates and quality of life. By prioritizing these conditions, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center can allocate resources more effectively, promote healthier lifestyles, and ultimately improve patient outcomes and longevity.

PRIORITY: Access to Healthcare Services

DESCRIPTION OF HEALTH NEED DATA:

- Out of 49 providers in Wilkes County, few are taking new patients. Of the 49, 15 providers are planning to retire in under 5 years.

Source: Key Informant Conversation, 2024

- 100% of Key Informants in the 2024 survey indicated that Access to Care was an issue for Wilkes County.

Source: PRC, Wilkes County Key Informant Survey, 2024

- In the 2024 community survey 26.2% of respondents reported fair or poor health which is over 10 percentage points higher than the national rate.

Source: PRC, Wilkes County Community Survey, 2024, BRFS, 2022

STRATEGY #1: Increase access to health care

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
• Implement Community Paramedicine Program • Improve primary care provider recruitment	• Wilkes County EMS • Internal Human Resources and Business Development Partners	• Reduce preventable Emergency Department visits • Decrease wait time for PC visits

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

- Number of providers in the county
- Reduced ED visits for inability to get PCP appointment
- Number of paramedicine visits per year

**Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.*

PRIORITY: Behavioral Health: Mental Health and Substance Use

DESCRIPTION OF HEALTH NEED DATA:

- Twenty-five percent of community survey respondents indicate fair or poor mental health status.
  Source: PRC, Wilkes County Community Survey, 2024
- Over 72% of Key Informants perceive mental health a major problem in the County.
  Source: PRC, Wilkes Key Informant Survey, 2024
- Age adjusted mortality from drug overdoses is significantly higher than both state and national rates.
  Source: Metopio, 2024

Strategy #1: Increase access to behavioral health services

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
• Provide financial support for Peer Support Specialist Program • Explore behavioral health provider opportunities or referral partners	• Wilkes Recovery Revolution	• Provide peer support and peer counseling to ED and IP at WMC

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

- Number of individuals screened and referred for services
- Number of patients completing prescribed treatment plan

**Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.*

Note: Plans to address selected CHNA priorities are dependent upon resources and may be adjusted on an annual basis to best address the health needs of our community.

PRIORITY: Chronic Disease: Heart Disease, Stroke and Cancer

DESCRIPTION OF HEALTH NEED DATA:

- Prevalence of stroke and hypertension in Wilkes County is higher than state and national rates.

Source: BRFSS Data, 2022

- Over 80% of Key Informants indicated heart disease, stroke and cancer to be moderate to major problems for Wilkes County.

Source: PRC, Wilkes Key Informant Survey, 2024

Strategy #1: Increase cohesive clinical team with consistent approach to care

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
• Obtain TJC Primary Stroke Center accreditation	• The Joint Commission	• Improve response time for stroke care • Establish consistent approach, reducing variation and risk of error

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

- Accreditation received
- Number of individuals served, and referrals provided

**Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.*

Strategy #2: Increase early detection opportunities

SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS	COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS	OBJECTIVES
• Provide community cancer, stroke and cardiovascular early detection education sessions	• Tyson Foods • Wilkes Senior Center • MerleFest	• Patient education and awareness

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

- Number of patients educated
- Number of patients screened
- Number of referrals made based on positive screening

**Impact measures are subject to change depending on the direction of each intervention.*

Adoption of the Implementation Strategy

The Community Health Implementation Strategy report was adopted by the Wake Forest Baptist Wilkes Medical Center board of directors on April 29, 2025.

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