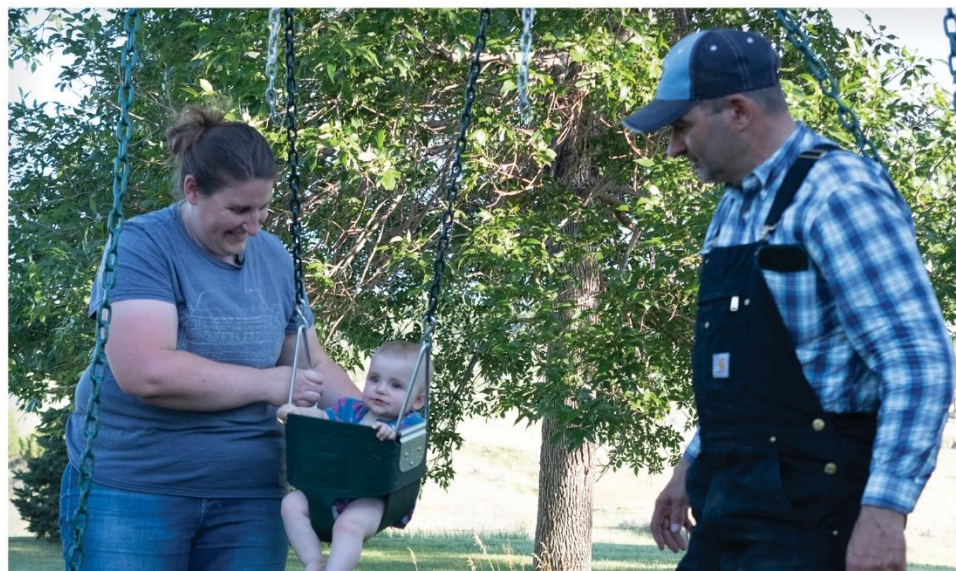




# Community Health Needs Assessment

SANFORD BEMIDJI MEDICAL CENTER  
2025-2027



Dear Community Members,

It is once again my privilege to share with you Sanford Bemidji Medical Center's Community Health Needs Assessment report. Our hospital completes a community health needs assessment every three years to identify opportunities to improve the health and wellness of our community.

The report and implementation plan that follows will guide our work over the next three years and builds upon previous progress made in our community.

The Community Health Needs Assessment is a rigorous process in which we sought input from community members, leaders, and organizations including public health. Additionally, Sanford Health collaborated with the North Dakota State University Center for Social Research to incorporate additional data analysis and provide an independent assessment. Together, these elements paint a picture of the current needs facing the community, opportunities for partnership with area businesses and organizations, and resources available to address identified needs.

On behalf of the Sanford Bemidji Medical Center team, thank you for your continued support of the Community Health Needs Assessment process.

Sincerely,

Karla Eischens  
President Chief Executive Officer  
Sanford Bemidji Medical Center



## BACKGROUND

### Community Description

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The Sanford Bemidji Medical Center is in Bemidji, Minnesota. Located in north central Minnesota, Bemidji is surrounded by breathtaking natural beauty. The community graces the shore of Lake Bemidji, one of more than 400 crystal clear lakes in the region. Known as the “First City on the Mississippi,” Bemidji is the county seat of Beltrami County, with an estimated 250,000 residents living within 75 miles of the community.

Ranked as a “Top Town” by Outdoor Life magazine, Bemidji serves as the center for economic development for all of northern Minnesota and is the regional hub for educational services, health care, retail shopping, transportation, finance, and governmental services.

Bemidji is located near many popular recreational destinations, including Itasca State Park, Lake Bemidji State Park, state forest areas, and the Chippewa National Forest. There are 400 fishing lakes within 25 miles of the city, over 500 miles of snowmobile trails and nearly 100 miles of cross-country ski trails located in and around Bemidji. During the summer, more than 25,000 visitors per month stop to take photographs at the iconic statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox.

The community as defined for purposes of the Community Health Needs Assessment includes Beltrami, Cass, and Hubbard Counties in Minnesota and represent a majority of the volumes to the Sanford Bemidji Medical Center. No populations were intentionally excluded during the process of defining the community or within the CHNA process. Demographic detail for the counties is included in the appendix.

### Partners

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The Community Health Needs Assessment builds on the work of previous cycles and is the result of the coordinated efforts of many internal and external partners. Sanford Health would like to thank and acknowledge the following and their teams for their assistance. This program would not be possible without their expertise.

### Sanford Health

- Erika Batcheller, Executive Vice President, Chief External Affairs Officer
- Nick Olson, Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer
- Corey Brown, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
- Amber Langner, Senior Vice President, Treasury
- Blayne Hagen, Vice President, General Counsel, Sioux Falls
- Lindsay Daniels, Vice President, Care Management
- Doug Nowak, Vice President, Data Analytics
- Natasha Smith, Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Catherine Bernard, Director, Tax
- Karla Cazer, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Faith Community Nursing Center
- Deana Caron, Senior Tax Accountant
- Kurt Brost, Senior Director, Community Relations
- David Hill, Director, Chief Privacy Officer
- Jessica Sexe, Senior Director, Communications
- Phil Clark, Director, Marketing Insights
- Shawn Tronier, Lead Marketing Analyst
- Chase Gerar, Strategic Planning Advisor, Fargo
- Brian Ritter, Head of Market Affairs, Bismarck
- Kayla Winkler, Lead Community Relations Specialist, Bemidji

## **System Partners**

- Sister Nancy Miller, Director Mission Integration, CHI St. Alexius Health
- Julie Ward, VP of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Avera McKennan Hospital & University Health Center
- Angela Schoeffelman, Community Program Manager, Avera Community Health Resource Center
- Alli Fast, Community Health Program Manager, Essentia Health
- Nancy Hodur, Director, North Dakota State University Center for Social Research
- Karen Olson, Research Specialist, North Dakota State University Center for Social Research
- Kathy McKay, Public Health Administrator, Clay County Public Health
- Desi Fleming, Director of Public Health, Fargo Cass Public Health
- Justin Bohrer, Public Health Analyst & Operational Planning Lead, Fargo Cass Public Health
- Julie Sorby Engen, Director of Community Development, Family HealthCare
- Shelby Kommes, Public Health Coordinator, Sioux Falls Health Department
- Renae Moch, Public Health Director, Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health and Immediate Past President, North Dakota Public Health Association
- Erin Ourada, Administrator, Western Plains Public Health
- Joe Kippley, Public Health Director, Sioux Falls

## **Bemidji Partners**

We express our gratitude to the following community collaborative members for their expertise during the planning, development and analysis of the community health needs assessment:

- Amy Bowles, Beltrami County Public Health
- Anne Lindseth, Beltrami County Health & Human Services
- Craig Gaasvig, Beltrami County Commissioner
- John Carlson, Beltrami County Commissioner
- Jason Riggs, Beltrami County Sheriff
- Lynn Eaton, City of Bemidji Council Member
- Jeanne Edevold Larson, Executive Director Northern Dental Access
- Chrissy Downwind, Bemidji State University American Indian Resource Center Executive Director
- Ann Humphrey, Bemidji State University American Indian Resource Center Associate Director
- Catrina Welch, Bemidji State University Department of Nursing Chair
- Megan Christiansen, Bemidji State University, Asst. Professor of Nursing & Director of Niganawenimaanaanig
- Dena Alamano, United Way, Executive Director
- Scott Turn, Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce, President
- Sandy Hennum, Community Outreach Specialist, Headwaters Regional Development Center
- Mike Mastin, Police Chief, City of Bemidji
- Dr. Jeremy Olson, Superintendent, Bemidji Area Schools
- Ruth Sherman, Executive Director, Community Resource Connections
- Martin Jennings, Executive Director, Northwest Indian Community Development Center
- Dave Hengel, Executive Director, Greater Bemidji
- Andrew Lankowicz, Chief Operating Officer, Cass Lake Indian Health Services Hospital
- Andy Wells, President, Wells Technology
- CAPT Joanna Ferraro, Pharm D Acting Chief Medical Officer, Bemidji Area IHS

- Tim Lutz, Superintendent, Red Lake Schools
- Jeremy Severson, Administrator, Oshki Manidoo Center
- Pete Aube, Sanford Health Northern Minnesota Board of Directors

### **Sanford Bemidji Description**

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Sanford Bemidji Medical Center, a 118-licensed bed regional medical center, has been a vital part of the Bemidji community since 1898. It is the largest hospital in the region, serving 176,000 people. It serves as a regional hub for Sanford AirMed air ambulance services and offers a Level 3 trauma center and fully staffed emergency room. Sanford Bemidji currently employs 180 clinicians, including physicians and advanced practice providers, and more than 2,000 other staff.

As a provider of specialized care, Sanford Bemidji offers expanded services in cancer, heart and vascular care, orthopedics and sports medicine, behavioral health and women's health, along with comprehensive adult, pediatric and senior health services. Thousands of patients in the Bemidji region are able to receive specialty care in their community, close to home.

A merger with Upper Mississippi Mental Health (UMMHC) in 2017 resulted in Sanford Bemidji becoming the largest provider of mental health services in the region. UMMHC had an outstanding history with programs for families, groups, and individuals. Services range from psychological evaluations to substance use disorder services, in-school child and adolescent therapy. With their expertise, and Sanford's integrated system, it was a win-win for both organizations and allowed Sanford to embed needed behavioral health services into primary care clinics. Since the merger, the service has expanded to include 55 mental health professionals, including adult and child adolescent psychiatry with 14 programs.

Created in partnership with Beltrami County and PrimeWest Health Services, Sanford Health PrimeWest Residential Support Center opened in 2019 in Bemidji, Minnesota. The center is a voluntary residential treatment facility for adults who are experiencing a psychiatric or mental health crisis and need short-term mental health care. The facility offers two residential programs providing tailored treatment, including an assessment of the patient's immediate needs, daily crisis stabilization, supportive and short-term problem-solving counseling, medication monitoring, skills training, and collaboration and coordination with agencies, providers and families.

In partnership with the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County and the Minnesota Department of Health, Sanford Health opened the Sanford Bemidji Crisis Center in 2023. This center includes an innovative EmPATH unit, short for Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment and Healing. This model of care provides urgent behavioral health care and treatment in a supportive, calming environment. The EmPATH facility is comprised of family, adult and children's spaces that allow patients to decompress and receive individually tailored care for up to 23 hours. Staffed by behavioral health specialists, the facility is the first in the state to feature separate EmPATH units for adults and children. There are also spaces that have been designed for cultural and spiritual healing, particularly for Indigenous patients.

The Sanford Bemidji Crisis Center also has an inpatient psychiatric unit with eight beds for adults who need more extensive care and medication management. This is the only unit of its kind within 90 miles of Bemidji. It keeps patients close to home so they can be connected to local outpatient services for follow-up care.

In 2018, Sanford Health opened the Sanford Joe Lueken Cancer Center, the region's largest cancer facility, in Bemidji. Offering comprehensive care in one location, the center provides radiation oncology, an infusion pharmacy, 3D mammography services, research and clinical trials, nutrition services, nurse navigation support, financial counseling, genetic counseling and survivorship services. Since opening, the Sanford Joe Lueken Cancer Center has served thousands of patients, giving them access to necessary treatments close to home.

In fall 2023, Sanford Health in Bemidji installed a state-of-the-art Varian linear accelerator at the center. This new machine generates three-dimensional images, giving clinicians the ability to target and destroy hard-to-reach cancerous cells in a precise area of the body with minimal exposure to surrounding healthy tissue. It also lets clinicians continuously monitor tumors during treatment. A tumor that might need up to 40 sessions of conventional radiation therapy might need less than five sessions with the new accelerator. As a result, patients do not need to travel as often and they experience fewer side effects, improving their overall treatment and healing experience.

The Sanford Bemidji Heart and Vascular Center features a cardiology clinic, congestive heart failure clinic and multiple cardiac catheterization labs with prep and recovery areas. Since bringing interventional care to the region, the center now provides a broad spectrum of treatment solutions, including 24/7 emergent STEMI care, cardiac rehabilitation, vascular surgery, screenings, electrophysiology and more. Since 2020, the cardiovascular team has earned annual performance recognition from the American College of Cardiology's NCDR Chest Pain – MI Registry.

In spring 2024, an expansion of the Heart and Vascular Center was completed. This expansion included a new state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab, improved wayfinding and additional clinic space. Electrophysiology was also added as an additional specialty offering.

After receiving a federal grant from the Rural Maternity and Obstetric Management Strategies program in 2021, Sanford Health collaborated with Beltrami County Health and Human Services, Cass Lake Indian Health Services, PrimeWest Health, Red Lake Indian Health Services, Sanford Medical Center Fargo and Scenic Rivers Health Services to form the Families First: Rural Maternity Health Collaborative.

Working together to break down barriers and provide individualized patient care, Families First expands and enhances available services, decreasing adverse patient outcomes, reducing costs and supporting patients so mothers, babies and their families thrive for generations to come. This collaborative approach unites our programs to coordinate prenatal and postpartum care, community referrals, transportation to appointments, participation incentives and more.

By supporting low intervention birth practices and honoring the beliefs of Native American patients, the collaborative strives to empower women and improve the safety of deliveries throughout northern Minnesota. Ongoing projects include group prenatal care classes, home visit nursing programs, and virtual care appointments and monitoring.

Part of the same parent organization, Sanford Bemidji works closely with Good Samaritan Society to serve the community's senior residents. Bemidji Good Samaritan Society facilities and services include a 78-bed skilled nursing facility, 120-apartment assisted living complex and a separate memory care unit, a durable medical equipment company, a Class A licensed home care agency and a Medicare certified hospice program.

## **CHNA Purpose**

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The purpose of a community health needs assessment is to develop a global view of the population's health and the prevalence of disease and health issues. Findings from the assessment serve as a catalyst to align expertise and develop a Community Investment/Community Benefit plan of action. There is great intrinsic value in a community health needs assessment when it serves to validate not-for-profit status and create opportunity to identify and address public health issues from a broad perspective. A community health needs assessment identifies the community's strengths and areas for improvement. A community health needs assessment is critical to a vital Community Investment/Community Benefit Program that builds on community assets, promotes collaboration, improves community health, and promotes innovation and research. It also serves to support progress made toward organizational strategies.

## **Regulatory Requirements**

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Federal regulations stipulate that non-profit medical centers conduct a community health needs assessment at least once every three years and prioritize the needs for the purpose of implementation strategy development and submission in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code 501(r)(3).

The Internal Revenue Code 501(r) requires that each hospital must have: (1) conducted a community health needs assessment in the applicable taxable year; (2) adopted an implementation strategy for meeting the community health needs identified in the assessment; and (3) created transparency by making the information widely available.

The regulations stipulate that each medical center take into account input from persons who represent the broad interests of the community. Hospitals are required to seek input from at least one state, local, tribal or regional government public health department or state Office of Rural Health, with knowledge, information or expertise relevant to the health needs of the community.

Non-profit hospitals are also required to seek input from members of medically underserved, low income, and minority populations in the community, or organizations serving or representing the interest of such populations. This includes underserved populations experiencing disparities or at risk of not receiving adequate care due to being uninsured or due to geographic, language or financial or other barriers.

The community health needs assessment includes a process to identify community resources available to address identified and prioritized needs. Hospitals are to address each assessed need or explain why they are not addressing a need. Once needs have been identified and prioritized, hospitals are required to develop an implementation strategy for each. The strategies are reported on the IRS 990 and a status report must be provided each year on IRS form 990 Schedule H.

Finally, hospitals are required to be transparent with the findings and make the written CHNA report available to anyone who requests it. All CHNA reports and implementation strategies are housed on the Sanford website at [www.sanfordhealth.org](http://www.sanfordhealth.org). Hospitals must keep three cycles of assessments on their website.

Sanford extended a good faith effort to engage all aforementioned community representatives in this process. We worked closely with public health experts throughout the entire assessment process. Public comments and responses to the community health needs assessment and the implementation strategies are welcome on the Sanford website or

contact can be made at <https://www.sanfordhealth.org/about/community-health-needs-assessment>. No community comments or questions regarding the previous CHNA have been made via the website link or email address.

## CHNA Process

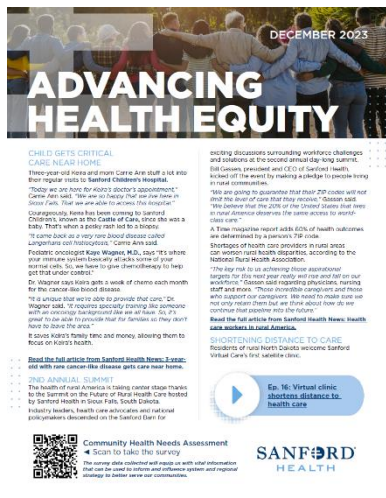
Sanford Health, in coordination with public health experts, community leaders, and other health care providers, within the local community and across Sanford's care delivery footprint, developed a multi-faceted assessment program designed to establish multiple pathways for health needs assessment.



## Limitations

The findings in this study provide an overall snapshot of behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of residents living in the community. A good faith effort was made to secure input from a broad base of the community. However, gaps in individual data sources may arise when comparing certain demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, income, minority status) with the current population estimates. For example, these gaps may occur due to the difficulty in reaching respondents through the survey process.

To mitigate limitations, the CHNA evaluates community health from several perspectives: a stakeholder and community survey, meetings with community leaders that have special knowledge and expertise regarding populations, secondary data sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and County Health Rankings, public comments from previous assessments, and institutional knowledge by Sanford employees locally and across the Sanford enterprise.



Following the completion of the 2022-2024 report, Sanford Health determined that the survey collection process was an area for improvement. As noted above, the multi-step process minimizes limitations that exist among individual components. Sanford Health and system partners determined there is greater interest in the survey findings, as such, efforts to improve representation across demographics is a focus for the current and future cycles.

Sanford invested in a multifaceted campaign that included an earned media campaign on local media outlets and the public-facing Sanford Health News (<https://news.sanfordhealth.org/>). The system also promoted the survey internally through the organization's intranet, all-staff emails, and newsletters.

Internal efforts were supported with a robust advertising campaign that included, among other efforts, a digital media program yielding 3.6 million impressions and a print ad campaign encouraging Native American communities to participate through placements in DeBahJiMon Magazine, Anishinaabeg Magazine and MHA Times (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara). Further support was given to collecting surveys at various community events. The goal of



these efforts was to increase participation by those underrepresented the previous cycle, including lower income, minority, and medically underserved populations.

Overall, survey respondents in the current cycle were more aligned to respective community demographics. The investment made by the system and partners to improve representation provides a base of learnings for future CHNA cycles.

### Community and Stakeholder Survey

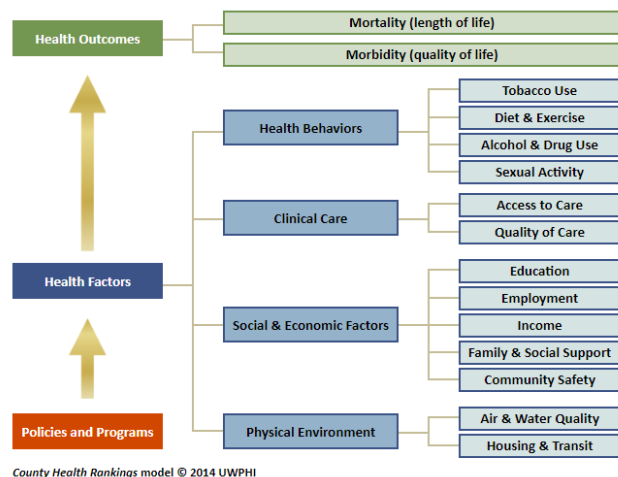
Community residents were asked a series of questions through an online survey designed in partnership with health experts and public health officials across the Sanford footprint to understand health needs. Survey design is based on the UW Population Health Institute model. Each respondent was asked to rate community drivers from poor to excellent. Any response other than excellent was offered a follow-up opportunity to comment on the reason for their ranking. Respondents were also asked a series of questions specific to their health care access, health care quality, barriers to care, travel to care, and insurance. The survey was sent to a sample of the Beltrami, Cass, and Hubbard counties, Minnesota, populations secured through Qualtrics, a qualified vendor. The full set of questions is available in the appendix.

The survey was the first of multiple efforts to engage community stakeholders and elected officials with knowledge and connections amongst medically underserved, low income, or minority populations. Stakeholders were sent the survey and asked to complete the instrument and then forward the survey to their respective populations for greater involvement. Additional investments to increase involvement in the survey are noted in the “Limitations” section of the report.

Survey data for the local community should be considered directional and best utilized in conjunction with additional data. A total of 734 respondents from the CHNA area completed the survey. Promotion investments by the system yielded a total of 9,714 completed surveys from across the Sanford footprint, an increase from 6,748 the previous cycle. The responses generated 48,643 open-ended responses and 1.76 million pieces of data (cells).

### Secondary Data

County Health Rankings are based upon the UW Population Health model and serve as the main secondary data source utilized for the community health needs assessment. Alignment of the survey and secondary data within the UW Population Health model allows for greater connection of the data sets. Population data are sourced to the U.S. Census Bureau. Additional data sources may be used and are sourced within the document.



### Health Needs Identification Methodology

The Center for Social Research at North Dakota State University was retained to develop the initial community health needs list for each community, building upon their involvement during the previous cycle. The following methodology was used to develop the significant health needs presented later in the report:

- Survey data was stratified into representative groups based upon population: large urban communities, medium sized communities, and rural communities. The three

groups were analyzed separately. Bemidji is included with Aberdeen, SD; Thief River Falls, MN; Vermillion, SD; and Worthington, MN.

- To identify community health care needs, each community's score by question was compared to the average stratified composite of the comparative group. For example, if the composite stratified system-wide average score is 4 and an individual community's average response was 2.5, which would suggest an issue of concern and a potential community health care need to be highlighted in the summary findings.
- Upon determination of a potential strength or need, County Health Rankings (<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>) and responses from open-ended questions provided additional insights into the drivers of the respective needs.
- A similar methodology was also used to provide additional insights into findings from County Health Rankings data with relevant health needs highlighted in the survey findings.
- Health needs identified through either the survey or County Health Rankings data but not both were also included in the findings.
- The Center for Social Research validates the findings of the primary research by engaging at least two internal reviewers. Each reviewer has their own technique and strengths to review the findings; however, they check for accuracy in the data by reviewing the code/syntax, the output, the correct representation of the data in the report, verbiage, consistency, context, and overall readability. Both reviewers also supported previous CHNA reports.

### **Community Asset Mapping**

Asset mapping was conducted to locate community resources available to address the assessed needs. Each unmet need was researched to determine what local resources are available. Once gaps were determined, the prioritization exercise followed with key stakeholder groups determining top needs for their community.

A positive development since the previous CHNA report is the integration of findhelp.com into the Sanford Health digital ecosystem. In 2022, the organization implemented findhelp, an online tool to incorporate contact and referral information to connect community-based organizations with patients to meet their health-related social care needs. The system is available to the health care team and as a public facing site for self-navigation to consumers. A link is included on every after-visit summary provided to Sanford Health patients and is available on Sanfordhealth.org and in MyChart. Patients can receive information in the format that is meaningful to them (electronic or paper) and in their preferred language. The tool is used to identify local resources as part of the community asset mapping section of this report.

### **Community Stakeholder Meetings**

Community stakeholders and elected officials with knowledge and connections amongst medically underserved, low income, or minority populations were further included in the process during the community stakeholder meetings. During the meetings, survey findings were presented to community stakeholders. Facilitated discussion commenced and each participant was asked to consider the needs identified that should be further developed into implementation strategies. Health needs identified during the previous cycle but not raised through the survey or County Health Rankings were also considered. The meeting served to inform the group of the findings but also served as a catalyst to drive collaboration and prioritization of local needs. The Bemidji region hosted a series of meetings including a meeting open to all community stakeholders, a meeting specific to Native American health, and a meeting, which hosted our current CHNA community partners.

The participants provided information to answer the following types of questions as it relates to identified needs:

- What are the biggest challenges currently with these needs in the community?
- Does the community have gaps in services, access, outreach, etc.?
- What opportunities exist, where can we have greatest impact in addressing these needs?
- Which are most urgent in nature?
- Is there already work being done on these needs?
- What are the resources currently not utilized within the community that could address this topic?
- Which needs fall within the purview of health care system and which do not? Can the non-healthcare needs be shared with other entities or organizations?
- Is there anything you consider an urgent need that we have not discussed?

Sanford Health Leadership selected the needs for their implementation plan based upon their current capacities, areas of expertise, alignment with strategic plans, and service areas, among other drivers

## COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

### Community Health Summary

The overall health of the community can be described as good. Survey respondents, supported by data from the County Health Rankings, indicated high marks for safety, high feelings of safety due to low crime levels, and positive perceptions of employment opportunities. However, nine areas of concern were brought forth for discussion to the Community Stakeholder Meeting for discussion (below).

The top health needs presented below were identified through a mix of primary and secondary research conducted by the North Dakota State University Center for Social Research, which was commissioned by Sanford Health to analyze the data, and Sanford Health. Priority was given to the key topics ranked lowest by community survey with further analysis provided through secondary research. Areas of focus that may not have been raised by the community survey but shown to be an area of focus through secondary research, were also included.

Each health need includes the drivers behind its inclusion in the list, including qualitative survey results, qualitative responses from the survey, and stratified results from the enterprise results that provide clarity to the local discussion. Secondary research from County Health Rankings and other sources were also provided. Insight from the community stakeholder meetings was included as a valuable tool for understanding the needs, and importantly, how to address each issue

For the purposes of this assessment, the Bemidji market area is defined as the combination of Beltrami, Cass, and Hubbard counties in Minnesota. The community health summary and identified health needs presented below were identified through a mix of primary and secondary research. Priority was given to the key topics rated lowest by respondents of the community survey, with further analysis provided through secondary research using the 2023 County Health Rankings (CHR) data. Areas of focus that may not have been raised by the community survey but shown to be an area of focus through secondary research, are also included. To further assist in identifying community health needs, survey and CHR data were collected for similar-sized market areas served by Sanford Health. Similar-sized market areas identified for and included in this analysis include Aberdeen, SD; Bemidji, MN; Thief River Falls, MN; Vermillion, SD; and Worthington, MN. For each measure, averages were calculated for each of the market areas and for the group as a whole for comparison purposes. Context and research provided to explain the importance of a particular health topic were obtained from CHR unless otherwise noted. A total of 734 respondents from the Bemidji area completed the survey.

### Community Health Summary

Survey respondents were asked to rate various issues impacting health in their community and issues impacting their personal health and wellness on the following 1 to 5 scale: 1= poor, 2= fair, 3= good, 4= very good, 5= excellent.

Overall, perceptions among survey respondents in the Bemidji area were positive for only three of the 10-community health issues presented to them (average score of 3.00 or higher):

- Environmental health (average score= 3.45)
- Access to exercise opportunities (average score=3.14)
- Health care quality (average score=3.01)

The average scores for the remaining seven community health issues in the Bemidji area were all below 3.00, and were almost always the lowest of similar-sized markets served by Sanford Health. The areas scoring below 3.00 are discussed in the Top Health Needs section. When asked about their personal health, survey respondents in the Bemidji area rated their current health and wellness as good (average score=3.07) and their current ability to access health care services as slightly better (average score=3.26); however, both scores were the lowest when compared to similar-sized markets served by Sanford Health.

CHR data indicate that Beltrami and Cass counties in Minnesota are among the least healthy counties in the state. Hubbard County ranks in the lower range of Minnesota counties in terms of overall health. In addition, the following areas of concern were identified for further discussion (in no particular order).

**Top Health Needs**

**Access to Affordable Health Care**

Cost and the ability to afford needed health care was identified as the top health care concern that survey respondents and their families in the Bemidji area face on a regular basis. In addition, 29 percent of respondents indicated that they or a family member did not receive needed medical care in the past year (which is the highest rate when compared to similar-sized markets served by Sanford Health). When asked why, cost and inability to pay for health care services was among the top reasons, along with wait time for appointments and a lack of providers.

Adding to the difficulty in accessing affordable health care in the Bemidji area is the economic climate. Survey respondents in the Bemidji area rated the employment and economic opportunities in their community as less than good (average score=2.77). When respondents were asked why they rated these opportunities as they did, responses focused on low wages, salaries not keeping pace with inflation, and limited opportunities. These concerns are evident in CHR data that indicate the Bemidji market area has the highest unemployment rate (4%), the highest child poverty rate (18%), and one of the lowest median household incomes (\$61,290) when compared to similar-sized markets. CHR data also indicate that 10 percent of people in the Bemidji area are uninsured, a rate which is similar to the comparison group average.

The stakeholder meetings contained robust conversations around the community members who fall in that Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed (ALICE) and represent a growing number of families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and technology. In addition to the respondents, inability to pay were access constraints.

Local Asset Mapping	
<p><b>Major employers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Health, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Public Schools, 3300 Gillett Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji State University, 1500 Birchmont Dr. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami Co., 701 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Anderson Fabrics, 24 Summit Ave, Bemidji</li> <li>• Knife River Materials, 4101 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Employment resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Health &amp; Human Services (employment counseling, job training), 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• CareerForce, 616 America Ave NW #210, Bemidji</li> <li>• Experience Works, 309 America Ave NW #2, Bemidji</li> <li>• Northwest Indian Community Development Center, 1819 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nortech Systems, Inc., 4050 Norris Ct. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Norboard Minnesota, 4409 Northwood Rd. NW, Solway</li> <li>• Paul Bunyan Communications, 1831 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Potlatch, 50518 Co. Hwy 45, Bemidji</li> <li>• City of Bemidji, 317 4th St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Development Center, 1219 Naylor Dr SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Always There Staffing, 2522 Hannah Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Doherty Staffing, 1500 Birchmont Dr NE, Bemidji</li> </ul>
<p><b>Primary Health Care Providers/ Routine Medical Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami Co. Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Tru North Health Care, 514 Beltrami Ave. NW #102, Bemidji</li> <li>• BSU Student Health Clinic, 1st Floor of Cedar Hall, BSU campus, Bemidji</li> <li>• VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, 1217 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Pharmacies that provide flu shots &amp; vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Iverson Corner Drug, 408 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o MedSave Family Pharmacy, 427 Mag Seven Ct. SW Ste 101, Bemidji</li> <li>o Walgreen Pharmacy, 421 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Thrifty White, 2000 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o CVS Pharmacy, 2312 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Health Insurance providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MN Sure – MNSure.org</li> <li>• Pine Country Insurance, 507 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Northway Insurance Services, 307 3rd St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Diversified Insurance, 309 America Ave. NW #2, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Dental Insurance resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspen Dental (Insurance &amp; Financing), 2219 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW Ste 6-7, Bemidji</li> <li>• North Country Dental (has a membership plan &amp; payment plan), 1311 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji</li> <li>• Northern Dental Access Center, 1405 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision Insurance providers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision Insurance Plan (VSP) – vsp.com</li> <li>• Stonewell Ins., 522 Beltrami Ave. NW Ste 107, Bemidji</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prescription Assistance programs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPAssist Patient Assistance Program, 602 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• MN Drug Card – Mndrugcard.com</li> <li>• Discount Prescription Card – 888-884- 7713</li> <li>• Prescription Drug Assistance Program, 573-996-3333</li> <li>• CancerCare co-payment assistance, 800-813-4673</li> <li>• Freedrugcard.us</li> <li>• Rxfreecard.com</li> <li>• Medsavecard.com</li> <li>• rxgo.com</li> <li>• americasdrugcard.org</li> <li>• mygooddays.org</li> <li>• NORD Patient Assistance Program, rarediseases.org</li> <li>• Patient Access Network Foundation, panfoundation.org</li> </ul>	<p><b>Affordable Health Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Community Care Program, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Area Indian Health Services, 522 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Health &amp; Human Services, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

- Pfizer RC Pathways, pfizerRXpathways.com
- RXhope.com

**Access to Quality Health Care**

Despite survey respondents in the Bemidji area rating their own ability to access health care as good (average score=3.26), when they were asked about the most important health care issues impacting their community, access to health care services and providers was the top issue (more so than affordability concerns). When the 23 percent of respondents who rated their own ability to access health care as poor or fair were asked to explain why they did so, responses focused on a lack of providers in their community, transportation issues, and poor quality of care. And while respondents rated the overall quality of health care in their community as good (average score=3.01), the average score was the lowest when compared to similar markets. In addition, two-thirds of survey respondents in the Bemidji area reported traveling outside of their community to receive health care services in the past three years (64%). When asked why, most of those who traveled for care indicated that they needed specialty care or the needed services were not available locally (77%), followed by 35 percent who were referred by a physician and 34 percent who sought better or higher quality care elsewhere.

CHR data indicate that when compared to similar-sized markets, the Bemidji area has similar ratios of population to providers, with 1,458 people for every primary care physician and 1,543 people for every dentist. Despite this coverage, CHR data also indicate that when compared to similar-sized markets, the Bemidji area has the highest rate of preventable hospital stays (2,454 per 100,000 Medicare enrollees), one of the lowest mammography screening rates (46%), and the lowest flu vaccination rate (48%).

Nearly three-fourths of survey respondents in the Bemidji area indicated that there are health care services they would like to see offered or improved in their community (73%). When these respondents were asked which health care services they would like to see offered or improved, most said behavioral and mental health care (67%), followed by addiction treatment (49%), dental care (35%), family medicine or primary care (32%), long-term care and nursing homes (29%), emergency/trauma services (26%), and walk-in/urgent care (26%).

Discussions with community stakeholders highlighted a persistent and growing need for comprehensive behavioral health care across all age groups. Despite notable advancements and increased availability of services in recent years, the demand for mental health support remains substantial and continues to outgrow the growth in resources and infrastructure. Addressing this imbalance is crucial to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of age, can receive the support they need to maintain their mental well-being.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Primary Health Care Providers/ Routine Medical Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Tru North Health Care, 514 Beltrami Ave. NW #102, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health Care Services for Native people:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations Home Health, 2524 Hannah Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Native Youth Crisis Hotline – 877-209- 1266</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Leech Lake Family Violence Program for Ojibwe, 190 Sailstar Dr. NW, Cass Lake</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BSU Student Health Clinic, 1st Floor of Cedar Hall, BSU campus, Bemidji</li> <li>• VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, 1217 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Pharmacies that provide flu shots &amp; vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Iverson Corner Drug, 408 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Walgreen Pharmacy, 421 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Thrifty White, 2000 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o CVS Pharmacy, 2312 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>Sanford Bemidji Pharmacy, 1611 Anne Street, Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NorthWest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC), 1819 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>• Equay Wiigamig Women’s Shelter, State Hwy 1, Pinewood</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>
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### Healthy Living

When survey respondents in the Bemidji area were asked about the biggest health concerns for themselves and their family (concerns they face on a regular basis), chronic health issues were among the top concerns, after cost and access issues. And the most commonly cited chronic health concerns involved weight, cancer, diabetes, and the heart. CHR data indicate that nearly one in ten adults in the Bemidji area has diabetes (9%) and one in three adults has obesity (35%), both of which are about average for similar-sized market areas served by Sanford. CHR data also indicate that 67 percent of residents in the Bemidji area have access to exercise opportunities, a rate which is lower than the comparison group average.

In terms of food security, respondents in the Bemidji area rated access to healthy foods as less than good (average score=2.95), a score which is the lowest when compared to similar-sized markets. The most common barrier cited by respondents was the high cost associated with eating healthy. These concerns are evident in CHR data which indicate that 11 percent of the population in the Bemidji area did not have access to a reliable source of food during the past year. In addition, 11 percent of people are low income and do not live near a grocery store. Both percentages are higher than rates for similar-sized markets served by Sanford.

Regarding tobacco and alcohol usage, CHR data indicate that the Bemidji area has the highest rate of adult smokers (21%) and one of the highest rates of alcohol-involved driving deaths (36%) when compared to similar-sized markets.

Discussion at the stakeholder meeting included conversations around an increase in drug related substance abuse & injury.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Primary Health Care Providers/ Routine Medical Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dental resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Dental Access Center, 1405 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Aspen Dental, 2219 Paul Bunyan Dr NW Ste 6-7, Bemidji</li> <li>• Hazelton Family Dentistry, 110 Mag Seven Ct. SW Ste 220, Bemidji</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tru North Health Care, 514 Beltrami Ave. NW #102, Bemidji</li> <li>• BSU Student Health Clinic, 1st Floor of Cedar Hall, BSU campus, Bemidji</li> <li>• VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, 1217 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Pharmacies that provide flu shots &amp; vaccinations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Iverson Corner Drug, 408 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Walgreen Pharmacy, 421 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Thrifty White, 2000 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o CVS Pharmacy, 2312 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bemidji Dental, 2600 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>• North County Dental, 1311 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Chronic Disease resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Better Choices Better Health, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• American Heart Assoc. – heart.org</li> <li>• Asthma &amp; Allergy Foundation – aafa.org</li> </ul>
<p><b>Obesity resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford dieticians, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Indian Health Services, 522 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Tru North Health Care, 514 Beltrami Ave. NW #102, Bemidji</li> <li>• BSU Student Health Clinic, 1st Floor of Cedar Hall, BSU campus, Bemidji</li> <li>• VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic, 1217 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Extension (nutrition information &amp; classes), 7223 Fairgrounds Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Fitness Centers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Anytime Fitness</li> <li>o Snap Fitness</li> <li>o Fusion Center</li> <li>o Gym Bin</li> <li>o CrossFit Bemidji</li> <li>o Gillett Wellness Center</li> <li>o Paul's Muscle Mecca</li> <li>o Revolution Fitness</li> <li>o Boss Lady Fitness</li> <li>o Core Health Nutrition &amp; Yoga</li> <li>o Lily Pad Yoga</li> <li>o Sanford POWER - Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Physical Activity resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park District activities</li> <li>• School physical activities</li> <li>• Sanford Center</li> <li>• Gillette Recreation Center</li> <li>• Bemidji Curling Club</li> <li>• Evenson Memorial Baseball Field</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy Eating resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Extension (nutrition information &amp; classes), 7223 Fairgrounds Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford dieticians, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• I Can Prevent Diabetes courses</li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Community Garden Plots – <a href="http://bemidjimn.recdesk.com/community/facility?type=6">bemidjimn.recdesk.com/community/facility?type=6</a></li> <li>• Farmers Markets: o Bemidji Area Farmers Market o Bemidji Natural Choice Farmers Market</li> <li>• Grocery Stores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Lueken's Village Foods South, 609 Washington Ave. S., Bemidji</li> <li>o Lueken's Village Foods North, 1171 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Harmony Natural Foods Co-op, 302 Irvine Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Stittsworth Meats, 722 Paul Bunyan Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Pete's Place, 7189 Pete Lane NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CSAs that serve Bemidji: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Lone Rock Farms, 5309 15th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Northern Light Farm, 2048 Agate Ln NW, Solway</li> <li>o Fort Benedict Grocery, 34365 Co Rd. 38, Benedict</li> <li>o TJJ Farm, 27081 Lower Rice Lake Rd., Bagley</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bemidji Soccer Fields</li> <li>• Bemidji Baptist Christian School facilities</li> <li>• Heartland Christian Academy facilities</li> <li>• St. Mark's Lutheran School facilities</li> <li>• St. Philip's School facilities</li> </ul>	<a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a>
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### Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

When survey respondents in the Bemidji area were asked about the most important health care issues impacting their community, mental health and substance abuse were among the leading issues (behind access and cost of care). In addition, mental health was among the top four health care concerns that respondents and their families face on a regular basis. According to CHR, adults in the Bemidji area average 4.5 mentally unhealthy days each month and 15 percent of adults average at least 14 days of mental distress per month (rates which are among the highest percentages when compared to similar-sized markets). One of the most important measures of mental health within a community is suicide. CHR data indicate that there are 20 suicides for every 100,000 people in the Bemidji area (which is one of the highest rates among similar markets). In addition, there are 27 drug overdose deaths for every 100,000 people in the area (which is higher than the Minnesota state average of 15). Fortunately, the Bemidji area has one mental health care provider for every 405 people, which is slightly better than the comparison group average.

Of survey respondents in the Bemidji area who would like to see specific services offered or improved in their community, most respondents said behavioral and mental health services (67%) followed by addiction treatment (49%).

Discussions with community stakeholders highlighted a persistent and growing need for comprehensive behavioral health care across all age groups. Despite notable advancements and increased availability of services in recent years, the demand for mental health support remains substantial and continues to outstrip the growth in resources and infrastructure. The stakeholders discussed the current community assets for mental health, as well as discussed current gaps in service. Addressing this imbalance is crucial to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of age, can receive the support they need to maintain their mental well-being.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Mental Health &amp; Suicide resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Behavioral Health, 1705 Anne St NW Door #3, Bemidji</li> <li>• Hope House Community Support Program, 2014 7th St. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Health &amp; Human Services, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• BSU Counseling (for enrolled students), 1500 Birchmont Dr. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bridges Housing Program for people with mental illness – 641-602-1880</li> <li>• Community Behavioral Health Hospital, 800 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mental Health &amp; Suicide resources Cont.:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Homes Children &amp; Family Services, 4225 Technology Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Region II Mental Health Initiative (monthly mtgs.) – 213-333-4196</li> <li>• Stellher (outpatient therapy), 519 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Stellher Children's Crisis Line – 800-422-0045</li> <li>• Veteran's Support Group, 1217 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Schackman Kramer &amp; Assoc., 1526 30th St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24-Hr. Crisis Line – 800-422-0045</li> <li>• Evergreen Youth &amp; Family Services, 610 Patriot Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Evergreen Crisis Shelter, 622 Mississippi Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Great River Psychological Services, 403 4th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Integrative Health &amp; Wellness, 819 Paul Bunyan Dr. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Journey, 1630 Forest Lane SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Gathering of Hearts Support Group (support group for suicide loss survivors), 610 Patriot Dr NE, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Woodvale Psychological Services, 403 4th St. NW #110, Bemidji</li> <li>• Keeping Our Children Safe suicide prevention program, 403 4th St. NW #110, Bemidji</li> <li>• Suicide prevention hotline – 988</li> <li>• Native Youth Crisis Hotline – 877-209- 1266</li> <li>• Foster care beds for adults in crisis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Spruce Woods Apts., 718 15th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o MSOCS, 810 Clausen Ave. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Cardinal of MN – 3 in-home services</li> <li>o Eagle Wing, 5603 Tall Pines Rd. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Lighthouse Lodge, 3217 Johnson St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Teri Kinn Adult Foster Care, 10240 N. Garden Lane NE, Bemidji</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Substance Abuse Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Bemidji Clinic, 1705 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Area Program for Recovery, 403 4th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Online AA Meeting, aa-intergroup.org</li> <li>• Online NA Meeting, virtual-na.org</li> <li>• NA program, 2508 Wash. Ave. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Oshki Manidoo Center, 1741 – 15th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Face It Together, 408 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Alano Club, 3802 Greenleaf Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Park Place (housing for those with substance abuse/mental health issues), 600 3rd St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dementia/Alzheimer’s Disease resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alzheimer’s Assn. – alz.org</li> <li>• Sanford Health Trillium Memory Care, 930 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Havenwood Care Center, 1633 Delton Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Health Nielson Place, 1000 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Touch of Home, 711 17th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford WoodsEdge, 1000 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Elder Care, 1633 Delton Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

**Long-Term Senior Care**

Safe, quality, affordable housing is fundamental to a healthy life. Healthy homes can improve lives and provide a foundation of health for individuals and families, but unhealthy homes can just as easily undermine quality of life and even cause poor or substandard health. A safe, quality, and affordable home is paramount to healthy aging.

Respondents in the Bemidji area rated the quality of long-term care, nursing homes, and senior housing as less than good (average score=2.65) – and nearly half of respondents rated the quality as poor or fair (46%). When respondents who rated the quality of long-term care, nursing homes, and senior housing as poor or fair were asked why they did so, responses referenced an overall staffing shortage in the community, limited options for nursing care, and long waiting lists for all senior-accessible housing. In addition, of survey respondents in the Bemidji area who would like to see specific services offered or improved in their community, one in four respondents said long-term care (29%).

Discussion with the stakeholders included discussion around the quality score not being reflective of quality received at the long-term care facilities. They felt the care provided was good, however, due to the extreme shortage of staffing in long-term care facilities and limited options to choose from, it affected the quality score.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Long Term Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Health Neilson Place, 1000 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• D&amp;D Caring Hearts, 1426 Pamela Ct NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Minnesota Veterans Home, 920 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Aspen Hills, 2528 Park Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Goldpine Home, 1700 30<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Northview Manor (Independent Senior Living), 1805 30<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• BirchHaven Village, 1700 Norton Ave, Bemidji</li> <li>• Good Samaritan Society, 172 Summit Ave, Blackduck</li> <li>• Cornerstone Nursing &amp; Rehab Center, 416 7<sup>th</sup> St NE, Bagley</li> <li>• Jourdain Perpich Extended Care Facility, 24856 Hospital Dr, Redlake</li> <li>• Essentia Health Living Center, 900 Hilligoss Blvd SE, Fosston</li> <li>• Bemidji Senior Center (Senior Activity Center), 216 3<sup>rd</sup> St NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Memory Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Health Windsong, 1010 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Health Trillium, 930 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Heritage Living Center, 619 W 6<sup>th</sup> St, Park Rapids</li> <li>• McIntosh Senior Living, 600 Riverside Ave NE, McIntosh</li> <li>• Havenwood Care Center, 1633 Delton Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Tamarack Court, 1511 Delton Ave, Bemidji</li> <li>• Cedar Cottage, 1711 Delton Ave, Bemidji</li> <li>• Colleen’s Caring Hands, 2525 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji</li> <li>• Long Lake Loon Lodge, 7747 Loon Lodge Ln NE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Touch of Home Assisted Living Home, 711 17<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

### **Child Care Quality**

Participation in high-quality early childhood care and education programs can have positive effects on children’s cognitive, language, and social development, particularly among children at risk for poor outcomes<sup>3</sup>.

Survey respondents in the Bemidji area rated the quality of child care, day care, and preschool as less than good (average score=2.45) – and half of respondents rated the quality as poor or fair (55%). When asked to explain why, respondents cited an overall lack of child care providers along with limited capacity and restricted options among existing providers.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has historically considered child care affordable if the total expense consumes less than 10 percent of household income, and more recently proposed an affordability threshold set at 7 percent of household income<sup>4</sup>. According to CHR, the average household in the Bemidji area spent 25 percent of its income on child care, which is three times the proposed threshold for affordability.

At the stakeholder meeting, the discussion was around the great quality of childcare providers, but stakeholders said they feel due to limited access to get into childcare facilities and the high cost for childcare the quality ranked poorly. Stakeholders recognized Sanford on their forward thinking approach to opening a childcare facility.

**Local Asset Mapping**

<p><b>Substance Abuse Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Bemidji Clinic, 1705 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Area Program for Recovery, 403 4th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Online AA Meeting, aa-intergroup.org</li> <li>• Online NA Meeting, virtual-na.org</li> <li>• NA program, 2508 Wash. Ave. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Oshki Manidoo Center, 1741 – 15th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Face It Together, 408 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Alano Club, 3802 Greenleaf Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Park Place (housing for those with substance abuse/mental health issues), 600 3rd St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resources for At-Risk youth:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evergreen Kinship North, 622 Mississippi Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Evergreen Youth Crisis Center, 622 Mississippi Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Stellher Children’s Crisis Line – 800-422-0045</li> <li>• Keeping Our Children Safe suicide prevention program, 403 4th St. NW Ste 245, Bemidji</li> <li>• Native American Youth Hotline – 877-968-8491</li> <li>• Native Youth Crisis Hotline – 877-209- 1266</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Teen Pregnancy resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evergreen Youth &amp; Family Services, 610 Patriot Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Health Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Evergreen Young Parents, 610 Patriot Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Childhood Obesity resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Clinic, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford dietitians, 1233 34th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford fit <a href="http://www.sanfordfit.org/">http://www.sanfordfit.org/</a></li> <li>• Beltrami County Public Health, 616 America Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Parks &amp; Recreation Dept., 423 Wilson Ave. SE, Bemidji (parks, playgrounds &amp; organized summer activities)</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Child Care resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami Co. Child Care Assistance Program, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bi-County Head Start, 1601 Conifer Ave NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Leech Lake Head Start, 705 5th St. NW C, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Preschools:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o TLC Preschool, 123 29<sup>th</sup> St NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Calvary Lutheran Preschool, 2508 Wash. Ave. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>o First Lutheran Preschool, 900 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>o Heartland Christian Academy Preschool, 9914 Heartland Cir. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Daycare Centers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Bethel Child Care Center, 5232 Irvine Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Kandi Land Learning Academy, 610 S Railroad St SE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Sunny Days, 1330 Augusta Dr. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Growing Tree Daycare, 123 29th St. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Gym Bin, 928 Washington Ave. S., Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Child Care Resources Cont.:</b></p> <p>In-Home Group Daycares:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Kids Clubhouse, 20th St., Bemidji</li> <li>o Wendy Tisdell, 821 – 3rd St. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Connie’s Little Tykes, 47093 – 229th Ave., Bemidji</li> <li>o Marilyn Geller &amp; Angie Anderson, Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Shannon Anderson &amp; Coralee Meyers, Irvine Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Debbie Ammonson, Grant Valley Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Monica Arel, Last Road NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Stacy Black, Spencer Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Susan Bushman &amp; Jessica Johnson, Irvine Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Linda Caron, Pine Crest Court NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Kimberly Christofferson, Augusta Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Melinda Delaney, 179th Ave., Bemidji</li> <li>o Nicole DuBois, 4964 Grant Valley Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Penny Evans, Chad Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Dana Fenske, Madison Ave. SW, Bemidji</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Pine Pals, 1700B 30<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Wee Care Daycare, 2800 Arrowwood Cir NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Jeri Francis, Carr Lk. Rd. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Connie Fredrickson, Pine Grove St. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Misty Giffen, Jackpine Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Sheila Hall, Park Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Shawna Hanks, 5th St. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Lora Hendricks, Monroe Ave. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Sheila M. Hirt, Kay Ave. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Rachelle Houle, Bixby Ave. NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Gwenn Hovestol, Oak Hills Rd. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Ilene Jacobson, Wild Plum LN NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Amy Jensen, Valley View Dr., NE, Bemidji</li> <li>o Nichole Kelsey, 16th St. SW, Bemidji</li> <li>o Kayla Koenig, 2nd St. SE, Bemidji</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bullying resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Sheriff, 613 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Police, 613 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• School Counselors, 3300 Gillett Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Youth Crime resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Sheriff, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Police, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities for Youth (other than school/sports activities):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alano Club, 3802 Greenleaf Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Boys &amp; Girls Clubs, 1600 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Boy Scouts, 2508 Washington Ave S, Bemidji</li> <li>• Girl Scouts, 2508 Washington Ave S, Bemidji</li> <li>• 4-H, Beltrami County Extension, 7223 Fairgrounds Rd. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Headwaters Science Center, 413 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Kinship North Mentoring Program, 622 Mississippi Ave., Bemidji</li> <li>• Headwaters School of Music, 519 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Public Library, 509 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Paul Bunyan Playhouse children's activities, 314 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

**Community Safety**

Accidents and violence affect health and quality of life in the short and long-term, for those both directly and indirectly affected, and living in unsafe neighborhoods can impact health in a multitude of ways.

Survey respondents rated community safety concerns in the Bemidji area as less than good (average score=2.44) and lower than any similar-sized market served by Sanford Health. When asked why they rated community safety as they did, respondents cited a high, rising rate of crime and concerns around substance abuse. CHR data indicate that the Bemidji area has one of the highest rates of alcohol-involved driving deaths (36%) when compared to similar-sized markets – and that the rates of firearm fatalities (14.1 per 100,000 people), injury deaths (101 per 100,000 people), and juvenile arrests (37 per 1,000 youth) in the Bemidji area are higher than any of the comparison group communities served by Sanford.

At the stakeholder meeting, the stakeholders focused on the increase in crime related to substance abuse. They mentioned an increase in petty crime & theft related to burglaries as drug users support their addiction. Stakeholders questioned some of the statistics provided in the presentation such as the alcohol-related driving deaths (36%) and firearm fatalities (14.1 per 100,000 people) in our region compared to local law enforcement data.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Substance Abuse Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanford Bemidji Clinic, 1705 Anne St NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Area Program for Recovery, 403 4th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Online AA Meeting, aa-intergroup.org</li> <li>• Online NA Meeting, virtual-na.org</li> <li>• NA program, 2508 Wash. Ave. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• Oshki Manidoo Center, 1741 – 15th St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Face It Together, 408 Beltrami Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Alano Club, 3802 Greenleaf Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Park Place (housing for those with substance abuse/mental health issues), 600 3rd St. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul> <p><b>Drug Take Back Programs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami Co. Sheriff, 613 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Child Abuse/Neglect resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Sheriff, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Police, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Beltrami County Child Protection, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Sanford Children’s Mobile Crisis Team, 800-422-0045</li> <li>• Native American Youth Hotline – 800- 273-8255</li> </ul> <p><b>Street Drugs/Drug Dealers/Criminal Activity/Sex Trafficking/Gang Activity resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Sheriff, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Police, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>
<p><b>Domestic Violence Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beltrami County Sheriff, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Bemidji Police, 613 Minn. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Northwoods Battered Women’s Shelter, PO Box 563, Bemidji</li> <li>• Peacemaker Resources, 1826 Mikrantip Rd SW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Support Within Reach Sexual Violence Resource Center, 1510 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji</li> <li>• Family Advocacy Center of Northern MN, 800 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>• House of Hospitality/Village of Hope homeless shelter, 525 Miss. Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Domestic Violence Resources cont.:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nokomagiisis Program for Tribal Elders &amp; Children, 1819 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji</li> <li>• Domestic Violence Hotline – 800-799- 7233</li> <li>• Support Within Reach, 1510 Bemidji Ave N, Bemidji</li> <li>• Leech Lake Family Violence Program for Ojibwe, 190 Sailstar Dr. NW, Cass Lake</li> <li>• Equay Wiigamig Women’s Shelter – State Hwy 1, Pinewood</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

**Public Transportation**

Transportation systems help ensure that people can reach everyday destinations, such as jobs, schools, healthy food outlets, and healthcare facilities, safely and reliably. Public transportation services play an important role for people who are unable to drive, people without access to personal vehicles, children, individuals with disabilities, and older adults.

Respondents in the Bemidji market also rated community access to daily transportation as less than good (average score=2.15) – and nearly two-thirds of respondents rated the quality as poor or fair (64%). When asked to explain why, respondents indicated very limited public



options with long wait times, inconvenient hours, and restricted routes which impacts their ability to travel to work, access child care, and obtain other services.

At the stakeholder meeting, it was discussed that several different agencies are working on a transportation strategy specific to their organization. Stakeholders felt it would benefit the community if the transportation conversation were led by one organization with a community task force helping in creating the plan. The stakeholders discussed what organizations and leaders would be important in creating a community wide plan.

<b>Local Asset Mapping</b>	
<p><b>Transportation Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bemidji Bus Lines, 1507 Naylor Dr. SE, Bemidji</li> <li>• First City Taxi, 623 22nd St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Living at Home Caregivers, PO Box 465, Park Rapids</li> <li>• Bemidji Medi-Van, 900 Longview Dr., Detroit Lakes</li> <li>• Rental cars – Enterprise, National, Avis, Hertz – 3824 Moberg Dr. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Paul Bunyan Transit (city bus), 706 S. Railroad St. SE, Bemidji</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transportation Resources Cont.:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northwoods Interfaith Caregivers, 616 America Ave. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Touching Hearts at Home, 615 Anne St. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Soaring Eagles Transportation, 2406 Tracy Ct. NW, Bemidji</li> <li>• Shamrock Shuttle – 218-556-1730</li> <li>• Uber – mobile app</li> <li>• Lyft – mobile app</li> </ul> <p><b>For Additional Resources reference:</b>  <a href="https://sanford.findhelp.com/">https://sanford.findhelp.com/</a></p>

**Affordable Housing**

There is a strong and growing evidence base linking stable and affordable housing to health. As housing costs have outpaced local incomes, households not only struggle to acquire and maintain adequate shelter, but also face difficult trade-offs in meeting other basic needs. When the majority of a paycheck goes toward the rent or mortgage, it can be difficult to afford doctor visits, healthy foods, utility bills, and reliable transportation to work or school. This can, in turn, lead to increased stress levels and emotional strain.

Survey respondents in the Bemidji market rated the availability of affordable housing in their community as fair (average score=1.88) and lower than any other community health issue. When asked to explain why, respondents cited a general lack of affordable units to purchase or rent, and heightened challenges for seniors and those with disabilities. Respondents also noted that housing considered to be affordable continues to age and conditions continue to deteriorate.

CHR data indicate that 14 percent of households in the Bemidji area have severe housing problems (i.e., overcrowded, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities) and 12 percent of households spend at least 50 percent of their household income on housing costs – both rates are higher than the comparison group average.

At the stakeholder meeting, the stakeholders acknowledged current housing projects in the works, including the project Sanford Health is a partner in, and the positive impact they will have in our community. They also acknowledged that housing will likely remain a priority in our community and we will have to continue to develop more strategies.

**Local Asset Mapping**

**Housing resources:**

- Northwoods Rentals, 481 Mag 7 Ct. SW #8, Bemidji
- Bi-County Community Action Program, 6603 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji
- Housing & Redevelopment Authority, 619 American Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Headwaters Housing Development Corp., 1320 Neilson Ave SE, Bemidji
- Crown Property Management, 258 Anne St. NW, Bemidji
- Bemidji Property Management, 117 5<sup>th</sup> St NW, Bemidji
- Bemidji Management, 218-751-6881
- Vision Properties Mgmt., 1421 Bemidji Ave. N #3, Bemidji
- Housing & Redevelopment Auth, 619 America Ave. NW, Bemidji
- The ARC Minnesota, P.O. Box 64007, St. Paul

**Low Income Housing resources:**

- Bi-County Community Action Program (rent assistance), 6603 Bemidji Ave. N., Bemidji
- Bemidji Churches United (provides financial assistant to low income residents looking for housing), 414 Lincoln Ave. SE, Bemidji
- Delton Manor Apts., 1903 Delton Ave. NW #108W, Bemidji
- Red Pine Estates, 2590 Ridgeway Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Sanford Health Baker Park Housing, 803 Dewey Ave., Bemidji
- Regency Park South, 1228 30th St. NW, Bemidji
- Regency Park Apts., 1410 30th St. NW, Bemidji

**Low Income Housing resources cont:**

- Pine Tree Estates, 721 15th St. NW, Bemidji
- Pine Ridge, 2925 Pine Ridge Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Northview Manor, 1805 30th St. NW, Bemidji
- Sanford Health Windsong, 1010 Anne St. NW, Bemidji
- Nymore, 1500 Roosevelt Rd. SE, Bemidji
- Northland, 619 America Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Sprucewoods, 718 15th St. NW, Bemidji
- Minnesota Apts., 2513 MN Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Bristlecone Apts., 2510 Irvine Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Northern Star, 800 26th St. NW, Bemidji
- Kestrel Pine, 906 26th St. NW, Bemidji
- Carter Place, 918 Carter Cir. SE, Bemidji
- Colony Park, 2815 Ridgeway Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Ridgeway Court 3, 910 30th St. NW, Bemidji
- Ridgeway Apts., 2938 Ridgeway Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Timber Ridge Apts., 2215 Conifer Ave. NW, Bemidji
- Gatewood Park, 1220 30th St. NW, Bemidji
- Bemidji Presidential Apartments, 677 Anne St. NW, Bemidji
- Odayin House, 3524 St. Onge Dr. NE, Bemidji
- Whispering Meadows, 3813 Whispering Meadows Ct. NW, Bemidji

**For Additional Resources reference:**

<https://sanford.findhelp.com/>

**Sanford Area of Focus**

The significant health needs noted above were brought forward as topics of discussion at the local stakeholder meetings, which convened a range of community leaders with knowledge of medically underserved, low income, or minority populations. Members of the local public health agency and Sanford Health were also present. A list of attendees can be found in the introduction. Stakeholders discussed the health needs, potential causes, and provided additional insight for their local populations and community resources. Participants were also encouraged to offer additional needs that may not have been raised during the research process.

The Community Health Needs Assessment identified three specific areas for focus for Sanford during the 2025-2027 implementation cycle:

1. Increase Access to Healthcare Providers: Incorporates the Access to Quality Health Care and Public Transportation needs identified in the previous section.
2. Continued expansion of Behavioral Health Services and Substance Abuse Programs Incorporates the Mental Health need and elements identified in the Community Safety Need.
3. Increase Access to Affordable Healthcare

## Implementation Plan for Prioritized Needs

### **Priority 1: Increase access to Health Care Providers**

#### **Current Activities**

A patient's zip code should not dictate the quality of health care they receive. Sanford Bemidji plays a vital role in ensuring that patients in rural Minnesota have access to health care services. As the community ages and challenges with clinician recruitment and health care infrastructure changes arise, maintaining robust and sustainable health care access becomes increasingly critical. Sanford Health of Northern Minnesota is committed to ensuring that the quality of care is not influenced by a patient's location.

Serving patients throughout more than seven counties in northern Minnesota, Sanford Health currently operates a critical access hospital with rehab and ambulance services in Bagley as well as 11 network locations. These locations provide primary care, eye care and optical services, kidney dialysis, pharmacy services, outpatient rehab and behavioral health care. Sanford Health clinicians in Bemidji frequently provide a wide variety of additional outreach services at these locations and others throughout the region. As of March 2024, this included outreach offerings at non-Sanford Health locations in Red Lake, Baudette, Cass Lake, International Falls, Bigfork and Roseau. Outreach services and specialties include orthopedics, sleep medicine, nephrology, obstetrics and gynecology, general surgery, cardiology, podiatry, bariatrics, oncology, ophthalmology, interventional pain management, dermatology, optometry, behavioral health and internal medicine.

In an effort to attract clinicians to work in our region, Sanford Health is proud to partner with regional medical schools to prepare students for practicing in rural communities. Through these partnerships, students engage in an immersive year-long experience living in Bemidji while learning firsthand from local clinicians in family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, OB/GYN, surgery, psychiatry and emergency medicine. Rural rotations like these have been shown to influence a physician's choice in practice location. Additionally, we have a robust recruitment plan for the next three years, which includes several specialties such as oncology, rheumatology, urology, ENT, and more.

Working together to break down barriers and provide individualized patient care, Families First expands and enhances available services, decreasing adverse patient outcomes, reducing costs and supporting patients so mothers, babies and their families thrive for generations to come. A critical part of this program is the transportation portion, which includes transportation to and from pre-natal appointments.

Early detection and treatment can have a huge impact on a patient's outcome. Sanford Health offers several opportunities throughout the year for community members to get screenings, whether or not they have a primary care provider or health insurance. Our team hosts heart and vascular screenings monthly as well as multi-day blood screening events every year in partnership with the Bemidji and Park Rapids Rotary Club.

In 2021, Sanford Health launched a virtual care initiative to fundamentally transform how we deliver care by expanding access, improving the patient experience, advancing innovation through new research, and attracting and training a new generation of clinicians.

**Projected Impact**

Upon completion of the three-year Implementation Plan, the community would see a decrease in new patient lead-time in primary care and specialty care.

**Goal 1: Improve opportunities for transportation for patients to health-related appointments.**

Improving transportation for patients to their appointments is essential for ensuring that individuals can access necessary care consistently. Reliable transportation helps reduce missed appointments, allowing for better health outcomes.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Work with community partners to develop a comprehensive transportation plan that serves the broader community	A community bus set route including stops on our campus to increase access for low-income and the medically underserved.	Time spent with the planning committee to build out a strategic plan for a route bus stop	President / CEO, Community Relations	Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce
Expand non-emergent patient transportation in key focus areas	<p>Reduce holding days in the in-patient units due to lack of transportation upon discharge</p> <p>Minimize same-day cancellations and no-shows in clinic</p> <p>Become Department of Transportation certified to allow for billable transportation in key focus areas</p> <p>Engage with other healthcare providers to identify areas for collaboration</p>	Staff time & resources	Vice President of Operations	



**Goal 2: Provide increased opportunities for patients to receive early screening and vaccinations**

Enhancing preventive screenings in adults and boosting immunization rates, particularly for influenza in children, are essential steps in promoting long-term health and well-being. By prioritizing these measures, we can detect potential health issues early and protect vulnerable populations, from preventable diseases, ultimately reducing the overall burden on the healthcare system.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Implement a mobile mammography program to increase accessibility and early detection of breast cancer.	<p>Mobile Mammography truck to be operationalized by Q1 2026</p> <p>Launch mobile mammography screenings in 5 rural clinic locations in Q3 of 2026</p>	<p>Financial commitment of a mobile mammography truck (with support of the SHNM Foundation)</p> <p>Staff time &amp; resources</p>	Vice President of Operations, Director of Cancer Services, Manager of Radiology	Potential collaboration with other healthcare providers, nonprofits and tribal partners.
Initiate a flu vaccine program to boost influenza vaccination rates among children	<p>Increase influenza vaccination rates for children ages 0-18 by 10%.</p> <p>Create in-school flu shot program offering the flu shot at little to no cost for students that can be replicated throughout the region</p> <p>Expand current flu shot events to other clinic locations</p>	<p>Financial commitment for vaccines</p> <p>Staff time &amp; resources</p>	Vice President Operations, Director of Clinic, Community Relations	Various school districts, the Boys & Girls Club, other organizations that have programming for kids
Plan and establish a clinical screening department to	Completion of business plan		Vice President of Operations, Director of Cardiology	Potential collaboration with other healthcare providers, nonprofits and tribal partners.

enhance access to early detection screenings and improve overall patient outcomes.	Operationalize the clinic and develop a baseline of number of patients utilizing the screening clinic			
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**Goal 3: Expand virtual health care options for patients**

Expanding virtual health care will significantly enhance patient access by providing more convenient and flexible options for receiving medical care, especially for those in remote or underserved areas.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Broaden virtual care offerings in women's health and behavioral health.	Reduce the wait time for new patients and boost the number of virtual appointments overall by 15% in OB/GYN and Behavioral Health	Staff time & resources	Vice President of Operations	Rural communities with outreach clinics & hospitals  Collaboration with Paul Bunyan Communications
Remove barriers to virtual care, such as lack of internet or technical knowledge, for key populations	Increase MyChart activation by 5 % from current 2024 activation rate of 80.2%  Add virtual care option in two new departments and increase overall virtual care provided by Sanford Bemidji	Staff time & resources  Collaborate with Paul Bunyan Communications to develop and implement an IT Navigator to support patients by Q4 2025	President/CEO	Paul Bunyan Communications

## **Priority 2: Increase access to behavioral health services & substance abuse treatment**

### **Current Activities**

Increasing behavioral health services and expanding access to substance abuse treatment are critical for addressing the growing mental health and addiction crises. By providing comprehensive support and accessible care, we can help individuals manage their conditions, reduce stigma, and promote recovery. Strengthening these services is essential for improving overall public health, enhancing quality of life, and building healthier communities.

In 2023, Sanford Behavioral Health of Northern Minnesota became a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC), adopting a model designed by SAMHSA and CMS to integrate behavioral and physical health care, expand access to mental health and substance use disorder services, and ensure consistent use of evidence-based practices. This model emphasizes community outreach, offering services in patients' homes and via telehealth whenever possible.

Sanford Health now allows patients aged 10 and older to self-schedule virtual behavioral health appointments without a referral, increasing access and reducing stigma. Additionally, its emergency departments are connected to psychiatrists who assess and manage emergent behavioral health crises virtually; ensuring patients receive quick, coordinated care, whether discharged with a safety plan or transferred to inpatient units.

The Sanford Bemidji Crisis Center, opened in 2023 in partnership with local organizations, features an innovative EmPATH unit (Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment, and Healing), offering urgent care in a calming environment for up to 23 hours. It includes separate areas for children and adults, with spaces designed for cultural and spiritual healing, particularly for Indigenous patients. The center also includes the regions only inpatient psychiatric unit within a 90-mile radius, allowing local residents to access extended care close to home.

Sanford Health also integrates behavioral health services in primary care clinics and oncology departments through on-site Integrated Health Therapists (IHTs), ensuring that patients who need further assessment can receive immediate support. Mobile Crisis Response Services provide 24/7 crisis intervention, both in-person and over the phone, for individuals of all ages.

Their school-based programs offer mental health support in local elementary schools, while the Youth Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program provides intensive, multidisciplinary care for youth with severe mental health needs. The substance use disorder program offers personalized treatment plans, including abstinence-based and harm-reduction approaches, with specialized groups for various populations. Sanford Health was also the first non-Native organization to earn Wellbriety certification, integrating cultural healing practices for Native American patients.

The PrimeWest Residential Support Center offers short-term residential care for adults in mental health crises, helping patients stabilize and reintegrate into their communities. The New Beginnings Re-Entry Project assists formerly incarcerated individuals in transitioning back to society by providing access to mental health, substance use treatment, and other support services, contributing to reduced recidivism rates in Minnesota.

### **Projected Impact**

For patients, expanding behavioral health services and substance abuse treatment can lead to improved mental health and recovery outcomes. Access to comprehensive and timely support helps individuals manage their conditions more effectively and reduces the stigma of seeking help, ultimately enhancing their quality of life and fostering a healthier community.

**Goal 1: Increase access to virtual visits for behavioral health care**

Expanding access to virtual visits for behavioral health care is crucial because it offers flexible, convenient, and timely support for individuals struggling with mental health issues. Virtual care removes barriers such as transportation, and scheduling conflicts, making it easier for people to seek help when they need it most.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Expand virtual visits for behavioral health care	Increase virtual offerings of outpatient mental health therapy  Increase virtual offerings of substance abuse care	Staff time & resources	Director, Behavioral Health	
Remove barriers to virtual care, such as lack of internet or technical knowledge, for key populations	Users supported.	Staff time & resources  Collaborate with Paul Bunyan Communications to develop and implement an IT Navigator to support patients by Q4 2025	President/CEO	Paul Bunyan Communications

**Goal 2: Increase access to substance use services**

Increasing access to substance use services is vital because it ensures that individuals struggling with addiction receive timely and effective treatment. Enhanced access can lead to earlier intervention, and support recovery efforts. It also helps address the broader social impacts of substance abuse, such as family disruption and economic strain, ultimately fostering healthier communities and reducing the burden on the healthcare system.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Expand initiation of medications in the ER for opioid use disorders	Provide education to ER providers/ clinical teams on initiation of	Medical Director time and training	Chair and Director BH	Mahnomen & Bagley Sanford; Leach Lake IHS

	MAT meds in that setting.			
Increase efforts to connect individuals to navigation services and treatment after ER visits for opioid overdose or opioid use disorder (OUD). Enhance access to Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) support and resources in the community.	Increase the number of individuals served by our Medication Assistance Therapy staff following their ER visit.  Continue expansion of services to individuals in the Park Rapids and Cass Lake, through our Sanford locations in those communities.	Provider, nursing, care coordination, LADC, management – time and resource	Director, Behavioral Health  Director, Behavioral Health	Hubbard County, Cass Lake I.H.S., Red Lake Chemical Health/ I.H.S, Pine Manor in Nevis, Northern Addiction Wellness in Wilton
Expand virtual care options for substance abuse	See Priority 1, Goal 1.			

**Goal 3: Provide substance use (and mental health) services to the incarcerated in Beltrami county.**

Providing substance use and mental health services to incarcerated individuals in Beltrami County is crucial for addressing the root causes of their behaviors and supporting their rehabilitation. Access to these services can improve their chances of recovery, reduce recidivism rates, and facilitate successful reintegration into society.

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Provide substance use and mental health services both individually and in-group settings within the jail.	Increase the number of individuals that receive a comprehensive treatment approach during and following incarceration.	LADC time, Master’s level therapist, Psychiatrist, peer support, care coordination, management	Director, Behavioral Health	Beltrami County Jail  Thief River Falls Behavioral Health

**Priority 3: Increase Access to Affordable Health Care**

**Current Activities**

Increasing access to affordable healthcare helps reduce health disparities by providing equal access to preventive services, treatments, and ongoing care, which contributes to overall better health outcomes and a higher quality of life. Accessible, affordable healthcare also supports early intervention, reducing the need for emergency care and mitigating the long-term economic and health impacts on the community.

Sanford Health currently offers financial assistance for patients who need medically necessary services or emergency care. This assistance, which can range from a balance reduction to complete forgiveness, is provided to patients demonstrating financial need. In 2023, Sanford Health provided over \$7 million in financial assistance to patients in the Bemidji area. We have also implemented a presumptive community care policy. Instead of waiting for a patient to come to us after a bill has been sent to collections, we proactively evaluate some of the patient's demographic information and other factors to determine if they might need financial assistance.

Sanford Health helps patients in need through the Providing Needed Aid to Patients Locally (PNAPL) Foundation Fund. The fund aims to help patients experiencing financial hardships meet their basic needs. Funds are used to help establish patient self-management and to get items that will streamline care like blood pressure cuffs, scales, pulse oximeters, pill boxes, wheelchairs, shower chairs and dressing supplies. Funds can also be used for copays and transportation.

A medical diagnosis can often cause a financial burden, and an inability to afford medication can prevent someone from fully recovering both physically and financially. Sanford Health's prescription assistance program offers tiered assistance based on income level to help patients afford their medication. If a patient indicates they cannot afford their medication, clinicians can presumptively qualify them. Patients who meet program guidelines are eligible for six months of prescription assistance. In 2023, Sanford Health provide over \$290,000 in prescription assistance to Bemidji area patients.

**Projected Impact**

Upon completion of the three-year Implementation Plan, the community would see several positive outcomes including increased healthcare access & health outcomes, reduced health disparities, enhanced community wellbeing and a decrease in healthcare costs. Overall, the community would experience a more robust and accessible healthcare system that supports the well-being of all its residents.

**Goal 1: Launch Making Care Primary initiative**

Making Care Primary will improve patients care experience while improving healthcare outcomes and lower the overall cost of care through the following: care coordination, partnerships with healthcare specialist, and leveraging community-based connections to address social determinants of health

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Measurable Outcome &amp; Timeline</b>	<b>Resources to be Committed</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Community partnerships and collaborations, if applicable</b>
Launch Making Care Primary initiative in our region	Determine community partnerships by Q2 2025  Improve efficiency and effectiveness of Care Management Strategies in primary care by	Financial resources to increase staff FTE's	Chief Nursing Officer, Director Clinic	To be determined

	<p>standardizing interventions and process as guideline- Q4 2025</p> <p>Complete building of infrastructure to support this project by Q4 2026</p>			
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**Needs Not Addressed**

Below are the needs identified during the CHNA process—as referenced in the Community Health Needs Assessment Report above—that are not addressed as a significant need for the purpose of this process. Although not included in the Implementation Plan, the hospital supports efforts to address community needs, such as viewing the information collected within the Community Health Needs Assessment as a community benefit and sharing survey and assessment information with community partners to support the expansion or establishment of programs that reduce community needs. Additionally, Sanford Health further supports through its findhelp resource tool that informs patients and consumers of national and local resources. In 2022, the organization implemented findhelp, an online tool to incorporate contact and referral information to connect community-based organizations with patients to meet their health related-social care needs. The system is available to the health care team and as a public facing site for self-navigation to consumers. A link is included on every after-visit summary provided to patients and is available on Sanfordhealth.org and MyChart.

**Needs Not Addressed**

**Healthy Living:** Sanford Health will continue operation of our Pediatric Food Pantry as well as determine if there is opportunity to expand into other regions that may not have a food bank available. Additionally, Sanford Health will continue support of the Backpack Buddies Program, which is led by the United Way. While not directly addressed in the implementation plan, elements of healthy living would be addressed in the implementation plan for priority two. The need was not including it within the Implementation Plan due to other identified needs deemed higher priority for purposes of the process.

**Employment & Economic Opportunity:** Sanford Health leadership is involved in a number of community led projects with a mission to grow employment opportunities for our community members. Additionally, we have started internal programs and collaborations with outside organizations to help break down barriers that an individual may face trying to gain employment with Sanford Health. The need was not included in the Implementation Plan as the other facilities or organizations in the community—including those in which the hospital is involved—are addressing or are better positioned to address the need.

**Child Care Quality:** In partnership with Pine Pals, which is a daycare center in Bemidji, we will be opening The Nest, which will provide 30+ additional slots for infant & toddlers. This will support both our employees as well as community members by adding daycare slots in the

area of highest need. Given current efforts in the space, the needs was determined to be a lower priority for purposes of the Community Health Needs Assessment.

**Affordable Housing & Long-Term Senior Care:** Sanford Health has taken an active role in community collaborations around housing in our community. We have leadership participation on both the Beltrami County Housing Collaborative and the United Way Housing Trust Fund Cabinet. The two organizations will work together to address and secure funding for housing projects that meet the highest needs. Additionally, in partnership with the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County Housing Authority, and the Headwaters Regional Development Corporation, we applied for a grant to build a 40-unit workforce-housing complex. Given current efforts in the space, the needs was determined to be a lower priority for purposes of the Community Health Needs Assessment.

**Community Safety:** Based on feedback from our community stakeholders, community safety may be tied to substance abuse. We are working with community partners to address this increasing safety concern as a whole with our ability to provide substance abuse treatment as one part of the overall safety of our community. As such, hospital leadership determined community safety to be a lower priority for purposes of a standalone priority goal in the implementation plan as other organizations are addressing the need. However, components of community safety, primarily substance abuse will be addressed as the hospital addresses substance abuse in the implementation plan.

## EVALUATION OF 2022-2024 CHNA

### **System-wide Support and Utilization of the Community Health Needs Assessment Program**

Sanford Health continues to integrate the CHNA report, supporting data, and Implementation Plans across the organization, including in the annual strategic planning program and operations. The Sanford Health Board of Trustees incorporated population health as an aspirational target metric necessary to become the “premier rural health system” in the country. The population health target aligns the work conducted through the CHNA with the overall evaluation of Sanford’s success.

CHNA data is made available throughout the planning process, as needed as part of the annual strategic planning process, both internally and to external organizations that partner with the system. Sanford also incorporated the CHNA into the capital expenditure request process to give a voice to the needs and concerns of this population.

In 2022, the organization implemented findhelp, an online tool to incorporate contact and referral information to connect community-based organizations with patients to meet their health related-social care needs. The system is available to the health care team and as a public facing site for self-navigation to consumers. A link is included on every after-visit summary provided to patients and is available on Sanfordhealth.org and MyChart. Findhelp generated nearly 28,000 internal and external searches from within CHNA-defined communities on CHNA topics in 2022 and over 19,000 in 2023. The Bemidji CHNA area has performed 3,756 searches since January 2022.

### **Access to Health Care – Mental Health**

In 2023, Sanford Bemidji Behavioral Health (SBBH) became a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). Our facility has also expanded behavioral health services in several local communities including Park Rapids, Walker, Mahnomon, Hawley, and Pelican Rapids. This includes services for both children and adults. Additionally, Sanford Bemidji



Behavioral Health is actively exploring expansion of behavioral health services into secondary markets in multiple communities. Based on current expansion in Park Rapids alone, we have increased services by 20% for residents of that community.

Sanford Bemidji Behavioral Health ended 2023 with fifteen interns over the course of the year. Six of those interns were at the provider level (Master's Degree or higher). We ended the year with a 73.3% retention rate for these BH interns. We also created a pipeline grant to encourage staff to return to school and obtain their Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselor (LADC) license. The first recipient of this grant is starting their education in Q1 of 2024. Currently, we have eighteen staff under clinical supervision to obtain their independent licenses to become mental health professionals in the state of Minnesota. In 2023, we signed two psychiatrists and two Advanced Practice Providers increasing access to behavioral and mental health care. The growth comes on top of two psychiatrists and three APPS signed in 2022.

In addition to having over 25 local counselors and behavioral health clinicians, Sanford Health recently launched an option for patients to self-schedule a virtual behavioral health appointment. These appointments do not require a referral from a primary care provider and are available to patients ages 10 and older. Patients directly schedule appointments, reducing stigma and ensuring they have timely care when they need it.

Sanford Health's emergency departments are virtually connected with psychiatrists to ensure patients with emergent behavioral health concerns are triaged quickly. In an emergency, a psychiatrist sees a patient virtually, consults with the on-site provider and recommends next steps, including transfer to an in-patient behavioral health unit if necessary or discharge home with a safety plan in place.

To further increase access to behavioral health care, integrated health therapists (IHTs) are embedded into primary care clinics and oncology departments across Sanford Health. If a patient expresses a need or a provider identifies a patient who would benefit from further assessment, the IHT is on site to have a conversation immediately, simplifying the process for patients and ensuring they leave their current appointment with a follow-up plan.

Heartland Lakes Development Corporation is finishing construction of their first housing project in Q2 of 2024. In 2023, we contributed financially to HLDC towards their work around different housing in Hubbard County (including adding supportive housing). The pending development of the project was noted in the previous year's report.

The Sanford Bemidji Crisis Center opened in Q1 of 2023. Between the months of March 2023-February 2024, the Center's EmPATH unit had 674 appointments with patient ages ranging from six years old to seventy-four years old. In 2024, the EmPATH team has started calling all patients on the therapy waitlist to identify if they can bridge any gaps that may exist in service. Access to Mobile Crisis Response services was expanded by increasing full-time FTEs. The center's inpatient psychiatry unit also admitted 170 patients for care within its first year since opening.

The Sanford Health behavioral health department frequently offers mental health crisis presentations and trainings to staff and the public. Over the past two years, these offerings included four Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Trainings with over 100 participants, Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality trainings, and three regional Crisis Intervention Training events with over 75 law enforcement, correctional officers, dispatchers, crisis team members, first responders and mental health professionals.

In addition, the department offers a monthly training series on mental health-related topics. This series is open to other partners and departments like hospital case management, the emergency department and Center City Housing Corp. In summer 2024, the behavioral health department is partnering with Bemidji State University, Evergreen Youth and Family Services and other community organizations to provide educational opportunities on a wide variety of behavioral health care topics.

To increase access to culturally sensitive substance use prevention and treatment, Behavioral Health's SUD program became a Wellbriety certified treatment center in 2022. Meeting this criteria ensures all counselors are trained in and incorporate culturally based curriculum, provides access to a Native American elder who conducts ceremonies and provides teachings, and incorporates traditional Native American healing practices (smudging, pipe ceremony, sweat lodge, etc.) into the program. We currently have three staff members trained in Wellbriety treatment. In 2023, we expanded these offerings to include monthly community sweat lodges. We are pleased to note that our team recently received recognition from White Bison for going above and beyond to provide culturally aligned services for Indigenous people seeking long-term recovery.

The Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (formerly Medication Assisted Therapy) program moved to the 1705 Anne St. Clinic and has treated 365 unduplicated patients in 2023. As a part of this program, the Recovery Medicine Clinic was opened within the Sanford Cass Lake Clinic in spring 2024. The clinic specializes in addiction medicine offering patient care and case management for behavioral health needs once a week. Due to limited resources including workforce and financial resources, Sanford Bemidji Behavioral Health will not move forward with opening a detox unit in the near future.

Sanford Bemidji Behavioral Health has hired additional FTE's to Children's Therapeutic Services & Supports (CTSS) and have increased the number of children and families served through this program. Bemidji Area School District contracts out their in-school behavioral health to various community agencies including Sanford Behavioral Health. Though the list of schools varies each year, Sanford Health was able to offer in-school services during the 2023-2024 school year at Northern Elementary, Solway Elementary, Horace May Elementary, JW Smith Elementary, Schoolcraft Learning Community, Lincoln Elementary, Gene Dillon Elementary, Trek North and Voyageurs charter schools. As noted in the previous report, the School Linked Mental Health Grant request was increased by \$300,000, to support an increase of five FTEs to serve additional schools. We will be offering Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports to all Bemidji Schools.

In addition to the needs within the CHNA community, Sanford is exploring the expansion of behavioral health services into secondary markets in multiple communities adjacent to the current service footprint. Behavioral Health services were expanded into Park Rapids through the acquisition of A Better Connection completed December 2021. The addition to the Sanford organization increased services by 20% with a 1.0 care coordinator, and 1.0 BHC.

### **Healthy Living, Food Insecurity, and Expanded Support for Neighboring Counties**

We started 2022 committed to improving depression screening in primary care. During the year, we added depression screening to several specialty departments and the walk-in clinic. The results were excellent. Sanford Health Bemidji is committed to improving depression screening for all patients. In 2023, the primary care clinics screened 76.4% of eligible patients, a nearly 30% improvement from an initial screening rate of 48.3% in 2021. In 2022, we adopted an improvement strategy focused on 'no missed opportunities' for screening which has resulted in adding depression screening to several specialty departments as a standard of

care. Specialty clinic departments that have integrated depression screening into patient care visits are Cardiology, Interventional Pain, Walk-In Clinic, Women's & Childrens, Oncology, Urology, and Eye clinics. This comprehensive approach has resulted in our highest rate of depression screening to date: 54.5% (from 31.4% in 2021) which equates to roughly 8,000 additional patients being screened annually for depression.

The initial primary care goal of reducing uncontrolled diabetes to 23.5% was realized. This measure improved from 36% uncontrolled A1C down to 19.7% and we are making progress towards a more aggressive 2024 goal of less than 14.5%. Referrals to self-care also improved from only two per month in August 2021 to 15 patients per month by August 2022 and then further improved to over fifty-three patients per month by December of 2023 through promotion efforts. Also of note, patients attending Better Choices/Better Health classes have seen up to a 12% improvement in medication compliance.

In 2023, our Sanford Sports Academy POWER program expanded to provide individual team training to four different types of youth sports. Our team also started to provide adult training through both small group fitness and personal training. Scholarships are available to all students, so no student athlete is turned away due to their ability to pay.

During 2023, Sanford Health continued community conversations around a community wellness center and what the specific community needs entail. A decision was made to move forward with a partnership for a YMCA project. In 2024, Sanford Health intends to sign a letter of intent for the lead gift of this YMCA project.

The Pediatric Clinic implemented the Food Pantry in June of 2022. In 2023, our pediatric food pantry distributed 21,040 pounds of food to 196 families. These families included 484 children between the ages of 0-17, 318 adults aged 18-59 and 48 seniors who are 60+. The Bemidji CHNA area has performed 3,756 searches on the findhelp platform since January 2022. Over 24% of the searches were related to food resources. The CHNA area has over 35 food-related programs available to local residents through the findhelp tool. These organizations can maintain their contact information and resources and can receive referrals through the system, if desired.

During spring 2023, Sanford Health continued to fund the Bemidji School District Angel Fund which provides hot breakfast and lunch to all children who do not have money in their food account. Around this same timeframe, the State of Minnesota allocated funds to provide free hot breakfast and lunch to all students. Due to this, the Angel Fund partnership was put on pause in the fall of 2023 and in 2024. Our team will revisit as needed.

In 2022, Sanford Health donated to the Bemidji Community Food Shelf so they could purchase a van to provide monthly mobile food drops in Blackduck and Kelliher. This service is still available in 2023. Sanford Health is also exploring the option of opening a food pantry in our Blackduck Clinic in the near future.

Better Choices, Better Health®: Living Well workshops are for people with lifelong health conditions, such as arthritis, cancer, chronic pain, depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease or multiple sclerosis. These free workshops are open to adults ages 18 or older and their caregivers. They create a supportive environment where attendees learn how to reduce their pain, increase their energy, work with their provider on a treatment plan and get the most out of the activities they love. Sanford Health also offers a variety of additional educational opportunities throughout the year, including free talks with doctors and support groups.

Sanford Health partnered with Bemidji Rotary Club in 2019 to improve wellness for an underserved part of the community through the Neighborhood Connections (formerly Ridgeway Neighborhood) Initiative. This initiative helps residents of this low-income area with housing, food and health care access. Over the past five years, Sanford Health employees have hosted vaccine clinics, offered on-site care and provided food and other essential supplies to community members through the program.

The program has employed housing navigators who are based in the apartment office and work full time in addition to the other services offered. Fall 2024, Sanford Health will be expanding services within this program to include additional health related events including more vaccine clinics, Narcan education, first aid and CPR classes and more.

Sanford Health has identified potential land on our campus that could support a Community Garden and will continue to analyze this opportunity.

The United Way Backpack Buddies program has expanded programming to Bagley, Blackduck, Kelliher, Clearbrook, Gonvick and Red Lake schools. Funding from Sanford Health has helped make this possible.

Sanford Health continues to meet with community leaders in Park Rapids and Hubbard County as we explore opportunities to support these communities in our service footprint.

In 2023, we took a wider approach to focus on healthy living priorities in all of the communities that we have a clinic or hospital presence in.

Sanford also continues to support other health systems, participating in the CHI St. Joseph health Care/Hubbard County Community Health Needs Assessment survey and Community Stakeholders meeting in 2022.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The Community Health Needs Assessment, Implementation Plan, and survey data are available online at <https://www.sanfordhealth.org/about/community-health-needs-assessment>. The website includes current and historical reports.

Anyone wishing to receive a free printed copy, obtain information on any topic brought forth in the report, or offer public comments for consideration during the implementation plan or future Community Health Needs Assessment work, please contact us at [Community.Benefits.Sanford@SanfordHealth.org](mailto:Community.Benefits.Sanford@SanfordHealth.org) or visit <https://www.sanfordhealth.org/about/community-commitment/community-health-needs-assessment>

## APPROVAL

The information presented in the Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan were approved by the hospital's Board of Directors at their October 2024 meeting. The Sanford Health Board of Trustees approved CHNA and Implementation Plans at their December 2024 meeting.

## APPENDIX

### Expanded Demographics<sup>1</sup>

The population of the Bemidji CHNA community is estimated to be 100,296 as of July 2023, which is a 2.7% increase over 2020 levels. A majority of the population increase is from Hubbard and Cass Counties, which increased by 782 and 1,356, respectively. Beltrami County, home of Bemidji, also saw increases of 480 during the same period. The CHNA community population growth outpaced the 0.5% population growth for the state of Minnesota.

Beltrami County has a larger share of its population under the age of five years (6.3%) and under the age of 18 years (24.5%) than the other counties in the CHNA community and the state. Conversely, Beltrami has a lower share of the population aged 65 years and over (17.4%) than Hubbard or Beltrami Counties and the state of Minnesota. Beltrami and Cass Counties also has a higher share of American Indian and Alaska Native alone at 22.0% and 11.7%, respectively. This compares to 1.4% for the state of Minnesota.

Economic and housing statistics are mixed across the counties. Hubbard and Cass Counties have similar median values of owner-occupied housing units (\$240,000 approx) compared to \$203,900 in Beltrami. Similarly, the two counties have higher owner-occupied housing rates, both above 80% compared to 67% for Beltrami. Median household incomes are all within the \$61,000-\$67,500 range but poverty level discrepancies are apparent. Beltrami has an estimated poverty rate of 17.3%, Cass has a rate of 13.8%, and Hubbard has a rate of 9.6%

Additional demographic statistics are available in the table below.

Fact	Hubbard, MN	Cass, MN	Beltrami, MN	Minnesota
Population estimates, July 1, 2023, (V2023)	22,132	31,446	46,718	5,737,915
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2023)	21,350	30,090	46,238	5,706,804
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2023, (V2023)	3.70%	4.50%	1.00%	0.50%
Persons under 5 years, percent	4.90%	4.80%	6.30%	5.80%
Persons under 18 years, percent	20.80%	20.20%	24.50%	22.60%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	26.80%	27.00%	17.40%	17.40%
White alone, percent	93.70%	84.50%	72.50%	82.60%
Black or African American alone, percent	0.60%	0.50%	0.90%	7.60%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	2.70%	11.70%	22.00%	1.40%
Asian alone, percent	0.50%	0.50%	0.80%	5.50%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.10%	Z	0.10%	0.10%
Two or More Races, percent	2.40%	2.80%	3.60%	2.80%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	2.90%	2.50%	2.70%	6.00%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	91.70%	83.20%	71.30%	77.60%

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>

Housing Units, July 1, 2023, (V2023)	14,792	24,794	21,976	2,575,411
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2018-2022	81.80%	84.10%	67.80%	72.30%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2018-2022	\$245,500	\$241,000	\$203,900	\$286,800
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$1,574	\$1,450	\$1,493	\$1,818
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2018-2022	\$552	\$497	\$560	\$639
Median gross rent, 2018-2022	\$827	\$874	\$935	\$1,178
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2018-2022	3.50%	3.60%	5.00%	12.00%
Households with a computer, percent, 2018-2022	91.20%	92.30%	92.50%	94.50%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2018-2022	85.20%	85.20%	86.90%	89.70%
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2018-2022	94.10%	93.90%	92.40%	93.70%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2018-2022	29.60%	24.80%	31.40%	38.20%
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2018-2022	9.30%	10.50%	10.40%	7.70%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	6.80%	8.20%	8.60%	5.30%
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2018-2022	57.20%	56.00%	62.90%	68.60%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2018-2022	54.60%	53.90%	60.50%	65.00%
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2018-2022	25.5	23.8	21.1	23.3
Median household income (in 2022 dollars), 2018-2022	\$67,197	\$61,970	\$62,173	\$84,313
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2022 dollars), 2018-2022	\$36,944	\$34,505	\$32,055	\$44,947
Persons in poverty, percent	9.60%	13.80%	17.30%	9.60%
Total employer establishments, 2021	602	867	1,251	152,836
Total employment, 2021	4,562	6,754	15,218	2,627,416

### **Leading Causes of Death**

The Minnesota Department of Health publishes the annual Minnesota County Health Tables, which includes county-level counts for ten leading causes of death. Counts for the counties included within the CHNA community are in the table below. Data for calendar year 2020 is presented alongside the total for 2016-2020.

Cancer, followed by Heart Disease, were the leading cause of death in the counties for the five-year period and for calendar year 2020 for the causes listed.

Leading Causes of Death Cause-Specific Death Counts for Ten Leading Causes											
County	Cancer	Heart Disease	COVID--19	Unintent. Injury	Alzheimer's	Stroke	CLRD	Diabetes	Chronic Liver Disease	Hypertension	Years
Beltrami	90	86	41	47	23	25	19	19	19	11	2020
Cass	84	61	24	25	13	6	21	16	11	4	2020
Hubbard	50	55	37	14	17	11	10	8	7	2	2020
Beltrami	414	381	--	172	107	106	99	79	43	24	2016-2020
Cass	430	293	--	127	54	60	112	64	39	--	2016-2020
Hubbard	279	214	--	59	84	44	55	43	--	--	2016-2020
<a href="https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/genstats/countytables/index.html">https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/mchs/genstats/countytables/index.html</a>											

## **Community Health Needs Assessment Survey**

The survey tool was delivered online via Qualtrics. The survey questions in printed format are presented below as a reference. Surveys made available in English, Spanish, Somali, and Sudanese.

Thank you for your interest in the Community Health Needs Assessment. Your confidential responses are vital to helping understand the factors driving the health needs of the community.

### **RESIDENCE**

Please enter your county of residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Please enter your zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_

### **COMMUNITY**

How would you rate the quality of HEALTH CARE available in your community?

Poor

Fair

Good

Very Good

Excellent

Don't Know

In your opinion, what is the most important HEALTH CARE issue your community faces?

How would you rate the quality of LONG-TERM CARE, NURSING HOMES & SENIOR HOUSING services in your community?

Poor

Fair

Good

Very Good

Excellent

Don't Know

Why did you give it that rating?

How would you rate the quality of CHILDCARE, DAYCARE & PRE-SCHOOL services in your community?

Poor

Fair

Good

Very Good

Excellent

Don't Know

Why did you give it that rating?

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**How would you rate the availability of AFFORDABLE HOUSING in your community?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent
- Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate the ability of residents to ACCESS DAILY TRANSPORTATION in your community?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent
- Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate your community's EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent
- Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate your community as being a SAFE place to live?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent
- Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate the ENVIRONMENTAL health of your community?**

*(clean air, clean water, etc.)*

- Poor  Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent  Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate the ability of residents to access HEALTHY & NUTRITIONAL FOODS in your community?**

- Poor  Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent  Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**How would you rate the ability of residents to access PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & EXERCISE OPPORTUNITIES in your community?**

- Poor  Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent  Don't Know

**Why did you give it that rating?**

**YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

**Overall, how would you rate YOUR current state of health & wellness?**

- Poor  Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent  Don't Know

**What is the biggest HEALTH CARE concern you or your family face on a regular basis?**

**Are there any health care services that you would like to see OFFERED or IMPROVED in your community?**

- Yes     Please answer next question
- No     Skip to 'Your Health Care Usage' section

**Please select the health care services you would like to see OFFERED or IMPROVED in your community. (Select all that apply)**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Addiction Treatment                              | <input type="radio"/> Heart Care                       |
| <input type="radio"/> Behavioral Health / Mental Health                | <input type="radio"/> Labor and Delivery               |
| <input type="radio"/> Cancer Care                                      | <input type="radio"/> Long-Term Care / Nursing Homes   |
| <input type="radio"/> Chiropractic Care                                | <input type="radio"/> Orthopedics and Sports Medicine  |
| <input type="radio"/> Dental Care                                      | <input type="radio"/> OBGYN / Womens' Care             |
| <input type="radio"/> Dermatology                                      | <input type="radio"/> Pediatrics / Childrens' Care     |
| <input type="radio"/> Emergency / Trama                                | <input type="radio"/> Walk-in / Urgent Care            |
| <input type="radio"/> Eye Services ( <i>Ophthalmology, Optometry</i> ) | <input type="radio"/> Other ( <i>please specify</i> ): |
| <input type="radio"/> Family Medicine / Primary Care                   |  |
| <input type="radio"/> General Surgery                                  |  |

**YOUR HEALTH CARE USAGE**

**Do you currently have a primary care physician or provider who you go to for general health issues?**

- Yes      No

**How long has it been since you last visited a physician / provider for a routine check up or screening?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Within the past year    | <input type="radio"/> More than 5 years ago |
| <input type="radio"/> Within the past 2 years | <input type="radio"/> Never                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Within the past 5 years |   |

**What has kept you from having a routine check-up?** (Select all that apply)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Cost/Inability to Pay              | <input type="radio"/> No child care                            |
| <input type="radio"/> COVID-19                           | <input type="radio"/> Wait time for appointments are too long  |
| <input type="radio"/> Don't feel welcomed or valued      | <input type="radio"/> Clinic hours are not convenient          |
| <input type="radio"/> Don't have insurance               | <input type="radio"/> Fear / I do not like going to the doctor |
| <input type="radio"/> My insurance is not accepted       | <input type="radio"/> Nothing / I do not need to see a doctor  |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of transportation             | <input type="radio"/> Don't have a primary care physician      |
| <input type="radio"/> Distance / lack of local providers | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Getting time off from work         |  |

**How would you rate your current ability to ACCESS health care services?**

- |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Poor                  | Fair                  | Good                  | Very Good             | Excellent             |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Why did you give it that rating?

**In the past year, did you or someone in your family need medical care, but did not receive the care needed?**

- Yes     No     Unsure

**What are the reasons you or a family member did not receive the care needed?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Cost/Inability to Pay              | <input type="radio"/> No child care                            |
| <input type="radio"/> COVID-19                           | <input type="radio"/> Wait time for appointments are too long  |
| <input type="radio"/> Don't feel welcomed or valued      | <input type="radio"/> Clinic hours are not convenient          |
| <input type="radio"/> Don't have insurance               | <input type="radio"/> Fear / I do not like going to the doctor |
| <input type="radio"/> My insurance is not accepted       | <input type="radio"/> Nothing / I do not need to see a doctor  |
| <input type="radio"/> Lack of transportation             | <input type="radio"/> Don't have a primary care physician      |
| <input type="radio"/> Distance / lack of local providers | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Getting time off from work         |  |

**TRAVELING FOR CARE**

**Have you or a member of your family TRAVELED to receive health care services outside of your community within the past 3 years?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, Where did you travel to?** *(If you traveled more than once, enter the most recent place you traveled to?)*

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

**What was the main reason you traveled for care?** *(select all that apply)*

- Referred by a physician
- Better / higher quality of care
- Medical emergency
- Needed a specialist / service was not available locally
- Second opinion
- Immediate / faster appointment
- On vacation / traveling / snowbirds
- Cost or insurance coverage
- Don't feel welcomed or valued by local providers

Other *(please specify)*

**YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE**

**Do you currently have health insurance?**

- Yes
- No

**Please indicate the source of your health insurance coverage.**

- Employer *(Your employer, spouse, parent, or someone else's employer)*
- Individual *(Coverage bought by you or your family)*
- Federal Marketplace *(Minnesota Care / Obamacare / Affordable Care Act)*
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Military *(Tricare, Champus, VA)*
- Indian Health Service *(IHS)*

Other *(please specify)*

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

**What is your sex?**

- Male  Female  Prefer not to answer

**Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer?**

- Yes  No  Prefer not to answer

**How many people live in your house, including yourself?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How many children under age 18 currently live with you in your household?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino in origin or descent?**

- Yes  No

**What is your race?** *(Select all that apply)*

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Caucasian or White
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American

Other *(please specify)*  
\_\_\_\_\_

**How long have you been a US Citizen?**

- I am not a US citizen  
    • Are you planning to become a US citizen?  Yes  No  Prefer not to answer
- 0 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- More than 10 years

**What language is spoken most frequently in your home?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your current marital status?**

- Married  Divorced
- Single, never married  Widowed
- Unmarried couple living together  Separated

**Which of the following best describes your current living situation?**

- House (*owned*)
- Apartment or House (*rental*)
- Homeless
- Some other arrangement

**What is your primary mode of daily transportation?**

- Automobile/Truck (*owned or leased*)
- Online Ride Service (*Uber / Lyft*)
- Taxi Service
- Public Transportation (*bus / subway / rail*)
- Other (*please specify*)
- Walk
- Bicycle
- Family, Friends or Neighbors
- I do not have a primary mode of daily transportation

**What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (*high school diploma or equivalent including GED*)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree in college (*2-year*)
- Bachelor's degree in college (*4-year*)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (*JD, MD*)

**Your current employment status is best described as:**

- Employed (*full-time*)
- Employed (*part-time*)
- Self-employed
- Furloughed
- Not employed, looking for work
- Not employed, not looking for work
- Retired
- Disabled or unable to work

**What is your total household income from all sources?**

- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$34,999
- \$35,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 or more

Thank you for completing the survey. Your responses ensure more accurate and targeted solutions to address identified health issues.