



**CULLMAN**  
REGIONAL

**Cullman Regional Medical Center, Inc.**

**2019**  
**Community Health Needs Assessment**  
**Implementation Strategy**

# Overview

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## Introduction

Cullman Regional Medical Center, Inc. (CRMC) is a 145-bed acute care hospital located in Cullman, Alabama. CRMC is the only hospital in Cullman County, a county consisting of more than 755 square miles located in north central Alabama. CRMC is designated a Level III Trauma Center and provides a wide range of services.

CRMC completed a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that was approved and adopted by the CRMC Board of Directors on June 25, 2019. The implementation strategy to address health needs identified in the 2019 CHNA was approved and adopted by the CRMC Board of Directors on October 1, 2019. Both the CHNA and implementation strategy were developed in compliance with Internal Revenue Code, section 501(r).

## Evaluation Process and Criteria Utilized

Community health needs were identified based on information gathered through primary and secondary data collection and analyses, and discussions with the CHNA Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee, and were grouped into seven major categories. These areas were prioritized by the CHNA Advisory Committee by utilizing criteria related to the number or proportion of people effected by the health need; the ability to meet the need with resources available; the estimated feasibility and effectiveness of possible interventions; whether addressing the need builds on existing organizational competencies; the importance the community places on addressing the health need; and the opportunity to intervene at the prevention level. The result was the identification and ranking of seven significant health needs.

## Significant Health Needs

Through the process described above and in the Assessment Methodology section of the CHNA, CRMC developed the following prioritized list of significant health needs:

1. Heart disease
2. Access to Care/Continuity of Care
3. Obesity
4. Diabetes
5. Substance Abuse/Mental Health
6. Smoking/Vaping
7. Cancer

## **Significant Health Needs to Be Addressed**

Based on the evaluation criteria described previously, including prioritizing the health needs with the strongest alignment to its mission and ability and capacity to address those health needs, CRMC identified the five highest priority health needs below as those it will address.

1. Heart disease
2. Access to Care/Continuity of Care
3. Obesity
4. Diabetes
5. Substance Abuse/Mental Health

### ***Heart Disease***

Heart disease is the number one killer in Cullman County, and the heart disease mortality rate in Cullman County is substantially higher than either the Alabama statewide rate or the national rate. Also, several focus group and interview participants indicated that heart disease, as well as several causes of and risk factors for heart disease, were a significant health issue in Cullman County.

### ***Access to Care/Continuity of Care***

Access to care, including continuity of care, were identified as a significant health need through both primary and secondary data. Several focus group and interview participants identified access to care as a significant health issue, particularly for the uninsured or underinsured. Secondary data supports this concern, with a low level of affluence, and a high proportion of uninsured population in Cullman County. In addition, the primary care population to physician ratio is significantly higher in Cullman County than statewide and national ratios.

### ***Obesity***

More than one-third of the population of Cullman County is considered obese, which is a considerably higher rate than the national average. The significance of obesity was also the most frequently mentioned health need by focus group and interview participants. Additionally, obesity is one of the most significant risk factors for and causes of numerous other health issues experienced by Cullman County residents, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer.

### ***Diabetes***

The incidence of diagnosed diabetes has continued to increase, reaching 14.4 percent of the adult population in Cullman County in 2015. Additionally, diabetes was recognized by several focus group and interview participants as a significant health issue in Cullman County.

## ***Substance Abuse/Mental Health***

Although there is little secondary data available specific to behavioral health issues at the county level, both substance abuse and mental health were mentioned by numerous focus group and interview participants as a significant and increasingly growing health issue facing Cullman County residents.

## **Significant Health Need That Will Not Be Addressed**

### ***Smoking/Vaping***

The prevalence of smoking among Cullman County residents is below the Alabama statewide rate and above the national rate, and was identified by few focus group and interview participants as one of the most significant health issues. As identified previously, CRMC provides, and expects to continue providing, numerous smoking and tobacco cessation services to the community. Additionally, CRMC has designated its campus as smoke- and tobacco-free.

### ***Cancer***

Cancer is the number two cause of death in Cullman County, and the cancer mortality rate in Cullman County is slightly higher than the national rate. Few focus group and interview participants identified cancer as a significant health issue in Cullman County. Although not addressing cancer specifically in its CHNA implementation strategy, CRMC provides, and will continue providing, a number of services related to the detection, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, as well as community education programs focused on the prevention and early detection of cancer.

Of the significant health needs identified, CRMC has determined it is most appropriate to focus its efforts and resources on heart disease, access to care/continuity of care, obesity, diabetes and substance abuse/mental health. CRMC believes its resources are best focused on the highest priority health needs identified. Regarding smoking/vaping and cancer, CRMC expects to continue to offer the services it has offered historically. However, CRMC does not intend to address smoking/vaping and cancer specifically at this time due to several factors, including their lower priority, the difficulty in intervening in these health issues at the prevention level, the ineffectiveness of the possible interventions, as well as the existence of other organizations focused on providing these services to the community.

# Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy specifies the community health needs CRMC intends to address, together with the goal, actions CRMC intends to take to address the goal/health need, anticipated impact of the actions, programs and services CRMC plans to commit, and collaborative partners.

## Heart Disease

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Reduce the mortality rate for heart disease in Cullman County.</b>
<b>Actions CRMC Intends to Take to Address Goal/Health Need:</b>	
1.	Continue to operate the Community Paramedic Program through Cullman Emergency Medical Services and multidisciplinary Readmissions Team with a targeted focus on congestive heart failure (CHF), including use of a dedicated Case Manager and conducting regular meetings with area nursing homes, home health and hospice agencies, and assisted living facilities to improve coordination of care.
2.	Continue to provide free health screenings at community events at locations throughout Cullman County, including targeting low income and minority populations, and referrals to an appropriate physician for follow-up care.
3.	Expand interventional cardiology coverage through recruitment of an additional interventional cardiologist.
4.	Improve screening and early detection of heart disease through promotion of CRMC's new diagnostic tests, including calcium scoring and CT angiography.
5.	Continue use of CRMC's Team focused on heart failure, providing specific education and tools/toolkits to heart failure patients, and tracking specific heart failure statistics. Continue to expand heart failure education at patient discharge.
6.	Continue to partner with the American Heart Association related to multiple initiatives.
7.	Recruit additional general cardiologists and physician extenders.
<b>Anticipated Impact of Actions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the impact of heart disease on Cullman County residents.</li> <li>• Improve the care coordination for CHF patients, including lowering of readmission rates.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people being screened for signs of heart disease and heart disease risk factors.</li> <li>• Expand CRMC's interventional cardiology coverage to five days per week.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people that are diagnosed with heart disease earlier so treatment can begin sooner.</li> <li>• Increase access to general cardiologists and physician extenders.</li> </ul>	

## Heart Disease (Continued)

<b>Programs and Resources CRMC Plans to Commit:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support/funding for Community Paramedic Program and multidisciplinary Readmissions Team.</li><li>• Support/funding for free health screenings.</li><li>• Support/funding for recruitment of additional interventional cardiologist, general cardiologist, and other cardiology-related staffing.</li><li>• Support/funding for new CRMC heart disease diagnostic tests.</li><li>• Support/funding for CRMC's Team focused on heart failure, including education, and tools/toolkits.</li><li>• Support/funding for the American Heart Association partnership initiatives.</li></ul>
<b>Collaborative Partners:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cullman EMS</li><li>• Area nursing homes, home health and hospice agencies, and assisted living facilities</li><li>• Area community organizations, including churches, businesses, parks and recreation organizations, civic clubs, schools, and physician offices</li></ul>

## Access to Care/Continuity of Care

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Improve access to care and continuity of care for Cullman County residents.</b>
<b>Actions CRMC Intends to Take to Address Goal/Health Need:</b>	
1.	Continue to operate and grow the Community Paramedic Program through Cullman Emergency Medical Services, with a re-centered focus on patients discharged to home as the most vulnerable population of patients.
2.	Recruit additional primary care and specialty physicians to serve the unmet needs of the community.
3.	Continue to use/expand use of multidisciplinary Readmissions Team and participate in the North Alabama Readmission Coalition, including incorporating best practices and partnering with nursing homes, home health and hospice agencies, and assisted living facilities to improve care coordination.
4.	Continue to partner with and build patient bridge to Good Samaritan Health Clinic, including the provision of a nurse practitioner and other financial support, promoting awareness in community among local physicians, and working to minimize patient paperwork and facilitate the application process.
5.	Continue to provide free health screenings at community events at locations throughout Cullman County, including targeting low income and minority populations, and referrals to an appropriate physician for follow-up care. (Heart Disease Action #2)
6.	Continue to assist individuals in health insurance enrollment, including contracting with a Medicaid eligibility provider.
7.	Continue to operate a physician referral line and continue to enhance physician information, including scheduling online physician appointments, available on CRMC's website.
8.	Continue to provide nurse navigators for indigent cancer patients.
9.	Continue to partner with and serve as a sponsor of The Link of Cullman County.
10.	Make primary care telehealth services available to the community.
<b>Anticipated Impact of Actions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the overall health and quality of life of Cullman County residents.</li> <li>• Improve the care coordination and lowering of readmission rates.</li> <li>• Improve and expand access to primary care and specialty services for Cullman County residents, including uninsured and underinsured individuals.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people receiving health screenings, including low income and minority groups, and receiving appropriate follow-up care.</li> <li>• Increase enrollment in Medicaid.</li> </ul>	

## Access to Care/Continuity of Care (Continued)

### Programs and Resources CRMC Plans to Commit:

- Support/funding for Community Paramedic Program and multidisciplinary Readmissions Team.
- Staffing and funding support for free health education and screening programs.
- Support/funding for recruitment of additional physicians and other staff to improve access.
- Support/funding of the Good Samaritan Health Clinic.
- Support/funding of free health screenings in areas of Cullman County with low income and minority populations.
- Support/funding for contracting with Medicaid eligibility provider.
- Support for and sponsorship of The Link of Cullman County.
- Support/funding for primary care telehealth system.

### Collaborative Partners:

- Cullman EMS
- North Alabama Readmissions Coalition
- Good Samaritan Health Clinic
- Area community organizations, including churches, businesses, parks and recreation organizations, civic clubs, schools, and physician offices.
- Area nursing homes, home health and hospice agencies, and assisted living facilities
- The Link of Cullman County

## Obesity

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Reduce the proportion of Cullman County residents that are obese.</b>
<b>Actions CRMC Intends to Take to Address Goal/Health Need:</b>	
1.	<p>Continue to work toward changing negative health behaviors through community health education/outreach, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding the number of CRMC's industry partners (providing corporate health screening and education programs, including fitness and nutrition education);</li> <li>• Providing education to community businesses regarding ensuring a healthy work environment (using American Heart Association tools);</li> <li>• Expanding Scale Back Alabama to the community and industry, including providing public weigh-in sites;</li> <li>• Providing health tips on social media;</li> <li>• Offering Weight Watchers on CRMC's campus;</li> <li>• Offering nutrition education to the community; and</li> <li>• Making low calorie healthy recipes and nutrition tips available on CRMC's website.</li> </ul>
2.	Continue to partner with North Alabama Agriplex to promote healthy lifestyles, including offering nutrition education, healthy cooking classes (using the mobile kitchen), and supporting use of healthy produce.
3.	Develop and implement an employee campaign with the goal of weight reduction, including offering prizes.
<b>Anticipated Impact of Actions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of Cullman County residents that are obese.</li> <li>• Increase the number of Cullman County residents that eat a healthy diet and exercise on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people that attend educational sessions or learn about healthy nutrition, diet and exercise through CRMC's industry initiatives, website and social media efforts.</li> </ul>	
<b>Programs and Resources CRMC Plans to Commit:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support/funding for designated employee to oversee CRMC's community wellness initiatives.</li> <li>• Staffing and funding support for free health education and screening programs.</li> </ul>	
<b>Collaborative Partners:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight Watchers</li> <li>• North Alabama Agriplex</li> <li>• Area community organizations, including churches, businesses, parks and recreation organizations, civic clubs, schools, and physician offices</li> <li>• Alabama Cooperative Extension Agency</li> </ul>	

# Diabetes

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Reduce the proportion of Cullman County residents that are diabetic.</b>
<b>Actions CRMC Intends to Take to Address Goal/Health Need:</b>	
1.	See Obesity Implementation Strategy.
2.	Enhance diabetic education opportunities throughout the community, including to wound care patients.
3.	Investigate opportunities for case management staff to assist with providing diabetic supplies to indigent patients, including referring eligible patients to the Good Samaritan Health Clinic.
4.	Investigate the feasibility of offering free diabetic education services.
<b>Anticipated Impact of Actions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of Cullman County residents that are diabetic.</li> <li>• Increase the number of Cullman County residents that eat a healthy diet and exercise on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Increase the number of people that attend educational sessions or learn about healthy nutrition, diet and exercise through CRMC’s industry initiatives, website and social media efforts.</li> <li>• Increase access to, and use of, appropriate diabetic supplies among Cullman County residents, including indigent patients.</li> </ul>	
<b>Programs and Resources CRMC Plans to Commit:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Obesity Implementation Strategy.</li> <li>• Support/funding for provision of diabetic supplies to indigent patients.</li> </ul>	
<b>Collaborative Partners:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight Watchers</li> <li>• North Alabama Agriplex</li> <li>• Area community organizations, including churches, businesses, parks and recreation organizations, civic clubs, schools, and physician offices.</li> <li>• Good Samaritan Health Clinic</li> <li>• Alabama Cooperative Extension Agency</li> </ul>	

## Substance Abuse/Mental Health

<b>Goal:</b>	<b>Improve access to services for Cullman County residents with substance abuse/mental health issues.</b>
<b>Actions CRMC Intends to Take to Address Goal/Health Need:</b>	
1.	Recruit a psychiatrist to oversee behavioral health services, including an outpatient behavioral health clinic and providing inpatient consults.
2.	Develop and operate an outpatient behavioral health facility.
3.	Investigate the feasibility of hiring additional behavioral health providers.
4.	Develop protocols, written by the psychiatrist, for CRMC's Emergency Department (ED) to assist ED physicians and staff in treating behavioral health patients in the most appropriate manner.
5.	Purchase and operate a transport van to be used to transport behavioral health patients to facilities that offer appropriate treatment.
6.	Remodel CRMC's ED to include behavioral health seclusion rooms that can be used to house patients waiting for inpatient treatment.
7.	Work together with WellStone Behavioral Health and the court system to develop a system to treat opioid and alcohol abuse.
<b>Anticipated Impact of Actions:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to behavioral health care among Cullman County residents.</li> <li>• Improve the care settings for both behavioral health and non-behavioral health patients presenting to CRMC's ED.</li> <li>• Improve the care coordination of behavioral health patients in Cullman County.</li> </ul>	
<b>Programs and Resources CRMC Plans to Commit:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support/funding for recruitment of a psychiatrist.</li> <li>• Support/funding for purchase and operation of transport van.</li> <li>• Funding for required facility changes.</li> <li>• Support/funding for operation of outpatient behavioral health clinic.</li> </ul>	
<b>Collaborative Partners:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WellStone Behavioral Health</li> <li>• The Sanctuary at the Woodlands</li> <li>• The Foundry Farm Recovery Center</li> <li>• Lighthouse, Inc.</li> <li>• Restoring Women Outreach</li> <li>• Alcoholics Anonymous – Cullman</li> <li>• SKG Foundation</li> <li>• Court System</li> <li>• The Link of Cullman County</li> </ul>	