



# Community Health Improvement Plan 2023-2025

## Carrier Clinic

### *A Dedicated Behavioral Health Hospital*

Carrier Clinic®, a behavioral health system, has been a trusted source of compassionate help and supportive healing for patients and their families since we opened our doors in 1910.

One of the largest independent, nonprofit central Jersey behavioral health facilities, Carrier Clinic specializes in inpatient psychiatric treatment and treatment and rehabilitation for substance abuse. We provide a complete array of expert care and education for adolescents and teens, adults, and older adults on the inpatient and residential levels. Outpatient services are provided for ECT treatment and drug abuse addiction.

Ours is a safe, compassionate, and respectful environment, set on a beautiful 100+ acre country setting at the foothills of the Sourland Mountains, in centrally-located Belle Mead, NJ. Our caring, supportive staff is among the best in their respective fields, all driven by the similar goal of returning each individual back to their family, workplace, community, and the things they enjoy.

### *About Hackensack Meridian Health - Keep Getting Better*

Hackensack Meridian Health is a leading not-for-profit health care organization that is the largest, most comprehensive and truly integrated health care network in New Jersey, offering a complete range of medical services, innovative research and life-enhancing care. Hackensack Meridian Health comprises 18 hospitals throughout New Jersey, from Bergen to Ocean counties. Hackensack Meridian Health has more than 36,000 team members, and over 7,000 physicians and is a distinguished leader in health care philanthropy, committed to the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

## CHNA Background

In alignment with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and applicable federal requirements for not-for-profit hospitals, Hackensack Meridian Health Carrier Clinic completed a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that was adopted by the Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors on December 7, 2022.

The Carrier Clinic 2022 CHNA was conducted by Professional Research Consultants, Inc. (PRC) for Hackensack Meridian Health to identify the health needs within the hospital's service area. The assessment incorporates data from multiple sources, including primary research (through the PRC Community Health Survey and PRC Online Key Informant Survey) as well as secondary research (vital statistics and other existing health-related data). The complete CHNA report can be found at <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/About-Us/community-health-needs-assessment>

In addition to assessing health indicators, the 2022 CHNA took a close look at social determinants of health (SDoH) such as food insecurity, housing, transportation, education, and other factors. Furthermore, lessons learned about inequities in opportunity, access, education, and trust revealed by COVID-19 were taken into consideration.

## Determining Community Health Priorities

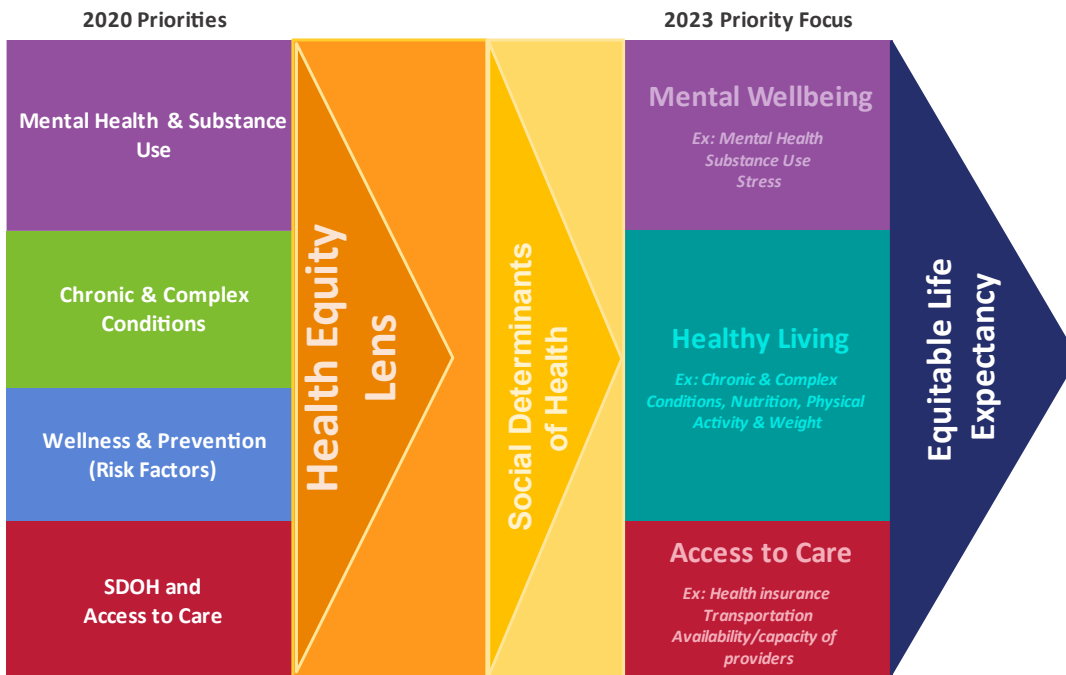
In reviewing the data from the 2022 CHNA, it is evident that the priorities identified in 2019 remain pressing needs but in different ways due to the myriad impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Existing inequities in opportunity, access, education, and trust were exacerbated by the pandemic. The inequities highlighted by the pandemic elevated health equity as a lens in which health priorities were redefined from 2019 for Hackensack Meridian Health as a network, and Carrier Clinic in particular.

Hackensack Meridian Health conducted virtual community forums in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the network service areas with representatives from each hospital and key community stakeholders during August 2022. During the forums, an overview of the findings from the 2022 CHNA report for each region was shared by PRC, Inc. Following the data presentation, 35th Street Consultants presented the proposed framework for this CHIP and led the prioritization discussion in the breakout groups. Fifty-five people participated in the Central Region Community Partner Forum on August 17, 2022, representing agencies and institutions throughout the region, representing diverse perspectives. During discussion, there was overwhelming support for the health equity strategy and endorsed the reframed priority areas for 2023-2025.

Using a health equity lens, the goals were reframed to achieve equitable life expectancy for all people, regardless of their zip code, race, ethnicity, preferred language, gender identity, or other factor. When the needs, priorities, and activities from 2022 are viewed through a health equity lens, it becomes clear that social determinants of health (SDoH) have an impact on every identified area and are incorporated in each rather than as a distinct priority.

The final priority areas are – **Mental Wellbeing, Healthy Living, and Access to Care.**

## Prioritized Health Needs Summary



## Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

The intent of our CHIP is to be responsive to community needs and expectations and create a plan that can be effectively executed to leverage hospital and network resources, as well as community partners.

A CHIP is a dynamic rather than a static plan and should be modified and adjusted as external environmental factors change, including market conditions, availability of community resources, and engagement from community partners. Furthermore, a CHIP should build on and leverage prior success while simultaneously adjusting strategies and actions as obstacles are encountered.

The following defines the types of programmatic strategies and interventions that guided the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan.

- **Prevention and Awareness:** Health promotion and disease prevention programs focus on keeping people healthy. These initiatives aim to engage and empower individuals and communities to choose healthy behaviors and make changes that reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and other morbidities.
- **Build Capacity:** Efforts which aim to help individuals navigate the healthcare system and improve access to services when and where they need them.
- **Strengthen Community Partnership:** Includes collaborations, partnerships, and support of providers and community organizations across multiple sectors (e.g., health, public health, education, public safety, and community health).

## Significant Health Needs That Will Not Be Addressed

Carrier Clinic acknowledges the wide range of health issues that emerged from the CHNA process. It is important to note that there are community health needs identified through Carrier Clinic's 2022 CHNA process that were not prioritized for inclusion in this CHIP. As a specialty inpatient behavioral health hospital, Carrier Clinic determined that it could effectively focus on only those health needs which are the most pressing, under-addressed and within its ability to influence. Therefore, the priority area of Healthy Living, while a network-wide priority, is not included as a priority area for Carrier Clinic. The following healthy living and other needs were identified in the 2022 CHNA process for Carrier Clinic, but are not prioritized for this CHIP:

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Heart Disease and Stroke
- Injury and Violence
- Tobacco Use
- Nutrition, Physical Activity and Weight
- Oral Health
- Potentially Disabling Conditions
- Respirator Disease
- Eye Exams

Because Carrier Clinic is a specialty hospital, it does not have the clinical expertise to have meaningful direct and positive impact on the range of healthy living needs identified in the CHNA in the short or long term. Carrier Clinic remains open and willing to continue to work with hospitals across the HMH network and other public and private partners to address issues impacting healthy living and other facets of health and wellbeing as opportunities arise.

## Priority Area: Mental Wellbeing

The 2022 CHNA for Carrier Clinic identified the following sub-priorities within the Mental Wellbeing priority area. Sub-priorities were determined based on areas of opportunity uncovered through the CHNA process.

### Sub-priorities identified from the 2022 CHNA:

- “Fair/Poor” Mental Health
- Diagnosed Depression
- Symptoms of Chronic Depression
- Receiving Treatment for Mental Health
- Difficulty Obtaining Mental Health Services
- Key Informants: Mental health ranked as a top concern
- Unintentional Drug-Related Deaths
- Illicit Drug Use
- Referred/Treated for Rx Addiction

Priority Area: Mental Wellbeing		
Goal: A community where all people have access to high quality behavioral health care, and experience mental wellness and recovery		
	Objectives	Strategies/Action Steps
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue behavioral health education and increase participation among diverse and vulnerable populations</li> <li>▪ Support public health in local prevention and emergency initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organize lectures related to substance use, healthy social, emotional, and mental health that are inclusive and accessible to diverse and vulnerable populations</li> </ul>
Build Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand care delivery methods for behavioral healthcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase care delivery options for diverse and vulnerable populations</li> </ul>
Strengthen Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase, strengthen and evaluate partnerships with community-based organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participate in local and regional health coalitions and task forces to lend support to activities promoting mental wellness for all</li> <li>▪ Identify and deepen partnerships with community-based organizations that serve diverse and vulnerable populations</li> </ul>

## Priority Area: Access to Care

The 2022 CHNA for Carrier Clinic identified the following sub-priorities within the Access to Care priority area. Sub-priorities were determined based on areas of opportunity uncovered through the CHNA process.

### Sub-priorities identified from the 2022 CHNA:

- Inconvenient Office Hours
- Cost of Prescriptions
- Cost of Physician Visits
- Appointment Availability
- Finding a Physician
- Specific Source of Ongoing Medical Care
- Ratings of Local Health Care
- Key Informants: Access to health care as a top concern

Priority Area: Access to Care		
Goal: All people will have the opportunity to be as healthy as possible, regardless of where they live, work or play		
	Objectives	Strategies/ Action Steps
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce common barriers to accessing health care for diverse and vulnerable populations</li> <li>▪ Strengthen cultural competency training for team members and physicians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase screening for social determinants of health (SDoH) and make appropriate referrals to community-based resources</li> <li>▪ Increase implicit bias and cultural competency training amongst all team members</li> </ul>
Build Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hire, retain and promote a diverse workforce</li> <li>▪ Develop and leverage alternative care delivery models to improve access to care for all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leverage behavioral health best practices to enhance care across the network</li> <li>▪ Continue to provide support and training for ReaL (race ethnicity, and language) and SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) data collection tools, methods, use</li> </ul>
Strengthen Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase, strengthen and evaluate partnerships with community-based organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participate in local and regional health coalitions and task forces to lend support to health equity</li> <li>▪ Identify and deepen partnerships with community-based organizations that serve diverse and vulnerable populations</li> </ul>

## Alignment with New Jersey State Health Improvement Plan

Health needs identified in the CHNA research were confirmed by community stakeholders and refined through collaborative discussion. Local concerns were then aligned with the statewide health priorities in the **New Jersey State Health Improvement Plan (2020)**. This approach ensures priority areas reflect local concerns and community-generated strategies for action while establishing a connection to statewide initiatives. The table below shows the identified health needs in the New Jersey State Health Improvement Plan and the alignment of these issues with priorities with Hackensack Meridian Health priorities.

New Jersey State Health Improvement Priorities	Hackensack Meridian Health Priorities	
Health Equity	Health Equity Lens	
Mental Health and Substance Use	Mental Wellbeing	
Nutrition, Physical Activity and Chronic Disease	Healthy Living	
Immunizations	Healthy Living	Access to Care
Birth Outcomes	Healthy Living	Access to Care
Alignment of State and Community Health Improvement Planning	Applies to all HMM priorities	

## Next Steps

Community health improvement requires collaboration among community-based organizations, policy makers, funders, and many other partners. A CHIP is a dynamic guide to move from data to action, to coordinate community resources, and to measure progress as a community. The Carrier Clinic CHIP outlines specific actions to address our community’s most pressing health needs. We invite your partnership as we monitor and share our progress toward these efforts during the 2023-2025 reporting cycle. For more information about Carrier Clinic’s community health improvement initiatives, please visit <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/About-Us/community-health-needs-assessment>

### Our Research Partners:



A New Jersey certified Small Business Enterprise (SBE) and Women Owned Business Enterprise (WBE), 35th Street Consulting specializes in transforming data into action that advances health and social equity through practical and impactful strategies. Our interdisciplinary team of community development experts, health planners, researchers, and data analysts have worked with hundreds of healthcare providers, payors, public health departments, government agencies, health and human service providers, and other community-based organizations to direct action and funding to reimagine policies and achieve realistic, measurable social impact.



[www.PRCCustomResearch.com](http://www.PRCCustomResearch.com)

Professional Research Consultants (PRC) is a nationally recognized health care consulting firm with extensive experience conducting Community Health Needs Assessments in hundreds of communities across the United States since 1994.