



# GRHS COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2022

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*An assessment of the health and wellness of Pope County conducted by Glacial Ridge Health System and community partners to better understand the needs and assets of the community we serve and to identify priority health needs.*

Approved by Glacial Ridge Hospital Board of Directors 12/19/2022



GLACIAL RIDGE  
HEALTH SYSTEM  
*heartfelt care®*

# GRHS COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2022

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## Executive Summary

Glacial Ridge Hospital performs a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to assess the current health status of our community every three years. Hospitals utilize available public health data and community input to identify the community's needs and direct their community benefit activities to address them. Glacial Ridge Health System's (GRHS) primary service area is Pope County, one of the 5-counties served by Horizon Public Health (HPH). Horizon Public Health is a fully integrated local public health organization that serves the residents and communities in Pope, Douglas, Stevens, Grant, and Traverse Counties. Throughout the past few years, two GRHS staff participated in public health's Community Partnership Team and leadership team meetings to review and discuss information during the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and the priorities selected. Horizon Public Health completed its comprehensive CHA in 2022; it included statistics and information specific to each county.

During the hospital's CHNA process in 2022, Glacial Ridge Health System (GRHS) formed a team of GRHS staff and community leaders with knowledge of the population's needs and resources. GRHS staff included the clinic manager, discharge planners/social service designees, and marketing staff participating in Horizon Public Health's CHA. Community leaders on the hospital's CHNA team represented Horizon Public Health, Pope County Family Collaborative/Early Childhood Initiative (ECI), and the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership.

In preparation for the CHNA meeting, team members reviewed summary pages from Horizon Public Health's 2022 Community Health Assessment (CHA). The 5-counties served by HPH continue to be nearly homogenous, and the summary pages in the CHA apply to all. Team members had access to the complete CHA online for more details. Additionally, Horizon Public Health's community partnership

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team identified community health needs in the CHA. It ranked them based on community impact, the potential for change, economic feasibility, and community resources.

After discussion and sharing additional information at the in-person meeting, the CHNA team agreed to adopt Horizon Public Health's CHA for the hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment. In addition, the team agreed with the top 10 identified health concerns for GRHS' service area and concurred with the health priorities of HPH. The top three priorities for our community are Access to Care, Chronic Disease/Obesity, and Developing Community Resilience.

Horizon Public Health is creating its Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for the next five years. GRHS staff have agreed to be on their Community Leadership Team and other teams leading the initiatives for the three priority areas. Following approval of the CHNA by the Glacial Ridge Hospital District Board of Directors, GRHS will write an Implementation Strategy for board approval by May 2023.

We are pleased to share the following report with you.

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## **Impact of 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment**

Glacial Ridge Health System completed a Community Health Needs Assessment and prepared the corresponding implementation strategy for Glacial Ridge Hospital's service area in 2019. The documents were made available to the public and posted online.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its response created challenges and opportunities for Glacial Ridge Health System (GRHS) and its ability to advance its strategic approaches regarding the implementation plan.

Additionally, many of our partner agencies/organizations were involved in public health efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community and schools and provide testing and vaccinations. As a result, the challenges faced by GRHS and our partner organizations required additional adaptations.

This minimized progress of the implementation plan from GRHS' 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment. A report on the 2019 Implementation Strategy was completed and shared with community partners during the 2022 CHNA (Appendix A).

Glacial Ridge Hospital received no public/community comments or feedback on the 2019 CHNA and Implementation Plan. However, if there were any, they would have been considered during this 2022 CHNA.

## **Overview**

### **Glacial Ridge Health System**

The mission of Glacial Ridge Health System is to provide the highest quality "heartfelt" care to the communities we serve. Glacial Ridge Hospital is an independent, not-for-profit, 22-bed Critical Access District Hospital located in Glenwood, Minnesota, approximately 120 miles northwest of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Glacial Ridge Hospital is a rural healthcare facility not affiliated with a larger

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hospital system. Tertiary services are provided by St. Cloud Hospital in St. Cloud, approximately one hour from Glenwood.

Glacial Ridge Hospital was a city-owned hospital until October of 1976, when several townships and cities in Pope County joined forces to form a district hospital. The following cities and townships constitute the Glacial Ridge Hospital District: Grove Lake, Chippewa Falls, Gilchrist, Glenwood, Lake Johanna, Reno, Bangor, Westport, and Leven, and the cities of Brooten, Glenwood, Starbuck, Villard, Westport, Long Beach, and Sedan.

Glacial Ridge Hospital is governed by a district Board of Directors. Directors are elected to represent each township and city included in the hospital district, and they are dedicated to providing our patients with the finest medical care possible.

Glacial Ridge Health System encompasses a hospital, three primary care rural health clinics in Glenwood, Starbuck, and Brooten; a wellness center; Homecare and Hospice programs; a full-service eye care center, and basic life support ambulance service with ambulances stationed in Brooten, Glenwood, and Starbuck. Additionally, the Glacial Ridge Hospital Foundation supports and directs the operations of a 59-unit independent living facility for seniors across the street from the hospital.

Acute care services provided at Glacial Ridge Hospital include inpatient, maternity, surgery (general, orthopedic, podiatric), emergency, radiology, laboratory, ambulance, pharmacy, rehabilitative therapy, and anesthesia. In addition, outreach services offered at the hospital continue to expand in terms of scope and quantity of visits.

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In FYE 2022, 63.6% of inpatient volume was Medicare and 10.3% was Medicaid. The remaining 26.1% of the payer mix was divided among managed care, commercial insurance, self-pay, and charity care. The Medicare mix between inpatient, outpatient, and clinic visits was 53.1% in FYE 2022.

## **Service Area**

The population served by Glacial Ridge Hospital in Pope County is approximately 11,403, with a service area of nearly 15,000 encompassing portions of the adjoining counties: Stearns, Swift, Stevens, and Douglas. GRHS identified the primary and secondary service areas by zip code reports of patients utilizing healthcare at GRHS and the 2021 U.S. Census estimates for Pope County.

Pope County is 670 square miles with a population density of 17 persons per square mile compared to the Minnesota state average of 71 (U.S. Census, 2020).

## **Methodology**

### **Organize**

GRHS staff members tasked with leading the hospital's CHNA have been part of Horizon Public Health's Community Health Assessment and its Community Health Improvement Plans in recent years, along with GRHS' CHNA since 2013. In 2022, Horizon Public Health completed its Community Needs Assessment (CNA) that included GRHS' primary service area of Pope County. As a result, GRHS did not have to duplicate the process of gathering and analyzing the data for the hospital's CHNA.

GRHS invited community partners to a CHNA team meeting in November, including Horizon Public Health's Community Strategist, a Horizon Public Health Educator/SHIP Coordinator, and the Pope County Family Collaborative Coordinator/Early Childhood Initiative Director. The Coordinator has decades of knowledge and experience serving Pope County residents. Along with public health

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initiatives, these programs serve the community's medically underserved, low-income, and minority populations. CHNA team members also included GRHS' clinic manager and hospital discharge planners/social service designees. They are on several internal committees focusing on patient health, community needs and resources, and health equity.

### **Gather and Analyze Data**

Horizon Public Health is a fully integrated local public health organization that serves the residents and communities in Pope, Douglas, Stevens, Grant, and Traverse Counties. Horizon Public Health's recent CHA included a complete evaluation of the demographics, health status, needs, and statistics with detailed data for each county and a comparative analysis. The counties are generally similar in demographics and health concerns.

In partnership, GRHS' CHNA team reviewed and discussed public health's Community Health Assessment.

This process was designed to:

- Incorporate existing public data to access the health needs, disparities, assets, and forces of change in our community without duplication of resources
- Collaborate with Horizon Public Health (HPH) in their recent Community Health Assessment (CHA) findings and identification of the top priority health needs for the service area of GRHS

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Horizon Public Health utilized a variety of information and data sources and gathered community input to analyze community health issues. The data sources included:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- CDC and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Data
- County Health Rankings
- American Society for Microbiology
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Department of Health Electronic Records
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Hospital Discharge Data
- Minnesota Pharmacy Prescriptions Monitoring Program
- Minnesota State Demographic Center
- Minnesota Compass
- Minnesota Student Survey
- Substance Use in Minnesota, SUMN.org
- Data gathered from local focus groups, community dialogues, visioning, and community events

HPH directly engaged hundreds of stakeholders representing a broad spectrum of Pope County organizations and community members. These conversations included individuals or organizations representing those living in poverty, experiencing adverse physical and mental health impacts, minorities, and those medically underserved and uninsured. Page 99 of Horizon Public Health's CHA lists all members of their Community Partnership Team.

One tool Horizon Public Health used was a community health survey to understand better how the environment in which people live, work, play, and age shapes overall health. It was available in English and Spanish, and participants could complete it online or by calling to receive a paper copy. They asked

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residents of each county to participate, and 66 community members in Pope County completed the survey.

Through all of these initiatives, HPH gained input on community perceptions, resources, individual and group needs, and ideas for improving the health of the population and healthcare services.

### **Community Profile**

The population of Pope County has remained stable and is homogenous. From the 2010 census to the estimated population of Pope County from the US Census as of July 1, 2021, there has been minimal change in the community's population size and demographics. Future projections indicate a nearly steady population over the next twenty years.

#### **Age**

Pope County's population has an older median age of 45.8 compared to 38 years for the state. There are more adults aged 65 and older than school-age children, and the difference will continue to widen as the Baby Boom generation ages. 21.7% of Pope County is under 18 years of age, close to the state average; however, the 65+ population is 24.7% compared to the state average of 16.7%.

This shifting demographic causes uncertainty regarding the county's ability to attract working-age adults, preserve its vitality, and maintain a thriving (or stable) economy. It will impact the community's workforce, healthcare, long-term care housing, and supportive services.

#### **Veterans**

West Central Minnesota has a higher veteran population than urban communities. The veteran status in Pope County is 10%.

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## **Race**

In Minnesota, people of Color (those who are any race other than White) make up 16% of the total population and only 3% in Pope County.

## **Education and Residence**

As HPH shared, opportunities and our health are strongly connected. Income and homeownership can directly impact your health and well-being on many levels. Additionally, education can be an important predictor of lifelong health. Of Pope County residents 25 years and older, 94% have a high school diploma, including 23% who have a Bachelor's degree, compared to the state average of 37%.

The homeownership rate of 78% in the hospital's primary service area is similar to most bordering counties. Additionally, all surrounding counties are mirroring the state trend, of which the price of rent continues to rise, affecting 22% of all households in Pope County. As HPH noted in the CHA, over 47% of renter households spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs, and almost 25% spend more than 50% of their income on housing. When families struggle to pay rent, they are at a heightened risk for various negative health outcomes.

## **Income and Poverty**

Income shapes where we live, how stable our living arrangements are, what condition our home is in, what schools we attend, what types of recreation we take part in, what kinds of foods we eat, and more. Since poverty decreases opportunities in education, employment, and living conditions, it may increase the risk of developing chronic diseases, which can lead to even lower income.

Many Pope County residents live in lower-income households. At least 29% of students in school qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches, an income-based program. 8% of children in Pope County are

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below the poverty level (10% in the state), and 7% of adults 65 years and older live in poverty, the same as the state. Pope County's overall poverty rate is 7% of the population compared to 9% statewide.

According to public health data, people with higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier and live longer, which is why Healthy People 2030 focuses on providing high-quality educational opportunities for children and adolescents. The stress of living in poverty can affect children's brain development, making it harder for them to do well in school.

### **Transportation**

Through the 2021 Horizon Public Health Survey and numerous Community Conversations, an area of concern was the lack of range of service and availability of public transportation across the entire HPH service area. In terms of health equity, individuals without transportation are more likely to delay and forgo necessary appointments, preventative care, and health maintenance activities.

Beyond access to health care, lack of transportation impacts the well-being of rural residents from issues varying from access to and obtaining food, social support, employment, education, recreation, and community services. Older adults are particularly vulnerable to isolation without reliable transportation options, which can lead to an increased risk of morbidity and mortality.

### **Childcare**

Childcare is critical to the workforce, particularly employing parents of young children. Licensed childcare is also critical in providing age-appropriate development for children. Unfortunately, in Greater Minnesota, the net loss of child care has been more extensive than in urban areas. There is a significant shortfall in the number of spaces needed to accommodate families, and the situation continues to worsen in our communities. Without adequate and affordable childcare options, parents face financial

and social barriers. Gaps exist in access, supply, demand, and reimbursement for childcare in Pope and surrounding counties.

### Community Health Measures

As public health states, health refers to a physical body, whereas wellness is an overall balance of physical, social, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, environmental, and occupational well-being. Before and during the CHNA meeting, the team reviewed and discussed several documents, including summaries of the eight key sections from Horizon Public Health's CHA (Appendix B). Each summary included key data points and trends, strengths of the community, insights from the data, and consideration for action. These eight key sections are:

- Demographics and Community Characteristics (page 6)
- Factors Influencing Health (page 13)
- Health and Wellness (page 27)
- Maternal and Child Health (page 32)
- Community Health Behaviors (page 38)
- Mental Health (page 50)
- Environmental Health Factors (page 54)
- COVID-19 Pandemic (page 60)

The full CHA is available for download on their website at <https://horizonpublichealth.org/plans-and-data/>, and team members could access it for additional details about Pope County residents.

HPH referenced many statistics in their CHA, and the leading physical and mental health concerns remain the same as GRHS' and HPH's previous community health assessments. One measure, the SHIP 2020 Community Health Survey, reported the following percentage of individuals 18+ in the hospital's primary service area with chronic diseases: Overweight or Obese 72%, High Blood Pressure/

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Hypertension or Pre-hypertension 37%, High Cholesterol or triglycerides 29%, Depression 18%, Diabetes or Pre-Diabetes 13%, Currently, have Asthma 7%, and COPD 4%. The percentage of adults with high blood pressure is higher than the statewide average of 24%, and diabetes rates are higher than the 9% state average.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death, followed by cancer in all five counties served by HPH.

Statewide, cancer is the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease.

### Community Resources

Individuals shared knowledge on what is currently being done in Pope County and by who at the CHNA meeting. These are in addition to HPH's Resource Lists on pages 96-98 of the CHA. Local resources and organizations identified during the CHNA meeting include ACE Trainers, Pope County Family Collaborative/Early Childhood Initiative, Pope County Childcare Association, Early Childhood Dental Network, Prenatal Bags for OB patients at GRHS, West Central Initiative, Families in Need Program, Safe Families for Children, Someplace Safe, Salvation Army, and at Minnewaska Area Schools, a Mental Health Coordinator, a Safe and Welcoming Committee, and the Lighthouse (food bank for students). Additionally, a Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) Coordinator expanded on what has been done recently in Pope and adjacent counties and SHIP's 2022-2025 work plan.

GRHS staff also shared with the team what resources GRHS currently has and plans for initiatives underway that align with HPH and SHIP's priorities. These include health equity and access to care, managing chronic conditions, and the breadth of services available. In addition, GRHS healthcare staff have specialty certifications to support the top health conditions, including substance abuse, pain management, and obesity.

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## Health Issues Identified and Prioritized

After discussion, the CHNA team agreed to adopt Horizon Public Health's CHA for the hospital's Community Health Needs Assessment. Further, the CHNA team agreed with the identified health concerns for GRHS' service area from HPH's CHA. The CHA process ranked them based on community impact, the potential for change, economic feasibility, and community resources.

The Top 10 Health Concerns are:

- Mental Health and Mental Illness
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Child Care
- Poverty
- Health Care Access, Quality, and Literacy
- Overweight and Obesity
- Drug Use and Abuse
- Transportation
- Physical Inactivity
- Housing and Renting

GRHS' CHNA team concurred with the top health priorities for Pope County in HPH's CHA. The three priorities for our community are Access to Care, Chronic Disease/Obesity, and Developing Community Resilience.

## CHNA Summary

This assessment confirms the need for the wide range of programs and services offered by a comprehensive health system in Pope County. Many important issues and topics that influence the health of our communities were identified through the hospital's community health needs assessment

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and public health's CHA. Each of them impacts a segment of the population, yet not every possible issue can be addressed at once. As a result, HPH will develop a community health improvement plan (CHIP) to address the top three priorities. The CHIP will also identify resources locally and statewide for each of the top 10 health concerns.

Glacial Ridge Hospital will develop an implementation strategy for the 2022 CHNA similar to public health's CHIP. In addition, GRHS will continue to support and, when applicable, be involved in HPH and community organizations' initiatives.

All parties recognize the significant need to address behavioral health, substance abuse, and the opioid crisis. Therefore, Glacial Ridge Health System and Horizon Public Health envision supportive coordination for improved Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse/Opioid screening and interventions, children's health services, as well as appropriate referrals and support to improve access to primary care physicians and to address chronic conditions.

Further, the hospital and medical centers are uniquely positioned to identify and address the community's health needs, especially concerning acute, diagnostic, emergency, and specialty services. Several committees monitor, identify and take action when GRHS can affect community health and patient care through programs and additional resources.

GRHS will continue to indirectly address local health needs and health equity through the availability of charity care, the support of Medicare and Medicaid programs, and discounts to those uninsured who are self-pay. Glacial Ridge Hospital also assists with transportation costs on Rainbow Rider when identified patients do not have transportation for appointments or a ride home upon discharge from the hospital.

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Additionally, as more emphasis is placed on reducing healthcare costs, keeping people well, improving the management of chronic illnesses, and meeting the needs of an aging population, GRHS is strengthening local and area partnerships and collaborations to fulfill these expectations.

As a non-profit health system, the mission of GRHS is to provide the highest quality “heartfelt” care to the communities we serve. The needs assessment and implementation plan illustrate the importance of collaboration between our hospital, public health, and community partners. The hospital service area, including all of Pope County, will be best served by combining efforts and resources, including our community partners, to address these needs and impact change.

## Next Steps

- The Glacial Ridge Hospital Board of Directors will review and approve the CHNA in December 2022.
- This document will be directly shared with stakeholders in the community, including all involved in the CHNA and the Strategic Planning Committee at GRHS. In addition, it will be publicly available and posted on the hospital's website.
- A CHNA Implementation Plan for the priority health needs will be created and shared with the attendees at the CHNA for review. It will identify the goal, objectives, strategy, and measurement.
- The Implementation Plan will be presented to the Glacial Ridge Hospital Board of Directors for approval by May 15, 2023.
- The Glacial Ridge Hospital Board of Directors will delegate the Strategic Planning Committee as responsible for monitoring the progress as it has since 2013.
- Once approved, this document will be publicly available and posted on the hospital's website.
- The Strategic Planning Committee at GRHS will review the CHNA and adopt the implementation plan as directed by the board of directors.
- The CEO and Strategic Planning Committee will lead the CHNA Implementation Plan over the next three years.
  - The Strategic Planning Committee includes a community member, hospital board members, CEO, Director of Nursing, Clinic Manager, QAPI Manager, Marketing and Communications Manager, a doctor, and a nurse practitioner.
- The CHNA facilitator will be responsible for the ongoing evaluation, measurement, and progress reporting of plan status.
- An update on the 2022 CHNA Implementation Plan will be reported twice a year at a minimum to the Strategic Planning Committee. Glacial Ridge Hospital Board of Directors receive minutes from these bi-monthly meetings and approves them at subsequent board meetings.
- GRHS will gain commitment from community partners and identify roles, responsibilities, and funding resources needed to implement action plans.

## GRHS' 2019 CHNA Implementation Strategy Report for 2020-2022

### Considerations during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Response

The COVID-19 pandemic and its response created challenges and opportunities for Glacial Ridge Health System (GRHS) and its ability to advance its strategic approaches regarding the implementation plan. Additionally, many of our partner agencies/organizations were involved in public health efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community and schools and provide testing and vaccinations. As a result, the challenges faced by GRHS and our partner organizations required additional adaptations. This minimized progress of the implementation plan from GRHS' 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment.

### Goals and updates for GRHS' 2019 Implementation Strategy from 2020-2022

#### **Priority 1. Decrease the incidence of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and increase resiliency among Pope County residents.**

Strategy 1 – Increase awareness and education in the healthcare community.

- No ACE educational sessions were held in the 5-county service area of Horizon Public Health (HPH) (including GRHS' healthcare service area of Pope County) since 2019. This was due to prioritizing the COVID-19 response and actions to prevent the spread of COVID. Consequently, GRHS did not offer education to staff from a certified ACES trainer during the implementation plan timeframe (2020-2022). However, GRHS plans to offer several sessions for staff in 2023.
  - (In GRHS' prior CHNA Implementation Plan, Western Regional ACE Training Coordinator Anna Johnson presented three sessions to GRHS employees on Feb 26, 2019, and 130 attended.)

Strategy 2 – Collaborate with HPH and community partners to support policies, programs, and initiatives in the community to increase resiliency.

- HPH researched ACE based health initiatives and established a work group in Pope County to collaborate with the local Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) work group. These work groups are key in educating, identifying, and addressing ACES from a prevention approach and expanding the community's understanding of the impact ACES have.

- Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) and Pope County Family Collaborative continue to work with parents and lead the ACES initiatives in our hospital's service area.
- GRHS staff donate over \$10,000 yearly to the United Way of Douglas and Pope Counties to support their initiatives. All money received from Pope County stays in Pope County. The United Way programs had high demand and served more people in recent years than they generally do.
- Minnewaska Area School District hired additional mental health staff and improved student access.
- Many partner organizations could not allocate additional resources toward this strategy. However, they continued serving and supporting community members with an increased need for assistance during the pandemic.

**Priority 2. Prevent and decrease drug misuse and abuse in Pope County by youth and adults.**

Strategy 1 – Provide support for Horizon Public Health's county-level coalition that will champion the efforts to prevent and decrease drug misuse and abuse in Pope County.

- Due to the pandemic and agencies' response from 2020-2022, the county-level coalition could not provide resources for this strategy.
- Following Horizon Public Health's 2022 Community Health Assessment and GRHS' Community Health Needs Assessment underway, it will remain a high priority in the new improvement plans for both organizations. In addition, the upcoming Opioid Settlement for each county will support this initiative.

Strategy 2 – Participate in and/or support current and new Horizon Public Health or community initiatives to decrease drug misuse and abuse in Pope County.

- GRHS providers continue to review alcohol, smoking, vaping, and drug use at each Child and Teen Checkup using the standard MN CTC form. They discuss and refer if needed.
- An Opioid Task Force has members representing all five counties HPH serves. It focuses on opioid education and prevention, mental well-being, and resiliency.
- This priority area is supported by work from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership, Drug-Free Communities, and ClearWay Minnesota preventions grants awarded to HPH.
- See the second bullet point above in Strategy 1.

Strategy 3 – Participate and implement evidence-based programs when feasible at GRHS and continue current actions. Providers at GRHS continue to identify effective, alternative pain treatment options.

Involvement by GRHS during this implementation plan includes:

- GRHS medical staff participate in the ECHO program.
- Implemented new procedures to identify potential addiction risks before prescribing opioids to patients.
- Adopted and implemented an Opioid Reduction/Tapering program for patients, including patient education and multiple strategies for pain management without medication.
- Implemented a Pain Neuroscience Education (PNE) program in our Therapy Department.

Refer to Horizon Public Health's 2022 Community Needs Assessment for Pope County data that measures the impact of these strategies.

# Community Health Assessment 2022



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## Horizon Public Health

Douglas, Grant, Pope, Stevens,  
and Traverse Counties

Approved by the Horizon Public Health  
Community Health Board  
August 8, 2022



# Horizon Public Health

## A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

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I am pleased to present the Horizon Community Health Assessment, a collaborative effort of Horizon staff with many community partners and residents. Horizon Public Health has been intentional in seeking to listen to a wide variety of community voices during this assessment process.

The Community Health Assessment provides a data snapshot of the factors that impact health of the people living in the communities which Horizon Public Health serves, including; opinions, observations, and perspectives. Mental and physical well-being, social risk factors, and health equity are all important influences on our health. Together, as a community, our vision is to organize community resources to create upstream solutions to increase health for all.

In partnership with the community, Horizon Public Health will now turn its attention to focus on the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan which creates community-driven solutions to elevate health and well-being. In collaboration with community partners, we will develop priorities and strategies to improve health and well-being, especially for populations who are most at risk.

The 2022 Community Health Assessment contains the most up to date data available at the time of publication, and is intended to be a living document which will be updated as additional data becomes available. We encourage the use of this assessment as a starting place for understanding the health of our communities, working to increase health, and planning for the future.

Healthy regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann E Stehn".

Ann Stehn, EMPA, PHN  
Administrator, Horizon Public Health

# Horizon Public Health

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# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## DEMOGRAPHICS & COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

### Key Data Points & Trends

- The population over the past decade across the region has increased at a slower rate than the state of Minnesota (3% compared to 7%).
- Over the next three decades, population growth is expected to increase at the highest rate in Douglas County (+13%) and decrease in the lowest rate in Traverse County (-45%).
- Residents ages 65 and over will continue to become a larger share of the population, growing to nearly 30% of the total population by 2030.
- Four counties (Douglas, Grant, Pope, and Traverse) have a higher percentage of Veteran residents than the state average (6%).
- While not as culturally diverse as the state, the region is home to a growing Hispanic population, particularly in Stevens County.

### Strengths of the Community

- Strong sense of community.
- Reduced costs of living (compared to urban areas).
- Easy access to outdoor recreation.
- Resiliency when faced with community challenges.

### Insights from the Data

- With the growing aging population, the region may need to find creative, local strategies to address related infrastructure needs in long-term care, transportation, and workforce.
- Improving broadband access and transportation options will become increasingly important to ensure all residents have access to services and supports.
- Ongoing training of public health and health care staff, as well as collaboration with community organizations, will help the region better understand and address the unique health needs of seniors, veterans, the Hispanic population, and their families.

### Considerations for Action

- The impact the workforce shortage has on our community.
- The cost of living is increasing at a fast rate.
- Fluctuation of population changes and aging populations across the region.



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## FACTORS INFLUENCING HEALTH

### Key Data Points & Trends

- Home values across the region are increasing more quickly than income. Rent is increasing and incomes are not keeping up in Grant and Stevens counties.
- Many residents live in lower-income households; at least 26% and up to 46% of students in school qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch, an income-based program.
- A smaller percentage of households (78%-80%) have access to broadband internet than in all areas of rural Minnesota (82%).
- Between 2015 and 2020, West Central Minnesota licensed child care spots decreased by almost 600.
- The percentage of residents receiving a routine physical check-up decreased from 74% in 2013 to 67% in 2020.
- Residents delayed medical care because of cost, COVID-19 concerns, and/or because they didn't feel their issue was serious enough to require care.

### Strengths of the Community

- Community partners' local passion and perspective contributes to community cohesion and resiliency.
- Telehealth services were extended access across the geographic region.

### Insights from the Data

- Telehealth and other online resources support health for many residents.
- Douglas, Pope, and Traverse counties lack dependable broadband internet access.
- Housing insecurity may increase in some areas if rent and housing values continue to outpace increases in income.
- Reductions in child care options present challenges for working parents and may require creative strategies.
- While some delays in health care were the result of COVID-19 precautions, shortages of health care providers, dentists, and mental health professionals also create barriers to accessing health care services.

### Considerations for Action

- Increase access for mental health services, specifically for youth and those with ACEs.
- Lack of child care access is negatively impacting employment, income, and community vitality.
- Increase in alcohol use and abuse.



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Key Data Points & Trends

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death, followed by cancer. Statewide, cancer is the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease.
- The percentage of adults with high blood pressure is higher in each county than the statewide average, while diabetes rates are higher than the state average in all but Stevens County.
- At least half of women have received mammogram screenings for breast cancer, similar to statewide rates.
- 2019 adult influenza vaccination rates varied widely by county, from 15% in Traverse County to 60% in Douglas County.

### Strengths of the Community

- Mammogram screenings are higher than the state average for most of the region.
- Childhood immunization rates are high across the region.
- Youth dental check-ups rates went up in 2016 to 2019.

### Insights from the Data

- With heart disease as the leading cause of death and high blood pressure rates higher than the statewide average, a combination of strategies could be considered to encourage heart health.
- Breast cancer rates are 2-3 times higher than lung cancer rates, highlighting the importance of regular mammograms and breast cancer screening.
- Influenza-related hospitalizations and deaths have been lower in recent years, potentially due to COVID-19 mitigation practices. As these practices ease, outreach and education may be needed to increase influenza vaccination rates to prevent unnecessary illness, particularly in Pope and Traverse counties.

### Considerations for Action

- Rising obesity trends, including heart health ramifications.
- Increasing depression rates and the need for mental health self-care education.



## HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH

### Key Data Points & Trends

- The rate of teenage pregnancies is lower than the statewide rate.
- Expecting mothers are more likely to receive prenatal care in their first trimester of pregnancy (83%-90%) than those statewide average (79%).
- Early childhood screening rates decreased in 2018-19 and 2019-20 while statewide rates remained steady.
- Between 2015 and 2019, the rate of child maltreatment reports due to neglect, sexual abuse, and mental injury increased in all counties, like statewide rates.
- Immunization rates for children and adolescents are higher than statewide rates. Minnesota Department of Health reported an overall decrease in vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Strengths of the Community

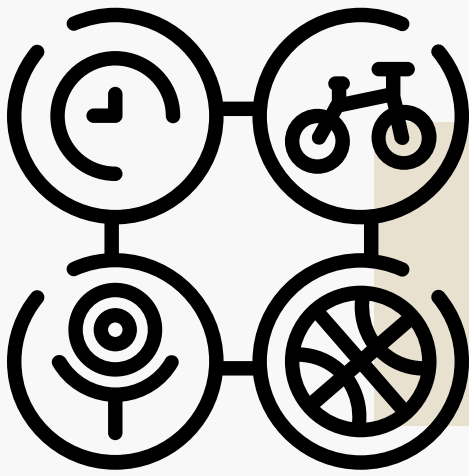
- Child and adolescent vaccination rates are higher than the state average.
- Prenatal care in the 1st trimester is higher than the state average.

### Insights from the Data

- While students have similar physical activity and eating behaviors as peers statewide, they could be encouraged to establish healthy behaviors that carry into adulthood.
- Increased reports of child maltreatment signal a need to complete a deeper dive into local data.
- Additional strategies may be needed to increase immunization and early childhood screening rates, particularly if some families delayed care due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Considerations for Action

- Rising obesity rates among all ages, as well as an increase of heart related diseases.
- High rates of maltreatment reports and the impact on families and children.



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## COMMUNITY HEALTH BEHAVIORS

### Key Data Points & Trends

- Adult obesity rates are higher than the state overall (40%, compared with 31%).
- 29% of adults responding to the 2020 SHIP survey reported exercising 5+ days each week. The cost of gym memberships and other programs was described as “a big problem” and a barrier to physical activity for 15% of residents.
- Among students, physical activity tends to decrease with age, particularly among females.
- In 2019, approximately 10% of residents experienced food insecurity, i.e. they did not have access to or the ability to afford healthy food.
- A greater percentage of residents report using alcohol and binge drinking as compared to the state percentage.
- Over one-quarter of 9th and 11th grade students living in Traverse (28%) and Stevens (33%) counties report using alcohol in the past 30 days, a higher percentage than in other counties in the region.

### Strengths of the Community

- The Opioid Taskforce has mobilized a network of community providers to address the impact opioids have had among the community.
- Youth tobacco policy changes reduced youth purchase.

### Insights from the Data

- Increasing opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy foods can help youth establish healthy behaviors and reduce obesity rates among adults in the region.
- Adult alcohol use/abuse and admissions to treatment has increased across the region.
- Results from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey and other local data should be used to determine whether the 2019 increase in student-reported alcohol use is part of an ongoing trend.
- Tobacco use has increased in adults across the region. Strategies may be necessary to determine the cause of the increase and availability of cessation resources.
- How has the impact of COVID-19 affected access to food across the region?

### Considerations for Action

- Youth screen time and its connection to obesity trends.
- Increase in adult tobacco use, while youth-use has decreased (except for e-cigarettes).
- Increase in adult alcohol use and abuse.



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## MENTAL HEALTH

### Key Data Points & Trends

- Over one-third of residents (36%-46%) reported experiencing poor mental health one or more days in the past month with 14-23% of adults having experienced depression or anxiety like national data.
- Among adults, 11-20% have experienced a delay in care for a mental health concern.
- Minnesota Student Survey data showed notable changes in self-reported mental health between 2016 and 2019, including divergent trends that require additional exploration. There are some counties where self-reported feelings of depression were lower in 2019 than in 2016, but where suicidal ideation increased.
- Preventable deaths due to suicide in Minnesota have remained relatively stable since 2016; drug overdoses continued to increase during that timeframe, taking the lives of over 1,000 Minnesota residents in 2020.

### Strengths of the Community

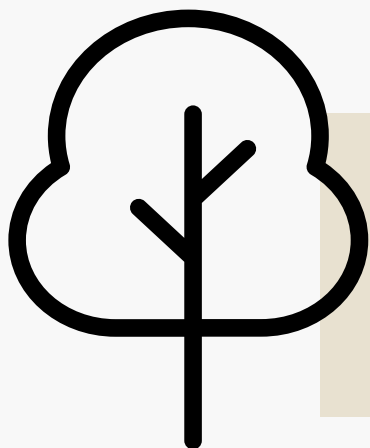
- Increased awareness of the importance of good mental health and positive well-being.
- Stigma reduction around accessing mental health care.

### Insights from the Data

- Mental health is a critical component of overall health, but may not be discussed as openly as physical health. Our region may consider ways to expand the opportunity to talk about mental health at all ages and stages.
- Multiple strategies may be needed to ensure individuals experiencing a mental health challenge can connect with others easily for support and treatment.
- Local data may help our region better understand the degree to which drug overdoses contribute to premature deaths.

### Considerations for Action

- The impact(s) of delayed mental health care.
- The emotional well-being of youth.
- Does the increase in mental health awareness cause increased in the data related to mental health?



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACTORS

### Key Data Points & Trends

- Although few children have tested positive for elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs), many of the homes in the region (47%-66%) were built before 1980 and may have lead-based paint (restrictions were put in place in 1978).
- Data show average statewide temperatures have increased 3 degrees since data first reported in 1895, impacting the growing season and snow cover.
- Air quality has improved across the state and in the region, a trend expected to continue.

### Strengths of the Community

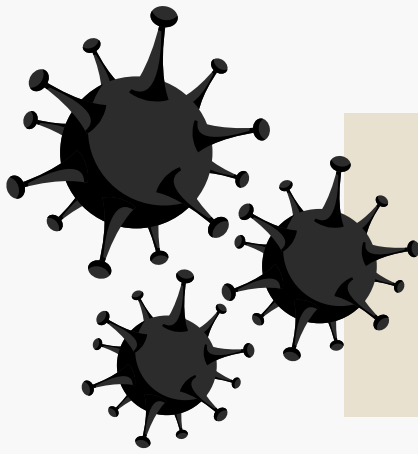
- Grant dollars and community funding to support programs and education related to environmental health.

### Insights from the Data

- Radon is prevalent public health educational efforts need to remain strong on testing. There is a need for affordable treatment measures for positive radon test results that require mitigation.
- Climate change will impact agriculture, economies, and the environment. Ongoing education can help assess impact and prepare for changes.
- Additional environmental health indicators are limited; local stakeholders may have additional insights into air and water quality and other environmental indicators to aid regional prioritization.

### Considerations for Action

- The need to collect and monitor data regarding environmental changes and trends.
- Further education to community about the resources already available.



# HORIZON PUBLIC HEALTH

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Key Data Points & Trends

- COVID-19 was confirmed in March 2020. As of March 2022, there have been 18,834 confirmed cases and 170 COVID-19 related deaths in the region as reported by the Minnesota Department of Health.
- Minnesota lost approximately 300,000 jobs in the early stages of the pandemic due to shutdowns and changes in service delivery, and is on track to return to pre-pandemic job levels in 2022.
- Across multiple health professions, job vacancies have increased since pre-pandemic levels in Minnesota. Mental health and substance abuse counseling vacancies have increased from 8% in 2019 to 26% in 2021.
- Although graduation rates did not decline during the pandemic, there was a decrease in reading proficient among young learners (3rd grade) in the state and across the region.
- Mental Health has had an impact in the prevalence of anxiety and depression.

### Strengths of the Community

- Outdoor recreation and activities resources are thriving because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-19 vaccination rates for the region follow a similar trend when compared to the state rates.
- High school graduation rates did not decline.

### Insights from the Data

- Additional information is needed to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic led to delays in care, including missed preventive care visits and delays in seeking mental health or substance abuse services.
- Multiple strategies are needed to address rural workforce shortage gaps potentially exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- COVID-19 continues to have an impact on mental health.

### Considerations for Action

- The effect the pandemic has had on youth.
- How will the projected decrease in rural health workforce impact our communities?
- A need to increase mental health resources.
- Relationship between pandemic and maltreatment.

# Community Health Improvement Plan Priorities 2023-2027

## Top 10 Health Concerns

1. Mental Health and Mental Illness
2. Adverse Childhood Experiences
3. Child Care
4. Poverty
5. Health Care Access, Quality, and Literacy
6. Overweight and Obesity
7. Drug Use and Abuse
8. Transportation
9. Physical Inactivity
10. Housing and Renting



**Access to Care -**  
(dental, mental, and physical)



**Chronic Disease - Obesity**



**Resilience -**  
(ACEs, Social Connectedness,  
and Substance Use)

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