



Community Health Needs
Implementation Plan

Benefis Missouri River Medical Center



Community Health Needs Implementation Plan

Located in Fort Benton, Montana, Benefis Missouri River Medical Center (BMRMC or the Medical Center) has been an active healthcare provider for its community since 1882. The Medical Center is a 25 bed critical access hospital that offers adults and children in Chouteau County medical services, including acute care, rehabilitation, emergency medicine, physical therapy, and occupational therapy among others.

Organized as a non-profit hospital, BMRMC conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in 2023 to comply with IRS Section 501(r)(3)(a). BMRMC identified key community health priority areas through its 2023 CHNA process. The complete findings from this CHNA process can be found in the [CHNA Benefis Missouri River Medical Center report](#) on the BMRMC website.

As a follow-up to the CHNA process, BMRMC developed an implementation plan to address certain identified community health needs over the next three years. The identified community health need focus areas were selected because (1) they were seen to align with the Medical Center's clinical mission and (2) the Medical Center has resources available to carry out an action plan for each. This document outlines plans for BMRMC to support specific community benefit efforts as part of a larger community-wide plan. Details of the plan are discussed in this document.



Priority #1

Access to Specialty
and Pediatric Care



Priority #2

Mental Health



Priority #3

Access to Wellness
and Life Improvement
Resources



Priority #4

Community
Health Education

Impact Initiatives - Priority Health Issues



Priority Health Issue #1

Access to Specialty and Pediatric Care

Description of Community Need

A majority of CHNA community survey and focus group respondents identified the need for additional healthcare providers in Chouteau County. Specifically, there is a limited specialty and pediatric care presence in Chouteau County, forcing community members to seek care outside of the county.

Vision

BMRMC recognizes that there is a need for additional specialty care and pediatric providers in Chouteau County to prevent community members from having to travel long distances in potentially adverse weather conditions for care outside of the county. BMRMC plans to explore expansion of the care offering available to community members through outreach opportunities with Benefis across a variety of additional specialties. Further, BMRMC, with the help of partnering agencies, will seek to make the current care offering at local medical practices more widely known to show community members that quality specialty and pediatric care alternatives are offered in Chouteau County.

Partner Agencies

- Chouteau County Department of Public Health (County Department of Public Health)
- Benefis Health System (Benefis)
- Independent local physician practices

Priority Health Issue #1

Access to Specialty and Pediatric Care

Hospital Strategy

- Over the past couple of years, BMRMC and the County Department of Public Health have been committed to providing more access to pediatric and specialty care providers for Chouteau County community members. Together, BMRMC and the County Department of Public Health will continue to bring in outside healthcare professionals that provide care to people of Chouteau County in specialties, such as cardiology and obstetrics/gynecology, and will seek out new opportunities to bring additional specialists to expand the care offering in the community.
- BMRMC will have access to Benefis' electronic medical record, Epic, which will improve care coordination, help the community understand available services within the county, and increase access to telehealth for Chouteau County community members. After implementation is completed, all patient information/records will be transferred to the new system enhancing the patient care experience.
- BMRMC will do the following to make Chouteau County care offerings more widely known: (1) increasing visibility of providers to community members in various ways including, but not limited to, provider meet-and-greet events and (2) leveraging existing social media platforms to drive health initiative advertisement campaigns.
- BMRMC currently employs a significant portion of the Fort Benton, Montana, population. With their relationship to Benefis, BMRMC employees have access to a more affordable, comprehensive health plan than their prior one. In the coming years, BMRMC will look to increase the enrollment in the Benefis health plan for its employees and their families.
- BMRMC adopted Benefis' financial assistance policy, which is more generous than BMRMC's prior financial assistance policy impacting a larger percentage of the community as it relates to free and discounted care. Through this policy change, BMRMC will seek to make care more affordable for the community by offering financial assistance to patients who otherwise would not have access to medical care or would avoid medical care altogether due to cost concerns.
- To the extent that there are facility/equipment/infrastructure restrictions to providing types of care that make sense for the community, BMRMC has already begun working with Benefis on a plan to make the necessary upgrades to improve care access.

Measure

BMRMC will measure success using 2024 as a baseline for measurement by: (1) increasing the number of new medical providers participating in health communication efforts year-over-year, (2) making new medical specialties available to patients in Chouteau County year-over-year, and (3) maintaining or increasing the number of social media and related marketing materials released to the public year-over-year.



Priority Health Issue #2

Mental Health

Description of Community Need

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Through the CHNA process, mental health was identified as a need within the Chouteau County community for members of all ages, including education of mental health resources and related issues. Specifically, over 50% of the CHNA community survey and focus group respondents reported inadequate mental health resources in Chouteau County.

Vision

BMRMC recognizes that mental health resources, including ones for prevention, screening, and clinical assessment among others are vital to a healthier community. Combined with local community organizations, BMRMC will (1) make existing resources and capabilities at the County Department of Public Health more widely known to community members and (2) contribute more mental health resources and education to make Chouteau County a healthier community.

Partner Agencies and Roles

- Chouteau County Department of Public Health (County Department of Public Health)
- Local dedicated mental health and addiction services organizations.
- Statewide (Montana) dedicated mental health and addiction services organizations.
- Benefis Health System (Benefis)

Priority Health Issue #2

Mental Health

Hospital Strategy

- Leveraging its relationship with Benefis, BMRMC looks to promote the use of mental health resources made available through the partnership. One particular Benefis mental health resource that BMRMC plans to leverage in this initiative is technology for virtual meetings. BMRMC hopes that this technology will allow Chouteau County community members to have a new access point to mental health counseling sessions, addiction recovery programs, and other related mental health platforms.
- BMRMC also seeks to find opportunities to empower existing community mental health professionals (counselors) to help them better accomplish their work.

Measure

BMRMC will measure success by increasing the number of additional mental health resources (i.e., virtual visits, programs, professionals, etc.) made available to community members over the next three years, using the year 2024 as a baseline.



Priority Health Issue #3

Access to Wellness and Life Improvement Resources

Description of Community Need

Through the CHNA process, access to wellness and life improvement resources (e.g., blood pressure readings, diabetes management, exercise/physical activity programs) were identified as needs in the community. Improving the current lifestyles of community members and promoting healthy habits were seen as imperative for various population health initiatives in Chouteau County.

Vision

BMRMC recognizes that Chouteau County community members need additional health/life improvement resources. BMRMC will attempt to reestablish key community exercise/wellness programs and events as well as leverage its relationship with Benefis to offer additional services to Chouteau County community members as well as increase the level of care coordination for local patients.

Partner Agencies and Roles

- Chouteau County Department of Public Health (County Department of Public Health)
- Benefis Health System (Benefis)
- Independent local physician practices

Priority Health Issue #3

Access to Wellness and Life Improvement Resources

Hospital Strategy

- Annually, BMRMC and other community health-related organizations host a local health fair. This event allows members of Chouteau County free access to key health resources, such as blood pressure readings, flu shots, and annual physicals among others. It also gives community members the opportunity to meet with local pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to ensure that they are managing medications properly, living health lifestyles, and more. BMRMC will continue hosting this event to ensure the provision of essential health resources and services to enhance the well-being of the people of Chouteau County.
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, BMRMC and its partnering community organizations offered various health and wellness programs to the people of Chouteau County (e.g., immunization clinics and disaster readiness programs through the Chouteau County Health Board). Health and safety concerns from the COVID-19 pandemic have prevented many of these programs from happening in recent years. BMRMC looks to reestablish these programs.
- Leveraging its relationship with Benefis, BMRMC will use Benefis' existing care coordination strategies to effectively track patients from their initial check-in through subsequent follow-up visits. BMRMC will evaluate weaknesses in the current care continuum to improve the process in the future.
- Benefis also has plans to upgrade BMRMC's facilities. One part of this plan is to build out BMRMC's resident dining room to allow for families and members of the community to participate in life enrichment activities offered in the space.

Measure

BMRMC will measure success by increasing the number of resources and services (e.g., health and wellness programs, etc.) made available to the community over the next three years, using 2024 as the baseline year.



Priority Health Issue #4

Community Health Education

Description of Community Need

Through the CHNA process, education and preventative care were identified as needs in the community. Preventing diseases and obesity is associated with lifestyle, education-level, and income-levels of the local population. More specifically, education in key health areas (e.g., risks in underage drinking/substance abuse, necessity for vaccinations, etc.) were identified as needs within the Chouteau County community.

Vision

BMRMC recognizes that education and preventative care are essential to promoting a healthier community. Combined with local community organizations, BMRMC will offer more health education and resources to schools and community families. BMRMC will also leverage social media platforms to make available health resources more widely known to the community members regardless of age.

Partner Agencies and Roles

- Chouteau County Department of Public Health (County Department of Public Health) and partnering organizations
- Independent local physician practices
- Local school systems (elementary, intermediate, and high schools)

Priority Health Issue #4

Community Health Education

Hospital Strategy

- Several organizations in the community are working to improve the level of health education, including BMRMC. As an organization, BMRMC will seek to educate the public on various topics, including the care offering already available in the community, proper uses of the emergency room, and dangers of substance abuse among others.
- BMRMC will seek to provide more education on health and related topics to students at the various local school systems. Examples of these efforts could include speaking at school assemblies, hosting healthcare professional panel discussions for students and their families, and holding immunization clinics at local schools during operating hours among others.
- Benefis is in the process of launching a new website, which will have individual webpages for each Benefis hospital including BMRMC. Website enhancements will allow Chouteau County community members to easily identify health services offered at BMRMC as well as the other general health information/services provided in the county. Benefis will staff a team to ensure that the BMRMC webpage is constantly updated with accurate health information for the people of Chouteau County.

Measure

BMRMC will measure success by increasing the number of health educational resources made available to the community over the next three years, using 2024 as the baseline year. Additionally, BMRMC will measure success by increasing the number of new healthcare professionals engaging in health education initiatives over the same time period.



Process for Identifying and Prioritizing

All areas identified in the CHNA report dated November 30, 2023, were considered for impact planning. Results of the surveys and interviews, as well as community data, were presented to the Board of Directors at Benefis. In analyzing the data, the Board of Directors determined the above to be the most significant health needs in the community.

Areas Not Covered by Impact Initiatives

BMRMC identified the four top areas to focus on after careful consideration of all needs identified within the CHNA. These four are considered the most significant health needs in the community and will be covered by the impact initiatives. Other health needs identified in the assessment, not deemed significant, may be indirectly impacted by the initiatives, but resource constraints prevent BMRMC from directly addressing these initiatives.