

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



2022


Ridgecrest
REGIONAL HOSPITAL

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2022

Introduction

Located in Ridgecrest, California, Ridgecrest Regional Hospital (RRH) is a nonprofit, full service, acute care hospital with 196 beds, including 25 inpatient and 125 Skilled Nursing Facility beds. RRH is the only regional healthcare system providing a variety of services to the rural communities of the Southern Sierra, serving residents from as far north as Big Pine, CA, which is over 100 miles north of Ridgecrest. Additional details about RRH can be found at <https://www.rrh.org/about-us/>

In addition to other requirements, Section 501(r3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) requires that a hospital organization conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years to maintain tax-exempt status. More information about the legal requirements of a CHNA can be found at <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/community-health-needs-assessment-for-charitable-hospital-organizations-section-501r3>.

Objective

The goal of the CHNA report was to document, synthesize and prioritize community health needs through the perspectives of residents and public health experts, with the goal to identify resources available to address these health needs in order to improve the health status of the community.

Adoption and Comments

This Implementation Strategy was adopted by Ridgecrest Regional Hospital's Board of Directors in April 2023. This report is widely available to the public on the hospital website, <https://www.rrh.org/about-us/community-benefit/community-health-needs-assessment/>.

Written comments can be submitted to Ziad.Jureidini@rrh.org and Adan.MartinezGonzalez@rrh.org

2022 Community Health Needs Assessment Summary

Significant health needs were identified from issues supported by primary and secondary data sources gathered for the CHNA. The needs were indicated by secondary data sources, community stakeholder interviews and community surveys. Health indicators were considered significant health needs when they exceeded benchmark data, specifically county or state rates. Ten topics were selected for assessment for the 2022 CHNA. These topics were determined based on a number of factors, including continuity with the previous CHNAs, available data, and relation to emergent issues of broader public health concern regarding health disparities and the broader public health impact of COVID-19. These topics are used to organize the results in a subsequent section of this report.

List of Prioritized Significant Health Needs

1. Access to Care
2. Mental Health
3. Health Education, Wellness, and Disease Prevention
4. Substance Use or Addiction
5. Sexual Health
6. Maternal Health
7. Chronic Disease
8. Elder/Senior Care
9. Acute Illness and Injury
10. Environmental Conditions

Community Service Area

Geography and Population

The community served by RRH is centered around the city of Ridgecrest, located in the northeastern corner of Kern County. However, the hospital's service area extends to additional remote and rural regions, including Inyokern to the west, Johannesburg and Randsburg to the south, and Trona and Searles Valley to the northeast. Each of these areas roughly corresponds to a ZIP code. The table below provides an estimate of the total population for each of the five ZIP codes mentioned above that roughly correspond to the areas served by the hospital.

Table 8. ZIP Code	Approximate Location	Population
93555	Ridgecrest	33,925
93562	Trona	1,757
93527	Inyokern	1,690
93554	Randsburg	99
93528	Johannesburg	48
TOTAL POPULATION IN THE SERVICE AREA		37,519

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020. <https://censusreporter.org>

For the purposes of this report, many of the health-related statistics will focus primarily on the 93555 ZIP code of the service area because of the disproportionate clustering of the population residing within the region. However, much of the qualitative feedback received provides context and relevance for the more remote regions as well.



Demographics

1.5% identify as transgender*

4.5% identify as gay or lesbian*

3.4% identify as bisexual*

49% identify as male

51% identify as female

Within the ZIP code 93555 (Ridgecrest), there are slightly more women than men. Additionally, across the state of California, an estimated 1.5% of individuals identify as transgender, 4.5% identify as gay or lesbian, and 3.4% identify as bisexual. The age distribution of 93555 (Ridgecrest) is similar to that for Kern County as a whole but tends to skew slightly older.

Roughly 2/3 of the population of 93555 is White, compared to only about 1/3 of Kern County as a whole.

Over 9 in 10 residents of 93555 are US citizens, compared to about 8 in 10 residents of Kern County as a whole.

There are over twice as many veterans living in 93555, compared to the population of Kern County as a whole.

Criteria Determining the Significant Health Needs the Hospital Will Address

This Implementation Strategy provides details on how RRH plans to address the significant health needs identified in the 2022 CHNA. The hospital plans to build on previous CHNA efforts and existing initiatives, while also considering new strategies and efforts to improve health. The following criteria were used by the hospital to determine the significant health needs RRH will address in the Implementation Strategy:

- Organizational Capacity
- Existing Infrastructure: There are programs, systems, staff and support resources in place to address the issue.

- Ongoing Investment: Existing resources are committed to the issue. Staff time and financial resources for this issue are counted as part of our community benefit effort.
- Focus Area: Has acknowledged competencies and expertise to address the issue and the issue fits with the organizational mission.

As a result of the review of needs and application of the above criteria, RRH will prioritize the following health needs:

1. Access to Care
2. Mental Health
3. Health Education, Wellness, and Disease Prevention
4. Substance Use or Addiction
5. Sexual Health
6. Chronic Disease
7. Elder/Senior Care

CHNA Implementation Plan Priority Needs and Specific Areas to Address

For each significant health need that Ridgecrest Regional Hospital plans to address, the objectives are listed along with key programs and collaborations it plans to commit to in the next three years.

Significant Need #1: Access to Care

The CHNA revealed that issues related to primary care services remains challenging in the RRH service area. The vast majority of community members and providers that were surveyed did not believe that the community had enough health and medical services. This category included issues such as long wait times and difficulties obtaining an appointment or test results.

Key objectives include:

- Increase access to primary care through our clinics
- Increase education regarding primary care and related services

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address access to care:

- Expand Primary Care Services: Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Adult Medicine, Internal Medicine and Women's Health/Maternal Health.
- Continue recruitment efforts for physicians, and advanced practice providers; including Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners and Certified Nurse Midwives.

- Increase the number of Advanced Practice Providers in all Primary Care Clinics.
- Continue establishing Patient Centered Medical Home models in clinics.
- Establish hospital discharge clinic.
- Promote access to healthcare services through marketing and advertising.
- Provide financial assistance through both free and discounted care for healthcare services, consistent with the hospital's financial assistance policy.
- Increase community knowledge of medical transportation resources available in Ridgecrest and through health care insurance plans.

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

RRH will conduct these strategies with the overarching goal in mind to improve access to healthcare services, especially for the uninsured and underinsured. RRH anticipates the following impact from these efforts:

- Increase access to primary care providers and specialty care providers.
- Improve appointment availability and scheduling.
- Improve transitional care for patients discharged from the hospital.
- Provide financial assistance to qualified patients.
- Support access to healthcare by educating the community on transportation resources.

To address access to care, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Recruitment Agencies
- Community Clinics
- RRH Marketing Department
- Ridgecrest Medical Transportation
- Kern Health Systems and HealthNet plans



Significant Need #2: Mental Health

Adequate access to mental health, behavioral health and substance-abuse treatment is critical for population health. The CHNA revealed ongoing challenges with finding mental health providers and appropriate services. In addition, there was low confidence among surveyed providers that a client referred for help with substance use or addiction would receive the services they need. Further barriers include a lack of resources, lack of attention, and fear of judgment.

Provision of mental health services is a county-provided service and obligation under state law. County-provided services in our community are subject to remote oversight from Bakersfield and have been problematically-operated over several decades. Although RRH did help fund the local Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) with the county, the county has been reluctant to fund collaboratively with RRH preferring only to fund large for-profit healthcare providers that service the entire county. RRH primary responsibility is provide Medical care in our community and initiatives in the mental health service line must be financially sustaining and offered in a quality manner.

Key objectives include:

- Improve access to mental health
- Educate community on mental health resources

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address mental health:

- Recruit additional clinical staff
- Partner with local school district to provide therapeutic development
- Build out of additional building space
- Addition of MD
- Wellness Group programing
- Creating relationship with recognized universities

However, if these programs are not financially sustaining or not able to be staffed, RRH will curtail these programs and focus our efforts on lobbying the county for adequate services in our community.

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- Decrease in waitlist times due to increased provider availability
- Monthly collaborative treatment meetings between RRH and school district to coordinate mental health care of identified at risk students
- Physical plant expansion will provide additional space patient access and care
- Improve coordination among health care providers with community resources and programs
- University partnerships to aid in recruiting and training of new mental health clinicians

To address mental health, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Sierra Sands Unified School District

Significant Need #3: Health Education, Wellness, and Disease Prevention

Programs aimed at promoting health and preventing diseases can enable individuals to make healthier choices and decrease their chances of developing health conditions or disabilities. Such initiatives can have a broader impact by reducing health disparities, enhancing the overall quality of life, and boosting access to healthcare and other related services within the population.

Key objectives include:

- Educate patients on annual wellness visits
- Educate community on available resources
- Provide health and wellness education focused on prevention of obesity and chronic diseases

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address health education, wellness and disease prevention:

- Send letters to patient when they are due for annual wellness visits with handout stating what an annual wellness visit is, also promote annual wellness visits via social media, podcasts and local newspaper ads.
- Provide monthly wellness articles to the community focused on well-being and prevention
- Provide educational classes, seminars, and presentations at the local library focused on health and wellness
- Provide diabetes information in Spanish
- Provide health promotion months that are focused on a particular health concern to help educate and bring awareness in order to help prevent cancer and/or chronic diseases
- Provide all local resources on the RRH website
- Continue to work with local organizations to provide health and wellness education
- Offer health coaching services

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- Get more patients to come in for their annual wellness visits and be able to address preventative care and disease prevention.
- Provide information to the community on whole being health and wellness and offer simple and easy ways to help prevent diseases and/or improve their overall health
- Children and parents will gain understanding in how some chronic diseases can be prevented through simple changes. Raise awareness of the ways they can prevent obesity and some chronic diseases and improve overall health.
- Resources will be available to those who speak Spanish and help those with diabetes know how to self-manage their diabetes.

- Community will gain understanding in how some chronic diseases can be prevented through simple changes. Raise awareness of the ways they can prevent obesity and some chronic diseases and improve overall health.

To address health education, wellness, and disease prevention, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Local newspaper
- Local Radio
- All RRH clinics
- RRH Marketing - social media
- Local library
- Local organizations (including schools, businesses, and individuals)



Significant Need #4: Substance Abuse or Addiction

Adequate access to mental health, behavioral health and substance-abuse treatment is critical for population health. The CHNA revealed ongoing challenges with finding mental health providers and appropriate services. In addition, there was low confidence among surveyed providers that a client referred for help with substance use or addiction would receive the services they need. Further barriers include a lack of resources, lack of attention, and fear of judgment.

Provision of substance abuse or addiction services is a county-provided service and obligation under state law. County-provided services in our community are subject to remote oversight from Bakersfield and have been problematically-operated over several decades. Although RRH did help fund the local Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) with the county, the county has been reluctant to fund collaboratively with RRH preferring only to fund large for-profit healthcare providers that service the entire county. The county did not fulfil a commitment to add a sobering bed facility to the CSU. Further local government has made it very difficult for religious-based substance abuse/addiction facilities to operate within our community. RRH primary responsibility is provide Medical care in our community and initiatives in the substance abuse/addiction service line must be financially sustaining and offered in a quality manner.

Key objectives include:

- Provide a new substance addiction treatment for our community
- Educate the community on availability of a new rehab program

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address substance abuse or addiction:

- Advertising campaign to raise awareness
- Outreach and Open House
- CA Bridge Program Grant
- Hire Substance Use Navigator
- Suboxone Clinic
- Additional training of ED doctors

However, if these programs are not financially sustaining or not able to be staffed, RRH will curtail these programs and focus our efforts on lobbying the county for adequate services in our community.

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- Increase the community's awareness for SUD treatment available at RRH
- Grant submitted and funded to address opiate crisis
- Hired Substance Use Navigator to engage patients and refer to appropriate levels of care
- Suboxone Clinic treating patients who struggle with drug or alcohol use

- Create environment of harm reduction to decrease stigma and improve access to care to get patients started on recovery at first point of contact

To address substance abuse or addiction, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Integrated care throughout all RRH community
- Local Ridgecrest Community treatment providers for coordination of patient treatment

Significant Need #5: Sexual Health

Most community members that were surveyed indicated that they would not know where to go for sexual health services, including for STIs, birth control, or transgender specific services. While most providers felt that they knew where to refer patients for these services, they were not confident that patients would receive care for their sexual health needs.

Key objectives include:

- Raise community awareness on where to go for prevention and treatment of STIs
- Raise provider awareness of resources available for the prevention, assessment and diagnosis, and treatment of STIs
- Increase clinic staff knowledge of resources available for the prevention, assessment and diagnosis, and treatment of STIs

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address sexual health:

- Provide information and resources for the public and providers and their staff
- Educate providers
- Ensure Providers appear in searches for the diagnosis and treatment of STIs

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- Reduce STIs
- Increased knowledge among providers and their staff on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment of and the resources for STIs

To address sexual health, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- HHS: STI National Strategic Plan: [Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\) | HHS.gov](#)

- CDC: [STI Treatment Guidelines \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines)
- National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers; [About | NNPTC](#)
- CDPH STD Control Branch: [Sexually Transmitted Diseases Control Branch \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/STI/STI-Prevention-Center.aspx)
- Essential Access Health STI Prevention Center [STI Prevention Center | Essential Access Health](#)

Significant Need #6: Chronic Disease

Health education about chronic diseases can help individuals understand the risk factors associated with these diseases and the preventive measures they can take to reduce their risk. Education can also promote healthy lifestyles, such as regular physical activity and healthy eating.

Key objectives include:

- Provide health and wellness education focused on prevention of obesity and chronic diseases

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to address chronic disease prevention:

- Provide monthly wellness articles to the community focused on well-being and prevention
- Provide educational classes and presentations at the local library focused on chronic diseases
- Provide diabetes information in Spanish
- Provide health promotion months to help educate on how to prevent chronic diseases
- Provide all local resources on the RRH website
- Continue to work with local organizations to provide health and wellness education
- Offer health coaching services

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- Get more patients to come in for their annual wellness visits and be able to address preventative care and disease prevention.
- Children and parents will gain understanding in how some chronic diseases can be prevented through simple changes.
- Resources will be available to those who speak Spanish and help those with diabetes know how to self-manage their diabetes.
- Community will gain understanding in how some chronic diseases can be prevented through simple changes.

To address health education, wellness, and disease prevention, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Local newspaper, Local Radio
- All RRH clinics
- RRH Marketing - social media
- Local library and Local organizations (including schools, businesses, and individuals)

Significant Need #7: Elder / Senior Care

As people age, they may require assistance with daily activities and medical care. Elder senior care ensures that older adults receive the proper care and attention they need to maintain their health and well-being. The CHNA revealed transportation barriers, awareness of services, lack of specialized care and use of telehealth services as barriers that affect older adults.

Key objectives include:

- To inform the community of the services that are currently available
- To provide easy access to this information

RRH will focus on the following strategies and programs to elder / senior are:

- Communication campaign to get the word out to the community regarding the resources that are available to assist with the above needs.
- Social media posts
- Updates to the website
- Senior services will ensure that the physician's office has access to this information as well to display in their lobbies

The anticipated impact these actions will be to:

- The community and hospital employees will have a better idea of community services that are available.

To address Elder / Senior Care, RRH plans to collaborate with:

- Other social service agencies in the Ridgecrest area
- Salvation Army

- Senior Center
- Local senior church groups



Issues Not Being Addressed

Ridgecrest Regional Hospital acknowledges the vast number of health needs that emerged from the CHNA process. RRH chose to address those areas where it could most effectively use its knowledge and resources to make an impact. For those three areas not being addressed – Maternal Health, Acute Illness and Injury, and environmental conditions – it was determined that addressing those needs were best served by others in the community who have the expertise, capacity and adequate resources. Accordingly, RRH will continue to support strong partners in the community to effectively address those needs.

Next Steps

As a community hospital in a medically underserved area, RRH is fundamentally committed to make an impact in the community. Continuous review of the CHNA implementation plan is a process that is active throughout the three-year period. For each of the health needs, RRH will work with community partners to strengthen existing services and where gaps exist, identify new collaborative initiatives to better serve at-risk and vulnerable communities.