

Deaconess Hospital 2025 CHNA Priorities and Action Plan – Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

(Including mental health, suicide, substance use/misuse)

Behavioral health includes issues specific to mental health and substance/drug/alcohol use or abuse. Considerations specific to the prioritization of behavioral health included: Prevalence and co-occurring nature of mental health and substance use/misuse within the county. Existing barriers to accessing behavioral health care include (but are not limited to) cost, lack of specific providers, waitlist and appointment times, and/or lack awareness of the issues and/or available resources. Behavioral health is a multi-faceted health issue. There is a correlation between social determinants of health such as insecure housing, poverty, exposure to trauma, etc. and subsequent behavioral health concerns. There are positive steps being taken regarding behavioral health. Efforts should be made to capitalize on things that are already having an impact, leveraging existing partnerships/initiatives and scaling up efforts.

Impact plan

- Starting in 2026 Deaconess is working with IU Medical School, The Stone Center and University of Evansville on the Psychology Residency. This should result in more providers being available to patients in the region.
- Planned effort to communicate resources available to community and providers.
- Deaconess is working to open more outpatient services including services for chemical dependency. This will be an effort that will include other community partners. *

*Community Partners: Suicide Coalition, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), Peace Zone, Substance Abuse Council, Youth First, Indiana Hospital Association-Behavioral Health Council, and Greater Evansville Mental Health Collaborative

AGING POPULATIONS

Aging populations include the needs of adults 65 and older in the community. Considerations specific to the prioritization of aging populations included: Aging adults (65 and older) is a growing population in the county with expectations for even more growth. Due to limited access to affordable care, aging adults are forced to choose between medication/healthcare and other basic needs such as food or utilities. Many also rely on home-based caregivers (self, family) who are under-qualified to provide the care needed. Many older adults are also caring for children. Isolation is a growing

concern among aging adults. Many support groups and other opportunities for in-person interaction were discontinued through COVID-19 and have not restarted.

Impact plan

- In 2026 Deaconess Emergency Departments at Midtown and Gateway will be certified as Geriatric Emergency Departments by ACEP. This will ensure older patients get well-coordinated quality care at every level.
- To address access issues, Deaconess Primary Care for Seniors is adding another provider.
- The new Internal Medicine Residency program should also impact available senior care with more providers available.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

(Including maternal health, child abuse and neglect, food and housing security) Healthy families include maternal child health, child abuse and neglect, and food/housing insecurity. Considerations specific to the prioritization of healthy families included: Infant mortality, especially among Black infants, continues to be high within the county and highlights the importance of prevention and early intervention efforts. Foster care rate is higher than the state rate; long term, these children experience trauma and may experience their own mental health concerns. Participants described disparities related to this priority based on factors such as race, ethnicity, cultural norms, and income. Access to affordable, quality childcare was noted as a key factor impacting this health issue. Awareness and education around these issues was an identified need for both families and providers serving families.

Impact plan

- To help address maternal and infant health Deaconess has collaborated with Ronald McDonald House to implement the “Care Mobile”. A mobile health clinic for pregnant moms and newborns. This mobile health clinic will go to at-risk areas of the community to provide easier access to care for moms and babies. This mobile clinic will have both a nurse and a social worker providing not only medical care, but other support needed.
- To address food insecurity Deaconess will support local food banks and farmer’s markets.
- Deaconess will also continue to work with Habitat for Humanity to address housing insecurity.

ACCESS TO CARE

Access to care involves connecting residents to healthcare within the service area. Considerations specific to the prioritization of access included: Affordability of care is limited by poverty and insufficient insurance coverage. Availability of care is limited by insufficient care options that are culturally responsive and available in different languages; difficulty attracting providers to the field and/or geographic area and retaining providers who are overwhelmed and dealing with burnout. Other key barriers include insurance reimbursement challenges (for both providers and service recipients) and a lack of awareness around available resources in the community.

Impact plan

- Access to care continues to be an important issue for Deaconess. There is a continued commitment to adding more providers, specialists and appointments available. There will also be more virtual appointments available and more virtual hospital follow-up appointments for those that cannot make it to a provider's office.
- In 2026 Deaconess will open a free-standing Emergency Room and Urgent Care. This should improve access to care for patients in the area.
- To reach more at-risk children and parents in EVSC. Deaconess will add multi-lingual navigators in the EVSC school clinics to improve the health of our immigrant population. These navigators will be able to educate parents on available health resources and information.
- Through community benefit, the Deaconess Foundation, and community partners. Deaconess will continue to provide rides and gas cards for patients who are not able to get to medical appointments.

OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

Outreach and advocacy involve strengthening awareness and understanding of health priorities among residents. Considerations specific to the prioritization of access included: Outreach and advocacy are a response to external factors such as federal,

state, and local funding cuts to needed programs and services and the current political climate (i.e., policies impacting care for specific groups such as immigrant populations, LGBT populations, unhoused populations). Prioritizing outreach and advocacy is also expected to address misperceptions in the community (e.g., promoting the value of prenatal and other preventative care, correcting the misperception that certain health issues are limited to specific groups). As part of the outreach and advocacy discussion, participants also prioritized combining efforts with other regions across the state.

Impact plan

- Deaconess will continue to educate the community and patients on:
 - Healthy living and preventive care
 - Necessary cancer screenings available at no charge
 - Any current health alerts
 - Resources for chronic health issues (diabetes, high blood pressure, etc)
 - Where and how to get care, they need when they need it
 - Maternal health
 - Other available medical resources

This education will come through community outreach, various communication channels, social media and in cooperation with other community partners.