

Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Plan 2014

Washington Regional Medical System is a comprehensive healthcare network that includes the only not-for-profit, community-owned and locally governed medical center in Northwest Arkansas. The flagship medical center is located in Fayetteville, Ark., in Washington County. Approximately 65% of the medical center's inpatient discharges originate from Washington County, so for purposes of this implementation plan, the medical center's community is defined as Washington County.

Washington Regional conducted a thorough and comprehensive survey of area residents throughout Northwest Arkansas in 2013 to identify and prioritize the community's significant health needs.

Based on a review of the data gathered during this assessment, including leading causes of death, rankings of health outcomes and factors as well as surveys and interviews, numerous health needs were identified. These needs were prioritized and evaluated to determine which were significant to the community. The criteria included the number of persons affected, the seriousness of the issue, whether the health need particularly affected persons living in poverty or members of an underserved population, and availability of community resources to address the need.

While determining the community's health need priorities, age-related data received careful consideration. Using U.S. Census figures, the Nielsen Company determined trends in population change by age from 2013 to 2018. All age groups in Washington County are expected to grow, the trend report showed, but the one that is projected to grow the most is the group that tends to require the most medical attention: those aged 65 and older. This age group is expected to increase by more than 20% in the next few years.

Four significant community health need priorities have been identified:

1. Obesity
2. Cerebrovascular disease and stroke
3. Access to clinics
4. Diabetes

Washington Regional leadership has developed an Implementation Plan to identify specific activities and services to directly address these health concerns and to positively impact our community. The objectives were determined by studying the health needs identified, within the context of Washington Regional's overall strategic plan, and the availability of particular resources. Each objective is followed by specific implementation activities.

Community Health Need Priority #1
Obesity

Obesity-related illnesses are a leading health concern in Arkansas and in the community served by Washington Regional. Arkansas has one of the nation's highest rates of obesity, with a United Health Foundation ranking of 48. A March 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that, while no state had a prevalence of obesity lower than 20%, Arkansas was among 13 states with a prevalence of 30% or higher.

According to that same report, medical costs for Americans who are obese were \$1,429 higher in 2008 than for their healthy-weight counterparts. Health conditions linked to obesity include some of the leading causes of preventable death: heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are contributing factors to obesity. By providing nutrition education and access to exercise programs, more community residents will be equipped with the knowledge they need to make healthier lifestyle choices.

Objective #1

Washington Regional will support and implement initiatives to promote positive lifestyle behaviors that can reduce the incidence of obesity and also to provide services that help community members overcome obesity.

Implementation Activities:

- A. Washington Regional will continue to offer the services of the Washington Regional Center for Exercise, the area's first hospital-based fitness center, to employees and the community.
- B. Washington Regional, through its Center for Exercise, will study the feasibility of establishing a "Change Your Life through Weight Management" program that would be a cooperative effort involving multiple hospital departments and services.
- C. Washington Regional will continue to develop its bariatric surgery services for community members who are eligible for that treatment option.
- D. Washington Regional will continue to be a model for the community and other area employers by supporting an employee wellness program — featuring health insurance discounts for participating employees — and an employee-led Wellness Committee.
- E. Washington Regional, through its Johnelle Hunt Center for Women, will continue to participate in the Exclusive Breastfeeding perinatal core measure as defined by the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care and supported by the U.S. Department of Health, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics. A CDC report found that breastfeeding for 9 months reduces a baby's odds of becoming overweight by more than 30%.
- F. Washington Regional will continue to provide information about nutrition and fitness at health fairs and community events such as Day of Dance and Girls Night Out, at free seminars such as Your Health Matters, and through publications such as *Your Health* magazine and online newsletter.

**Community Health Need Priority #2
Cerebrovascular disease and stroke**

According to the Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas has the nation's highest rate of death from stroke.

The CDC reports that most people can't name all the symptoms of stroke or know the importance of calling 911 if they think someone is having a stroke. Getting immediate medical attention for stroke is crucial. Patients who arrive at the emergency room within three hours of their first symptoms tend to have less disability than those for whom care was delayed.

New advances in treatment for cerebrovascular disease and stroke can save lives, while effective rehabilitation services can help patients recover function lost from a stroke. For at-risk patients, comprehensive education can help prevent future strokes.

Objective #2

Washington Regional, through its Northwest Arkansas Neuroscience Institute, will continue to expand and enhance services to provide education, rehabilitation, diagnosis and treatment for cerebrovascular disease and stroke.

Implementation Activities:

- A. Washington Regional will bring an advanced treatment known as endovascular neurosurgery to Northwest Arkansas, adding two endovascular neurosurgeons to the medical staff in 2014.
- B. Washington Regional will complete construction in 2014 of a neurosurgical hybrid operating suite that will be primarily dedicated to the treatment of stroke and other brain disorders. The suite is designed to accommodate both endovascular and conventional neurological surgeries.
- C. Washington Regional will continue to participate in the Arkansas SAVES program (Stroke Assistance through Virtual Emergency Services), a partnership between Washington Regional, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Center for Distance Health, the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services.
- D. Washington Regional will pursue Certified Stroke Center designation by 2015.
- E. Washington Regional will provide funding that will allow its partner, HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital, to expand its services by adding 20 all-private patient rooms.
- F. Washington Regional will continue to provide information about cerebrovascular disease and stroke at health fairs and community events such as Day of Dance and Girls Night Out, at free seminars such as Your Health Matters, and through publications such as *Your Health* magazine and online newsletter.

Community Health Need Priority #3
Access to clinics

Area survey respondents listed affordable and available healthcare as the single most important factor needed to ensure a healthy community. Personal interviews conducted during the needs assessment process revealed several key concerns, including lack of transportation preventing rural residents from accessing healthcare, and residents' lack of a "home" clinic or primary care physician creating overuse of hospital emergency rooms.

The survey indicated that a sizable homeless population exists in the area served by Washington Regional. While several nonprofit agencies provide resources for these members of the community, some of their basic health and dental care needs are unmet.

Objective #3

Washington Regional will continue to improve the availability of clinic-based healthcare and increase community members' abilities to access critical health services.

Implementation Activities:

- A. Washington Regional will proceed with plans to establish an urgent care clinic that will offer extended hours, Monday through Saturday.
- B. Washington Regional will continue to recruit physicians and supporting staff in all medical specialties, especially primary care, to meet patient demand.
- C. Washington Regional will continue to provide financial support to community health services such as Northwest Arkansas Free Health Center and the Washington County Department of Health's prenatal care clinic and HIV clinic.
- D. Washington Regional, through its Cancer Support Home and partnerships with grant programs including Susan G. Komen and Cancer Challenge, will continue to provide free cancer screening services, free mammography services, free prescription assistance and free overnight lodging that allows cancer patients who live in outlying areas to stay near their physicians and clinics during treatment.
- E. Washington Regional, through its Faith in Action program and support from agencies including United Way, will continue to provide volunteer-based free services to homebound older adults, including assistance in arranging transportation for medical services.
- F. Washington Regional will partner with the Walmart Foundation to establish and implement a mobile dental clinic to provide free dental care services to all ages.

Community Health Need Priority #4 Diabetes

The prevalence of diabetes diagnoses in Arkansas has increased drastically in the past two decades, according to the CDC, which also found that diabetes mortality rates have increased as well. An estimated quarter million Arkansas adults have diabetes, according to the United Health Foundation. CDC figures show Arkansas in the second-highest tier of diabetes prevalence in the nation.

Diabetes is a growing health concern for many members of our community. In fact, area survey respondents named diabetes one of their top three health concerns. Even when it is not a patient's primary diagnosis, diabetes is a complicating factor in other illnesses and, says the CDC, is underreported on death certificates. The CDC estimates that only 4 of 10 deaths among people with diabetes actually have diabetes listed as the cause of death.

Areas with an aging population, like the community served by Washington Regional, will see a greater prevalence of diabetes, since the risk of the disease increases with age. Persons over the age of 45 are four times more likely to develop diabetes. Many people at high risk for diabetes could reduce their risk by 58% over 3 years by following lifestyle modifications — such as improved nutrition and increased exercise — outlined in the CDC's Diabetes Prevention Program.

Objective #4

Washington Regional will support and implement initiatives to treat diabetes, increase awareness of diabetes management practices and promote positive lifestyle behaviors to reduce the incidence of diabetes.

Implementation Activities:

- A. Washington Regional will recruit and hire an endocrinologist by August 2014.
- B. Washington Regional will establish an endocrinology clinic by August 2014.
- C. Washington Regional will enhance its existing diabetes management program by aligning it with the new endocrinology clinic under the guidance of the endocrinologist.
- D. Washington Regional will continue to provide comprehensive diabetes management services, recognized by the American Diabetes Association, featuring classes and support groups designed for people of all ages with type 1, type 2, gestational diabetes, pre-diabetes, metabolic syndrome or reactive hypoglycemia.
- E. Washington Regional will continue to provide information about nutrition and diabetes management at health fairs and community events such as Day of Dance and Girls Night Out, at free seminars such as Your Health Matters, and through publications such as *Your Health* magazine and online newsletter.