

Little River Memorial Hospital
Community Health Needs Assessment
2025

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Introduction

Little River Memorial Hospital (“LRMH”) is the sole not-for-profit community hospital in Little River County, Arkansas (County). As the sole acute care facility in the County, LRMH is committed to providing high-quality care that addresses the needs of Little River County community with focused, friendly, compassionate care for each person it serves. As both part of its mission and in response to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements, LRMH conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years to (1) assess the health needs of the community and (2) adopt strategies to implement improvements to community health based on the responses received and (3) evaluate the impact of strategies adopted from past CHNAs.

This document is a summary of the evidence collected during the community health needs assessments, as required by the IRS during tax year 2025. It will serve as a compliance document for LRMH, as well as a resource for the community at large until the next assessment cycle.

About Community Health Needs Assessments

As a result of the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act*, tax-exempt hospitals are required to assess the health needs of their communities and adopt implementation strategies to address significant identified needs. Compliance with section 501(r) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) requires that a tax-exempt hospital facility:

- Conduct a community health needs assessment every three years.
- Adopt an implementation strategy to meet the significant community health needs identified through the assessment.
- In each subsequent assessment, evaluate the impact of previous implementation strategies on identified needs.

The community health needs assessment must take into account input from persons who represent the broad interest of the community served by the hospital facility, including those with special knowledge of or expertise in public health. The hospital facility must make the community health needs assessment widely available to the public.

This community health needs assessment is intended to document the LRMH’s compliance with IRC Section 501(r). Significant health needs of the community have been identified and prioritized so that the LRMH may adopt an implementation strategy to address specific needs of the community.

The process involved:

- A comprehensive evaluation of the implantation strategy that was developed as a result of the community health needs assessment completed in 2022.
- Collection and analysis of a large range of data, including demographic, socioeconomic and health statistics, healthcare resources, and patient use rates.
- Interviews with key interviewees who represent a) broad interests of the community, b) populations of need, and c) persons with specialized knowledge in public health.

This document is a summary of all the available evidence collected during the community health needs assessment required by the IRS. It will serve as a compliance document, an assessment of the impact of the previous implementation strategy, and a resource until the next assessment cycle.

Acknowledgments

The community health needs assessment research team would like to thank all those who contributed to the community health needs assessment described herein. We are grateful for the individuals who gave their time and expertise to inform both the direction and outcomes of the study. We greatly appreciate the contribution of their stories.

Summary of Community Health Needs Assessment Process

The purpose of the community health needs assessment is to help the LRMH’s understanding of the health needs of the community and to document compliance with the federal laws outlined above.

Based on current regulations and other guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department and the IRS, the following steps were conducted as part of the LRMH’s community health needs assessment:

- An evaluation of the impact of actions taken to address the significant health needs identified in the 2022 community health needs assessment was completed to understand the effectiveness of the LRMH’s current strategies and programs.
- Population demographics and socioeconomic characteristics of the community were gathered and reported utilizing various third parties. The health status of the community was then assessed. Information on various metrics of population health and well-being and community conditions reported for the community by countyhealthrankings.org was analyzed. Health factors with significant opportunity for improvement were noted.
- An inventory of healthcare facilities and resources was prepared.
- Community input was provided through interviews of key interviewees. Results and findings are described in the Key Interviewees section of this report.
- Information gathered in the steps above was analyzed and reviewed to identify health issues of uninsured persons, low-income persons, and minority groups and the community as a whole. Health needs were then prioritized taking into account the perceived degree of influence the LRMH has to impact the need and the health needs impact on overall health for the community. Any information gaps identified during the prioritization process would have been reported.

Community Served by the LRMH

LRMH is located in the city of Ashdown, Arkansas, in Little River County. Ashdown is located in southwestern Arkansas near the Texas and Oklahoma borders and is accessible by regional and U.S. highways.



Defined Community

This CHNA takes into account input from persons who represent the broad interests of the community served by LRMH (this provision is related to assessing community health needs rather than defining the community). For CHNA purposes, a hospital facility may take into account all of the relevant facts and circumstances, including the geographic area served by a hospital facility, target population(s) served (for example, children, women, or the elderly), and the hospital's principal functions (for example, focus on a particular specialty area or targeted disease).

LRMH is the single largest provider of acute care services and is part of the broader Little River Medical Center Inc. group. For the purposes of this CHNA, LRMH's defined community is the overall population of Little River County, Arkansas.

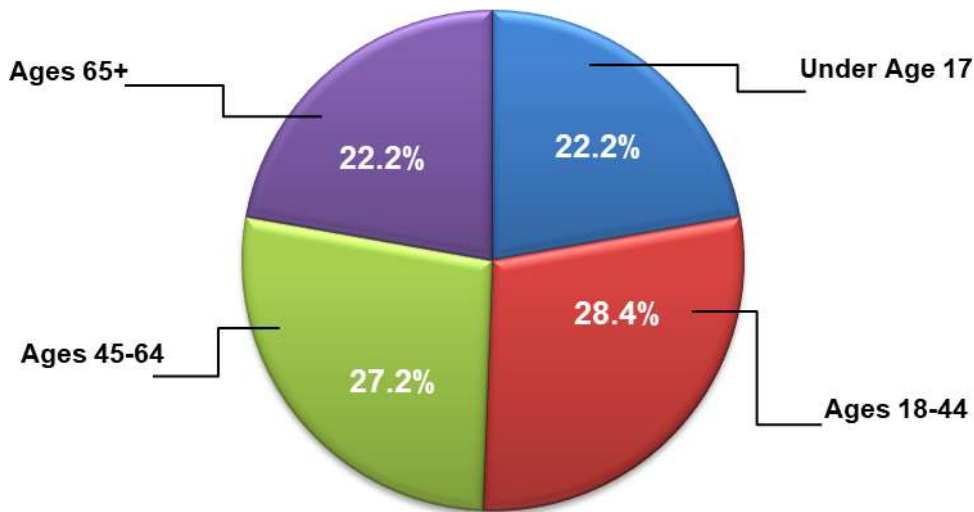
Community Characteristics

Community Population and Demographics

The community served by the LRMH is a primarily rural area in southwest Arkansas. According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates, approximately 12,000 people live in Little River County.

The chart below shows the breakdown of the community's population by age group. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 49% of the community's population is age 45 or older, compared with 43% in Arkansas and 42% in the United States as a whole. These age groups use more health services than any other; consequently, the LRMH could experience an increase in patient volume in the future.

Community Population by Age Group



Source: CARES Engagement Network

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Community

The socioeconomic characteristics of a geographic area influence the way residents access healthcare services and perceive the need for healthcare services. Factors such as educational attainment, poverty levels, unemployment rates, and insurance coverage levels contribute significantly to the health status of the community.

Socioeconomically, the community served by the LRMH is similar to many other parts of rural Arkansas. About 17% of the population age 25 or older has obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to about 36% of the U.S. and 26% of Arkansas. About 9% of the population aged 25 or older does not have a high school diploma, compared to about 10% in the country as a whole and 11% in Arkansas. Lower levels of education have been linked to negative health outcomes, so the educational attainment of the community is relevant to the consideration of the health needs of the community.

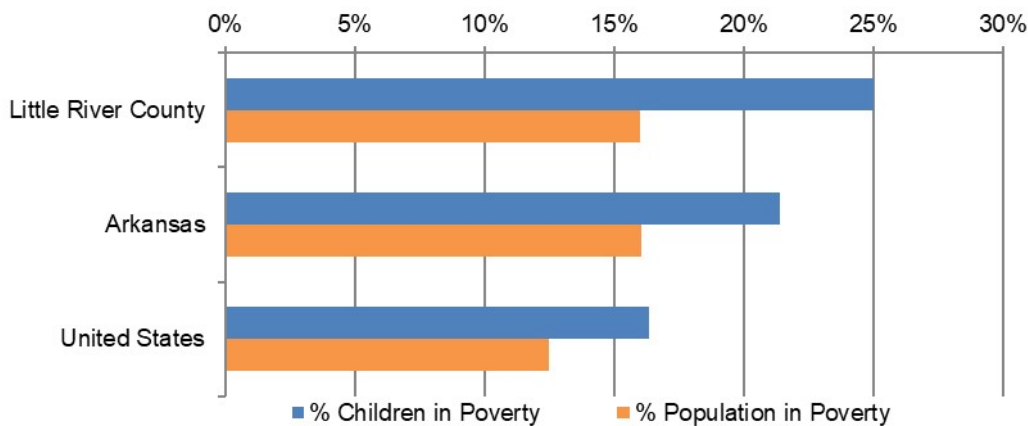
The income levels of individuals within the community also have a significant effect on their ability to access health services. The average median household income in the LRMH’s community is \$53,344, compared with \$60,773 for the state of Arkansas and \$80,734 for the United States. Lower-than-average median household income suggests that many members of the community may have difficulty obtaining healthcare, especially preventive care. The chart below shows the percentage of the community’s population living below the federal poverty line, with the percentage of children under age 18 shown separately. The specific health needs of low-income members of the community should be considered carefully throughout the preparation of this assessment.

Median Household Income



Source: CARES Engagement Network

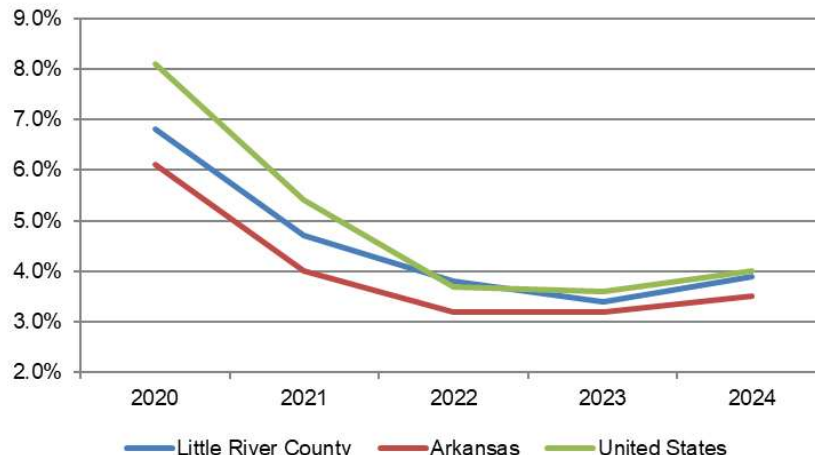
Population in Poverty



Source: CARES Engagement Network

One socioeconomic measure that has been improving steadily over the past several years is the unemployment rate. The graph below reflects a spike in 2020, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the unemployment rate of the community has been decreasing and returned to pre-pandemic levels, along with those of the state of Arkansas and the United States. As the economy improves and more people find employment, the socioeconomic status of the community should be strengthened and access to healthcare improved.

Unemployment Rates, 2020–2024



Source: CARES Engagement Network

Health Status of the Community

This section of the assessment reviews the health status of Little River County residents. As in the previous section, comparisons are provided with the state of Arkansas and the United States as a whole. This assessment of the various metrics of population health and well-being and community conditions will enable the LRMH to identify priority health issues related to the health status of its community’s residents.

Good health can be defined as a state of physical, mental and social well-being, rather than the absence of disease or infirmity. According to *Healthy People 2030*, the national health objectives released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, individual health is closely linked to community health. Community health, which includes both the physical and social environment in which individuals live, work and play, is profoundly affected by the collective behaviors, attitudes and beliefs of everyone who lives in the community. Healthy people are among a community’s most essential resources.

Numerous factors have a significant impact on an individual’s health status: lifestyle and behavior, human biology, environmental and socioeconomic conditions, as well as access to adequate and appropriate healthcare and medical services.

Persons who do not smoke, who drink in moderation (if at all), use automobile seat belts (car seats for infants and small children), maintain a nutritious low-fat, high-fiber diet, reduce excess stress in daily living and exercise regularly have a significantly greater potential of avoiding debilitating diseases, infirmities, and premature death.

The interrelationship among lifestyle and behavior, personal health attitude, and poor health status is gaining recognition and acceptance by both the general public and healthcare providers. Some examples of lifestyle and behavior and related healthcare problems include the following:

Lifestyle	Impact on Health
Smoking	Lung cancer Cardiovascular disease Emphysema Chronic bronchitis
Alcohol/drug abuse	Cirrhosis of liver Motor vehicle accidents Unintentional injuries Malnutrition Suicide Homicide Mental illness
Poor nutrition	Obesity Digestive disease Depression
Lack of exercise	Obesity Cardiovascular disease Depression Diabetes
Overstressed	Mental illness Alcohol/drug abuse Cardiovascular disease

Population Health and Well-Being and Community Conditions

An analysis of various measures of population health and well-being and community conditions for a particular community can, if improved, help make that community a healthier place to live, learn, work, and play. A better understanding of the factors that affect the health of the community will assist with improving the community’s habits, culture, and environment. This portion of the community health needs assessment utilizes information from County Health Rankings, a key component of the Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH) project, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

Counties in each of the 50 states are assigned a health group rank ranging from 1 to 10 according to summaries of a variety of health measures. Those having high health group ranks, e.g., 1 or 2, are considered to be the “healthiest in the United States” and those with a health group rank of 10 being the “least healthy in the United States.” Health group ranks are assigned based on the following summary measures:

- Population Health and Well-Being – health group rankings are based on an equal weighting of one length of life measure and four qualities of life measures.
- Community Conditions – health group rankings are based on weighted scores of three types of factors:
 - Health infrastructure (nine measures)
 - Physical environment (seven measures)
 - Social and economic factors (eight measures)

A more detailed discussion about the ranking system, data sources and measures, data quality, and calculating scores and ranks can be found at the website for County Health Rankings (www.countyhealthrankings.org).

As part of the analysis of the needs assessment for the community, Little River County will be used to compare the relative health status of the community to the state of Arkansas as well as to a national benchmark, if available. A better understanding of the factors that affect the health of the community will assist with how to improve the community's habits, culture, and environment.

The following table, from County Health Rankings, summarizes the 2025 population health and well-being and community conditions metrics for Little River County, which comprises the community for the LRMH. Measures underperforming the state average are highlighted in red.

	Little River County Metric	Arkansas	National Benchmark
Population Health and Well-Being			
Length of Life			
Premature death – Years of potential life lost before age 75 per 100,000 population (age adjusted)	12,700	11,200	8,100
Quality of Life			
Poor physical health days – Average number of physically unhealthy days reported in past 30 days (age adjusted)	5.0	5.2	4.5
Low birth weight – Percent of live births with low birth weight (<2,500 grams)	11%	9%	8%
Poor mental health days – Average number of mentally unhealthy days reported in past 30 days (age adjusted)	6.2	6.3	5.7
Poor or fair health – Percent of adults reporting fair or poor health (age adjusted)	25%	26%	20%
Community Conditions			
Health Infrastructure			
Flu vaccinations – Percent of fee-for-service Medicare enrollees that had an annual flu vaccination	35%	42%	44%
Access to exercise opportunities – Percentage of population with adequate access to locations for physical activity	53%	63%	84%
Food environment index – Index of factors that contribute to a healthy food environment, from 0 (worst) to 10 (best)	7.7	4.6	7.6
Primary care physicians – Ratio of population to primary care physicians	3,940:1	1,440:1	1,310:1
Mental health providers – Ratio of population to mental health providers	11,630:1	360:1	290:1
Dentists – Ratio of population to dentists	2,360:1	2,020:1	1,340:1
Preventable hospital stays – Rate of hospital stays for ambulatory-care sensitive conditions per 100,000 Medicare enrollees	3,755	3,115	2,769
Mammography screening – Percent of female Medicare enrollees age 65–74 that received an annual mammography screening	41%	43%	46%
Uninsured – Percent of population under age 65 without health insurance	8%	11%	9%
Physical Environment			
Severe housing problems – Percentage of households with at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities	7%	13%	17%
Driving alone to work – Percentage of the workforce that drives alone to work	86%	80%	70%
Long commute - driving alone – Among workers who commute in their car alone, the percentage that commute more than 30 minutes	49%	28%	37%
Air pollution: particulate matter – Average daily density of fine particulate matter in micrograms per cubic meter (PM2.5)	9.3	8.3	7.3
Drinking water violations – Indicator of the presence of health-related drinking water violations. 'Yes' indicates the presence of a violation, 'No' indicates no violation	No		
Broadband access – Percentage of households with broadband internet connection	79%	87%	91%
Library access – Library visits per person living within the library service area per year	<1	2	2
Social and economic factors			
Some college – Percentage of adults ages 25–44 with some post-secondary education	56%	59%	68%
High school completion – Percentage of adults ages 25 and over with a high school diploma or equivalent	91%	89%	89%
Unemployment – Percentage of population ages 16 and older unemployed but seeking work	3.9%	3.5%	4.0%
Income inequality – Ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to income at the 20th percentile	4.8	4.8	4.9
Children in poverty – Percent of people under age 18 in poverty	25%	20%	16%
Injury deaths – Number of deaths due to injury per 100,000 population	90	95	87
Social associations – Number of membership associations per 10,000 population	14.4	11.7	9.1
Child care cost burden – Child care costs for a household with two children as a percent of median household income	34%	30%	28%

Note: Blank values reflect unreliable or missing data.

Above information shows that there are opportunities for the LRMH to take positive steps toward improving the community's health.

Healthcare Resources

The availability of health resources is a critical component to the health of a county's residents and a measure of the soundness of the area's healthcare delivery system. An adequate number of healthcare facilities and healthcare providers are vital for sustaining a community's health status. Fewer healthcare facilities and healthcare providers can impact the timely delivery of services.

A limited supply of health resources, especially providers, results in the limited capacity of the healthcare delivery system to absorb charity and indigent care, as there are fewer providers upon which to distribute the burden of such care. This section will address the availability of healthcare resources to the residents of the LRMH's community.

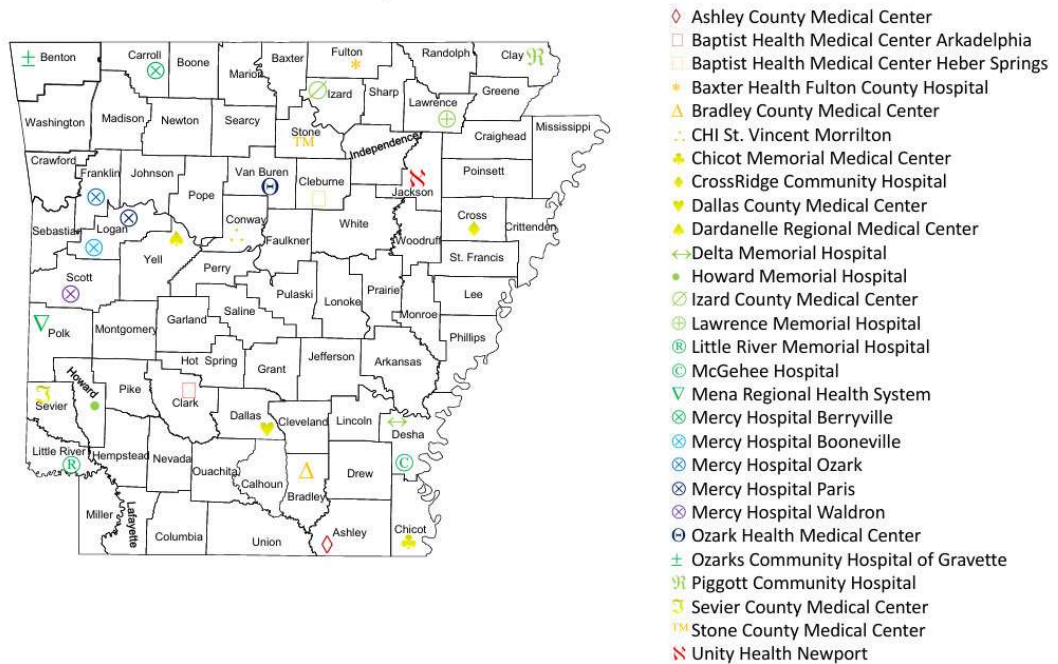
Acute Care Hospitals

LRMH is the only source for acute care in the County. As it has less than 25 acute care inpatient beds, is located more than 35 miles from any other hospital, maintains an average inpatient stay of less than 96 hours, and provides 24/7 emergency care services, LRMH qualifies as a Critical Access Hospital.

LRMH is one of only 28 Critical Access Hospitals in Arkansas in 2025. A map of the other Critical Access Hospitals is shown below.

As a Critical Access Hospital, LRMH cannot and is not meant to take more complex cases or cases requiring long inpatient stays. For these reasons, Little River County residents frequently have to seek care in the Texarkana area, from either Wadley Regional Medical Center or the CHRISTUS St. Michael Health System.

Arkansas Critical Access Hospitals



Date: July 21, 2025
Source: Arkansas Department of Health
Data Source: Rural Health Section

Source: Arkansas Department of Health, <https://healthy.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/FY26-Arkansas-Critical-Access-Hospital-Map.pdf>

Other Healthcare Resources

Other than the LRMH, Little River County residents benefit from many other healthcare resources:

Area Clinics – Little River County has several primary care family practices and one pediatric primary care practice. Many of these clinics are expanding their provider base with APRNs, rather than additional physicians. Additional details may be found in the Access to Providers section.

Area Nursing Homes – There are two skilled nursing facilities and one residential care facility in Little River County (Little River Nursing & Rehab and Pleasant Manor Nursing Home), providing a total of 186 beds. Additionally, Pinecrest Lodge, a residential care facility, also provides Little River County with an additional 13 beds. These facilities provide residential, medical and rehabilitative services to the elderly and disabled in the community.

Little River County Health Unit – The Little River County Health Unit is a general resource for public health in the County. This unit provides services including WIC, family planning, prenatal care, immunizations, communicable disease follow-up, sexually transmitted disease and HIV testing, tuberculosis testing and treatment, breast care and environmental services.

Survey Data

To gather information about the community's current attitudes and needs as it related to public health, LRMH staff asked three key interviewees to complete surveys. These surveys were created to assess public perceptions of the county's health status and unmet needs.

The surveys were developed to either facilitate an open discussion with the survey respondents, or respondents could complete the surveys with written responses. This year, the respondents chose to provide written responses.

Methodology

LRMH conducted these surveys with three key interviewees. The interviewees were asked to participate based on their specialized knowledge or expertise in public health or their knowledge of underserved and minority populations.

The interviews were conducted using a standard questionnaire. A copy of the interview instrument is included in appendices. Comments were provided on the following issues:

- Health and quality of life for residents of Little River County
- Current strengths in the community and public health
- Opinions regarding the most important health issues facing community residents
- Opinions regarding the types of services Little River County currently lacks
- Barriers to improving health and quality of life for residents of the community

Respondents filled out each survey in writing, answering open-ended questions. The respondents were assured that personal identifiers, such as names or organizational affiliations, would not be connected in any way to the information presented in this report. Therefore, information included in the report may have been altered slightly to the extent needed only to preserve confidentiality.

This data collection technique does not provide a quantitative analysis of the respondent's opinions, but reveals some of the factors affecting the views and sentiments about overall health and quality of life within the community.

Survey Results

While many issues were raised by each individual respondent, all respondents brought up three primary common issues. These issues are summarized below:

- **Mental and Behavioral Health:** All survey respondents identified the lack of mental and behavioral health providers in Little River County as a general detriment to public health and quality of life in the community.
- **Community Awareness:** LRMH provides excellent care but there are members of our community, including nurse practitioners, physician assistants and physicians that are not fully aware of the hospital's ability to provide emergency care in addition to hospital in-patient care. Hospital leadership needs to do a better job of communicating available services.
- **Urgent Care Clinics:** The respondents addressed this issue differently, but seemed to agree that the community would benefit from the ability to see a healthcare provider for non-emergent needs outside of regular business hours.

Evaluation of Response to 2022 CHNA

LRMH prepared an implementation strategy in response to the needs identified in its 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment. A listing of those needs, along with the steps taken by LRMH to address them, is listed below:

1. Obesity and heart disease
2. Wellness and health education
3. Drug abuse prevention

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic was a major barrier to the implementation of any plans after the 2022 CHNA. Now, with a vaccinated workforce and cases at a manageable level in Little River County, LRMH is hopeful that they can begin to work on the goals identified in the surveys.

Identification and Prioritization of 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, numerous health needs were identified. These needs were evaluated to determine which were significant to the community.

As a result, the following list of significant needs was identified:

1. Obesity and heart disease
2. Wellness and health education
3. Drug abuse prevention
4. Mental and Behavioral Health
5. Urgent Care Clinics

As LRMH develops its updated implementation strategy, public comments on this CHNA report and any comments or ideas about implementation are welcomed. Comments may be directed to LRMH's management at 451 W. Locke St., Ashdown, Arkansas 71822.

APPENDICES

SAMPLE SURVEY

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

Community Health Needs Assessment for: Little River Memorial Hospital

Name:

Title:

Agency/Organization:

of years living in County:

of years in current position:

Introduction: Hello, my name is [interviewer's name]. I am working with Little River Memorial Hospital on its 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment. Little River Memorial Hospital is gathering local data as part of developing a plan to improve health and quality of life in Little River County. Community input is essential to this process.

You have been selected for a key informant interview because of your knowledge, insight, and familiarity with the community. We anticipate the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Please keep in mind that while the overall themes that emerge from these interviews will be summarized and made available to the public, each individual interview will be kept strictly confidential.

As you consider the question I'll ask you, please keep in mind the broad definition of health adopted by the World Health Organization: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Feel free to think of the community's health needs broadly when sharing your perspectives.

Questions:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself, including your occupation and your role in the community.
2. What do you think are your community's strongest assets?
3. In general, how would you rate health and quality of life in the community?
4. In your opinion, has health and quality of life in the community improved, stayed the same or declined over the past few years? Why?
5. What do you think are the most significant health care needs in Little River County today?
6. What health care needs are not being met in your community today?
 - o What are the mental or behavioral health care needs in your community? Do you feel these needs are being met?
7. What do you think could be done to better address the health care needs of the people in your community?

8. What health care needs does Little River Memorial Hospital need to address?
9. Do you think people in your community are fully aware of the local healthcare services that are available to them? If not, why not?
10. What services, other than specialties, do you think Little River Memorial should offer?
11. Do you have a local physician?
12. For what services are residents being referred out of town?
13. What population(s) do you think is underserved?
14. Have you or someone you know had difficulty obtaining health care services in the past few years?
 - o If yes, what were the challenges preventing you, or the people you know, from getting the health care services needed?
 - o Did it have to do with access to a physician?
15. What do you think prevents patients from getting the health care they need?
16. After everything we have discussed, what do you see as the three most critical health issues in your community?
17. Is there someone that you would recommend we speak to who may have useful input for this assessment?
18. Do you have any other comments you would like us to consider?

Thanks so much for sharing your concerns and perspectives on these issues. As a reminder, summary results will be made available by Little River Memorial Hospital and used to develop a community-wide health improvement plan. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact at Little River Memorial Hospital. Thank you again for your participation.

SOURCES

Sources

CARES Engagement Network,
<<https://engagementnetwork.org/assessment/>>

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps,
<www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Cost Report Data. Online Medicare Cost Report Worksheets and Data Sets,
<<http://www.costreportdata.com/index.php>>

HealthyPeople 2030,
<<https://odphp.health.gov/healthypeople>>