

Geisinger

Geisinger Lewistown Hospital

Community Health Needs Assessment



Dear friends,

Listening is an important component in delivering effective healthcare. At Geisinger, we listen not only when our patients talk with us about their individual health histories and symptoms, but also when our community shares information regarding areas in need of improvement so we all can become healthier and happier. To that end, we work cooperatively with other organizations to conduct community health needs assessments. Based on the feedback provided — whether it is the need for increased access to medical services or educational programming — we take action to make things better.

This is not simply the right thing to do. It is also who we are and what we are all about. And as we begin our second century of service at Geisinger, we remain committed to our patient care, education, research and community service mission.

We are pleased to share our latest Community Health Needs Assessment brochure, and hope you will take the time to review it. You can also visit geisinger.org/chna to learn more about Geisinger's ongoing efforts to enhance the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

Thank you for your interest.

Take care,

David Feinberg, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer

Compassionate caring. That's our commitment to you when you come to Geisinger Lewistown Hospital for care. Our physicians' and practitioners' dedication to serving the community and providing care to all in need has never been stronger.

Geisinger's well-being is closely tied to the health of the community, which is why we seek to understand and respond to identified community health needs. Our role is to be good corporate citizens and work with the community to tackle the most critical health and social problems. We are invested in community partnerships, job creation and support for local governments.

Geisinger's community support also includes the provision of free, uncompensated care to patients who cannot afford to pay; care to the elderly and poor not paid by Medicare or Medicaid; allied health, medical residency and fellowship educational programs to train physicians and other healthcare professionals; healthcare research; and community health, education and outreach programs.

As you read more about Geisinger's response to the community health needs assessment, we welcome your ideas regarding how we can better serve you, your family, your friends and your neighbors.

Be in good health,

Kay A. Hamilton, RN
Chief Administrative Officer

Michael T. Hegstrom, MD
Chief Medical Officer



You talked and we listened

Providing the best possible healthcare means understanding the needs of the people that Geisinger Health System (GHS) serves. It means caring about what their everyday lives are like. It means communicating with them to assess what they think about the services and programs we provide. Finally, it means identifying barriers to how they access and use the comprehensive healthcare resources that GHS offers.

That's why Geisinger Health System collaborated with outside organizations across a 13-county region to contract Tripp Umbach, a private healthcare consulting firm and nationally recognized leader in health needs assessments. They assisted us in conducting our Community Health Needs Assessments.

Between October 2014 and March 2015, information was gathered from key community stakeholders using a variety of methodologies, including interviews, hand-distributed surveys and analysis of secondary data. The information we collected indicated three distinct areas on which to focus:

- Addressing needs related to behavioral health and substance abuse
- Increasing access to/affordability of healthcare
- Reducing the negative impact of lifestyle choices on health

In terms of behavioral health, the study indicated that

there are not enough providers to meet demand. Where care is available, providers are often fragmented, with better coordination needed between primary care providers, behavioral health specialists and substance abuse counselors. Too strong a reliance on pharmacology was also cited as an issue when it came to care.

Residents, many of whom live in rural areas, complained of problems finding transportation to appointments. Some were resistant to seeking care for behavioral health concerns due to cost and perceived social stigma. This combination of factors led to higher-than-average rates of issues with anxiety, depression and bipolar disorders. Suicides and relapses into substance abuse were also of serious concern.

Increasing access to healthcare was determined to be the second-greatest need in our community. In addition to problems with transportation, residents cited not enough local providers, lengthy waits for service and problems having insurance plans accepted. Cost of care is a major concern for many. Uninsured care can be unaffordable, and even moderate income earners cannot always afford health insurance.

Poverty is an issue for many in our community — and unfortunately, it is often an indicator of poor health status. Our studies indicated that other social determinants, such as cultural and religious affiliations, also provide barriers to care. In many cases, people are simply unaware of the health services that are available.

The third-largest need we discovered was for finding

means of reducing the impact of questionable lifestyle choices on health. Smoking, lack of exercise, substance abuse and bad eating habits all contribute to poor health and can lead to chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, heart disease and respiratory problems. According to our study, every county in the region, with the exception of Schuylkill, showed significantly lower rates of physical activity than those reported for the state, and rates for smoking are high throughout the region. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in the rates of lifestyle-related illnesses since 2012.

So now that we've learned so much about the communities we serve, what do we do next? Create solutions that will enable us to serve them better. In the words of Geisinger Health System CEO Dr. David Feinberg, "I want us to exceed every patient's and family's expectations."

This brochure presents a sampling of programs developed to address the needs of the communities we serve. Some of them are new, but many of them were already in existence. Some may be improved or expanded based on the new data. The brochure also details additional programs put in place at Geisinger facilities throughout central and northeast Pennsylvania to address needs that are specific to those locations.

You talked. We listened. Now let us show you how we plan to care for you and your loved ones — not only when you are a patient, but every day.

Improving healthcare access for everyone

"Geisinger Lewistown Hospital is in the process of expanding and upgrading in a number of areas," says Kay Hamilton, chief administrative officer at Geisinger Lewistown Hospital. "Our goal is to not only improve access to healthcare, but also to make that care more patient-centered and efficient."

The renovations to the Emergency Department are an example of how the hospital is increasing efficiency and streamlining care. "The new design will allow staff to get appropriate resources to patients more quickly," Ms. Hamilton says.

Imaging technology will be upgraded and a second CT scanner will be added. New ultrasound rooms, a fluoroscopy room and a new general X-ray room are also planned. "This investment in state-of-the-art technology means better and faster test results," explains Ms. Hamilton. "It assures best outcomes for our patients, and



because it makes the process more efficient, it facilitates everyone's access to care."

Several physicians have recently joined Geisinger Lewistown Hospital. Five gastrointestinal doctors, a general surgeon, two cardiologists, a neurosurgeon and an OB/GYN have also joined the team within the past year.

Timely access to healthcare improved dramatically with the opening of Careworks®, Geisinger's walk-in clinic on North Logan Boulevard. "Careworks is a wonderful option," says Ms. Hamilton. "Patients don't need appointments, they're in and out in no time and it's far less expensive than a trip to the Emergency Department."

To provide healthcare to the underserved, underinsured and uninsured, Geisinger Lewistown Hospital has partnered with the Primary Health Network (PHN). A new Community Health Center is planned, with primary care physicians, a variety of specialists, a dental clinic and a pharmacy all-in-one facility. "As with all PHN clinics, fees will be adjusted on a sliding scale based on income level," says Ms. Hamilton.

"Better access to healthcare was identified as an important need in our community," says Ms. Hamilton. "I'm proud to say Geisinger Lewistown Hospital is taking numerous steps to address the issue," says Ms. Hamilton.

Teaming up to help at-risk community members

The Mifflin County HUB program is a cooperative effort between local police, educators, addiction counselors and various other human service agencies. Its goal is to prevent crisis by helping at-risk people before a crisis occurs.

"Police officers are out there on the front line every day. We see it all: behavioral health, substance abuse, domestic violence, housing problems, truancy and more," says Bill

Herkert, former chief of police for the Lewistown Police Department. "Usually, more than one of these factors is at play in any given situation. It's a vicious cycle, and more than any one agency can handle. The idea behind HUB is to get different service agencies working together to find effective solutions for people at risk."

According to Chief Herkert, the HUB concept, which refers to the "hub" of information-sharing between groups at a meeting, originated in Canada in 2011. The HUB team in Lewistown formed in early 2015. It meets once a week to identify individuals or families at risk. No names or other personal information are shared during any initial evaluation — only demographics.

If the situation needs intervention, the HUB chairperson selects the agencies that should be involved. Representatives are only given the information they need to devise a plan. "It's all very confidential," explains Chief Herkert.

Once a plan is in place, team members offer their help to the person or family — free of charge. "The response has been overwhelmingly positive," he says. "Many people know they need help, but don't know how to go about getting it."

The Lewistown program has been effective in addressing behavioral health and substance abuse issues, which are often at the root of other problems. "In just its first year, the HUB program has made a significant impact on safety and public health," says Kay Hamilton, chief administrative officer for Geisinger Lewistown Hospital. "Connecting services from a variety of agencies lets us take a more holistic approach to intervention."

"This is a program that should definitely be expanded into other locations," she says.

Healthy living for seniors at Mann Edge Terrace

Mann Edge Terrace is a 31-unit apartment complex for people age 62 and up. Located in the heart of Lewistown, it benefits from a community outreach program combining education, referral services and exercise programs.

"It's a cooperative effort that involves many organizations," explains Phyllis K. Mitchell, vice president of Corporate Communications for Geisinger, who supervises the program. "Geisinger Lewistown Hospital plays a big role, as do many community organizations, such as the Mifflin-Juniata Area Agency on Aging and SUN Home Health & Hospice."

According to Ms. Mitchell, the goal is to help residents live independently and remain active and healthy. Presentations teach residents about symptoms to be aware of and how to stay healthy. "Diabetes, heart failure, depression, and colon, skin and breast cancers have all been addressed this year," she says.

Gladys Goodman and her husband were among Mann Edge Terrace's first residents back in January 2013. "We go to as many programs as possible," she says. "Deb Yingling does an excellent job and she's always friendly and approachable." Ms. Goodman appreciates that everything is designed with seniors in mind. "Reading materials are printed in large type with lots of spacing, exercises are modified to adapt to individual limitations and presentations are kept to about an hour — which is nice, because a lot of us need our naps," she says.

"The programs are very well done," says resident Patty Gallagher. "And after each one, we fill out survey cards and make suggestions. The talk on living wills was inspired by a suggestion we made, so I know they listen to our feedback."

During the initial rental process, each resident meets with Deb Yingling, Geisinger Lewistown Hospital's care manager, to share information and identify any health risks. "Ms. Yingling becomes the residents' partner in care," explains Ms. Mitchell. "She can offer assistance to assure access to needed healthcare services and community resources. Thanks to this program, the residents of Mann Edge Terrace know they're covered."

Get Fresh Markets make it easy to eat healthy

Good nutrition can have a tremendous impact on health and well-being. But it can be a challenge to fit in shopping and learning how to cook new options that are good for you and taste good, too. With so many in our community suffering from chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, we feel it's our mission to not



only educate people on the subject of better lifestyle choices, but to also make those choices easy — and fun.

Our Get Fresh Markets do just that.

“Get Fresh Markets is a partnership between Foodservices, Clinical Nutrition, the Sustainability Program and Geisinger Wellness,” explains Diane Harlow, director of Geisinger Wellness. “The markets are held throughout the summer and feature seasonal and, when available, locally grown produce. There are cooking demonstrations, recipe cards and tips for recycling.”

At each market, Foodservice highlights a different type of produce in their daily menus. Customers are taught how to prepare and store the featured item, and nutrition information sheets are distributed. “The team also comes up with a minimum of six recipes using the featured produce,” says Ms. Harlow. “That way, if someone in the family doesn’t like one option, there are other possibilities.”

According to Ms. Harlow, many visitors bring their children and grandchildren to the Get Fresh Markets. “The more people we can get involved, the better. It’s all about supporting a culture of health and wellness,” she says.

Finding better ways to communicate with our patients

“The Community Health Needs Assessments determined that better access to health services is an important need in all communities we serve,” says Rebecca Ruckno, director of Patient Experience for Geisinger Health System. “When it comes to access, many factors are involved, including issues with insurance and challenges finding transportation. But in some cases, the problem boils down to patients not being able to communicate effectively with healthcare providers.”

Ms. Ruckno points out that there can be many reasons for miscommunication. Some patients do not speak English, others cannot read it well even though they are native speakers and some are sight-challenged.

“Health literacy is something we’ve been addressing for a while,” says Diane Harlow, director of Geisinger Wellness. “At the moment, we’re working to formalize a cohesive, structured approach to enhancing health literacy that can be replicated throughout our system — and elsewhere.”

For foreign-language-speaking patients, Geisinger has implemented an online system called Stratus Video Interpretation, which uses technology to connect healthcare providers with interpreters in over 175 spoken and signed languages. “Stratus is an application that we’ve loaded onto tablets,”

explains Ms. Ruckno. “It’s available 24/7, on demand.”

Ruckno and Harlow say they’re also developing a training program for employees to help them communicate more effectively with patients. “For most people, coming to the hospital is very stressful,” says Ms. Ruckno. “We’re teaching staff members to take emotional states into consideration and [to] ask questions to make sure patients understand the information they’re being given.”

New strategies are also being discussed to help make patients’ needs more obvious. “We’ve talked about having a patient’s preferred language appear on the first page of his or her electronic medical record,” says Ms. Harlow. She adds that if a patient is sight- or hearing-impaired, that should come up, too. “The more we do to facilitate and optimize patient experience, the better,” Ms. Harlow says.

Helping patients dispose of old medications safely

Cleaning out your medicine cabinet is a way of protecting your loved ones from harm. Unused and expired prescriptions may end up in the hands of young children or get abused by teenagers looking for a quick high.

But flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash sends them to local waterways and landfills, where they can harm the environment.

Luckily, Geisinger has a solution. MedSafe and MedReturn collection bins are in place or being installed at many Geisinger locations for safe, eco-friendly disposal of all unused and expired medications. The program, which has collected more than 4,000 lbs. of expired and unused prescriptions over the past 4 years, is entirely free of charge.

“More than 440 million prescription drugs are improperly disposed of each year,” says John Jones, RPh, vice president of Enterprise Pharmacy at Geisinger. “We want to make it as easy as possible for people to dispose of their unwanted medications responsibly.”

MedSafe units are available Monday through Saturday during normal pharmacy hours on the Geisinger Medical Center campus. They will soon be installed at the Geisinger Clinic in Dallas and a second MedReturn location is planned for Wilkes-Barre.



It’s such an old idea
it almost seems brand new.

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