

In 2025, WakeMed participated in Wake County's 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment – the process is a collaborative effort between the residents of Wake County and its many community partners, including the other health care systems operating in Wake County.

Throughout this process, three key opportunities were identified as critical to improving the health and well-being of our community:

- Access to Health Care
- Mental Health
- Affordable Housing and Homelessness

As such, WakeMed has developed the following implementation plan to address the priorities outlined in the Wake County 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment. As part of WakeMed's mission to improve the health and well-being of our community by providing outstanding and compassionate care to all, we are committed to supporting and addressing the unique and diverse needs of our growing community.

Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Plan 2025-2027



ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Ensuring all members of our growing community have access to the health care services they need is critical to maintaining the health of Wake County. WakeMed is focused on improving access to care through continued growth and expansion, as well as the development of innovative models of care delivery.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
Expand access to adult and pediatric primary care across Wake County and surrounding areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Add walk-in and traditional primary care offices.• Build and expand innovative, virtual primary care access pathways outside of traditional office visits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Track total number of primary care visits, total number of primary care clinical attributions.• Track the number of new primary care sites added.
Enhance access to high-quality specialty care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand cancer care services along with infusion center services.• Continue expansion of Brain & Spine programs to enhance services for patients with brain disease and/or neurological disorders.• Develop value-based collaborations and pathways to benefit patients receiving surgical services for coronary artery bypass, major bowel, joint replacement, hip and femur fracture, and spinal fusion procedures.• Focus efforts to shift surgery volume to outpatient where clinically appropriate to improve value and increase inpatient capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor patient volumes in specialty services, Time to next appointment for Cancer Care.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
<p>Build and expand proactive and innovative care models focused on preventing illness or escalations of chronic conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and expand Precisely You, a WakeMed precision medicine and genetics research study aimed to provide genetic screening and early identification for several cancers and metabolic conditions. • Expand capabilities in predictive analytics to inform proactive outreach strategies and care interventions prior to adverse health outcomes. • Use innovative technology to expand care management outreach and support through virtual care pathways (remote patient monitoring, post-surgical telemedicine programs). • Continue efforts to reduce overall impact of illness and total cost of care across Wake county by participating in two accountable care organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the total number of Precisely You screenings and the estimated number of cancers prevented. • Track the number of predictive analytic models deployed to impact care pathways. • Track the number of patients engaged in a care management/care support program.
<p>Expand access to inpatient acute care beds in Wake County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluate bed counts, makeup and locations to determine whether the current compliment meets the needs of the community. • Develop innovative at-home acute care pathways to shift site of care to home whenever possible. • Build 45-bed acute-care hospital in Garner, along with a 150-bed mental health and wellbeing hospital as WakeMed's integrated Whole Health Campus. • Expand NICU beds and services at Cary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluate bed counts. • Continue to evaluate identified inpatient bed needs documented in annual State Medical Facilities Plan. • Track inpatient volumes to determine need for access to acute care beds. • Monitor Wake County population growth to plan for future inpatient needs. • Bring online (6) approved Level II neonatal beds at WakeMed Cary Hospital.
<p>Expand access to urgent and emergency care in Wake County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase bed capacity and enhance access to emergency departments at current locations (pending Raleigh campus bed addition, North renovations) • Explore building additional Healthplex locations across Wake County. • Continue to expand Urgent Care options as an alternative to emergency departments where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track volumes and ED utilization. • Develop plans for expanding two Healthplex locations in the county. • Track and expand Urgent care/MyCare 365 sites.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
<p>Enhance access to post-acute care options through collaboration with home health, skilled nursing facilities and rehabilitation hospitals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand home health service offerings and locations served. • Explore a value-based partnership with local skilled nursing facilities focused on high-quality care of mutual patients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track new services offered through Home Health Care. • Track innovative options to improve access to skilled nursing facilities.
<p>Partner with government, community-based organizations and other safety-net health care providers to improve access to care and overall health outcomes for vulnerable populations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the services of the Center for Community Health as a resource for coordinated, holistic transitional care for some of Wake County's most vulnerable residents. • Utilize mobile wellness vehicle to expand reach into the community and address health care disparities. • Screen for social needs affecting health outcomes at all facilities and connect to community-based organizations to close need gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track number of patients seen at Center for Community Health, number of patients embedded in community safety-net. • Track number of mobile wellness engagements, % of patients screened for social drivers of health. • Track number of patients connected to social resources.

MENTAL HEALTH

Like most health systems across the country, WakeMed has seen a steady increase in the demand for behavioral health services. As such, we have continued to invest significant time, energy and resources to increase the capacity and breadth of services needed to support patients suffering from behavioral health conditions. Many of these strategies rely on the strong partnerships we've built with community-based organizations and our peer health care organizations throughout Wake County.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
Decrease drug overdose deaths	Invest in an Addiction Medicine Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardized work to help ensure our hospital providers have the training and tools they need to initiate and continue medication-assisted treatment. • Direct our Addiction Medicine team to provide education to clinicians across our system to help ensure we can recognize and treat issues associated with substance use. • Develop processes to close coordination with outpatient providers through our Network for Advancing Behavioral Health, the outpatient arm of our WakeMed Behavioral Health Network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark/track drug overdose death rates in Wake County. • Track # of clinician education sessions and # of departments/clinicians reached. • Track referrals placed through NABH.
	Develop a comprehensive Narcan Take Home Kit Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Naloxone to discharged patients who are seen in all ED departments due to an opioid overdose. • Expand Narcan distribution sites to include WakeMed MyCare 365 Clinics, Urgent Care locations, outpatient pharmacies and through outreach events, vaccine clinics at shelters and care centers, and mobile wellness clinics. • Explore partnerships with community organizations, including Alliance Medical Ministry, Advance Community Health, Raleigh Rescue Mission, and Southeast Raleigh Promise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the number of Narcan kits provided to patients in all WakeMed emergency departments in 2025-2028. • Track new partner relationships.
Develop a pipeline for diverse mental health providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a collaboration with Wake Tech on mental health technician training programs, including providing help with curriculum development. Support Mental Health & Well-Being Nursing Director to serve as the Vice Chair for the Social and Human Services Advisory Council. • Provide internships and shadowing experiences for Wake Tech students with our mental health clinician team. • Support medical students from UNC Chapel-Hill and Campbell University by providing rotations in psychiatry and addiction medicine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track training and curriculum development tools. • Track internships and opportunities for education with our mental health clinician teams. • Track clinical rotations in psychiatry and addiction medicine.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
<p>Decrease community suicide rate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each month, ~1300 patients present to WakeMed in a mental health crisis. WakeMed's goal is to provide prompt and compassionate care. To meet the needs of the community, WakeMed employs over 200 mental health specialists, including Psychiatrists, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Psychologists, Psychiatric Nurses, Pharmacists, Occupational Therapists, Licensed Mental Health Clinicians and Peer Support Specialists. On average, patients presenting to a WakeMed ED with a mental health need meet with a mental health expert within 15 minutes of arrival. • For patients who come to WakeMed in crisis and require inpatient psychiatric admission, WakeMed can generally connect them with a bed within 24 hours. This is a significant improvement from the several day wait experienced in the past. This decrease is the result of strong partnerships with other community organizations through the WakeMed Behavioral Health Network, as well as a commitment to building inpatient psychiatric beds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > WakeBrook (28 beds) opened in May 2024 and served 704 patients in 2024. Anticipate serving ~1300 patients per year in 2025. Expect 2025 volumes to remain steady through coming years. > Recently broke ground on our new Whole Health Campus in Garner. This campus will include 150 mental health beds and is slated to open in the first quarter of 2029. In partnership with Sheppard Pratt, WakeMed anticipates treating 2,600 people at the mental health hospital in the first year and over 5,100 when at full capacity. • To increase access to care, WakeMed must ensure patients are willing to accept treatment. WakeMed is working to create warm and healing environments where patients and families immediately feel relief and where all are assured they will be treated with dignity and respect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > WakeMed has reduced the rate of involuntary commitments (IVCs) by 60% since 2021. > Aligned with WakeMed's commitment to delivering trauma-informed care, we are striving to have a restraint-free environment. WakeMed's current restraint rates are 90% lower than national benchmarks. > Building out a continuum of structured outpatient and interventional psychiatry programs that align with emerging best practices to add access to a range of services to the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to track time to mental health consultation in the ED with a goal of maintaining target consult time within 15 minutes of arrival. • Continue to track timely patient connection to inpatient services within 24 hours. Reduce the days in waiting for service. • Track number of patients referred and connected to inpatient services at WakeBrook. • Monitor construction of Whole Health Campus as well as community demand for inpatient care. • Track reduction in time to connect patients with access to care. • Track IVC rates with goal of continued reduction in percentage. • Continue to track restraint rates at WakeBrook with the goal of further reducing rates lower than national benchmarks. • Track and analyze patient flow through WakeMed's continuum of mental health care. • Track additional services added.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
<p>Support community engagement programs addressing mental health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with AHEC and the WakeMed Foundation, host quarterly Mental Health Grand Rounds educational series with continuing education credits for WakeMed staff as well as local community. Additionally, through WakeMed's relationship with Sheppard Pratt, connect community mental health clinicians with Sheppard Pratt's Center for Professional Education, which offers a wealth of mental health educational resources. • WakeMed and YMCA of the Triangle have developed a program (ACCEPT) that teaches evidence-based coping skills to YMCA-involved youth, including Counselors in Training (CITs). Future plans include expanding to Wake County YMCA afterschool programs in 2026 to impact ~500 children, with hopes of extending to YNCA camp programs across the state by 2028. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 128 hours of continuing education credit for WakeMed staff and community members. • Connect community mental health clinicians with Sheppard Pratt's Center for Professional Education. Measure by number of connected clinicians and hours of continuing education. • Track the number of CIT and after-school staff trained in ACCEPT. Track the number of YMCA youth members who have been impacted.
<p>Promote advocacy for mental health services throughout the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in resource fairs throughout the community. • Chief Medical Officer to serve on the NC Commission for Mental, Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the number of WakeMed Mental Health & Well-Being engagements at resource fairs and other community events. • Track and consider increasing the number of meaningful and impactful leadership roles Mental Health & Well-Being executives participate in through 2029.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

While it is outside WakeMed's resources and expertise to develop housing options, we are engaged in supporting our community's homeless population. With regard to their health and well-being, focusing on social determinants of health, we continue to explore innovative ways to improve access to care for patients in Wake County who are dealing with housing insecurity.

ACTIONABLE ITEM	STRATEGY	ACCOUNTABILITY/MEASUREMENT
Support community members experiencing homelessness by connecting them with community resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue HEART Program under the Center for Community Health program. • Actively engage in supporting the homeless population in our community with medical care focused on addressing social determinants of health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track program performance and utilization.
Provide respite services for patients with medical needs and housing insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Health & Medical Respite Program through Community Case Management and the Center for Community Health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor utilization and readmissions.
Partner with local non-profit organizations providing services to community members experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a health clinic at Oak City Outreach Center. • Center for Community Health Community Outreach efforts in the community and at area homeless shelters via mobile program, providing new education topics each month. • Community Advisory Council will advise which topics and services are needed in the community to match education programs and services provided by our Corporate & Community Health team. • Provide financial and volunteer support where appropriate for those nonprofit organizations addressing medical, food and housing insecurities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track utilization at Oak City Center health clinic. • Track the number of outreach events and education programs. • Track volunteer hours and financial contributions.
Support efforts to preserve and add affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When appropriate, support agency and community efforts, including those along the New Bern Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Corridor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress in the community made by agencies working in this space.