Forrest General Hospital

CHNA Report

CHNA Report and Implementation Plan

Approved September 23, 2025



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Executive Summary

As a hospital dedicated to the health and well-being of our region, conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment ("CHNA") is both a strategic priority and a moral responsibility. The CHNA provides a comprehensive, data-driven view of the most pressing health challenges facing the people we serve in south Mississippi. It allows us to identify service gaps, emerging trends, and underlying disparities—ensuring that our programs, services, and investments are aligned with the real needs of our community.

This process is more than a regulatory obligation; it is central to our mission as a community hospital. By engaging directly with local stakeholders, we gain valuable insight and build stronger relationships with those who share our commitment to community health. In our most recent CHNA, we partnered with trusted organizations such as SeMRHI (Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative), the Hattiesburg Public School District, the Edwards Street Fellowship Clinic, numerous local churches and many others to ensure that a wide range of voices—particularly those in underserved and vulnerable populations—were represented.

These partnerships allow us to better understand the social determinants of health, such as food insecurity, housing instability, and access to education, and to tailor our strategies accordingly. Whether it's expanding health resources and services, supporting chronic disease management in low-income neighborhoods, or investing in health education initiatives, the CHNA helps us set priorities that are both evidence-based and community-informed.

Furthermore, the CHNA strengthens collaboration across sectors, encouraging coordinated action with civic leaders, nonprofits, educators, and faith-based groups. It reinforces our accountability by setting clear, measurable goals and providing a transparent roadmap for improving health outcomes.

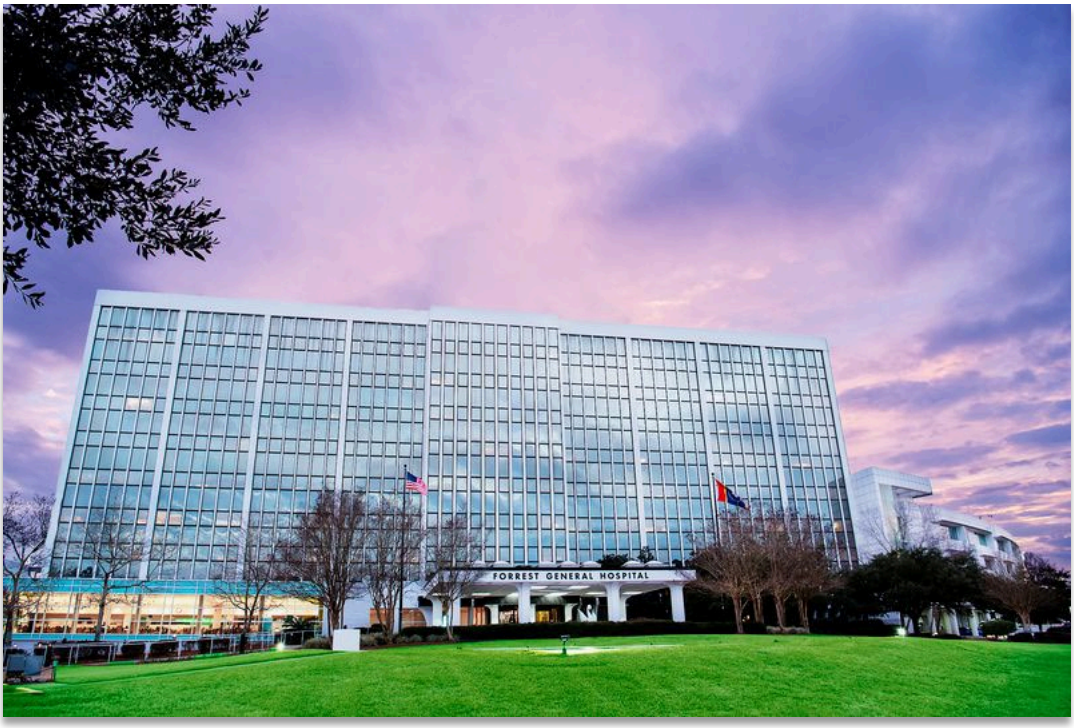
In summary, the CHNA is not just a tool—it is a catalyst for action. It ensures we remain not only a provider of care but a proactive leader in building a healthier, stronger community.

Jeff Cook
President and Chief Executive Officer
Forrest Health

About the Hospital

Forrest General Hospital

Forrest General Hospital ("FGH") in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, has been a leader in medical excellence in South Mississippi since it opened its doors in 1952. The hospital has grown from the original 90-bed facility into a 547-bed, American College of Surgeons ("ACS")-certified Level II regional Trauma Center hospital system.



In addition to the general medical/surgical facility, the system also features Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services, one of the nation's most comprehensive treatment campuses, The Orthopedic Institute, the region's only orthopedic hospital, and the Forrest General Cancer Center, which is currently the largest cancer research center in the state.

In 2012, Forrest General strengthened the foundation for the future of healthcare in the region by forming the Forrest Health System (the "System") to increase access to quality healthcare and improve the services and stability of local community hospitals.

Forrest Health is comprised of its flagship, Forrest General Hospital, Highland Community Hospital in Picayune, Jefferson Davis Community Hospital in Prentiss, Jefferson Davis Extended Care Facility in Prentiss, Marion General Hospital in Columbia, Pearl River County Hospital & Nursing Home in Poplarville, Perry County General Hospital (Rural Emergency Hospital) in Richton, and Walthall General Hospital in Tylertown.

The System also includes The Institute of Neuroscience, Asbury Hospice House, and a variety of clinics in Collins, Columbia, Tylertown, Prentiss, Poplarville, Laurel, Picayune, Waynesboro, and Wiggins, improving access to quality healthcare for these rural communities.

About the Hospital, Continued

FGH, the flagship of Forrest Health, also provides all levels of care for critical access care hospitals in the 19-county service area. Forrest General's Emergency Department is among the most modern and advanced emergency facilities available. In 2024, the department handled 140,491 visits. The Emergency Department includes a total of 73 rooms, including 10 acute care rooms, 45 emergent care rooms and four minor care rooms in addition to a decontamination room. The facility is staffed 24 hours a day by board-certified physicians, advanced practice nurses, and registered nurses. The Emergency Department also serves as medical control for AAA Ambulance and Southeast Mississippi Air Ambulance District (SEMAAD) – the longest continually operating air ambulance service in the United States.



Forrest General's Trauma Center became the state's first ACS-certified Level II Trauma Center in 2024. The Center combines the latest technology with exceptional physicians and staff to provide emergent care to critically-injured trauma patients. Forrest General was also the first hospital in Mississippi designated as a Level II Trauma Center by the Mississippi State Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services. The Trauma Center at Forrest General provides an immediate, organized response by a highly-specialized team, 24/7, 365 days a year.

Trauma Services is always staffed by board-certified trauma surgeons, as well as in-house neurosurgeons, emergency physicians, critical care physicians, radiologists, anesthesiologists, and operating room teams who are available 24 hours a day. We also provide 24-hour coverage for neurosurgery, orthopaedic surgery, maxillofacial surgery, otolaryngology, urology, vascular surgery, oral surgery, thoracic surgery, ophthalmology, and interventional radiology. The Trauma Center features dedicated trauma bays with state-of-the-art technology and dedicated operating rooms.

Forrest General's Trauma Center strives to elevate the quality of care that patients receive. One such way is through participation in the American College of Surgeons Trauma Quality Improvement Program ("TQIP").

The Trauma Center has a specialized trauma follow-up clinic located inside the main hospital. Patients can follow up with specialized surgeons, who oversee the recovery process from beginning to end. The Trauma Clinic is staffed by trauma surgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, and neurosurgeons.

One of the goals of the Trauma Center is to reduce traumatic injuries by participating in injury-prevention efforts throughout the community, including providing education on topics such as all-terrain vehicle ("ATV") safety, helmet safety, seatbelt safety, distracted driving, car-seat safety, bicycle safety, burns, and fall prevention. Forrest General Hospital's Trauma Center also participates in the national STOP THE BLEED® program to increase the potential for community members to provide life-saving treatment to people with severe bleeding. Forrest General Hospital trauma physicians and nurses provide education and training, which teaches the community quick and safe actions to control bleeding.

About the Hospital, Continued

For more than 60 years, Forrest General has cared for hearts and blood vessels across Hattiesburg, the Pine Belt, and South Mississippi. From diagnosis to treatment, and through rehabilitation, our Heart and Vascular services team is committed to helping patients return to their lifestyle.



Whether providing interventional and surgical treatment for a variety of heart conditions such as arrhythmia, congestive heart failure or coronary artery disease, to vascular disorders dealing with the body's network of blood vessels, arteries and veins that carry blood to and from the heart, these skilled teams are here to help.

Vascular disorders can also be managed with a range of treatment options, including surgery. Treatments include abdominal aortic aneurysm, carotid artery disease, deep vein thrombosis, and peripheral arterial disease.

When a heart attack strikes, time is a critical factor in determining the outcome. Forrest General's Heart & Vascular Services is connected to The Cardiac Network, which links a number of smaller South Mississippi hospitals to FGH to provide prompt, life-saving technology to heart attack victims. Network hospitals are provided with STEMI protocols which are implemented for heart attack victims prior to being transported to Forrest General for care.

The Cardiac Network enables many South Mississippi counties to receive the same fast, expert medical treatment available at Forrest General. Local doctors work closely with Forrest General's interventional cardiologists from the time the patient arrives at their local hospital to the time they arrive at Forrest General for more advanced treatment.

Forrest General physicians and staff also work through the STEMI Care System, a network of hospitals that have implemented a process called an ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction, or STEMI. This process is designed to deliver care within minutes to patients experiencing a heart attack.

For its care of heart attack patients, Forrest General has been recognized with several of the American Heart Association's Mission Lifeline Gold Plus Achievement Awards, along with the National College of Cardiology Platinum award, recognizing outstanding care of STEMI heart attack patients. In 2024, Forrest General was recognized among the nation's top performing hospitals for treatment of heart attack patients. The American College of Cardiology's NCDR (National Cardiovascular Data Registry) Chest Pain – MI Registry Platinum Performance Achievement Award was presented to only 259 hospitals nationwide.

About the Hospital, Continued

Forrest General opened the state's first Ambulatory Cardiovascular Surgery Center in the fall of 2022, in partnership with Hattiesburg Clinic. This outpatient surgery center for heart patients offers a number of procedures, which combine the expertise of cardiologists and cardiovascular surgeons with the support of Forrest Health, the largest health system in South Mississippi. The center offers a comprehensive range of heart and vascular services, including cardiac catheterization, percutaneous coronary intervention ("PCI"), and cardiac rhythm management.

A staff of heart and vascular surgeons oversee a number of additional procedures including Coronary Angioplasty/Stent, Peripheral Angiography, Peripheral Vascular Interventions, Venous Disease Interventions, Vascular Access, Pacemaker Implantation, Defibrillator ("AICD") Implantation, Loop Recorder Implantation, and Electrophysiology Studies and Ablation Therapies.

During the fall of 2023, Forrest General received designation as a Bariatric Comprehensive Center by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program ("MBSAQIP").

The center performs laparoscopic and robotic gastric sleeve and gastric bypass surgeries. Candidates for these surgeries include those who are at least 18 years old and have a BMI greater than 40 or BMI of 35-39 with at least two comorbidities such as hypertension or diabetes.

These weight-loss surgeries allow patients to resume activities within two to three weeks post-surgery. These minimally-invasive approaches involve smaller incisions, reduced scarring, shorter hospital stays, and faster recovery times compared to traditional open surgery. A support group is also available for those who have undergone weight-loss surgery.

Forrest General's Women & Children's Services provides a variety of services for women at all stages of their life.

Forrest General was the first hospital in Mississippi to become Baby-Friendly certified. This means FGH is one of a little more than 600 hospitals across the U.S. to earn this recognition. It also means we take extra measures to provide the highest stands of care for lactating mothers and their babies

Forrest General's Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit ("NICU") cares for premature, underweight, and/or sick babies requiring the highest level of care after birth.

The NICU consists of a total of 19 rooms, divided between an intensive care unit, intermediate care nursery, and isolation room for critically ill infants. The NICU is supported by neonatologists, nurse practitioners, and highly-skilled nurses, respiratory therapists, and NICU support techs trained in neonatal care.

The FGH NICU utilizes private patient rooms to offer "family-centered care," which means parents can stay with their child at all times during their NICU stay. Each NICU bed is also equipped with a webcam, so parents can stay connected with their newborns.

The Women's Surgery Center at Forrest General Hospital is one of the many features of Women and Children's Services. The surgery suite is dedicated to women's gynecology health and is aesthetically pleasing with a warm and personal environment that is designed to feel more like home.

This dedicated private area also provides skilled nursing care, pre-operative and post-operative care and convenience, all in one location — a women's specialty hospital within a hospital.

About the Hospital, Continued

Forrest General's Skilled Nursing Unit ("SNU") expanded to a 30-bed facility in November of 2023 to better serve its 19-county service area. The unit, which provides benefits of a post-acute medical setting where patients can go after a hospital stay, offers rehabilitative services such as physical, occupational, speech, respiratory therapies, medical management and other medical services. These services provide recovery benefits to a patient before they return to a home setting.

SNU was also recognized in 2023 and 2024 among the country's elite SNU facilities by U.S. News and World Report. By earning a "high performing" rating, the highest possible achievement, this puts Forrest General's SNU in the top 19 percent of 15,000-plus skilled nursing units in the country.

The unit has also maintained a five-star quality rating by CMS, Nursing Home Compare, for health inspections, staffing, and quality measures.

Forrest General opened the Forrest Health Institute of Neuroscience ("FHIN") during 2023. FHIN, a local outpatient clinic located within the healthcare campus, serves patients with complex spinal disorders, nervous system disorders, which include the brain, spinal cord, and peripheral nervous systems, and a spine clinic. A new service, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, was added for patients aimed at treating impairments or disabilities affecting the brain, spinal cord, nerves, bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, and muscles.

The clinic has a main Midtown location on the perimeter of the hospital campus with a second location in West Hattiesburg.

Patients are seen by a team of expert neurosurgeons, some with more than 20 years of experience, and vast knowledge in all areas of brain and spine surgery.

The main Midtown location is a modern facility, which includes eight exam rooms, a conference/consultation room, onsite X-ray, and offices for the providers, staff, and director, with ample parking.

With the opening of an IR (Interventional Radiology) Suite, Forrest General Hospital is meeting the needs of its patients who had been driving elsewhere for their care. This suite, located in the hospital's Radiology Department, offers a variety of treatments for Pine Belt patients.

The IR suite offers procedures such as neurological, cancer treatment, OB/GYN, and urology. The facility also supports the needs of Forrest General's Level Two Trauma Center. Philips Azurion Imaging Equipment allows the staff to treat complex imaging procedures with cutting-edge technology.

In 2024, Pine Grove Behavioral Health and Addiction Services celebrated 40 years of serving those throughout the country who needed support – whether behavioral or addiction related.

Pine Grove includes 88 inpatient beds comprised of an adult psychiatric unit, child and adolescent unit, and a detoxification unit. Additionally, Pine Grove features several world-renowned addiction treatment programs, outpatient services, and other specialty offerings. They offer outreach locations in Columbia, Laurel, Madison, McComb, Meridian, and Picayune.

About the Hospital, Continued

In 2024, Pine Grove opened the doors on a new Outpatient Services Building, the largest of Forrest Health's recent building projects. This 30,662-square-foot facility allowed for expanded outpatient care for children, adolescents, and adults, also offering additional space and providers to assist with care through specialized intensive therapy services, and telehealth.

Positioned adjacent to the Pine Grove campus, the outpatient facility resembles a retreat-like structure and aesthetics encourage a natural, calming ambiance. The building, which merges form and function, exemplifies state-of-the-art design and patient-centered care.

While Pine Grove offers a wide array of services to combat mental health and substance abuse, a unique offering of the campus is the Spiritual Grounds, a multi-faceted project that takes advantage of the great outdoors. The Spiritual Grounds use a series of elements to help patients as they begin a journey of contemplation and growth. They include the Paul McMullan Plaza and Circle of Healing, Meditative Labyrinth, Fire Circle, and Medicine Wheel. Ground was recently broken for the final two elements, a bell tower and a chapel.

In FY2024, Pine Grove delivered inpatient psychiatric care to 3,060 patients, which includes the treatment of children, adolescents, and adults. Pine Grove's outpatient services department provided 13,384 patient visits; including the organization's outpatient clinic for children, adolescents and adults, intensive outpatient substance use disorder treatment program, Forrest Health's Employee Assistance Program, and Pine Grove's partial hospitalization mental health treatment program. Pine Grove also treated 501 patients, in FY2024, for specialty addiction care, including substance use disorders, trauma, co-occurring eating disorders, and sexual addiction.

For patients needing a joint replacement, such as a hip, knee or shoulder, or surgery on their hand, foot, ankle, spine, or for a sports injury, Forrest General's Orthopedic Institute provides a one-stop location. As the only freestanding orthopedic hospital in the region, The Orthopedic Institute ("TOI") offers a level of inpatient and outpatient care that is unmatched in the Southeast. The facility allows patients to avoid the traditional hospital experience by providing for their every need in one convenient location focused on orthopedic care.



About the Hospital, Continued

Now 12 years old, TOI is expanding to meet the needs of patients in South Mississippi. As the population ages, medical professionals are seeing a need for more orthopedic procedures. TOI is adding six additional operating rooms, as well as expansion of Support Space and Central Sterile. Renovations and upgrades are also being made to the six existing operating rooms, modifications made to Central Sterile and additional pre/post-op spaces to accommodate the operating room capacity. Once the project is complete, TOI will have 93,000-square-feet of space dedicated to exceptional orthopedic care.

TOI provides the convenience of having everything an orthopedic patient might need in one place – dedicated orthopedic operating rooms, pre-operative rooms, a Post Anesthesia Care Unit ("PACU"), all with state-of-the-art equipment and technology. However, this technology is only enhanced by the outstanding physicians and staff members who provide care and create positive patient experiences each day.

There are also support services such as laboratory and diagnostic imaging services. Rehabilitation can also be done at TOI with specialized therapists. Joint Camp, a physical therapy program dedicated to the evaluation and recovery of joint replacement patients, is provided in a spacious, highly-equipped room centrally located to all patient rooms.

Unique features include custom-designed patient rooms with wider doorways, beds and chairs designed for orthopedic patients, more space for family and belongings, windows for natural lights and elegant decorative touches that make it feel more like home. Other amenities in this modern facility include convenient parking and a cafeteria.

During FY2024, physicians at TOI conducted 3,340 surgical procedures. Since opening in October 2012, more than 36,000 surgeries have been performed at the facility.

The Forrest General Cancer Center, which celebrated 25 years in 2024, currently houses the state's largest clinical trials program and was the first in the world to house a multiple myeloma clinical trial in 2023. These trials are the same ones you would see at much larger facilities across the country.

The center's Patient Navigator Program helps guide patients to live with, thru, and beyond cancer. From screenings to treatment and follow up care, the patient navigator educates patients and their families and coordinates consistent care between individual patients and the various healthcare providers.

In order to provide help to patients who sometimes need financial assistance to get to their appointments, employees started a Fuel to Fight 5k/2-mile Walk, which is now in its fourth year. Proceeds from the run are handled by the Forrest General Healthcare Foundation to support transportation needs for patients. The fund has raised more than $70,000 in the last three years.

The Cancer Center has a staff of 50, including six providers and three nurse practitioners. Currently, lung, prostate, and breast cancer make up the majority of patients seen at the Cancer Center.

Now in its 31st year, Forrest General's Hospice program offers patients and their families personalized hospice care at home, in the hospital or a nursing home, or at Asbury Hospice House, depending on the patient's needs.

About the Hospital, Continued

Home Hospice reaches patients in Forrest Health's 19-county service area and provides a variety of services – from skilled nursing care and wound/ostomy nursing to therapies, medical social services, personal care services, and respite care, just to name a few.

Asbury Hospice House, located in Hattiesburg, is a 12-bed facility, which offers a home-like setting where staff can address the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of each patient and their family. This inpatient facility provides a comforting atmosphere where families can gather and prepare in dignity.

Asbury offers 12 spacious patient rooms, a dining area and kitchen facilities, a comfortable family room with fireplace, a meditation room, and garden, all coupled with the best available care.

Asbury Hospice House, which opened in 2016, was built through funds donated to the Forrest General Healthcare Foundation. The Foundation has an ongoing campaign to raise funds to add more patient rooms, an outdoor pavilion, a children's room, and other needed space.

Forrest General's Hospice program offers a Bereavement Support Group that meets at Asbury the first Tuesday of each month.

A Forrest General Healthcare Foundation campaign is raising funds to help expand the facility to meet the growing needs of the community.

Forrest General Hospital is proud to be home to the Family Medicine Residency Clinic and program. Forrest General's Family Medicine Residency Clinic ("FMRC") offers a convenient solution for the entire family including children and infants and provides an opportunity for resident physicians to gain experience with patients in a continuity clinic setting while the residents rotate through many different specialty rotations throughout the three-year residency program. One of the many benefits of choosing a resident as a primary care physician is they are able to treat patients in the clinic and continue care if that patient is admitted to the hospital. The FMRC is the only family medicine clinic in this area that offers this benefit.

Services Offered include comprehensive care from birth-nursing home, chronic care, continuity of care, acute care, preventative health/wellness, women's health, vaccines, minor surgery, EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment), newborn and pediatric hospital services under direct supervision of the pediatric faculty, physicals (for children and adults), and VFC clinic (Vaccines For Children-Medicaid/Chips).

The physicians in our program have all finished medical or osteopathic school and are all licensed physicians. This program provides these young physicians with three additional years of training to reinforce their specialty and subspecialty education.

These physicians provide OB/GYN services at Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative and work with SeMRHI at their school clinics. They also see patients at Edwards Street Fellowship's Health Clinic eight hours per week. They also help with annual sports physicals for area high school students.

About the Hospital, Continued

The FGH program is ranked fourth in the nation for board scores amongst programs whose graduates all took the American Board of Family Medicine's board examination in 2023. Since the FGH program graduated its first class in 2016 (students enrolled in 2013 for the three-year training program), there has been a 100 percent board passage rate on the first attempt. And three of the past four graduating classes have scored in the 95th percentile nationally for board scores, putting the program in the top five percent. The 2023 graduating class scored in the 99.6th percentile, or the top 0.4 percent – No. 4 out of 773 programs in the U.S., which is made up of nearly 11,400 residents.

Allowing patients healthcare access is important in helping manage appointments, prescriptions, and their health records. Forrest General provides the Iris Patient Portal, an internet application that allows patients to have secure, convenient online access to their health information and education at their fingertips. It also allows patients to engage in certain online communications with providers, request appointments or prescription refills. Through Epic, an electronic medical record system, Forrest General Hospital, Hattiesburg Clinic, and the Family Medicine Residency Clinic physicians and staff, as well as those at ancillary facilities, have access to a patient's medical records online. This provides easier and safer access to medical records, films, and other information without having to be carried from one clinic to another. FGH and HC have also made these services available to the Edwards Street Fellowship Health Clinic where FMRC residents volunteer and treat patients one day per week.

Forrest General offers several programs which promote healthy lifestyles for all ages:

SPIRIT OF WOMEN – Since 2004, Spirit of Women (SOW) has been a valued resource for women of all ages in the community. Subscribers receive a monthly newsletter with healthy recipes, tips for living a healthier lifestyle, a blog, a calendar listing of upcoming SOW events, classes, donations, interesting stories, and community updates. Each year, programs are customized to meet the needs of today's women and their families, no matter what stage of life they are in.

SPIRIT GIRLS – This is a program of Spirit of Women, which is designed to reach young women through events targeted at promoting self-esteem, encouraging healthy lifestyles, and having lots of fun. Spirit Girls is for 7th – 12th grade girls and offers an opportunity for young ladies to learn the importance of taking action for their health and of giving back to the community through a variety of volunteer opportunities.



AMBASSADORS – Student volunteer programs are an important part of Forrest General's offerings for students who are seeking career path experiences, as well as the opportunity to meet community service requirements. The Ambassador Program compliments and enhances the patient care experience by allowing students to provide important non-clinical support to patients, their families, visitors, and staff. The program is comprised of several areas, including Leadership, Patient Care Rounding, Emergency Room (ER) Care Partner, Information Desks, Customer Care Experience, and Departmental Support.

About the Hospital, Continued

Due to the expansion and growth of Forrest General Hospital, the need arose for easier access to the hospital from U.S. Hwy. 49 and for better traffic circulation to, through and away from the facility, which also includes access to additional medical facilities between Forrest General and Hattiesburg Clinic. The long-term benefit of this project will greatly enhance the quality of life for current residents, as well as improve connectivity from one side of town to the other. As a whole, this is a testament to the hospital and city listening to its residents, collaborating across industries and staying committed to a project that plays a vital role in improving access to healthcare.

The U.S. Hwy. 49/Midtown Traffic Improvement Project was first addressed in 2011, but didn't begin until 2022. The City of Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi Development Authority, Office of State Aid Road Construction, and Forrest General Hospital are part of the seven-phase improvement project.

This project expands access to Forrest General Hospital by shifting a traffic signal, installing additional traffic signals, improving traffic circulation on Arlington Loop, where many of the hospital's ancillary clinics are located, and provides a more efficient route to the Midtown area from Highway 49.

The work has provided frontage road access to the entrance of the hospital, a separate entrance for Emergency Room traffic along a landscaped boulevard, and an exit to the south of the facility at a newly-installed traffic signal. Parking for employees has also been enhanced.

As Forrest County's largest employer, Forrest General Hospital has been a part of the Hattiesburg landscape for 73 years. In an ongoing effort to fulfill its mission to do what is best for the patient, the healthcare facility continues to add and expand facilities, make improvements to existing infrastructure, add state-of-the-art equipment and technology, strengthen partnerships within the community and surrounding areas, and welcome new physicians, specialists, and ancillary staff, while providing unique, quality, and cutting-edge healthcare right here at home.

The Community Health Needs Assessment

The Community Health Needs Assessment ("CHNA") defines opportunities for healthcare improvement, creates a collaborative community environment to engage multiple change agents, and is an open and transparent process to listen and truly understand the health needs of Forrest and Lamar Counties. It also provides an opportunity for the hospital to identify valuable collaborative partners as we try to better serve the community and improve the health of our citizens.

The federal government now requires that nonprofit hospitals conduct a community health assessment. These collaborative studies help healthcare providers build stronger relationships with their communities, identify needs, and dedicate funding and other resources toward programs that clearly benefit local residents. CHNAs can be powerful tools with the potential to be catalysts for outstanding community change.

Increasing Health Equity

Health Equity is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Progress toward achieving health equity can be measured by reducing health disparities. Health disparities are particular health differences closely linked with economic, social, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced obstacles to health based on their race or ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and other personal characteristics which might create more challenging access to healthcare.

Looking closely at all aspects of our communities' overall health, allows Forrest General Hospital and its collaborative partners to focus on the root causes that are perpetuating the differences which contribute to struggles in ensuring health equity. By identifying the conditions, practices, and policies that allow the continuation of these differences in health outcomes, we can better identify the changes needed to create a healthier community for all our citizens.

Community Engagement and Transparency

We are pleased to share with our community the results of our CHNA. The following pages offer a review of the strategic activities we have undertaken over the last three years, as we responded to specific health needs we identified in our community. Although the major impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, it has taken extra effort and time to regain the momentum in creating a mentality of health and wellness education and prevention.

The report also highlights the updated key findings of the assessment. We hope you will take time to review the health needs of our community as the findings impact every citizen of our rural Mississippi community. Also, review our activities that were in response to the needs identified in 2022.

The Community Health Needs Assessment, Continued

Data Collection

Primary and secondary data was gathered, reviewed, and analyzed so that the most accurate information was available in determining the community's health needs and appropriate implementation process.

Primary Data**:** collected by the assessment team directly from the community through conversations, telephone interviews, focus groups and community forums; the most current information available.

Secondary Data**:** collected from sources outside the community and from sources other than the assessment team; information that has already been collected, collated, and analyzed; provides an accurate look at the overall status of the community.

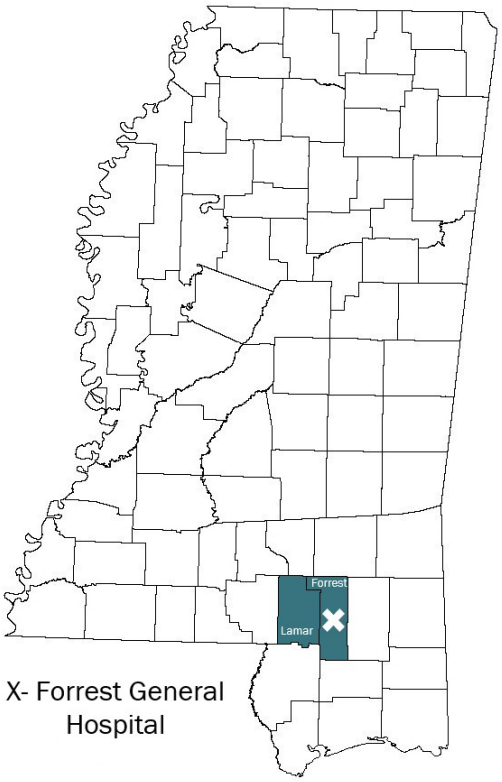
Secondary Data Sources

- The United States Census Bureau
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- American Heart Association
- Forrest General Hospital Medical Records Department
- Mississippi State Department of Health
- ESRI Demographic Research
- Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Health Data and Research

About The Community

Service Area

Primary: Forrest and Lamar County



X- Forrest General Hospital

The Counties

Forrest County is located in southern Mississippi and is only a short drive to the Gulf of Mexico. Hattiesburg is the county seat and home to the University of Southern Mississippi. The county has a total area of 470 square miles, of which 466 square miles is land.

Lamar County is located in southern Mississippi. It is a short drive from New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. The county has a total area of 500 square miles, of which 497 square miles is land. The county seat is Purvis.

Communities

Cities and Towns in Forrest County

- Hattiesburg (County Seat; small portion in Lamar County)
- Petal

Cities and Towns in Lamar County

- Hattiesburg (mostly in Forrest County)
- Lumberton (partly in Pearl River County)
- Purvis (County Seat)
- Sumrall

About the Community, Continued

Demographics

Forrest County 2024

Population:	78,435
Racial Mix:	
White	56.0%
African American	37.2%
Native American	0.4%
Asian	1.1%
Two or More Race	1.8%
Other	3.5%
Hispanic*	4.4%
Non-Hispanic	95.6%

Lamar County 2024

Population:	66,734
Racial Mix:	
White	70.9%
African American	22.7%
Native American	0.4%
Asian	1.5%
Two or More Race	1.4%
Other	3.1%
Hispanic*	3.8%
Non-Hispanic	96.2%

*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

		Forrest County	Lamar County
Population:		78,435	66,734
Racial Mix:	White	43,924	47,314
	African American	29,178	15,149
	Asian	863	1,001
	American Indian	314	267
	2 or more	1,412	934
	Other	2,745	2,069
	Hispanic*	3,451	2,536
Median Household Income:		$52,821	$69,106

*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

About the Community, Continued

Mississippi, Forrest County, Lamar County, and United States

	Mississippi	Forrest County	Lamar County	United States
Median Age	39.6	34.2	35.3	38.9
Median Household Income	$55,017	$52,821	$69,106	$77,540
Poverty Level	19.4%	19.0%	13.1%	11.5%

SOURCES:
U.S. Census Bureau, 2020
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community
ESRI Community Profile

Forrest County	
Percent of residents who do not have access to broadband:	15.5%
Households receiving food stamps/SNAP:	11.5%
Households with 1+ persons with a disability:	38.5%
Households without a vehicle:	6.7%
Percent of adults who didn't finish high school:	9.2%
Percent of Unemployment as of 11/2024 ** :	3.0%
Percent living alone:	12.3%

Lamar County	
Percent of residents who do not have access to broadband:	11.4%
Households receiving food stamps/SNAP:	9.4%
Households with 1+ persons with a disability:	28.2%
Households without a vehicle:	4.2%
Percent of adults who didn't finish high school:	8.6%
Percent of Unemployment as of 11/2024 ** :	2.8%
Percent living alone:	12.6%

SOURCES **
US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community
Source: ESRI Community Profile

About the Community, Continued

Forrest County	
The percentage of adults who report fair to poor health	22%
Obesity Prevalence	44%
Diabetes Prevalence	14%
Excessive Drinking	16%
Smoking	17%
Life Expectancy	71.4
Percent of households with at least 1 – 4 housing problems (overcrowding, high costs, lack of kitchen/plumbing)	15%

Lamar County	
The percentage of adults who report fair to poor health	19%
Obesity Prevalence	40%
Diabetes Prevalence	11%
Excessive Drinking	18%
Smoking	17%
Life Expectancy	77.2
Percent of households with at least 1 – 4 housing problems (overcrowding, high costs, lack of kitchen/plumbing)	12%

SOURCES:
U.S. Census Bureau, American Community
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute
County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
National Findings Report 2024

www.countyhealthrankings.org

Community Input

Community health needs were identified through the collection and analysis of data from a variety of quantitative and qualitative sources. Using multiple sources is essential to ensure the assessment reflects a comprehensive range of facts, trends, and community perspectives. This multifaceted approach helps identify the most pressing health priorities. Among these sources, one of the most valuable is direct input from the individuals and communities we serve.

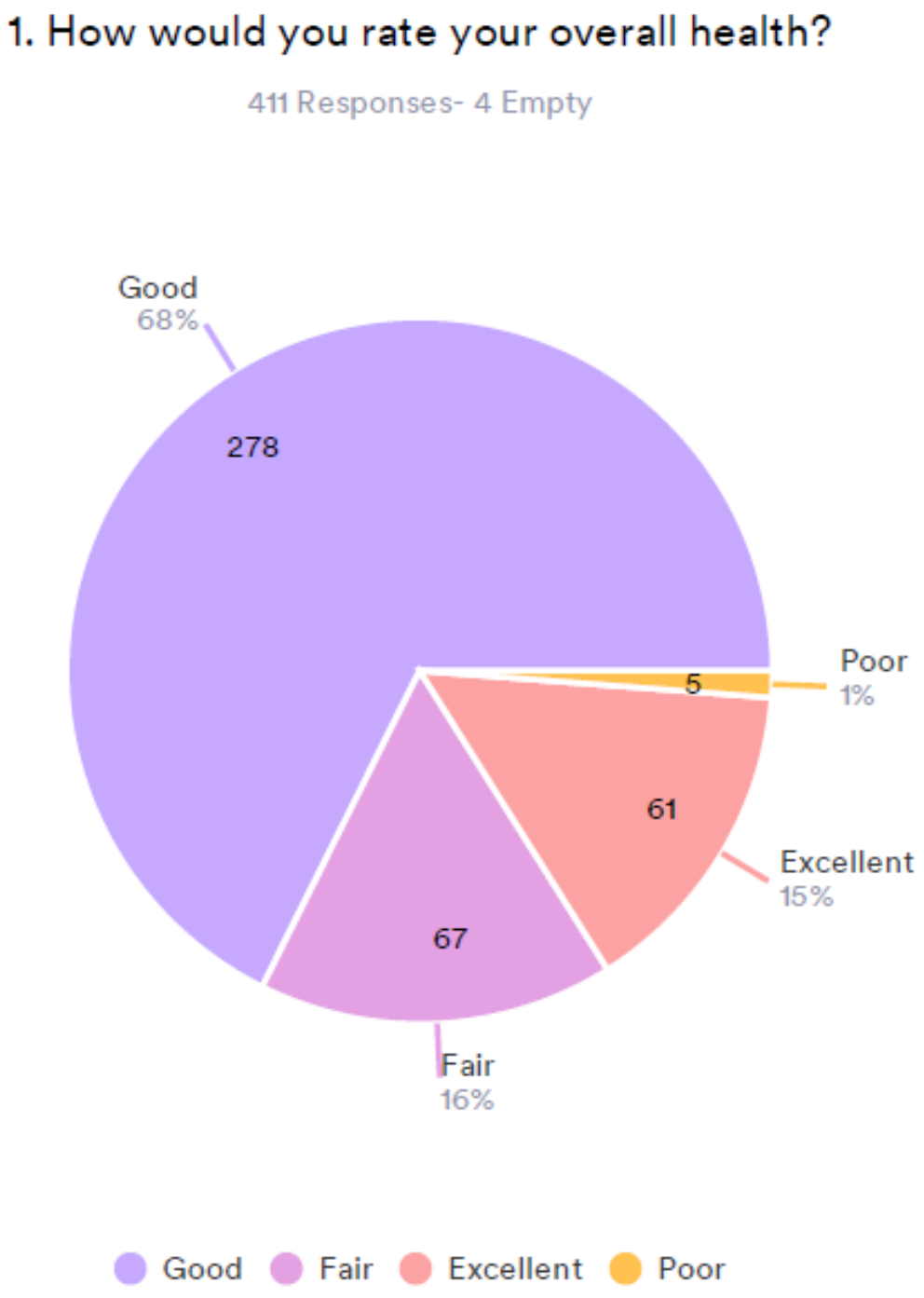
To gather community input, the hospital developed and distributed an online survey. Members of the general public were invited to participate, with the survey promoted across multiple channels to ensure broad reach. It was made available on the hospital's website, shared via two external mass emails to community members, and featured in the *Spirit of Women* e-newsletter. Additional outreach included boosted posts on the hospital's social media platforms, distribution of the survey link and QR code at an Area Development Partnership luncheon, and targeted outreach to local clergy through the hospital's Spiritual Care department. Hospital employees also received the survey through an internal mass email. The responses were analyzed and used to help determine key health priorities and inform the development of new initiatives.

These questions are meant to gather insights into health status, behaviors, needs, and satisfaction levels of a community. Your responses can help healthcare providers and public health officials prioritize resources in areas most needed by the community. Thank you for taking this survey and providing your invaluable feedback. The survey and the input from the respondents are on the following pages.



Community Input, Continued

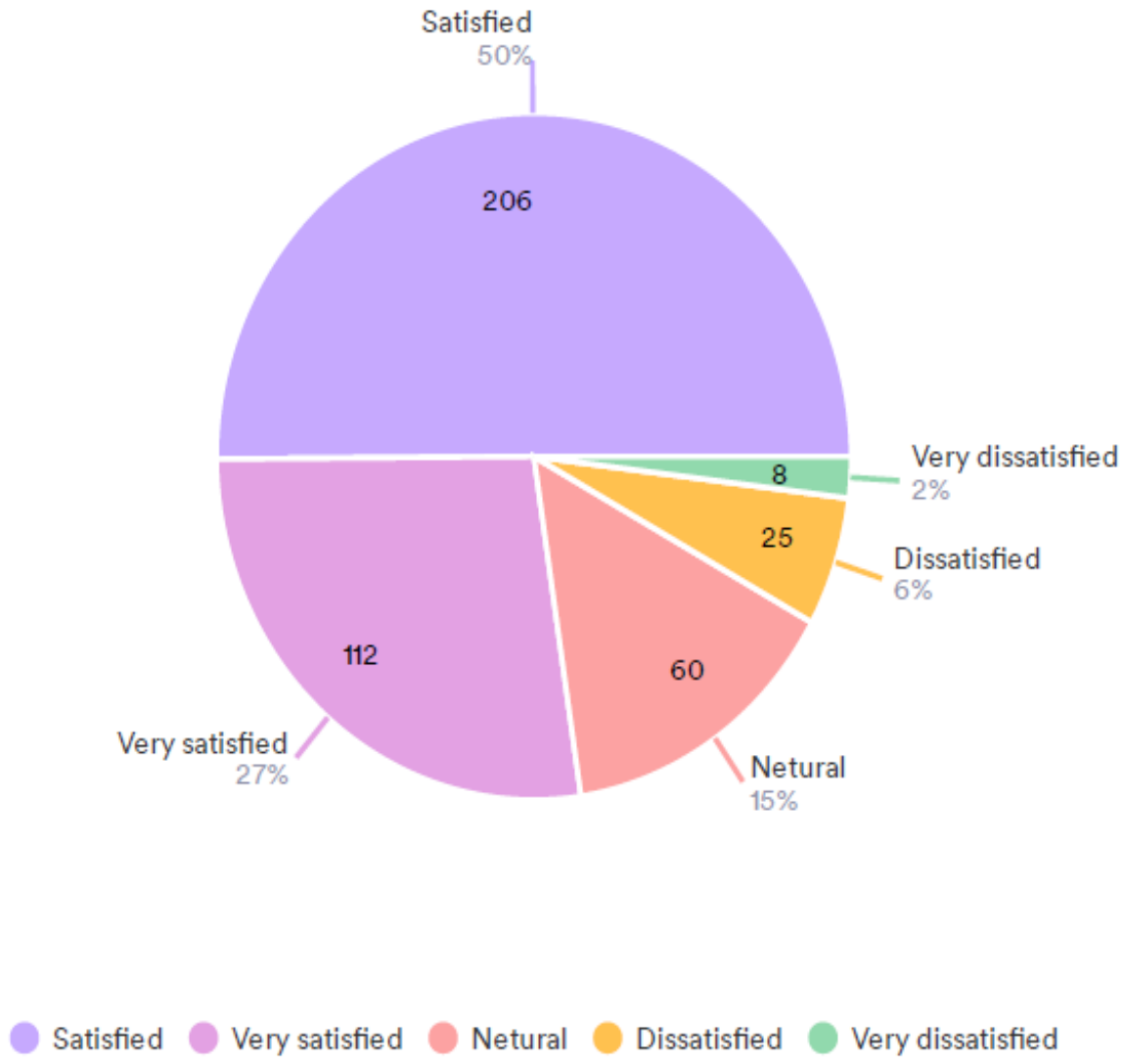
Forrest General Hospital CHNA Community Survey 2025:



Community Input, Continued

2. How satisfied are you with the healthcare services available to your community?

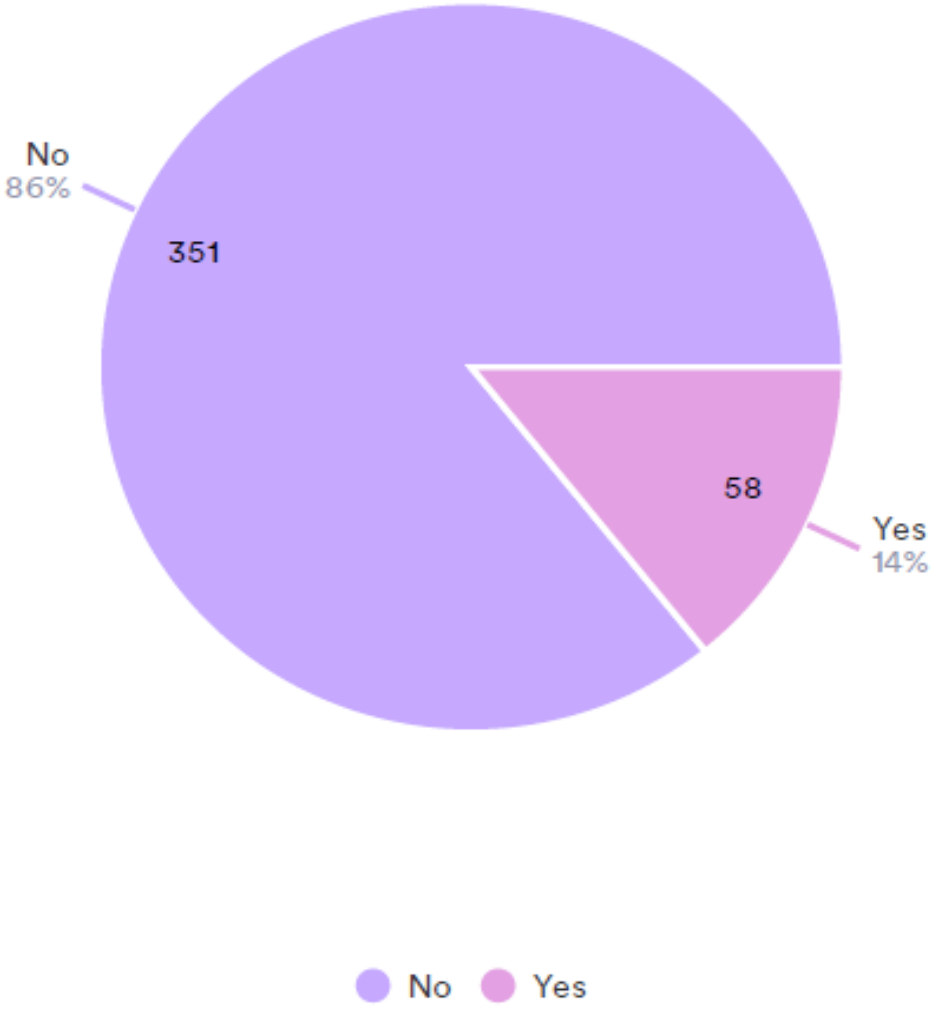
411 Responses- 4 Empty



Community Input, Continued

3. In the past year, have you had difficulty accessing medical care?

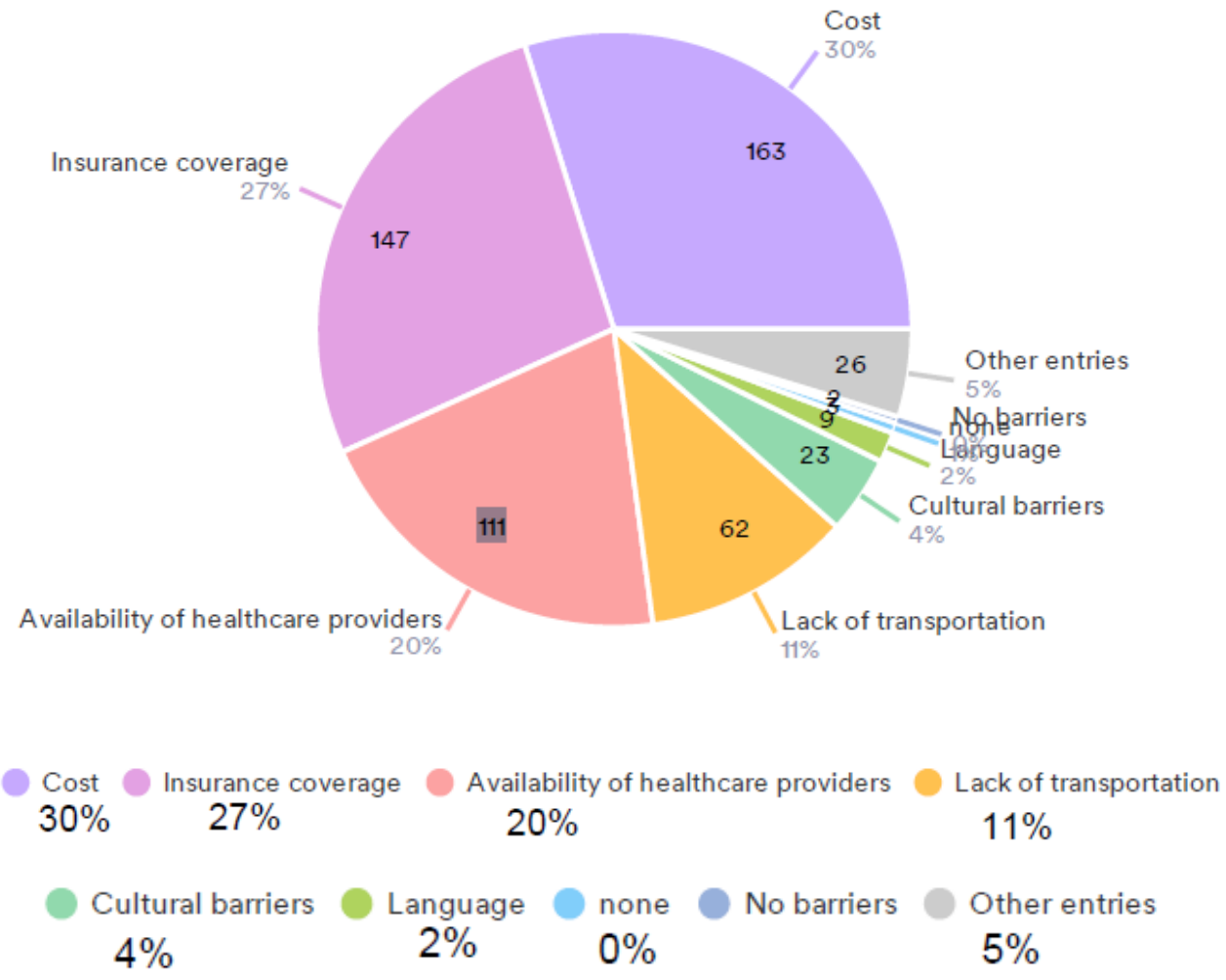
409 Responses- 6 Empty



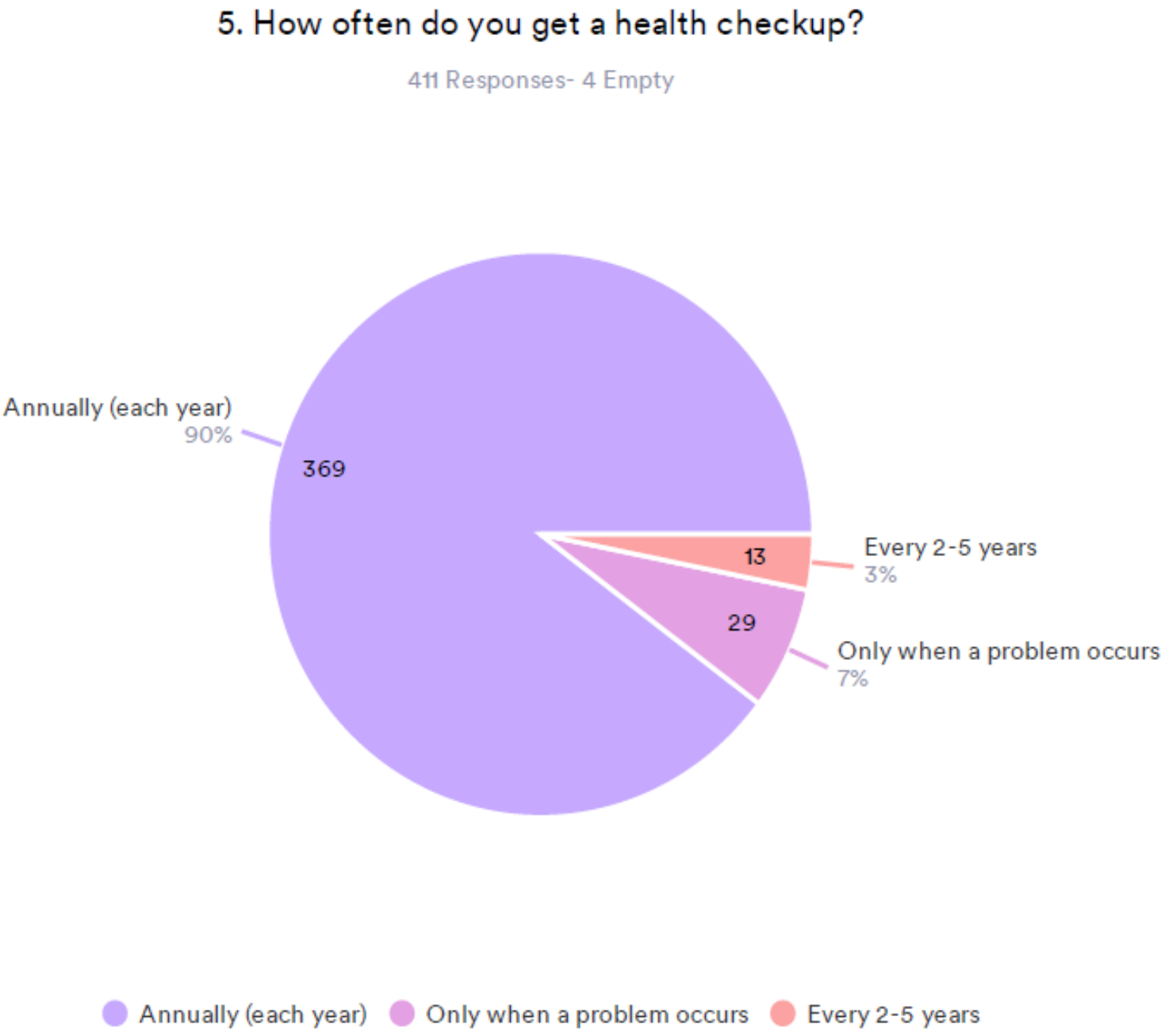
Community Input, Continued

4. Are there any barriers to receiving medical care in your area? (check all that apply)

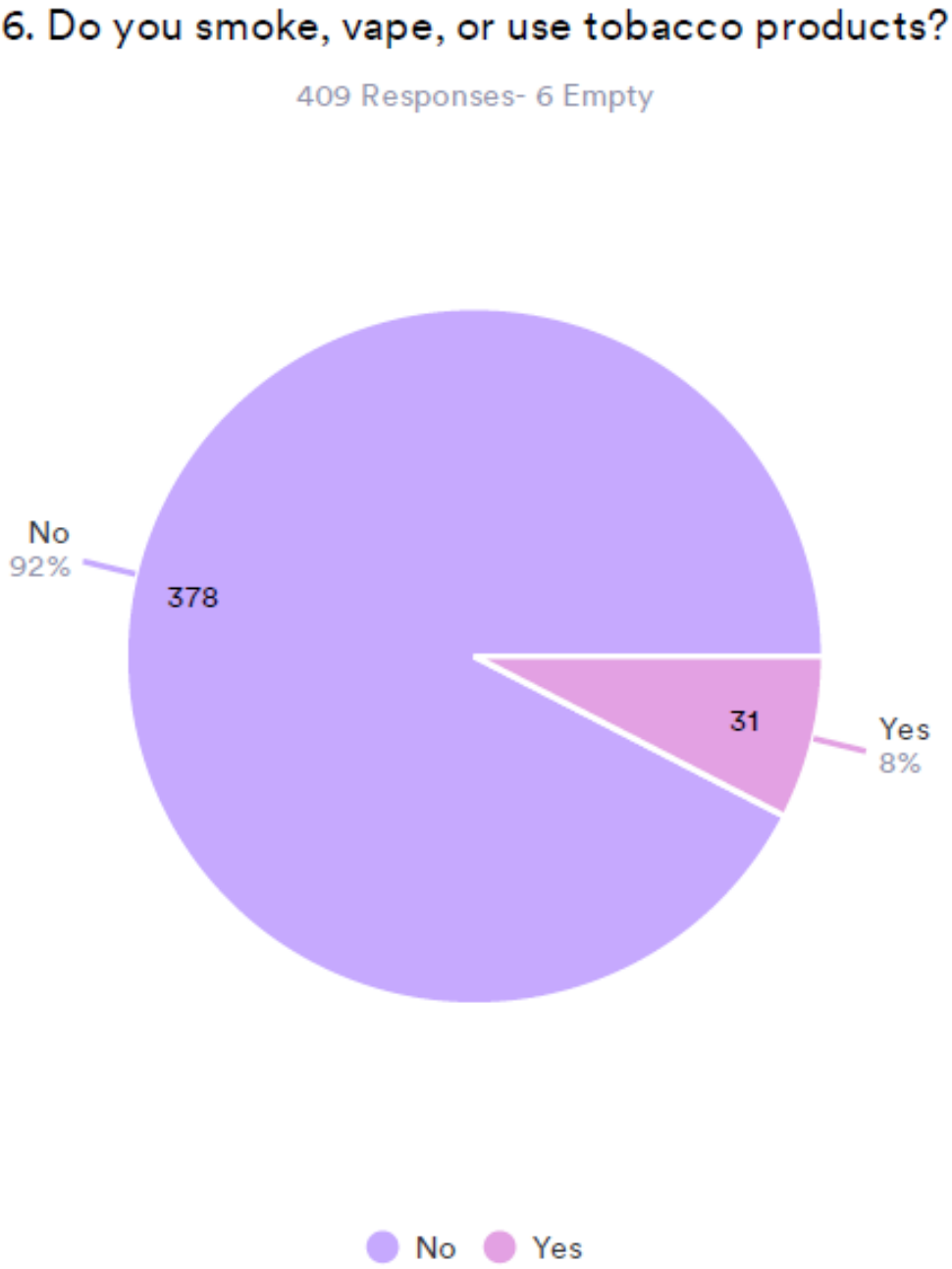
546 Responses- 123 Empty



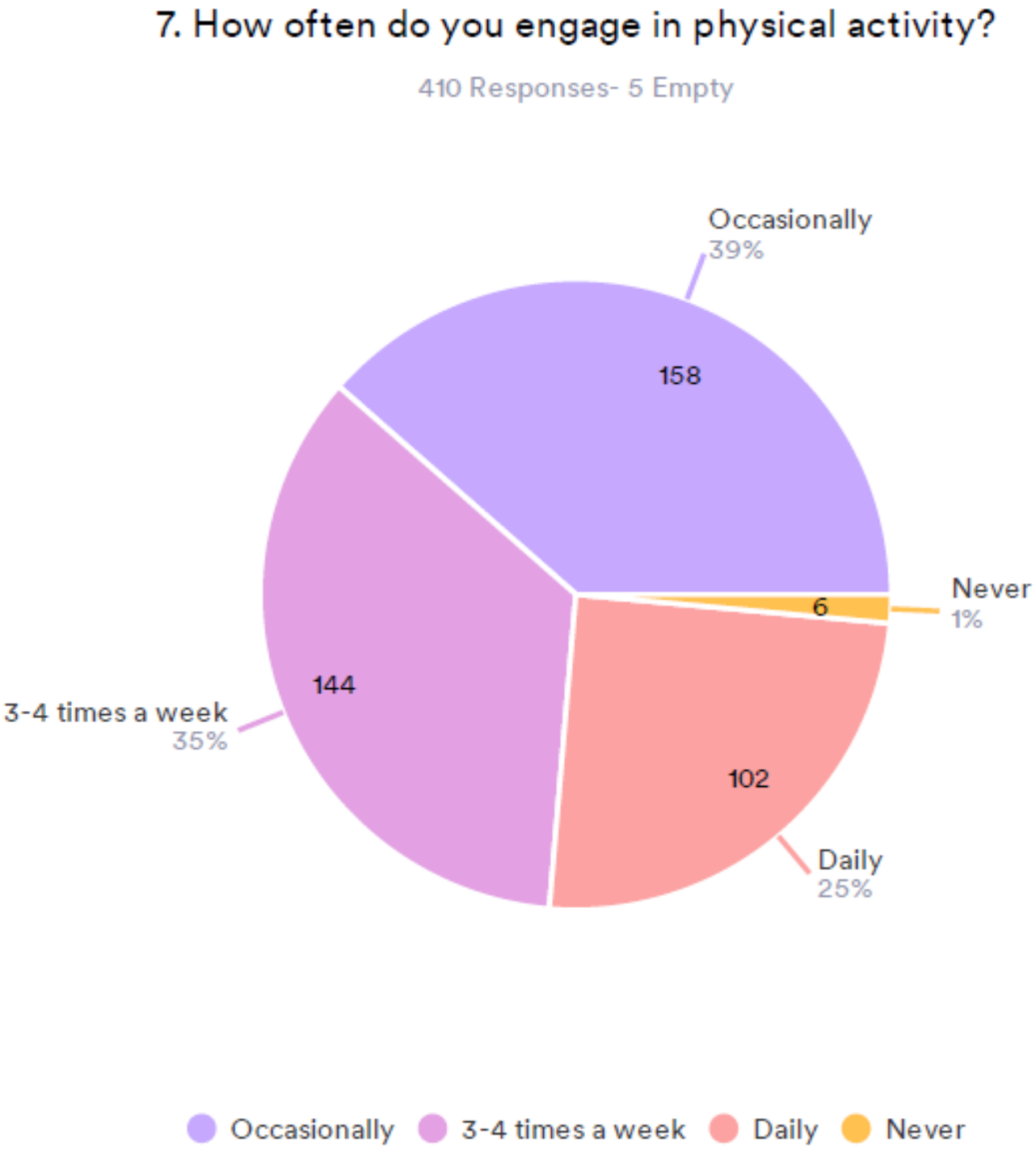
Community Input, Continued



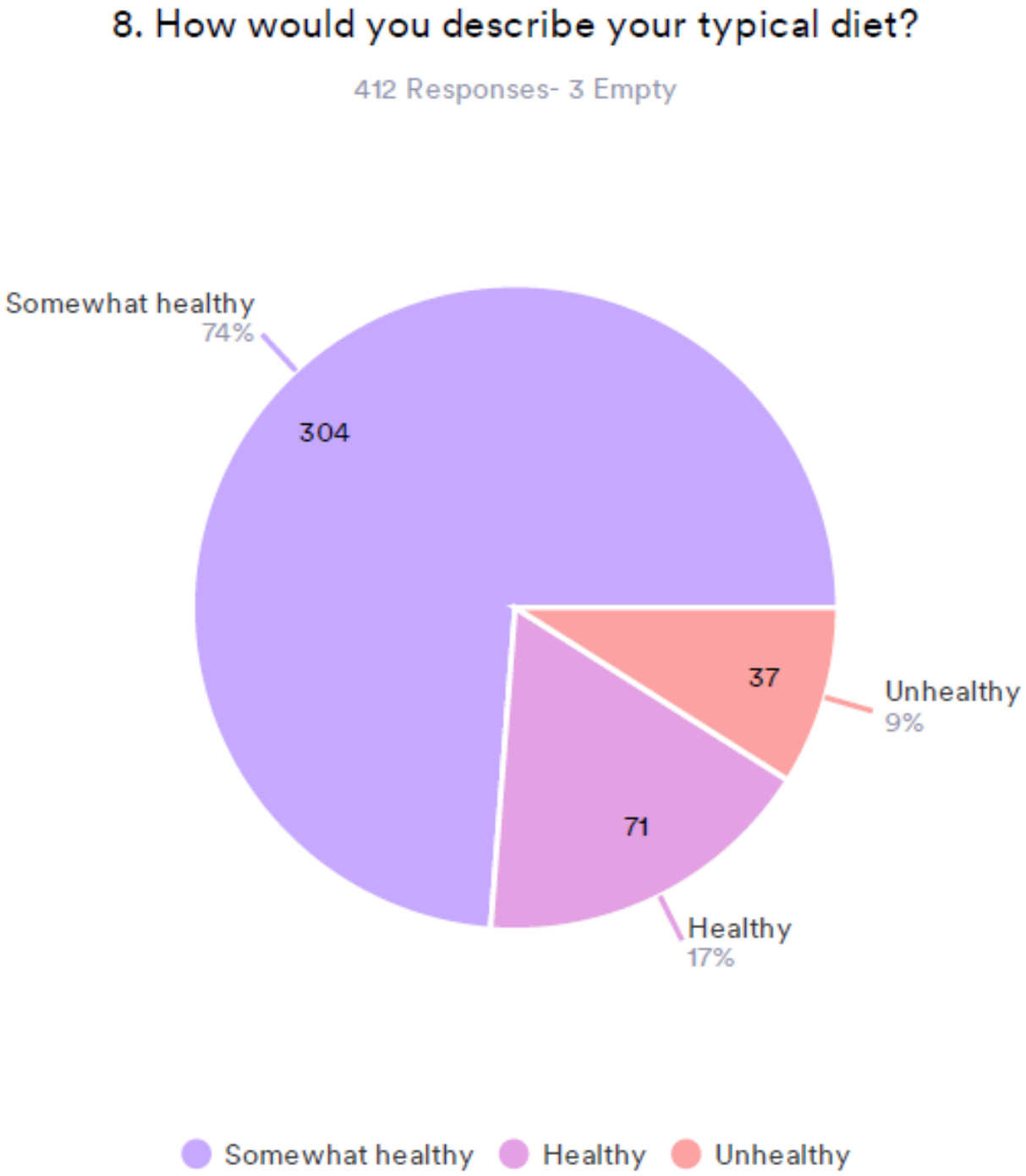
Community Input, Continued



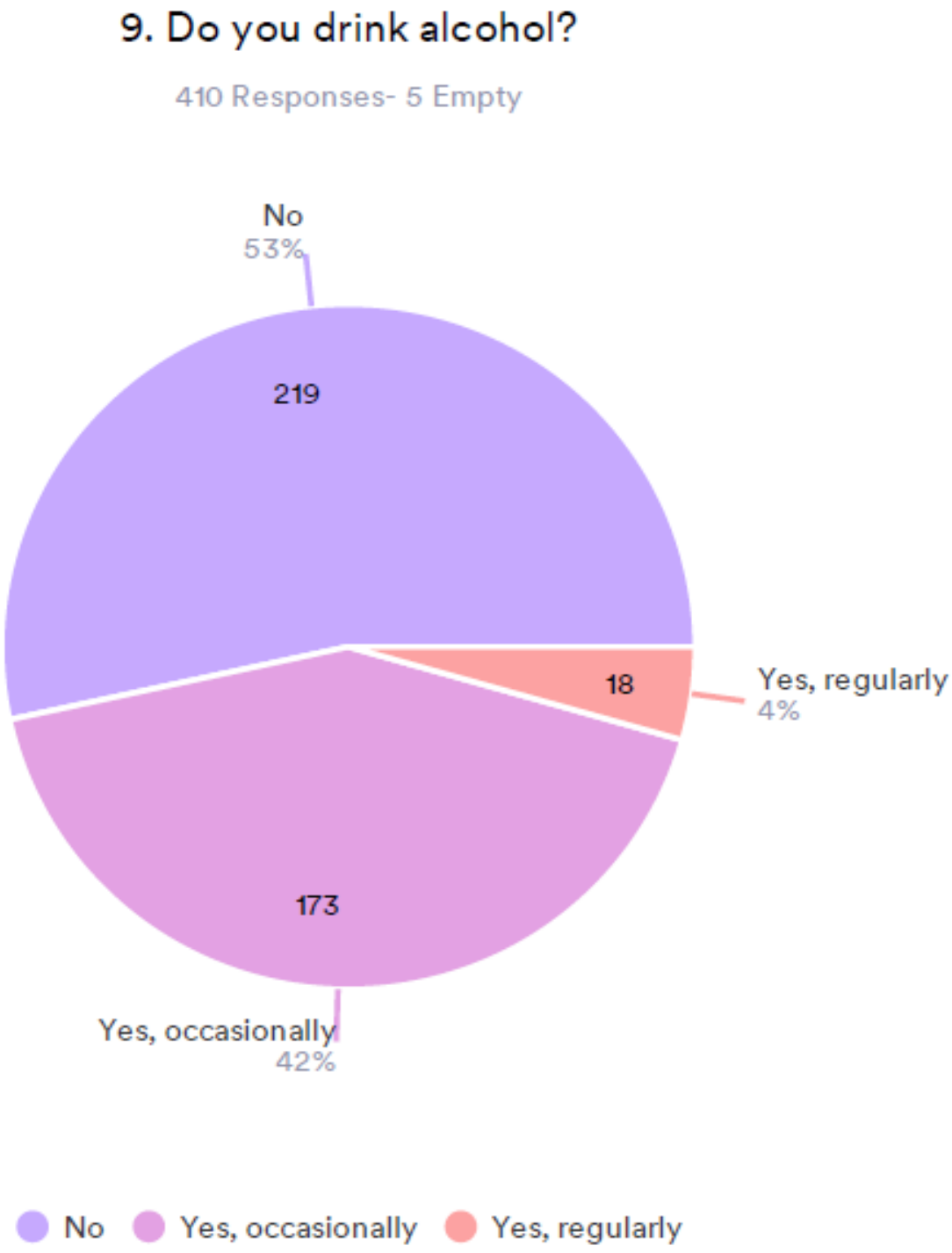
Community Input, Continued



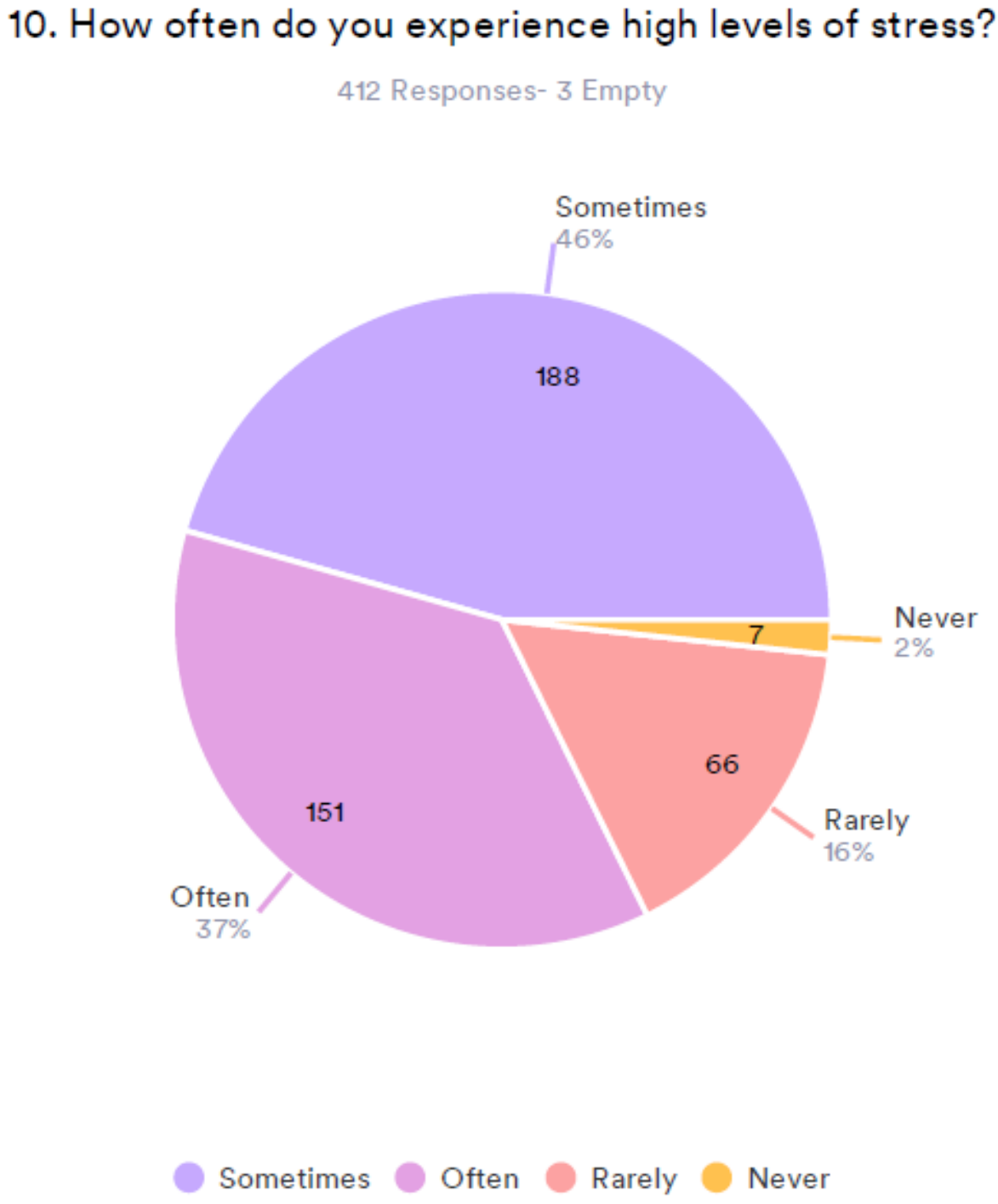
Community Input, Continued



Community Input, Continued



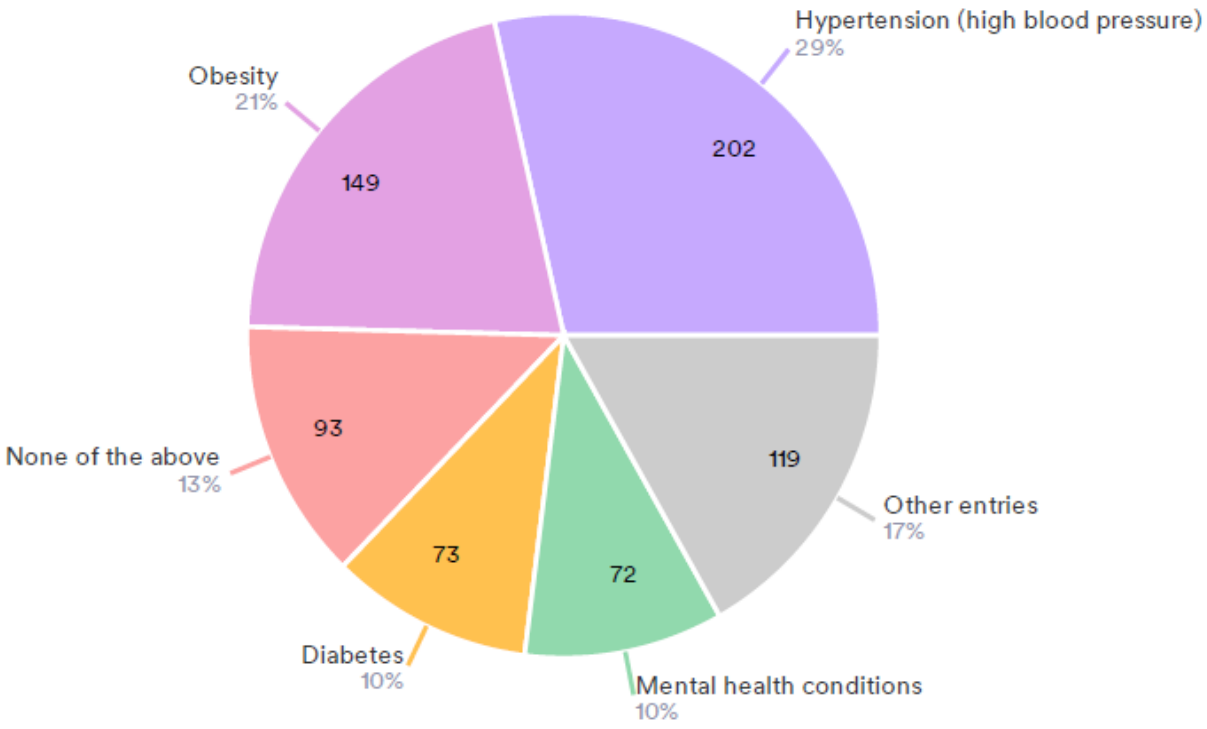
Community Input, Continued



Community Input, Continued

11. Have you ever been diagnosed with any of the following conditions? (check all that apply)

708 Responses- 7 Empty



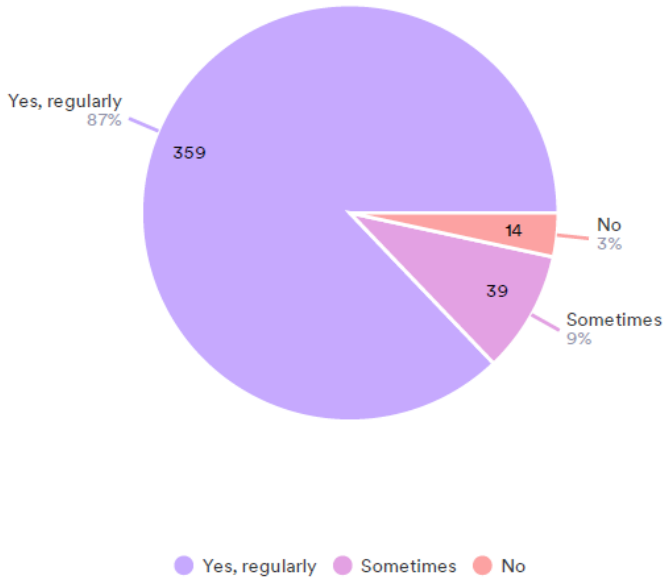
RESPONSES TO OTHER INCLUDE:

- Asthma
- Cancer
- Heart Disease

Community Input, Continued

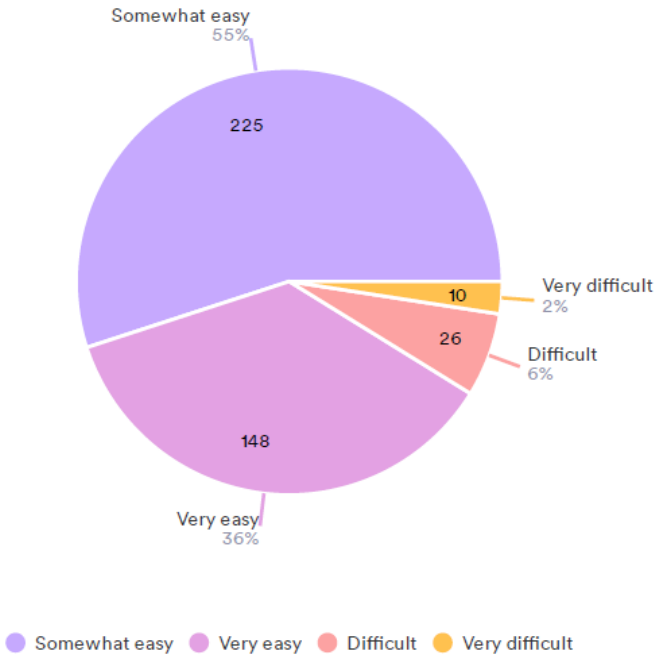
12. Do you receive recommended screenings or preventive care services? (ex: mammograms, colonoscopies, immunizations)

412 Responses- 3 Empty



13. How easy is it to get an appointment with a healthcare provider in your community?

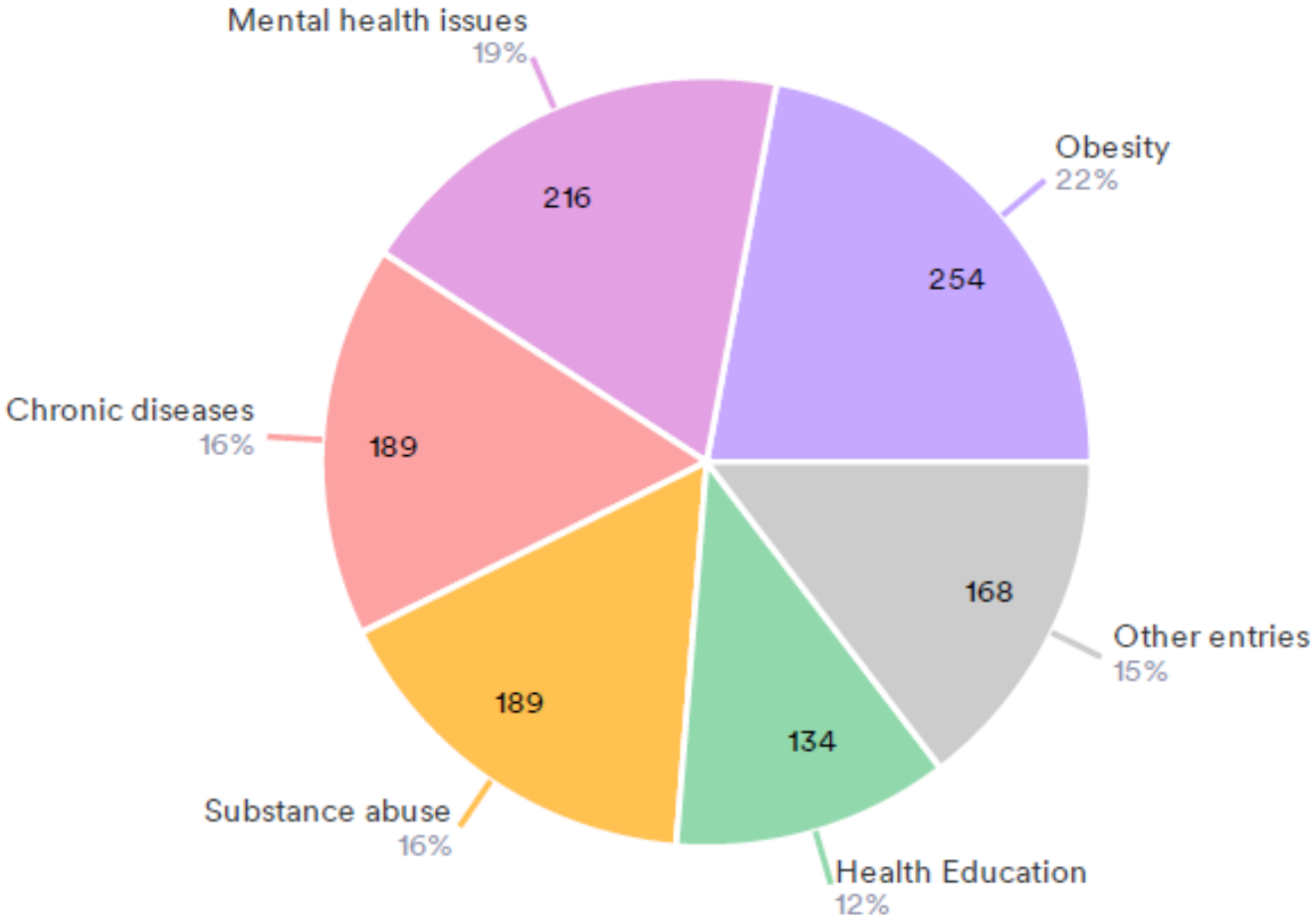
409 Responses- 6 Empty



Community Input, Continued

14. What are the biggest health challenges facing your community?

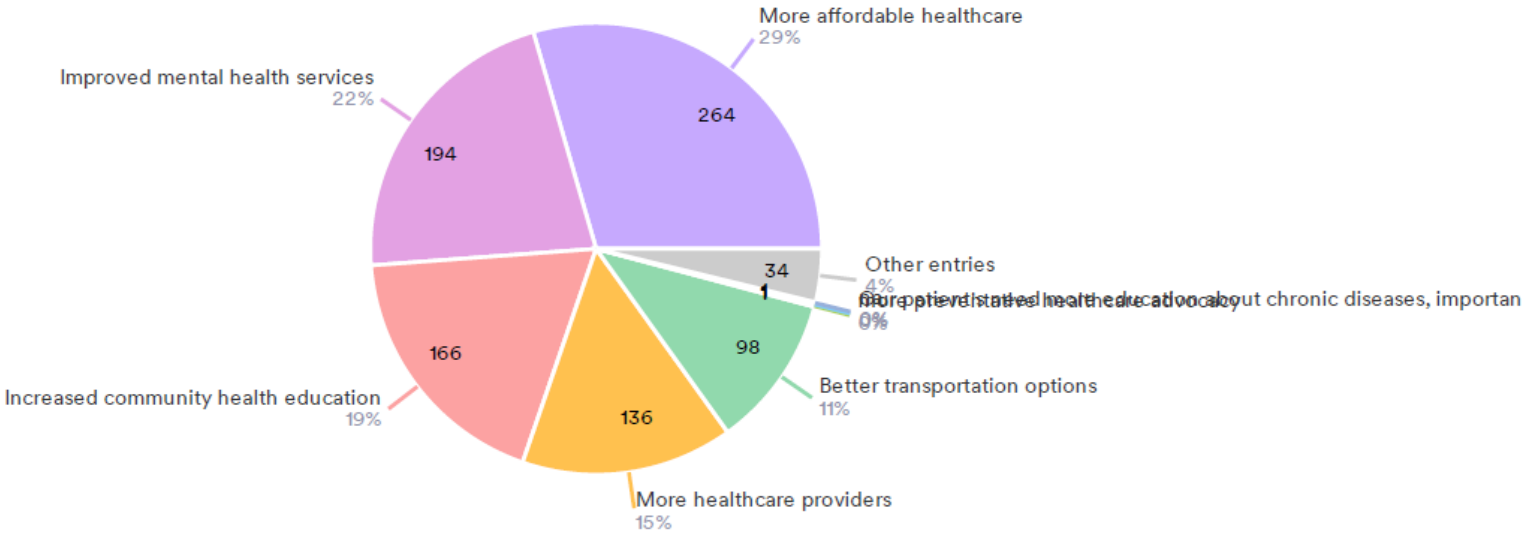
1150 Responses- 33 Empty



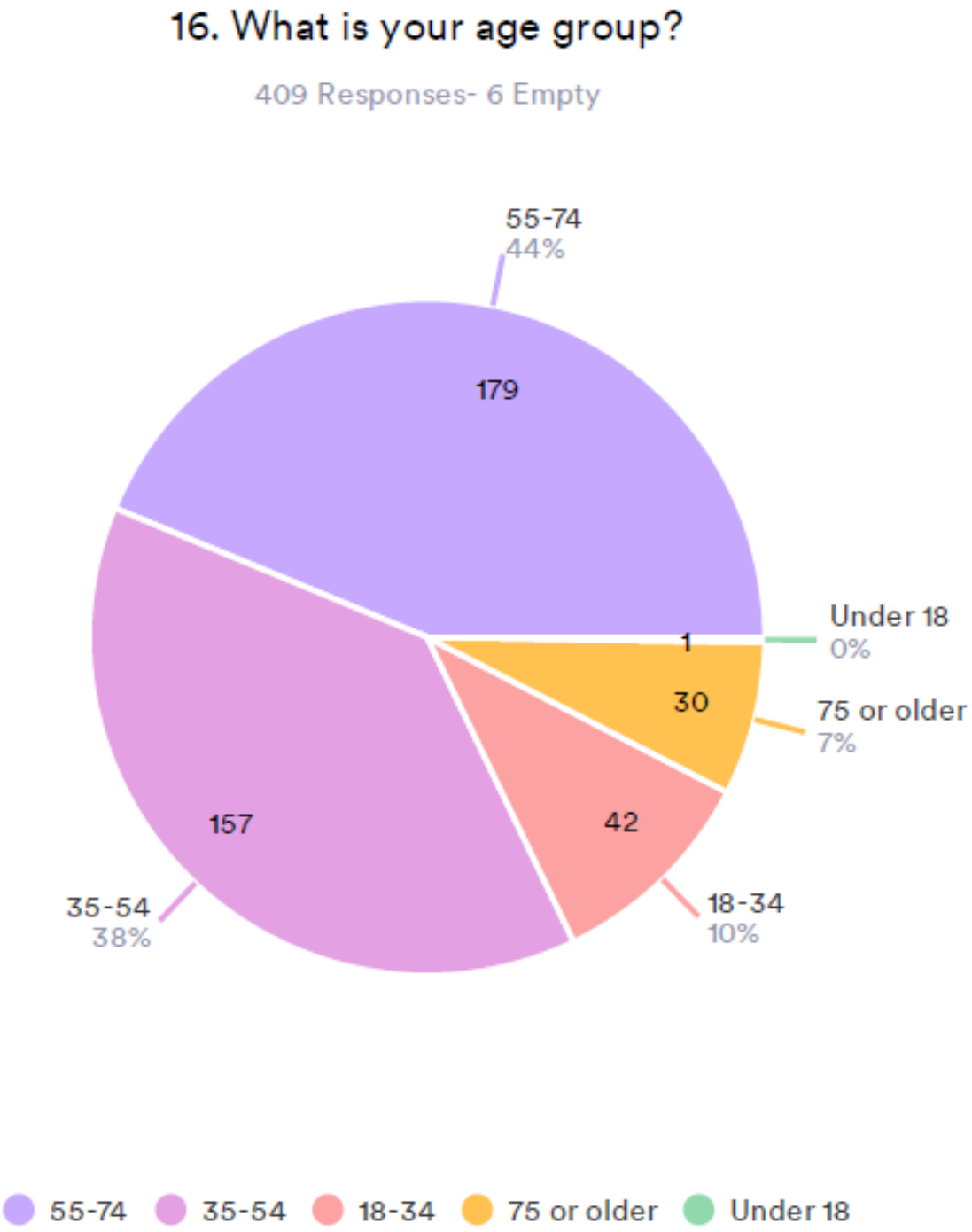
Community Input, Continued

15. What improvements would you like to see in healthcare services in your community?

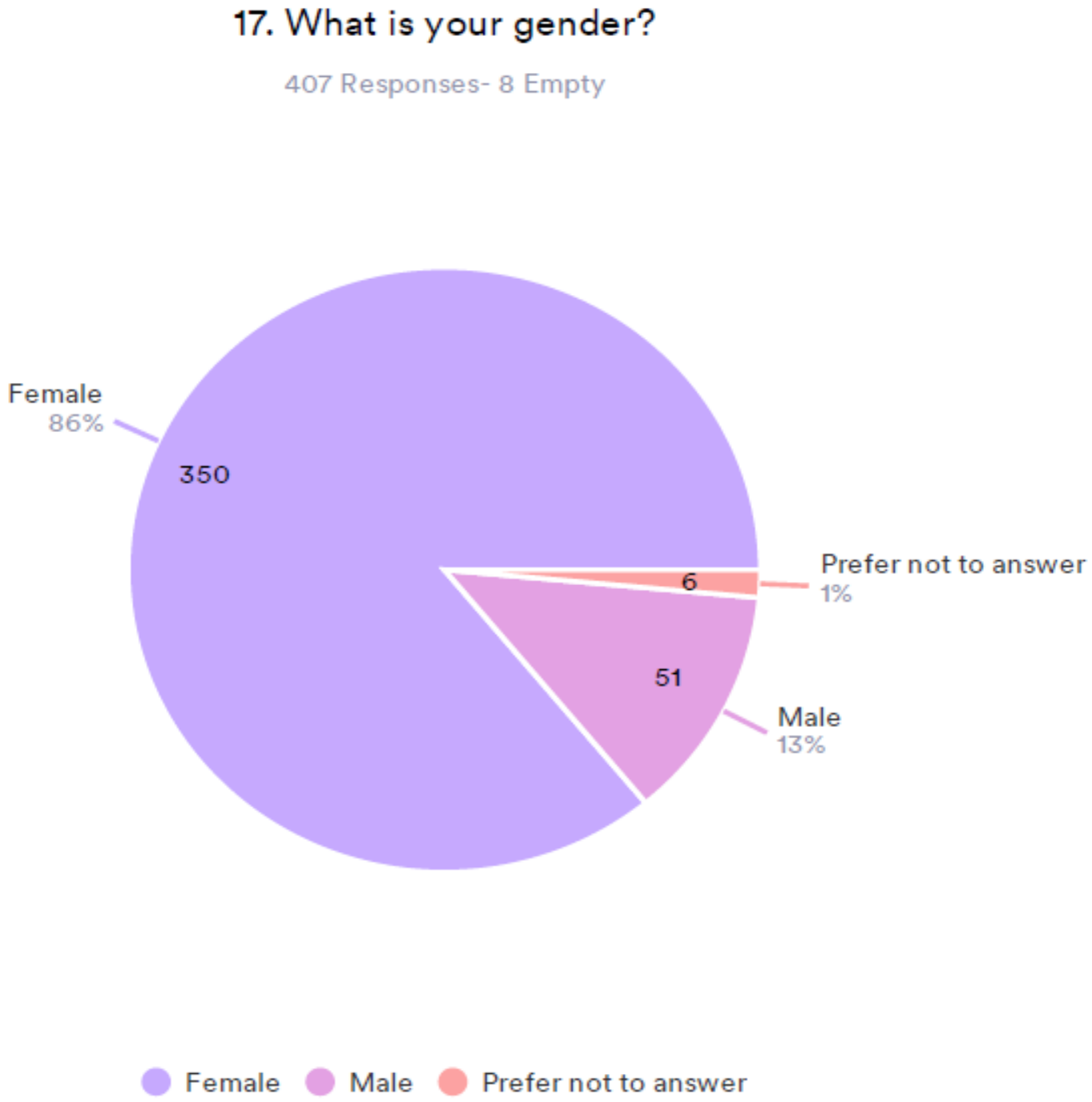
895 Responses- 29 Empty



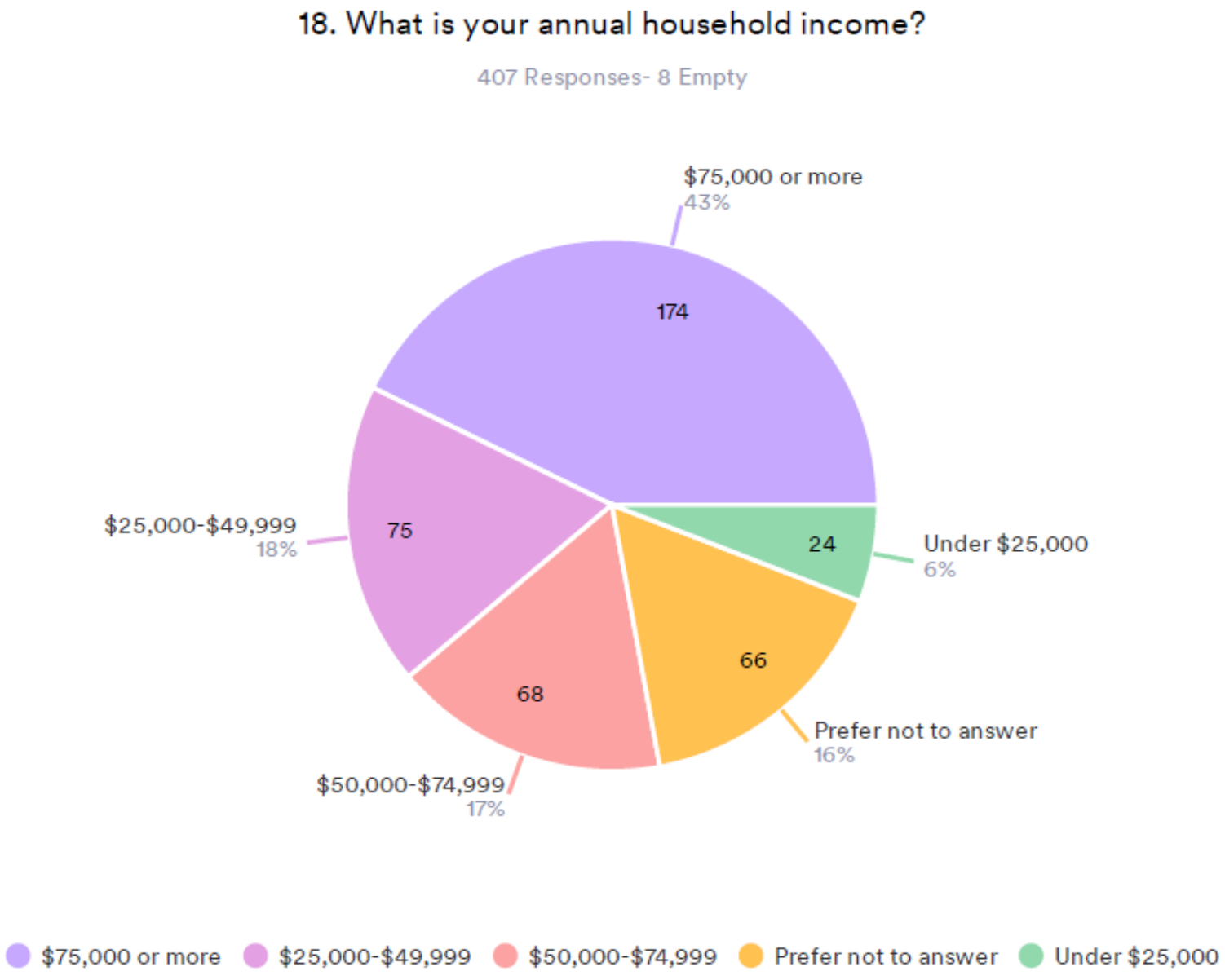
Community Input, Continued



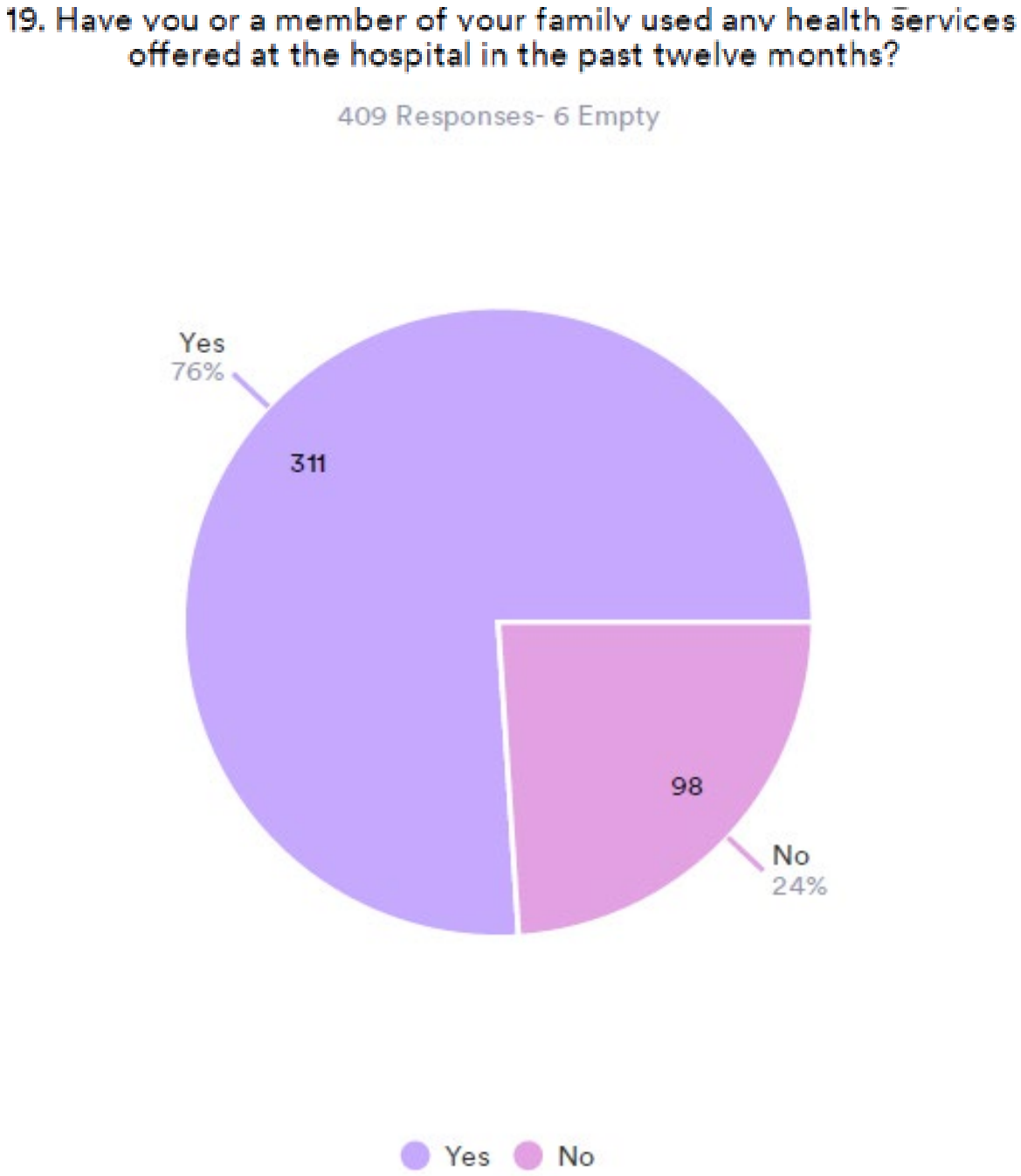
Community Input, Continued



Community Input, Continued



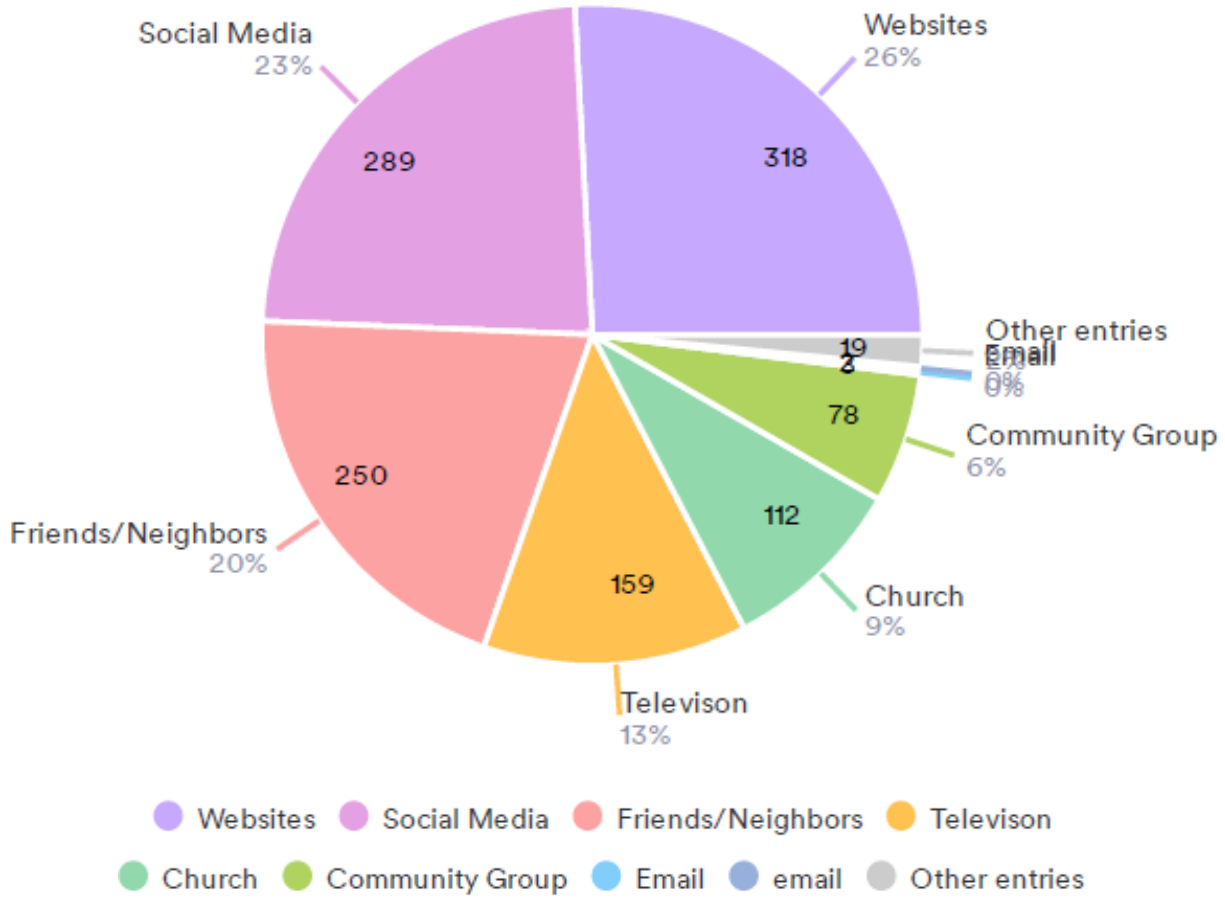
Community Input, Continued



Community Input, Continued

20. How do you receive or access information? (check all that apply)

1230 Responses- 14 Empty



Community Input, Continued

Community Health Needs Assessment Steering Committee

Rosa Byrd – Executive Director, Heart & Vascular **(FGH)**

Herbert Durr – Interventional – Special Procedures Supervisor – Radiology Services **(FGH)**

Breanne Gaubert – Director of Marketing & Communications **(FGH)**

Dr. Charles Griffith – Family Practice Physician – FGH Family Medicine Center/Residency Program

Tangela Jackson – Director of Women's and Children's Services **(FGH)**

Kecia Jones – Cancer Center Manager **(FGH)**

Dr. Lisa Leek – Emergency Medicine Physician – President of the FGH Medical Staff

Dr. Sophy Mangana – Radiation Oncologist **(FGH Medical Staff)**

Jennifer McLaurin – Skilled Nursing Facility Administrator **(FGH)**

Mary Muli – Central Transport Manager **(FGH)**

Colleen Munkel – Director of Business Development, Pine Grove Behavioral Health Services

Millie Swan – Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, Forrest Health



Community Input, Continued

Participants in the Community Forum

Peggy Answorth – St. Paul United Methodist Church (also FGH Board member)

Toby Barker – Mayor, City of Hattiesburg

Eve Bauer – Regional Director, American Heart Association (Zoom)

Jeff Cook – President and Chief Executive Officer, Forrest Health

Tracie Fowler – President and CEO, United Way of Southeast Mississippi

Breanne Gaubert – Director of Marketing and Communications, Forrest General Hospital

Tonya Green – Director of Social Services – Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative (SEMHRI)

Juli Martinez – Executive Director, Hope Community Collective

Annie McMillan – DE+I Consultant Staff, Mississippi Power

Ann McMullen – Executive Director, Edward Street Mission Fellowship Center

Barry Plunkett – Consultant, HORNE

Brandi Sanford – Mississippi Department of Health Community Health, Director, Region 3, Team 8

Pastor Arthur Siggers – Mt. Olive Baptist Church

Eric Steele – Representative, Hattiesburg High Public Schools (also FGH Board member)

Millie Swan – Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer, Forrest Health

Robert Williams – Superintendent, Hattiesburg Public Schools









Social Determinants of Health

Social Determinates of Health: Definition and Impact

The concept of social determinants of health ("SDOH") refers to the broad range of non-medical factors that significantly influence individual and community health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization, SDOH are "the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age," encompassing a vast array of influences that extend well beyond clinical care. These determinants are typically grouped into six domains:

- **Economic Stability**: Employment, income, expenses, medical bills, and financial support.
- **Neighborhood and Physical Environment**: Housing, transportation, safety, parks, playgrounds, walkability, and geography.
- **Education**: Literacy, language, early childhood education, vocational training, and higher education.
- **Nutrition**: Hunger and access to healthy food options.
- **Community and Social Context**: Social integration, support systems, community engagement, discrimination, and stress.
- **Healthcare Access**: Health coverage, provider availability, cultural competency, and quality of care.

These social determinants have a measurable impact on both medical outcomes and the total cost of care. For example, food insecurity alone is associated with approximately $155 billion in annual healthcare costs in the U.S., and nearly 80 percent of emergency department visits by homeless patients are preventable with reliable access to primary care. Research indicates that 60 percent of a patient's overall health is shaped by SDOH and individual behavior, compared to 30 percent by genetics and only 10 percent by the care they receive.

The Role of Forrest General: Convener and Organizer

Hospitals are uniquely positioned to serve as conveners and organizers of community-wide efforts to address SDOH. While addressing these determinants often extends beyond the traditional scope of medical care, hospitals encounter the consequences of unaddressed social needs daily. As such, they have both a vested interest and a responsibility to lead collaborative initiatives that drive meaningful change.

Social Determinants of Health, Continued

Five Critical Steps Forrest General-Led SDOH Initiatives:

1. **Articulate the Hospital's Unique Role**

   Forrest General will clearly define their role in collaboratively tackling SDOH. This involves understanding their "impact advantage"—the specific resources, relationships, and expertise that position them to drive change—and communicating this role to partners and stakeholders.

2. **Leverage Community Partnerships**

   Effective SDOH interventions require collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, including community-based organizations, public health agencies, payers, and local government. Forrest General will act as a convener, bringing these groups together to align efforts, share data, and coordinate resources.

3. **Address Root Causes, Not Just Symptoms**

   Successful strategies go beyond addressing the immediate consequences of social needs (such as providing transportation or food) and instead target the underlying causes, like poverty, housing instability, and systemic inequities. This requires engaging directly with affected populations to understand their lived experiences and priorities.

4. **Prioritize Trust-Building with Patients and Communities**

   There is often deep mistrust between marginalized populations and the healthcare system, rooted in historical discrimination and inequity. Forrest General will prioritize earning trust by involving patients in program design, ensuring cultural competence, and demonstrating sustained commitment to community well-being.

5. **Integrate SDOH Efforts Across the Organization**

   Addressing SDOH is not solely the responsibility of community outreach teams; it must be embedded from the C-suite to the front lines. Hospital leadership will champion SDOH as a strategic priority, while clinical and non-clinical staff are empowered to identify social needs and connect patients with appropriate resources.

Overview of Social Determinants of Health for Forrest General's Population

The social determinants of health ("SDOH") are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. For Forrest General Hospital's service area, which includes Forrest and surrounding counties in Mississippi, recent community health needs assessment ("CHNA") survey data and demographic profiles reveal several key SDOH impacting the population.

Social Determinants of Health, Continued

Key Types of Social Determinants Identified

Economic Stability

- Cost is a significant barrier: 30 percent of survey respondents cited cost as a barrier to care, and 27 percent cited insurance coverage issues.
- Income disparities: 6 percent of respondents reported annual household incomes under $25,000, while 43 percent reported incomes of $75,000 or more, indicating a notable income gap.
- Employment-related barriers: Respondents noted challenges in taking time off work to attend appointments and the need for more income-based sliding scale fees.

Access to Healthcare

- Availability of providers: 20 percent cited lack of provider availability as a barrier, and respondents reported long wait times for appointments and difficulty accessing specialists, particularly in rural areas.
- Transportation: 11 percent identified transportation as a barrier, especially affecting rural residents who may need to travel long distances for care.
- Insurance and affordability: Insurance coverage issues and the cost of medications were recurring themes, with some respondents struggling to afford co-pays or prescriptions.

Neighborhood and Physical Environment

- Rurality: Many respondents highlighted transportation challenges and lack of local specialists, especially in more rural communities.
- Lack of exercise facilities: Several comments called for more affordable, accessible exercise options, noting that weather and cost are barriers to physical activity.

Education and Health Literacy

- Health education: 12 percent identified lack of health education as a major community challenge, and many requested increased community health education and preventative care advocacy.
- Respondents noted a lack of knowledge about the importance of regular checkups and chronic disease management.

Social and Community Context

- Social support: Respondents expressed a need for more support for caregivers and improved care navigation for elderly patients.
- Cultural and language barriers: While less frequently cited (4 percent and 2 percent, respectively), these remain relevant for some community members.

Social Determinants of Health, Continued

Health Behaviors

- Physical activity: Only 25 percent reported daily exercise, with 39 percent exercising occasionally and 1 percent never exercising.
- Diet: 74 percent described their diet as "somewhat healthy," but 9 percent reported unhealthy diets.
- Tobacco and alcohol use: 8 percent use tobacco products, and 46 percent drink alcohol at least occasionally.

Impacts of Social Determinants on Health Outcomes

Chronic Disease Burden

- High rates of hypertension (29 percent), obesity (21 percent), and diabetes (10 percent) were reported, reflecting the impact of diet, physical inactivity, and barriers to care.
- Mental health conditions were reported by 10 percent of respondents, with mental health issues identified as a major community challenge (19 percent).

Access and Utilization

- 14 percent reported difficulty accessing medical care in the past year, with cost, insurance, provider availability, and transportation as leading causes.
- Many respondents only seek care when problems arise, rather than for preventive services.

Community Perceptions and Needs

- The most requested improvements were more affordable healthcare (29 percent), improved mental health services (22 percent), and increased community health education (19 percent).
- Respondents also called for more healthcare providers, better transportation options, and expanded preventative health advocacy.

Social Determinants of Health, Continued

Summary Table: Key SDOH for Forrest General's Population

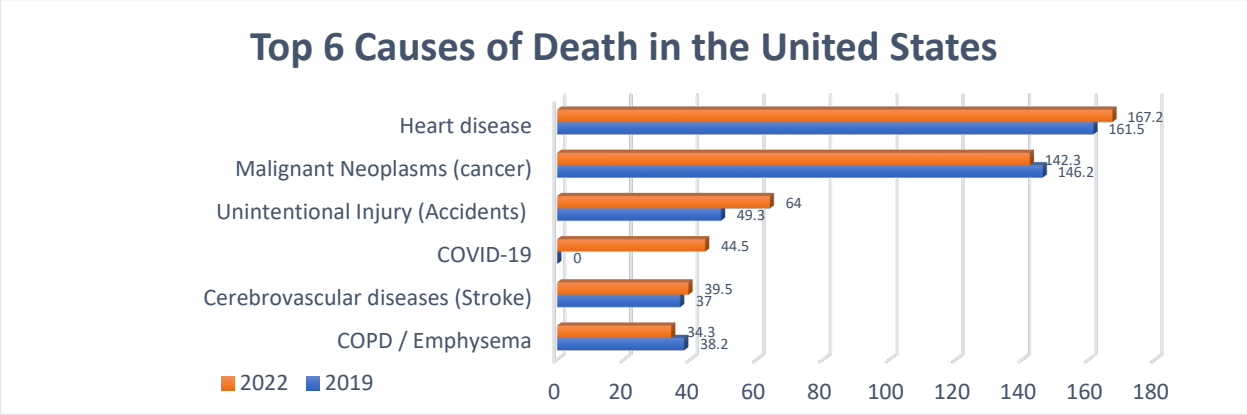
Determinant Type	Main Issues Identified	Impact on Health Outcomes
Economic Stability	Cost, insurance, income disparities, employment	Delayed care, chronic disease management issues
Access to Healthcare	Provider shortages, long wait times, transportation	Reduced preventive care, delayed treatment
Neighborhood/Environment	Rurality, lack of exercise facilities	Lower physical activity, higher chronic disease
Education/Health Literacy	Low health education, limited awareness	Poor self-management, late disease detection
Social/Community Context	Caregiver support, cultural/language barriers	Navigation challenges, disparities in care
Health Behaviors	Diet, physical inactivity, tobacco/alcohol use	Elevated chronic disease rates

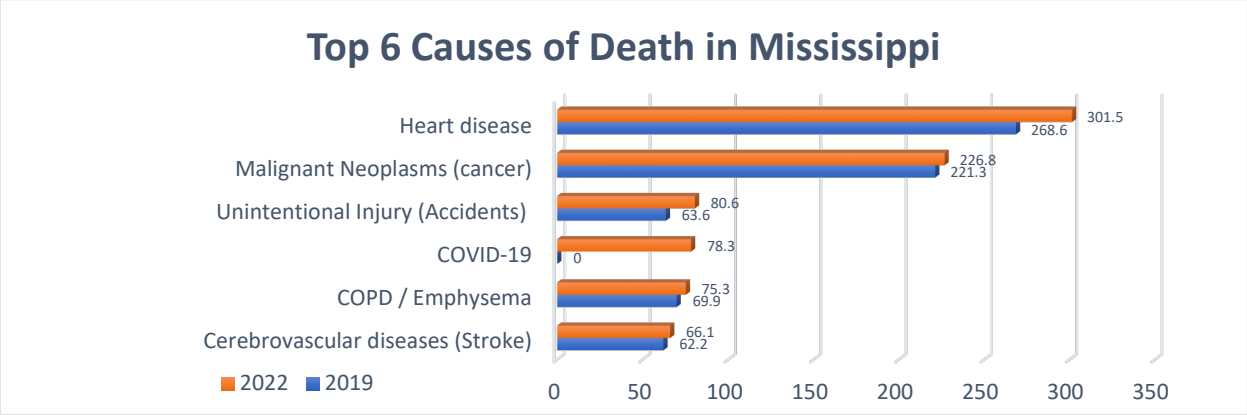
Conclusion

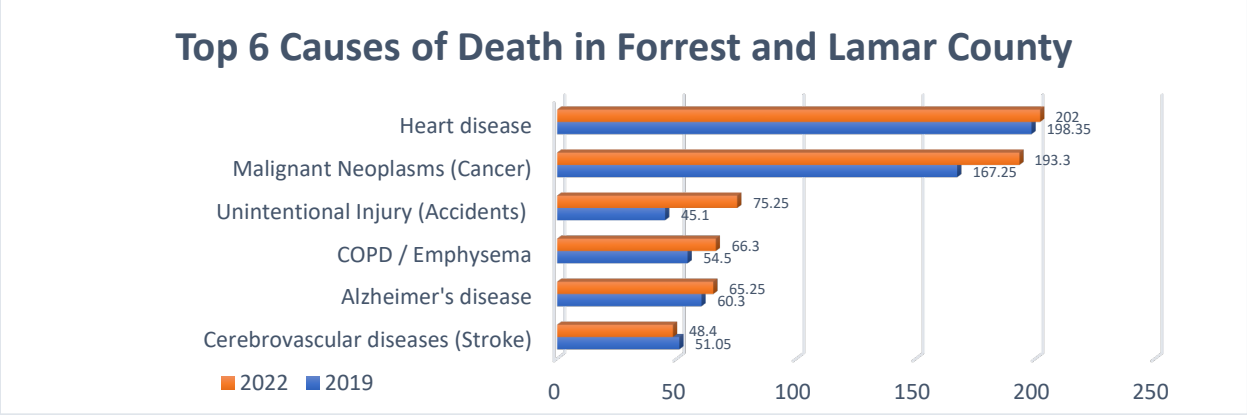
Forrest General's population faces a combination of economic, access, educational, and environmental barriers that shape health outcomes. Addressing these SDOH—especially affordability, provider access, transportation, and health education—will be critical to improving overall community health and reducing health disparities in the region.

Causes of Death Analytics

Cause of Death Comparison (based on per 100,000)



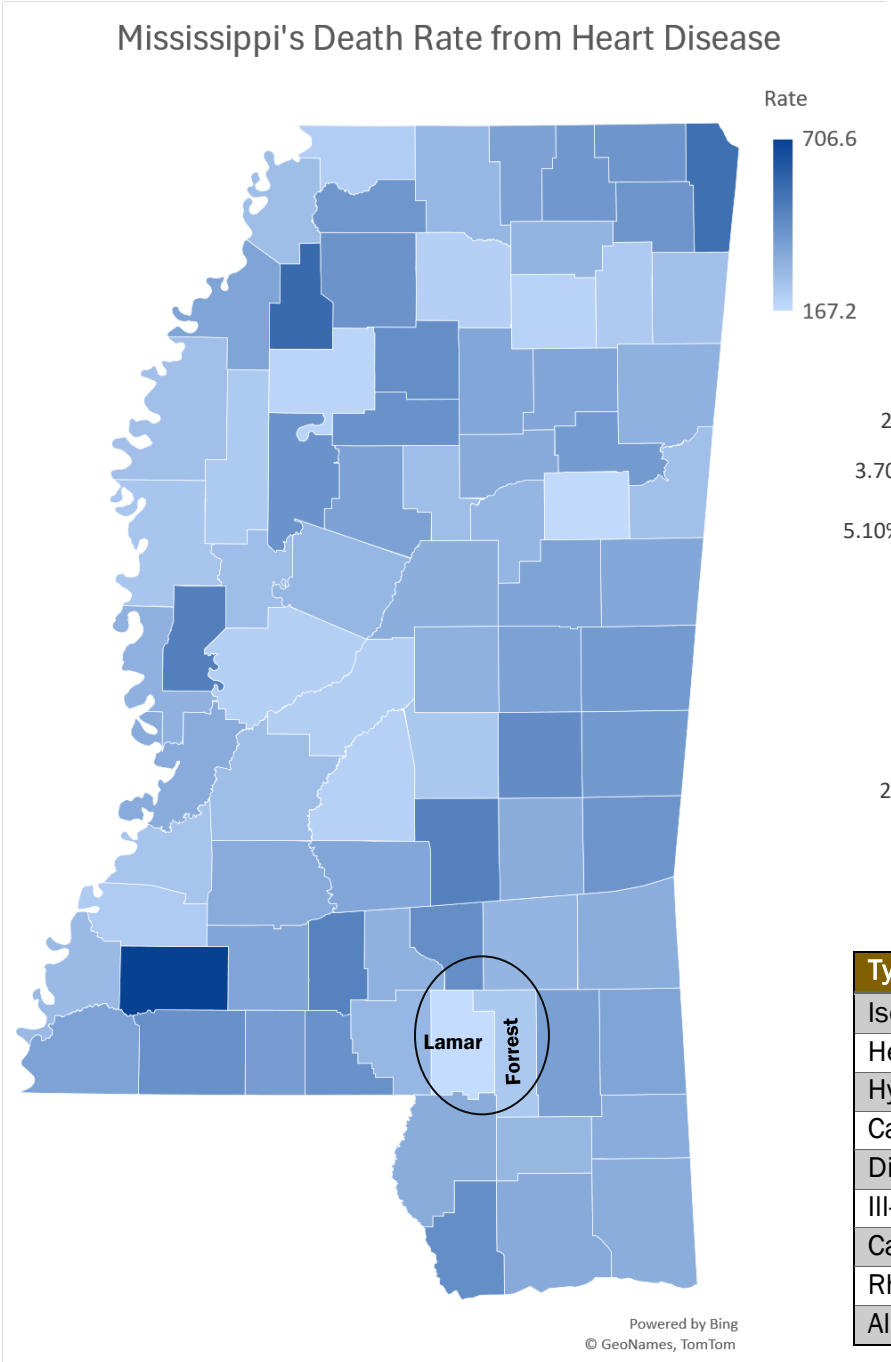


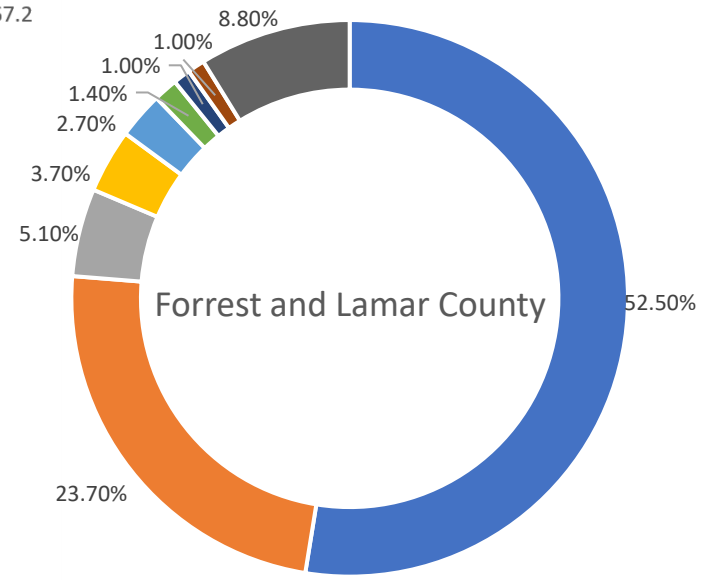


Causes of Death Analytics, Continued

Heart Disease Death Analytics (based on per 100,000)

Below is a heat map showing heart disease-related deaths across Mississippi by county, with darker shades indicating higher death counts. HORNE conducted a focused review of the specific types of heart disease contributing to deaths in Forrest and Lamar County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.



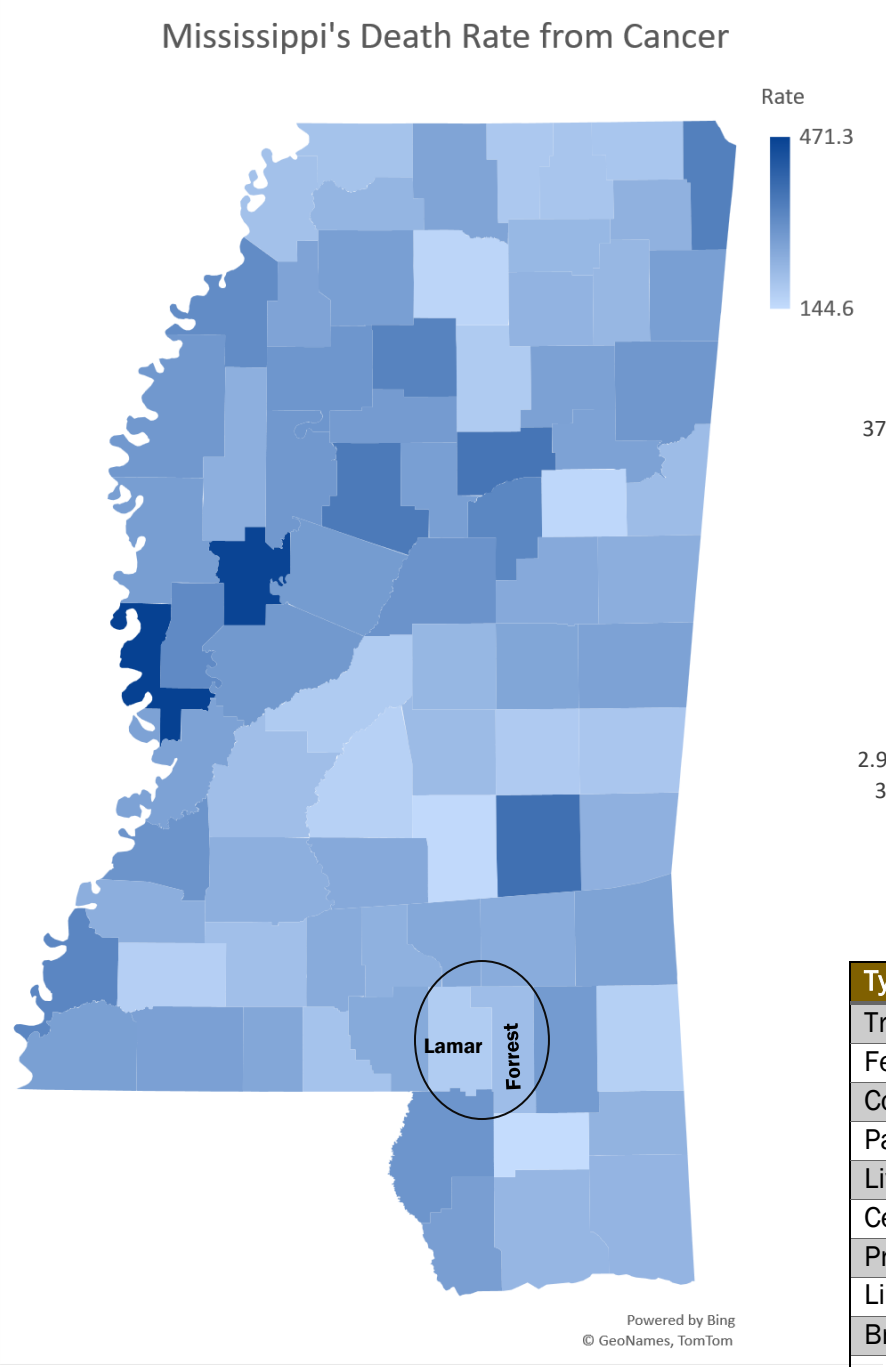


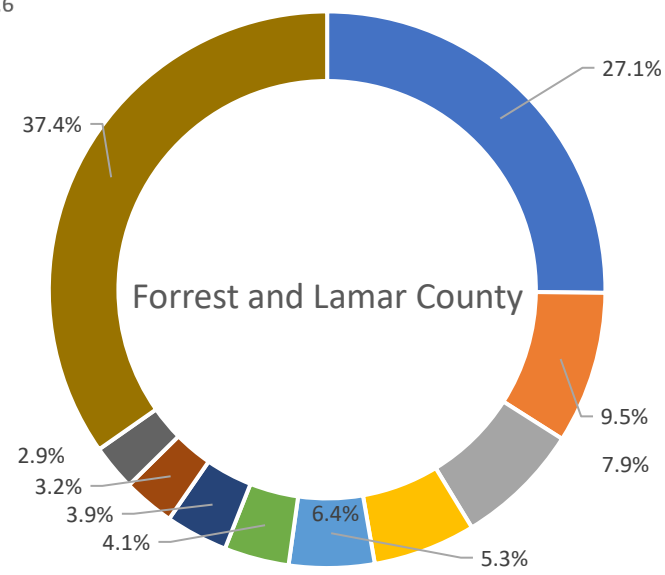
Type of Heart Disease	Percentage
Ischemic Heart Disease	52.5%
Heart Failure	23.7%
Hypertensive Heart Disease	5.1%
Cardiac Dysrhythmias	3.7%
Diseases Of Pulmonary Circulation	2.7%
Ill-Defined Heart Diseases	1.4%
Cardiomyopathy	1.0%
Rheumatic Heart Disease	1.0%
All Other Heart Diseases	8.8%

Causes of Death Analytics, Continued

Cancer Death Analytics (based on per 100,000)

Below is a heat map showing cancer-related deaths across Mississippi by county, with darker shades indicating higher death counts. HORNE conducted a focused review of the specific types of cancer contributing to deaths in Forrest and Lamar County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.



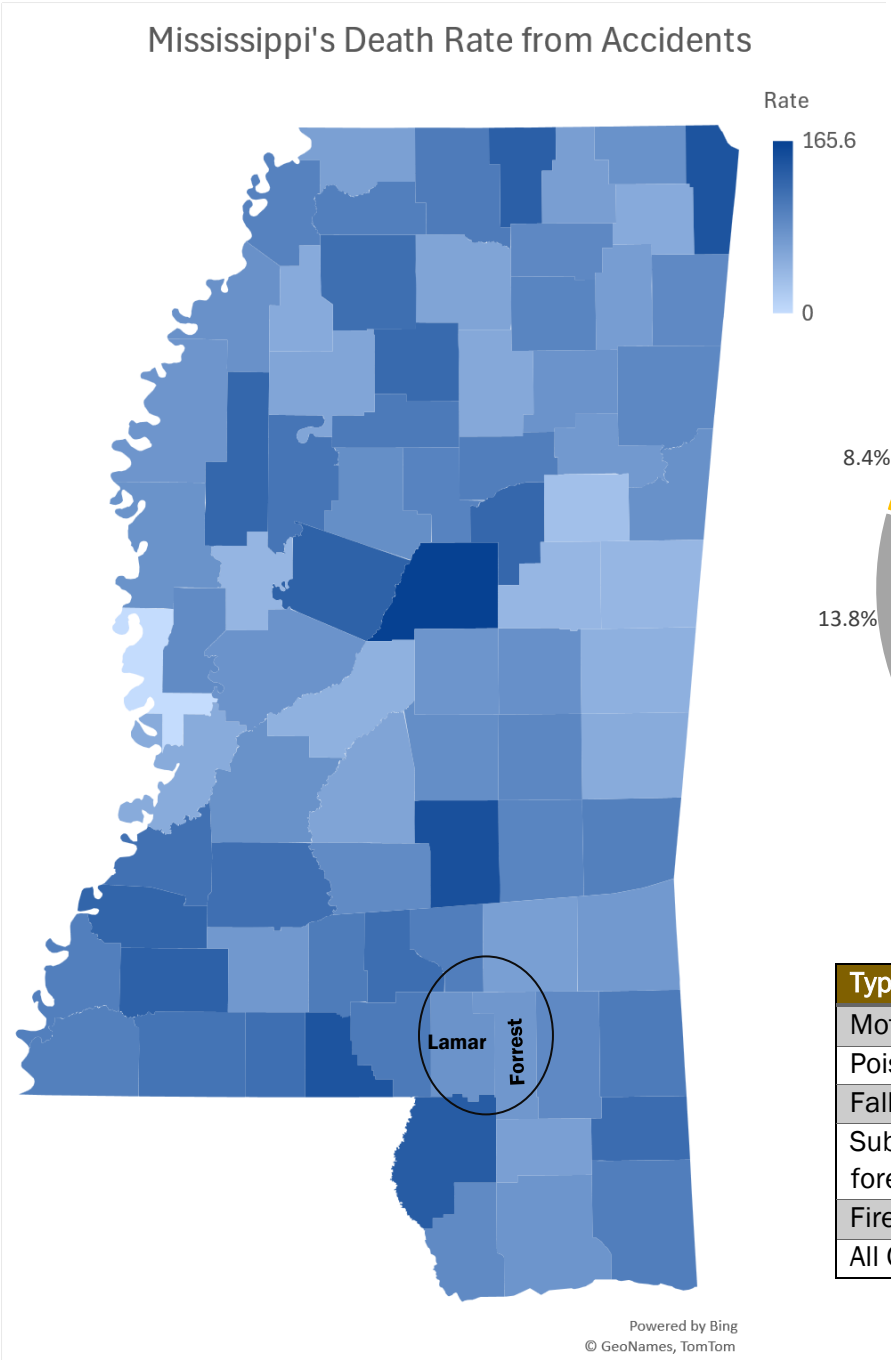


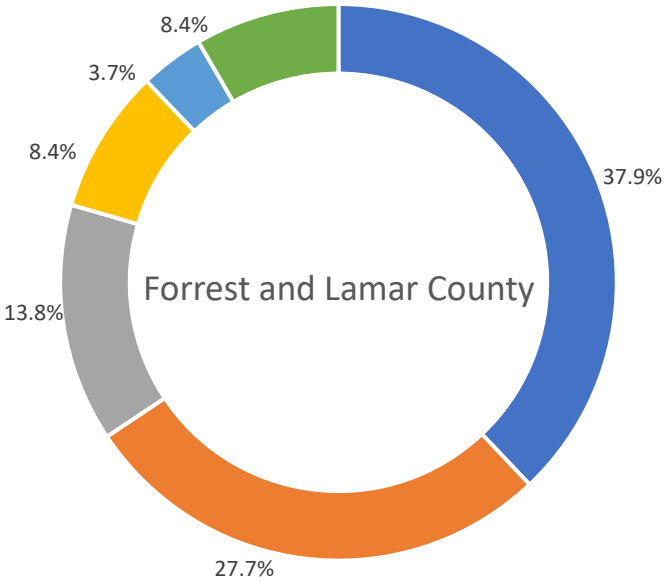
Type of Cancer	Percentage
Trachea, bronchus, and Lung	27.1%
Female breast	9.5%
Colorectal	7.9%
Pancreas	6.4%
Liver and intrahepatic bile ducts	5.3%
Cervix uteri	4.1%
Prostate	3.9%
Lip, oral cavity, and pharynx	3.2%
Brain	2.9%
All Other cancers	37.4%

Causes of Death Analytics, Continued

Accidental Death Analytics (based on per 100,000)

Below is a heat map showing accident-related deaths across Mississippi by county, with darker shades indicating higher death counts. HORNE conducted a focused review of the specific types of accident contributing to deaths in Forrest and Lamar County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.





Type of Accident	Percentage
Motor vehicle	37.9%
Poisoning-drugs	27.7%
Falls	13.8%
Submersion, suffocation, and foreign bodies	8.4%
Fires, flames and smoke	3.7%
All Other Unintentional injuries	8.4%

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs

Summary of Impact of the 2022 CHNA Implementation Plan and Strategic Actions

An important element of the three-year Community Health Needs Assessment ("CHNA") cycle is revisiting the progress made on the priority needs identified in the previous assessment. By reviewing the actions taken to respond to the needs identified by our communities and prioritized by the CHNA Steering Committee, it is possible to better target the resources and efforts during the upcoming CHNA cycle. This review also provides the collaborative partners the affirmation that the joint efforts to improve the overall health of our community has been successful.

Prioritization

The information gathered from the community was very uniform and was also consistent with the quantitative data. The most common needs mentioned by the community members were related to chronic diseases, health education, lifestyle improvement and access to care.

Being aware of this lifestyle disparity, the Steering Committee was diligent in addressing these chronic illnesses which lead to a disproportionate number of deaths. Also, the quality of life in our state is negatively impacted by these conditions that rob our citizens of the ability to enjoy good health daily.

Hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, weight loss/obesity and nutrition were all health needs identified by both the community members and healthcare professionals. In addition, deaths from female breast cancer and trachea, bronchus and lung cancer were identified as disproportionate for the county. Community members saw a need for increased education and preventive care in order to eliminate the path to chronic disease and cancer.

Prevention can be cost effective compared to the catastrophic treatment needed when a chronic disease is unmanaged and leads to major health problems. Education related to nutrition was emphasized because of the link between obesity and so many chronic health conditions. Other community health needs that were expressed included a need for increased health literacy, and decreased health disparities among socioeconomic and racial groups.

Community Health Improvement Plan

Based on the communities' input and the knowledge of the patient population we serve, the CHNA Steering Committee prioritized these needs and developed a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) that would address the above needs. The Strategic Actions and the activities implemented to improve the health and wellbeing of our community, along with the positive impact of these activities, are detailed on the following pages.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

2022 Strategic Action Responses

Develop and Nurture Relationships With Diverse Populations of the Community

To be more inclusive, establish relationships, and build trust with diverse populations, so they will heed Forrest General Hospital's preventative care measures and reach out to Forrest General Hospital when medical care is needed.

- Partnered with Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative (SeMRHI) for Community Resource and Health Fair at Chain Park, which offered free health screenings, vendor booths, activities for children, snow cones, food, and more.
- Prom Promise with Hattiesburg High School involved students making a promise not to drink and drive on prom night.
- Dr. Keith Jones, Neurohospitalist and Medical Director of Stroke, visited a Health Science class at Hattiesburg High School where he talked about stroke, giving the students a quiz after his talk to see how much they learned and what they could do to aid a stroke victim.



- During Stroke Month, Neurohospitalist and Medical Director of Stroke, Dr. Keith Jones, visited Hattiesburg neighborhoods and the streets of the Hub City to talk to residents about stroke signs and symptoms.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Students from South Jones High School took part in a NextFlex Career Pathway tour of Forrest General Hospital, where they visited different departments and heard of the many opportunities a healthcare career holds and the education needed and requirements to be met.
- Flyers printed in both English and Spanish were distributed to area non-profits who work with diverse populations, and provided pertinent information about each of the services these non-profits offer.



- Spirit Girls collected prom dresses in all styles, colors, and sizes and set up a showroom with partner, Bliss Bridal, for its annual Prom-A-Palooza. During this event, area girls could rent prom dresses for just $12, ensuring a wonderful night at prom without having to worry about the cost of a dress.
- Forrest General staff members and mascot, Forrest the Little Deer, read to students at Early Encounters Daycare at Parkway Heights United Methodist Church in Hattiesburg.
- Forrest General's Food & Nutrition Department held a Food Drive to collect non-perishable foodstuffs for the Edwards Street Food Pantry.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Participated in the Forrest County Senior Health and Resource Fair where Forrest General staffers handed out materials regarding healthcare.
- Partnered with Extra Table to sell T-shirts for Tees for Turkeys promotion with proceeds going to purchase turkeys for those in need during the holiday season.
- CMO (Care Management Organization) Insurance Agency partnered with Forrest General Hospital and Hattiesburg Clinic to hold no-cost Medicare seminars during open enrollment to help advise community members.
- Held a Career Fair with more than 20 Forrest Health Departments participating for 6th, 7th, and 8th-graders in the Hattiesburg Public School District to familiarize them with healthcare careers and paths.



- Forrest General Hospital's Women and Children's Services partnered with pediatrician, Dr. Anita Henderson, MD, and neonatologist, Dr. Randy Henderson, MD, to spread the word about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and the Clear the Crib initiative through a multi-media campaign and in-person event.
- Forrest General helped sponsor Shady Grove Church's Holly Jolly Christmas Community Giveback event, which helped nearly 500 people in the community with gifts, as well as gift cards, food and other items, and assisted families in learning about community resources from local groups and organizations.
- Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residents volunteer with Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative's Dr. Rebecca Roberts to provide OB/GYN services three days a week, seeing an average of 15 to 20 patients each day during their academic year (July – June).
- The Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residents volunteer at the Edwards Street Fellowship Health Clinic eight hours per week during their academic year, where they see an average of 10-20 patients each day, depending on the need that week.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residents work with Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative's school clinics on a rotation basis where they provide care eight hours a week for school-age children during the residents' academic year.
- Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residents assist Dr. Tullos and the Hattiesburg Clinic Sports Medicine Department each year with annual sports physicals at which time they see hundreds of students from high schools including Sumrall, Collins, and Oak Grove during an all-day sports physical day.
- Spirit Girls hosted Project Linus, which provided blanket creations for local children's shelters and pediatric units.
- Spirit Girls hosted Case 4 Smiles, which provided pillow case creations for local children's shelters and pediatric units.
- Forrest Health's Marketing & Communications Department and Human Resources Department volunteered their time at two non-profits – the Edwards Street Fellowship Center and The Arc of Southeast Mississippi. At Edwards Street, the Mar/Com team packed more than 1,100 pounds of rice for needy families while the HR team helped decorate cookies for the holidays with The Arc. Team members in the ICU adopted 10 children from Thames Elementary for Christmas. Forrest General staff members, who are members of Chapter 7 of the Mississippi Nurses Association, bought Christmas gifts for 100 Arc Angels.
- Partnered with the United Way of Southeast Mississippi to host a Community Baby Shower with expectant or new moms in attendance. Those in attendance met with local organizations to learn about baby health, infant CPR, sleeping patterns, car seat safety, SIDS education, local program offerings, visited vendor booths, and received car seats for their children.
- Provided health flyers in Spanish on rehabilitation services, Forrest General Hospital Women & Children's programs (breastfeeding, Clear the Crib, Sleep Plan) to non-profit agencies.
- Spirit Girls partnered with Extra Table to pack pallets of food for Extra Table's food pantry partners.
- Spirit Girls helped with Bellevue Elementary School's Hispanic Heritage Festival where the girls face painted for the event.
- Set up a booth at the Senior Community Health Fair held at Parkway Heights United Methodist Church where FGH representatives handed out healthcare information to seniors in attendance.

Measure of Success

An increase in positive public perception, thus instilling trust in our community, participation in events, and an increase in overall engagement.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

2022 Strategic Action Responses

Address Preventative Measures Relating to Heart Disease and Cancer

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Mississippi followed by cancer, which accounts for about one in every five deaths. Statistics in both Forrest and Lamar counties, Forrest General's primary service area, show the leading causes of death to be heart disease and cancer.

- Spirit Girls participate in the annual American Heart Association Heart Walk along with a team from Forrest General's Cardiac Department. Forrest General was also recognized as the top fundraising team in the Pine Belt.
- During February's Black History Month, Forrest Health promoted the need to be mindful of heart disease, especially among men of color throughout a multimedia campaign.
- On Give Back Volunteer Day, Mississippi Miss Hospitality contestants, who were in town for the state program, visited Forrest General Hospital, where they heard from a Forrest Health vice president and a radiation oncologist, and prepared goody bags and designed cards of encouragement for patients at the Forrest General Cancer Center.



- The Forrest General Hospital Cancer Center, in partnership with the MS Department of Health, hosted a "Tour of the Colon" event. Guests had fun exploring and learning about colon health.
- Forrest General Hospital held a Cancer Survivors Picnic in the Becky and Bill Oliver Healing Garden at which time they enjoyed food, fellowship, visited vendor booths, painted rocks for the garden, enjoy some great entertainment and food, and have their pictures made in the photo booth or with one of the hospital's therapy dogs, Major Payne.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Partnered with WDAM throughout the year for Pink-Up segments regarding breast cancer awareness.
- Forrest General's monthly blog, An Apple A Day, brings awareness to specific topics during awareness months such as February's Heart Month, where tips regarding symptoms and things to watch for were included.
- As part of the Cancer Awareness Month campaign, Forrest General published the testimonials of four cancer patients (Jerry Moore, Brian McMurry, Janice Felder, Nichole Green).
- The Spirit Girls held a February Happy Heart Challenge during which time they were challenged to eat healthy, better their mental health, and engage in physical activity
- The Spirit Girls provided colorful doodles and words of encouragement for patients with their Chalk Cheers on the sidewalks in front of the Forrest General Cancer Center.
- Spirit Girls decorated the front of the Cancer Center with painted pumpkins, which patients and staff were encouraged to take home with them.
- Employees at the Forrest General Cancer Center started a Fuel to Fight 5K run and 2-mile walk in 2022, which has raised more than $100,000 to date with funds supporting a transportation fund, handled by the Forrest General Healthcare Foundation, which helps patients in need get to their treatments.



- In preparation for The Cancer Center's Fuel to Fight 5k Run and 2-Mile Walk, Spirit Girls helped assemble more than 700 T-shirts, which are sold to benefit the race and then on race day, they made encouraging signs and cheered on runners along the race course.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Because of the care loved ones have received at the Forrest General Cancer Center, Hattiesburg Cycles makes a donation each year to the Forrest General Healthcare Foundation to be used at the Cancer Center, from the business' sales during October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month.
- Forrest General held a free Head, Neck & Oral Cancer Screening educational event in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health, which focused on head, neck, and oral health and highlighted the importance of early detection for dental disease, mouth and throat cancer, and other potential health issues.
- Laughs 4 Life, an annual fundraiser, commissioned Hattiesburg artist, Lissa Ortego, to paint a mural on the front sidewalk of the Cancer Center, which featured a variety of colored ribbons depicting the different types of cancers and words of encouragement.
- As part of its 25th anniversary celebration, the Forrest General Cancer Center sponsored an art contest where they invited the public to submit original pieces of artwork in three categories on the topic, "Colors of Courage," with winning entries to be hung in the Cancer Center.
- Through the American Heart Association, and in preparation for the Pine Belt's Art for Heart fundraiser, community sponsors provided Forrest General Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with lifesaving infant CPR kits, which will be given to the parents of NICU babies to take home and learn lifesaving CPR skills.
- Members of the University of Southern Mississippi Lady Eagle basketball team handed out free tickets to patients and staff at the Forrest General Cancer Center to their Pink Out game, which supports breast cancer patients. Their coach, Joye Lee-McNelis, a cancer survivor, is a big supporter of the Cancer Center.



Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- A press release and other campaign collateral highlighted signs, symptoms, and things women and men could do if they suspect they might have breast cancer, while also reminding them about having a yearly mammogram.

Measure of Success

An increase in positive public perception, thus instilling trust in our community, participation in events, and an increase in overall engagement.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

2022 Strategic Initiatives:

Substance Abuse Prevention and The Mental Health Impacts of COVID-19

Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services

The behavioral healthcare extension of Forrest Health is one of the nation's most comprehensive treatment campuses. Pine Grove's world-renowned programs treat gender specific substance abuse including specialized tracks for co-occurring eating disorders and trauma. Additionally, Pine Grove offers an Intensive Outpatient substance abuse healing program for adults and a separate treatment track specifically for those who are age 55 plus. Other Pine Grove specialty programs include a dedicated professional's treatment curriculum and a comprehensive evaluation center. Pine Grove also features a program for patients with sexual addiction. Inpatient Services including an Adult Psychiatric Unit, along with a Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit, and Outpatient Services are other components. Pine Grove has provided nationally and internationally recognized healthcare since 1984.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Pine Grove provided essential mental healthcare and addiction treatment for children, adolescents, and adults. Post pandemic, Pine Grove understands the COVID-19 virus has contributed to deep grief, uncertainty, and disruptions in routines for adults and children, underscoring the importance of mental healthcare. Additionally, the number of drug overdose deaths nationally and in Mississippi increased during the pandemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is critically important to educate parents, teachers, and other professionals in a position to help young people about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of mental healthcare services.

Objective

Pine Grove is committed to providing community education, support, and resources to help the region's population, including school-aged students, understand and receive needed mental healthcare and addiction treatment.

Target Population

School aged students, members of the general public, licensed professionals, educators, parents, and other community stakeholders in a position to advance healthy decision-making skills.

Goals/Desired Outcome

The goal is to fulfill the initiative's objective by facilitating educational awareness events for the aforementioned target population about the importance of receiving mental healthcare, understanding the harmful impacts of substance abuse, and accessing behavioral healthcare services and addiction treatment.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

Strategy/Actions

- Over the next three years, Pine Grove will facilitate continuing education events for licensed behavioral healthcare professionals on important mental healthcare topics that impact our community's residents including school aged students. These events will also educate professionals about the harmful impacts of substance abuse and provide education about emerging drugs that are detrimental to the health of our community. These educational events will also provide resources for attending professionals and information about treatment options.
- Pine Grove will also host events for the general public about the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide education about substance abuse and treatment.
- Additionally, Pine Grove will participate in professional conferences, health fairs, school functions, and community development initiatives throughout Forrest Health's service territory. At these events, Pine Grove will provide education, resources, and treatment options for mental healthcare and substance abuse addiction.
- Digital resources are also available regarding substance abuse prevention and the mental healthcare impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pine Grove will provide these digital resources on its website, professional blog, and various social media channels including the organization's alumni app.

Measure of Success

- Attendance figures at Pine Grove's professional and community-wide educational events.
- Feedback and engagement levels from Pine Grove's participation in professional conferences, health fairs, school functions, and other community development initiatives.
- Feedback from community stakeholders, school-aged students, parents, educators, and healthcare professionals
- Pine Grove will also measure the number of visitors to its website, professional blog, and social media channels regarding content that addresses substance abuse prevention and the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collaborating Partners

- Pine Grove's professional staff members
- Regional school districts
- Private schools
- Government agencies
- Professional licensing bodies
- Non-profit entities
- Local universities
- Community organizations

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

Response:

Over the past three years, Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services has facilitated numerous educational events for Pine belt area professionals, school age students, educators, parents, and members of the general public regarding the vital importance of seeking mental healthcare, and the necessity of substance use disorder treatment. These events included; continuing education events for licensed behavioral healthcare and addiction treatment professionals, statewide elementary, middle, high school, and university students, along with presentations and resources for other community stakeholders in a position to advance healthy decision-making skills.

Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services is a well-respected leader for providing the highest quality care both nationally and internationally. As a healthcare organization rooted in the Pine belt region of Mississippi, Pine Grove's commitment to the residents of Forrest and Lamar County is unwavering as evidenced by the organization's community outreach initiatives.

Educational Presentations:

Pine Grove's professional staff presented more than a dozen continuing education lectures for licensed providers both in-person statewide and within the Pine belt, in addition to providing lectures via webinars. These presentations included information about timely mental healthcare topics, such as "Helping Patients in Crisis," and identifying children, adolescents, and adults in need of acute psychiatric care. This lecture was presented at both the Annual ADHD and Related Concerns conference in Hattiesburg, and for area school counselors and therapists during a continuing education presentation at Forrest General Hospital. Both lectures were presented in the fall of 2022. Other topics Pine Grove's professionals addressed during continuing education lectures within the region included "Adverse Childhood Experiences and ACE Scores: Is it ADHD or is it ACE's?" This lecture was presented twice for professionals in fall of 2023 including a presentation for area practitioners at Forrest General Hospital. Additional presentations included, "Compulsive Sexual Behavior: Controversies, Misconceptions, and Current Trends." This lecture was given to a statewide audience of professionals, and at Forrest General Hospital for Pine belt professionals in the winter and spring of 2024.

Other presentations were given in partnership with the Mississippi Nurses Association including a webinar in the summer of 2022 titled, "Helping Nurses Identify and Provide Essential Care for the Treatment of Depression, Anxiety, and Depression." This lecture was available for nurses statewide. All of the presentations featured Pine Grove's esteemed mental healthcare staff. In the summer of 2023, Pine Grove also teamed with Mississippi Nurses Association for, "Helping Nurses Understand Addiction and Treatment." This day long workshop was held at Forrest General Hospital for nurses. All presentations featured education provided by Pine Grove's knowledgeable staff.

Pine Grove also partnered with sixty school counselors and behavioral healthcare specialists with the Lamar County School District for a professional development day hosted at Forrest General Hospital in the fall of 2024. Pine Grove's professionals presented continuing education information regarding youth suicide awareness and education. All of Pine Grove's educational lectures for regional professionals about relevant mental healthcare and substance use disorder prevention were well attended. Community professionals, through lecture feedback and attendance figures demonstrated the value Pine Grove provided to area healthcare professionals.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

Community Outreach:

From 2022 through 2024, Pine Grove participated in more than one hundred community outreach events, directly educating our Pine belt region and the healthcare professionals caring for our community members about substance use disorder prevention and relevant mental healthcare topics post COVID-19 pandemic. Pine Grove takes its responsibility as Mississippi's leader in behavioral healthcare and addiction treatment seriously and its community involvement recognizes this.

These events include a range of activities from participating in the University of Southern Mississippi's Spring Wellness Fair in 2022, educating students and staff about Pine Grove's treatment programs and services, to presenting on "The Mental Health Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Professionals," at the Area Development Partnership's May 2022 Accelerate Meeting. In the fall of 2022, Pine Grove participated in Pearl River Community College's Mental Health Awareness event on the Forrest County campus, educating students and staff about Pine Grove's treatment programs and services, particularly those applicable to college students.

In 2023, Pine Grove participated in the Pine belt Women's Expo in Hattiesburg, educating women within the Pine belt region about the importance of mental healthcare and addiction treatment. Pine Grove also shared important resources regarding the signs of depression and anxiety at this event. In 2024, Pine Grove exhibited at the Area Development Partnership's JumpStart to success event at the Forrest County Multi-Purpose Center and met with hundreds of high school students from throughout the region about the importance of mental healthcare and career fields within behavioral healthcare and addiction treatment they may pursue professionally in the future. Pine Grove also supported DREAM of Hattiesburg's annual night of Sweet DREAMS fundraiser to support their work with drug and alcohol prevention education. Pine Grove provided a booth with resources for event attendees, and information about the organization's treatment programs.

Digital Resources:

From 2022 through 2024, Pine Grove also had a strong digital presence through its website and social media postings regarding the importance of mental healthcare for children, adolescents, and adults, in addition to providing information about substance use disorders and treatment. One notable example is Pine Grove's digital blog featuring content written and sourced by Pine Grove's treatment professionals. During the measured time frame, Pine Grove educated its digital audience with more than 100 blog posts that addressed a range of issues including drug and alcohol addiction, compulsive behaviors, depression, anxiety, PTSD, grief, trauma, and self-harm. These posts also included information about the importance of emotional intelligence and mindfulness. In the summer of 2024, Pine Grove launched a revised website, including easier navigation for web browsers searching for information about mental healthcare resources and addiction treatment.

Additionally, Pine Grove published more than a hundred social media posts about mental healthcare and addiction issues. Pine Grove's digital channels also include the organization's Alumni app, used by those who completed a Pine Grove treatment program and consented to receiving Pine Grove resources through the organization's established Alumni Program. Since 2022, there have been more than two hundred posts related to substance abuse, mental healthcare and wellness featured on Pine Grove's Alumni Program app.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

Other:

- Stroke Month campaigns provided the signs and symptoms of a stroke and a BE FAST acronym to help people remember what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Forrest General hosted the 2024 Pine Belt Leadership Class for a breakfast at which time Dr. Jones spoke to the group about stroke signs and symptoms.
- Forrest General Hospital hosted the Area Development Partnership Pine Belt Leadership Class breakfast where they heard from Dr. Duncan Donald, medical director for Trauma and Surgical Services, on preventative measures and the importance of the Trauma Center.
- A CPR/Choking education seminar was held for Spirit Girls, who were educated by Forrest General Hospital's Maternal Child Instructor, Michelle Roberts, and learned about infant choking, water safety, and how to stay safe in the Mississippi heat.
- Hosted a University of Mississippi Medical Center trauma surgeon and his research assistant, who set up a table in the lobby to inform the public regarding a national research study involving trauma cases, handing out brochures, and asked those who stopped by to take a short survey.
- Attended Hattiesburg Public School District Back to School event for educators, providing healthcare information.
- Mayor's Youth Council educational tour of Forrest Health Institute of Neuroscience where students heard from Dr. Richard Clatterbuck, neurosurgeon.
- Forrest General Hospital joined the Hattiesburg community as they supported the University of Southern Mississippi's Golden Eagle baseball team as they hosted back-to-back NCAA Super Regional tournaments. Forrest General staffers wore black and gold attire during the days of the tourney, put up black and gold support signs around the perimeter of several campus buildings, and set up a tent near the entrance to the ballfield on game day to hand out rally towels with Forrest General branding.



Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Attended First Responders Day at the Petal Children's Center, where staff members read books to the children and explained the importance of washing their hands. In the absence of water, they showed children how to clean their hands with hand sanitizer.
- Set up booth at Mississippi Black Caucus Conference and talked with those who stopped by the booth, providing Forrest Health information, giveaways.
- Participated in the University of Southern Mississippi's Fall Wellness Festival, providing healthcare information about Forrest Health and providing giveaways.
- Send out monthly Spirit of Women newsletter, which provides a variety of health tips, healthy recipes, upcoming FGH-related events, support group meetings, etc., to the more than 8,300 women who are members.
- Set up a booth at Petal Community Day, where staff members handed out healthcare information.
- As part of Make a Difference Day, Forrest Health Spirit Girls collected children's books to be placed in Little Free Libraries at the hospital and around town.
- Set up booth at Petal Family Health & Resource Fair and handed out healthcare information.
- Spirit Girls worked the Night of Sweet Dreams, which is a dessert auction that raises funds for DREAM of Hattiesburg, so they can continue prevention activities and fund a tutoring program. Spirit Girls help with concessions and showcasing the auctioned desserts.
- During the Dog Days 5K, which benefits Hub City Service Dogs, Spirit Girls volunteered and cheered on runners along the race.
- During National Volunteer Month (April), Forrest General Ambassadors collected donations for their Comfort Cart, which were shared with and benefit patients undergoing treatment and included items such as personal care items and interactive happies to keep patients entertained.
- Spirit Girls served as little sisters for Miss Hospitality contestants throughout the week they were in town for the state program, providing them with notes of encouragement, goody baskets, assisting with dance numbers, etc.
- Forrest Health representatives from different departments and service lines, Pine Grove Behavioral Health and Addiction Services, Human Resources, Rehabilitation, etc. set up booths at the Pine Belt Women's Expo in Hattiesburg, and the Pearl River Women's Conference to talk to women about their health and hand out important information.
- Spirit Girls decorated the sidewalks at local elementary schools and medical facilities with Chalk Cheers, uplifting doodles and messages at Petal, Purvis Lower Elementary, the FGH Cancer Center, Forrest General.
- Spirit Girls painted fingernails for seniors at local assisted living facilities.
- During a Spirit Girls Meeting, Miss Mississippi's Outstanding Teen visited and shared her platform, Character Education and Bullying Prevention, with the girls.
- Kids Hub Advocacy Center and the Dixie Darlings, the dance team at The University of Southern Mississippi, partnered to host a dance clinic where Spirit Girls volunteered and helped the local girls participate.
- During Trick or Treat at the Pete, The University of Southern Mississippi's baseball complex, Spirit Girls participated with face painting and provided Forrest General Hospital materials.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Spirit Girls decorated three car trunks and handed out candy for The Arc of Southeast Mississippi Trunk or Treat.
- Spirit Girls handed out candy and face painted at Brookdale Assisted Living Facility's Trunk or Treat.
- Spirit Girls helped with events at the Hattiesburg Zoo's October event, Zoo Boo.
- Spirit Girls helped with Habitat for Humanity's Monster Mash Mud Run by cheering on participants as they slogged through the mud toward the finish line.
- Spirit Girls held a donation drive where they collected items to be donated to local veteran homes for Christmas gifts.
- During a Spirit Girls meeting, members brought items to be donated to patients at Asbury Hospice House.
- Spirit Girls worked the Lights of the Wild holiday event at Hattiesburg Zoo, where they were stationed at different areas, welcoming guests, and assisting in the petting zoo area, and food areas.
- Spirit Girls worked with Wreaths Across America for Veterans and placed wreaths across tombstones of former veterans in the Hub City.
- During a Women's Day event, Spirit Girls were educated on the benefits of journaling for mental health by getting a journal and creating vision boards, which encouraged healthy eating, exercise, and mental health.
- Spirit Girls collected and donated toiletries and non-perishable snacks for parents staying with their infants in Forrest General's NICU.
- Spirit Girls helped stuff campaign bags for the United Way's Fall 2023 campaign.
- Spirit Girls assisted Kids Hub Advocacy and created friendship bracelets for children that Kids Hub will encounter throughout the year.
- Spirit Girls, in collaboration with the Miss Mississippi Outstanding Teen program, created items to be distributed around the community as "Acts of Kindness." For example, girls created bookmarks to be passed out to church members, school teachers, family members, etc. Girls also created friendship bracelets to be given to friends outside of Spirit Girls, family members, etc.
- Spirit Girls assisted The Arc with tasks for their organization fundraiser.
- Created a series of Spirit of Women Holiday videos highlighting interesting ways to decorate, wrap gifts, provide interesting holiday treat, and keep stress levels down but energy high during the holiday season.
- Forrest General Hospital partnered with the University of Southern Mississippi's Department of Humanities' Center for Ethics and Health Humanities to promote an on-campus screening of "Crip Camp," an award-winning documentary about the Disabilities Rights Movement and a zoom panel discussion.
- Forrest Health participated in Area Development Partnership Jump Start Career Fair for Pine Belt students by setting up a booth and talking to students about healthcare and the many jobs available in the hospital setting and what education is required for each job.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Forrest General Hospice Services, Asbury Hospice House, and Palliative and Support Care Services held a celebration of life service, Precious Memories, to remember the lives lost while in hospice and palliative care during the past year.
- Forrest General hosted representatives from the US Navy Department of Nurse Anesthesia, where FGH educators mentor students, preparing them for the immense responsibility of caring for injured troops, often with little or no supervision, after deployment.
- Forrest Health observed various "months of note," such as Heart, Black History, Home Care & Hospice, Lung Cancer Awareness, SIDS Awareness, NICU Awareness, National Volunteer, Men's Health, Breast Cancer Awareness, and provided tips, risk factors, and other useful information on social media as well as in press releases during the month.
- Forrest General continued its series of Madalene's Moms classes for expectant and new moms to help them and their babies develop skills to make those early years a little easier and build support systems for new moms.
- Forrest Health's Spirit of Women hosted its annual 'Batter Up: Baseball Talk for Besties' event in partnership with The University of Southern Mississippi Athletics Department. Attendees had the opportunity to have their photos made with Coach Christian Ostrander and members of the team, have baseballs autographed, hit for the fences, throw balls and strikes, run the bases, visit the dressing rooms, and hear what makes the Golden Eagles fly high each season.
- Held monthly support group meetings – Bereavement, Bariatric.
- Forrest General partnered with The Blood Center for Community Blood Drives at Forrest Health facilities, which included stops at Marion General Hospital, The Orthopedic Institute, and the FGH Cafeteria Meeting Rooms. Educational material regarding blood donations was also provided.
- Forrest Health's Spirit Girls took part in the Hattiesburg Jaycees Christmas Parade, along with mascots, Forrest and Emerald, and handed out candy canes to those along the parade route.
- Forrest General partnered with Southern Miss to sponsor The Mother's Lounge during the Southern Miss football season. The Mother's Lounge provides moms with a cool, quiet, private place to care for their babies during home football games, with the lounge equipped with a changing table, diapers, water, and healthy snacks.
- Spirit Girls helped pack bags of toys for families and prepped Christian Services lunch boxes with scripture cut outs.
- Spirit Girls donated party decor supplies to the Cancer Center, so patients could decorate during the holidays.
- Forrest General Hospice and Asbury Hospice House held its annual Lights for Loved Ones, which brings members of the community together to honor the memory of loved ones lost during the year. Community members were invited to bring an ornament in memory of someone special to hang on the Christmas tree, which is placed on the lawn of Asbury Hospice House throughout the holiday season.
- Forrest General hosted students from the Jackson Public Schools JROTC program who attended a healthcare camp at William Carey University. Students learned about a variety of careers that exist within the healthcare field before splitting into groups to tour departments within the hospital – Food & Nutrition, the Simulation Lab with Education, Radiology, the ICU, and Respiratory Therapy.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

- Forrest Health's Spirit of Women partnered with Blooms Company for a "Spring Social: Floral Workshop," which included giveaways, health tips by Dr. Melanie Hall, MD, and floral design tips and tricks.
- Forrest General Hospital sponsored an Area Development Partnership Accelerate luncheon at Southern Oaks with Dr. James A. York, MD, Forrest General Radiology director, speaking on the advancements in healthcare and medicine.
- Forrest General Hospital and the Mississippi Organ Recovery Agency partnered for Blue & Green Day, which brings attention to organ donation during National Donate Life Month, and also included a MORA flag raising at which time both a donor family member and a donor recipient spoke about their experiences with organ donation. They also created the Wall of Heroes, a permanent display inside the hospital, which honors the lives of those individuals who have made organ donations at Forrest General Hospital.
- The Forrest General Trauma Team dedicated their time to teach nursing students at The University of Southern Mississippi College of Nursing and Health Professionals the invaluable Stop the Bleed training.

Measure of Success

An increase in positive public perception, thus instilling trust in our community, participation in events, and an increase in overall engagement.

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

Collaborating Partners:

Forrest General considers itself a member of the community and partners with organizations who directly contribute to the improved physical, mental, and emotional health of our local communities.

A few of the partnerships are listed below:

- Aldersgate Mission
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- Arc of Southeast Mississippi
- Area Development Partnership
- Brookdale Living Facility
- Case 4 Smiles
- Christian Services
- Church and faith leaders for all denominations
- City of Petal
- City of Hattiesburg
- DREAM of Hattiesburg
- Edwards Street Fellowship
- Extra Table
- Fieldhouse for the Homeless
- Forrest County
- Hattiesburg Jaycees
- Hattiesburg Public School District
- Hattiesburg Zoo
- Hope Community Collective
- Junior Auxiliary of Hattiesburg
- Kids Hub Advocacy Center
- Lamar County School District
- Laughs 4 Life
- Local businesses
- Local schools/school districts
- Madalene's Moms
- Miss Mississippi Outstanding Teen Program
- Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians
- Mississippi Miss Hospitality Program
- Mississippi Organ Recovery Agency (MORA)

Our Responses to the 2022 Needs, Continued

More of our collaborating Partners:

- Mississippi State Department of Health
- Mississippi Veterans Association
- Pearl River Community College
- Petal School District
- Project Linus
- Ryan's Smiles
- Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative (SeMRHI)
- St. Vincent DePaul
- The Blood Center
- United Way of Southeast Mississippi
- University of Southern Mississippi
- University of Southern Mississippi Athletics
- University of Southern Mississippi Humanities Department
- William Carey University
- William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Wreaths Across America

Prioritizing Our Needs for 2025

Southern Rural Health at a Disadvantage

According to research conducted by the National Institutes of Health, some rural areas of America experience better health outcomes compared to people residing in urban places. Individuals living in rural areas in the Northeast, and some parts of the Midwest and West in the US tend to have lower rates of death and disease compared to both the US in general and to their urban counterparts.

However, those living in the rural South, especially in the Appalachia and Mississippi Delta region, have the lowest life expectancy in the country, and the highest mortality rates due to heart, lung, blood, and sleep disorders; stroke; and cancer. Individuals residing in the rural South experience higher mortality rates compared to both their urban counterparts and other populations living in other rural regions across the US. The disparity in mortality rates between rural regions is stark, with people living in rural communities in the East South Central Region (Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama) experiencing more than 1,000 deaths per 100,000 from 2013 to 2015, compared to 850 deaths per 100,000 in all other rural areas of the US.

Prioritizing Future Efforts for Healthier Rural Communities

The traditional Southern lifestyle is greatly influenced by a less than healthy diet — highlighted by fried foods, organ meats, processed meats, eggs and egg dishes, sugar-sweetened beverages, and bread products. Poor diet, along with a lack of consistent aerobic activity, and the widespread use of tobacco products are major contributing lifestyle factors which can explain the prevalence of chronic conditions like high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, and some cancers.

The awareness of the Southern rural health disadvantage along with the mortality statistic for the population of our service area, made establishing our need for healthy changes a priority for the next three years. In addition to education for a healthier lifestyle for our residents, we will focus many of our strategic actions around reducing the prevalence of cancer, heart disease, stroke and substance abuse.

Community Health Implementation Plan 2025

Forrest General Hospital's Leadership, in collaboration with the CHNA Steering Committee, and a diverse group of collaborative partners, analyzed varied data indicators for Forrest and Lamar Counties, along with state and national health comparison and community input to identify the health and social needs in Forrest and Lamar Counties. Following the completion of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), Forrest General Hospital selected a subset of the research findings as the prioritized needs around which the hospital has developed a Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP) - a three-year implementation plan and strategies. Although the hospital may respond to many needs, the prioritized needs will be at the center of a formal CHNA implementation plan and corresponding tracking and reporting.

2025 Strategic Initiatives

INITIATIVE: Cancer Education and Support

Mississippi has a significant cancer burden, with cancer being the second leading cause of death in the state. Cancer accounts for more than 6,500 deaths annually, according to the American Cancer Society ("ACS"). More than 32,800 lives were lost to cancer between 2017 and 2023; however, most of these deaths were and are preventable and premature**.** During 2025, the ACS predicts 17,820 new cancer cases in Mississippi with 6,740 cancer-related deaths expected.

Statistics in both Forrest and Lamar counties show a cancer death rate of 193.30 with the most common cancers being trachea/bronchus/lung, female breast, colorectal and pancreas.

Target Population

Target general population of Forrest and Lamar counties, and specifically community members who are unhealthy, at-risk for cancer, or have a family history of cancer. Target culturally diverse segments of the population to ensure knowledge of health education and support.

Goals/Desired Outcome

To empower the community with knowledge and preventative help and safety measures, while enhancing awareness and accessibility of supportive resources in times of need.

Strategy/Actions

- Work with community groups, churches, school groups, non-profit organizations, etc. to address preventative measures relating to cancer.
- Educate the public to get screened early, as early detection can save lives.
- Educate and encourage the public to live a healthy lifestyle. This includes nutrition, the importance and impact of healthy eating, exercise, managing numbers (cholesterol, blood pressure, etc.), all which can contribute to cancer-related illness.
    - Obesity remains a significant public health concern in Mississippi and is a major contributor to various chronic health conditions. According to the Community Health Needs Assessment, there is an ongoing need for increased public education on healthy lifestyles to address this issue effectively.
- Educate women about signs and symptoms of breast cancer and cervical cancer. For breast cancer, breast self-examinations on a monthly basis.
- Work with providers to encourage yearly mammograms for women ages 40 and older.
- Educate men on the need for annual physicals, as well as prostate exams, which are now offered via blood tests.
- Partner with prominent men in the community to bring awareness to men's health.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

- Educate the public on the dangers of smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco products, and vaping, especially in adolescents and teens. Include and specify the risks associated with readily accessible consumer products – particularly those available at convenience stores and gas stations – that may contain harmful or undisclosed ingredients.
- Educate the importance of wearing sunscreen and protective clothing, including hats to protect your body, especially your head and face, from skin cancer. Stress the importance of these factors any time someone is outside – whether during recreational activities, mowing the lawn, working in the garden, or washing the car.
- Educate the general population through press releases, testimonials, billboards, social media, reels, and other campaign collateral, highlight reminders about special health-related months – breast cancer awareness month, Cancer Survivors Day, colon and skin cancers – to bring special attention to care individuals need to take.
- Work with churches and schools to establish wellness groups and small, ongoing events to promote healthy living. Church members often trust what they hear from clergy and other church leaders, so they are willing to participate in activities or take advice to heart. Foster partnerships with mental health advocates and support groups to provide comprehensive support for patients, and family members/caregivers, during and after their cancer journey.
- Educate the public on the importance of primary care physicians and scheduling annual appointments for regular medical checkups for early detection and treatment of cancers of the breast, colon, rectum, cervix, prostate, testes, oral cavity, and skin.
- Establish partnerships with local businesses—including grocery stores, restaurants, and food delivery services—as well as churches and schools to promote public education on healthy eating alternatives. These collaborative efforts aim to address obesity, a significant health concern affecting all age groups across our counties and the state.

Measure of Success

Increased partnerships, ongoing participation in events, and an increase in overall engagement.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

INITIATIVE: Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and Education

Cardiovascular disease ("CVD"), including heart disease and stroke, is the leading cause of death in Mississippi, accounting for more than one third of all deaths in the state. Mississippi's CVD mortality rate is among the highest in the nation. Statistics in both Forrest and Lamar counties, Forrest General's primary service area, show the leading cause of death to be heart disease.

Target Population

Target overall population in Forrest and Lamar counties, but especially community members who are unhealthy, at-risk for heart disease, or have a family history of heart disease. Emphasize prevention efforts targeting adolescents and teenagers, given the rising prevalence of vaping among younger age groups.

Goals/Desired Outcome

Equip the community with knowledge and prevention strategies. Increase awareness regarding signs and symptoms of heart-related issues and resources available.

Strategy/Actions

- Promote healthy living among the general population by highlighting the key components of a balanced and health-conscious lifestyle.
    - Educate the public on the importance and impact of healthy eating, exercise, knowing and managing your numbers (cholesterol, blood pressure, etc.) in order to target obesity issues, which greatly contribute to heart disease.
- Educate the public on the dangers of smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco products, and vaping. Encourage quitting tobacco in all forms, especially among the adolescent and teen populations. Highlight and detail the potential health risks of easily accessible consumer products—especially those sold at convenience stores and gas stations—that may contain hazardous or unidentified ingredients.
- Work with neighborhoods, churches, and schools to establish wellness groups, and educate them on the importance on staying active.
- Encourage participation in area runs/walks sponsored by non-profits such as the Fuel to Fight 5K, American Heart Association's Heart Walk, Hattiesburg Half Marathon, etc., where members of the community can get exercise while supporting a worthwhile cause.
- Educate the public on the signs and symptoms of a stroke, and what the BE FAST acronym stands for when it comes to stroke and what to do in the event of an emergency. Promote Stroke Month through marketing campaigns, which include the BE FAST information.
- Encourage public to learn CPR or how to use portable AED machines, which might help save the life of someone having a heart attack or other medical emergency
- Educate the public on the importance of managing stress, and offer tangible methods for reducing stress.

Measure of Success

An increase in positive public perception, thus instilling trust in our community. Ongoing participation in events, and an increase in overall engagement.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

INITIATIVE: Internet Safety Education and Awareness

Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services is one of the nation's most comprehensive treatment campuses. Pine Grove's world-renowned programs treat substance use disorders including specialized tracks for co-occurring eating disorders, compulsive behaviors, trauma, and mental health. Additionally, Pine Grove offers an Intensive Outpatient substance abuse healing program for adults. Other Pine Grove specialty programs include a dedicated professional's treatment curriculum and evaluation center. Pine Grove also features a program for patients with sexual addiction. Inpatient Services including an Adult Psychiatric Unit, along with a Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit, and comprehensive Outpatient Services are other components. Pine Grove is a division of Forrest Health, a partnership of healthcare organizations across South Mississippi, and the behavioral healthcare extension of Forrest General Hospital. Established in 1984, Pine Grove has provided nationally and internationally recognized healthcare for more than 40 years.

Pine Grove understands how challenging the teenage years and emerging adulthood is for young people in today's modern world. With the unique pressures associated with social media use and abuse, and the ever-increasing presence of technology, it's important for our community's young people to have a healthy relationship with technology. This includes the ability to recognize, report and reach out for help regarding the dangers associated with it. Additionally, it's important to educate parents about social media use in their child's lives and the harms that exist including cyberbullying, and predatory behaviors targeting children. National and statewide cybercrime statistics point to this being a critically important issue. Another audience that is susceptible to internet harms includes adult caregivers of loved ones, who require continuous care due to their medical needs. This initiative will also educate caregivers about internet scams and online predatory behaviors, while providing helpful resources to improve their mental health.

As part of this education regarding internet harms, it's important for teenagers, young adults, and caregivers to develop protective coping skills so they may make healthy online decisions. This includes helping young people and adult caregivers feel comfortable reaching out for help when needed, developing a support network, and reporting online threats and inappropriate messages to the proper authorities. Additionally, Pine Grove will advance public awareness regarding the importance of seeking mental healthcare services to help our community's youth and adult caregivers navigate their lives with confidence and hope for the future.

Target Population:

The target population for this initiative includes teenagers, young adults, caregivers, parents, educators, law enforcement, civic organizations, and healthcare professionals.

Goals and Desired Outcomes:

Pine Grove, in partnership with Forrest Health, is implementing several strategies to accomplish the goal of internet safety education and awareness. The outcome is to inform young adults, caregivers, and community stakeholders about online harms, and develop protective measures so they may understand and use the internet in a healthy manner.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

Process/Time Frame/Location:

- Pine Grove will provide education in the community, through presentations about internet harms targeting young people and caregivers. Resources available to help this audience will also be provided.
- To provide support for stakeholders about these issues including, but not limited to educational and healthcare professionals, caregivers, teenagers and young adults, and parents regarding internet harms and healthy decision making.
- Professionals with Pine Grove will provide materials and online resources to increase public awareness regarding internet harms targeting caregivers, young adults, and teenagers.

Measures of Success:

- Attendance figures at community-wide and professional presentations.
- Feedback from caregivers, teenagers, young adults, and other identified community stakeholders regarding the information provided.
- Pine Grove will measure the number of visitors to its website and social media engagement figures regarding information about internet safety and awareness education.

Cost/Funding/Human Resources:

Resources and costs are internal and vary according to the event. Resources used include Pine Grove and Forrest Health's professional staff members, who contribute their time to coordinate each effort, along with any collateral materials that are used.

Collaborative Partners:

Collaborative partners for this initiative include Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services, Forrest Health, law enforcement professionals, teenagers and young adults, parents, educators, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and other community stakeholders.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

INITIATIVE: Substance Abuse Prevention and the Mental Health Impacts of Covid-19

Pine Grove Behavioral Health & Addiction Services

The behavioral healthcare extension of Forrest Health is one of the nation's most comprehensive treatment campuses. Pine Grove's world-renowned programs treat gender specific substance abuse including specialized tracks for co-occurring eating disorders and trauma. Additionally, Pine Grove offers an Intensive Outpatient substance abuse healing program for adults and a separate treatment track specifically for those who are age 55 plus. Other Pine Grove specialty programs include a dedicated professional's treatment curriculum and a comprehensive evaluation center. Pine Grove also features a program for patients with sexual addiction. Inpatient Services including an Adult Psychiatric Unit, along with a Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit, and Outpatient Services are other components. Pine Grove has provided nationally and internationally recognized healthcare since 1984.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Pine Grove provided essential mental healthcare and addiction treatment for children, adolescents, and adults. Post pandemic, Pine Grove understands the COVID19 virus has contributed to deep grief, uncertainty, and disruptions in routines for adults and children, underscoring the importance of mental healthcare. Additionally, the number of drug overdose deaths nationally and in Mississippi increased during the pandemic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is critically important to educate parents, teachers, and other professionals in a position to help young people about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of mental healthcare services.

Objective

Pine Grove is committed to providing community education, support, and resources to help the region's population, including school-aged students, understand and receive needed mental healthcare and addiction treatment.

Target Population

School aged students, members of the general public, licensed professionals, educators, parents, and other community stakeholders in a position to advance healthy decision-making skills.

Goals/Desired Outcome

The goal is to fulfill the initiative's objective by facilitating educational awareness events for the aforementioned target population about the importance of receiving mental healthcare, understanding the harmful impacts of substance abuse, and accessing behavioral healthcare services and addiction treatment.

2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

2025 Strategy/Actions

- Over the next three years, Pine Grove will facilitate continuing education events for licensed behavioral healthcare professionals on important mental healthcare topics that impact our community's residents including school aged students. These events will also educate professionals about the harmful impacts of substance abuse and provide education about emerging drugs that are detrimental to the health of our community. These educational events will also provide resources for attending professionals and information about treatment options.
- Pine Grove will also host events for the general public about the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provide education about substance abuse and treatment.
- Additionally, Pine Grove will participate in professional conferences, health fairs, school functions, and community development initiatives throughout Forrest Health's service territory. At these events, Pine Grove will provide education, resources, and treatment options for mental healthcare and substance abuse addiction.
- Digital resources are also available regarding substance abuse prevention and the mental healthcare impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pine Grove will provide these digital resources on its website, professional blog, and various social media channels including the organization's alumni app.

Measure of Success

- Attendance figures at Pine Grove's professional and community wide educational events.
- Feedback and engagement levels from Pine Grove's participation in professional conferences, health fairs, school functions, and other community development initiatives.
- Feedback from community stakeholders, school aged students, parents, educators, and healthcare professionals
- Pine Grove will also measure the number of visitors to its website, professional blog, and social media channels regarding content that addresses substance abuse prevention and the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Collaborating Partners

• Pine Grove's professional staff members	• Professional licensing bodies
• Regional school districts	• Non-profit entities
• Private schools	• Local universities
• Government agencies	• Community organizations

Thank You

This comprehensive assessment will allow us to better understand the needs and concerns of our community. Forrest General Hospital is proud to be part of the Forrest Health System where we truly believe we are "our brother's keeper." As always, through this commitment to compassionate and mission-focused healthcare, we are honored to work closely with our collaborative partners to provide outstanding healthcare and create a healthier environment for the residents of Forrest and Lamar counties, and surrounding areas.

Our sincere thanks to those who took part in this process. We are especially grateful to the members of the Forrest Health Board of Trustees and the health system's leadership. Through their guidance and advocacy, we are able to continue our mission to do what is best for the patient.

A special thank you to our community partners who took the time away from their important work to provide invaluable information to help us see where disparities lie in our communities, and ways these non-profits and others are helping meet the needs of many. This provides important information to help Forrest Health continue to be a resource to those in need.

Our CHNA Steering Committee members and all those who participated in our Community Focus Group, either by their attendance at the Forum or through ongoing conversations, deserve a special thanks for their time, support, and insight. Their input has been invaluable.

And last, but perhaps, most importantly, to the general public who realize their voice does matter. Thank you for completing our Community Health Survey, reading our latest Community Health Needs Assessment, and for supporting our mission of care.

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