# Pearl River County Hospital

## CHNA Report

CHNA Report and Implementation Plan

Approved September 23, 2025




HORNE

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# Executive Summary

The purpose of this CHNA report is to provide Pearl River County Hospital (PRCH) with a functioning tool to guide the Hospital as it works to improve the health of the community it serves. In addition, the report meets the guidelines of the Internal Revenue Service.

The results of the CHNA will guide the development of PRCH's community health improvement initiatives and implementation strategies. This is a report that may be used by many of the Hospital's collaborative partners in the community.

The assessment was performed, and the implementation strategies were created by the CHNA Steering Committee with assistance from HORNE. The assessment was conducted in spring 2025.

The main input was provided by previous patients, employees, and community representatives. An opportunity to offer input was made available to the entire community through word of mouth plus a published and publicly available survey. Also, a productive Community Focus Group meeting was conducted with valuable discussion and input from representatives from across the county. This meeting was a collaborative effort of Pearl River County Hospital and Highland Community Hospital. Additional information came from public databases, reports, and publications by state and national agencies.

In this report, we discuss the health priorities that we will focus on over the next three years. The CHNA report is available on the Hospital's website www.prc-med.com or a printed copy may be obtained from the Hospital's administrative office.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to continue to be a part of this community. We take pride in the care we render and also being in the community to help prevent illness. We look forward to working with you to improve the overall health of those we serve in Poplarville and Pearl River County.

Kevin Hedgepeth
Administrator
Pearl River County Hospital

# About the Hospital

## Pearl River County Hospital

Pearl River County Hospital ("PRCH") is a community critical access facility located at 305 W. Moody Street in Poplarville, MS. PRCH currently operates five Emergency Department beds and 19 Inpatient/Swing Beds. PRCH provides a wide range of medical services and technology to our community, including emergency care, medicine, imaging and radiology, rehabilitation services, respiratory therapy, and swing bed services. These services are delivered by expert physicians and nurses at PRCH. PRCH has been part of the Forrest Health System through a management agreement since January 2020. PRCH has access to a variety of medical specialties and expert medical professionals when needed. PRCH's professional healthcare team provides efficient and effective care.

The Emergency Department ("ED") is a classified Level IV Emergency Department and Trauma Center and serves as a gateway to the Hospital. It is conveniently located on the West side of the Hospital currently and is easily accessible to vehicular traffic. Patients are checked in upon arrival and a nurse screens patients based on their clinical symptoms and needs. Whether urgent or nonurgent, patients are seen by a competent and caring Nurse Practitioner to evaluate their specific needs and direct their personal plan of treatment. Practitioners have access to Emergency Physicians via telemedicine as need arises. As a member of the statewide trauma system and a partner of Forrest General Hospital, PRCH can arrange for complex specialized care in an organized and timely manner.



Since March 2025, we have been involved in a total renovation of the ED to better serve our community. This will include two trauma rooms and five treatment rooms with separate walk-in and ambulance entrances and state-of-the-art equipment. It also includes modernization of the physical rehabilitation area. Completion is set for fall 2026. In the following pages, the photos of the floor plans and groundbreaking can be found.

Pearl River Family Clinic is located at 302 US-11 in Poplarville, MS. The clinic provides family practice services to the community including pediatric care and behavioral health needs.

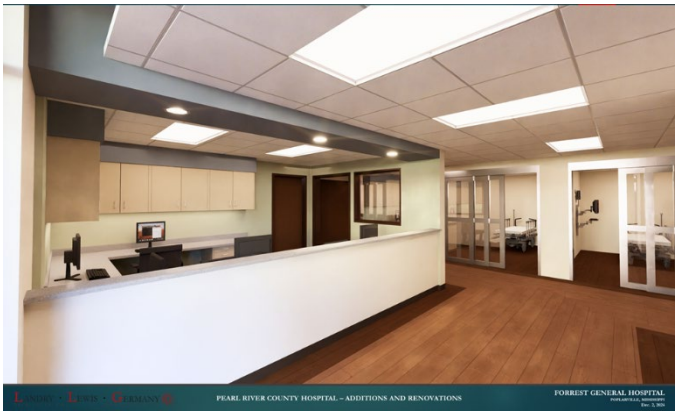
Our 120-bed nursing home provides an exceptional option to our elderly community for extended care. Not only do staff provide great clinical care, but deliver it in a kind, compassionate manner for a positive environment.

# About the Hospital, continued

## Emergency Department Renovations








# About the Hospital, continued

## Emergency Department Renovations







# The Community Health Needs Assessment

The Community Health Needs Assessment identifies opportunities for healthcare improvement, fosters a collaborative community environment to engage multiple change agents, and is an open and transparent process that listens to and truly understands the health needs of Pearl River County. It also provides an opportunity for the Hospital to identify valuable collaborative partners as we try to serve the community better and improve the health of our citizens.

The federal government now requires nonprofit hospitals to conduct a community health assessment. These collaborative studies enable healthcare providers to build stronger relationships with their communities, identify local needs, and allocate funding and other resources to programs that directly benefit residents.

## Community Engagement and Transparency

We are pleased to share the results of our Community Health Needs Assessment with our community. The following pages provide a review of the strategic activities we undertook over the last three years in response to specific health needs identified in our community.

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 each and every citizen of our rural Mississippi community. Also, review our activities that were in response to the needs identified in 2022. Later in this Community Health Needs Assessment, we highlight the success achieved with our 2022 Strategic Initiatives in the Strategic Action Responses section.

# 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
- PRCH Community Hospital Medical Records Department
- Mississippi State Department of Health, Office of Health Data and Research
- ESRI Demographic Research

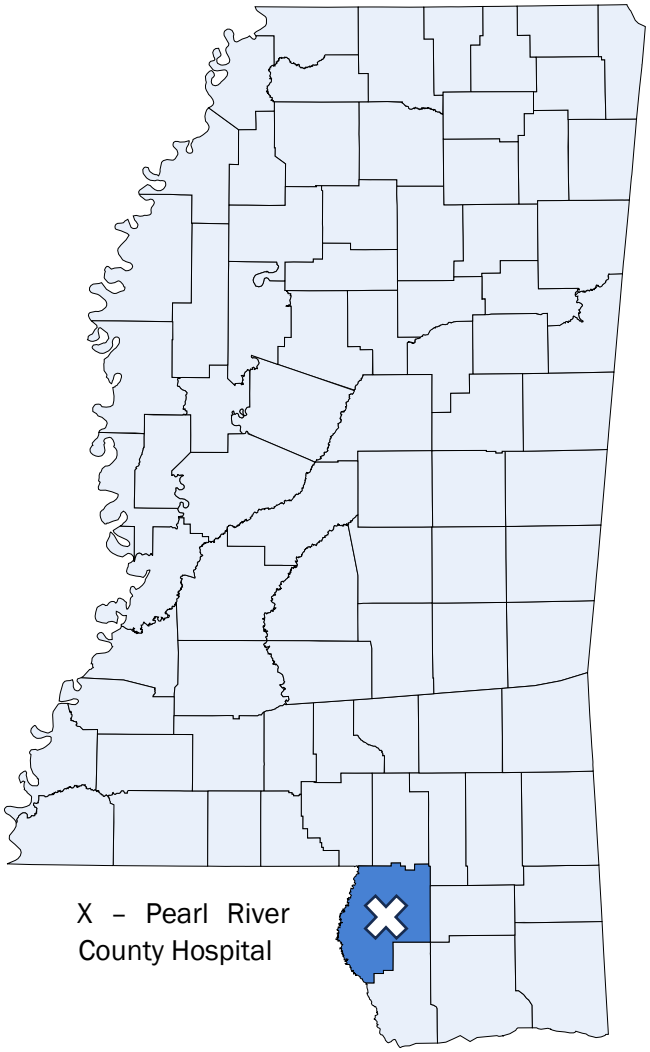
# About The Community

## Service Area

**Primary:** Pearl River County

## The County

**Pearl River County** is located in the pine belt region. The county was originally formed as Pearl County in 1872 from portions of Hancock and Marion Counties. Because of low population density and a small tax base, Pearl County dissolved in 1878. Present-day Pearl River County was organized in 1890 by an act of the Mississippi Legislature utilizing the same land area as its predecessor Pearl County. The county has a total area of 819 square miles, of which 811 square miles is land. It is the fourth-largest county in Mississippi by land area.



X – Pearl River County Hospital

## Communities

### Cities and Towns in Pearl River County

- Poplarville (County Seat)
- Picayune
- Lumberton (mostly in Lamar County)

### Unincorporated Communities

- Caesar
- Carriere
- McNeil
- Nicholson

# About the Community, Continued

## Demographics

### Pearl River County 2024

| Population: | 57,417 |
|---|---|
| Racial Mix: | |
| White | 79.0% |
| African American | 12.0% |
| Native American | 1.0% |
| Asian | 1.0% |
| Other | 1.0% |
| Hispanic* | 4.0% |
| Non-Hispanic | 96.0% |

### Pearl River County 2022

| Population: | 56,145 |
|---|---|
| Racial Mix: | |
| White | 79.9% |
| African American | 12.0% |
| Native American | 0.5% |
| Asian | 0.5% |
| Other | 1.2% |
| Hispanic* | 4.1% |
| Non-Hispanic | 95.9% |

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

| | | Pearl River County |
|---|---|---|
| Population: | | 57,417 |
| Racial Mix: | White | 45,612 |
| | African American | 6,850 |
| | Asian | 318 |
| | American Indian | 320 |
| | 2 or more | 3,547 |
| | Other | 770 |
| | Hispanic* | 2,430 |
| Median Household Income: | | $53,353 |

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

# About the Community, Continued

## Mississippi, Pearl River County, and the United States

| | Mississippi | Pearl River County | United States |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Age | 39.6 | 42.1 | 38.9 |
| Median Household Income | $55,017 | $53,353 | $77,540 |
| Poverty Level | 19.4% | 17.0% | 11.5% |

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

| Pearl River County | |
|---|---|
| Percent of residents who do not have access to broadband: | 10.0% |
| Households receiving food stamps/SNAP: | 15.8% |
| Households with 1+ persons with a disability: | 41.7% |
| Households without a vehicle: | 2.0% |
| Percent of adults who didn't finish high school: | 6.0% |
| Percent of unemployment as of 11/2024 ** : | 4.0% |
| Percent living alone: | 27.0% |

***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

| Pearl River County | |
|---|---|
| The percentage of adults who report fair to poor health | 19.6% |
| Obesity prevalence | 40.0% |
| Diabetes prevalence | 10.6% |
| Excessive drinking | 15.2% |
| Smoking | 19.7% |
| Life expectancy | 71.3 |
| Percent of households with at least 1 – 4 housing problems (overcrowding, high costs, lack of kitchen/plumbing) | 12.4% |

***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 various quantitative and qualitative sources. Considering information from a variety of sources is crucial when assessing community health needs, as it ensures the assessment captures a wide range of facts and perspectives and helps identify the highest-priority health needs. One of the most important sources is to seek input directly from those we serve.

The Hospital developed a community survey. Members of the general public were encouraged to participate in the online survey. The survey was available on the Hospital's website and Facebook page. Printed copies were available in various public areas, including the Hospital lobby, clinic waiting rooms, and the Emergency Department waiting area. Additionally, the survey was featured in the weekly county newspaper, *The Picayune Item*, on July 10, 2025. The data collected from the study were part of the input used by the Steering Committee in establishing priorities.



# Community Input, Continued

## 2025 CHNA Community Survey:

PEARL RIVER COUNTY HOSPITAL & NURSING HOME
Forrest Health®

Community Health Needs Survey 2025

Pearl River County Hospital is committed to serving the health needs of our community. Your feedback is valuable in helping us understand and address the most pressing health concerns in Poplarville and the surrounding areas. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

1. **What is your age range?**
   - 18-24
   - 25-34
   - 35-44
   - 45-54
   - 55-64
   - 65 or older

2. **How long have you lived in Poplarville?**
   - 1-3 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 5-10 years
   - 10-15 years
   - 15-20 years
   - 20-30 years

3. Over 30 years, **what do you believe are the most significant health problems facing our community?** (Please select all that apply)
   - Heart disease
   - Diabetes
   - Obesity
   - Cancer
   - Mental health issues (depression, anxiety, etc.)
   - Substance abuse (alcohol, drugs)
   - Access to affordable healthcare
   - Lack of preventive care
   - Other (please specify)

# Community Input, Continued

## 2025 CHNA Community Survey:

4. How satisfied are you with the availability of healthcare services in our community?
    - Very satisfied
    - Satisfied
    - Neutral
    - Dissatisfied
    - Very dissatisfied
5. How easy is it for you to access primary care services?
    - Very easy
    - Easy
    - Neutral
    - Difficult
    - Very difficult
6. Are you aware of the health education and wellness programs offered in our community?
    - Yes
    - No
7. If yes, have you participated in any of these programs?
    - Yes
    - No
8. What health services do you feel are most needed in our community? (Please select all that apply)
    - Increased access to specialists
    - Mental health services
    - Substance abuse treatment
    - Preventive care screenings
    - Affordable dental care
    - Increased emergency care
    - Transportation to medical appointments
9. How concerned are you about the affordability of healthcare services?
    - Very concerned
    - Concerned
    - Neutral
    - Not concerned
10. Do you have adequate access to healthy food options?
    - Yes
    - No

# Community Input, Continued

## 2025 CHNA Community Survey:

11. Do you have a comfortable and secure place to live?
    - Yes
    - No

12. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
    - Yes
    - No

13. Do you feel that there are enough opportunities for physical activity in our community?
    - Yes
    - No

14. How would you rate the quality of emergency services provided by Pearl River County Hospital?
    - Excellent
    - Good
    - Fair
    - Poor
    - Not applicable

15. What are the biggest barriers to you receiving adequate healthcare?
    - Cost
    - Transportation
    - Availability of doctors
    - Insurance issues
    - Time constraints
    - Other (please specify)
      _____

16. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions for Pearl River County Hospital regarding community health needs?

    _____

    _____

Upon completion of the survey, please either return to Jennifer Hines in the Admin Hallway, fax to 601-795-9863, or email to jennifer.hines@prc-med.com.

Thank you for your participation!

# Community Input, Continued

## Community Health Needs Assessment Steering Committee



### HOSPITAL STEERING COMMITTEE

| Name | Title | Affiliation |
|---|---|---|
| Joseph Anderson* | PMHNP (Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) | PRCH |
| Beverly Bilbo | Lab Manager | PRCH |
| Melinda Bowman | Chancery Clerk | Pearl River County |
| Deena Branum | DON | PRCH |
| Shawn Carpenter | LNHA (Nursing Home Administrator) | PRCH |
| Sara Duncan* | FNP | PRCH |
| Donald Hart | Pearl River County Supervisor | Pearl River County |
| Kevin Hedgepeth | Hospital Administrator | PRCH |
| Jennifer Hines | Executive Secretary | PRCH |
| Casey McInnis | 15th Circuit Drug Court | Pearl River County |
| Samantha Peters* | Registration Team Leader | PRCH |
| Steve Reid | Business Development Coordinator | PRCH |

**Not in attendance for the Steering Committee meeting*

# Community Input, Continued

## Community Focus Group

| Name | Title | Affiliation |
|---|---|---|
| Amy Alfonso | DON | Highland Community Hospital |
| David Alisson | Sheriff | PRC Sheriff |
| Joseph Anderson | Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner | Highland Family Medicine Clinic |
| Angel Austin | Mental Health | Highland Family Medicine Clinic |
| Beverly Bilbo | Lab Team Lead | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Jennifer Boehm | Executive Director | Hope Haven -Children's Advocacy Center |
| Melinda Bowman | Chancery Clerk | Pearl River County |
| Deena Branum | DON | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Caitlyn "Bre" Butler | Director of Clinical Outcomes | Highland Community Hospital |
| Todd Carroll | Regional Radiology Manager | Highland Community Hospital |
| Leslie Dauzat | Director of Acute Care Services | Highland Community Hospital |
| Cheryl Doyle | Nurse Lead | Mississippi Department of Health |
| Sara Duncan | Nurse Practitioner | Pearl River Family Clinic |
| Kevin Hedgepeth | Administrator | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Jessica James Henry | Public Health & Nonviolence Educator | Gulf Coast Center for Nonviolence |
| Jennifer Hines | Executive Secretary | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Jordyn Holston | Pharmacy Operations Coordinator | Highland Community Hospital |
| Alexander Huff, MD | Physician | Pearl River Family Clinic |
| Monica Jahn | Executive Secretary | Highland Community Hospital |
| Jameye Martin | Director | Manna Ministries |
| Kay Miller | Director | Exodus 21 Project |
| Sally Mitchell | Director of Outpatient Services | Highland Community Hospital |
| Jerel Myers | Supply Chain Manager | Highland Community Hospital |
| Carrie Olson | Director of Labor & Delivery | Highland Community Hospital |
| Stachia Peterson | Director Special Services | Poplarville School District |
| Steve Reid | Business  Development | Forrest Health |
| Jimmy Richardson | Pastor | New Providence Baptist Church |
| James "Allen" Smith | Director of Emergency Services | Highland Community Hospital |
| Lori Stines | Education/Trauma | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Janet Teague | General Manager | Christian Care Ministries |
| Elizabeth Treadway | Director | SPCA |
| Abbie Turnage | Regional Mammography Coordinator | Highland Community Hospital |
| Derek Turnage | Pearl River County Coroner | Pearl River County |
| James Turnage Jr. | Administrator | Highland Community Hospital |
| Lindsey Ward | Director of Economic Development | Pearl River County |
| Sugar Whitten | Director of Respiratory | Pearl River County Hospital |
| Carol Williams | Director | Backpack Buddies -Poplarville |
| Dr. Andrew Wilson | Associate Pastor | Picayune First Baptist Church |

# 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 nonmedical 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.
- **Health Care 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 PRCH: 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 for Hospital-Led SDOH Initiatives:

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

   PRCH 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. PRCH 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. PRCH 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 nonclinical staff are empowered to identify social needs and connect patients with appropriate resources.

### Overview of Social Determinants of Health for PRCH's Population

The social determinants of health ("SDOH") are the nonmedical factors that influence health outcomes. For PRCH's service area, which includes Pearl River 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

Below are the results of the survey regarding the importance of issues related to healthcare in the community:

- 78 percent Obesity, Diabetes
- 58 percent Substance Abuse
- 58 percent Mental Health

From these results and "Causes of Death" in PR County, and other concerns, with only 20 – 30 percent, the steering committee felt continuing the initiatives from 2022 would be in the best interest of the community. Surprisingly, cancer was only at 22 percent of concern from the survey, but the steering committee felt continuing education on tobacco cessation could positively impact cancer results long-term.

We made significant progress in education since 2022, with the goal over the next three years being to more closely monitor statistics related to these initiatives and move toward better outcomes.

## Summary Table: Key SDOH for PRCH'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 Health Care | 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 |

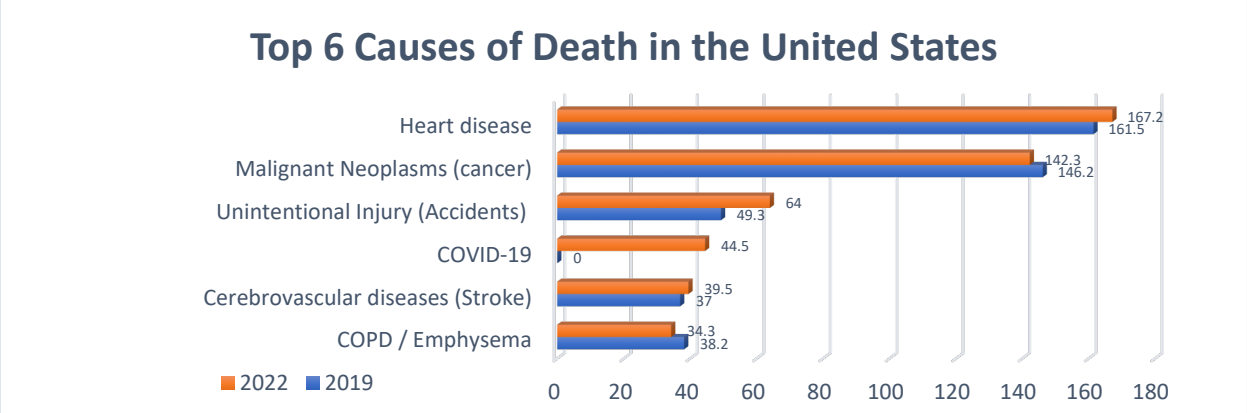
# Social Determinants of Health, Continued

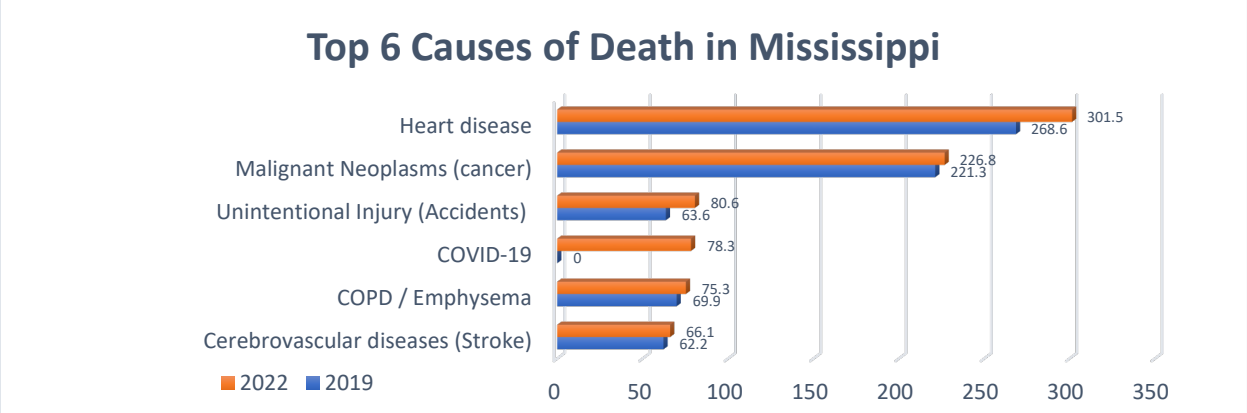
### Conclusion

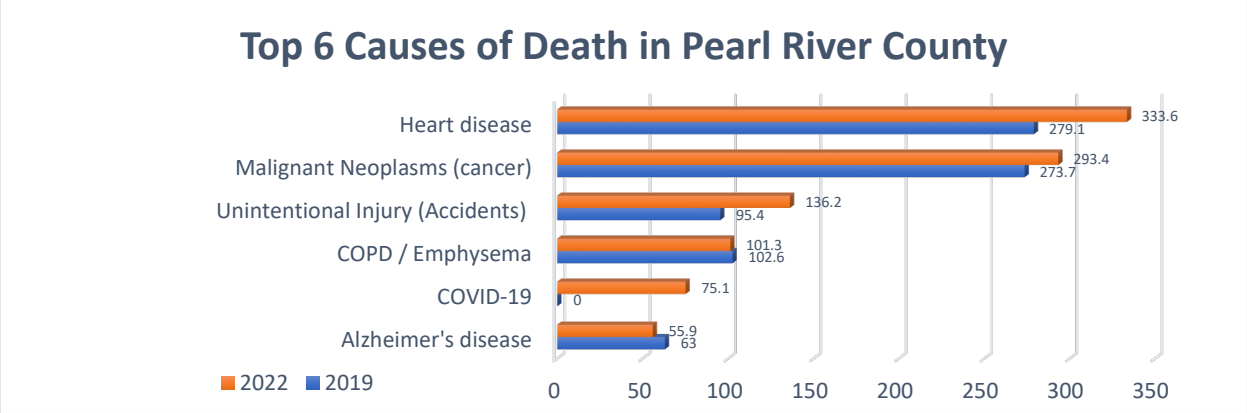
PRCH's population faces a combination of economic, access, educational, and environmental barriers that shape health outcomes. Addressing these SDOH—especially affordability, provider access, transportation, and health education—will be critical to improving overall community health and reducing health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

# Causes of Death Analytics

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



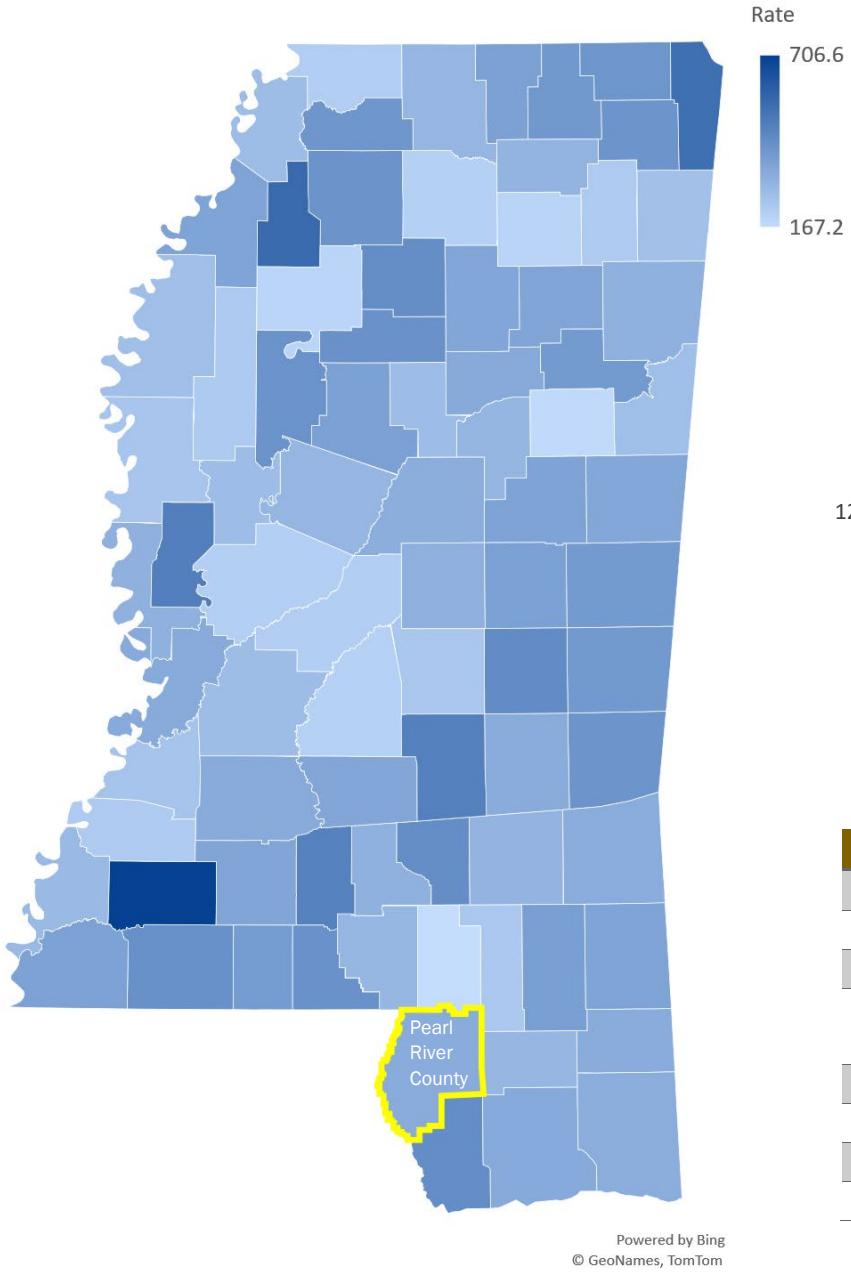



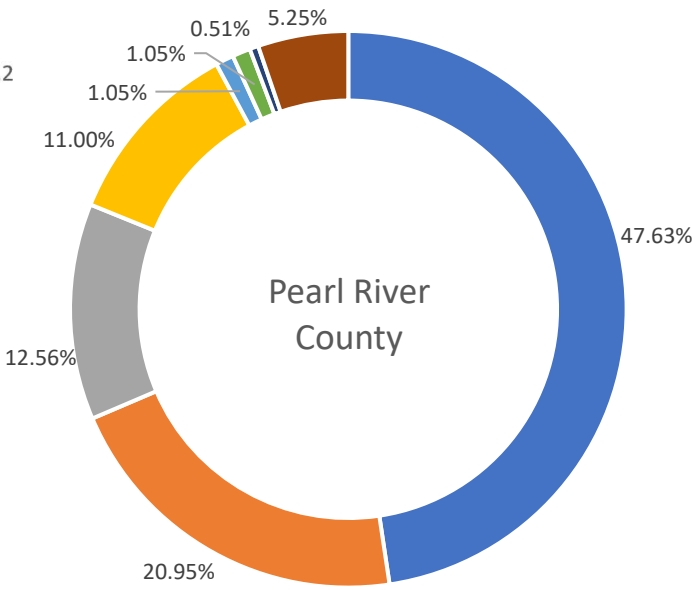
# Causes of Death Analytics, Continued

## 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 Pearl River County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.

Mississippi's Death Rate from Heart Disease



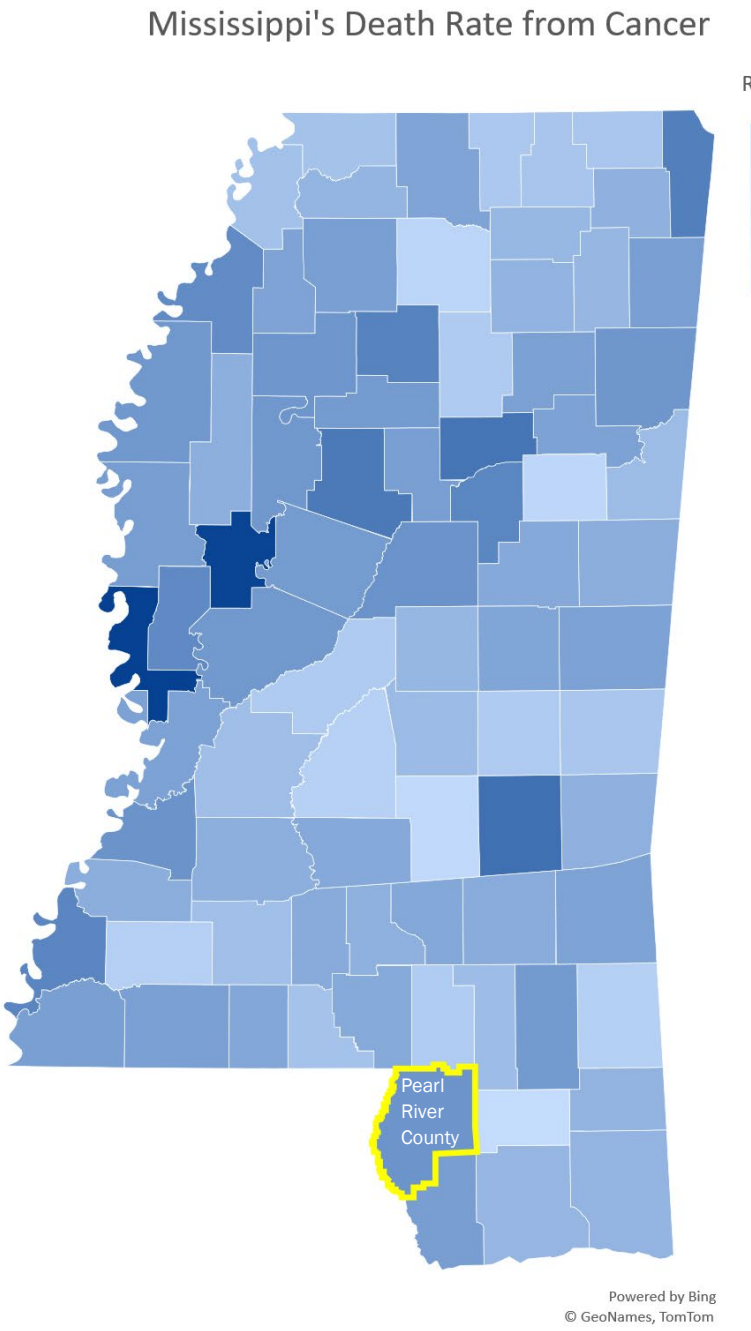



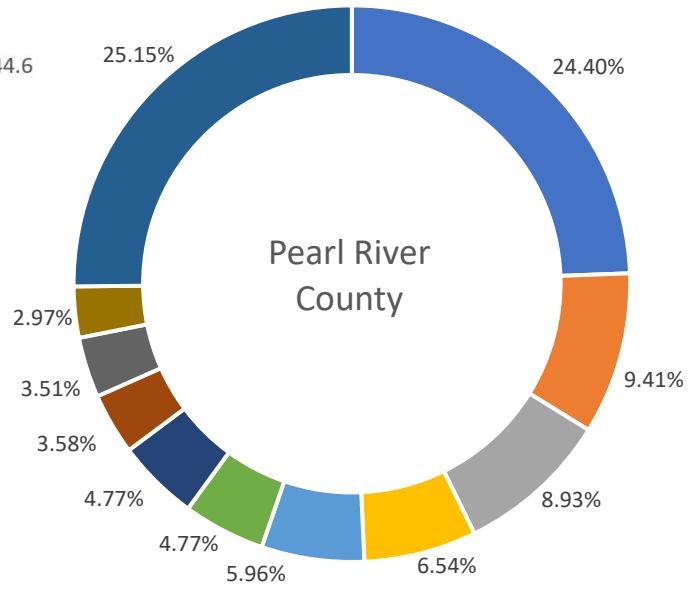

| Type of Heart Disease | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Ischemic heart disease | 47.63% |
| Heart failure | 20.95% |
| Cardiac dysrhythmias | 12.56% |
| Hypertensive heart disease with or without renal disease | 11.00% |
| Diseases of Pulmonary circulation | 1.05% |
| Ill-defined heart diseases | 1.05% |
| Rheumatic heart disease | 0.51% |
| All other heart diseases | 5.25% |

# 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 Pearl River County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.



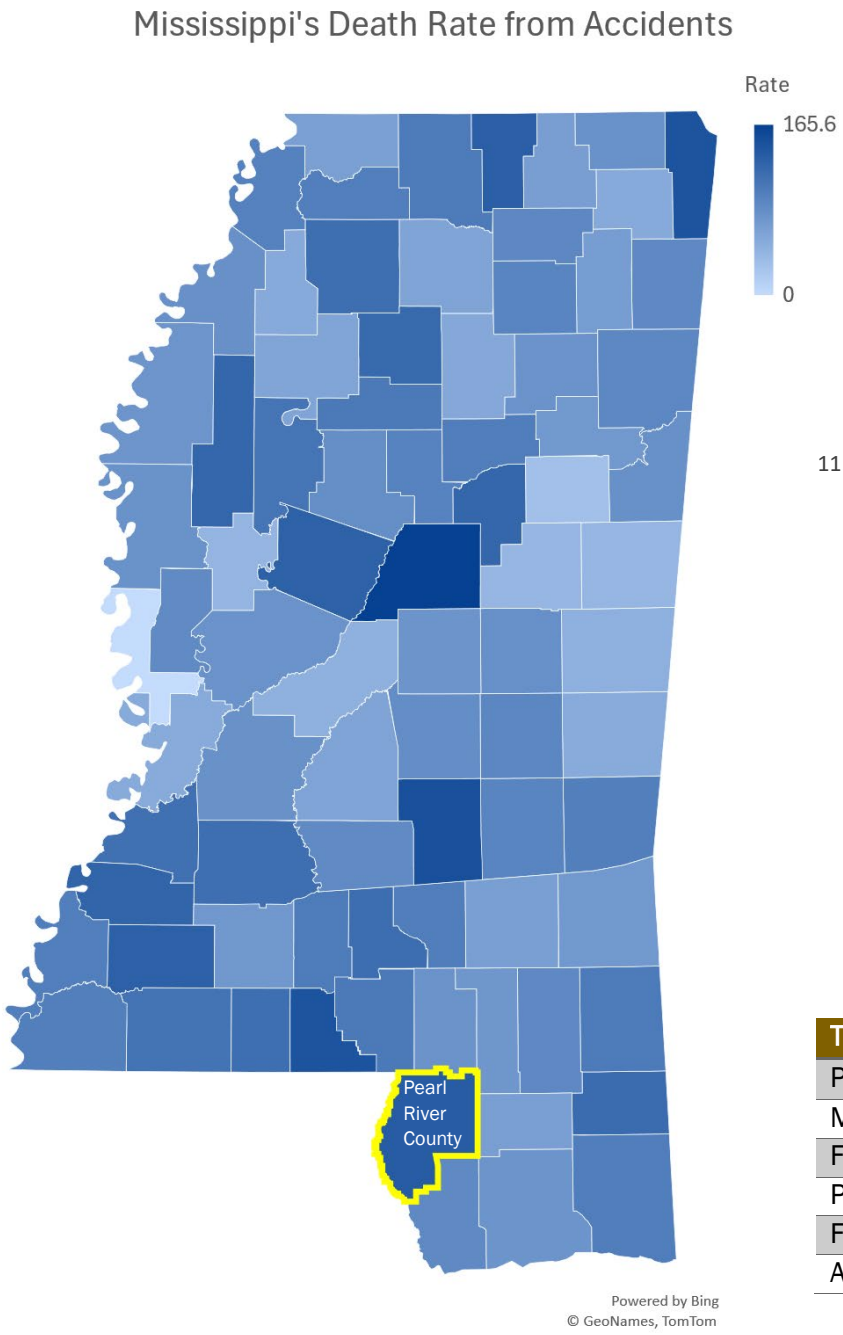



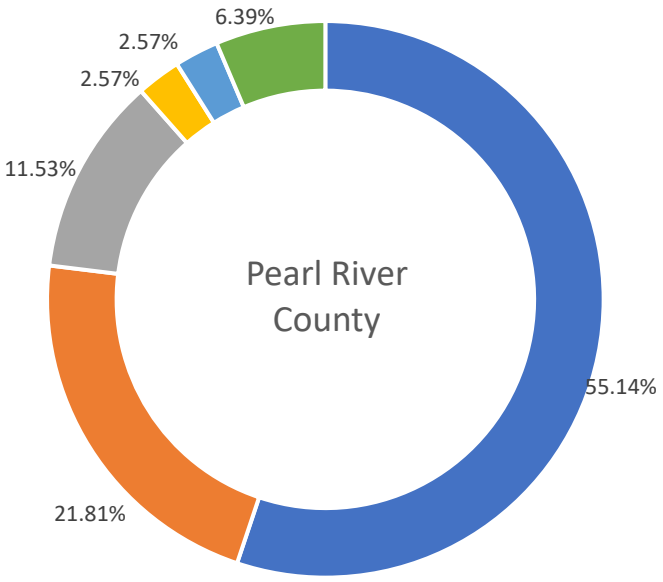

| Type of Cancer | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Trachea, bronchus, and lung | 24.40% |
| Female breast | 9.41% |
| Pancreas | 8.93% |
| Colorectal | 6.54% |
| Liver and intrahepatic bile ducts | 5.96% |
| Prostate | 4.77% |
| Bladder | 4.77% |
| Brain | 3.58% |
| Cervix uteri | 3.51% |
| Lip, oral cavity, and pharynx | 2.97% |
| All other cancers | 25.15% |

# 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 accidents contributing to deaths in Pearl County to identify key trends and areas for targeted intervention.




| Type of Accident | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Poisoning-drugs | 55.14% |
| Motor vehicle | 21.81% |
| Falls | 11.53% |
| Poisoning-solids, liquids, and gases | 2.57% |
| Fires, flames, and smoke | 2.57% |
| All other unintentional injuries | 6.39% |

# Our Response 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 Response to the 2022 Needs, Continued

## 2022 Strategic Action Response:

The most recent CHNA was adopted in 2022. This was the first CHNA completed by our facility under management of Forrest Health, because of the change in the tax status of Pearl River County Hospital. This was the first opportunity for PRCH to participate in a CHNA and see the Hospital and its collaborative partners work together to address identified health needs in our community.

## Drug Overdose Prevention

- Accidental poisoning/Over-dose was leading cause of accidental deaths in PRC, accounting for 47 percent of those deaths. Since fall of 2022 PRCH was able to attend health fairs at Poplarville School District and Pearl River Central School District and other Mental Health Events for the teachers, students, and families demonstrating how to use Fentanyl tests. We provided kits to the office for the school resource officers. We were also successful getting school officials to appropriate agencies to obtain Narcan for school nurses and Resource officers, working closely with our drug court officer. We also had the opportunity to provide and serve lunch to drug court graduates annually.
- Most challenging was our attempt at developing a Respite Center for Mental Health/Rehab Crisis. We had very engaged collaboration with PRC Chancery Clerk, Damascus Road Recovery, and DA's office staff. We were able to speak with local and state officials where all agree it is very much needed. The challenge comes down to funds. This will be on-going, as we look for grants or other means of revenue. We were able to reach well over our goal 200 students per year.



# Our Response to the 2022 Needs, Continued

## 2022 Strategic Action Response: Community Diabetes Education

- Diabetes is a life-altering illness that is increasingly common throughout the United States. Development of Type 2 Diabetes is largely influenced by a patient's lifestyle, including diet, activity level, and tobacco use. Our Diabetic Educator and other health care providers were able to attend/promote some 22 different classes of diabetes education. Not only educating those currently with diabetes but promoting healthy lifestyles and diets to prevent diabetes. Some classes were held at the Hospital, but we learned best attended were those held out in the community in venues such as civic organizations, churches, and senior centers. These sessions were well received, and this initiative is and will be on-going. We now have these partners reaching out for these educational opportunities. This well exceeded our goal of participants and growing.



# Our Response to the 2022 Needs, Continued

## 2022 Strategic Action Response: Tobacco Cessation

- There is a high prevalence of mouth, throat, and lung cancer in Pearl River County. These types of cancer are most commonly associated with tobacco use. Additionally, nicotine use among adolescents and teens has drastically increased due to the availability of vaping devices. At the health fairs and all community events attended, education literature regarding tobacco cessation and effects of vaping literature was handed out and discussed to all ages while focusing on school-aged to potentially reduce the prevalence of cancer and other chronic diseases associated with tobacco and nicotine use.
- We also participated in events held with local and state officials and community leaders to discuss age limits and possible elimination of certain vape products sold in stores. This remains on-going.



# 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

PRCH's Leadership, in collaboration with the CHNA Steering Committee, and a diverse group of collaborative partners, analyzed varied data indicators for Pearl River County, along with state and national health comparison and community input to identify the health and social needs in Pearl River County. Following the completion of the Community Health Needs Assessment ("CHNA"), PRCH 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 1: Drug Overdose Prevention

Accidental poisoning/overdose is the leading cause of unintentional deaths in PRC, accounting for 55 percent of those deaths. As healthcare providers, we will not only focus on treating these patients but also educate the public to hopefully reduce the mortality rate.

### Target Population

Will focus on prevention/education in schools, Fentanyl testing strips, and Narcan availability for adults in the community. The leading cause of these deaths is related to drugs laced with Fentanyl. By educating our youth, we hope to prevent the use of drugs. For those already with dependency, making testing strips available may help prevent the death of users.

### Goals/Desired Outcome

- Education to prevent the use of recreational drugs
- Reduce deaths through providing Narcan and Fentanyl test strips
- Collaborate with the PRC Chancery Clerk's office to develop a Respite Center for Mental Health/Rehab crisis that has resulted from drug dependency.

### Process/Time Frame/Location

- Partner with Damascus Road Recovery Center, businesses, schools, and government entities to raise awareness through education about drug awareness.
- Partner with businesses and government agencies to provide education related to Narcan and Fentanyl testing strip use.
- Provide "No questions asked" fentanyl testing strips through Emergency Departments, Rural Health Clinics, and local government offices.

### Measure of Success

- Provide in-person Drug Awareness education to at least 200 Pearl River County students annually.
- Provide Fentanyl testing strips to at least five local government offices or local businesses and resupply as needed.
- Open a respite center in collaboration with the Chancery Clerk's Office.
- Reduced death rate

### Collaborating Partners

- Damascus Road Recovery Center
- District Attorney's Office/Drug Court Officer
- Chancery Clerk's Office
- Poplarville Schools
- Pearl River Central Schools

# 2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

## Initiative 2: Community Diabetes Education

Diabetes is a life-altering illness that is increasingly common throughout the United States. Development of Type 2 Diabetes is primarily influenced by a patient's lifestyle, including diet, activity level, and tobacco use. Lifestyle modification education can be an effective treatment option for patients with both Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes and helps prevent high-risk patients from developing Type 2 Diabetes. Obesity can lead to diabetes and heart disease; therefore, there is a need for education.

### Target Population

- Adults with Type 2 Diabetes and the general population

### Goals/Desired Outcome

- Educate the relation between Obesity and Diabetes.
- Diabetes prevention through Healthy Lifestyle Education
- Education of adults with Diabetes to live a productive life

### Process/Time Frame/Location

- Quarterly education seminars
- Work with the local Drug rehab facility to educate their diabetic residents
- Provide education through churches and local organizations

### Measure of Success

- Hold at least four educational classes per year for the community with 12 to 15 participants.
- Enroll new referrals into the Diabetes Education Program within one week of referral.
- Reduce death rate.

### Collaborating Partners

- Dorraine Woods, RN, Diabetic Education
- Damascus Road Recovery Center
- Local healthcare providers
- Local churches
- Civic organizations

# 2025 Strategic Initiatives, Continued

## Initiative 3: Tobacco Cessation

There is a high prevalence of mouth, throat, and lung cancer in Pearl River County. These types of cancer are most commonly associated with tobacco use. Additionally, nicotine use among adolescents and teens has drastically increased due to the availability of vaping devices. Implementation of a community-wide education campaign focusing on the health risks associated with tobacco and nicotine use, and on resources available within the community to help individuals quit tobacco use, could drastically reduce the prevalence of cancer and other chronic diseases associated with tobacco and nicotine use.

### Target Population

- Adolescents and teens in Pearl River County
- Adults who use tobacco/nicotine-containing products

### Goals/Desired Outcome

- Community-centered education on health risks associated with tobacco and nicotine use
- Community-centered education on resources available to help individuals quit

### Process/Time Frame/Location

- Partner with the school districts, local government offices, county branch of the Tobacco Free Coalition, and local healthcare providers to provide education on health risks associated with tobacco and nicotine use.
- Partner with local healthcare providers to provide treatment and consultation for individuals who wish to quit using tobacco and nicotine.

### Measure of Success

- Provide in-person Drug Awareness education to at least 200 Pearl River County middle and high school students annually.
- Reduce cancer death rate

### Collaborating Partners

- Local healthcare providers
- Local churches
- Civic organizations
- Local government offices
- Poplarville schools
- Pearl River Central schools

# *Thank You*

This comprehensive assessment will enable us better to understand the needs and concerns of our community. Pearl River County Hospital is proud to be part of the Forrest Health System, where we genuinely 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 in our community to provide outstanding healthcare and create a healthier world for the residents of Pearl River County and the surrounding areas.

Our sincere thanks go to all those who took part in this process. We are especially grateful to the members of the Forrest General Board of Trustees and the health system's leadership. Through their guidance, we can continue our mission in our wonderful rural community in Mississippi.

Our CHNA Steering Committee members and all those who participated in our Community Focus Group, whether through attendance at the Forum or in conversations, deserve 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 voices do matter. Thank you for completing our Community Health Survey, reading our latest Community Health Needs Assessment, and for supporting our mission of care in Pearl River County.

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