



**St. Mary's Hospital
Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)
Implementation Strategy**

*Athens, GA
Fiscal Years FY26-28*



St. Mary's Hospital completed a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that was adopted by the Board of Directors on February 11, 2025. St. Mary's performed the CHNA in adherence with applicable federal requirements for not-for-profit hospitals set forth in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The assessment considered a comprehensive review of secondary data analysis of patient outcomes, community health status, and social influencers of health, as well as primary data collection, including input from representatives of the community, community members and various community organizations.

The complete CHNA report is available electronically at <https://www.stmarys-health.org/about-us/community-benefit>

or printed copies are available at 1230 Baxter Street, Athens, GA 30606

Our Mission

We, St. Mary's Health Care System and Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

Our Hospitals

St. Mary's is a not-for-profit Catholic health care ministry whose mission is to be a compassionate healing presence in the communities we serve. Founded in 1906 and now a member of Trinity Health, one of the largest faith-based healthcare ministries in the United States, St. Mary's focuses on neurosciences, cardiac care, orthopedics, general medicine/general surgery, women's health, and gastroenterology. Services include emergency care, intensive care, stroke care, cardiac catheterization, home health care/hospice services, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, assisted living, Alzheimer's/dementia care, preventive care, state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic services and a growing network of physician practices. Georgia's Large Hospital of the Year in 2006, 2010, 2015 and 2018, St. Mary's is an accredited Chest Pain Center with Primary PCI, a gold-plus hospital for stroke care, and has received the Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval™ for advanced thrombectomy-capable primary stroke care center, and spine surgery.

Our Community-Based Services

Breast Health Services

The St. Mary's Breast Health Center offers preventative care, high-risk counseling, treatment—both surgical and medical—and read-a-graphic organized through one center.

Cardiology

The St. Mary's team provides a comprehensive array of diagnostic tests to identify heart-related ailments and a number of innovative procedures to treat them. St. Mary's features advanced diagnostic tools like Cardiac MR, 3D echocardiography and 320-slice CT scanners.

Center for Rehabilitative Medicine

St. Mary's CRM provides inpatient care and intensive physical and occupational therapy and speech-language pathology services to help patients who meet admission qualifications maximize their function and return to independent living. CARF accredited.

Clinical Laboratory Services

St. Mary's Laboratory Services provide a full range of state-of-the-art laboratory testing, from routine bloodwork to the diagnosis of pathogens and cancers. The laboratory is fully accredited by the College of American Pathologists and the American Association of Blood Banks.

Diabetes Education Services

The Outpatient Diabetes Education Department at St. Mary's is recognized by the American Diabetes Association and offers individual appointments followed by two diabetes education classes. These classes cover all aspects of diabetes self-management from nutrition to reducing risk of diabetes-related complications.

Emergency Care

Open 24/7 for any medical emergency, including heart attack and stroke. St. Mary's Hospital is Joint Commission Certified as an Advanced Thrombectomy-Capable Primary Stroke Center and is accredited by the American College of Cardiology as a Chest Pain Center with Primary PCI

Endocrinology

St. Mary's Health Care System is a provider of Endocrinology and Diabetes care and offers a full range of treatment options for those with diseases of the Endocrine system.

Graduate Medical Education

Partnering with the Augusta University/University of Georgia Medical Partnership, St. Mary's is the participating site for the Internal Medicine Residency Program, Northeast Georgia's first graduate medical education program. Up to 33 physician residents provide supervised care with increasing levels of independence as the final stage of their medical education. The program is designed to address Georgia's physician shortage and attract new doctors to our region.

Hospitalists

St. Mary's created the region's first hospitalist program in 2002 to optimize care for inpatients. Athens Hospitalists Services is an independent group of board-certified internal medicine physicians dedicated to patient satisfaction.

Highland Hills

St. Mary's Highland Hills Village Senior Living is a community of support, fellowship, and watchful oversight for active seniors, and offers a robust continuum of care including independent living, assisted living, and memory care.

Home Care and Hospice Services

St. Mary's has a long-standing tradition of providing quality, compassionate care with dignity and respect both in the traditional hospital setting and in homes across Northeast Georgia

Infectious Disease Services

St. Mary's provides infectious disease services including outpatient medical care for patients, immunizations and vaccinations, management of chronic illnesses, and specialist consults for other physicians.

Inpatient and Critical Care

Acute care, pre- and post-operative, and restorative inpatient care are available for medical and surgical patients, along with palliative care services at all levels. Critical care services include dedicated medical/surgical intensive care (ICU), neurosciences critical care (NCCU), and level II neonatal intensive care (NICU). St. Mary's also provides an intermediate care unit (IMCU). In addition, Sacred Heart Hospital provides intensive care services.

Medical Imaging

St. Mary's Radiology Department maintains state-of-the-art equipment with capabilities such as digital x-ray, digital mammography, CT, MRI and ultrasound. St. Mary's Hospital currently is expanding to create an additional MRI suite. The radiology department also offers convenient mammography and bone density services at St. Mary's Outpatient Diagnostic, Rehab and Wellness Center.

Military and Veterans Health Program (MilVet)

The goal of the MilVet program is to provide military service members, veterans and their families with convenient

access to high-quality, culturally sensitive, people-centered health care services that meet their specific needs.

Mission Services

Mission Services is an integral part of St. Mary's commitment to caring. St. Mary's Mission Services encompasses Ethics, Spiritual Care, Spirituality in the Workplace, Formation, Language Services, and Patient Experience.

Neurology

St. Mary's Neurological Specialists are committed to true clinical excellence in patient care, providing medical treatment which is grounded in progressive, evidence-based medicine, utilizing the most current innovations and technologies.

Outpatient Infusion Suite

St. Mary's Outpatient Infusion Suite can help patients of all ages manage a wide range of conditions such as anemia, asthma, Crohn's disease, immune deficiencies, psoriasis and rheumatoid arthritis. Our skilled, compassionate registered nurses are trained to help patients maximize their health and avoid inpatient hospital stays.

Outpatient Services

Offering a wide variety of outpatient services from radiology and diagnostics to rehabilitation, St. Mary's provide patients with convenience, quality care and the latest technology to fit into their active lifestyles.

Palliative Care Services

St. Mary's Palliative Care Program is accessible to patients across Northeast Georgia. Care is provided by a team of expert specialists, led by a physician, that includes nurse practitioners, social workers, and chaplains. Services aim to provide relief from the symptoms and stresses of illness and to improve the patient's quality of life by focusing on the things that are most important to the patient and their family

Respiratory Care

St. Mary's Respiratory Care Department is available for any breathing-related need, from ventilator management in the critical care setting to outpatient breathing tests, smoking cessation, and a support group.

Rheumatology Services

The Rheumatology Center of Athens, a St. Mary's collaboration with Padmanaidu Karnam, M.D., serves patients across Northeast Georgia who are living with arthritis and other autoimmune conditions.

Spine Care

St. Mary's is the first hospital in the Athens area to earn The Joint Commission Gold Seal of Approval for Spine Surgery.

St. Mary's Stroke Center

St. Mary's Hospital in Athens is the region's leading provider of comprehensive stroke care, offering 24/7 emergency services. Our advanced stroke care includes ischemic stroke interventions such as IV thrombolytics, commonly known as "clot busters," and cerebral thrombectomy, an endovascular procedure that removes clots from the brain.

Surgery and Robotics

All three St. Mary's hospitals provide traditional and minimally invasive surgical systems delivered by highly experienced surgeons and teams. In addition, St. Mary's Hospital in Athens also offers three surgical robots – our region's most comprehensive range of robotic surgical services.

Virtual Care

St. Mary's has avenues to connect with a provider using a computer, smartphone, or tablet for more basic appointments

Urgent Care

St. Mary's Emergency Departments have walk-in treatment options for minor to moderate conditions.

Women and Maternity Services

St. Mary's Hospital has the region's most spacious Family Birth Center, where most women can labor, deliver, recover and complete their post-partum stay in one room. St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital also offers a spacious and compassionate Mother-Baby Unit. We offer digital imaging capabilities in our Athens Women's Imaging Center, including 3D-mammography, MRI-guided breast biopsy, CT, ultrasound and breast health nurses. Convenient and private mammography, bone density and ultrasound services are available at St. Mary's Outpatient Diagnostic, Rehab and Wellness Center. St. Mary's Hospital also has a dedicated unit for women's urology and gynecology services.

Wound Center

St. Mary's Center for Wound Healing provides a full range of wound healing services in clean and modern outpatient facilities in Athens and Lavonia. Our physicians take a multidisciplinary approach to managing chronic, non-healing wounds.

Our Community

The geographic service area was defined at the county-level for the purposes of the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The service area was determined by extracting patient-visit data. The service area counties accounted for the highest number of patient visits by county of residence using 2024 hospital data.

Seven counties are defined as the service area for St. Mary's Hospital: Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Jackson, Madison, Oconee, Oglethorpe, and Walton. The counties with the most patient visits are the "primary service region." The counties with the next highest patient visits are the "secondary service region." See Figure 1 to the right for a map of the service area. St. Mary's Hospital has 196 Beds at its Athens, Georgia location. In 2023, on average, 23% of the service area population was under the age of 18, and 16% were over the age of 65. On average, 88% of the service area population had a high school diploma, and 31% had a bachelor's degree in 2023. [U.S Census]

The total population for the service area in 2023 is 466,705. The total population per county within the service area and aggregated across all seven counties are presented below in ascending order, from least to most populous county [2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey & County Quick Facts].

- Oglethorpe: 15,469
- Madison: 31,473
- Oconee: 45,588
- Jackson: 83,936
- Barrow: 89,299
- Walton: 103,065
- Clarke: 129,875

Service Area Demographics: Racial and Ethnic Composition

The majority of households in the St. Mary's service area are listed as identifying as Non-Hispanic White (54%), followed by African American (26%), Hispanic (12%), Asian (4%), Other (2%) [2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey & County Quick Facts].

Service Area Demographics: Household Income

The average median household income for the residents within the St. Mary's campus across the five counties in the service area was \$65,231. However, there is some disparity of median income by county: the lowest median income is in Clarke County (\$52,267), while the area's highest median income is in Oconee County (\$115,925). There is also wealth disparity between racial groups as white households have significantly higher incomes than black households. This exposes

the lack of financial mobility in communities of color. [County Health Rankings].

Our Approach to Health Equity

While community health needs assessments (CHNA) and Implementation Strategies are required by the IRS, Trinity Health ministries have historically conducted CHNAs and developed Implementation Strategies as a way to meaningfully engage our communities and plan our Community Health & Well-Being work. Community Health & Well-Being promotes optimal health for people experiencing poverty or other vulnerabilities in the communities we serve by addressing patient social needs and investing in our communities through dismantling oppressive systems, including racism, and building community capacity. Trinity Health has adopted the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s definition of Health Equity: “Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”

This implementation strategy was developed in partnership with our community and will focus on specific populations and geographies most impacted by the needs being addressed. Racial equity principles were used throughout the development of this plan and will continue to be used during the implementation. The strategies implemented will mostly focus on policy, systems and environmental change as these systems changes are needed to dismantle racism and promote health and wellbeing for all members of the communities we serve.

Health and Social Needs of the Community

The CHNA conducted in late 2024 to early 2025 identified the significant needs for health and social drivers of health within the St. Mary’s community. Community stakeholders then prioritized those needs during a facilitated review and analysis of the CHNA findings. The significant health needs identified, in order of priority, include:

1. Healthcare Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Healthcare Access continues to be the dominant concern, reflecting challenges in accessing affordable, quality healthcare services. Barriers include insurance coverage gaps, limited availability of primary care providers, transportation difficulties, and language barriers. This disparity disproportionately affects low-income populations and minority groups, leading to delayed or forgone care, resulting in worse health outcomes. <i>(See CHNA, page 37).</i>
2. Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Behavioral Health (Mental and Substance Use): The CHNA reveals high rates of mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders. Stigma, lack of awareness, limited access to mental healthcare services, and affordability are significant obstacles to care. The intersection of behavioral health issues with other health conditions further complicates treatment and management. The growing opioid crisis further exacerbates this health need and warrants urgent attention. <i>(See CHNA, pages 38-39).</i>

3. Cardiovascular Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cardiovascular Disease: Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) remain a major health concern, contributing to high rates of hospitalization and mortality. Risk factors such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, and hypertension are prevalent. (See CHNA, page 40).
4. Maternal Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternal Health: The CHNA indicates disparities in maternal health outcomes, such as higher rates of premature births and infant mortality among certain demographic groups. Access to quality prenatal care and postpartum support services is crucial for improving maternal health outcomes and reducing disparities. (See CHNA, pages 41-42).
5. Diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diabetes: Diabetes in the service area causes serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure, significantly impacting residents' quality of life. This prevalence leads to increased healthcare utilization and substantial costs, placing a burden on both individuals and the health care system. (See CHNA, pages 43-44).
6. Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia: The aging population within the service area is experiencing an increasing prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The associated caregiving burden for families and the need for specialized services constitute a growing challenge for the health care system. (See CHNA, pages 45-46).
7. Food Insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Insecurity: A substantial portion of the population experiences food insecurity, lacking consistent access to sufficient, nutritious food. This issue affects household health, contributing to chronic diseases, and exacerbating existing health disparities. (See CHNA, page 47).

Hospital Implementation Strategy

Significant health and social needs to be addressed

St. Mary's Hospital, in collaboration with community partners, will focus on developing and/or supporting initiatives and measure their effectiveness to improve the following needs:

- Healthcare Access– CHNA pages 37-38

Significant health and social needs that will not be addressed

St. Mary's acknowledges the wide range of priority health and social issues that emerged from the CHNA process and determined that it could effectively focus on only those needs which are the most pressing, under-addressed, and within its ability to influence. St. Mary's does not intend to address the following needs independently, but instead to focus on improving healthcare access which may ultimately affect all significant needs identified:

- Behavioral Health
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Maternal Health
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementia
- Food Insecurity

The goal over the next three years will be to make impactful and measurable change through full execution of the implementation plan that will correspond with this CHNA. Throughout the qualitative focus groups and meetings with the Advisory Councils at each campus, urgency was consistently expressed by participants to address healthcare access. Access to care is foundational to improving health outcomes across all residents and populations in the service area. Improvements in access to care have the potential to improve the overall health of the community. Finally, all advisory council members recognized and agreed that intervening on healthcare access allows St. Mary's the flexibility to address all seven of the top health needs, given that access is tied to all healthcare outcomes for all people.

In each health need discussed and prioritized, access was the main concern of the focus group members, the advisory council, and a common theme found in quantitative data. By focusing on healthcare access, St. Mary's can create a more inclusive and comprehensive healthcare environment across the service area.

This implementation strategy specifies community health needs that St. Mary's Hospital, in collaboration with community partners, has determined to address. The hospital reserves the right to amend this implementation strategy if circumstances warrant. For example, certain needs may become more pronounced and require enhancements to the described strategic initiatives. During these three years, other organizations in the community may decide to address certain needs, indicating that the hospital should refocus its limited resources to best serve the community.

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Healthcare Access



Goal: Improve access to healthcare for patients and community members in the St. Mary's Hospital service area--with special efforts made to increase access for the medically underserved.

CHNA Impact Measures					FY2026 Baseline	FY2028 Target	
Number of people served through pop-up clinics held in Clarke County				70		300	
Provide Diabetes Prevention Program curriculum cohorts to community members at risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.				1		12	
Number of patients receiving financial assistance at St. Mary’s Hospital				1,157		3,770	
Number of free mammograms offered to un/underinsured women at St. Mary’s Hospital				25		80	
Strategy		Timeline		Hospital and Committed Partners (align to indicate committed resource)	Committed Resources (align by hospital/committed partner)		
		Y1	Y2		Y3		
Improve diabetes prevention efforts in our community by providing education, peer support, cooking skills, and fresh produce through our partnership with WWG and Marigold Collective		x	x	x	St. Mary’s Hospital	Financial contributions Staff time Meeting space	
					Wholesome Wave Georgia	Financial contributions Staff time	
					Marigold Collective	Fresh produce	
		Focus location(s)				Focus Population(s)	
		Clarke and surrounding counties				Community members that have tested positive for pre-diabetes	
Strategy		Timeline		Hospital and Committed Partners (align to indicate committed resource)	Committed Resources (align by hospital/committed partner)		
		Y1	Y2		Y3		
Partner with local organizations that serve community members experiencing challenges with access to care to provide pop-up clinics where clinicians take vitals		x	x	x	St. Mary’s Hospital	Staff time Medical supplies Interpreter services	
					Wholesome Wave Georgia	Financial contribution Staff time	

and provide screenings to improve individual health knowledge					Produce vouchers
	Focus location(s)				Focus Population(s)
	Clarke County				Low-income community members at risk of developing chronic disease
Strategy	Timeline			Hospital and Committed Partners	Committed Resources
	Y1	Y2	Y3	(align to indicate committed resource)	(align by hospital/committed partner)
Provide no-cost mammograms to un- and under-insured women at-risk of breast cancer	x	x	x	St. Mary’s Hospital	Staff time and expertise, equipment
				Athens Radiology Associates	Staff Time
				Athens Neighborhood Health Center	Staff Time
				Mercy Health	Staff Time
				Athens Wellness Clinic	Staff Time
	Focus location(s)				Focus Population(s)
	Clarke and surrounding counties				Low-income women Minority women
Strategy	Timeline			Hospital and Committed Partners	Committed Resources
	Y1	Y2	Y3	(align to indicate committed resource)	(align by hospital/committed partner)
Increase the number of low-income patients receiving financial assistance for medical services provided by St. Mary's by partnering with community health clinics to help patients successfully complete the application packet with all of the required information	x	x	x	St. Mary’s Hospital	Staff and Expertise Increased Financial Assistance
				Mercy Health	Staff Time
	Focus location(s)				Focus Population(s)
	Clarke and surrounding counties				Low-income and under-insured

Adoption of Implementation Strategy

On August 12, 2025, the St. Mary's Health Care System Board of Directors met to discuss the 2025-2028 Implementation Strategy for addressing the community health and social needs identified in the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment. Upon review, the Board approved this Implementation Strategy and the related budget.

Stonish Pierce

Stonish Pierce, FACHE

12/11/2025

October 13, 2025

