

**Armstrong Center for Medicine and Health
ACMH Hospital
Strategic Plan to Address Community Needs – 2021**

Wellness and
Nutrition

Substance
Abuse

Prevention and
Management
Of Chronic
Disease

Mental Health



Setting Priorities to Address the Health Needs of the Community

A community health needs assessment was conducted in 2021 and the findings were presented to the ACMH Hospital Board of Directors on 6/23/2021 at which time they approved a prioritization methodology, a list of needs for which plans would be developed, and discussed why certain needs would not, or could not, be addressed.

Community needs were prioritized using the following methodology:

- Needs for which ACMH Hospital has already begun to develop plans.
- Needs for which prevention will be a component of plans.
- Needs that are related to the management of chronic disease.

The Board of Directors determined that the following factors would be used to determine community needs that would not or could not be addressed in this plan

- ACMH Hospital lacks the ability to affect change.
- ACMH has determined that other community organizations are addressing the need.

Background

Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death of Armstrong County residents despite medical, pharmaceutical, and technological advances, indicating a failure of doctors and patients in managing the underlying associated chronic health conditions--diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, and obesity, all of which show increasing trends. A root cause analysis of those underlying chronic conditions demonstrated a correlation with unhealthy behaviors: lack of physical activity; poor nutritional choices; substance abuse; and inadequate sleep.

Stakeholders in the community, with knowledge of Armstrong County health needs, expressed concerns regarding substance abuse, physician shortages, obesity, limited access to healthy foods, physical inactivity, limited access to exercise opportunities, and transportation. Nearly all stakeholders who were interviewed discussed the COVID pandemic which, as one stakeholder put it “further broke already broken systems.” The pandemic exacerbated the health care needs identified in previous community health needs assessments (CHNA's) and identified new barriers to care and to recovery. Interviewees discussed the need to

- better manage chronic conditions,
- address provider shortages,
- provide more health and wellness services,
- improve the healthcare literacy of the public,

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- address certain societal issues such as food insecurity and improvement of nutrition (especially for children and adolescents, older adult populations, and drug-addicted individuals,)
 - diminish the stigma of certain behavioral and societal conditions (i.e., addiction and poverty,)
 - address certain environmental needs such as inadequate public transportation systems and the lack of broadband and reliable Internet service within many areas of the county.

Pennsylvania Rural Health Model

ACMH Hospital participates in the [Pennsylvania Rural Health Model](#) and annually develops plans to address the healthcare needs of its service area. The Model is a Pennsylvania Department of Health initiative and a value proposition in conjunction with the Center for Medicare & Medical Assistance (CMS). Currently there are eighteen participating rural hospitals throughout Pennsylvania in the initiative. Under this Model, CMS and other participating payers pay participating rural hospitals on a global budget—a fixed amount, set in advance—to cover all inpatient and hospital-based outpatient items and services. In addition, participating rural hospitals are working to redesign the delivery of care for their beneficiaries, to improve quality of care and better meet the health needs of their local communities. The purpose of this innovation is to pay hospitals and clinicians based on the quality, not quantity, of care they give patients. The Model has helped the CHNA oversight committee recommend the priorities for this plan.

The Rural Health Model tests whether the predictable nature of global budgets will enable participating rural hospitals to invest in quality and preventive care, and to tailor their services to better meet the needs of their local communities. Participating rural hospitals prepare Rural Hospital Transformation Plans, which must be approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and CMS. The Transformation Plans outline each hospital's proposed care delivery transformation to invest in quality and coordinate care, to obtain support and continuous feedback from stakeholders in the community, and to tailor the services they provide to the needs of their local community.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has committed to the achievement of targets related to population health outcomes and access under this Model, and plan to tie financial incentives for participating rural hospitals to Pennsylvania's performance on the following three goals:

1. increasing access to primary and specialty care.
2. reducing rural health disparities through improved chronic disease management; and

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3. decreasing deaths from substance use disorders and improve access to treatment for opioid abuse.

ACMH Priorities – the needs for which strategic plans are being developed:

The ACMH Board of Directors approved the development of plans for the following list of community needs.

- Wellness and nutritional needs – address obesity, food security and nutritional deficiencies
- Substance abuse
- Management of chronic diseases
- Mental health
- Recruitment of primary care providers, nurses, and social workers

Obesity, Food Insecurity, Nutritional Deficiencies

When conducting the most recent CHNA, it was found that the population of Armstrong County has a high rate of obesity while at the same time, much of the population experiences food insecurity and/or inadequate access to healthy foods. Armstrong County is mostly rural, and many residents do not live near healthy sources of food such as grocery stores and farmers' markets. Much shopping seems to be done at dollar stores where fresh fruits and vegetables are not sold. Several strategic plans have been made to address this problem.

Implementation of a Community Farm

ACMH has entered a loosely formed collaboration with the Richard G Snyder YMCA of Armstrong County, A Mano Eatery, and local farm owners. The purpose of this collaboration is to implement a Community Farm Initiative. The farm owners have offered the use of generous portions of their properties to allow volunteer members of the community to plant and harvest produce. An experienced gardener will provide training on planting, weeding, harvesting and other gardening tasks. A pavilion of sorts will be erected on the property by the owner and leased to the Farm Initiative to provide shelter for the volunteers and a place to stage their work processes. The Farm Initiative will provide a healthy social environment. Nutrition education will be provided by ACMH dietitians. A Mano Eatery will provide healthy cooking classes. The Community Farm will encourage volunteerism. The sale of harvested fruits and vegetables will be offered to dollar stores for the purpose of resale in the most rural areas. Excess harvest will be donated to distribution facilities such as food banks and/or the Red Cross.

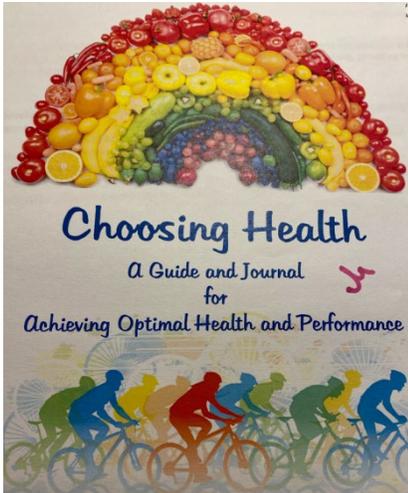


The Armstrong Community Farm Initiative aims to bring together a community network that is focused on providing fresh local produce to rural Armstrong County residents through volunteer-based farming, and education on healthy living activities and food habits.

Goals of the Community Farm:

- Develop a volunteer network to learn and participate in activities on the Armstrong County farm(s) -- land preparation, seed planting, harvesting of crops
- Provide fresh produce to the community
- Provide education to the community via on-site instruction related to gardening/farming, cooking demonstrations, nutrition, and how to shop for healthy foods.
- Encourage physical activity through and a healthy social environment through participation in activities at the farm(s)

The Choosing Health Program



Choosing Health is a comprehensive guide and journal of the Armstrong Center for Medicine and Health. It is designed as a resource for health coaches, their clients, and persons working independently toward health and performance goals. The guide aligns with the ACMH vision statement: "We will be a leader in promoting responsible and healthy behavior in our community

The purpose of the Choosing Health program is to encourage people to develop goals for wellness. The goal should go beyond losing weight or becoming stronger but should be focused on empowering people to achieve their life ambitions at any age through a healthier body and mind. William H. White,

Ph.D. has been contracted to lead ACMH through this program.

Program participants will pay a monthly fee which will give them access to health coaches who address:

- Assessing one's own wellness risks
- Establishing one's own wellness goals
- Exercise programs
- Satisfying nutritional needs
- Sleep
- Relationships and health
- Balancing work with other essential areas of life
- Core beliefs, purpose, and spirituality
- Tracking progress.

The ACMH Hospital Care Package Program

The mission of ACMH Care Package Program is to provide nutritious food to patients in need, which will promote wellness, nourishment, and strength following discharge from the ACMH Hospital.

The period immediately following a hospital stay can be a challenging time. Patients may not be well enough to cook or shop for several days. The ACMH Care Package Program provides interested patients with a three-day supply of meals to help with that transition.

Food from the ACMH cafeteria is packaged into frozen meals for patients to take home upon discharge. These easy to prepare meals include a wide variety of food types with specific options for cardiac and diabetic patients when applicable. ACMH discharge planners identify patients with food/nourishment needs upon intake. They then coordinate the delivery of the food, which will be packaged in reusable cloth bags that were donated by the ACMH Foundation.



ACMH Dietary professionals preparing care packages

Substance Abuse

Addiction Recovery Mobile Outreach Team (ARMOT)

ACMH will continue to partner with and support the [ARMOT](#) program, which receives grant funding from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy – Rural Health Services. ARMOT staff perform an assessment when requested by a hospital or emergency department physician, to determine the likelihood that an in-house patient may have a substance abuse problem. ARMOT personnel visit the patient before discharge and help develop a recovery plan for the patient. Describing their services as a “tour-guide to the continuum of recovery services” ARMOT personnel attempt to transfer patients into treatment as quickly as possible. ARMOT personnel include certified recovery specialists, each of whom has experienced long-term recovery themselves, and is well suited to help recovering addicts in all recovery needs, such as finding employment and housing, and finding the best-suited 12-step or faith-based programs and sponsors. Additionally, intent on eliminating the stigma associated with addiction, they provide counseling to medical and law enforcement personnel, helping them become non-judgmental, especially when dealing with repeat offenders. This video link provides information about how the program works and the successes of the ARMOT Program. [The ARMOT Program Video](#).

Armstrong County Veterans Treatment Court



ACMH will continue to participate in a county-wide partnership to support the [Armstrong County Veterans Treatment Court](#), offering highly structured substance abuse rehabilitation programs to Veterans in lieu of traditional incarceration. The partnership consists of the Armstrong County Court of Common Pleas, the District Attorney, Public Defender and Chief Probation Officer, the Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission, ACMH Foundation, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, ARC Manor, ACMH emergency medicine, psychiatric physicians, and other stakeholders. The program graduates 3-5 program participants per year and AMCH participates and supports all graduation ceremonies.

Medical Detoxification Unit

ACMH has opened a four-bed medical detoxification unit, classified as a Level 4A, meaning the patient must have a medical complexity, a substance use disorder, and be in acute withdrawal. Admission is voluntary for the patients. Patients are admitted for alcohol-, opioid-, and benzo-related withdrawal, mostly from the ACMH emergency department. A medical oversight committee consists of an ACMH hospitalist, an emergency department physician, and an anesthesiologist. The American Society of Addiction Medicine ([ASAM](#)) [assessment tool](#) is being used as it is the tool that has been adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Staffing consists of one RN, a nurse's aide, a therapist and may include members of a behavioral health assessment team. Physician and mid-level practitioners are on site and/or on call. While the pandemic and nursing shortages has forced the unit to shut down for short periods of time, the continuation of operation of this unit is planned. ACMH works with acute withdrawal patients to obtain post-discharge transportation to ensure compliance with post-discharge appointments.

SMART Choices

[SMART Choices](#) stands for Substance Misuse and Referral to Treatment. A child's treatment providers use the SMART Choices approach to identify adolescents who are using substances and provide those adolescents with the help they need. The SMART Choices program seeks to help children avoid the long-term consequences of substance abuse. Starting as a partnership with UPMC Children's Hospital and Foundation with UPMC Children's Community Pediatrics (CCP), SMART Choices has expanded to more than 30 areas, Armstrong County



being one of them. "SMART Choices provides children and their families access to addiction experts in a nationally recognized, integrated primary care/behavioral health model. Smart Choices helps pediatricians and therapists develop skills to help children and families struggling with the use of drugs and alcohol.

Some adolescents benefit from simply talking to their treatment providers about their substance use and producing a plan. Substance use typically begins in childhood or adolescence. Research shows that the earlier a person begins using substances, the more likely he or she is to develop serious problems. Since prevention and early intervention are so important, a child will receive substance use questionnaires from his treatment providers starting at age 11. The systematic screening occurs at all well-child visits from that point, allowing pediatricians to start the conversation – with youth and families – about ways to make safe choices and helping improve access to quality care.

The 2017 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS), noted that 17 percent of sixth graders in Armstrong County had tried alcohol, and that 40 percent of eighth graders had tried it, according to Kami Anderson, executive director of the Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission (AICDAC.) The 2017 PAYS survey said 18 percent of eighth graders had tried marijuana. “In the past, when kids started having substance abuse problems, pediatricians didn’t know what to do, and parents didn’t know what to do,” she said. She also added that use by parents has a clear correlation to lifetime substance use by children.

UPMC, with input from researchers at the University of Pittsburgh, developed a new type of interviewing that allows adolescents themselves to identify problems associated with substance use in their lives and develop plans to resolve the problems themselves.

The technique, called “[motivational interviewing](#),” is offered by the seventeen pediatricians, pediatric nurse practitioners and physicians’ assistants at the UPMC Children’s Community Pediatrics — Armstrong practice. Because children are often exposed to alcohol and drug use early, the SMART Choices program provides guidelines for pediatricians to screen adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 to see which are at risk for drug use. The motivational interviewing screening process allows teens to identify problems with substance use and helps them create plans to prevent substance abuse in their own lives. The pediatricians look for any endorsement of vaping, alcohol, or marijuana by the teen, and address concerns by parents over their child’s suspected use of those substances.

The program addresses why pediatricians need to be involved in substance use prevention. It lists these reasons:

- It is one of the leading causes of death and injury in adolescents.
- Its monetary impact on families is greater than that of diabetes or cancer.
- Pediatricians are often the first line of defense against the potential lifelong health and family crises resulting from opioid use in children.
- Accessing high-quality, specialized treatment early on is critical to preventing a cascade of substance use and abuse-related problems, opioid use in children, and death.

Adolescents who have substance use issues may also be dealing with such things as anxiety, depression, or trauma. Though the pediatricians do not provide counseling for those conditions, they help the family find treatment providers and programs.

In Armstrong County, in addition to CCP, the Smart Choices program team includes the [Family Counseling Center](#), [AICDAC](#), [ARC Manor](#) and staff members from ACMH Hospital who have received the master's level training, provided by UPMC, in how to perform motivational interviewing.

[Stopping Addiction In The Next Generation \(SMART Choices\)](#) is available to view on Andrew Laddusaw's YouTube channel. The interview features Dr. Schlesinger and Alex Jennings discussing SMART Choices in Armstrong County. Additionally, the CCP YouTube channel contains a virtual parent series which can be viewed by clicking on any of the links below.

- [Session 1: Helping with Understanding](#)
- [Session 2: Helping with Self-Care](#)
- [Session 3: Helping with Words](#)
- [Session 4: Helping with Actions](#)

A SMART Choices [landing page](#) has been launched for parents. This webpage provides free access to parents and providers to Kognito. Kognito is an online, interactive, training tool that helps parents and providers learn how to talk to adolescents about substance use. The landing page also includes a list of resources.

Drugs Kill Dreams® Program

ACMH Hospital and Foundation continues to support the [Drugs Kill Dreams Jail Experience](#) which shows teens and adults the dangers and consequences of using drugs. Designed as an interactive, live event - depicted by actors – the Jail Experience shows what can happen when a person becomes addicted to drugs including being arrested and jailed or worse, overdose and death. Participants can talk with those in the judicial system, medical professionals and drug and alcohol counselors, along with recovering substance users and their family members.

Note: The Jail Experience events have been cancelled during the pandemic. Click on the web link above after the pandemic is over to see when events will be rescheduled.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

Plans to address chronic disease prevention and management have been aided by the development of transformation plans under the Pennsylvania Rural Health Model discussed earlier in this document. Some of the activities conducted under the Model include:

- Collaboration with long term care facilities to reduce the rate of acute admissions and readmissions.
- Telemonitoring in the Kittanning Care Center for remote providers to monitor, diagnose and advise nursing staff personnel – thus keeping the patient at the facility if possible.
- The development of protocols with the Kittanning Care Center for the care of congestive heart failure (CHF) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) patients.
- Remote monitoring in patient homes – Systems have been implemented in the Northeast corner of Armstrong County in collaboration with the South Bethlehem Primary Care Center with plans to implement the same in collaboration with the Kittanning Rural Health Center. Glucometers, scales, and pulse oximeter systems are being used in conjunction with a third-party monitoring organization that analyzes the data and notifies caregivers and the physicians' offices when appropriate. Letters are being sent to home-bound patients with chronic diseases to encourage enrollment in the remote monitoring program.

Prevention of foot ulcers for diabetic patients

Diabetes is a prevalent disease, particularly within Armstrong County. Diabetic patients often suffer from secondary health issues such as diabetic foot ulcers. Diabetic foot ulcers develop subsequent to microvasculature changes, which occur secondary to diabetes, and may be worsened by other comorbidities. Diabetic foot ulcer patients maintain up to a 56% greater chance of requiring a lower extremity amputation over the five years following the development of a diabetic foot ulcer (Musa et al., 2018). Incidences of diabetic foot ulcers have been shown to be decreased with the use of evidence-based guidelines for care in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

The implementation of such guidelines includes staff education, diabetic foot exams, improved patient education instructions, and appropriate podiatry referrals. When implemented in conjunction with one another, they have significant impact. Amputations alone may be reduced by 49%-85% (Baker, Apelqvist, & Schaper, 2012). When a foot exam is performed, a patient's sensation is evaluated using a monofilament. The result of that test combined with other tests can indicate an "as-needed" or "ASAP" referral to a podiatrist.

ACMH has received a grant from the Margaret Patton Foundation to acquire monofilament testing kits that are given free of charge to diabetic patients who have been deemed to be “at-risk” during their annual exams with their primary care physicians. Once trained in the use of the kits, patients can self-test between their episodes of primary care.

LIFE Armstrong County

[LIFE Armstrong County](#) is a partnership between ACMH and Lutheran Senior Life. Lutheran Senior Life provides senior living communities and care options for seniors that include community-based health, wellness, and social services in Western Pennsylvania. LIFE means Living Independence for the Elderly, and LIFE Programs are innovative health plans that provide care and services which allow eligible seniors to live safely in their homes 24-hours a day, seven days a week. LIFE Armstrong County helps older adults who are living at home by managing their complex medical, functional, and social needs. Participants have a full range of medical, social and rehabilitation services available to them including:

- Comprehensive medical care
- Adult day services on the ACMH campus
- Support care in the participant's home
- Prescription coverage
- Meals
- Recreational programs
- Transportation to and from the ACMH LIFE Center where medical and social needs can be met

The LIFE Armstrong County participants receive much of their adult day services, medical care, rehabilitation and more at the LIFE Armstrong County Center located on the ACMH campus. LIFE drivers transport participants to and from the Center as well as to other scheduled medical appointments managed through the LIFE partnership. Each participant receives individualized care and personal attention. The staff strives to help them reach their highest levels of functioning, health, and well-being. A day at the LIFE Center may include:

- Seeing the doctor
- Receiving medications
- Exercising
- Enjoying activity programs
- Having lunch with friends
- Participating in physical therapy
- Receiving assistance with personal care

ACMH Hospital participates in the LIFE program by developing programs to prevent falls and by helping discharged patients determine their eligibility for services under the LIFE Armstrong County program.

Website to promote Health and Wellness

ACMH is in the process of developing a health/wellness website with programming to help community members navigate to reliable sources of Internet information.

Transportation for Seniors

Many seniors miss important medical appointments due to transportation issues. ACMH is working with [Vantage® Healthcare Network](#) to provide door-to-door non-emergency patient transportation in Armstrong County. Vantage® offers wheelchair accessible vans and drivers who are experienced in assisting passengers with mobility issues and mobility aids.

Hospital-at-Home program

A [Hospital-at-Home](#) program enables some patients who need acute-level care to receive care in their homes, rather than in a hospital. This care delivery model has been shown to reduce costs, improve outcomes and enhance the patient experience.

In November 2020, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services launched the Acute Hospital Care at Home program to provide hospitals expanded flexibility to care for patients in their homes by enabling a planned “home admission” to replace or shorten an inpatient stay. This healthcare delivery model works best for conditions with well-defined treatment protocols, such as pneumonia, congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, and cellulitis.

ACMH is working with a collaboration comprised of Highmark Health and Contessa Health Care, a Nashville-based organization to implement a Hospital-at-Home program for Highmark patients. [Contessa](#) is a leader and pioneer of Home Recovery Care, a model that combines all the essential elements of inpatient hospital care in the comfort of patients’ homes.

Mental Health

ACMH Hospital is developing plans offer outpatient mental and behavioral health services over the next two-year period.

The Recruitment of Health Care Workers into Armstrong County

ACMH Hospital continues to recruit physicians, nurses, social workers, and others into the community. It is working with nearby colleges and universities to provide clinical training for students at ACMH Hospital and its primary care facilities and hopes to encourage them to start their careers in Armstrong County.