



# Community Health Implementation Plan

## 2022-2024



## INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

**Day Kimball Healthcare (DKH)** is a premier provider of integrated healthcare services in Northeast CT and nearby MA and RI. In CT, our service area includes 450 square miles, spanning 13 of the 15 towns in Windham County.

We serve 70 percent of the approximated 100,000 residents of those communities through our high-quality, comprehensive medical services delivered by skilled medical professionals, close to home. We are also the largest employer in the region with approximately 80 percent of our employees living in the communities where we provide care.

In 2018, through a Community Health Needs Assessment, DKH took a broad look at the needs of individuals in our primary service area. DKH's primary service area, like many other rural health systems, presents our patient population with access barriers including lack of public transportation and limitations to specialty services. Our assessment, which is available on the [Day Kimball website](#) has identified six community needs.

This implementation plan will outline those needs, DKH's goals to close those gaps, and our implementation strategy for doing so over the next several years.



## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

As an organization, Day Kimball Healthcare (DKH) has a responsibility to meet the needs of the communities we serve, address identified challenges, and pinpoint opportunities for improving the quality of health in our region.

The Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP) supports our efforts to progress from data collection to action orientation, and provides a framework to prioritize the health needs that have been identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA).

The CHNA takes a broad look at the needs of individuals in our primary service area, and acknowledges the work we are doing to close the gaps. The assessment examines a variety of indicators including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity, chronic health conditions such as diabetes and cancer, access to care, specifically transportation, and more.

This CHIP document assesses the greatest unmet health needs in the community that require the collaborative partnership of various local community partners, and reflects an ongoing collective focus on advancing initiatives, programs and services improving the health and wellbeing of our community.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: COVID-19 RESPONSE



### GOAL

Maintain partnerships with state and local agencies to assess risk, reduce transmission and promote prevention of COVID-19

- » Continue following emerging data, policies and regulations
- » Explore alternate recruiting strategies to address dynamic changes in workforce

### STRATEGY

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to require significant attention and action, and DKH remains committed to bringing the most up-to-date information to our staff, patients and the community. DKH continues to follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the CT Department of Public Health (DPH), and our strategies have evolved from mitigating COVID-19 to managing as part of our ongoing reality.

Amid the pandemic, DKH implemented and has maintained extensive safety measures and initiatives by establishing COVID-19-safe care standards across our locations. We continue to observe visitor restrictions across our facilities, require masking, and screen for symptoms. DKH quickly mobilized its telehealth services across multiple Day Kimball services including primary and specialty care, outpatient behavioral health, and cancer care.

DKH moved quickly to offer vaccinations and we continue to offer vaccines and boosters. Our attention has been focused on ensuring individuals are up to date on flu and RSV vaccinations. DKH and many of the local school system leadership collaboratively worked together to establish and coordinate a community COVID-19 clinic to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible school educators, faculty and staff throughout the region.

We continue to be challenged by the ongoing impact the pandemic has had on our workforce. As clinicians continue to leave the field, we have adjusted our recruiting efforts and are exploring alternate strategies to attract and onboard new talent through developing different types of job structures to our clinical and support staff positions.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: TRANSPORTATION



### GOAL

Increase availability of transportation in our region

- » Increase advocacy for state and federal support of improved transportation systems
- » Ongoing support of enhanced transportation systems; ie. rideshares and bussing services
- » Ongoing exploration of grant opportunities

### STRATEGY

Over 3 million people annually in the United States cannot obtain medical care due to transportation. For DKH, lack of adequate transportation within the community remains a major issue. In our assessment, we found that Day Kimball Healthcare's primary service area, like many other rural health systems, have barriers to adequate transportation. Transportation barriers result in missed or rescheduled medical appointments, delayed care, and missed or delayed medications and prescriptions. Such delays lead to poorer management of chronic diseases and poorer health outcomes for the people in our community. Overcoming transportation challenges, and the barriers these challenges present in accessing healthcare services in our region, must be a community-wide effort.

DKH regularly acknowledges this need in various town and state meetings, with planning initiatives underway. DKH is participating in the Northeastern Connecticut Coalition for planning, and Day Kimball leadership continues to participate in eastern Connecticut forums and creating consistent points of advocacy for improvements in transportation systems in our region.

DKH senior leadership partnered with regional high school students as part of the Woodstock Academy's Human Right Conference in April 2022. The presentation focused on the many barriers and disparities facing members of our community in accessing basic healthcare services, with emphasis placed specifically on the lack of adequate transportation within our region. An outcome of this regional partnership resulted in students lobbying for support from state representatives in positively influencing the availability of public transportation and ride share services in Northeastern Connecticut.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: FOOD INSECURITY



### GOAL

Address nutritional concerns for Hematology/Oncology patients

- » Address the needs of cancer patients who struggle with food provisions
- » Provide shelf-stable and perishable food to DKH oncology patients
- » Provide nutrition education and interventions

### STRATEGY

Windham County in Connecticut has the lowest income rate in the state, with an estimated 16% of citizens identifying as food insecure (US Census Bureau, CT.gov). Food insecurity is a multifaceted issue that indiscriminately affects cancer patients.

Given that 30-80% of cancer patients will be diagnosed with malnutrition at some point after diagnosis, this issue is more pressing than food insecurity in the general population (Leser et al., 2018).

In response to this data, a hospital-based food pantry (Caitlyn's Cupboard) was established at Day Kimball Hospital. Caitlyn's Cupboard provides shelf-stable and perishable food items to oncology patients receiving care at DKH, as well as nutrition education and interventions from an oncology certified registered dietitian.

Special attention is paid to individualized nutrient needs in the setting of oncology care, and items (i.e. Ensure, oral rehydration solutions) not normally found at community food pantries are offered to these uniquely at-risk patients.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: FALL PREVENTION



### GOAL

Reduce falls and decrease utilization of fall related services with the community

- » Expand Fall Prevention efforts through the “continuum of healthcare” including: DKH Hospital, Homemakers, Outpatient Rehab, and beyond
- » Bolster community partnerships to provide expanded programs

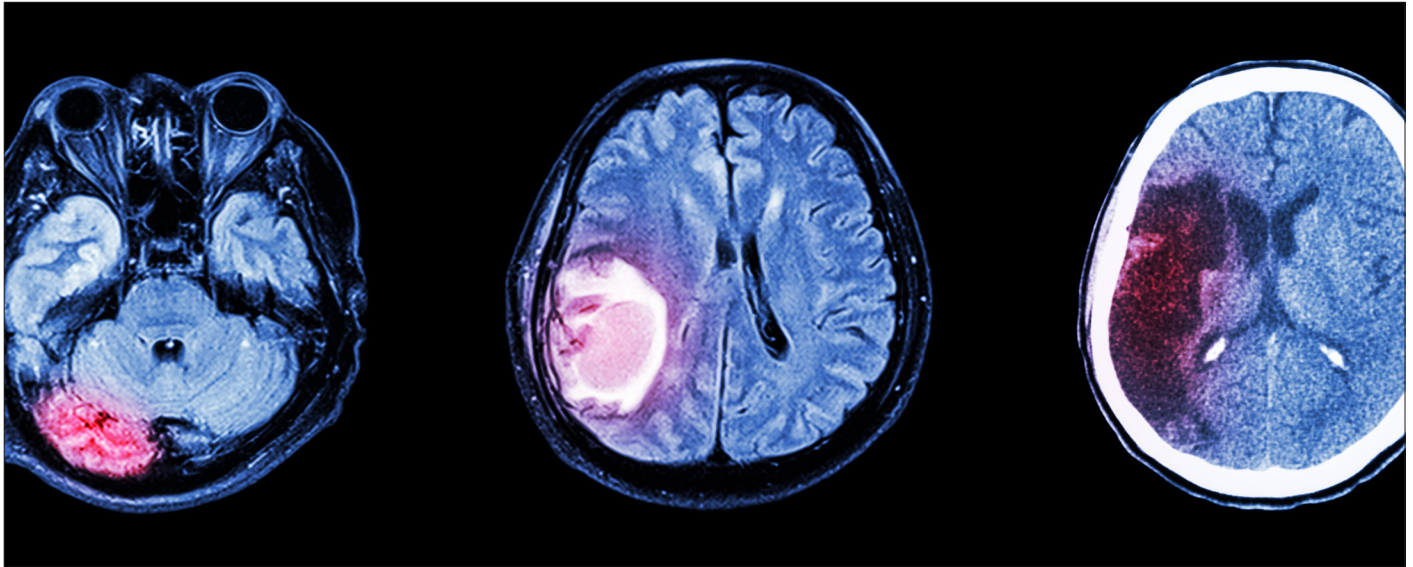
### STRATEGY

The Day Kimball at Home Fall Prevention Program offers fall prevention education and interventions, comprehensive fall risk screenings, individualized sessions for home safety evaluations and exercise instruction, and medication review to identify medication side effects that cause an increase in fall risk.

We do this by hosting community clinics in senior centers, senior housing community rooms, town halls and our local YMCA. In addition, we can provide this service one-on-one to patients and community members in their homes.

Our team is led by physical therapists who are certified fall prevention specialists. They analyze each person’s fall risk and conduct follow-up phone calls at 1 month, 2 months, 3 months and 6 months, as needed to provide continued fall prevention education and support.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: STROKE



### GOAL

Provide education to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with stroke

- » Education on stroke intervention, diagnosis, treatment and management
- » Education on post-stroke care and management.
- » Reduce possibility of disability associated with stroke

### STRATEGY

Day Kimball Hospital strives to provide, in conjunction with UMASS Medical Center- with its dedicated stroke unit, neurointensivists, stroke team, telestroke and neurosurgery - comprehensive care for all patients presenting with stroke symptoms, in our community and the surrounding communities it serves.

Our education initiative focuses upon identifying stroke symptoms and the importance of seeking immediate medical care. Using current technology and media we intend to teach the community about stroke intervention, diagnosis, treatment and management as well as teach them about post-stroke care and management.

We believe that this education will reduce morbidity and mortality associated with stroke for all individuals presenting with stroke symptoms and reduce disability for stroke patients presenting to our facility.



## NEED IDENTIFIED: CANCER SERVICES



### GOAL

Provide services to treat the increased number of local cancer cases in the community

- » Recruit two medical oncologists
- » Support cancer service line growth
- » Maintain a successful accredited cancer care program at DKH

### STRATEGY

Northeast Connecticut has some of the highest rates of cancer both in the state and country for breast, lung, skin, colorectal, prostate and leukemia. Currently, we have one full-time and two part-time medical oncologists and provide 24/7 coverage for the oncology patient population.

Our service line strategy is to provide more specialty cancer care at DKH; as supported by the recruitment of a colorectal surgeon and improved surgical technology acquisition of a da Vinci Intuitive Robot. Additionally, patient support has been enhanced with the expansion of Caitlyn's Cupboard, exercise, and holistic services.

In September 2022 had a successful Commission on Cancer Care survey of our Cancer Service here at Day Kimball Healthcare.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: SURGICAL SERVICES



### GOAL

Effectively optimize surgical patients to prevent surgical site infections and manage pain control

- » Utilize Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) measures to prevent surgical site infections (SSI)
- » Decrease opioid usage utilizing alternative modalities for pain

### STRATEGY

Surgical Site Infections (SSI) are the most common and costly of all hospital-acquired infections, accounting for 20 percent of all hospital-acquired infections. SSIs impact the quality of patient care with increased length of stay, re-admission, and even death.

The opioid crisis, as noted in a brief (June 2021) by the American Medical Association, worsened with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic with 1,374 opioid deaths in Connecticut in 2020. Prescription opioids are a factor in 24.4% of opioid deaths in Connecticut.

Both mentioned issues demand an important focus on quality outcomes for patients undergoing surgery. Implementation of the ERAS program bundled evidence-based approach that incorporates both SSI prevention and alternative modalities for pain control strategies.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: DIABETES



### GOAL

Manage patient endocrine and metabolic disorders with expanded specialty care services

- » Address the transportation issues of our diabetic patients by providing education and instruction about how to perform diabetic self-care at home
- » Provide a more defined educational program to pre-diabetic patients

### STRATEGY

Day Kimball Medical Group (DKMG), a division of Day Kimball Healthcare (DKH), has successfully launched a comprehensive diabetes care management program, establishing Endocrinology as a unique system level service line within the organization. The Northeastern Connecticut regional community now has access to a multidisciplinary team approach for diabetic care. With comprehensive case management and individualized treatment plans, we help patients manage a variety of endocrine and metabolic disorders.

Day Kimball has hired a board-certified and fellowship-trained Endocrinologist, Dr. Meryl Reichmann, who brings over 20 years of clinical experience to the region. Day Kimball has hired a full time registered dietician and certified diabetes educator, Sarah Balko, to provide education and instruction to patients about how to perform diabetic self-care. This includes the importance of home blood glucose testing, how nutrition and exercise impacts diabetes, strategies for lifestyle modifications as well as, modalities based on the needs of individuals.

With this team, we also provide a more defined educational program to pre-diabetic patients in an effort to avoid a patient being diagnosed with diabetes and the associated sequelae. Through this work, Day Kimball is making progress towards becoming an American Diabetes Association Accredited DSME site to help meet the educational needs of the local community.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



### GOAL

Provide comprehensive assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for a range of psychiatric conditions for for Northeastern Connecticut community members

- » Address emotional needs of school-age children and their families
- » Make significant investments in technology resources to protect patient privacy
- » Implement new programs that support and address stigma

### STRATEGY

In 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Day Kimball Behavioral Health implemented the use of telehealth services for patients who are experiencing health issues that do not allow them to come to the office. Telehealth has also been beneficial for patients and families who have chronic transportation needs, and those who have scheduling difficulties (especially parents with multiple children). DKBHS will continue to provide these services when appropriate, and has made significant investments in technology resources in order to provide a high-quality, secure process to protect patient privacy.

In addition, since 2020 DKBHS has successfully recruited two board-certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners (PMHNP-BC) to meet the need for psycho-pharmacology management amongst the Northeastern CT community. Both prescribers have a background in working with older adults, which was an important aspect of the recruiting process due to the aging population in our geography.

DKBHS currently has six psychotherapists trained in Accelerated Resolution Therapy – or ARTherapy® – which is an evidence-based treatment using rapid eye-movement (REM) to desensitize emotional and physical reactions using voluntary memory replacement (VMR) and voluntary image replacement (VIR). ARTherapy® is commonly used for conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), phobias, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), chronic pain, and other conditions in which ‘talk’ therapies may not be sufficient.

## NEED IDENTIFIED: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, continued

### STRATEGY

The Covid-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact on school-age children, interrupting face-to-face communication methods for portions of three school years, compromising critical time periods for social and emotional development. In addition to telehealth services, DKBHS has three psychotherapists trained in ARTherapy®, which allows patients to heal more quickly, requires less appointments, and creates increased access for children who would otherwise be wait-listed.

Two child-adolescent therapists are trained in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), an evidence-based therapy for individuals experiencing depression or other mood disorders, suicidal thoughts and/or self-injurious behavior. DBT skills class for adolescents resumed in July 2022. DKBHS has three therapists trained in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), an evidence-based treatment for children who have experienced traumatic event and their care givers.

In 2023, DKBHS and the Centreville Bank Foundation are partnering on a grant intended to enhance the infrastructure of child-adolescent service line operations. In addition to funding for advances in technology, it provides opportunities for a variety of new services. The Child-Adolescent Wellness Integration Program (CAWIP) is a comprehensive collection of activities designed to highlight the connection between physical and emotional health.

Additionally, DKBHS and the DKH Academy for Community Health are collaborating on a Speaker Series consisting of experts on integration of emotional well-being with physical health, nutrition, spirituality, and other associated domains of children's lives. Both CAWIP and the Academy Speaker Series are set to launch in April 2023.

DKH Pr!de is also set to launch in 2023. This program is designed to support school-age children who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community and educate their allies to the foundations for establishing and maintaining a culture of inclusion, appreciation, and humility for historically marginalized peoples.

This program is ideal for adults, educational leaders, child-adolescent behavioral health clinicians, and those who work with children in extra-curricular capacities. DKBHS will be coordinating with local school leaders to create best practices to support members of the LGBTQ+ community to reduce the risk for suicide and other emotional conditions that have disproportionately impacted these students.



## RESOURCES AND EVALUATION

In 2021, Day Kimball Healthcare completed a community health needs assessment (CHNA) for Windham County and our extended service area as required of nonprofit hospitals by the Affordable Care Act of 2010.

Day Kimball leaders continue to have active discussions with regional officials, school administrators, and other members of the community regarding overarching health care related issues across our region. Through these ongoing discussions, we have identified those needs, identified our goals to close the gaps, and our implementation strategy for doing so over the next several years, as detailed throughout this document. DKH will continue to work with community partners and advocates towards addressing social and economic forces that concurrently impact the health and welfare of those we serve.

On behalf of DKH, thank you to the many community stakeholders who have participated in meetings and discussions about our communities' health needs. We also want to thank all of the DKH staff, leaders, board members, and local organizations and regional and state officials for participating in our assessment process. We have identified needs within our community that as the community hospital we are committed to addressing.

We look forward to continuing our work as a health system and in partnership with other organizations across the region to make Windham County a healthier community.