

Community Health Implementation Strategy

FY 2022-2025

Executive Summary

The Outer Banks Hospital is a 21-bed, not-for-profit, critical access hospital located in Nags Head, NC. The hospital serves residents and visitors of Dare County and the surrounding region by promoting wellness and providing the highest quality healthcare services. The hospital provides the following services to the community: acute hospitalization, labor and delivery, emergency and urgent care, general and specialized surgery, filmless imaging, cardiology, and oncology.

The Outer Banks Hospital is a partnership between Chesapeake Regional Healthcare (40%) and ECU Health (formerly Vidant Health) (60%). ECU Health is a regional health system serving 1.4 million people in 29 counties throughout rural eastern North Carolina. Most of the counties served by ECU Health are listed in the top 40 most economically distressed areas in the state (67% of ECU Health's counties are classified as Tier 1 counties; 33% of the counties are classified as Tier 2 counties). The system consists of ECU Health Medical Center (an academic medical center), eight community hospitals, an ambulatory surgery center, wellness, and rehabilitation facilities, home health agencies and other independently operated health services. ECU Health is affiliated with the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. The mission of ECU Health is to improve the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina. Our vision is to become a national model for rural health and wellness by creating a premier, trusted health care delivery and education system. Integral to our mission is our commitment to be responsive to our community's needs and to provide high quality, cost-effective health care services.

Description of Community

The primary service area for The Outer Banks Hospital encompasses Dare County. Dare County is located along the coast in northeastern North Carolina. Municipalities within Dare County include Avon, Buxton, Frisco, Hatteras, Manns Harbor, Kitty Hawk, Manteo, Nags Head, Kill Devil Hills, Southern Shores, and Duck.

As of 2019, the population of Dare County had increased by 3% since 2016 to an estimated 37,009 permanent residents. The projected population growth for Dare County is expected to be around 47,026 people by 2029. The population was evenly divided among males (50%) and females (50%). The White population accounts for 92.7% of the total population; Hispanic or Latino residents make up 7.5%; and Blacks/African Americans comprise 3.0%. American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and Multiracial persons represent 3.1% of the total population. Dare County is a Tier 2 county, meaning it is not one of the 40 most economically distressed counties in North Carolina. In 2021, Dare County's median household income was reported to be \$59,381, which is higher than the median household income in North Carolina. Additionally, the poverty rate in Dare County is 9.0%, which is lower than the state and the region. These factors contribute to the health challenges identified in the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment.

Participants

Health ENC – 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment

Initiated in 2015 by the Office of Health Access at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Health ENC grew out of conversations with health care leaders about improving the community health needs assessment (CHNA) process in eastern North Carolina. Health ENC, now a partnership among county health departments and hospitals in eastern NC, coordinates a regional CHNA in 33 counties of eastern North Carolina. In addition, the Health ENC Program Manager works to build coalitions and partnerships that will address health issues identified through the regional CHNA process.

As part of the assessment process, members of The Outer Banks Hospital and Dare County Department of Health and Human Services worked collaboratively to distribute a community health opinion survey to various segments of the population in Dare County. The survey was printed in English and Spanish and distributed to a broad range of people in the community, targeting different income levels, including underserved members of the community, the elderly, and the general population. In addition to the paper surveys, a web-based survey tool was developed by Health ENC and made available to the public through different email lists. The survey was also publicized through the local newspaper and social media. The survey was used to collect primary data from April 15 - June 18, 2021. In Dare County, a total of 1,029 community members completed the survey, which is an increase in the number of surveys received in 2019 (848).

Community Key Stakeholder Group – Dare County

The Healthy Carolinians of the Outer Banks served as the community stakeholders who participated in the planning, data review and prioritization process for the 2022 Dare County CHNA. Members include:

- Breaking Through Task Force Members
- Community Care Clinic of Dare
- Dare County Emergency Medical Services
- Dare County Health & Human Services
- Dare County Health & Human Services Board
- Dare County Schools
- Dare County Sheriff's Office
- Dementia Friendly Task Force
- GEM Adult Day Services
- Hotline
- Interfaith Community Outreach, Inc.
- Mano al Hermano
- Outer Banks Community Collaborative
- Outer Banks Community Foundation
- Saving Lives Task Force Members
- The Outer Banks Hospital and Medical Group
- The Outer Banks Hospital Board of Directors
- Various Community Members

The Outer Banks Hospital Development Council Community Benefit Grants Program

The Outer Banks Hospital is committed to improving the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina. We partner and serve community members throughout the continuum of care. With our mission at the forefront of our efforts, ECU Health Medical Center (formerly Vidant Medical Center) made a substantial donation to the ECU Health Foundation (formerly Vidant Health Foundation) in 1998 to establish the Community Benefit and Health Initiatives Grants program. In 2006, the program extended its outreach by establishing a Regional Community Benefit Grants program which works with The Outer Banks Hospital to distribute grants to their communities.

The goal of the program is to support outreach projects that focus on wellness and prevention strategies. The Community Benefit Grants program supports community partners to educate people about disease prevention and management, provide people with the knowledge and tools to be successful in their own health care, and establish programs within communities, making them available and more accessible to community members who need these programs/services. The Outer Banks Hospital distributes over \$100,000 annually to various agencies/organizations in Dare County.

The committee's funding focus areas are based on the health priorities identified in the most recent CHNA.

2022 Community Health Priorities for Dare County

The comprehensive 2022 Dare County Community Health Needs Assessment included significant input from community members, as well as a wealth of information from local, state, and national data sources. Key stakeholders reviewed primary and secondary data. Following an in-depth discussion of the assessment data and existing community resources, the key stakeholder group selected three health priorities for focus over the next three years.

These three health priorities are:

- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Access to Health Services

Implementation Strategies

Priority Health Need #1: Mental Health

Goal: To improve access and services for mental health patients in our community.

Supporting Data: Although the age-adjusted death rate due to suicide has decreased slightly, it remains a significant problem in Dare County. The 2016 death rate due to suicide in Dare County was (20.2 deaths/100,000 population), the 2021-2022 rate is (19.3 deaths/100,000 population) and remains substantially higher than that of the North Carolina rate (13.4 deaths/100,000 population). Further, suicide is among the top ten causes of death in the county.

The 2022 mental health provider rate is another indicator of concern. For every 610 Dare County residents, there is 1 mental health provider in Dare County. This ratio is double that of mental health providers state wide. For every 310 North Carolina residents, there is 1 mental health provider. In a recent survey, 13.7% of Dare County resident respondents reported having difficulty accessing a mental/behavioral health care provider. Survey respondents were also asked to demonstrate areas impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the leading response being stress and anxiety reported by 63.1% of respondents. Following close behind at 32.5% was mental/behavioral health.

Strategies:

- An Outer Banks Hospital representative will participate on the Healthy Carolinians Breaking Through Task Force.
- An Outer Banks Hospital representative will participate on the Healthy Carolinians Adult Collaborative on Mental Health Task Force.
- Through a community benefit grant, The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to fund the Breaking Through Task Force for a public awareness campaign that focuses on reducing the stigma attached to seeking help for behavioral health issues and creating awareness about local issues.
- Through a community benefit grant, The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to fund Children and Youth Partnership to expand mindfulness-based well-being programs that provide students, teachers and community members with skills to manage stress proactively and enhance emotional self-regulation. Additionally, the program will also further incorporate our Hispanic community by teaching these skills in Spanish.
- The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to focus on wellness programs offered by the Center for Healthy Living as well as through their Outreach Department, such as free yoga and wellness camps during the warmer months.

Priority Health Need #2: Substance Abuse

Goal: To improve access and services for substance abuse patients in our community.

Supporting Data: Dare County's death rate due to medication/drug overdose (24.5) is significantly higher than that of North Carolina (16.7). Dare County also falls within the second poorest performing quartile when compared against other counties in North Carolina and across the United States. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of overdoses in Dare County was trending downwards compared to previous years. However, the number of overdose cases increased significantly after the COVID-19 outbreak. In October-December of 2019, the number of overdoses in Dare County was 8; for the same months in 2020 the number of overdoses was 41.

Along with drug use, alcohol abuse is also an area of concern for Dare County. In 2020, 17.3% of adults in Dare County are reported to drink excessively, which is 1.7% higher than reported for North Carolina as a whole. However, Dare County does successfully meet the HP 2020 target of 25.4%. As for tobacco use, adults in Dare County (24.8%) reported current use of any tobacco product compared to the state (22.6%). Unfortunately, both Dare County and North Carolina have failed to meet the Healthy North Carolina 2030 target of 15%.

Strategies:

- With three Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialists at The Outer Banks Hospital, the hospital will continue its Tobacco Cessation Program, an excellent resource and opportunity for community members to break the tobacco habit. The program highlights include:
 - Comprehensive evaluation to determine which treatments will be most effective for the patient
 - Evidence-based medications — often combination of medications and/or adaptive treatment
 - The option of several evidence-based behavioral treatments
- One of the Tobacco Treatment Specialists participates in the Region 9, Albemarle Regional Health Services Tobacco Prevention Task Force.
- A representative of The Outer Banks Hospital will serve on the Saving Lives Task Force and the Hospital will continue to sponsor, participate, and promote the Saving Lives Task Force Town Hall events and other programs.
- The Outer Banks Hospital Center for Healthy Living will continue to develop a new program that brings an Alcohol Use Reduction Clinic to their offered services. The development of this program includes a provider from the Center for Healthy Living to attend Gray Area Drinking Coach Training to become educated about the neurobiology behind alcohol cravings (as well as tobacco and binge eating) and the healthy coping mechanisms that can be used with patients to regulate the nervous system and eliminate those cravings.
- Through a community benefit grant, The Outer Banks Hospital will fund the Cross Roads OBX Association to incorporate a peer support specialist to assist those suffering from substance abuse. The specialist will help to connect and enroll patients in treatment and therapy programs, as well as provide housing assistance and recovery planning.
- The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to host the medicine drop events in the community on a quarterly basis.
- The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to sponsor Dare CASA (Coalition Against Substance Abuse) events and look for ways to collaborate with this group.

Priority Health Need #3: Access to Health Services

Goal: To improve access to health care services throughout our community by investigating current access to health care issues and discussing potential solutions for challenges facing our community.

Supporting Data: Access to care has been a top priority of the Community Health Needs Assessment for several years. In fact, following the 2019 CHNA, The Outer Banks Hospital began efforts to lead a workgroup to collect more data surrounding Access to Health Services. While remaining a priority, this workgroup was sidelined because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a recent community survey, 27.0% of respondents reported having issues receiving access to health care in Dare County. Survey respondents (54.2%) also report primary care physicians being the most difficult health care provider to access, with 56.3% not being able to get an appointment. Thankfully, the number of physicians per 10,000 population in Dare County has increased from 11.3 in the year 2000 to 17.2 in 2019. As of 2021, for every 1,700 Dare County residents, there is 1 primary care provider in Dare County. This ratio is double that of mental health providers state wide. Comparably, for every 1,400 North Carolina residents, there is 1 primary care provider. Along with health care, health insurance also plays a key role in access to care among residents. As of 2022, the rate of individual's ages 0-64 years old who have health insurance coverage in Dare County is 87.3%, leaving almost 15% of this population uninsured.

Strategies:

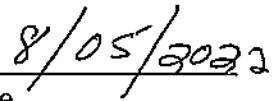
- At least one representative of The Outer Banks Hospital and Medical Group will serve on the newly-formed Access to Care Community Task Force.
- The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to explore unique ways to provide primary and specialty care needs for our community, including the hiring of new primary care physicians in at least two of our OBMG practices in 2022.
- Annually, The Outer Banks Hospital will award community benefit grants totaling more than \$120,000 for community projects that increase access to health care.
- In addition to a community benefit grant to provide health care services for the under-served population cared for by the Community Care Clinic of Dare (free clinic), The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to support this clinic by employing their Executive Director.
- A new Health Coach vehicle with two private exam spaces is slated to arrive in late 2022 to bring the hospital's free screening services and flu vaccines to all areas of the Outer Banks, including mainland Dare County and Lower Currituck County.
- The hospital's Community Wellness Program will provide free wellness screenings (cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar, height/weight, and body mass index) for the community. The wellness screening also includes providing resource information and referrals for participants who do not have health insurance coverage or other financial means to access care.
- The Outer Banks Hospital will continue to provide free screenings for breast, lung and colon cancer and make these tests available to those without insurance.
- Hospital sponsorships support several non-profit organizations in our community to help underwrite programs that provide access to care and medical travel/expenses for patients.
- The Outer Banks Hospital continues to partner with NC MedAssist to host two (2) Over the Counter Medicine Giveaway events in Manteo and Hatteras Island. In 2022, more than 1,000 people were served.
- Construction has begun on the new Cowell Cancer Center which will enhance cancer services for our patients and their caregivers once the center opens in late 2023.

Approval

The Outer Banks Hospital's Community Health Implementation Strategy for 2022-2025 was approved by the Board of Directors on August 5, 2022.



Tess Judge, Chair, The Outer Banks Hospital Board of Directors



Date