

2026–2028 COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (CHIP)

Lawrence Hospital | Methuen Hospital | Haverhill Hospital

1. INTRODUCTION

Merrimack Health is committed to improving the health and well-being of the communities it serves across the Merrimack Valley.

As nonprofit hospitals, Lawrence Hospital and Methuen & Haverhill Hospitals conduct Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) every three years in accordance with Section 501(r) of the Internal Revenue Code. The purpose of the CHNA is to identify the most significant health needs facing the communities served and to guide the development of strategies to address those needs.

The 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment represents the first CHNA conducted jointly by the former Lawrence General Hospital, now Lawrence Hospital and the former Holy Family Hospitals, now Methuen and Haverhill Hospitals.

The CHNA was conducted in partnership with Greater Lawrence Family Health Center (GLFHC) and incorporated input from residents, community organizations, public health partners, and healthcare providers across the Merrimack Valley.

The 2026–2028 Community Health Implementation Strategy reflects a system-wide approach, leveraging the combined resources of Lawrence Hospital, Methuen Hospital, and Haverhill Hospital to address community health needs across the region.

This implementation strategy builds on the work previously undertaken by Lawrence General Hospital through its 2023–2025 Community Health Implementation Plan while incorporating new priorities and initiatives identified through the first joint CHNA conducted across the Merrimack Health system.

2. COMMUNITIES SERVED

Our primary and secondary areas include 13 communities across Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire:

- Andover
- North Andover
- Boxford
- Lawrence
- Methuen
- Haverhill
- Groveland
- Georgetown
- West Newbury
- Merrimack
- Salem
- Atkinson
- Plaistow

Residents of the Merrimack Valley represent a diverse population, including racially and ethnically diverse communities, immigrant populations, and households facing economic hardship - factors that influence health outcomes and contribute to disparities in access to care, preventive services, and social determinants of health.

As a regional healthcare provider, Merrimack Health delivers a range of inpatient, outpatient, and emergency services to meet the health needs of this population.

Community health improvement efforts described in this implementation strategy are designed to address health needs identified across this service area, with particular attention to populations experiencing barriers to care. The Merrimack Valley includes communities with significant socioeconomic diversity and varying levels of access to healthcare services, making community partnerships, outreach, and collaboration essential components of improving health outcomes.

3. COMMUNITY HEALTH PRIORITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The CHNA identified four key priority areas:

- Access to health care and missing resources
- Affordability, Income (poverty) and housing
- Chronic Illness, mortality and prevention
- Mental health/behavioral health

Following completion of the CHNA, Merrimack Health leadership, in collaboration with community partners, identified priority health needs that the health system is well positioned to address.

This system-wide perspective allows Merrimack Health to coordinate resources across campuses and strengthen its ability to address community health needs throughout the Merrimack Valley. While many needs were identified, priority areas were selected based on the health system's ability to make a meaningful impact through its clinical expertise, available resources, and community partnerships.

Implementation strategies are aligned with Merrimack Health's organizational priorities and are designed to build on existing programs, strengthen partnerships, and support measurable improvements in community health outcomes.

Implementation activities are also designed to:

- Strengthen Merrimack Health's presence and visibility in supporting the community
- Leverage existing partnerships with trusted community organizations
- Support community benefit reporting requirements
- Demonstrate measurable impact on community health outcomes

Merrimack Health will monitor progress toward achieving implementation strategy goals through ongoing data collection, program monitoring, and collaboration with community partners.

The following priority areas and strategies reflect Merrimack Health's focused approach to addressing key community health needs.

Merrimack Health will monitor progress toward achieving implementation strategy goals through ongoing data collection, program monitoring, and collaboration with community partners. This CHIP may be revised or updated as new data emerges, priorities shift, or external conditions change.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE & MISSING RESOURCES

Maternal and Child Health

Improving maternal and infant health outcomes remains a key priority in the Merrimack Valley. Community input highlighted opportunities to improve prenatal care access, and coordination among providers, especially for women with preexisting medical conditions.

Strategy	Key Activities	Potential Partners	Measures / Indicators
Improve access to prenatal care services	Identify barriers to prenatal care access and strengthen support services such as navigation assistance, scheduling support, language access services, and culturally responsive communication.	GLFHC, social service agencies, community organizations	Increase in patients accessing prenatal care services; reduction in missed prenatal appointments
Expand education in English and Spanish	Integrate the Bump 2 Baby mobile app into prenatal care services across Merrimack Health to support patient education, appointment reminders, and	OB/GYN providers, GLFHC, maternity care teams	Number of patients enrolled in the app; patient engagement with educational resources

	connection to maternal health resources. Promote the app through prenatal visits, hospital communications, and community outreach initiatives.		
Provide culturally and linguistically responsive care	Ensure services are accessible to diverse populations through language access and culturally responsive approaches.	Community organizations	Increased utilization among priority populations; development of multilanguage materials
Increase community awareness of maternal and child health services	Organize and host community health fairs in Lawrence, Methuen, and Haverhill focused on priority health needs identified through the CHNA. Provide health education, connect residents to hospital services, and facilitate referrals to community resources.	Community organizations, GLFHC, local boards of health, public health partners	Completion of health fairs hosted; number of residents attending; number of screenings conducted

CHRONIC ILLNESS, MORTALITY & PREVENTION

Tuberculosis Prevention and Treatment

Tuberculosis continues to be a public health concern in the region, particularly among populations facing socioeconomic and access barriers.

Merrimack Health will explore opportunities to strengthen regional capacity for tuberculosis testing, treatment, and care coordination, including the potential reestablishment of tuberculosis clinic services to better serve high-risk populations.

Strategy	Key Activities	Potential Partners	Measures / Indicators
Bring TB clinic services to the community	Evaluate feasibility and operational needs for reinstating TB clinic services at Methuen Hospital or another appropriate location within the Merrimack Health system.	Massachusetts Department of Public Health TB Program, local boards of health, infectious disease providers	Completion of feasibility assessment

	Reopen tuberculosis clinic services consistent with Merrimack Health strategic goals.	Massachusetts Department of Public Health, infectious disease providers, local boards of health	TB clinic established
	Improve communication and referral processes between hospital providers and public health partners responsible for TB case management and follow-up care.	Massachusetts Department of Public Health, local boards of health	Number of patient encounters

Minimizing Risk of Heart Disease

Opportunity to promote heart health and reduce the risk of heart disease was identified, with approximately one-third of service area population identified as being at risk.

Strategy	Key Activities	Potential Partners	Measures / Indicators
Reduce risk of heart disease	Conduct community-based blood pressure screenings through Merrimack Health-led events and participation in community outreach initiatives	Local Boards of Health (Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill); community-based organizations (e.g., Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Lawrence CommunityWorks); YMCA of the North Shore and other community centers; Faith-based organizations; Senior centers and housing authorities	Number of individuals screened; number of community events with blood pressure screening offered; number of individuals referred for follow-up care (as appropriate)

MENTAL HEALTH / BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Mental and Behavioral Health

Mental health and substance use challenges were consistently identified through the CHNA as major community concerns.

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Merrimack Health will continue working with community partners to improve access to behavioral health services, strengthen referral pathways, and support community-based mental health initiatives.

These efforts will align with system initiatives to expand behavioral health capacity and improve timely access to services.

Strategy	Key Activities	Potential Partners	Measures / Indicators
Expand behavioral health service capacity	Expansion of access to behavioral health services across Merrimack Health, including reopening of existing inpatient behavioral health beds in Haverhill Hospital and increasing access to inpatient behavioral health beds through improved staffing in Methuen Hospital	Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs), GLFHC, behavioral health providers	Increase in number of staffed behavioral health beds
	Develop and implement partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient program, including program design, staffing, and coordination with existing behavioral health services	Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs); local behavioral health providers and outpatient clinics; Greater Lawrence Family Health Center	Program established; number of patients served
Strengthen partnerships with behavioral health providers	Continue collaboration with behavioral health providers to improve referral pathways and coordination of care.	Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs), GLFHC, behavioral health providers	Number of coordinated referrals; number of patients connected to services
Provide culturally and linguistically responsive care	Ensure services are accessible to diverse populations through language access and culturally responsive approaches.	Community organizations	Increased utilization among priority populations; development of multilanguage materials
Increase community awareness of mental health resources	Organize and host community health fairs in Lawrence, Methuen, and Haverhill focused	Community organizations, GLFHC, local boards	Completion of health fairs hosted; number of residents

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	on priority health needs identified through the CHNA. Provide health education, connect residents to hospital services, and facilitate referrals to community resources.	of health, public health partners	attending; number of screenings conducted
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APPENDIX A. COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The 2025 CHNA was conducted jointly by the former Lawrence General Hospital, now Lawrence Hospital, and the former Holy Family Hospitals, now Methuen and Haverhill Hospitals, in collaboration with Greater Lawrence Family Health Center (GLFHC).

This assessment incorporated data and community input from the service areas of Lawrence, Methuen, and Haverhill, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of health needs across the Merrimack Valley.

The assessment process included:

- Analysis of demographic and health outcome data
- Community surveys
- Key informant interviews
- Community focus groups
- Review of public health data sources

These efforts helped identify significant health needs affecting residents of the Merrimack Valley and informed the prioritization process used to determine areas of focus for the **2026–2028 implementation period**.

APPENDIX B. PRIORITY POPULATIONS

The CHNA indicated priority populations experiencing the greatest barriers to health and healthcare access. This information further informs community implementation planning.

These populations include:

- Individuals with limited economic resources
- Immigrant and refugee communities
- Individuals best served in languages other than English
- Youth and adolescents
- Older adults
- Individuals experiencing housing instability
- Individuals with chronic or complex health conditions

Addressing health disparities and improving equitable access to care will remain a central focus of implementation activities.

APPENDIX C. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Merrimack Health recognizes that improving community health requires strong collaboration with local organizations, public health agencies, and community-based partners.

Key partners involved in implementation efforts may include:

- Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
- Local Boards of Health
- Community-based organizations
- Social service agencies
- Behavioral health providers
- Educational institutions
- Public health agencies

Merrimack Health will prioritize partnerships with organizations that:

- Have strong community trust and engagement
- Serve priority populations identified in the CHNA
- Align with the health system's strategic priorities
- Offer opportunities for meaningful collaboration in prevention, education, and care coordination

APPENDIX D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Community engagement plays a critical role in Merrimack Health's efforts to address community health needs and improve health outcomes across the Merrimack Valley.

Through the Office of Community Engagement, Merrimack Health works closely with local organizations, public health agencies, schools, and community-based partners to increase awareness of available health services and to connect residents with the care and resources they need.

Community engagement efforts support implementation of the Community Health Implementation Strategy by:

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- Increasing awareness of health services and prevention resources
- Strengthening relationships with community organizations and public health partners
- Facilitating community-based education and outreach activities
- Improving access to care through community partnerships and referral pathways
- Promoting culturally and linguistically responsive health information

These efforts help ensure that Merrimack Health's implementation strategies remain responsive to community needs and that residents are aware of available services and resources.