

Marion County & Polk County Community Health Assessment & Community Health Improvement Plan 2021-2025

The health of our community

In 2019, Marion County and Polk County worked together with local people and organizations to look at the health of our community through a new Community Health Assessment or “CHA”. This included two steps:

- 1) Gathering and studying data.
- 2) Asking community members about their health, their access to the everyday things that impact overall health (often called the Social Determinants of Health and Equity, or SDOH-E) and what they needed to live better lives.

After looking at this data and hearing directly from community members, the group chose these top three areas to work on over the next 5 years:



Substance use (health problems caused by using tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs)



Behavioral health supports (help with mental health problems)



Housing (having a place to live that is safe and does not cost too much)

The counties and their partners updated the CHA in 2020 and 2021 with some new data. To learn more about the CHA and read the latest version, please visit Marion County Health and Human Services' [website](#).

The plan

From late 2020 to spring 2021, the group came back together to create a plan, called the 2021-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan or “CHIP”. The CHIP includes goals and ways (called “aims” and “strategies”) to improve the CHA priority areas. To make the CHIP, the group first formed three work groups – one for each area. Each work group included community members, leaders and experts. Together, they looked at information from the CHA and carefully chose aims and strategies. Then they wrote and shared the CHIP with other local key community organizations and groups for additional input before it was finished.

The CHIP’s overall strategies are:



See below for an overview of aims by CHA priority area. You can also read the complete CHIP, including strategies, on the Marion County Health and Human Services' [website](#).



Substance use

Many people in our community have health problems from using substances like tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. There are not enough doctors and services that help people heal from addiction or address an on-going need for substances.

Substance use work group members made aims and strategies to help prevent drug use and improve supports for those who already have substance use problems.

Aim 1:

Teaching youth about the harms of using alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana to prevent substance use.

Aim 2:

Creating more health and support services for people using substances in rural areas.

Aim 3:

Promoting a community environment that supports the relationship between substance use recovery and overall health and wellness.



Behavioral health supports

A large amount of community members experience feelings of depression and loneliness. Help for mental health is often expensive, far away, or difficult to find. When creating aims and strategies, people in the behavioral health supports work group focused on the quality and amount of mental health supports. They saw a clear need for help that aids people of different cultures, ages, genders, and income levels.

Aim 1:

Lowering the number of people of all ages with depression.

Aim 2:

Helping people keep their mental health strong during difficult times.

Aim 3:

Helping make it easier for people to get the mental health care they need.



Housing

A large number of people in the community are homeless and have specific health problems. The price of housing has increased in the last few years. This has made it more difficult for people to pay their rent or mortgage and puts them at risk of becoming homeless. When it is hard to pay for housing, it becomes harder to pay other bills, buy healthy food and get health care. In the housing work group, people agreed it is important to help those who are homeless now, and prevent people from becoming homeless. They created specific aims and strategies to help lower the number of people who experience these problems.

There are many local organizations working hard to address housing and homelessness issues. One of the leaders of this work is the [Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance \(MWVHA\)](#). With support from the MWVHA, the housing work group made aims and strategies that support the good work that has already started.

Aim 1:

Connecting health and housing experts to work together on health and safety problems for those who are homeless.

Aim 2:

Lowering the risk of community members becoming homeless or returning to homelessness.

Aim 3:

Standing up for more housing.

The next 5 years

Now that we have a picture of our community’s health, and a plan to get better, we need to take action. Over 100 people from many different types of organizations created the CHIP. Everyone has a part to play in making it a reality. To do this, organizations will each make an “action plan”. These plans will tell us how each organization wants to do their part to meet the CHIP’s aims and strategies. Each action plan will look different, but together, our community will be working towards the same goals and solutions.

Each year, the supporters of the CHA/CHIP will review data, update action plans, hear from community members if we have made progress, and learn how we can do better. In 5 years, we will come together again to create a new CHIP based on the health and voice of our community.



This document was produced by PacificSource Community Solutions – Marion County and Polk County CCO and the Willamette Health Council in support of our individual actions to implement components of the Marion-Polk CHIP 2021-2025. The full Marion-Polk CHIP is a shared document and guide for community health improvement work. This document does not reflect the actions or opinions of any other partners that participated in the Marion-Polk CHIP 2021-2025 process.