

# Geisinger

**Geisinger Health System  
Community Health Needs Assessment  
Update: 2017**

## Community Health Needs Assessment

In each of the following sections, you will read about regional or system-wide programs offered by Geisinger as a focused effort to fulfill community and patient needs that were identified through the latest Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) surveys.

Geisinger Health System collaborated with outside organizations across a 13-county region to contract Tripp Umbach, a private healthcare consulting firm and nationally recognized leader in health needs assessments. Between October 2014 and March 2015 information was gathered from key community stakeholders using a variety of methodologies including: interviews, hand distributed surveys, and analysis of secondary data.

Some of the programs described in the following synopses are completely operated and/or funded by Geisinger and some are offered in cooperation with local health and human service agencies. Often, the needs of the communities we serve are similar throughout the areas of Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey where Geisinger providers care for patients. In these cases, we develop system-wide programs to benefit patients throughout our system. For more specific needs found in our local communities, we offer programs to serve patients close to home.

The program synopses are sorted by Geisinger hospital. The services and programs we provide are a response to needs identified in the most recent or, in some cases, past CHNA surveys. The synopses describe how the programs or services we provide fall into one of three broad categories:

### **Improving access to healthcare**

Perhaps the most significant need identified in the CHNA survey was for better, faster, more convenient and less costly access to healthcare services of all kinds. Geisinger is taking innovative steps to address barriers to healthcare and help provide physical, mental, dental, rehabilitative and preventive services to patients, regardless of their health insurance status. The topics addressed include: how to find the right doctor, provider or facility; special services provided to patients with specific needs (such as the elderly or underinsured or uninsured); trauma prevention and treatment; and many others.

### **Addressing behavioral health and substance abuse**

Geisinger and its partners have a wide range of programs aimed at helping patients find healthcare services when they are facing mental, psychiatric, developmental or behavioral health challenges or struggling with addiction. Alzheimer's disease and other aging brain issues as well as alcoholism and opioid abuse are addressed in a large and growing number of programs specifically aimed at expanding services.

### **Improving healthy behaviors**

Prevention is key when addressing lifestyle choices and preventable health conditions. Geisinger has numerous educational programs to help patients get well and stay well. These efforts include classes offered to the community and outreach programs that bring healthcare professionals, education, nutrition and medication to the people. Our goal is to assist patients with their health before a serious problem arises that sends them to the hospital.

For more information about Geisinger Health System or to read the 2016 CHNA brochures, please go to <http://www.geisinger.org/chna>.

## Geisinger Health System (GHS)

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## Improving access to healthcare

### Complex care, closer to home

Comprehensive treatments for complex health conditions such as heart, lung and kidney disease are routinely found at large health facilities. But patients in rural communities, like many that Geisinger serves, often have even higher rates of chronic disease than those in urban areas. Long distances to hospital facilities, transportation problems and a lack of specialists in the area can make it tough for families to access the right care for these conditions.

That's why Geisinger specialists travel across the region to staff outreach clinics that provide advanced care, while keeping better track of patients with chronic health conditions. Each clinic is staffed with doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Depending on the location, diagnostic lab and imaging services may be offered as well.

From cardiology to dermatology, and from complex orthopaedic and thoracic surgery to neurosurgery, Geisinger's specialty services are available in more than 30 communities across northeast and central Pennsylvania. Many of our locations offer specialty pediatric and women's health services, as well.

Our specialists travel so patients don't have to, providing them with a convenient way to seek the specialty care they need, without excessive driving or the challenges of seeking care only at a hospital.

### Geisinger Health Plan: Comprehensive coverage for the uninsured and seniors

Geisinger Health Plan (GHP) has been providing affordable, high-quality health coverage for more than 20 years. It offers a large network of caring, well-trained providers in communities throughout northeast, central and western Pennsylvania. We are particularly proud to offer excellent health insurance plans for the most vulnerable in our communities — uninsured adults and children, as well as seniors.

GHP Family is an affordable medical-assistance, managed-care plan that offers comprehensive coverage to uninsured and underinsured residents of 22 counties in Pennsylvania. Many services are covered at no cost, including doctor's office visits, emergency care, preventive services (including immunizations and screenings), diabetes care, maternity care, dental and vision services and prescription drugs. Members also have 24-hour access to compassionate nurses and health coaches.

GHP Kids offers health coverage to uninsured children under 20 years of age in 40 counties statewide, through Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). For most children, CHIP is completely free and includes routine checkups and immunizations, prescription drugs, vision and dental services and emergency care.

For seniors, navigating the complexities of Medicare and Medicaid coverage can be overwhelming. GHP offers a dual eligibility plan for seniors who qualify for Medicare Parts A and B coverage as well as Medicaid. Geisinger Gold Secure Rx (HMO SNP) is designed to make medical expenses more predictable, allow better coordination among providers and lower out-of-pocket expenses for seniors. This user-friendly plan offers convenient benefits such as low or no monthly premiums, a single ID card, prescription drug coverage, dental and vision services, fitness programs and care management nurses.

GHP's affordable, easy-to-use health plans are a lifeline to many residents who otherwise might struggle to find consistent, high-quality care and coverage.

## **ProvenHealth Navigator: A results-based, team-oriented medical home**

A medical “home” isn’t a building. It’s a patient-centered model of care led by the patient’s primary doctor and a team of healthcare professionals working closely together, ensuring the patient gets coordinated care that will keep him or her healthy. The healthcare team of specialists, care managers, pharmacists, social workers and community health assistants will work with the patient, the family and the caregivers to build a plan of care that will prevent urgent and emergent care visits and hospitalizations. ProvenHealth Navigator® (PHN) is Geisinger’s patient-centered model of care committed to ensuring every patient receives the highest quality of care.

Research has shown that patients being managed under the medical home model stay healthier and spend less time in the hospital. Medical home care, which focuses on more frequent doctor visits and consistent follow-up by the team, has shown particular benefits to patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. Studies show that medical home patients are more likely to meet specific health goals, such as lowering their blood sugar, cholesterol and/or blood pressure.

Patients in Geisinger’s PHN medical home program benefit from a team-based approach to care with access to doctors and PHN care manager 24/7. As integral members of the team, care managers are compassionate professionals trained to help patients navigate the complex aspects of the healthcare system, coordinating care and communicating with the team of healthcare providers. Care managers, social workers and community health assistants are also available to help our patients overcome some of life’s most difficult challenges, such as coping with mental illness, addiction, abuse and loss and managing disabilities. They counsel individuals on how to cope more effectively with the stresses of everyday life and focus on improving psychological well-being. The team also coordinates community resources that are available and assists the patient and family with their needs.

By expanding our successful medical home initiative, we’re ensuring that our patients have access to the most effective models of care.

## **Geisinger telemedicine brings healthcare closer to home**

In Geisinger’s 31-county service area, geography and complex health conditions can create barriers between providers and people who need care the most. Nearly half of our patient population resides in rural areas, and more than 60 percent of patients have one or more chronic health conditions. Geisinger’s Telemedicine Program helps ensure that patients can remain close to home and still receive high-quality, specialized care.

Our Telemedicine Program uses high-definition audio/video technology and tools such as digital stethoscopes to connect remote patients to our hospitals and primary care clinics, as well as to non-Geisinger partner facilities. In 2016, Geisinger provided more than 8,300 telemedicine visits across 26 health services for 61 Geisinger clinic sites and non-Geisinger healthcare organizations.

With telemedicine, everybody wins. Inpatients may be able to get an earlier diagnosis, begin treatment sooner and avoid hospital transfers, since their physicians can reach out to specialists anywhere in the Geisinger system for advice or consult. Geisinger specialists can assess outpatients who are being seen at clinics across the state without the patient needing to travel to the hospital where the specialist practices. This can save time and reduce the costs associated with travel, while allowing patients to enjoy the support of loved ones at home. Providers have more convenient access to Geisinger’s many specialists when making critical decisions. Earlier diagnosis and detection can reduce costs for everyone.

Of course, telemedicine is not a substitute for one-on-one interaction with a Geisinger provider. It is an added tool for

those providers, allowing them to reach out to the right specialist when a patient needs one. All telemedicine sessions with providers are confidential, just as if the patient had gone to the specialist's office.

By connecting patients, regardless of where they live, to experienced professionals in many specialties, Geisinger is making excellent healthcare available to every patient in the communities we serve.

### **Support for seniors as they age at home**

Medical advances mean people are living longer than ever and more seniors are choosing to age at home. LIFE Geisinger (Living Independently For Elders) helps eligible seniors stay at home, stay independent and stay healthy.

The LIFE Geisinger team is on call 24/7, every day of the year, providing support and peace of mind for seniors and their loved ones. Our staff of doctors, nurses and other health professionals offers a wealth of experience in gerontology and healthy aging. Working together, they assess each participant's needs, develop care plans and deliver the services seniors and their families need to feel secure.

Transportation services make home deliveries of supplies and/or medications, carry seniors to non-emergency medical and other appointments as needed and deliver LIFE participants to and from our adult day centers for scheduled visits. These comfortable day centers, staffed by compassionate caregivers, offer seniors comprehensive medical and social services as well as excellent opportunities for socializing, creativity and exercise. (Geisinger's adult day centers are open to all seniors, whether or not they participate in LIFE Geisinger.)

LIFE is an optional benefit under both Medicare and Medicaid for seniors who are at least 55 years of age, live in Geisinger's service area, meet state requirements for nursing home-level care and are able to live safely in a community setting at the time of enrollment. Participants must enroll voluntarily.

Providing access to more and better options for high-quality healthcare, especially for our most vulnerable patients, is a primary goal across Geisinger Health System.

### **High-quality, non-emergency care in your community**

For patients experiencing a non-emergent injury or illness, Geisinger Careworks clinics offer high-quality medical services at convenient locations throughout Pennsylvania.

Careworks urgent care clinics provide quick, convenient healthcare from certified medical professionals, such as family nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Careworks clinicians are highly trained professionals from Geisinger Health System and are experienced with treating sore throats, earaches, sinus infections, flu, urinary tract infections, sprains, minor laceration repair and more.

In addition, Careworks offers many other services, including adult immunizations; physicals for school, sports and camp; and employer-contracted services, such as pre-employment physicals and drug testing. Phlebotomy (blood draws) can be performed at Careworks when ordered by a Careworks provider. At select locations, EKGs and X-rays are available if ordered by our staff.

Geisinger Careworks attends to the medical needs of adults and children 12 months or older, and no appointment is necessary. The offices will, upon request, communicate with a patient's primary care physician about his or her visit. The objective is to return the patient to primary care after addressing the acute episode that is present at his or her visit.

Careworks helps keep families well by providing access to Geisinger providers, professionals and services in convenient community locations.

## Bridging the communications gap for better health

Great healthcare starts with providers and patients being able to talk to — and understand — each other. A clear, two-way conversation helps doctors, nurses and therapists get accurate patient information and explain diagnoses, procedures or treatment plans. Good communication helps patients make educated decisions and give informed consent.

At Geisinger, we see patients who have different levels of hearing ability and literacy. They speak hundreds of languages. Communication challenges can be frustrating, and could even result in reduced quality of care. We know a hospital stay can be stressful. To give our patients the best experience possible, we use advanced technology and continuous training. We are making a systemwide effort to improve all forms of communication, including brochures, consent forms, website pages and other materials. The goal is to help all patients clearly understand what their hospital stay will entail and how best to manage their condition or disease.

Stratus is a video-interpreting device used for patients who are deaf or hearing-impaired or who don't speak English. Geisinger now has over 250 Stratus devices across the system. Available 24 hours a day in more than 200 languages, including American Sign Language, Stratus is operated by trained interpreters. It is immediate, reliable and easy to use. Stratus helps us connect and communicate.

Language Line is our audio interpretation service. It allows us to communicate with patients with limited English proficiency both in the hospital and over the phone.

We can also provide one-on-one sign language interpreters at all of our Geisinger locations. Of course, all interpretation services are free of charge.

Finally, Geisinger employees train continuously to make sure that they are listening effectively and answering all questions in simple, understandable terms. We want to make sure that every patient or designated family member understands what is happening, whether they are with us for a one-hour appointment or for a longer inpatient stay.

## Addressing behavioral health and substance abuse

### Drug Takeback Program makes disposing of old medications easy

Each year, more than 440 million prescription medications in the U.S. expire or go unused. The potential for abuse is constant, and its consequences can be staggering.

An estimated 71,000 children (up to age 18) are seen in emergency rooms each year for unintentional medication poisoning, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. A report by the Office of National Drug Control Policy reveals that 12- to 17-year-olds abuse prescription drugs more than cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine combined.

Recognizing the impact of medication abuse on our region, Geisinger is coordinating an effort to address safe medication disposal, and organizing resources through a program consisting of four major areas:

Through our Drug Takeback Program, we work with the National Guard and law enforcement at local, regional and state

levels to place and oversee secure collection units for medication drop-off at community pharmacies, including Geisinger CareSite Pharmacies.

We collaborate with local universities to research and develop cost-effective ways to properly organize, collect and destroy unused medications.

We survey a large portion of our patient base to learn their attitudes about medication disposal. We use what we discover to educate schools and the community about the health risks and environmental dangers of old, unused prescriptions.

In the past, medicines were flushed and dumped, but water treatment plants aren't designed to remove them entirely before they enter the water supply. We're collaborating with regional and statewide environmental groups to advocate the elimination of medication disposal into our waterways.

## **Breaking down barriers to psychiatric care**

Geisinger Health System is committed to helping residents with behavioral health issues get the care they need to live their lives fully and well. To do so, we are moving forward on several new initiatives systemwide.

Using an integrative approach that's being embraced by hospitals across the country, we are now offering behavioral health services at many of our primary and specialty practices statewide. This will ensure access to needed services. Having a psychologist or clinical social worker on site to start the evaluation process immediately saves time and increases the likelihood that patients will follow through with care.

Patients in rural areas often travel long distances to access services, making it more difficult to receive consistent care. Through our telepsychiatry efforts, we're delivering treatment to patients where they live through programs like Skype.

To address the shortage of psychiatrists in rural Pennsylvania, Geisinger has created its own psychiatric residency program at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. The four-year program accepts four new students each year. We hope that many of our graduates will choose to practice psychiatry in our rural communities.

Opioid or prescription painkiller addiction is a significant problem throughout Pennsylvania. A Center of Excellence grant, along with funding from Geisinger Health Plan, is funding the expansion of our opioid addiction treatment program and the hiring of experienced addiction specialists.

Finally, members of Geisinger's psychiatric team are working to bring about change and remove barriers to care through our advocacy effort. We're meeting with officials on the local, state and national levels to modify healthcare regulations that stand in the way of the best care.

We believe that these programs, combined with other efforts at addressing behavioral health and substance abuse issues throughout Geisinger Health System, could save thousands of lives every year.

## **Improving healthy behaviors**

### **Teaching a healthy eating lifestyle**

It seems like no matter where you turn today, some "expert" is selling a diet book or people are being urged to join a program that delivers prepared food to their door or learn a complicated cooking program. In an age when obesity and

sedentary lifestyles are a major health concern, the information can be confusing — and in some cases, contradictory.

Geisinger dietitians teach patients that good nutrition is more than working in a few salads here and there. It's also about identifying and then changing unhealthy habits, some of which can lead to chronic and serious health problems. They know that helping the people in their care understand how small changes each day can make a big difference in a patient's quality of life. And they understand the unique eating and exercise challenges people face and create nutrition plans tailored to fit each patient's lifestyle, wellness and overall health goals. Our dietitians help to manage inpatients' daily nutrition and teach both inpatients and outpatients how to make healthier food choices.

We present no-cost and low-cost nutrition classes in communities across our health system, showing residents how to make the most of their resources. We share ideas for fresh, low-cost meals and ways to get active without spending a lot. Topics include nutrition on a budget, food labeling, tips for weight management, healthy cooking, emotional eating, diabetes support groups and gluten-free and vegetarian diets.

## **Medication and financial assistance**

No one should go without medication or healthcare just because it's expensive. Avoiding care or changing recommended dosages to make medications last longer can pose serious health risks. Geisinger is committed to providing medically necessary healthcare to those in need and offers financial and medication assistance to its patients to make care more affordable.

Patients may apply for financial assistance at any time, and all patients are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their financial circumstances. Depending on the amount of the bill and the circumstances, interest-free repayment plans are available with minimum monthly payments as low as \$25. Those who qualify may also be enrolled in other federal or state assistance programs. Anyone with special circumstances may request a case review by a Geisinger financial counselor.

Uninsured patients are required to apply for Pennsylvania Medical Assistance or enroll in the Federal or State Health Insurance Marketplace. Through Geisinger's Trusted Advisor program, certified application counselors educate consumers and patients about the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. A counselor can assess a patient's needs, assist with a Marketplace insurance application, review financial assistance programs, explain plan options and help a patient enroll. To assist with medication costs, Geisinger's Enterprise Pharmacy Department has pharmaceutical reimbursement coordinators who provide aid and assistance to individuals without prescription drug coverage, who cannot afford their high-dollar co-pays, who are in the Medicare Part-D coverage gap or who have insurance that does not cover a prescribed medication. There are medication assistance programs and foundations that provide assistance to uninsured, under-insured and insured individuals who qualify based on enrollment criteria.

Many drug manufacturers offer pharmaceutical assistance programs; if approved, medications are sent by mail at no cost. Discount mail-order programs are available, as well, and some medications can be purchased using discount cards at retail pharmacies. The Geisinger Health System Financial Assistance Program allows eligible patients to receive discounted medications through our pharmacy. Our coordinators can even enroll senior patients in PACE or PACENET over the phone.

## **Helping kids get active, eat right and stay fit**

It's always been a tough job to be a parent. In today's electronics-driven world, it may be even harder. Childhood obesity is a major problem in all communities across the nation. Media, society and peer pressure can make it difficult for children

to lead healthy, active lives. Fast and processed food and digital entertainment are glamorized, and physical activity is often viewed as boring or elite. With too much screen time and too little outdoor play, an entire generation of children could be on the fast track for serious health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease, later in life.

Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital partners with Kohl's department store in Kohl's Cares Moving4Health, a free, user-friendly online program that encourages healthy behaviors for kids. Moving4Health helps kids and parents alike learn about ways to get active, eat right and prevent childhood obesity. Resources and activities are provided for children and parents to help families learn how to live healthy lives together.

Moving4Health shows children how to make positive choices in their daily eating and activity habits while providing a fun, web-based experience that is simple to understand. The program motivates children to increase offline activities, reinforcing healthy behaviors with suggestions for meals, snacks and active play.

The partnership also reaches children and their families through weekly nutrition and fitness programs at area school districts, community venues and free health fairs across the region.

### **Helping patients live their best lives**

Managing chronic illnesses at home is an important step that patients must take in maintaining their health. Not only will it make them feel better, but it helps in avoiding hospitalization and the need for emergency care. Geisinger offers three programs to help patients live their best life while dealing with chronic illnesses.

The Live Your Best Life Program (chronic disease self-management) and the Live Your Best Life with Diabetes Program (diabetes self-management) are group sessions for those with chronic conditions or individuals with diabetes. Each program lasts six weeks, and all participants receive the book Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions. Friends, family and caregivers are welcome to attend. Both programs are offered throughout the Geisinger service area.

Participants learn healthy eating habits, exercise and relaxation techniques, how to set goals for improvement and how to manage the symptoms, including pain and fatigue, of chronic conditions. Participants in the diabetes program also learn about issues specific to the disease, including how to make healthy changes to lower glucose and A1C and how to monitor blood sugar and medications, as well as skin and foot care.

The Diabetes Prevention Program, offered in Blair, Bradford, Columbia, Lackawanna, Lycoming, Northumberland, Wayne, Wyoming and York counties, focuses on participants with pre-diabetes or those who are at risk of developing diabetes. All participants receive supporting materials with weekly lesson content, which covers healthy eating, increasing physical activity, weight loss, stress reduction and coping skills, and how to make healthy lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

All three wellness programs are offered at no cost and are open to the public.