

Southern Ocean Medical Center



Community Health Improvement Plan 2026-2028

Southern Ocean Medical Center

A beacon of medical excellence our residents and visitors can depend on

Each and every day at Southern Ocean Medical Center, our physicians, nurses, team members and volunteers come together to capture the spirit of compassionate care and medical excellence that has defined our hospital for more than 40 years. It is our way of assuring that we remain true to providing each patient with a remarkable health care experience. We were recognized with the Gold Plus Achievement Award for Stroke Care by the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association and are designated a High-Performing Hospital for Heart Failure and Stroke by U.S. News & World Report. Our Center for Bariatrics is recognized by the American College of Surgeons as the most comprehensive, high-quality bariatric surgery program in the region, and designated as a Center of Excellence by the American Society of Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery.

About Hackensack Meridian Health - Keep Getting Better

Hackensack Meridian Health is a leading not-for-profit health care organization and New Jersey's largest, most comprehensive, and integrated health network. Our network includes 18 hospitals, more than 500 patient care locations, and a complete range of services from innovative research and life-enhancing care to lifesaving air medical transportation. Our 38,000 team members and 7,000 physicians are committed to the health and well-being of the communities we serve, making Hackensack Meridian Health a distinguished leader in healthcare philanthropy

CHNA Background

In alignment with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and applicable federal requirements for not-for-profit hospitals, Hackensack Meridian Health Southern Ocean Medical Center completed a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that was adopted by the Hackensack Meridian Health Board of Directors on December 10, 2025.

The Southern Ocean Medical Center 2025 CHNA was conducted by Professional Research Consultants, Inc. (PRC) for Hackensack Meridian Health to identify the health needs within the hospital's service area. The assessment incorporates data from multiple sources, including primary research (through the PRC Community Health Survey and PRC Online Key Informant Survey) as well as secondary research (vital statistics and other existing health-related data). To supplement the other data collections, Hackensack Meridian Health engaged Moxley Public Health to conduct primary data collection through qualitative focus groups with community members from priority populations. The purpose of these focus groups was to gather qualitative insights into community health priorities, access to and utilization of health care services, maternal and infant health, and perspectives on care for all.

In addition to assessing health indicators, the 2025 CHNA took a close look at social drivers of health (SDoH) such as food insecurity, housing, transportation, education, and other factors.

The complete CHNA report can be found at <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/About-Us/community-health-needs-assessment>

Determining Community Health Priorities

Hackensack Meridian Health conducted virtual community forums in the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the network service areas with representatives from each hospital and key community stakeholders during July 2025. During the forums, an overview of the findings from the 2025 CHNA report for each region was shared by PRC, Inc. In reviewing the data from the 2025 CHNA, it is evident that the priorities identified in 2022 remain pressing needs. Following the data presentation, HMH Leadership presented the proposed framework for this CHIP and led the prioritization discussion in the breakout groups. Sixty two people participated in the Southern Region Community Partner Forum on July 17, 2025 representing agencies and institutions throughout the region, representing diverse perspectives.

The final priority areas are – **Mental Wellbeing, Healthy Living, and Access to Care.**

Prioritized Health Needs Summary



Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

The intent of our CHIP is to be responsive to community needs and expectations and create a plan that can be effectively executed to leverage hospital and network resources, as well as community partners.

A CHIP is a dynamic rather than a static plan and should be modified and adjusted as external environmental factors change, including market conditions, availability of community resources, and engagement from community partners. Furthermore, a CHIP should build on and leverage prior success while simultaneously adjusting strategies and actions as obstacles are encountered.

The following defines the types of programmatic strategies and interventions that guided the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan.

- **Prevention and Awareness:** Health promotion and disease prevention programs focus on keeping people healthy. These initiatives aim to engage and empower individuals and communities to choose healthy behaviors and make changes that reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases and other morbidities.
- **Build Capacity:** Efforts which aim to help individuals navigate the healthcare system and improve access to services when and where they need them.
- **Strengthen Community Partnership:** Includes collaborations, partnerships, and support of providers and community organizations across multiple sectors.

Significant Health Needs That Will Not Be Addressed

Southern Ocean Medical Center acknowledges the wide range of health issues that emerged from the CHNA process and determined that it could effectively focus on only those health needs which are the most pressing, under-addressed and within its ability to influence. Specifically, Southern Ocean Medical Center will not be addressing the following sub-priorities within the Mental Wellbeing, Healthy Living, and Access to Care priority areas:

- Mental Wellbeing:
 - Alcohol Induced Deaths
- Healthy Living:
 - Nutrition, Physical Activity, & Weight- (children's physical activity, overweight & obesity children)
- Access to Care:
 - Lack of Financial Resilience

Because these priorities are outside the bandwidth of the organization, rendering them outside of Southern Ocean Medical Center's feasibility of having an impact in the short or long term. Southern Ocean Medical Center remains open and willing to work with hospitals across the HMH network and other public and private partners to address these issues and others impacting health and wellbeing opportunities.

Priority Area: Mental Wellbeing

The 2025 CHNA for Southern Ocean Medical Center identified the following sub-priorities within the Mental Wellbeing priority area. Sub-priorities were determined based on areas of opportunity uncovered through the CHNA process.

Sub-priorities identified from the 2025 CHNA:

- Mental Health Provider Ratio
- Difficulty Obtaining Mental Health Services
- Substance Use- (Sought help for Alcohol/Drug Issues)

Priority Area: Mental Wellbeing		
Goal: A community where all people have access to high quality behavioral health care, and experience mental wellness and recovery		
	Objectives	Strategies/Action Steps
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip individuals with the tools to understand behavioral health • Build a healthier, more resilient community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize lectures/trainings related to substance use, healthy social, emotional, and mental health • Screen and refer for behavioral health needs • Support public health in local prevention and emergency initiatives
Build Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance ability to deliver care with greater impact and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer care delivery options • Bridge the gap between acute and ambulatory services ensuring a seamless transition of care
Strengthen Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage partnerships for collective impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase, strengthen and evaluate partnerships with state and local community-based organizations

Priority Area: Healthy Living

The 2025 CHNA for Southern Ocean Medical Center identified the following sub-priorities within the Healthy Living priority area. Sub-priorities were determined based on areas of opportunity uncovered through the CHNA process.

Sub-priorities identified from the 2025 CHNA:

- Cancer- (leading cause of Death, cancer deaths - including lung cancer & colorectal cancer, Cancer Incidence- lung cancer, cancer prevalence)
- Diabetes-(kidney disease deaths)
- Heart Disease & Stroke-(leading cause of death, HD deaths, HD prevalence, HBC prevalence)
- Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Weight- (low food access, access to recreation/fitness facilities, overweight & obesity adults)
- Respiratory Disease- (pneumonia/influenza deaths)
- Tobacco-(Use of Vaping Products)

Priority Area: Healthy Living		
Goal: All people will have access to chronic disease education, screening, and management services to achieve an optimal state of wellness		
	Objectives	Strategies/ Action Steps
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip individuals with the tools to understand behavioral health • Build a healthier, more resilient community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize lectures/trainings related to substance use, healthy social, emotional, and mental health • Screen and refer for behavioral health needs • Support public health in local prevention and emergency initiatives
Build Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance ability to deliver care with greater impact and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer care delivery options • Bridge the gap between acute and ambulatory services ensuring a seamless transition of care
Strengthen Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage partnerships for collective impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase, strengthen and evaluate partnerships with state and local community-based organizations

Priority Area: Access to Care

The 2025 CHNA for Southern Ocean Medical Center identified the following sub-priorities within the Access to Care priority area. Sub-priorities were determined based on areas of opportunity uncovered through the CHNA process.

Sub-priorities identified from the 2025 CHNA:

- Primary Care Physician Ratio
- Specific Source of Ongoing Medical Care
- Emergency Room Utilization

Priority Area: Access to Care		
Goal: To ensure all community members can achieve their full health potential		
	Objectives	Strategies/ Action Steps
Prevention and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce common barriers to accessing health care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen for health related Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) to provide referrals and community based resources • Address Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) to reduce health disparities and improve population outcomes
Build Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance ability to deliver care with greater impact and efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer care delivery options • Bridge the gap between acute and ambulatory services ensuring a seamless transition of care
Strengthen Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage partnerships for collective impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase, strengthen and evaluate partnerships with state and local community-based organizations

Alignment with New Jersey State Health Improvement Plan

Health needs identified in the CHNA research were confirmed by community stakeholders and refined through collaborative discussion. Local concerns were then aligned with the statewide health priorities in the **New Jersey State Health Improvement Plan (2020)**. This approach ensures priority areas reflect local concerns and community-generated strategies for action while establishing a connection to statewide initiatives.

Next Steps

Community health improvement requires collaboration among community-based organizations, policy makers, funders, and many other partners. A CHIP is a dynamic guide to move from data to action, to coordinate community resources, and to measure progress as a community. The Southern Ocean Medical Center CHIP outlines specific actions to address our community's most pressing health needs. We invite your partnership as we monitor and share our progress toward these efforts during the 2026-2028 reporting cycle. For more information about Southern Ocean Medical Center's community health improvement initiatives, please visit <https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/en/About-Us/community-health-needs-assessment>