

Cape Cod Healthcare: Cape Cod Hospital and Falmouth Hospital

CHNA 2026 – 2028: Strategic Implementation Plan FY26 - Year 1

Introduction

The FY26 Cape Cod Healthcare (CCHC) Community Benefits Strategic Implementation Strategy (SIP) describes how Cape Cod Hospital (CCH) and Falmouth Hospital (FH) will jointly address the priorities and target populations identified in the 2026 - 2028 Cape Cod Hospital and Falmouth Hospital Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Report. The report can be viewed and downloaded at www.capecodhealth.org. Please refer to the CHNA for further detail on CCHC's service area, target populations, and Community Benefits program.

The priorities and cross-cutting themes are listed below and were identified during a comprehensive prioritization process that will inform CCHC's Strategic Implementation Plans (SIP) for the years 2026, 2027 and 2028. The SIP is an annual blueprint of how CCHC plans to accomplish its Community Benefits Mission and facilitates community engagement and collaboration across institutions.

CCHC Community Benefits Mission Statement

Cape Cod Healthcare, Inc., through its Community Benefits initiative, is committed to enhancing the quality of and access to comprehensive healthcare services for all Cape Cod residents. Through continuous assessment of community needs, coordinated planning and the allocation of resources, this commitment includes a special focus on the unmet needs of the financially disadvantaged and underserved populations. We will assume a leadership role in collaborative efforts joining our resources, talent, and commitment with that of other providers, organizations and community members.

The Community Benefits Mission Statement was affirmed by the CCHC Community Health Committee and the Board of Trustees in 2000 and remains in effect.

2026-2028 CHNA Findings

Through thoughtful consideration of the data presented in the CHNA, and using prioritization criteria and knowledge of the existing and planned programs already in place, three priority areas have been identified for 2026-2028:

Priority Areas

1. Healthcare Access
2. Behavioral Health
3. Housing

Cross-cutting themes were also identified and will be represented in each of the priority areas:

Cross-Cutting Themes

1. Health Equity
2. Economic Hardship

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The following vulnerable populations are addressed in the 2026-2028 CHNA and FY26 SIP:

Vulnerable Populations

- Residents across Barnstable County with focus on specific regions of the Cape most acutely impacted by geographic isolation and access to services
- Populations managing mental health and/or behavioral health disorders, particularly children and older adults
- People facing housing-insecurity
- Non-English-speaking individuals
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- Low-income individuals and families

Social Determinants of Health (SDH) addressed by the 2026-2028 CHNA and FY26 SIP

include: economic stress and instability, food access, housing, transportation, healthcare access, discrimination, and racism.

FY26 SIP Highlights

FY26 is the first year for CCHC’s 2026-2028 CHNA, which brought to light the current needs that the community of Barnstable County is facing. In creating the FY26 SIP, we are able to take a fresh look at the needs of our community that emerged over the last three years and make plans on how to address the 2026-2028 CHNA priorities.

One strategy that we are using to address identified needs in the community is to meet the Health Equity Community Benefits Investment goals, which were implemented by CCHC in FY23. These goals ensure that we are investing a percentage of community benefits dollars that is on par with the percentage of the County’s population that identify as historically underinvested groups, including Black, Brazilian, Hispanic, LBGQTQ+, people with disabilities, non-English speaking, and migrant populations.

Healthcare Access Priority Area

Timely and accessible healthcare is essential to prevent underlying health conditions from developing into more acute issues/concerns and larger problems in the future. Access to care continues to be identified as one of the leading health needs in our community. Although there have been many improvements since CCHC’s last CHNA, including an increased focus on provider recruitment, there are still areas of need. Overall, specialty care and mental health services are some of the most challenging types of care to access.

Many stakeholders and residents were concerned over the lack of behavioral health services in Barnstable County, particularly for adolescent and geriatric populations. A major factor that has

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contributed to difficulties in accessing most types of healthcare services was staffing shortages, which itself is related to the challenges around economic stability, income, and housing costs in Barnstable County. On a positive note, stakeholders commented that many community-based organizations, including the Visiting Nurse Association of Cape Cod, provide a number of programs to increase access to care, including blood pressure, diabetes, and other health clinics, immunizations and various wellness programming.

Goal: Increase access to physical and mental health services in Barnstable County through collaborative approaches.

Objective 1

Expand hospital-based initiatives to increase access to care.

- Increase recruitment and hiring of health care providers.
- Increase screening of disability accommodation needs

Objective 2

Support, strengthen and expand strategic collaborations and regional efforts to increase access to care.

- Continue to partner with the Federally Qualified Health Centers in our region.

Objective 3

Strengthen the healthcare workforce by investing in innovative training programs

- Nursing Assistant “will train” program, Pharmacy Tech Academy, Phlebotomy “will train,” Certified Surgical Technologist trainees and high school co-op opportunities.
- Partnerships with various local schools, colleges and universities on health care employment education and development including Barnstable High School on their CNA certification program, which trains certified nursing assistants who are ready to join the workforce upon graduation.

Objective 4

Provide support for patients and staff whose first language is not English

- English for speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are free to CCHC employees.
- Free medical interpreters are provided to all CCHC patients, as well as physician offices throughout the community and EMS.

Community Partners Include: Duffy Health Center, Outer Cape Health Services, Barnstable County SHINE program, Barnstable High School, Cape Cod Foundation, Health Imperatives, Team Maureen, and Community Action Committee of Cape Cod & the Islands.

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Behavioral Health Priority Area

Over half of the community survey respondents listed mental health issues as a top health concern in the community, while one third identified mental health issues as a top health concern impacting their families. High prevalence of issues for adolescents and geriatric community groups was noted, coupled with concerns the healthcare sector is not adequately meeting the needs of those seeking services related to mental health.

Substance use has been a consistent concern of residents in Barnstable County for many years, driven by historically higher rates of opioid misuse and overdose deaths and systemic challenges to meeting the treatment and recovery needs of those seeking care. Substance use is impacting both youth and older adults, though for different types of substances. A top concern among respondents is alcohol abuse or binge drinking, followed by stigma or fear associated with seeking care for alcohol or drug addiction. Respondents are also concerned about how the more recent mental health crisis is bleeding into the ongoing substance abuse problems in the region.

Goal: CCHC will be a leading partner in providing comprehensive regional health services and community resources for individuals with mental health conditions and substance use disorders. We will partner with our community to improve access to behavioral health services across Barnstable County.

Objective 1

Expand hospital-based services and collaborations to address mental health, substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders in various care settings.

- Provide embedded Recovery Support Navigators in CCHC Emergency Departments.
- CCHC pilot program for adolescent and geriatric outpatient behavioral health services
- Provide psychiatric consultation to First Responders.
- Create new collaborations to create new and untraditional points of access to services.
- Support wellness programs to contribute to the overall well-being of the population, whereby reducing the need for mental health services.
- Support community-based, trauma-informed care programs to address trauma and substance use.
- Offer a Behavioral Health Community Helpline.
- Continue to utilize CCHC's Substance Use Prevention Fund to make grants to organizations that meet CCHC Community Benefit's goals and objectives.
- Support both well-established programs and new, innovative programs to increase access to wellness and mental health services.
- Focus investments on substance use disorder prevention programs, including mentor programs for at-risk youth.

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Objective 2

Strengthen the regional network of care for those with mental health and substance use disorders.

- Support behavioral health prevention, education, and training through regional coalitions including:
 - Community Crisis Intervention Team Coalition
 - Behavioral Health Community Education

Community Partners Include: Duffy Health Center, Outer Cape Health Services, Big Brothers Big Sisters, AIDS Support Group of Cape Cod, Children’s Cove, Hopeful Outreach, WE CAN Corporation, MA DPH, MA DMH, Behavioral Health Innovators, Cape Cod Children’s Place, Cape Cod YMCA, and Heroes In Transition.

Housing Priority Area

Housing has long been a significant challenge in Barnstable County and has consistently been ranked as the top social need in CCHC’s previous Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs). Stakeholders note that efforts to address the housing crisis on Cape Cod are now more organized than in the past, with promising developments such as the formation of *Housing to Protect Cape Cod* in 2022, which promotes a Cape-wide approach to tackling the issue. The housing shortage stems from two main factors: high housing costs and limited availability of year-round housing stock. Both issues are tied to the region’s economic seasonality and its reliance on tourism.

While housing has been a longstanding concern for residents, the pandemic intensified the problem and amplified its ripple effects, particularly on essential community resources and workers, including police, fire, EMTs, and healthcare professionals.

Goal: Improve health indicators of vulnerable populations in our community by increasing access to housing and supporting programs and partnerships that support stable and high-quality housing.

Objective 1

Continue to develop partnerships with regional organizations that address issues of housing and homelessness.

- Include housing representatives on CCHC Community Benefits advisory committee.
- CCHC representatives participate on regional housing committees and workgroups.
- Provide grant funding to organizations addressing the housing crisis in our region.

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- Develop cross sector partnerships to assist patients in securing or maintaining stable, high-quality housing.
- Leverage CCHC’s DoN CHI funding to address the housing crisis on Cape Cod, with a \$1.5 million investment in workforce and affordable housing through a partnership with the Housing Assistance Corporation.

Objective 2

Improve regional capacity to support transitions between health care settings and home.

- Support programs that keep individuals with health conditions stably housed.
- Establish partnerships to develop new programs to address gaps in services.
- Partner with Duffy Health Center to offer the Bridge Program to people who are hospitalized and experiencing homelessness.
- Provide oncology patients with transportation to oncology appointments

Community Partners Include: Housing Assistance Corporation, Homeless Prevention Council, Duffy Health Center, Habitat for Humanity, Belonging to Each Other, Community Development Partnership, and Lower Cape Outreach Council, Cape Cod Village.

Cross-Cutting Themes: Health Equity and Economic Stress & Instability

During the prioritization process for selecting priority areas for planning, two cross-cutting themes were identified to be included in the strategies in each of the above priority areas.

Health Equity Cross-Cutting Theme

Health equity means the attainment of the highest level of health for all people, where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, preferred language, or other factors that affect access to care and health outcomes (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services).

In CCHC’s most recent CHNA, differences in healthcare utilization were observed in stratified analyses of survey respondents. Survey respondents who were non-white were more likely to rate their own or their family's health as ‘fair’ or ‘poor’ compared to the overall sample. All racial and ethnic groups in the state report that they have trouble obtaining necessary healthcare. From 2021-2023, the percentage of Massachusetts residents of other/multiple races who reported difficulty obtaining necessary health care grew to 48.3%, the highest rate of any group. In 2023, compared with other racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic residents reported lower rates of having a preventive care visit and higher rates of avoidable emergency center visits.

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One of CCHC's goals is to help everyone we serve have the opportunity to attain their full health potential regardless of socio-economic factors such as race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation or gender-identity. To help achieve this goal, Dr. Kumara Sidhartha, MD, MPH, was named CCHC's first Chief Health Equity and Wellness officer in May 2023. In this role, Dr. Sidhartha is responsible for developing, implementing and managing CCHC's overarching strategy for providing equitable health, including:

- Identifying and addressing health disparities
- Developing culturally specific and responsive policies in care delivery
- Supporting all CCHC programs in building their equity practice and culture
- Using the lens of diversity and inclusion to enhance policies related to our community engagement and partnership
- Building CCHC's quality measures around disparities and analyzing how we collect data to reflect best practices
- Screen for Social Determinates of Health in the Epic EMR
- Established a health equity committee for CCHC

Additionally, CCHC is working to reduce disparities by strengthening maternal health supports. CCHC is actively seeking individuals interested in becoming Doulas and will cover the full cost of their training.

CCHC cannot address the underlying causes of health disparities without assistance from community partners. The key partnerships and relationships that we will continue to build include Amplify POC, the Visiting Nurse Association, local Federally Qualified Health Centers, Barnstable County Extension, Cape and Island Trans Resource Fund, and Brazilian Resource Center. We intend to continue to build relationships in our community with organizations serving traditionally marginalized populations.

Economic Hardship Cross-Cutting Theme

The cost of living in Barnstable County is high. This includes housing costs, food, childcare, and other basic needs, all of which were major concerns among residents based on data from the CHNA's community survey as well as stakeholder interviews and resident focus groups. While documented poverty rates are lower compared to the state, the true cost of living in the region requires an income level that far exceeds poverty level incomes. In Barnstable County, median household incomes are lower than the overall median household income among American Indian and Alaskan Native, Black and Hispanic households.

Many of these economic pressures stem from or are exacerbated by the seasonal nature of the local economy in Barnstable County. Seasonal instability can impact the consistency of household income as well as the consistency of health insurance coverage. Thus, residents and families in Barnstable County may be forced to prioritize the costs of basic needs like housing,

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food, or childcare over healthcare services, contributing to poorer health outcomes over time. Additionally, in Massachusetts, lower income is correlated with an increase in diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma and respiratory disease, and mental illness, resulting in disproportionate rates of chronic disease in Black and Hispanic communities.

Partners will include A Baby Center, The Family Pantry of Cape Cod, Sustainable CAPE, Cape Abilities, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance, and the CCHC Health Equity Committee.

Conclusion

CCHC’s Community Benefits program will continue supporting initiatives and organizations that address the priority needs identified in the 2026–2028 CHNA, with an increased focus on health equity and on challenges related to economic hardship. We will also deepen our efforts to invest meaningfully in the Social Determinants of Health that drive underlying health disparities.