



2023-2025 Stark County Community Health Improvement Plan Evaluation Report

The Stark County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Advisory Committee transitioned into the fourth assessment cycle in 2022. This cycle was implemented with a unique approach. Thrive at Work, a consulting firm, facilitated a series of community conversations and work sessions to draw on strength-focused community building and collective impact methodologies. Community stakeholders and members were engaged in discussion around the mental health needs and the social conditions impacting the community. The conversations helped guide the development of a shared vision, core beliefs and a community roadmap for positive health outcomes.

Shared Vision: “Everyone struggles. No one struggles alone.”

Core Beliefs:

- All people can be well and joyful.
- Individual and community health are connected.
- Everyone should be connected to community and digital infrastructures.
- Collaborations are vital to our success.
- Mental health care is health care and is more than avoiding crisis.

A framework of 10 strategies was narrowed down from the numerous ideas identified through the community conversations and work sessions. At the 2023 Health Improvement Summit, over 120 participants voted on the five strategies to be included within the 2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP):

1. No cell phone usage in schools.
2. Funding to address non-treatment barriers when accessing behavioral health.
3. Behavioral health supports for school district staff.
4. Formalized partnerships among behavioral health providers and medical/urgent care facilities.
5. Digital technology platform to unify health and human services.

In the fall of 2023, implementation workgroups were convened to lead CHIP efforts. Throughout 2024, the workgroups developed action plans, researched initiatives, and gathered baseline data through community surveys and assessments. In 2025, the workgroups worked to accomplish priority area goals by implementing specific strategies and activities to improve the health of Stark County residents.

The five strategies addressed throughout the fourth assessment cycle were newly identified concepts requiring capacity building, research and data collection. The workgroups dedicated a lot of time transitioning these concepts into workable strategies limiting the tracking of quantifiable data indicators. This evaluation provides a narrative outline of capacity building efforts.

Access to Care

Goal #1

Unify health and human services to address the complexities and disparities that social drivers have on health outcomes of individuals and communities as a whole.

Strategy

Develop digital technology platform to unify health and human services.

Lead Agency

Behavioral Health Collaborative & StarkMHAR

In the fall of 2023, a group of local stakeholders were assembled to determine the need and feasibility of creating a community information exchange (CIE). CIEs are systems of healthcare and service providers using a common technology platform to share data and make efficient, closed loop referrals to address the social determinants of health in a holistic, data-driven way. The CIE Workgroup consisted of 17 members representing 11 agencies.

The CIE Workgroup met seven times throughout 2024, to discuss different platform options, research similar community projects, determine budget projections and identify local, statewide and federal support and funding opportunities. Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service was contracted to conduct a [Social Return on Investment \(SROI\) Analysis](#) based on a set of assumptions about the likely trajectory of a Stark County CIE. This report provided the information needed to support the development of a CIE in Stark County.

ConnectWell CIE of East Central Ohio was launched in 2025, focusing on whole-person care, removing barriers, fostering collaboration, and creating a healthier more connected community for everyone. ConnectWell CIE of East Central Ohio partners with local agencies, providers, and community members to link individuals with housing, food, transportation, healthcare, legal aid, and other essential resources. ConnectWell CIE of East Central Ohio has over 25 partner agencies on the platform and several community trainings have been facilitated. Startup funding was provided by Aultman Health System, City of Canton, North Canton Medical Foundation, Sisters of Charity Foundation, Stark Community Foundation, Stark MHAR, The Timken Foundation and United Way.

Access to Care

Goal #2

Improve patient access to behavioral health care and identify funding sources to reduce barriers.

Strategy

Reduce non-treatment barriers to improve behavioral health access.

Lead Agency

Access Health Stark County & Aultman Health Foundation

In the fall of 2023, the Behavioral Health Access Workgroup met twice to develop a plan with measurable objectives, action steps, and specific data indicators. The workgroup consisted of 19 members representing 12 different agencies.

The Behavioral Health Access Workgroup met six times in 2024, to finalize the action plan and develop a survey to identify social barriers within the community around transportation, housing, food insecurity, utility costs and health literacy. The survey was administered via hard copy directly to clients of Access Health Stark County, Aultman Generations, Stark County Health Department, Massillon City Health Department, and Alliance Family Health Center. Survey data was entered into an online system and analyzed by the Center for Marketing & Opinion Research. A total of 137 surveys were completed; respondents were Stark County residents, at least 18 years of age and currently receiving services.

In 2025, the Behavioral Health Access Workgroup met twice to discuss the leading barriers identified through the [Social Barriers Survey](#) and to plan open community discussions to collaboratively explore potential solutions and share insights to improve these access barriers. Approximately 67% of respondents reported experiencing barriers to care. The most common issues mentioned included financial issues such as lack of money or bills in general (44.9%), food insecurity (44.1%), housing (40.9%), transportation (29.9%), and health care (27.6%). Stakeholders, community partners, agencies and residents were brought together to openly discuss the issues of transportation (March), housing (April), and food insecurity (May). [Open discussion reports](#) are housed on the Stark County Health Department's website

Mental Health

Goal #1

Improve patient care coordination among behavioral health providers and medical offices/urgent care centers.

Strategy

Increase formalized partnerships between behavioral health providers and medical offices/urgent care centers.

Lead Agency

Alliance Family Health Center

In the fall of 2023, the Formalized Partnership Workgroup met three times to develop a plan with measurable objectives, action steps, and specific data indicators. The workgroup consisted of 22 members representing 14 different agencies.

Throughout 2024, the Formalized Partnership Workgroup met eight times to develop a survey to gather baseline data surrounding existing formalized partnerships between behavioral health and primary care providers. The survey identified seven current formalized partnerships between behavioral health and medical providers as well as engagement opportunities to enhance these existing partnerships and/or to establish new partnerships. A total of 20 surveys were completed.

The Formalized Partnership Workgroup met five times in 2025. Alliance Family Health Center, the lead agency, met with eight community partners to discuss challenges and gaps, identify specific agency training and resource needs, to make connections between behavioral health and medical provider offices and promote strong working relationships.

Mental Health

Goal #2

Increase digital wellness and safety for parents and youth.

Strategy

Increase safe electronic device education to decrease electronic bullying, increase youth stress management skills and sleep, and increase parent behaviors around electronic device management.

Lead Agencies

Stark County Health Department & Stark County Educational Service Center

In the fall of 2023, the Digital Wellness Workgroup met three times to develop a plan with measurable objectives and action steps, identify baseline data and specific data indicators, and research existing digital wellness and safety resources. The workgroup consisted of 25 members from 16 different agencies.

Throughout 2024, the Digital Wellness Workgroup met nine times to discuss and develop tailored messaging for youth, parents, and the broader community on digital wellness and safety. Resources were identified through the [Digital Wellness Lab of Boston Children's Hospital](#). A speaker from the Digital Wellness Lab presented at the 2024 Health Improvement Summit. Meetings were held with several high school and college level education and tech programs and with local marketing professionals to gather feedback on the direction of the digital wellness media campaign. A contract with a local marketing consultant, HomePlace Creative, was established. The workgroup utilized the Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey (OHYES!) from the 2022-2023 school year as baseline data and the 2024-2025 school year to track strategy and activity progress. OHYES! is administered to middle and high school students on a regular basis.

In 2025, the Digital Wellness Workgroup met seven times to promote the toolkit and develop a quarterly newsletter. HomePlace Creative developed the Digital Wellness Toolkit, a marketing plan with identified tactics, branded messaging, and videos. The Digital Wellness Toolkit, housed on [StarkHelpCentral.com](#), was created to help families, educators, and community partners build healthier, more balanced relationships with technology. The toolkit offers practical, easy to use resources that support real-life connections, reduces stress, and encourages mindful tech use. The Stark County Health Department created a Digital Wellness Newsletter, distributed quarterly to help community members stay up to date with the latest digital news, tools, and resources.

Mental Health

Goal #3

Improve behavioral health support for school staff within school districts.

Strategy

Expand behavioral health support within school districts to improve mental cognition and reduce classroom stress.

Lead Agencies

Stark County Health Department & Stark County Educational Service Center

The Digital Wellness Workgroup was also responsible for the school-based initiative addressed under goal three. In 2023, the workgroup researched potential surveys to assess school district behavioral health needs and identified the current behavioral health supports available to district personnel.

In 2024, the Digital Wellness Workgroup developed a [School Staff Mental Health Survey](#) utilizing the [Ohio School Wellness Initiative Manual](#) to gather baseline data and met with interested school districts. The survey identified specific behavioral health needs of school personnel. A total of 332 surveys were completed by participants from the following four districts and schools: Canton Local, Minerva Local, Osnaburg Local, and Patrick Elementary (Canton City Schools). The Stark County Educational Service Center continues to promote the survey to interested school districts.

A Kent State University Master of Public Health student created a uniquely designed (logo, school colors) mental health wellness newsletter for participating school districts in 2025. The newsletter incorporated survey data and addressed the specific needs identified within each school district's survey results. This strategy was completed in 2025.

Fifth Assessment Cycle - 2026 Next Steps

The Stark County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Advisory Committee transitioned into the fifth assessment cycle in 2025 with the development of the Community Health Assessment (CHA). The 2025 CHA was facilitated by the Center for Marketing & Opinion Research (CMOR) and included the following project components:

- **Community Survey** consisted of a random sample survey of Stark County, Ohio households. The final sample size was 800 which resulted in an overall sampling error of +/- 3.5% within a 95% confidence level. Oversamples were completed for Canton, Massillon, Alliance as well as with black residents to analyze these groups independently.
- **Social Barrier Survey** consisted of 137 county residents who were currently receiving services from a social service provider in the county.
- **Secondary Data Analysis** consisted of reviewing and analyzing secondary data sources to identify priority areas of concern when compared to survey data. CMOR gathered and compiled health and demographic data from various sources. OHYES! data was included providing data specific to the county's middle and high school student populations.
- **Qualitative Data** provided some contextual information to the primary and secondary data outlined above.
 - **Community Partner Survey** an on-line survey completed by 142 community partners with knowledge of and experience in community health related issues.
 - **Focus Groups** of two key demographics: older adults and residents of the county's rural areas.

CMOR analyzed all the data collected to identify the top five priority health issues for Stark County.



More than 150 community stakeholders, residents, and partner organizations participated in the 2025 Health Improvement Summit to prioritize these needs, resulting in Mental Health and Community Conditions being selected as the focus areas for the next planning cycle. The 2026-2028 Community Health Improvement Plan will be developed by the CHNA Advisory Committee in 2026, providing a roadmap for future assessment efforts.

The CHNA Advisory Committee utilized the Clear Impact Performance Management Software System, an easy-to-use web-based platform to collect, organize, analyze and share CHIP outcomes. The 2023-2025 evaluation report highlights the strategies and activities implemented throughout this assessment cycle.