

Arkansas Children's Northwest Community Health Needs Assessment Implementation Strategy

2026-2028



Arkansas Children's Northwest Implementation Strategy

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Arkansas Children's Northwest Implementation Strategy

Our Mission

We champion children by making them better today and healthier tomorrow.

Our Vision

Unprecedented child health.
Defined, discovered, delivered.

Child Health Needs Presented for Prioritization

Access to Care
Behavioral & Mental Health
Child Maltreatment Prevention
Injury Prevention
Maternal & Infant Health
Nutrition Security
Preventive Care
Substance Use Prevention
Violence Prevention

INTRODUCTION

Arkansas Children's is deeply committed to children in the communities we serve and is driven by a deep understanding of their ongoing health needs. From March 2024 through March 2025, the Arkansas Children's Community Engagement, Advocacy and Health Division completed the 2025 Arkansas Children's Northwest (ACNW) Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The CHNA considered all children in a 15-county area of northwest Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma as its community. This area includes Benton, Boone, Carroll, Crawford, Franklin, Johnson, Logan, Madison, Newton, Sebastian and Washington counties in Arkansas and Adair, Delaware, Le Flore and Sequoyah counties in Oklahoma. The assessment allowed for in-depth, community-engaged listening with a wide range of experienced stakeholders across the state. These primary data, along with secondary data, formed the foundation for the report.

The assessment incorporated five primary components, including:

26 focus groups with parents, caregivers, educators, community leaders, public health and health care leaders, school nurses and medical providers

28 key informant interviews with public health and subject matter experts

65 Comprehensive child-specific data review from more than 65 local, state and national sources of data sets and reports that compile data sets

667 A digital survey completed by 667 parent and caregiver respondents

136 A digital survey completed by 136 youth respondents

The 2025 assessment identified nine child health needs, with financial hardship indicated as a moderator of health. The CHNA team and advisory committees prioritized these needs through a multi-step scoring process developed for the assessment.

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First, the CHNA team analyzed each need based on factors determined by data and the community, including:

- Scope
- Severity
- Health Disparities
- Community Priority

Next, the advisory committee analyzed the needs based on factors including:

- Connection to Arkansas Children's mission, vision and strategic priorities
- How Arkansas Children's could impact the needs
- How impact could be measured
- Other leadership and critical considerations

As a result of this process, ACNW determined two identified needs as priorities for the next three years. This document is the corresponding Implementation Strategy, which details the planned activities that ACNW will employ to address these needs.

Priorities for the 2025 ACNW Community Health Needs Assessment

WELL-CHILD

Access to Care
Preventive Care

BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL HEALTH

– MODERATOR OF HEALTH –
FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

To download the
full 2025 ACNW
CHNA, visit
archildrens.org/chna

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In addition to satisfying the federal tax-exemption requirements outlined in the Affordable Care Act in 2012, the 2025 ACNW CHNA seeks to:

- Identify and prioritize the health needs of the children served by ACNW.
- Inform Arkansas Children's strategic initiatives that improve child health.
- Inform the impact efforts of several agencies that serve children in the ACNW service area.

COMMENTS

Please email
CHNA@archildrens.org
to submit a comment or
request a printed copy of
the 2025 ACNW CHNA.

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ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The 2026-2028 ACNW Implementation Strategy is a plan of action designed to address the priority community health needs identified during the 2025 ACNW CHNA. As this strategy evolves over the coming three years, ACNW may update action steps in response to changing community needs, changes in hospital resources or evaluation results of community benefit initiatives.

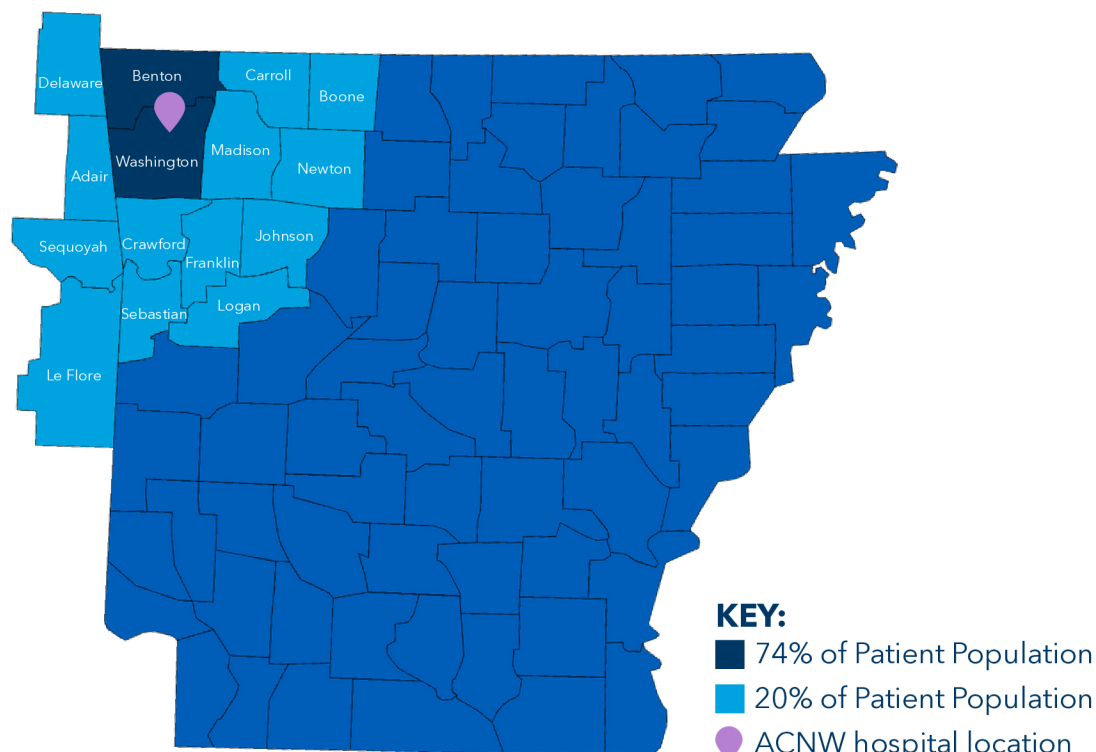
The 2025 CHNA prioritization process determined that six of the nine identified health needs would not be priorities for this strategy. These needs were not prioritized because they were less widespread or severe, had lower community priority, were less influenced by the hospital, were outside the current scope of the hospital or were more suitable for other organizations to address. While these issues are not priorities for this strategy, the hospital currently provides some level of support, resources or education related to each of them and plans to continue those activities as appropriate. However, ACNW will focus the majority of resources on the two priority issues of Well-Child Care, encompassing both Access to Care and Preventive Care, and Behavioral & Mental Health during the 2026-2028 community benefit cycle.

COMMUNITY DEFINITION

ACNW is located in Springdale, Ark., and is the region's only pediatric hospital that provides complete pediatric care close to home, with a pediatric emergency room and a Level IV trauma center. It is part of the Arkansas Children's health care system, which consists of two hospitals, a pediatric research institute, a foundation, clinics, education and outreach – all with an unyielding commitment to making children better today and healthier tomorrow.

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, Arkansas Children's served nearly 180,000 unique patients aged 0-21, reaching every county in Arkansas and well into the region. ACNW served more than 50,000 of these patients. Seventy-four percent resided in Benton and Washington counties.

For this three-year strategy, ACNW will prioritize community benefit efforts in this region, with a focus on Benton and Washington counties.



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MODERATOR OF HEALTH: FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

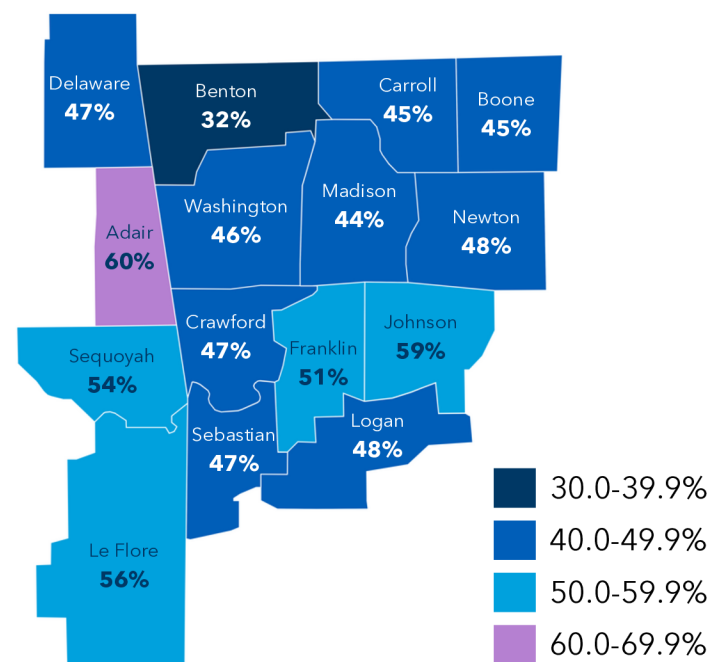
Financial hardship is widely recognized as an influencer – or a moderator – of health. While economic struggles may not cause poor health, they do influence the impact of various factors on overall health, such as:

- Access to health care for children – Insufficient or fluctuating income and other financial obstacles make it difficult for families to afford insurance and pay for preventive and incidental medical costs.
- Basic needs – Unstable or expensive housing, food and other basic needs exacerbate challenges with children's health. Reliance on inexpensive, processed food contributes to higher rates of obesity and related conditions.
- Parental support – In households with significant financial stress, parents may be unable to adequately care for their children, both physically and emotionally.
- Child mental health – Financial hardship may lead to chronic stress and developmental issues among children.

Financial hardship incorporates all households below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Threshold. This threshold depicts the minimum income necessary for a household's survival. Households below the threshold include those living below the FPL and ALICE households, which are those who earn above the poverty line but still struggle to afford necessities. This threshold, called the Alice Household Survival Budget, is defined by two additional measures: household costs and income by location. In Arkansas in 2023, the ALICE Household Survival Budget was \$26,460 for a single adult and \$70,500 for a family of four with two adults, an infant and a preschooler – much higher than the FPL (\$14,580 for an individual and \$30,000 for a family of four). Basic costs varied substantially by county (United for Arkansas, 2025). Please note that, at the time of this writing, Arkansas is a partner state with United for ALICE, but Oklahoma is not. For this reason, some ALICE data examined in this section were available for Arkansas only.

ACNW recognizes the added layer of burden financial hardship brings to our community members and supports families through assistance with application for Medicaid, TEFRA, SNAP and our financial assistance program, as well as referrals to community-based organizations for additional resources beyond our scope.

Percent Below ALICE Threshold by County



Source: United for ALICE, 2022

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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The Arkansas Children's Community Engagement, Advocacy and Health Division convened key members of the 2025 CHNA Advisory Committee and 2025 CHNA Working Group to draft and develop this implementation strategy. These individuals actively participated in planning sessions, contributing their ideas and selecting action steps for inclusion in this plan.

The strategy was informed by data and findings from the 2025 CHNA, past ACNW implementation strategy actions and hospital community benefit efforts. The resulting document was presented to the executive leadership of Arkansas Children's for approval and to the ACNW Board of Directors for adoption.

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES TO ADDRESS PRIORITY HEALTH NEEDS

To address the needs identified in this CHNA, Arkansas Children's recognizes the importance of partnerships and leveraging community resources. Key partners and resources identified to address these issues include:

Well-Child Care: Access to Care and Preventive Care

- State agencies
- Local (city and county) organizations
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs)
- Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
- Delta Dental
- Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) Arkansas
- Legal Aid of Arkansas
- Arkansas Minority Health Commission
- Immunize Arkansas
- School-based health centers

Behavioral & Mental Health

- State agencies
- Local (city and county) organizations
- Arkansas Behavioral Health Integrated Network
- Arkansas Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE)
- Natural Wonders Partnership Council
- UAMS Family Treatment Program and Child Study Center
- Arkansas Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)
- National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)
- UAMS Trauma Resource Initiative for Schools

ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S RESOURCE CONNECT

Powered by findhelp

Search for free or reduced-cost services like medical care, food, job training and more.



[RESOURCES.ARCHILDRENS.ORG](https://resources.archildrens.org)
OR DIAL 211 FOR HELP FINDING SERVICES



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Priority: Well-Child Care – Access to Care and Preventive Care

Anticipated Impact: Increase access to health care and utilization of preventive care services in the 15-county ACNW community

Metrics:

- Uninsured Children Aged 0-18 – Baseline found on page 23 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Children 0-18 Covered by Medicaid – Baseline found on page 24 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Immunization rates for children 19-35 months – Baseline found on page 25 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Immunization exemption rates – Baseline found on page 26 of 2025 ACNW CHNA

Operational Teams: ACNW teams, including Clinical Providers, Primary Care and Financial Counseling; Arkansas Children's teams, including Strategic Marketing and Communications, Arkansas Children's Clinical Network (ACCN) and the Division of Community Engagement, Advocacy and Health.

External Partners: School Districts, Marshallese Educational Initiative, Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese, Immunize Arkansas, local pharmacies, Legal Aid of Arkansas, Arkansas Department of Health (ADH), Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Natural Wonders Partnership Council and other non-profit and clinical partners.

Additional information relating to this health need can be found on pages 23-31 of the 2025 ACNW CHNA.

Action Step	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Utilize public information channels to promote the importance of prevention and receiving preventive health care, such as immunizations and well-child visits, particularly during the first year of life and opportunities to connect to care.	Parents and caregivers Pediatric health care providers	# of people reached # of engagements
Continuing Initiatives		
Continue efforts to increase vaccine access, such as partnering on vaccine clinics and providing vaccination clinics through local school district partnerships and supporting school-based health centers.	Children, families and caregivers Children in schools with high need	# of fully immunized youth aged 0-18 years for recommended ACIP-vaccines
Support the professional development of school nurses through community partnerships, the School Nurse Vodcast and the School Nurse Academy (SNA).	School nurses in Arkansas and border states	# of Vodcast and SNA participants # of CNEs given
Provide education on timely pediatric health topics to advance clinical outcomes, such as responding to cardiac and burn emergencies.	School staff, health professionals and first responders	# of Heart Safe Schools # of contact hours provided

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Priority: Well-Child Care – Access to Care and Preventive Care		
Action Step	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Continuing Initiatives		
Support and participate in the Arkansas Immunization Action Coalition's Childhood Immunization Workgroup and Natural Wonders Partnership Council to address vaccine hesitancy.	Counties and population groups with lower rates of immunization	# of fully immunized youth aged 0-18 years for recommended ACIP-vaccines
Continue the work of the Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) to support families with their health harming legal needs, such as assistance with eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).	Children, families and caregivers	# of cases referred # of cases closed
Support financial and multilingual resources, including enrollment in and referrals to Medicaid, TEFRA, SNAP, WIC and other programs that support access to care for families, like Arkansas Children's Resource Connect.	Children, families and caregivers	# of applications assisted # of referrals in Arkansas Children's Resource Connect % of patients insecure on SDoH screenings who receive referrals % of children 0-18 covered by Medicaid % of uninsured children aged 0-18
Participate in the ADH Paint-A-Smile program and perform oral health risk assessments, oral health screenings, education and apply fluoride varnish in clinical settings.	Children in clinical settings	# of oral health risk assessments and screenings conducted # of children who receive fluoride varnish
Utilize the Arkansas Children's Community Health Fund to support nonprofit partner organizations in addressing access to care and preventive care issues.	Organizations engaged in addressing access to care and preventive care	# of Community Health Fund grants provided

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Priority: Behavioral & Mental Health

Anticipated Impact: Empower communities in the 15-county ACNW region to address behavioral and mental health issues by increasing connections to resources and education

Metrics:

- Teen suicide rate (per 100,000 youth ages 15-19) – Baselines found on page 35 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- High school students who report feeling sad or hopeless – Baselines found on page 34 of 2025 ACNW CHNA

Operational Teams: ACNW teams, including Social Work and Primary Care; Arkansas Children's teams, including Behavioral Health, Strategic Marketing and Communications, and the Division of Community Engagement, Advocacy and Health.

External Partners: ADH, AFSP, Arkansas AWARE, Arkansas Crisis Center, DESE, Natural Wonders Partnership Council, One Community, school districts, and other non-profit and clinical partners.

Additional information relating to this health need can be found on pages 33-38 of the 2025 ACNW CHNA.

Action Step	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Engage in the Natural State Suicide Prevention Coalition to support strategies with the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (NSSP).	Organizations engaged in suicide prevention strategies	Unified voice for suicide prevention Collaboration to address resource gaps and provide evidence-informed solutions
Utilize public information channels to inform community of available mental health resources and educate on the connection of mental health to topics such as bullying, social media, infant health and attachment, parental support, parenting skills and substance use.	Children, families and caregivers Community members	# of people reached # of 988 engagements
Continuing Initiatives		
Support community-based organizations (CBOs) and schools to increase access to evidence-based trainings to support mental health, resiliency and stigma reduction.	Children, families and caregivers Community members School staff, including school counselors and nurses	# of participants reached # of CBOs and schools engaged

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Priority: Behavioral & Mental Health		
Action Step	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Continuing Initiatives		
Leverage youth voice through opportunities like community conversations, art expression and photovoice to reduce mental health stigma.	Children and youth Community members	Decreased stigma related to mental health # of youth voice participants
Continue the work of the MLP to support families with behavioral health needs, such as 504 plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).	Families with children experiencing behavioral health needs	# of cases closed related to behavioral health supports
Support and expand the development and distribution of educational support materials for families, such as means restriction materials and safety product distribution.	Children, parents, families and caregivers	# of resources distributed
Utilize the Arkansas Children's Community Health Fund to support nonprofit partner organizations in addressing behavioral and mental health issues.	Organizations engaged in addressing behavioral and mental health	# of Community Health Fund grants provided
Continue and build upon partnerships with schools and school-based health centers to support children in mental health crisis and improve processes for returning to school after a crisis.	School staff, including school counselors and nurses	Collaboration that results in improved supports and continuity of care for students

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Additional Needs Identified

Anticipated Impact: Appropriate initiatives and interventions will support the additional needs identified in the 2025 CHNA

Metrics:

- Eligible households participating in WIC and SNAP – Baselines found on page 47 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Infant mortality rate (IMR) – Baselines found on page 49 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Child Maltreatment Victims per 1,000 – Baselines found on page 51 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Arkansas Children Entering Foster Care from Substance Abuse – Baseline found on page 53 of 2025 ACNW CHNA
- Child Injury Deaths per 100,000 – Baselines found on page 55 of 2025 ACNW CHNA

Operational Teams: ACNW teams, including Social Work, Primary Care, Nutritional Services and Financial Counselors; Arkansas Children's teams, including Strategic Marketing and Communications, Home Visiting and the Division of Community Engagement, Advocacy and Health.

External Partners: Northwest Arkansas Community of Practice, Apple Seeds, NWA Food Bank, Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), Arkansas Highway Safety Office, school districts and other non-profit and clinical partners.

Additional information relating to these health needs can be found on pages 46-58 of the 2025 ACNW CHNA.

Action Steps	Additional Need(s) Addressed	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Host community conversations in target communities to educate and better address risk factors that impact infant safety.	Injury Prevention Maternal & Infant Health	Parents, families and caregivers	# of participants Improved IMR in communities Generalizable health knowledge shared with partners and stakeholders
Continuing Initiatives			
Continue to support Arkansas Children's nutrition security efforts, such as offering emergency food parcels, participating in the USDA sack lunch program, maintaining community Little Free Food Pantries, aiding in enrollment of food assistance programs and referring individuals to food resources close to home.	Nutrition Security	Children, parents, families and caregivers	# of lunch bags distributed to youth 18 and under # of families served by emergency food % of those eligible using SNAP and WIC

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Additional Needs Identified			
Action Steps	Additional Need(s) Addressed	Priority Population	Outcome Marker
Continuing Initiatives			
Continue to provide and expand opportunities for ACNW team members to volunteer for emergency food organizations and CBOs that address food insecurity.	Nutrition Security	Children and families who are under-resourced	# of volunteer events # of employees participating
Continue to connect families to maternal and infant health resources, such as WIC, home-visiting programs, Safe Start to Parenting classes, healthy relationship education, breastfeeding support, etc.	Maternal & Infant Health	Children, parents, families and caregivers	# of participants # of referrals
Continue and expand opportunities to educate and connect families to resources through Arkansas Children's Resource Connect, safety product distribution.	Child Maltreatment Prevention Injury Prevention Maternal & Infant Health Nutrition Security Substance Use Prevention Violence Prevention	Children, parents, families and caregivers	# of referrals through Arkansas Children's Resource Connect % of patients insecure on SDoH screenings who receive referrals # of safety products provided # of educational materials provided
Continue partnerships to advance child abuse prevention and infant health programs in the community.	Child Maltreatment Prevention Maternal & Infant Health	Children, parents, families and caregivers	# of Safe Start to Parenting participants # of individuals referred to home visiting programs # of partnerships engaged

