



2019  
COMMUNITY HEALTH  
NEEDS ASSESSMENT  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# 2019 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connecticut Children's, Hartford, Connecticut

Connecticut Children's strives to provide state-of-the-art medical and surgical care for patients, and is committed to strengthening communities to ensure support for children and families. Residents of cities like Hartford, where our main campus is located, continue to experience higher rates of chronic illness, developmental delays, injuries, violence, and trauma compared to suburban residents. We must address and reduce these disparities by incorporating access to community services from all child-serving sectors into our standard of care. By doing so, we can ensure health equity and stronger futures for all.

## METHODS:

In preparing the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), Connecticut Children's relied on interviews and surveys with community leaders and health leaders who participated in a key informant session; focus groups with residents of Hartford; and a survey of nurses employed by schools in Hartford. Connecticut Children's also reviewed many additional sources of information to inform this CHNA.

## IDENTIFIED NEEDS:

The CHNA highlights the greatest needs faced by Hartford residents in the following four categories, as identified by the community through our research:

<b>Mental Health, Behavioral Health, and Trauma</b>	Mental health ranked as the number one issue of concern facing Hartford residents, as identified in a survey of community leaders and health leaders. In a separate survey, school nurses identified behavioral health as the top concern facing children in Hartford schools, with violence ranking as the third highest concern. In addition, residents of our focus groups identified a dire need for more mental and behavioral health services, particularly for children. They also noted that depression among young children in Hartford is a need that must be addressed.
<b>School Readiness</b>	Community leaders and health leaders interviewed during our key informant session indicated an interest in learning more about education gaps in Hartford and how to address them. Their questions and comments centered on how absenteeism and transportation contribute to academic outcomes; whether affordability affects Pre-K and afterschool program participation; and how the Hartford curriculum compares to other districts. Residents who participated in our focus groups expressed concerns about a lack of affordable childcare, early learning opportunities, and children's programming at library branches. School nurses identified a need for hospitals to assist with the provision of supplies as well as educational materials for students, teachers, classrooms and schools.



<p><b>Childhood Obesity Prevention</b></p>	<p>Community leaders and health leaders interviewed during our key informant session identified food insecurity, which is a major contributor to childhood obesity, as the second issue of highest concern for Hartford residents. During focus groups, residents identified childhood obesity as one of the most pressing issues facing both children and adults. They named food deserts as a major factor in the obesity crisis, noting that their neighborhoods lack supermarkets, which reduces opportunities to access fresh fruits or vegetables. School nurses identified nutrition and a lack of opportunity to exercise as two of the five biggest health problems facing Hartford children. They also identified a lack of access to healthy foods and a lack of safe, stimulating play spaces as barriers that prevent children from maintaining healthy weight.</p>
<p><b>Housing, Environment and Community Factors</b></p>	<p>In a survey, community leaders and health leaders identified “poverty/food insecurity/lack of transportation” and “general lack of health care” as pressing issues for Hartford families. Other issues of concern included “housing affordability,” “income inequality and segregation,” and “housing quality/healthy homes.” During focus groups, residents identified asthma, injuries, accessing health services, and a lack of urgent care centers as top issues affecting children. School nurses identified a need to educate families to utilize primary care physicians, as opposed to emergency departments, which they stated is critical to ensuring continuity of care for optimal health.</p>

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Connecticut Children’s leadership and partners recognize the breadth of resources needed to address the extensive array of medical, social, and environmental needs identified in this assessment. The following recommendations provide a blueprint for the work of Connecticut Children’s and Connecticut Children’s Office for Community Child Health going forward.

**1. Develop Centralized Cross-Sector Care Coordination Services**

- a. Enhance medical, behavioral, and community care coordination at Connecticut Children’s and advocate for a centralized system of care coordination in the community.
- b. Expand care coordination within Connecticut Children’s clinically integrated network of primary care providers across the community and State.

**2. Increase Access to Health Services for Underserved Children**

- a. Ensure all children have access to health insurance and health services, including primary care and urgent care facilities.
- b. Expand early identification of child and family mental health concerns, along with insurance coverage for and access to counseling.

**3. Increase Collaboration Between Clinical and Community Programs to Ensure Best Outcomes Across Sectors**

- a. Encourage and support provider referrals to care coordination services.
- b. Bring Connecticut Children’s Easy Breathing and Healthy Homes programs to scale to reduce asthma, lead poisoning, and preventable injuries.
- c. Expand Connecticut Children’s clinically integrated network to offer pediatric providers clinical training, networking opportunities, partnerships with school based health centers, and access to community programs addressing social and environmental needs.



#### **4. Enhance Early Identification and Intervention for At-Risk Children**

- a. Expand efforts to serve children who are vulnerable and at risk for poor health, developmental, behavioral, academic, and life outcomes. Bring Help Me Grow, Connecticut's system of developmental promotion, early detection, and connection to services to scale through outreach to early learning centers, family resource centers, and child health providers.
- b. Advocate for housing and developmental services for children with blood lead levels between 5 and 25 micrograms per deciliter who are currently ineligible for services.

#### **5. Strengthen Education and Outreach for Injury and Violence Prevention**

- a. Increase engagement with communities and schools through Connecticut Children's Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Hartford.
- b. Increase collaboration with community organizations using the evidence informed "violence interrupter" model.
- c. Ensure comprehensive training for all Connecticut Children's team members on identifying and supporting families affected by violence.

#### **6. Advance a Strength-Based Protective Factors Approach**

- a. Expand internal and external adoption of the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework through training across all sectors serving children and families.
- b. Monitor implementation of the protective factors framework among providers, community health workers, and others who work with children and families.

#### **7. Increase Collaboration With Child Health Providers, Early Care and Education Providers, Home Visitors, Family Centers, and Public Schools to Facilitate School Readiness**

- a. Champion school readiness initiatives, which include early literacy promotion, school supply drives, and expanded public library hours and programming.
- b. Advocate for policies that increase access to, and affordability of, Pre-K and early learning programs.

#### **8. Prevent Childhood Obesity**

- a. Bring the Kohl's Start Childhood Off Right childhood obesity prevention program, with its expanded focus prenatal through age 5, to scale so more children enjoy the lifelong benefits of exposure to healthy nutrition and physical activity in their early years.
- b. Ensure residents have increased access to healthy food, nutrition information, and physical activity in order to maintain healthy lifestyles.

#### **9. Enhance Community Building Efforts in Targeted Neighborhoods**

- a. Launch and document outcomes from a health hub in North Hartford including a supermarket, health clinic, and affordable childcare that could be replicated elsewhere.
- b. Expand the Building for Health cross-sector referral approach to broaden the set of services supporting Hartford's families.
- c. Increase resources for those living in poverty, such as job training, employment services and opportunities, affordable childcare, community centers, and transportation.

