

Deschutes County Regional Health Implementation Strategy Summary

After completing the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), the St. Charles Board of Directors approved the 2026–2028 Regional Health Implementation Strategy (RHIS). This strategy guides the Bend and Redmond campus’s work for the next three years, focusing on pressing needs identified by local residents, partners and data.

The CHNA revealed several challenges affecting the health of the region, from behavioral health, substance use, housing, transportation and access to care. After evaluating severity, community impact and available resources, St. Charles Bend and Redmond selected two priorities that cut across age, background and circumstance—two areas where meaningful change could significantly improve quality of life.

The first priority focuses on reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve. Loneliness and social isolation affect people of all ages and are closely tied to poor physical and mental health outcomes. To address this widespread issue and work toward fostering a sense of belonging, St. Charles Bend and Redmond plans to take the following actions:

- Explore potential partnerships with local, state and national programs to measure loneliness among target populations, establish a baseline and develop metrics for tracking the resulting increased sense of belonging across Central Oregon
- Earmark grant dollars for partner organizations that are working to create opportunities for belonging and provide educational programs in the communities we serve
- Actively encourage St. Charles Health System to make in-kind donations, dedicate caregiver time and expertise to organizations with goal alignment (i.e. Central Oregon Suicide Prevention Alliance, public health departments, schools, community groups)
- Offer educational sessions and/or support groups related to physical or mental health conditions in a number of settings, including but not limited to, St. Charles Health System locations, schools, resource centers, health departments, etc. (i.e. suicide prevention, mental health first aid, cancer, family birthing, belonging presentation, etc.)

The following are the anticipated impacts to the intended actions:

- Community members will be able to access several trainings related to mental health with focus on connection and belonging (i.e. Mental Health First Aid, QPR, Belonging presentation, etc.).
- Community members will be able to support others experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation.
- Community members will have resources to foster belonging in their own communities.
- Community members will feel a stronger sense of belonging within the community where they most identify.
- Community organizations identify a sense of belonging as a need and commit to working on initiatives that foster a sense of belonging.

The second priority focuses on improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve. Food access is one of the most powerful predictors of long-term health, and too many families in the region struggle to find healthy, affordable nutritious food options. To address this widespread issue, St. Charles Bend and Redmond plans to take the following actions:

- Explore potential partnerships with local, state and national programs currently working to address access to healthy, affordable foods.
- Earmark grant dollars for partner organizations that are working to provide access to healthy, affordable food options and education on healthy cooking in the communities we serve.

- Actively encourage St. Charles Health System to make in-kind donations, dedicate caregiver time and expertise to organizations with goal alignment (i.e. The Giving Plate, NeighborImpact, Crook County on the Move, Madras Food Pantry, La Pine Community Kitchen, Sisters Community Garden, Around the Bend Farms, community groups)
- Offer support to organizations that are providing education/trainings on the importance of access to healthy, affordable foods and the impact of food insecurity in a number of settings, including but not limited to, St. Charles Health System locations, schools, resource centers, health departments, etc. (i.e. cooking class, gardening classes, etc.)
- Review, analyze and align, where appropriate, RHIS work plans with local, state and national efforts on an annual basis.

The following are the anticipated impacts to the intended actions:

- Enhanced community engagement and social cohesion: Food-related programs often bring people together, building stronger community ties and promoting collective well-being.
- Support for local and sustainable agriculture: Encouraging local food sourcing reduces dependence on imported foods and promotes environmentally sustainable practices.
- Increased food literacy and healthy eating habits: Educational components of these programs can empower individuals to make healthier food choices and sustain them over time.
- Improved nutritional health: Greater consumption of fresh, nutrient-rich foods leads to better overall health and helps prevent diet-related diseases.
- Improved access to affordable healthy food: Increased access to affordable foods helps ensure families and individuals can consistently meet their dietary needs.

Through these efforts, St. Charles Bend and Redmond reaffirms its commitment to not only treat illness but also support communities that foster a sense of belonging and have improved access to healthy, affordable foods.