

2026-2028

Regional Health Implementation Strategy

St. Charles Madras Community Benefit Department



Letter from leadership

At St. Charles Health System, we're working hard every day in our hospitals and clinics to improve the health of Central Oregonians by keeping care local, working with patients on their health goals and identifying barriers that keep people from achieving them.

As part of our role as the largest employer and the largest provider of health services in the region, we are proud to support community programs, wellness initiatives and efforts to improve access to care. More than ever, health care organizations like St. Charles understand that it isn't enough to just treat people who are injured or acutely ill — we must also work to prevent injury and illness in the first place. When we focus on education, prevention and reducing barriers to care, we can make an incredible difference at a time when every hospital bed, clinic room, employee and dose of medication counts.

St. Charles cannot care for Central Oregon on its own. We need partners every step of the way — partners who work in our communities, know our communities and understand the best ways to reach people and care for them where they are. These partnerships are absolutely vital, not only for the organizations involved, but for the communities we serve.

Every three years, St. Charles conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to help us better understand the specific health needs that our community is concerned about. Our most recent CHNA shows that while some in our communities are thriving, we have populations that are struggling with access to essential basic needs along with support for mental and behavioral health issues. From this information, we have determined that we will have two areas of focus for our Community Benefit priority work over the next three years.

- ***Reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities we serve.***
- ***Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve.***

We hope that together with our communities we can develop and support innovative ways to improve both of our selected priorities.

The St. Charles Health System Board of Directors reviewed, approved and adopted this implementation strategy during its February 2026 meeting. This has set in motion our plan to improve the communities in which we all live, work and play. Please take the time to review this important document. We know that it will take all of us, working together, to make Central Oregon as healthy as it possibly can be.

Sincerely,

Steve Gordon, MD
President and CEO

Matt Swafford
Chief Financial Officer

Overview

St. Charles Health System

Headquartered in Bend, Oregon, St. Charles Health System Inc. is a nonprofit, integrated delivery system that provides a full range of quality, evidence-based health care services within a 32,000-square-mile area in Central and Eastern Oregon. The health system owns and operates hospital campuses in Bend and Redmond, two Critical Access Hospitals in Madras and Prineville, family care clinics in Bend, La Pine, Madras, Prineville, Redmond and Sisters, a Center for Women's Health in Redmond and Bend, Urgent Care clinics in Bend, La Pine and Prineville, Cancer Centers in Bend and Redmond, a Heart & Lung Center in Bend, pharmacies in Bend, Madras and Prineville, Behavioral Health clinics throughout Central Oregon, a Center for Orthopedics and Neurosurgery in Bend and Redmond, along with many other specialty clinics throughout the region.

St. Charles Madras Campus

St. Charles Madras is a nonprofit, 25-bed Critical Access Hospital located in Madras, Oregon. St. Charles Madras is the only hospital located in Jefferson County and delivers a wide range of quality medical services to the residents throughout the region.

Summary of Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)

To prioritize the varied health needs of Jefferson County, the defined community served by St. Charles Madras, an extensive review of existing data, community partner information and a professionally facilitated phone survey were conducted and completed as part of the CHNA research. Once the initial analysis of available secondary data was collated, the phone survey completed and input collected from key stakeholders, the Community Benefit department prioritized St. Charles Madras' significant health needs as follows:

1. Mental/Behavioral health
 - *This significant health need is related to our priority of reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities we serve.*
2. Physical activity and weight status
 - *This significant health need is related to our priority of Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve.*
3. Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
4. Access to and quality of health care
5. Housing
6. Transportation

To review the 2026-2028 St. Charles Madras Community Health Needs Assessment in its entirety, please visit [Community Health Needs Assessment | St. Charles Health](#)

For any questions, comments or concerns, please contact the Community Benefit department at communitybenefit@stcharleshealthcare.org.

Criteria determining needs to be addressed

When determining which of the above significant health needs would be selected as the health priorities to be addressed, St. Charles considered the following criteria:

- Severity of issue
- Ability to impact
- Community resources
- St. Charles Madras campus available resources and expertise
- St. Charles Health System strategic plan

St. Charles Madras Prioritized Need(s)

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) identified that access to affordable healthy food, mental health services and affordable housing would most improve the health of our community. After careful consideration, St. Charles Madras campus will focus on efforts that help with **reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve** and **improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve** for the 2026-2028 regional health implementation strategy (RHIS).

Reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines loneliness as feeling alone, regardless of social contact, and social isolation as a lack of social connections.¹ One can experience one without the other. One might be connected but still feel lonely, or isolated yet not feel lonely.² About one in five Americans suffer from chronic loneliness, and younger adults show higher rates.³ Older adults are also at higher risk for both social isolation and loneliness due to health changes, mobility issues, loss of friends/family and sensory or memory impairments.⁴

Loneliness and social isolation are linked with a variety of serious health outcomes:

- Increased risk of heart disease and stroke.⁵
- Higher likelihood of dementia, slower walking speed, reduced self-care ability in older adults.⁶
- Among young people, associations with sleep disturbance, headaches, stomach aches, and over-use of the internet.⁷
- Overall, the health impacts of chronic loneliness and isolation are comparable to major risk behaviors like heavy smoking.⁸

Belonging is a fundamental human drive, defined as the subjective feeling of acceptance, inclusion, and identity within a group or community.⁹ According to Abraham Maslow's seminal Hierarchy of Needs belonging is situated as the third most foundational level, emerging only after the basic physiological and safety requirements have been relatively met.¹⁰ For some people, belonging is met via family, for others via church, friendships or other communities. The evolutionary importance of belonging is so profound that a deficiency can be intrinsically painful and sometimes overrides safety needs. It is strongly linked to negative psychological outcomes like depression and anxiety, and it is intrinsically tied to human health and resilience.¹¹ We truly are stronger together than we are alone.

Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve

Better access to healthy, affordable food is one of the biggest steps we can take to help the health of our communities. When good food is hard to find or too expensive, people end up relying on cheap, processed foods. This pattern is a major cause of serious, expensive long-

¹ [Health Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness | Social Connection | CDC](#)

² [What is Causing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and How Can We Fix It? | Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

³ [A Crisis of Belonging | Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

⁴ [Information for Health Care Providers | Still Going Strong | CDC](#)

⁵ [Social isolation and loneliness increase the risk of death from heart attack, stroke | American Heart Association](#)

⁶ [Health Effects of Social Isolation and Loneliness | Social Connection | CDC](#)

⁷ [What is Causing Our Epidemic of Loneliness and How Can We Fix It? | Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

⁸ https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes/social-isolation-loneliness.html?utm_source

⁹ [How the need to belong drives human behavior, with Geoffrey L. Cohen, PhD](#)

¹⁰ [Maslow's hierarchy of needs - Wikipedia](#)

¹¹ [The pain of social rejection](#)

term health problems like diabetes, heart disease and obesity. If we can make fresh produce and whole foods accessible and affordable, more people can adopt nutrient-rich diets, like the Mediterranean style, which are known to heal and protect the body. Studies even show that simply feeling secure about your food access is a stronger predictor of health than how much money you make, proving that this is a powerful way to reduce illness and long-term healthcare costs.^{12, 13}

It's about making sure everyone can thrive. When families struggle to get nutritious meals, it affects the whole community's performance. For kids, not knowing where their next meal is coming from (food insecurity) can impact their social, emotional and mental health and their ability to succeed in school.¹⁴ By making sure kids get proper nutrition, we support better concentration and development, setting them up for a stronger future. When people are healthy and energetic, they can show up, are more productive, find joy in their life and contribute more effectively to community life.

Finally, improving food access is essential for fairness and equality. There's a persistent problem where certain neighborhoods, often communities of color, are designated as "food deserts." This means they may have many fast-food options and convenience stores, but very few full-service grocery stores with affordable, healthy options.¹⁵ This makes healthy eating an expensive privilege rather than an easy choice, which continues to drive the health gap between groups. Health experts know that to truly help people get well, they must remove these practical, everyday barriers. When healthy food is available on every corner, we make a huge stride toward giving everyone a fair shot at a long, healthy life.s

In the key survey that informed the Regional Health Implementation Strategy (RHIS), participants continued to support our current priority of reducing isolation and increasing belonging and the addition of another priority focusing on access to affordable healthy food. Access to affordable healthy food was the issue most identified as important to improve overall quality of life. We will work with communities and key partners to address our loneliness and isolation crisis and our community's need for improved access to affordable healthy foods.

St. Charles Health System aims to partner with community members, employees and other organizations to help older adults, youth and others improve their sense of belonging and improve access to healthy food.

Needs not being addressed

The following are the significant health needs identified in the St. Charles Madras Campus CHNA that will not be addressed in this implementation strategy:

- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Access to and quality of health care
- Housing
- Transportation

To achieve real improvement, this plan will focus on issues the organization has the most ability to impact alongside our community partners. This cycle we will continue to focus on our previous cycle priority and add **improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve**. We made great progress through support of many organizations and programs during the 2023-2025 cycle and we are looking forward to continuing to support and strengthen those programs during the next cycle. Also, by selecting our new priority we will be able to focus new efforts and resources to a focus area that has risen in importance to our community as shown in our Community Health Needs Assessment. The efforts to have a positive impact and make a

¹² [How Is Food Access Related to Chronic Disease? | The Institute for Functional Medicine](#)

¹³ [A Food First Approach: The Power of Nutrition | The Institute for Functional Medicine](#)

¹⁴ [Impact of Nutrition and Food Insecurity on Child Health](#)

¹⁵ [How Is Food Access Related to Chronic Disease? | The Institute for Functional Medicine](#)

positive change to our two priorities will be made by the employees at St. Charles Madras, in collaboration with local partners, to improve the health of those the health system serves.

While all of the needs listed above are important, St. Charles leaders have decided to focus Community Benefit resources and efforts on the two priorities identified above. Work will also continue on each of the other identified needs listed above through internal St. Charles departments and through external community partners.

Implementation Strategy

St. Charles Madras' implementation strategy will systematically focus efforts across the entire community toward addressing its selected strategic priorities – **reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve** and **improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve** – and will collaborate with and rely on our community partners to join the effort to improve our current health status and track and measure our results. The implementation strategy recognizes both where we are and where we would like to be.

Actions St. Charles Madras intends to take for:

Reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve

- Explore potential partnerships with local, state and national initiatives 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 employee 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.)

Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve

- Explore potential partnerships with local, state and national initiatives 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 employee 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.

Resources St. Charles Madras plans to commit for both priorities:

- Community Benefit department grant funds
- Dedicate individuals from St. Charles Health System to volunteer at community events, representing the hospital and health system as experts in their field at local educational sessions
- Employee time for continuing education on both priorities.
- Hosting and/or working with community partners on priority focused speaking/training events

Anticipated impact from intended actions

By committing to the actions listed above, and others to be determined, the St. Charles Madras campus hopes to see and anticipate:

Reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve.

- 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 sense of belonging as a need and commit to working on initiatives that foster a sense of belonging.

Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve.

- 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.
- Improve access to affordable healthy food: Increased access to affordable foods helps ensure families and individuals can consistently meet their dietary needs.

Potential collaborations

Uniting as a community is the most effective way to address health needs and strategic priorities. The health system, collaborating with community partners and stakeholders, can tackle complex issues and make a collective impact toward common strategic priorities of improving the health and well-being of our regional community. The following is a list of organizations and/or groups that employees from St. Charles Madras may collaborate with on behavioral health initiatives throughout Jefferson County¹⁶:

Reducing feelings of loneliness and social isolation while fostering a sense of belonging in the communities that we serve

- All St. Charles facilities and clinics
- Medical community
- Jefferson County Public Health
- Central Oregon Health Council (COHC)
- Communities creating health groups
- Neighborhood associations
- Schools
- Local organizations that work with marginalized communities
- Central Oregon Community College
- Family Resource Center
- Oregon State University (OSU) Cascades
- Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)
- Opportunity Foundation
- Council on Aging of Central Oregon
- Best Care Treatment Center
- Restorative Justice & Equity Group, a project of Better Together Central Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Rimrock Trails
- Better Together Central Oregon
- Kids Club
- Lines for Life
- Local veterans' organizations
- Senior centers
- Assisted living facilities
- Organizations supporting houseless population
- EMT/paramedics
- Law enforcement
- Teen groups
- Faith-based community

Improving access to healthy, affordable foods in the communities that we serve

- All St. Charles facilities and clinics
- Medical community
- Jefferson County Public Health
- Central Oregon Health Council (COHC)
- Communities creating health groups
- Neighborhood associations
- Schools
- Local organizations that work with marginalized communities
- Central Oregon Community College
- Family Resource Center

¹⁶ This listing is not meant to be all-encompassing but instead serves as a small sampling of potential resources related to the significant health need

- Oregon State University (OSU) Cascades
- Oregon State University Extension Services
- Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)
- Council on Aging of Central Oregon
- Restorative Justice & Equity Group, a project of Better Together Central Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
- Better Together Central Oregon
- Kids Club
- Local veterans' organizations
- Senior Centers
- Assisted living facilities
- Teen groups
- Faith-based community
- Organizations supporting houseless population
- Local farmers and ranchers
- St. Vincent de Paul
- High Desert Food and Farm Alliance
- NeighborImpact
- Family Access Network
- Madras Community Food Pantry

Next Steps

Once approved, representatives from St. Charles Madras will use this outline to create work plans with specific objectives, strategies and collaborations. These documents will be monitored internally by the Community Benefit department and each respective work plan owner, i.e. Human Resources, Population Health programs, Care Coordination, etc.

Progress reports and updates will be presented on an annual basis through December 2028.

This plan will be made widely available to the public via the St. Charles Health System website and in hard copy upon request.