

DICKINSON COUNTY

FY25-27 Community Health Improvement Plan



Table of Contents

01 CHA/CHIP EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

02 SURVEY OVERVIEW & RESPONSES

06 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

09 CANCER

11 AGING WELL

13 HEALTHY LIVING

15 BOARD APPROVAL

16 REFERENCES

17 STAKEHOLDERS

Executive Summary

CHA/CHIP Process for Dickinson County

Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) and Dickinson County Public Health (DCPH) partnered with community organizations and providers to develop the FY25 Community Health Assessment (CHA) and FY25-27 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for Dickinson County, Iowa. Over 500 residents participated in the community-wide survey. The CHA internal steering committee then reviewed the results for overarching themes, followed by dedicated conversations with key stakeholders to identify underlying issues and feasible solutions. Following the CHA review and approval by the Lakes Regional Healthcare Board of Trustees, community focus groups reconnected to create measurable goals for the next three years, organized into four prioritized significant community needs.

Prioritized Significant Community Needs

Survey results and focus group feedback highlighted the interconnected nature of the issues and solutions, as well as the importance of elevating resources and access to services. Our community's primary vehicles to address the goals below will be through the Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition and Dickinson County Hunger Coalition, both of which are co-led and supported by Lakes Regional Healthcare and Dickinson County Public Health.



Behavioral Health

Increase awareness of behavioral health resources through coalition work, marketing, and community outreach events.



Cancer

Provide education on ways to prevent or reduce the risk of cancer, while also promoting the importance of timely cancer screenings.



Aging Well

Collaborate community partners to increase availability, access, and awareness of resources for seniors.



Healthy Living

Identify opportunities for key community stakeholders to design, implement, and promote healthy living programs and services.

Community Input: Survey Overview

Survey Process

The community survey, available in both English and Spanish, launched on September 1, 2024 and remained open for one month. Respondents could complete it electronically, using a Survey Monkey link, or fill out and submit paper copies. The print version was available upon request by contacting Dickinson County Public Health; callers received a mailed copy of the survey, as well as a stamped return envelope to submit their responses and ensure their information was incorporated into the community survey data. Print surveys were also distributed with help from community partners, including to individuals representing low income, medically underserved and minority populations, including homebound individuals, those on Medicaid, and people receiving assistance to navigate a variety medical and social services networks.

The survey was initially promoted with a press release and subsequent social media posts. Post cards containing a QR code for residents to conveniently scan and fill out the survey electronically were left at a variety of local schools, grocery stores, libraries, clinics, hospital departments, and the ministerial association, as well as at local high school sporting events. It was further elevated through promotion in the Bedell YMCA and Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce digital newsletters. The survey included 21 questions covering a variety of topics that impact our community's health and wellness. A complete copy of the survey questions is located in Appendix A, in both English and Spanish.

Survey Data

In the previous FY22 Community Health Needs Assessment data collection process, we received many responses about how a certain service was “not applicable” to their experience. With this feedback, the steering committee researched alternative survey questions. Using examples from across the state of Iowa, Dickinson County adjusted its approach, reframing the questions to ask the respondent to select what was most important to them, from a large option bank, rather than asking about opinions related to specific service lines.

Upon review of the 506 community responses, the CHA steering committee identified three “North Star” questions that guided the priority setting process:

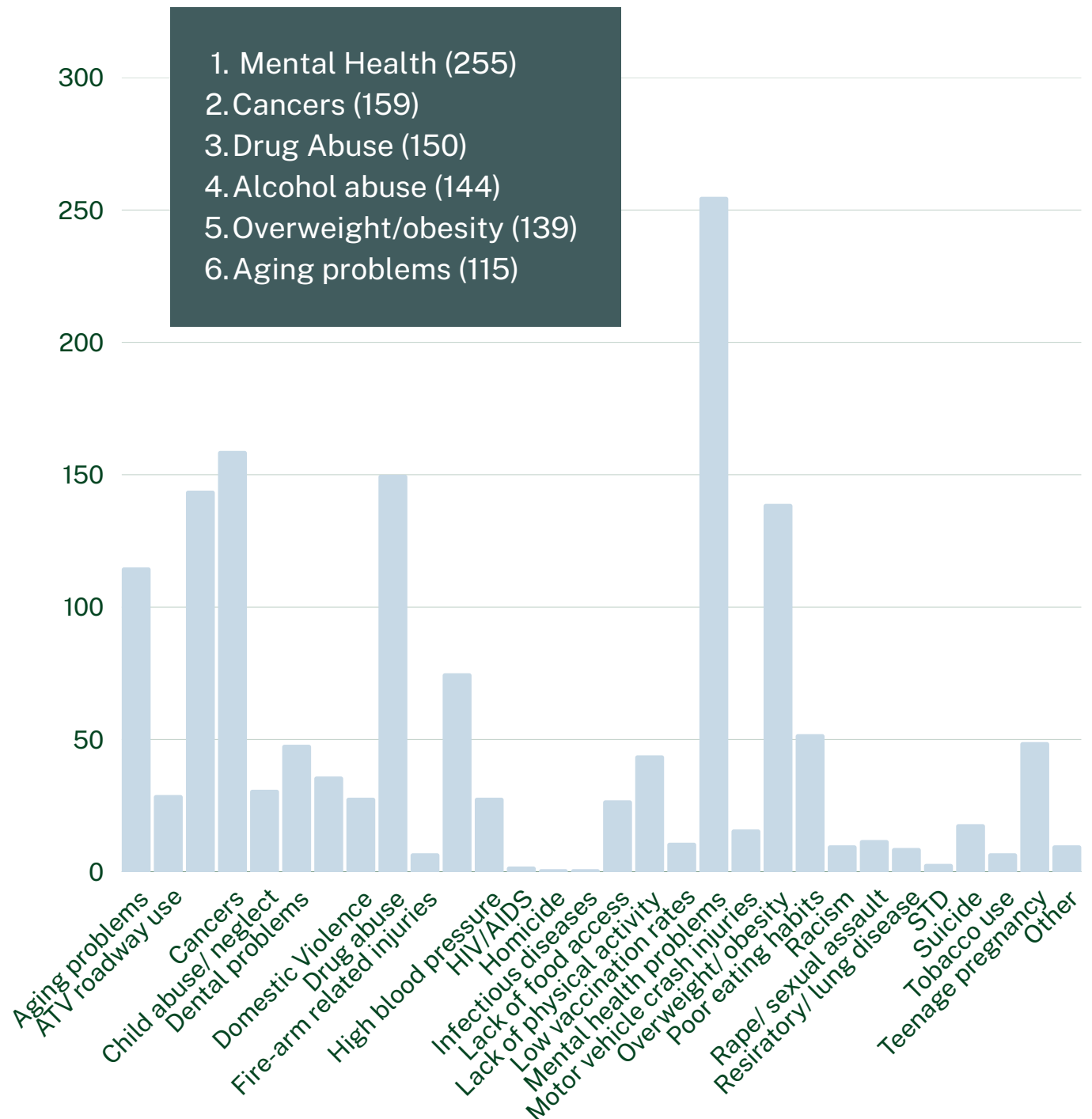
- “In the following list, what do you think are the three most important “health problems” in our community?”
- What are the three most important health screenings, education or information services needed in the community?
- What are the three most important things to improve the health of your family and neighbors?

506

**SURVEY
PARTICIPANTS**

Community Input: Survey Responses

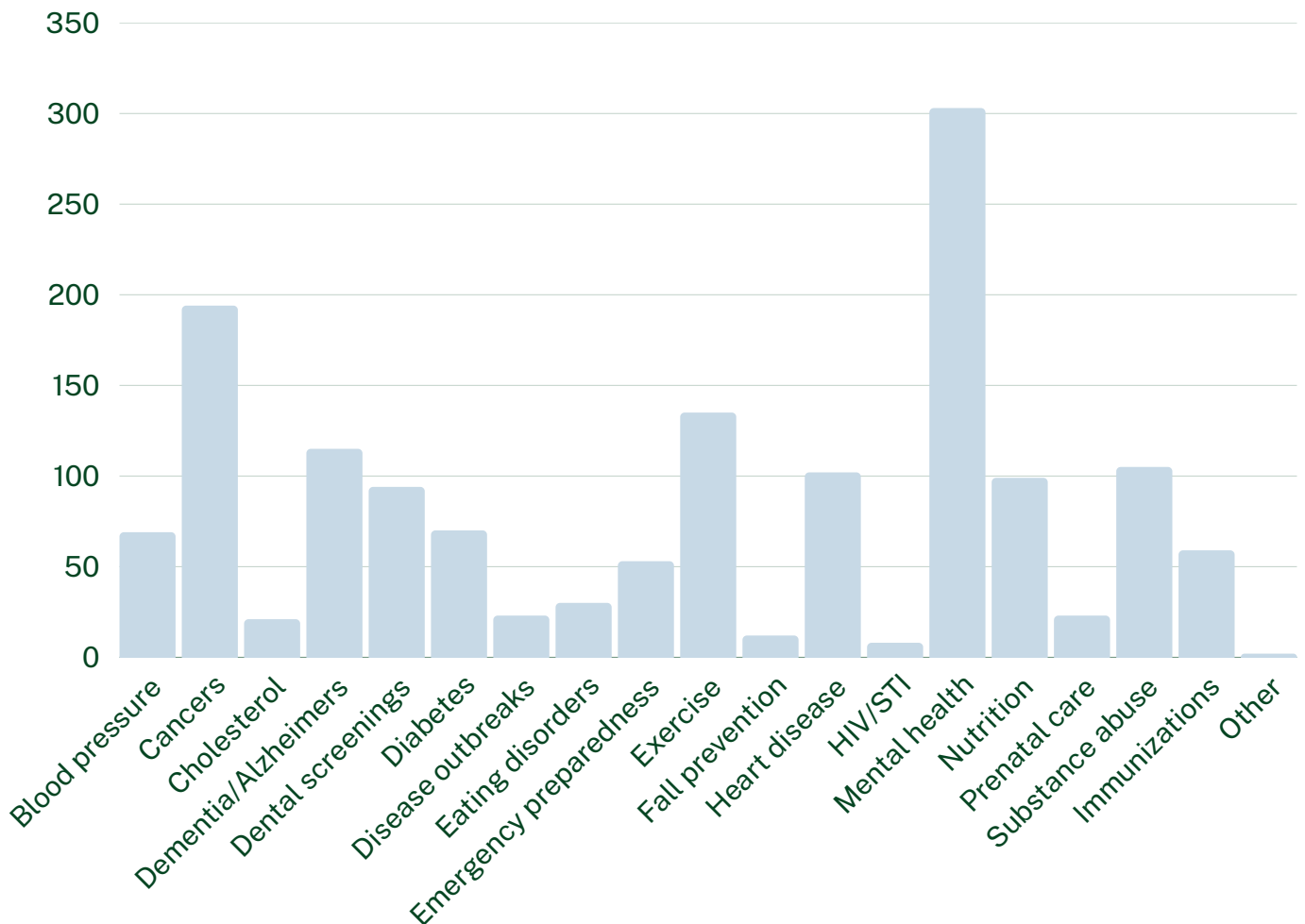
In the following list, what do you think are the three most important “health problems” in our community?



Community Input: Survey Responses

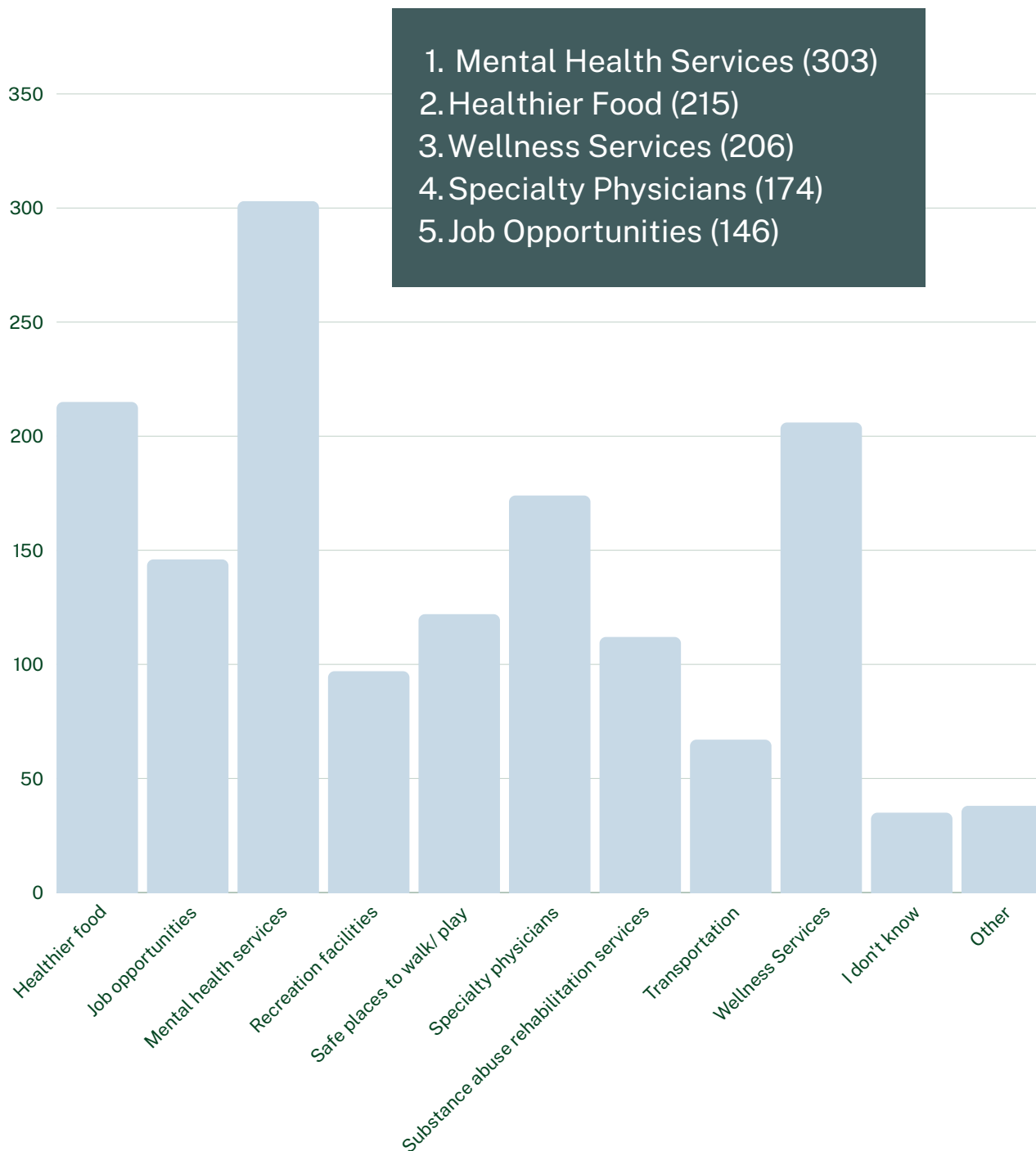
What are the three most important health screenings, education or information services needed in the community?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Mental Health (303) | 6. Heart Disease (102) |
| 2. Cancers (194) | 7. Nutrition (99) |
| 3. Exercise/physical activity (135) | 8. Dental Screening (94) |
| 4. Dementia/Alzheimer's (115) | 9. Diabetes (70) |
| 5. Substance Use (105) | 10. Blood Pressure (69) |



Community Input: Survey Responses

What are the three most important things to improve the health of your family and neighbors?





Behavioral Health

CHA Survey Data & Ongoing Coalition Work

Reviewing the results from the FY25 survey questions, over half of respondents noted behavioral health as an area of concern, listing it as one of the top three most important areas in relation to health problems, health screenings, and focus area needed to improve the lives of family members and neighbors. Substance use concerns also scored high. Informed by this community directive, Dickinson County will continue to prioritize the behavioral health work launched in FY22 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) cycle. Three years ago, the Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition (DCBHC) evolved from the CHNA mental health focus group.

DCBHC members include staff from local school districts, behavioral health providers, non-profit agencies, law enforcement, Lakes Regional Healthcare, and Dickinson County Public Health; the coalition also partners closely with the Iowa Great Lakes Rotary Club. Over the past three years, DCBHC established the Move for Mental Health Walk, serving as a multi-pronged initiative that encourages healthy movement, reduces stigma related to mental health, increases awareness of local resources, and raises funds to bring mental health speakers into the three school districts. The coalition also provides outreach to agricultural workers during the busy harvest season and continues to seek ways to support local seniors experiencing loneliness and access to resources. Based on CHA-CHIP focus group feedback, the coalition will continue to prioritize mental health outreach and engagement activities throughout the community.

State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) Alignment

Iowa conducted a statewide assessment, followed by the creation of its companion plan, the 2023-2028 State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). This document highlights similar prioritized needs seen at the local level, including Behavioral Health. Specific focus areas that align with Dickinson's survey feedback align with both of the state plan's overarching goals: Goal 1, Improve access to behavioral health services for all people in Iowa, and Goal 2, Strengthen Iowa's behavioral health system by increasing available resources and capacity. Within Goal 1, its Focus Area 1.3, Non-Traditional Delivery of Services, resonates with Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition objectives, encouraging the expansion of existing behavioral health programming in rural areas through innovative partnerships (Healthy Iowans).



Behavioral Health

The SHIP's second goal includes Focus Area 2.1: Children and Youth, Focus Area 2.2: Training and Support Services, and Focus Area 2.3: Collaboration (Healthy Iowans). Within those focus areas, DCBHC will continue to support prevention programming for youth 0-18, as well as for their family members. The coalition also aims to increase access to training and continuing education, while finding connections between behavioral health initiatives, as well as interrelated programming that addresses multiple CHA focus areas.

Potentially Available Resources

Atlas of the Lakes

Lakes Counseling

Crisis and Suicide Hotlines

Lakes Life Skills

Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition

Lakes Regional Family Medicine

Dickinson County Hunger Coalition

Local Churches

Disability Access Points

Local Schools

Elderbridge

On the Rock Counseling

Elevate

Plains Area Mental Health

Healthy Iowans: SHA-SHIP

Rosecrance Jackson Centers

Hope Haven

Seasons

Hope Rising

Shade of the Tree

Imperfectly Enough Psychiatry

Veteran's Counseling Center

Iowa Primary Care Association

Your Life Iowa



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH GOAL: Increase awareness of behavioral health resources through coalition work, marketing, and community outreach events

Strategies

- Maintain Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition (DCBHC), which provides a structure where mental health providers and key community stakeholders connect and develop strategies to raise awareness of behavioral health resources.
- Identify additional partners to elevate DCBHC strategies and presence in the county.
- Pursue diverse funding to invest in behavioral health awareness communication materials, including infographics, online resources, and advertising.
- Continue to host provider fairs, share-out sessions, panels, and Move for Mental Health Walk-Run to better familiarize the general public on available behavioral health services and organizations, as well as educate on specific mental health topics, such as resilience and grit.
- Support specific populations within the community through targeted initiatives, including campaigns and events for youth and families, agricultural workers, seniors, caregivers, and middle-aged adults.

Metrics to Ensure Progress

- DCBHC will continue to meet on a minimum of a quarterly basis to evaluate progress and plan ongoing outreach strategies and events.
- Minimum of two community outreach events that take into consideration youth population, implemented and promoted in partnership with Lakes Regional Healthcare and Dickinson County Public Health
- Utilize Move for Mental Health Walk proceeds to fund annual mental health initiatives.
- Minimum of one outreach event annually to the senior population of Dickinson County.
- Minimum of one mental health awareness campaign for the agricultural community annually.



Cancer

CHA Survey Data

In contrast with Behavioral Health, Cancer is a newly identified CHA-CHIP concern for Dickinson County residents. In response to the three most important health problems in our community, 159 respondents of 506 total participants selected cancer, making it the second most common survey response. Similarly, 194 people rated cancer as one of the three most important health screenings, also rising to the second. This heightened response coincides with the recent Cancer in Iowa reports, documenting the state of Iowa's continued status having second highest age-adjusted rate of new cancers in the nation, as well as one of only two states with increased cancer incidence (Iowa Cancer Registry).

99 Counties Project & Iowa Cancer Plan Alignment

In January 2025, Dickinson County participated in the 99 Counties Project, an initiative through the Iowa Cancer Consortium, Iowa Cancer Registry, and University of Iowa to identify the unique cancer risks occurring in individual counties. During their open community meeting, researchers Dr. Sarah Nash and Amanda Kahl shared that the most common types of cancers countywide include breast, prostate, melanoma, lung, and colorectal (Iowa Cancer Registry). They acknowledged the complex, multifactorial causes of cancers, including genetics, environment, age, and lifestyle choices. Some of these elements are beyond individual control; however, other risks can be identified and mitigated, and individuals can take timely steps to become aware of their cancer status. Aligning with the Iowa Cancer Plan, the Dickinson County CHIP targets actionable items, including specific steps at cancer prevention and risk reduction, as well as early detection and screening (Iowa Cancer Consortium).

Potentially Available Resources

Dakota Dermatology

Iowa Great Lakes Board of Realtors

Dickinson County Public Health

Joy of Life Foundation

Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center,
The University of Iowa

Lakes Regional Family Medicine

Iowa Cancer Consortium

Lakes Regional Healthcare



CANCER GOAL #1: Increase awareness and provide education on ways to prevent or reduce the risk of cancer

Strategies

- Reduce exposure to tobacco and secondhand smoke through promotion of prevention and cessation programming, as well as the dissemination of resources and informational materials through outreach events.
- Increase public awareness of the association between alcohol and cancer.
- Enhance opportunities to access nutritious food and be physically active.
- Promote and administer vaccinations shown to reduce the risk of cancer.
- Launch health education campaigns informing public of environmental health risks associated with radon and UV ray exposure, as well as mitigation techniques.

Metrics to Ensure Progress

- Partner to host community events and meetings, as well as advertising campaigns focused on cancer risk prevention and reduction.
- Track HPV vaccination rates in Dickinson County for ages 13-18.
- Increase radon testing and mitigation efforts.



CANCER GOAL #2: Increase awareness and availability of cancer screening

Strategies

- Develop a marketing strategy to educate the community on available cancer screening tools and current age recommendations.
- Educate the community on the signs and symptoms of various cancers, especially those identified by county-specific data presented during the 99 Counties Project, led by the Iowa Cancer Registry and University of Iowa.
- Promote cancer screening navigation programs, such as Care for Yourself, to increase patient access to early detection.

Metrics to Ensure Progress

- Update cancer screening posters and informational handouts in Lakes Regional Family Medicine clinic appointment rooms.
- Create a marketing calendar of annual cancer awareness dates to serve as a health awareness outline for initiatives, like October as Breast Cancer Awareness month.
- Utilize the 15 Care for Yourself slots across Dickinson, Emmet, and Osceola counties.



Aging Well

CHA Survey Data & Focus Group Feedback

115 survey respondents identified aging problems as a top three issue for Dickinson County residents. In response to the most important health screenings, education, and information services, 114 noted Dementia/Alzheimer's, as well as several chronic issues like heart disease (102), diabetes (70), and blood pressure (69). During the CHA focus group, staff from key partners like Elderbridge, health maintenance, home care, and hospice organizations, assisted living facilities, combined with representatives from the Bedell Family YMCA, other non-profit agencies, and representatives from the age group felt strongly about keeping a special emphasis on supporting the senior population rather than grouping related concerns into the Healthy Living category.

The data support the CHA focus group recommendations. According to the 2023 edition of the Older Iowans report, 27% of Dickinson County's population was over the age of 65 in 2021, ranking the county as the oldest population in the state of Iowa (State Data Center of Iowa, The Iowa Department of Aging). In 2023, the U.S. Census Bureau population estimates reported Dickinson County's 65+ population percentage rose to 28.9%, compared to 18.6% statewide and 17.7% nationally (University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute).

Potentially Available Resources

Bedell Family YMCA

Lake Park Senior Center

Dickinson County Hunger Coalition

Lakes Regional Family Medicine

Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition

Lakes Regional Healthcare

Dickinson County Public Health

Local Churches

Elderbridge

Local Food Pantries

Lakes Area Senior Center



AGING WELL GOAL: Collaborate community partners to increase availability, access, and awareness of resources for seniors

Strategies

- Identify target audiences, locations, and partnerships to leverage, promote, and build upon existing infrastructure to increasingly support the physical, mental, and social needs of the senior population.
- Support and promote built environments, such as the Bedell Family YMCA and local senior centers, that provide a space for prosocial programming and congregation.
- Evaluate options to create multi-generational opportunities for seniors, such as Walk with Ease, Reading Buddies, Lunch Buddies, and technology support partnering students with seniors.
- Maintain and promote resource navigation guides and postcards, such as the Dickinson County Resource Guide and the Dickinson County Crisis Navigation Guide.
- Pursue financial resources aimed at reducing the cost of community activities for seniors.
- Connect eligible individuals with Elderbridge, Dickinson County's Regional Agency on Aging, with the goal to keep people at home and surround them with resources to be able to age in place.
- Support rural residents by recruiting additional volunteers to assist seniors with transportation needs, including medical appointments, as well as Meals on Wheels delivery, to expand the area served.
- In rural communities, utilize locations like post offices to raise awareness of resource availability for energy assistance and food insecurity.

Metrics to Ensure Progress

- Provide quarterly out reach to rural seniors, providing resources and/or direct communication at town hubs like the local post office, grain elevator, gas station, food pantry, or library.
- Promote resource guides and post cards through both traditional and digital formats biannually.
- Track resource and program utilization engagement, including Meals on Wheels, congregate meal site attendance, and programs like Delay the Disease.
- Track volunteer numbers and participation rates related to senior programming and transportation needs.



Healthy Living

CHA Survey Data & Focus Group Feedback

Building on the concerns about chronic disease, 139 Dickinson County survey respondents noted overweight and obesity as a community issue. 135 expressed interest in more screenings and education on exercise and physical activity, as well as 99 participants selecting nutrition. In response to improving the health of family and neighbors, 215 of 506 survey respondents felt that access to healthier food was a key part of the solution. Local call for action related to healthier food choices and increased movement align with larger initiatives at the state level.

State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) & Iowa Cancer Plan Alignment

Healthy Iowans' State Health Improvement Plan, as well as the Iowa Cancer Plan, identify similar themes. The SHIP looks to reduce barriers to affordable, nutritious foods for Iowans, emphasizing the challenge of food insecurity, while championing solutions with 1) locally sourced foods, 2) a variety of physical activity options, and 3) community collaboration (Healthy Iowans).

The Iowa Cancer Plan reiterates these themes, encouraging the creation of environments that support physical activity and healthy eating (Iowa Cancer Consortium). Based on the local and state momentum, Dickinson County is committed to identifying opportunities for collaboration design, implementing, and promoting healthy living programs and services.

Potentially Available Resources

Bedell Family YMCA	Lakes Regional Healthcare
Dickinson County Hunger Coalition	Local Churches
Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition	Local Schools
Dickinson County Community Gardens	Meals on Wheels
Lakes Regional Family Medicine	No Boundaries Middle School Programs



HEALTHY LIVING GOAL: Identify opportunities for key community stakeholders to design, implement, and promote healthy living programs and services

Strategies

- Increase access to and promote the consumption of healthy foods through channels like Edible Orchards, local food pantries, and backpack programs.
- Encourage early adoption of healthy habits through implementation of Healthy LifeStars program, designed to motivate kids to live active lives and embrace nutritious food choices.
- Increase access and utilization of places for physical activity by promoting Dickinson County Trails, Dickinson County Community Gardens, local parks, wellness centers, as well as advertising of special events promoting healthy movement.
- Promote existing adult nutrition and movement programming, like diabetic education consulting, Fresh Conversations classes, and Delay the Disease.
- Identify additional opportunities to host or collaborate with community partners for wellness initiatives, like community classes that focus on healthy eating and exercise.
- Explore opportunities to develop a prediabetic program that creates access for A1C testing.

Metrics to Ensure Progress

- Attach recipes to food pantry items, like dried beans and lentils, providing accessible ideas about food preparation. Note whether this increases client interest in taking items. Trends will be discussed during monthly Dickinson County Hunger Coalition meetings.
- Document the pounds of produce, harvested from Dickinson County Community Gardens and Edible Orchards, donated to local food pantries and Head Start.
- On a quarterly basis, utilize food pantries as locations to offer health education, including smoking cessation, nutrition education services, oral health, movement opportunities and other programs designed to address social determinants of health.
- On a monthly basis, provide peer-led Healthy LifeStars programming in local elementary school classrooms.
- Track BMI trends over the next three years, as well as physical inactivity trends, through County Health Rankings and BRFSS responses.
- Track participation rates at healthy movement events, like Move for Mental Health.

Board Approval



To Whom It May Concern,

In compliance with the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the Lakes Regional Healthcare Board of Trustees officially reviewed and approved the FY 2025-2027 Dickinson County Public Health Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), created through the partnership between Lakes Regional Healthcare and Dickinson County Public Health.

Through feedback collected in FY25 community survey and stakeholder focus groups, the internal CHA committee identified four prioritized significant community needs. Initiatives related to the highlighted areas will be measured over the next three years::

- Behavioral Health
- Cancer
- Aging Well
- Healthy Living

Signed:

Dr. Joe Toale - Chairperson

10/22/2025

Date

Jason Harrington - President/CEO

10/22/2025

Date

References

Healthy Iowans. (Updated March 2025). 2023-2028 Iowa's State Health Improvement Plan. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/about/data-reports/performance-reports/healthy-iowans#iowa-health-improvement-plan-ship>

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Iowa Cancer Registry. (January 2025). Cancer in Dickinson County. <https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Presentation-Cancer-in-Dickinson-County-01.23.25.pdf>

Iowa Cancer Registry. (February 2025). Cancer in Iowa 2025. <https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/cancer-in-iowa-2025.pdf>

State Data Center of Iowa & The Iowa Department of Aging. (May 2023). Older Iowans: 2023. <https://www.iowadatacenter.org/application/files/9816/8415/6885/OlderIowans2023.pdf>

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2025). Dickinson County, IA: County Demographics. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Stakeholders

Serving/Representing Low Income, Medically Underserved, and Minority Populations

Behavioral Health

Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition
Hope Haven
Plains Area Mental Health
Rosecrance Jackson Recovery Centers
Seasons Center for Community Mental Health
Sioux Rivers Regional Mental Health

Businesses & Community Organizations

Atlas of the Lakes
Bedell Family YMCA
Dickinson County Hunger Coalition
Dickinson County Trails
Elderbridge
Iowa Lakes Corridor Development
Meals on Wheels
RIDES
Upper Des Moines
Vacation Okoboji
Voluntary Action Center

Government

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services
Dickinson County Emergency Management

Education

Okoboji School District
Spirit Lake School District
Harris- Lake Park School District

Public Health & Hospital

Avera Lakes Regional Family Medicine Clinic
Dickinson County Board of Health
Dickinson County Public Health
Free Dental Clinic
Lakes Regional Healthcare



An Avera Partner



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.