Community Health
Community health improvement efforts are most successful when they are grounded in collective impact, where structured collaborative efforts yield substantial impact on a large-scale social problem. Collective impact focuses on cooperation, collaboration, and partnership to help achieve common priorities and ensure all people have opportunities for optimal health.

Blue Ribbons

- ToRCH Pilot Program
- Delbert Day Cancer Institute and Affiliation with Siteman Cancer Network
- Collaborative Community Partnerships

Transformation of Rural Community Health (ToRCH)
The ToRCH project is a Missouri-based pilot initiative (headed by the MO HealthNet division) that aims to enhance healthcare access, promote health equity, and improve overall community health by fostering partnerships between rural hospitals and community organizations. By achieving successful healthcare and community collaborations, the project expects to reduce unnecessary emergency department visits and admissions, resulting in cost savings.

MO HealthNet acknowledges the difficulty for rural hospitals to fund the administrative costs required to invest in care coordination efforts. Therefore, the pilot program includes six hospitals chosen by MO HealthNet from across the state, including Phelps Health, as part of the initial cohort. The ToRCH pilot project will provide funding for administrative positions to coordinate the community benefit office, care coordination and technology requirements. Additionally, the program supports the implementation of software to track referrals for care coordination between participating hospitals and community partners.

There is upfront funding for the community benefit office to authorize funding for population health improvement. Providers in the community will receive reimbursement for conducting social determinants of health screenings to identify social needs early on and reduce healthcare disparities. There also will be funding for temporary healthcare assistance under the CMS-defined 1915(b)(3) services.

Finally, the community benefit office can earn incentives for meeting up to five local priorities for population health improvement. While subject to change, currently, Phelps Health and its community partners are looking at identifying innovative ways to improve the following five priorities: dental care, behavioral health, healthy behaviors, and screening and vaccinations.

Delbert Day Cancer Institute and Affiliation with Siteman Cancer Network
The nationally accredited Delbert Day Cancer Institute (DDCI) at Phelps Health provides all cancer care services under one roof for convenience and continuity of care for patients and their families.

The DDCI includes designated areas for radiation oncology, medical oncology, laboratory and imaging services, infusion, pharmacy services and a café. All cancer treatment and support services are centrally located in the DDCI in order to ensure the best possible patient experience and to ease the burden of having to travel to multiple locations for treatment.

The DDCI is also affiliated with the Siteman Cancer Network, which includes Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

Collaborative Community Opportunities

Phelps County offers health systems that promote and improve community-based health including Phelps Health, Four Rivers, Compass Health, Mercy, local health departments, and other community-based organizations. Goals for community-based care include:

- Expand and enhance community awareness about available resources and access to healthcare services for vulnerable and at-risk community residents.
- Increase community efforts and collaborations to address social determinants of health (SDOH), with a focus on health equity, access to care and community health.
- Work with community-based health organizations to coordinate and integrate approaches to address SDOH for vulnerable and underserved community members.

Red Flags

- Poverty and Food Insecurity
- Lack of Healthcare Insurance
- Physician Supply and Accessibility

Poverty and Food Insecurity

Poverty creates barriers to accessing health services and healthy food, leading to poor health. In Phelps County, 17.2% of the population lives in households with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), compared to 12.6% for Missouri and 12.4% for the US. Also, 11.8% of the Phelps County community receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, a federal program that provides nutrition benefits to low-income individuals and families that are used in stores to purchase food.

Access to healthy food is important for maintaining community health, but in Phelps County, the number of places where you can find healthy food is lower than state and national averages. For every 100,000 people in Phelps County, there are approximately 13.44 such places, whereas in the state of Missouri, this number is closer to 16.41. In the US, there are about 20.77 establishments for the same population.

Lack of Healthcare Insurance

Lack of insurance is a major obstacle to healthcare access, leading to poor health outcomes and limited access to preventive and specialty care. Uninsured adults experience worse health outcomes compared to those with insurance.

In Phelps County, 8.8% of the population is without health insurance coverage. The rate of uninsured persons in this area is higher than the state average of 7.5% and the national average of 7.9%.

Physician Supply and Accessibility

A limited supply of available resources, such as physicians, can have a detrimental impact on the overall health of a community. With fewer physicians available, individuals and families may face barriers to accessing timely and quality care, leading to delayed diagnoses, inadequate management of chronic conditions, and increased healthcare costs.

To determine health professional shortage areas, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) measures the population within two designated areas. One is the FTE Shortage – the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) practitioners needed within an area to achieve the population-to-practitioner target ratio. The second is the Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) Score developed by the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in determining priorities for the assignment of clinicians. The HPSA Score range is 0-26; a higher score equals greater priority.

For Phelps County, the HPSA FTE shows a shortage of 3.44 practitioners with a HPSA Score of 16.

Health Literacy

Phelps County, like many rural areas, struggles with Health Literacy. Less than 50% of the pediatric population on Medicaid in Phelps County have had a dental visit in the last 12 months, compared to 78.8% of kids nationwide. The same is true of preventative visits; less than 50% of kids have had a preventative medical visit in the last 12 months, compared to around 80% nationwide. This lack of preventative care leads to treatment in Walk-in clinics and ER's where the patient cannot get the ongoing care they need to treat underlying problems, and only the pressing symptoms are treated. This has led to worse health outcomes at a higher cost of care for our community.