

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CHNA) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



2020 – 2022

This plan encompasses implementation strategies for Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville, Braselton, Barrow and Lumpkin.



Northeast Georgia Medical Center



About this implementation plan

This implementation plan strategy was developed in partnership with hospital leadership and community stakeholders to address the identified priorities listed in the *2019 Community Health Needs Assessment*. It was approved by Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) and Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) boards on January 21 and 28, 2020 respectively. This plan focuses primarily on NGHS' responsibilities in addressing the priorities, but many activities also require work with community partners and those are indicated throughout the report. In this report, NGHS refers to all four hospital entities: Gainesville, Braselton, Barrow and Lumpkin.

View the full CHNA report at [www.nghs.com.health needs](http://www.nghs.com.healthneeds).

**CHNA Implementation Plan
2020 – 2022
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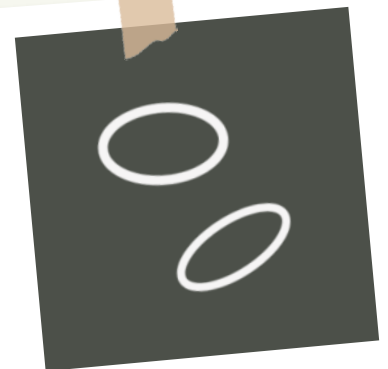
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Why these five priorities?

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) revealed many important health needs in the health system's service area.* Those needs varied by service area and included important concerns ranging from food access and nutrition, maternal and child health, to social isolation. All of the issues identified through the report are important to the health of the community and to NGHS. The five priorities adopted by the organization represent those on which we can have the *most* impact based on prioritization criteria and is not an indication of overall NGHS commitment to addressing other pressing health concerns. For example, though cancer care is not listed in the five priorities, NGHS continues our internal emphasis on cancer care services and will report its activity via the annual Community Benefit Report.

The organization chose priorities based on need and areas where it could have the *most impact* based on prioritization criteria.

*See pages 17 and 18 of full report at www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources for a description of the approach used to identify and prioritize significant health needs.

Systemwide Integration:

Service area specific

While NGHS works to care for the needs of our entire service area as a whole, providers in each service area may have specific areas of focus for different CHNA priorities. (See chart on next page.)

Population Health Management – Better Outcomes for Patients

Managing population health requires providing the right level of care to the right patient at the right time and place so the overall health of the population is improved. Working through partnerships such as HP2, which is a physician led, clinically integrated network made up of hospitals and physicians working together to improve quality of care while decreasing costs for patients, payers and providers, NGHS seeks to bend the curve on disease processes that result in better outcomes for patients. The use of social determinants of health holds significant promise for helping providers understand more about their patients, leading to earlier interventions capable of reducing risk and preventing adverse effects.



Community leadership:

NGHS will host a community breakfast in first quarter of FY20 for regional non-profits to share the CHNA website and demonstrate Tableau, the interactive dashboard that displays data evaluated via NGMC's CHNA by area served.

This dashboard was created for use by professionals in healthcare, community-based non-profits, academia, and/or interested citizens.

This event will be provided in partnership with United Way of Hall County and North Georgia Community Foundation.

Priority Emphasis by Service Area

NGMC Gainesville/Braselton

NGMC Barrow

NGMC Lumpkin

NGHS PSA

NGHS GBSA

NGHS SSA 400

NGHS SSA - North



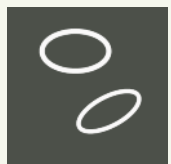
Mental & Behavioral Health



Access to Care



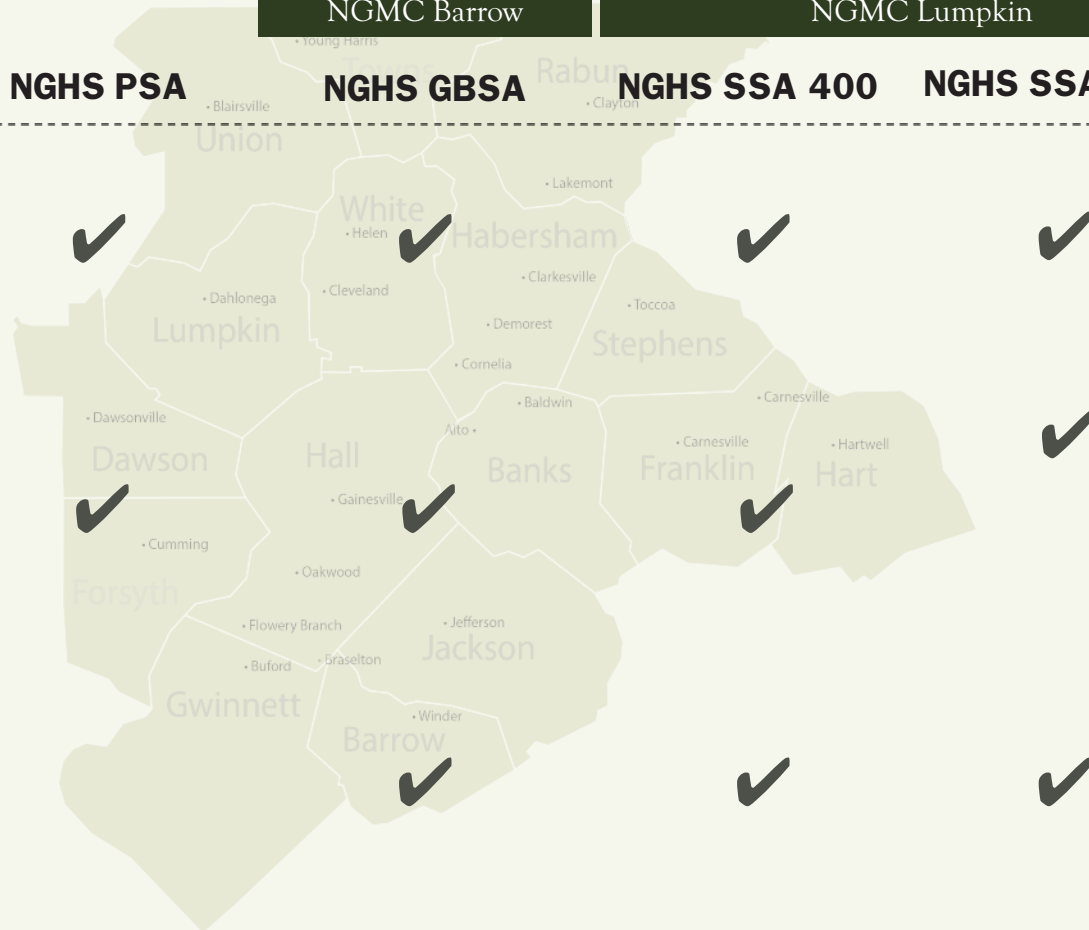
Diabetes



Septicemia



Cardiovascular Disease



Lumpkin County's high cardiovascular disease mortality rate and NGHS significant expansion of services along the 400 corridor represents a unique opportunity for NGHS to develop innovative solutions for reducing mortality rates which can be replicated across the region.

**PSA = Hall
SSA North = Habersham, Rabun,
Stephens, Towns, Union, White**

**SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin
GBSA = Gwinnett, Jackson, Barrow, Banks**

Mental and Behavioral Health

PSA = Hall

SSA North = Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White

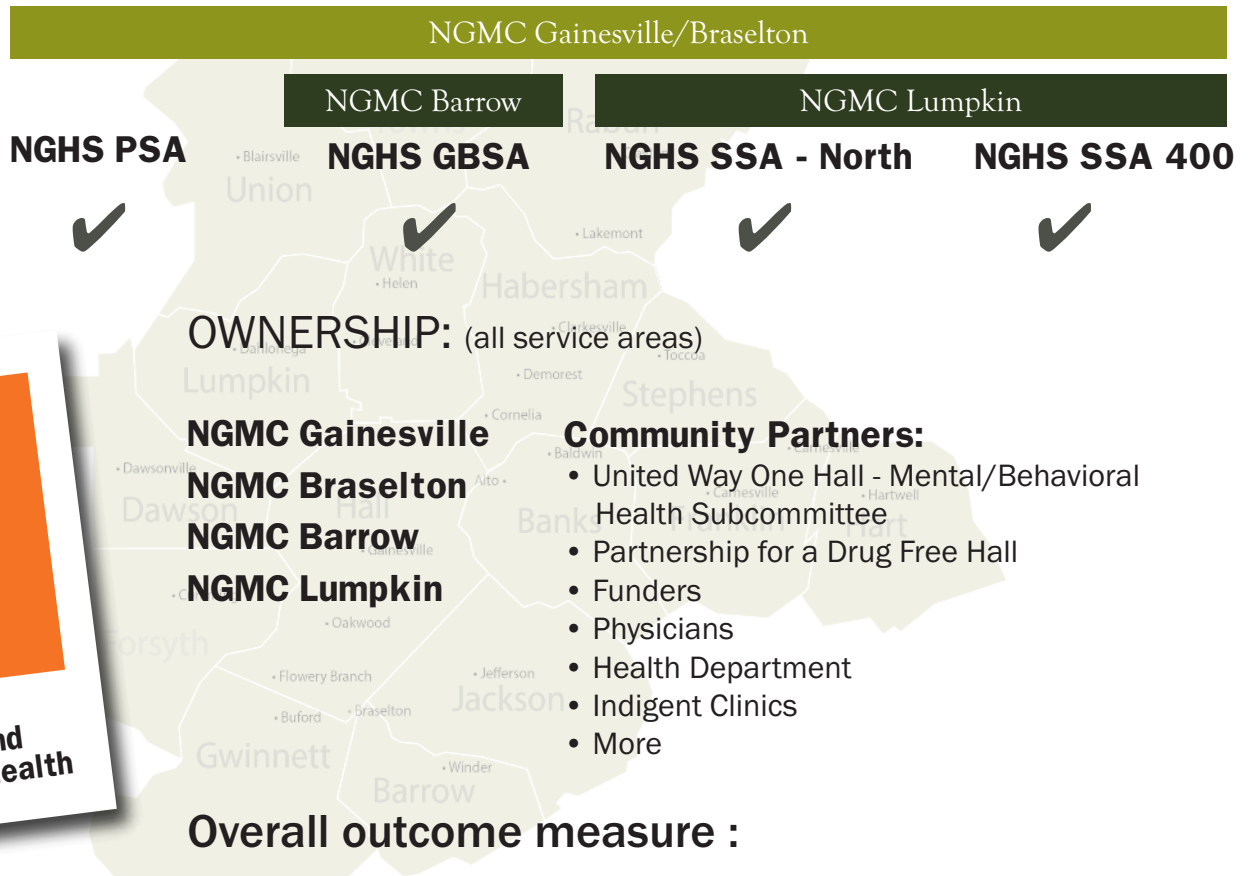
SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin

GBSA = Gwinnett, Jackson, Barrow, Banks



Mental and Behavioral Health

SUICIDE



10 of the 16 Northeast Georgia counties had suicides rates higher than the state of Georgia benchmark which was 13.1 per 100,000 population.

(See page 163 of CHNA Report for chart of suicide rates throughout the region.)

GOAL: Working with the community, create a comprehensive system of integrated services that recognizes and treats the mental and behavioral health needs of people when and where they need care. Begin in Hall and spread out into region with lessons learned as appropriate.

Areas of focus have been identified as Access, Collaboration and Education. For each priority, a workplan is underway to improve measurable outcomes for mental & behavioral health in our community through United Way's One Hall Mental & Behavioral Health Subcommittee of which NGHS is a part.

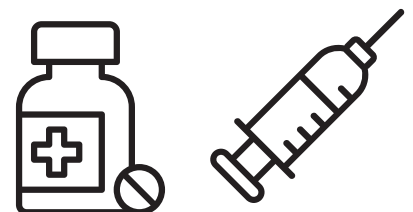
On two important metrics, the NGHS service area shows a need for immediate intervention related to the opioid crisis:

All counties in Northeast Georgia exceed the state rate for opioid prescriptions per 100 persons (70.9) and over half of the counties exceed the rate by more than two times.

The Georgia state benchmark for drug overdose deaths was 12.7 per 100,000. In the Northeast Georgia region, data were available for 13 of the 16 counties and 11 of those counties had drug overdose death rates higher than the Georgia benchmark.

TACTICS:

- The **Partnership for Drug Free Hall** is a partnership of agencies and community members dedicated to providing Hall County, Georgia, with information, resources and actions to address the drug problems of Hall County. NGHS provides a corporate sponsorship of \$10,000/year and active leadership in the partnership.
- The **Peer Support Program in the ED** continues, matching patients with substance abuse related issues with State grant- funded Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment (CARES) counselors to educate and support those seeking recovery. Success will be determined by lower readmission/recidivism rates.
- The **Peer Support Program in the NICU** provides CARES counselors to mothers-to-be who present with substance use disorders. This program has already seen tremendous success in lowering the length of stay of babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Abuse Syndrome. Our goal is to lower the average length of stay to five days or less in the NICU.
- **Increase Grant Funding** - NGHS will continue to pursue appropriate grants available for combating the opioid crisis.
- NGHS will partner with the Hall County Health Department to begin **overdose tracking** to identify opportunities to mitigate overdose deaths and point those with substance use disorder toward recovery resources.



MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

TACTICS, CONTINUED:

- The **My GCAL app** - for Apple and Android smartphones - was designed to reach Georgia's youth in times of need. GCAL is staffed by caring professionals - including licensed clinicians - who are available 24/7 to address behavioral health crises, make referrals for treatment, and dispatch mobile crisis response teams. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DHBDD) recently launched the Phone App to support the Georgia Crisis and Access Line. NGHS will help the DBHDD improve awareness of this vital community resource.



- **Data-Sharing Platform** - partnering with AVIA and other community partners, NGHS is leading efforts to develop a way for agencies to coordinate services to those with mental/behavioral health concerns via an integrated and secure data-sharing platform. Because many providers may come in contact with a person with mental/behavioral health concerns, a platform to facilitate coordination of services can be a substantial support mechanism for helping those in greatest need.

Our goal is to complete successful vendor selection during the first year and to begin enrolling users during the second year of this implementation plan.

- **One Hall Mental and Behavioral Health (MBH) Subcommittee**, of which NGHS is a part, is working to develop innovative ways for the community to address mental and behavioral health concerns impacting the people of Hall County. The committee has adopted a model they call "ACE," for Access, Collaboration and Education. This model is being evaluated for use in communities beyond Hall.

We will measure our success through this tactic by surveys of awareness of mental health, the justice initiative, education (Mental Health First Aid goals) and by the number of people trained.

- The **Reach Out Campaign**, spearheaded by the One Hall MBH Subcommittee, of which NGHS is a part, has been developed by Forum Communications to destigmatize mental and behavioral health. The budget, funded by NGMC, covers the campaign cost which includes social media, videos, outdoor advertising and other community-based communications to increase awareness and expand the community's conversation about mental and behavioral health as part of general health. We will measure our success through pre and post survey results.



One Hall's Reach Out campaign is designed to destigmatize mental health concerns and improve the public conversation about mental health.



For more information, go to unitedwayhallcounty.org/reachout

Access, Collaboration, Education Across the Region

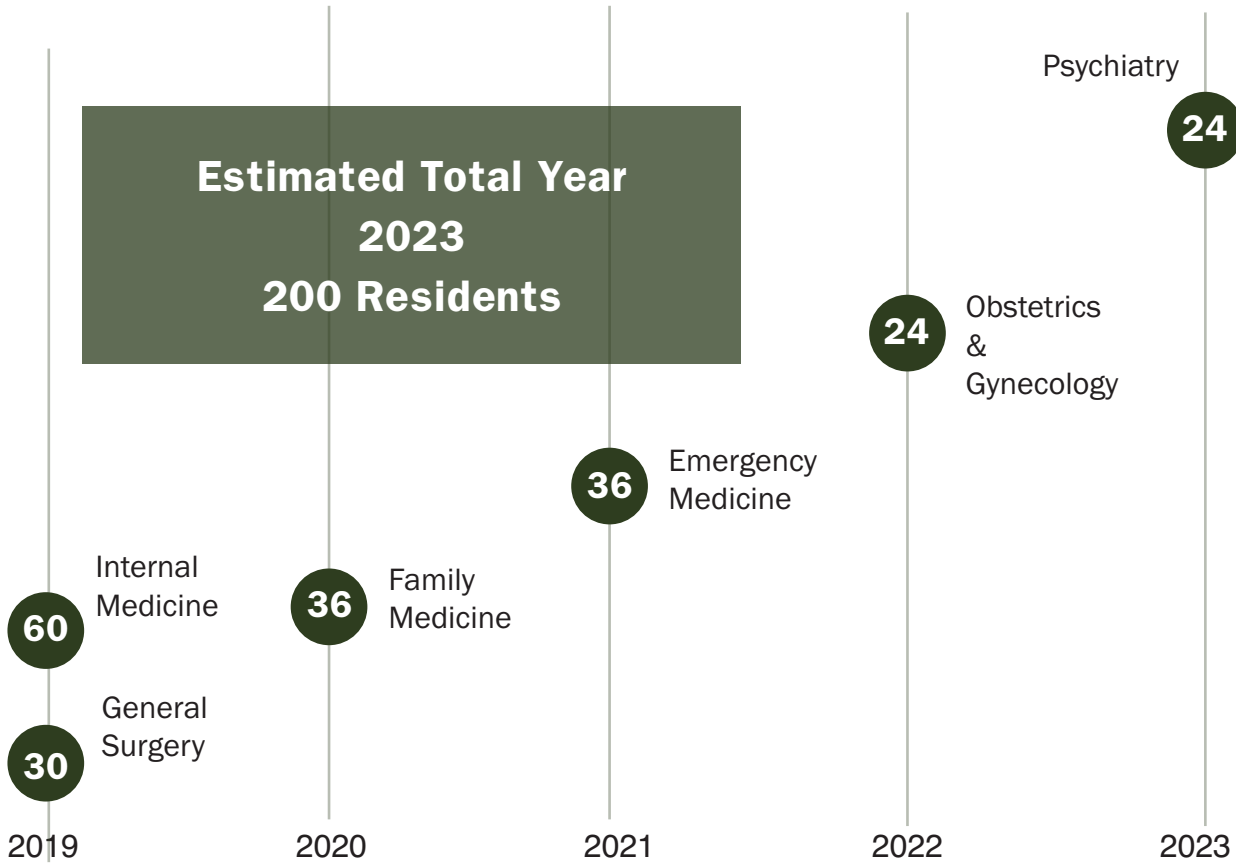
Following the same “ACE” model as One Hall, NGMC Gainesville, Braselton, Barrow and Lumpkin will work to improve ACCESS, COLLABORATION & EDUCATION to improve behavioral and mental health across the region. In addition, NGHS will work to encourage the ACE framework with CHNA partners.

NGMC Gainesville/Braselton					
		NGMC Barrow	NGMC Lumpkin		
		NGHS PSA	NGHS GBSA	NGHS SSA 400	NGHS SSA North
ACCESS	Data Sharing Platform allowing partners to provide improved services				
	Graduate Medical Education				
	Embedded Behavioral Specialists				
	Funding for Mental/Behavioral Health Justice Collaborative				
COLLABORATION	Partnership for Drug Free Hall				
	One Hall - United Way MBH Subcommittee				
	CARES Peer Support in ER				
	CARES Peer Support in NICU				
EDUCATION	Destigmatization campaign				
	Partner with Health Department epidemiological approach to opioid overdose				
	NGPG Providers partnering with regional providers on opioid epidemic				

PSA = Hall
SSA North = Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White
SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin
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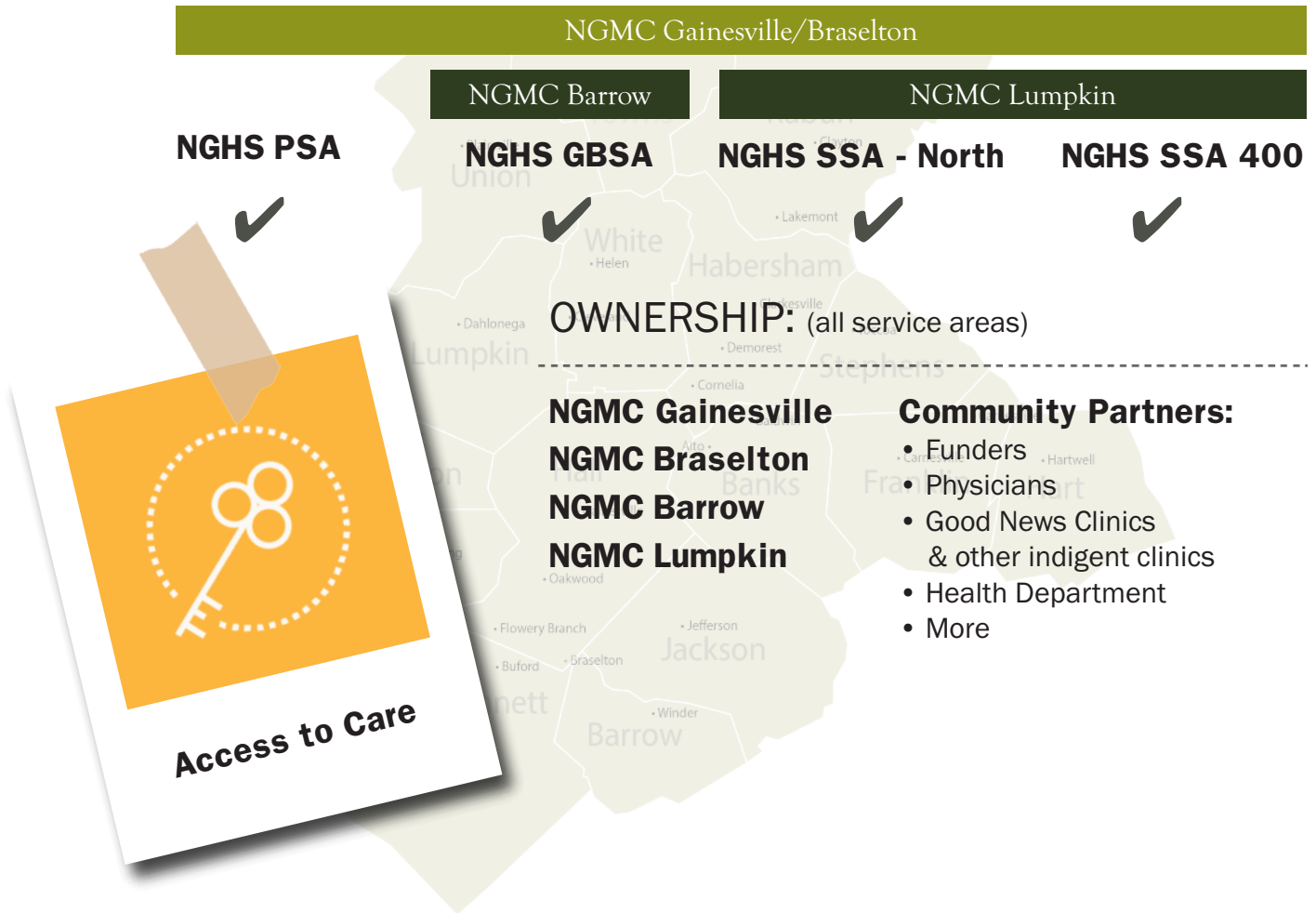
Graduate Medical Education



- **Graduate Medical Education - training 24 psychiatry residents by 2023**

Our community, state and nation are experiencing a shortage in psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. As part of our GME program, NGHS will welcome 24 psychiatry residents for training by 2023.

Access to Care



Work to improve access to care across the region.



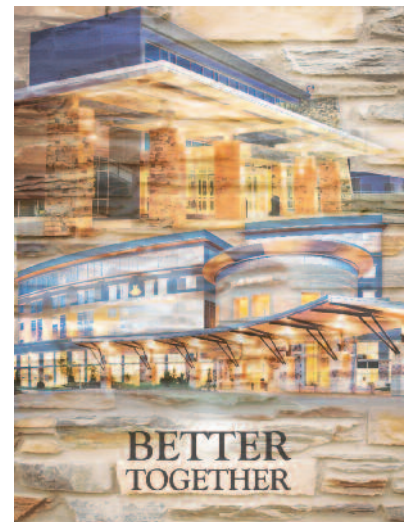
Outcome Measure:
GME Residency Fill Slots
Working toward 200 residency slots in various specialties by 2023

(see page 10 of this document)



TACTICS

- **Create a coordinated regional program** to assure appropriate and timely access to specialty and surgical care. The project is designed to eliminate the barriers to care for the region's indigent and underinsured.
- Consistent with overall mission, continue to **meet/exceed indigent care commitments** throughout the region.
- Complete evaluation for becoming a **Level 1 Trauma Center**.
- **Partnerships with indigent clinics** such as Good News Clinics (Gainesville), Good Shepherd Clinic (Dawsonville), Community Helping Place (Dahlonega). ER admissions/readmissions and controls of chronic diseases as measured through patient diabetes control, regulated blood pressure, congestive heart failure will be the system's metrics for this tactic.
- **Prenatal Program with the Hall County Health Department** continues with a goal of Healthy Pregnancies and Deliveries. NGMC's commitment is \$200,000 annually.
- Partner with **local medical transportation network**, Independent Transportation Network (ITN) Lanier.
- Evaluate **telehealth opportunities**, working with other regional providers (hospitals) to provide access so patients can receive care close to home.
- Explore **paramedicine program**, learning from experience of others.
- Opening of **NGMC Lumpkin** incorporating innovative care models.
- Northeast Georgia Health System has partnered with **Habersham Medical Center** to provide emergency and inpatient care. Habersham Medical Center and NGHS are working on a five-year plan to transform Habersham Medical Center campus, with the ultimate goal for it to become a Northeast Georgia Medical Center hospital. The plan calls for NGHS to invest \$3 million dollars each year, until 2024, to help Habersham Medical Center fund capital projects to enhance and expand services for the community.
- NGMC's Office of Research, working with physicians as principal investigators, will continue to take part in **cutting-edge clinical research** studies that have the potential to impact standard of care and improve the care patients receive.

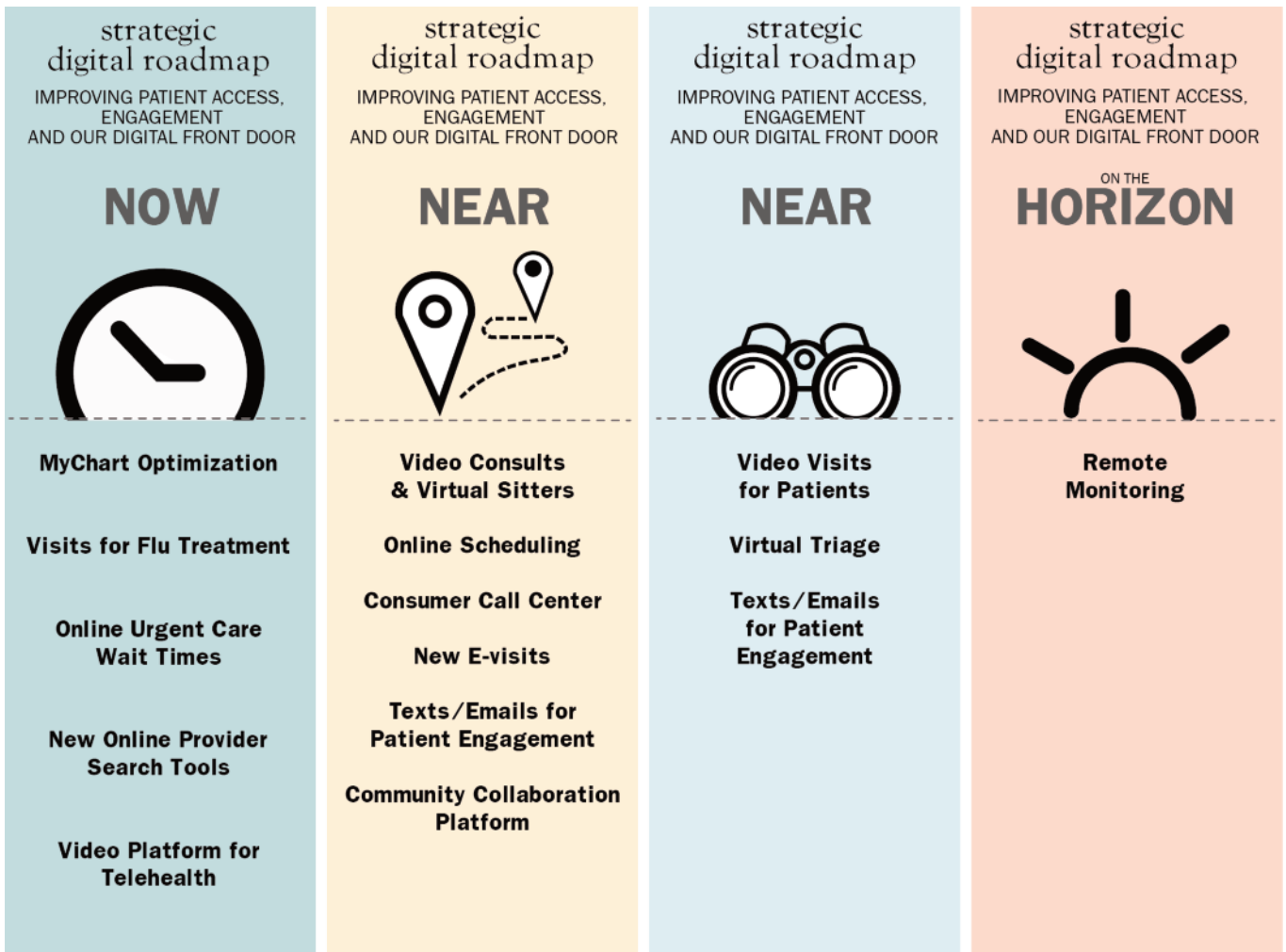


ACCESS TO CARE

- Establish a study group; review local data across the region, examine deaths, causes, and determine possible course of action for **perinatal morbidity/mortality and child mortality**

- **Digital front door:**

Using technology to better serve the community, NGHS is developing what we call our “digital front door” to improve access to care without a need for a traditional medical encounter in a physician’s office or hospital setting. Using technology, a growing percentage of the visits to physicians and other referral screenings are done digitally, increasing access and convenience throughout the region.



ACCESS TO CARE



- **Continue NGMC support of Foothills AHEC**

Foothills Area Health Education Center is a community-driven, non-profit corporation, supported by federal and local sources. The mission is to increase the supply and distribution of healthcare providers, especially in medically underserved areas. Through joint efforts, communities experience improved supply, distribution and retention of quality healthcare professionals. Foothills AHEC serves 31 counties in the Northeast Georgia area and NGMC supports a portion of operating costs for Foothills AHEC.

- **Continue NGMC's support of Safe Kids**

Northeast Georgia Medical Center serves as lead agency for Safe Kids Gainesville/Hall County. The mission of Safe Kids is to reduce unintentional injuries and death in children 19 and under. In FY19, Safe Kids provided over 131 programs and events that reached an estimated 25,000 children and their family members, teachers and caregivers. Through these programs, over 3,500 safety items were distributed to families who were in need of them. Safe Kids was funded in FY19 by The Medical Center Foundation's Healthy Journey Campaign.



- **Read Learn Succeed Support**

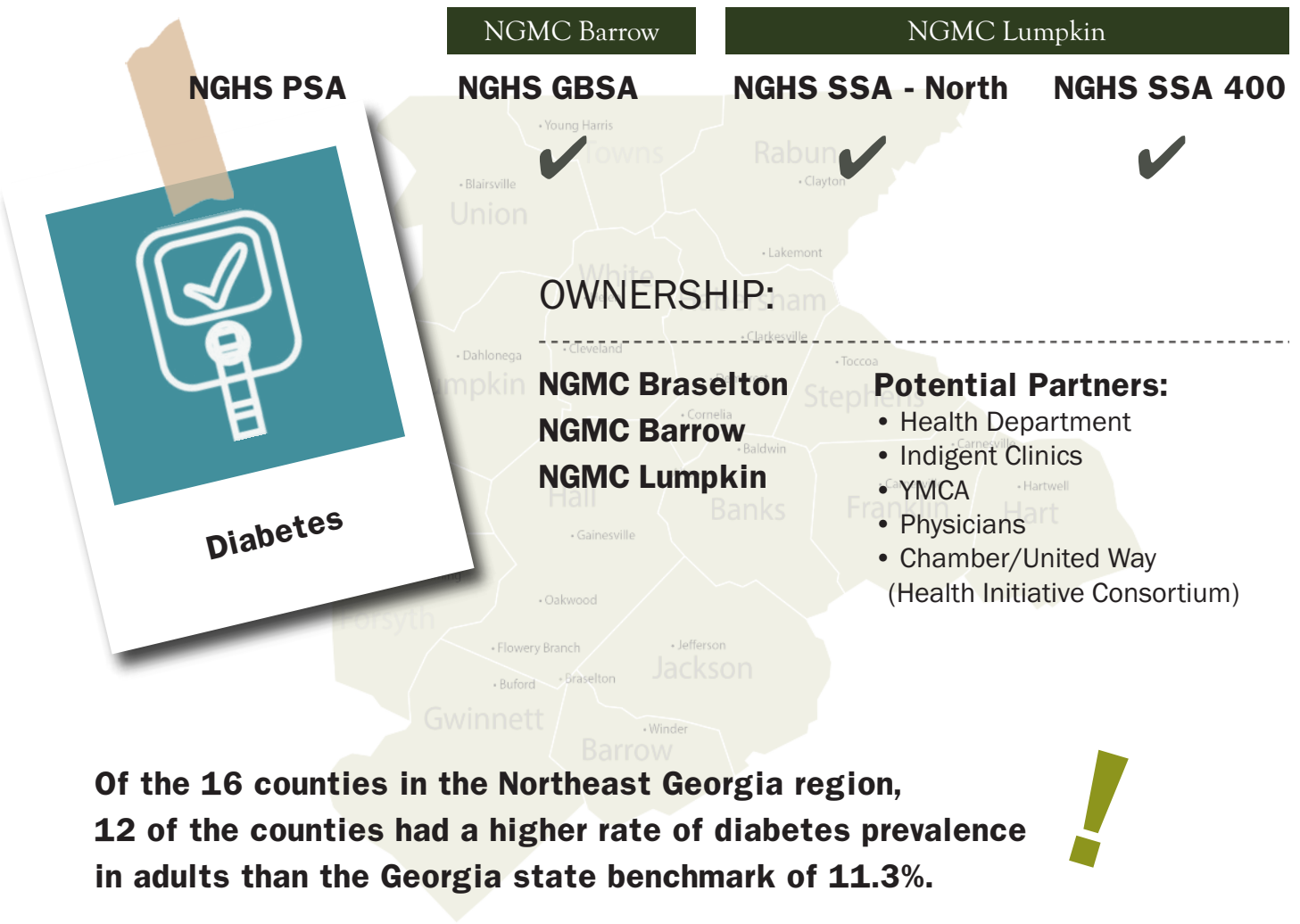
Maternal education is highly important for birth outcomes since it can affect infant health through multiple pathways such as higher income, better access to health insurance, increased health knowledge, better cognitive ability, and less risky health behaviors. Early education of children, beginning at birth, can begin to break the cycle of poverty. In an effort to improve school readiness and literacy for our community's children, NGMC has partnered with the United Way of Hall County's Read Learn Succeed initiative to produce a children's book to be given to all babies born at NGMC Gainesville and Braselton. Printed in English and Spanish, "Welcome to the World," provides education about the importance of reading to children every day, for at least 15 minutes, starting at birth. This book is given to babies born at NGMC. We plan to continue this partnership over the next 3 years.



- **Master Facility Planning**

Through the Master Facility Planning process, NGMC is looking at where and how services could be provided differently in the health system to make it easier on patients and result in better outcomes. The new plan focuses on expanding facility resources to accommodate the growing population in our area and improving operational efficiency throughout the organization.

Diabetes



Of the 16 counties in the Northeast Georgia region, 12 of the counties had a higher rate of diabetes prevalence in adults than the Georgia state benchmark of 11.3%.

Three counties had rates that were more than 20% greater relative to the benchmark:

- Hart, 13.7%
- Rabun, 14.7%
- Union, 16%

Additionally, five counties exceeded the state benchmark for the diabetes death rate, all were 26% or higher than the state benchmark of 21.5 diabetes deaths per 100,000 population:

- Hart, 26.7
- Lumpkin, 27.2
- Banks, 28.2
- Barrow, 30.3
- Franklin, 34.9

PSA = Hall

SSA North = Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White

SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin

GBSA = Gwinnett, Jackson, Barrow, Banks



Outcome Measure:

Prevent incidence of gestational diabetes giving unborn children a better chance for more positive health outcomes

The complications of diabetes represent a significant area for NGMC to impact patient outcomes. One of the greatest opportunities for impact on population health is preventing gestational diabetes, which is diabetes which develops during a woman's pregnancy. Focusing on this important time in a woman's life not only impacts the health of the mother, but also the baby she carries.

Gestational diabetes causes the babies heart rate to increase, high blood sugars in the mother and baby (overfeeding the baby and leading to very high birth weights and increased need for C-section deliveries), raises blood pressures in mothers to dangerous levels and impacts perinatal morbidity (*see Access to Care in this document*).

NGMC will focus preventive education and intervention for women in prenatal care who fail the glucose tolerance test, which also indicates a future risk of developing Type II diabetes. **A pilot program will be developed within one of the markets identified.**

NGMC will take advantage of Center for Disease Control programs and our own current partnership with YMCA.

Cardiovascular Disease

NGHS PSA

NGHS GBSA

NGHS SSA - North

NGMC Lumpkin

NGHS SSA 400

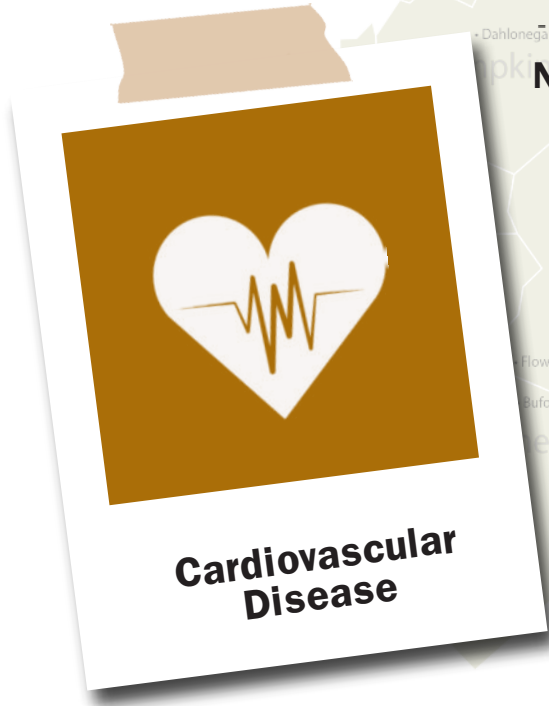


OWNERSHIP:

NGMC Lumpkin

Community Partners:

- Community Helping Place
- Good Shepherd Clinic
Dahlonega and Dawsonville
- Physicians
- The Heart Center of
Northeast Georgia Medical Center
- Health Department



**Cardiovascular
Disease**

Overall outcome measure:



Decrease heart disease death rate in Lumpkin County.

Baseline: 134.8 (78% higher than the state benchmark)

PSA = Hall
SSA North = Habersham, Rabun,
Stephens, Towns, Union, White
SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin
GBSA = Gwinnett, Jackson, Barrow, Banks

TACTICS

- **Tar Wars Program** in Hall, Dawson, Lumpkin, White, Habersham, Banks and Jackson (already implemented in Barrow) to educate youth about the dangers of smoking and vaping. \$50,000 has been budgeted for the next 3 years
- Successful opening of **new hospital in Lumpkin County** by 2021
- **The Heart Center to expand manpower in Lumpkin County**
- Evaluate potential offering of **cardiac rehabilitation in Lumpkin**
- **Compare heart disease death rate** – before and after opening of NGMC Lumpkin
- **Investments in the Treatment of Stroke:** Just as “time is muscle” when treating heart disease, “time is brain” when it comes to the treatment of stroke patients. NGMC Gainesville, which serves patients from throughout the region, will implement technology called “biplane angiography,” allowing physicians to better visualize the complex network of blood vessels that deliver blood and oxygen to the brain.
- A **neuro interventionalist** will be hired to perform procedures that will result in patients being able to get the care they need closer to home
- NGMC Gainesville is certified as a **Primary Stroke Center through DNV-GL Healthcare**. Emergent stroke treatment and inpatient care is provided to stroke patients by dedicated care teams who specialize in treating neurovascular conditions. NGMC Gainesville is endeavoring to expand the center's current treatment capabilities with the addition of acute stroke endovascular intervention and to ultimately gain Comprehensive Stroke Center certification. This program advancement will further improve patient outcomes and provide acute stroke treatment and recovery services not currently available in the region.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE



- **Continue and improve upon STEMI regional system**

Hosted each year by NGMC, the Northeast Georgia Regional STEMI Conference brings together paramedics, EMS staff and doctors from across the state. They meet to discuss the state of the Northeast Georgia Regional STEMI System – a collaborative effort between Northeast Georgia Medical Center and EMS in 18 counties across the region to provide fast and efficient treatment to patients suffering severe heart attacks known as STEMI (S-T Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction).

STEMI patients are in danger because their arteries are blocked, and blood isn't able to get to the heart, which causes deadly heart attacks. The STEMI Program makes sure information about the heart attack is sent to NGMC while the ambulance is en route, so a cardiologist is waiting to restore the patient's blood flow almost immediately after he or she arrives.

Septicemia

NGMC Gainesville/Braselton

NGMC Barrow

NGMC Lumpkin

NGHS PSA



NGHS GBSA



NGHS SSA 400



NGHS SSA - North



OWNERSHIP:

NGMC Gainesville
NGMC Braselton
NGMC Barrow
NGMC Lumpkin

Community Partners:

- Habersham Medical Center
- Stephens County Hospital
- Other regional providers
- Physicians
- The NGHS Foundation

PSA = Hall
 SSA North = Habersham, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White
 SSA 400 = Dawson, Lumpkin
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10 of 16 counties in northeast Georgia have sepsis rates above the state average



Overall Outcome Measure:

Using a region-wide approach, decrease the number of deaths (mortality rate) due to sepsis.

Baseline: 8.30 as of 10/19.

Target is for 2 regional providers to achieve 8.09

TACTICS

- All providers in the region using same **evidence-based protocols** (sharing of toolkit).
- Create a **Sepsis Alert Team** to provide 24/7/365 decision support to NGMC primary patient care

Sepsis is the body's overwhelming response to infection that can lead to organ damage, shock, and death.

SEPTICEMIA

- **Community health approach to education** (lecture series)
- The Formation of a **Sepsis Regional Population Health Team**. Outcome Measures will be the number of deaths due to sepsis, lengths of stay, 30-day readmission rate, community awareness administered by surveys. Funds requested for 3-year plan are \$450,000 per year for regional population health team related to Sepsis.
- Add a **Sepsis Outpatient RN Navigator** to provide patient/community support in order to promote sepsis awareness, empower patients to seek care earlier, navigate high-risk patients and provide facilitation/support to regional partners to extend sepsis work to the entire region to reduce septic shock on presentation, 30-day readmissions, and sepsis mortality.
- Upgrade current **Sepsis Coordinator to Sepsis Program Manager** to oversee the operations of the Sepsis Program.

Anyone can get an infection, and almost any infection can lead to sepsis.

1 | PREVENT INFECTIONS

Talk to your doctor or nurse about steps you can take to prevent infections.



Take good care of chronic conditions



Get recommended vaccines

2 | PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE

Remember to wash your hands and keep cuts clean and covered until healed.



Handwashing



Keep cuts clean and covered until healed.

3 | KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of sepsis can include any one or a combination of these:



Confusion or disorientation



Shortness of breath



High heart rate



Fever, or shivering, or feeling very cold



Extreme pain or discomfort



Clammy or sweaty skin

4 | ACT FAST

Get medical care IMMEDIATELY if you suspect sepsis or have an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse.

Sepsis is a medical emergency. Time matters.

To learn more about sepsis and how to prevent infections, visit www.cdc.gov/sepsis.



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See pages 17 and 18 of full CHNA report at www.nghs.com/community-benefit-resources for a description of the approach used to identify and prioritize significant health needs. The health needs NGHS chose not to address through the prioritization process include the following:

PSA: Food access and nutrition, maternal and child health, social isolation.

GBSA: Maternal and child health, physical activity, injury and death, violence, child abuse, income, education, access to dental care, cancer, transportation.

SSA North: Maternal and child health, cardiovascular disease, income, physical activity, violence, child abuse, education, access to dental care, employment, cerebrovascular disease, social isolation, cancer, COPD and respiratory disease, injury and death.

SSA 400: Maternal and child health, smoking, violence/child abuse, income, access to dental care, social isolation, cancer, transportation.

This is not to say that NGHS does not have any activity related to these issues. The organization had to choose where it could have the most impact based on prioritization criteria, and some of the needs not chosen still relate to chosen health priorities. For instance, Access to Care is a priority across the region. While transportation on its own did not make the health priority list, it would be an issue considered in access to care issues. The same is true with maternal child issues. Several health indicators related to maternal child issues are considered under access to care. And while cancer was not chosen as a community health improvement priority, NGHS already has an internal emphasis on this health issue and will report its activity via the annual Community Benefit Report.



Northeast Georgia Health System

improving the health of our community in all we do