

Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan

July 2023 - June 2028



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Figures	iv
Executive Summary	5
Acknowledgements	6
Partnering Organizations	7
Introduction	8
Addressing Health Disparities.....	10
Mobilizing Action Through Planning and Partnership (MAPP)	12
Overview of the CHA Process	12
MAPP Phase 1: Organizing for Success and Partnership.....	12
MAPP Phase 2: Visioning	13
MAPP Phase 3: The Four Assessments	14
Overview of the CHIP Process	32
MAPP Phase 4: Identifying Strategic Issues	32
MAPP Phase 5: Developing Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and an Action Plan	32
MAPP Phase 6: Action Cycle	32
Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan	33
Purpose	33
Methods.....	33
How to Use The CHIP	33
Strategic Health Priorities and Action Plans.....	35
Priority Area: Maternal and Child Health.....	36
Maternal and Child Health – Why Address It?.....	36
Maternal and Child Health – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives.....	41
Priority Area: Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use)	42
Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) – Why Address It?	42
Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives	49
Priority Area: Linkage to Care.....	50
Linkage To Care – Why Address It?	50
Linkage To Care – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives.....	54
Priority Area: Economic and Social Mobility and Stability	55
Economic and Social Mobility and Stability – Why Address It?	55

Economic and Social Mobility and Stability – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives	62
Community Resources	63
Sustainability of Efforts.....	73
Tracking Progress	73
Get Involved	74
Appendix A: Okeechobee County CHIPP	75

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: MAPP Framework.....	8
Figure 2: Okeechobee County Local Public Health Assessment Results	15
Figure 3: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Race, 2016-2020	17
Figure 4: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Ethnicity, 2016-2020	17
Figure 5: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Sex, 2016-2020	18
Figure 6: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Age, 2016-2020	18
Figure 7: CHA Socioeconomic Data Highlights, 2020.....	19
Figure 8: CHA COVID-19 Data Highlights, 2020-2022	20
Figure 9: CHA Maternal Health Data Highlights, 2020.....	21
Figure 10: CHA Morbidity Data Highlights, 2019-2020	22
Figure 11: CHA Mortality Data Highlights, 2020.....	23
Figure 12: CHA Mental and Behavioral Health Data Highlights, 2016-2020	24
Figure 13: CHA Hospital Utilization Data Highlights, 2021.....	25
Figure 14: CHA Health Care Facility Capacity Data Highlights, 2020	26
Figure 15: CHA Health Care Provider Supply Data Highlights, FY2020-2021	27
Figure 16: CHA Health Insurance Data Highlights, 2019.....	28
Figure 17: CHA Community Themes and Strengths Assessment Highlights.....	29
Figure 18: CHA Forces of Change Highlights	30
Figure 19: Maternal and Child Health Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives.....	37
Figure 20: Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives	43
Figure 21: Linkage to Care Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives.....	51
Figure 22: Economic and Social Mobility and Stability Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives	56
Figure 23: Community Resource List.....	63
Figure 24: Okeechobee County CHIPP List.....	75

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County (DOH-OKC) enlisted the Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) to facilitate a comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). As part of this process, the Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP), comprised of a diverse group of local public health system partners and stakeholders, was also engaged to inform and guide these processes.

From April 2023 through June 2023, the CHIPP convened to: 1) discuss emerging needs, gaps in services, opportunities within the community, and challenges facing Okeechobee County residents that had been identified through the primary and secondary data (as a part of the CHA); 2) share their perspectives and experiences as local public health system stakeholders; and 3) develop a plan to address the barriers, gaps, and challenges that were identified and prioritized. The CHIPP reviewed key health indicators from the CHA, which were stratified by race and ethnicity where data was available, to highlight disparities and determine the top health priorities in Okeechobee County. Through a series of meetings facilitated by HCSEF, the CHIPP then crafted goals, strategies, objectives, and activities to address each priority area. The result was ultimately a plan of action or the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which outlines how the community will address the key priorities and furthermore, by identifying the community partners and stakeholders that will work to ‘move the needle’ on each priority area.

The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP strategic priority areas:

- **Maternal and Child Health**
- **Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use)**
- **Linkage to Care**
- **Economic and Social Mobility and Stability**

The Okeechobee County CHIPP will continue to meet quarterly to report on efforts, assess progress, and refine the plan as needed.

Thanks to the dedication of the Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners, the CHIP is a thorough and executable plan that the various stakeholders can use to guide community health planning activities in the coming years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County and the Health Council of Southeast Florida would like to thank the residents, partnering organizations, and all stakeholders who contributed to this effort. At its core, this plan aims to create a healthier, more equitable Okeechobee County. Without the commitment and dedication of this community such change is not be possible.

“Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement and success have no meaning.”

– *Benjamin Franklin*

PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

211 Palm Beach Treasure Coast
Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc.
Career Source Heartland
Chobee Clubhouse
City of Okeechobee
Department of Children and Families
Early Steps
EOC of Indian River County/ Head Start
Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County
Hanley Foundation
Heartland Rides/Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Helping People Succeed
Indian River State College – Dixon Hendry Campus (Okeechobee)
Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network
Legal Aid Society
LOT Health Services
Martha's House
Nuestro Pueblo Servicios Inmigracion - Our Village
Okeechobee County School Board
Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office
Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP)
Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.
Okeechobee Senior Services
Our Village Okeechobee
Okeechobee Pregnancy Center - Wellness Clinic
QuitDoc/Tobacco Free Florida Okeechobee
Ritelifelife Services
Sexual Assault Assistance Program (SAAP) of the Treasure Coast
The Health Insurance Navigation Program through Epilepsy Alliance Florida
Treasure Coast Food Bank
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

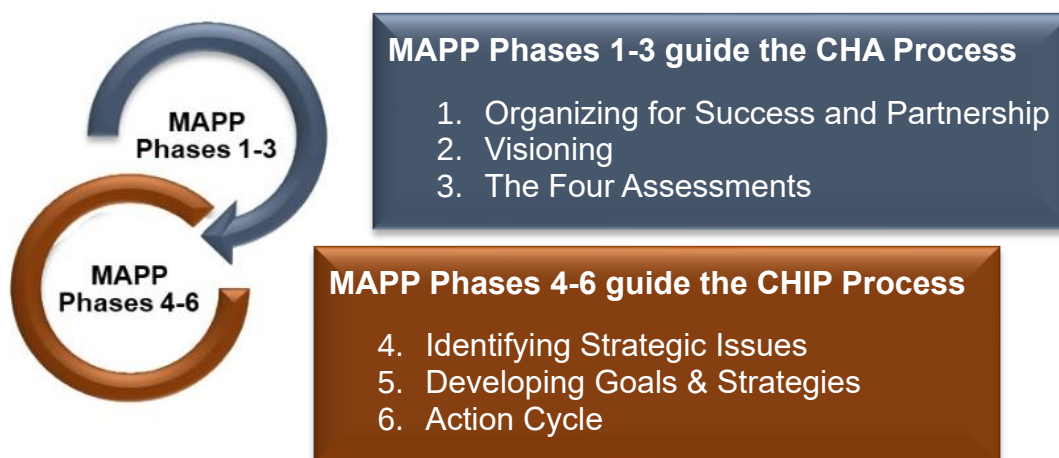
INTRODUCTION

The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is a five-year strategic plan intended to be used by stakeholders and community members to inform systematic and evidence-based decision making to improve the health of Okeechobee County residents.

In 2022, the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County engaged the Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) to facilitate a comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA) to develop the CHIP for Okeechobee County. HCSEF utilized the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model to guide the CHA and CHIP process. MAPP is an interactive process developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that is used to improve the local public health system's efficiency, effectiveness, and performance to help improve health outcomes and work towards achieving optimal health and high quality of life for all residents. At the time of this report, MAPP 2.0, a revised framework designed to adapt to emerging public health needs, was newly launched. These updates are being closely monitored and considered in the context of this work. Moving forward, the new MAPP 2.0 standards will be integrated into this process accordingly.

The MAPP framework consists of six phases: 1) Organizing for success and partnership; 2) Visioning; 3) The four assessments; 4) Identifying strategic issues; 5) Developing goals and strategies; and 6) Action cycle. Phases 1-3 guide the CHA process, and phases 4-6 guide the CHIP process. This process is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: MAPP Framework



NACCHO. (n.d.) *Mobilizing for Action Through Planning and Partnerships*. Retrieved from <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp>

Using the MAPP process, HCSEF gathered, analyzed, and synthesized primary and secondary data. This data was used to develop the CHA and provided an opportunity for stakeholders to evaluate health disparities and emerging health trends among residents and identify opportunities for improving care or services.

Following the completion and publication of the CHA, the Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP), a diverse group of community stakeholders who live and/or work within the county, worked together to develop the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP.

The strategic priority areas identified for the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP include:

- **Maternal and Child Health**
- **Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use)**
- **Linkage to Care**
- **Economic and Social Mobility and Stability**

HCSEF then facilitated exercises with the CHIPP to identify the root causes for each health priority area, which thus guided the development of each area's specific goals, strategies, and objectives. During this process, the group considered Healthy People 2030 and the Florida State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) priorities to ensure local-level alignment with national and state-level efforts. Best practices and evidence-based ideas were also considered. It is also important to note that the CHIP process is iterative, meaning the CHIPP will regularly monitor and evaluate the elements of this Plan to ensure the needs of residents are being prioritized, resources are being utilized effectively, and new partners and stakeholders are invited to participate and contribute in new ways not previously identified.

The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP ultimately aims to be a guide for improving the health and quality of life of Okeechobee County residents, by prioritizing the most pressing health needs in the community and developing a plan for strategic, collaborative action.

Addressing Health Disparities

Health disparities are when conditions or diseases occur more often among particular populations resulting in better or worse health outcomes compared to other groups. This is often due to the inequitable distribution of resources in communities, leading to systemic barriers or challenges that impact the ability of residents to access services and opportunities to achieve optimal health.

Social and economic factors that impact health and contribute to health disparities include access to education; quality health care; safe neighborhoods, transportation, and housing; community and social networks; and job opportunities and stable income. These are the broad set of forces and systems that shape life's conditions and ultimately outcomes.^{1 2} For example, those with lower socioeconomic status may encounter challenges in securing stable housing or having reliable internet access for telehealth consultations.³ Having an understanding of the conditions in which residents live in Okeechobee County and the barriers they face when accessing health resources is critical for developing a strategic plan to address health disparities.



Image Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2020. Social Determinants of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/sdoh/index.html>

¹ Social Determinants of Health (n.d.). Healthy People 2030. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023). *Social Determinants of Health*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/sdoh/index.html>

³ National Institute of Health, Medline Plus (2021). *Rural Health Concerns*. Retrieved from <https://medlineplus.gov/ruralhealthconcerns.html>

EQUALITY:

Everyone gets the same – regardless if it's needed or right for them.

**EQUITY:**

Everyone gets what they need – understanding the barriers, circumstances, and conditions.



Copyright 2022 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Image Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/blog/2023/01/tools-to-guide-your-2023-health-equity-journey.html>

To improve systems that support health in Okeechobee County, the CHIPP considered these social and economic factors that influence health disparities throughout the CHA and CHIP development process, particularly when developing the priority area goals, strategies, and objectives. The CHIPP represents community partners from a broad range of backgrounds, ensuring diverse community representation and advocacy throughout his process, who work every day to address barriers facing Okeechobee County residents. As a result, the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP strategically integrates upstream approaches that target key barriers to health for Okeechobee County residents and seeks to address the root causes of health disparities to create lasting positive change in the community. As mentioned previously, the group also referenced the Florida State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) throughout the planning process to ensure that local work in the county supports and aligns with state-level goals.

Further, the 2022 Okeechobee County Quality of Life Plan was strategically developed to align with the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP to address the health needs of under resourced communities and eliminate health disparities among racial and ethnic groups and tribal populations through evidence-based strategies and initiatives. The Okeechobee County Quality of Life Coalition and Quality of Life Taskforce, alongside the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County, will continually work to protect and promote the health of these groups.

MOBILIZING ACTION THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP (MAPP)

Between September 2022 and June 2023, HCSEF, the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County, and the CHIPP worked together to conduct a thorough CHA and develop a comprehensive, data-driven CHIP based on the findings. To ensure each element of the Okeechobee County CHA and CHIP process was collaborative and community-driven, HCSEF used the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) model to guide the development of the CHA and the CHIP. MAPP is an interactive process developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that is used by communities to assess key health issues, align resources for strategic action, and engage stakeholders around shared goals. MAPP consists of six phases: 1) Organizing for success and partnership; 2) Visioning; 3) The Four Assessments; 4) Identifying strategic issues; 5) Developing goals and strategies; and 6) Action cycle. Phases 1-3 guide the CHA process, and phases 4-6 guide the CHIP process.⁴ As previously mentioned, at the time of this report, MAPP 2.0, a revised framework designed to adapt to emerging public health needs, was newly launched. These updates are being closely monitored and considered in the context of this work. Moving forward, the new MAPP 2.0 standards will be integrated into this process accordingly. The CHA and CHIP development processes, MAPP Phases 1-6, are described in detail below.

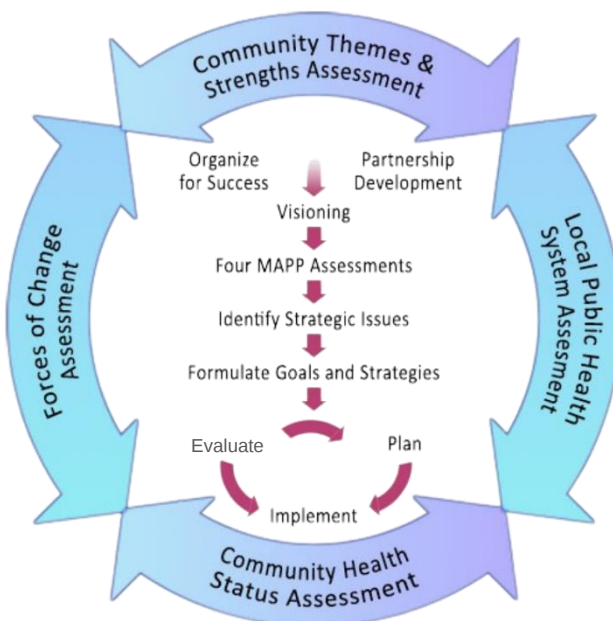


Image Source: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/mapp/main>

Overview of the CHA Process

MAPP Phase 1: Organizing for Success and Partnership

In Fall of 2022, HCSEF and the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County began CHA development in partnership with the stakeholders and community members who comprise the CHIPP. Phase 1 of the MAPP process sets the foundation for a planning process that encourages commitment and engages participants as active partners.⁵ The CHIPP, a diverse group of community stakeholders who live and/or work in the community, was established during the previous iteration of the Okeechobee County CHIP. During this

⁴ Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) (n.d.). National Association of County and City Health Officials. <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp>

⁵ Phase 1: Organizing and Engaging Partners (n.d.). National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp/phase-1-organize-for-success-partnership-development>

process, new members were identified to enhance capacity, increase diversity and representation, and broaden the reach of the Plan. Intentional efforts were made to engage multi-sector and multi-disciplinary partners, including those who represent populations who are disproportionately affected by health conditions that contribute to poorer health outcomes. In between meetings, HCSEF actively sought out new partners who could contribute to the work, through both perspective and experience, throughout the process. The CHIPP group was instrumental in developing the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP and played an active role in ensuring that the various phases of the MAPP process were completed with the best interests of the community in mind. Moving forward, the CHIPP will continue to steer implementation of this Plan and will serve as ambassadors for the CHA and CHIP within the community.

MAPP Phase 2: Visioning

During the Visioning phase, the CHIPP met to collaboratively determine the vision and values that are essential for building enthusiasm and setting the stage for planning moving forward. A shared community vision is an overarching goal that depicts what the ideal future looks and provides focus, purpose and direction for the CHA and CHIP.

To develop their vision, the group answered several questions:

1. What does a healthy Okeechobee County mean to you?
2. What are important characteristics of a healthy community for all who live, work, and play here?
3. How do you envision the local health system in the next five years?
4. What does a healthy Okeechobee have?
5. What do people in a healthy Okeechobee County know?⁶

The group crafted the following vision:

“A healthy Okeechobee County in which health and social services, resources, and programs are available, accessible, and culturally appropriate to allow residents to understand their health needs, to know where they can obtain services, and to truly thrive. A healthy Okeechobee County has environmental, programmatic, and structural supports to serve all residents equitably through a cohesive system of care, ensuring that the strength of Okeechobee County – its sense of community – is leveraged to reach all residents and provide the foundation for them to achieve their optimal health and wellbeing.”

Following the development of the vision, the group brainstormed values. These values are the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide the CHA and CHIP process. Values are central concepts that focus on the community and provide a basis for action and communicate expectations for the community health improvement process.

To determine the values, the group discussed the following question: What are the key values or behaviors that will be required of the local public health system partners, community, and others to achieve the vision?

⁶ NACCHO. (n.d.). *Phase 2: Visioning – Resources: Writing the Vision Statement*. Retrieved from <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp/phase-2-visioning>

The group developed the following list of core values:

- **Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork among partners throughout the local public health system, including medical partners and social service partners.**
- **The fostering of trust and respect among residents and providers to ensure the successful delivery and promotion of services and programs so these resources are utilized to their fullest potential.**
- **Equity and cultural sensitivity in the delivery of services, programs, promotions, and health education to ensure health improvement and the advancement of health literacy among residents.**
- **Accountability and commitment from partners across the local public health system to ensure all residents receive information and services successfully.**
- **Client-centered approaches, putting the residents first in all services and programs.**

MAPP Phase 3: The Four Assessments

The Local Public Health System Assessment

The Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA) is a tool that is used to determine how well the local public health system addresses the components of the 10 Essential Public Health Services and accompanying Model Standards, answering questions such as *“What are the components, activities, competencies, and capacities of our public health system?”* and *“How well are the 10 Essential Public Health Services being provided in our system?”*⁷ The LPHSA process in Okeechobee County took place in October 2022 over the course of two meetings. The first meeting was the internal LPHSA, which was conducted with Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County staff members. A second meeting was conducted with external partners to complete the final portion of the LPHSA. In addition to the standard LPHSA, Okeechobee County completed a Local Health Department Contribution Questionnaire and a Priority of Model Standards Questionnaire as a part of the assessment process. These additional questionnaires served as supplementary indicators of the local public health system’s performance in each Essential Service area and provided deeper analysis of the system in Okeechobee County.

During the scoring process, the local public health system was scored on the following scale: No Activity (0), Minimal Activity (25), Moderate Activity (50), Significant Activity (75), and Optimal Activity (100). As depicted in the table below, the average overall performance score in Okeechobee County was 65.9 out of 100. Additionally, the average overall priority rating was 8.4 out of 10. In this scoring, the Local Public Health System assigned a priority rating for the Model Standards under each Priority Area using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. Lastly, the average overall agency (local health department) contribution score was 51.9 out of 100 among all assessed Essential Service areas. The following scale was used in this Questionnaire: No Agency Contribution (0), Agency Contribution of 0-25% (25), Agency Contribution of 26-50% (50), Agency Contribution of 51-75% (75), Agency Contribution of 76-100% (100). Additional details about the Local Public Health System Assessment, the Priority of Model Standards Questionnaire, and the Local Health Department Contribution Questionnaire can be found in the full 2022 Okeechobee County CHA.

⁷ NACCHO. (n.d.) *Phase 3: Collecting and Analyzing Data – Local Public Health System Assessment*. Retrieved from <https://www.naccho.org/programs/public-health-infrastructure/performance-improvement/community-health-assessment/mapp/phase-3-the-four-assessments>

Figure 2: Okeechobee County Local Public Health Assessment Results

Model Standards by Essential Services	Performance Scores	Priority Rating	Agency Contribution Scores
ES 1: Monitor Health Status	69.4	8.0	83.3
ES 2: Diagnose and Investigate	84.7	9.0	83.3
ES 3: Educate/Empower	63.9	8.7	50.0
ES 4: Mobilize Partnerships	71.9	9.0	50.0
ES 5: Develop Policies/Plans	70.8	8.3	56.3
ES 6: Enforce Laws	70.0	7.7	50.0
ES 7: Link to Health Services	68.8	8.5	37.5
ES 8: Assure Workforce	58.4	8.3	50.0
ES 9: Evaluate Services	65.4	8.3	33.3
ES 10: Research/Innovations	35.4	8.0	25.0
Average Overall Score	65.9	8.4	51.9
Median Score	69.1	8.3	50.0

Source: Okeechobee County Local Public Health System Report, 2022; Aggregated by: National Public Health Performance Standards Tool and Score Sheet, Version 3.0

The Community Health Status Assessment

The Community Health Status Assessment is used to identify priority issues by compiling and analyzing secondary data. This was done through the development of the 2022 Okeechobee CHA. HCSEF compiled and analyzed secondary quantitative data from trusted sources, such as FloridaHealthCHARTS, the Florida Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics, and the U.S. Census Bureau, to depict the health status of Okeechobee County residents and illustrate how systems and structures in the community are impacting health disparities. HCSEF also disaggregated key demographic and socioeconomic data, health status data, and health resource availability and access data by Census County Division (CCD), ZIP Code, race, and ethnicity, when possible, to highlight disparities. The following section highlights the key areas of the 2022 Okeechobee County CHA, including the county's Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile, Health Status Profile, Health Resource Availability and Access Profile, Community Perspective Profile, and the Local Public Health System Assessment Profile. While this section provides a high-level overview of key CHA data, the full [2022 Okeechobee County Community Health Assessment](#) provides additional indicators and analysis. Lastly, it is important to note, the Okeechobee County CHIPP referenced the 2022 Okeechobee County CHA throughout the CHIP development process.

CHA Snapshot: Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile – Demographic Data Highlights

This table depicts the racial makeup of Okeechobee County from 2016 to 2020.

- As of 2020, over 82.4% of Okeechobee County residents were White, 8.7% were Black or African American, and 0.6% were Asian. From 2016 to 2020, the racial demographic trends in Okeechobee County remained consistent.

Figure 3: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Race, 2016-2020

Race	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
White	86.9%	87.0%	86.6%	85.4%	82.4%
Black or African American	8.8%	8.4%	8.7%	8.3%	8.7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.9%	1.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.6%
Asian	1.0%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
Some Other Race	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	2.6%	4.0%
Two or More Races	1.0%	1.3%	1.3%	2.0%	3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020

This table shows ethnicity trends in Okeechobee County from 2016 to 2020.

- From 2016 to 2020, the ethnic profile of Okeechobee County also remained consistent. Most recently, in 2020, approximately one-quarter of the county population was Hispanic.

Figure 4: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Ethnicity, 2016-2020

Ethnicity	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Hispanic	25.1%	25.0%	25.2%	25.5%	25.8%
Non-Hispanic	74.9%	75.0%	74.8%	74.5%	74.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020

This table shows the distribution of sex in Okeechobee County from 2016 to 2020.

- From 2016 to 2020, the proportion of male versus female residents in Okeechobee County remained consistent, with a slightly higher proportion of males residing in the county.

Figure 5: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Sex, 2016-2020

Sex	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Male	54.0%	54.1%	53.9%	54.0%	53.9%
Female	46.0%	45.9%	46.1%	46.0%	46.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020

This table shows the distribution of age in Okeechobee County from 2016 to 2020.

- In both 2016 and 2020, most Okeechobee County residents were between the ages of 35-44 years and 45-54 years. Most notably, from 2016 to 2020, the proportion of residents ages 20-24 years declined from 6.3% to 4.9% and the proportion of residents ages 85+ increased from 1.7% to 2.7%.

Figure 6: CHA Demographic Data Highlights – Age, 2016-2020

Age	2016	2020
< 5 years	6.1%	5.9%
5-9 years	6.0%	5.2%
10-14 years	6.5%	6.2%
15-19 years	6.6%	6.9%
20-24 years	6.3%	4.9%
25-34 years	12.5%	12.5%
35-44 years	12.6%	12.7%
45-54 years	13.3%	13.1%
55-59 years	6.2%	6.3%
60-64 years	6.1%	6.5%
65-74 years	10.0%	10.1%
75-84 years	6.1%	6.9%
85 + years	1.7%	2.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016-2020

CHA Snapshot: Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile – Socioeconomic Data Highlights

This table shows sociodemographic highlights, such as the proportion of residents below the poverty level, the median household income, the proportion of residents who are high school graduates, and the proportion of renter-occupied units in Okeechobee County and Florida. As available, the information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- In 2020, a higher proportion of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino residents in Okeechobee County were living below the poverty level compared to their White and non-Hispanic counterparts in the county and at the state level overall.
- The median household income in Okeechobee County was over \$10,000 less than that of the state.
- A smaller percentage of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino residents attained a high school diploma or further education compared to their White and non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Approximately one-quarter of Okeechobee County units were occupied by renters in 2020.

Figure 7: CHA Socioeconomic Data Highlights, 2020

Indicator	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black or African American	White	Hispanic or Latino Origin	Non-Hispanic
Below Poverty Level (%)	13.3%	17.8%	29.9%	17.1%	27.2%	12.8%
Median Household Income (\$)	\$57,703	\$46,097	-	-	-	-
High School Graduate or Higher (%)	88.1%	77.2%	66.9%	78.3%	55.4%	84.5%
Renter-Occupied Housing Units (%)	33.8%	25.2%	-	-	-	-

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2020

CHA Snapshot: Health Status Profile – COVID-19 Data Highlights

This table shows COVID-19 indicators such as the daily new case rate, the age-adjusted death rate, and the proportion of residents vaccinated in Okeechobee County and Florida. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- Significant disparities in the COVID-19 age-adjusted death rate existed among Okeechobee County Black residents and Hispanic residents, compared to their White and non-Hispanic counterparts.
- As of November 2022, approximately half of Okeechobee County residents had received an initial COVID-19 vaccination, compared to over 80% of state residents.

Figure 8: CHA COVID-19 Data Highlights, 2020-2022

Indicator	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black	White	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
Daily New Cases (Rate Per 100,000) (7/1/2022)	49.5	25.2	-	-	-	-
Age-Adjusted Deaths (Rate Per 100,000) (2020)	57.4	87.8	248.5	83.6	230.4	78.9
Vaccinations – Initial Series (%) (11/2/2022)	81.6%	55.6%	-	-	-	-

Source: COVID Act Now, 2022 and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2023

CHA Snapshot: Health Status Profile – Maternal Health Data Highlights

This table shows maternal health data highlights in Okeechobee County and Florida in 2020. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- Hispanic Okeechobee County residents reported a higher percentage of births to overweight mothers compared to non-Hispanic residents.
- Black Okeechobee County residents reported a higher percentage of births to obese mothers compared to White residents in Okeechobee County.
- Infant mortality reached a rate of 0.0 per 1,000 live births in Okeechobee County in 2020.

Figure 9: CHA Maternal Health Data Highlights, 2020

Indicator	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black	White	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
Births to Mothers with Adequate Prenatal Care (Proportion)	66.6%	60.6%	76.9%	60.2%	61.5%	60.1%
Births to Overweight Mothers (%)	27.6%	27.9%	25.0%	27.7%	30.5%	26.7%
Births to Obese Mothers (%)	28.1%	39.3%	45.0%	37.9%	38.9%	39.3%
Infant Mortality (Rate per 1,000 live births)	5.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2020

CHA Snapshot: Health Status Profile – Morbidity Data Highlights

This table shows several key morbidity indicators, such as the age-adjusted hospitalization rate of coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes, as well as the rate of preventable hospitalizations and the proportion of adult residents who are obese in Okeechobee County and Florida. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- Age-adjusted hospitalization rates of coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes were higher in Okeechobee County compared to the state of Florida overall.
- The rate of preventable hospitalizations from all conditions in Okeechobee County was nearly twice the rate of the state of Florida overall.
- A greater proportion of Okeechobee County adults were obese compared to their counterparts across the state.

Figure 10: CHA Morbidity Data Highlights, 2019-2020

Indicator (Rate Per 100,000)	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black	White	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
Coronary Heart Disease Age-Adjusted Hospitalization Rate (2020)	236.8	525.9	314.2	491.9	434.6	571.7
Cancer Age-Adjusted Incidence Rate (2019)	453.9	498.4	290.2	510.0	352.9	526.0
Stroke Age-Adjusted Hospitalization Rate (2020)	221.6	325.3	698.4	267.3	279.1	328.2
Diabetes (as any listed diagnosis) Age-Adjusted Hospitalization Rate (2019)	2160.3	4,053.7	5,403.7	3,025.3	5,610.8	3,850.3
Preventable Hospitalizations (all conditions) (2019)	737.7	1,468.9	-	-	-	-
Indicator (%)	Florida	Okeechobee County	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	
Adult Obesity (2019)	27.0%	35.8%	-	32.5%	36.4%	

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, University of Miami (FL) Medical School, Florida Cancer Data System, 2019

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), 2020

Source: Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System telephone survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida Department of Health Division of Community Health Promotion, 2019

CHA Snapshot: Health Status Profile – Mortality Data Highlights

This table shows several mortality data highlights, including the age-adjusted death rate for coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and unintentional injury. The age-adjusted death rate is also shown. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- Age-adjusted death rates from coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, and unintentional injury were higher in Okeechobee County compared to the state of Florida.
- There were no deaths from HIV/AIDS in Okeechobee County in 2020.

Figure 11: CHA Mortality Data Highlights, 2020

Age-Adjusted Deaths (Rate Per 100,000)	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black	White	Hispanic	Non- Hispanic
Age-Adjusted Death Rate	748.4	933.6	1231.0	934.1	1,018.5	962.5
Coronary Heart Disease	90.6	142.2	126.9	142.2	190.4	145.3
Stroke	44.4	46.6	133.2	45.1	24.3	46.1
Cancer	138.7	187.9	234.7	184.9	137.4	199.1
HIV/AIDS	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unintentional Injury	67.4	80.5	96.4	86.2	63.2	80.5

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2020

CHA Snapshot: Health Status Profile – Mental and Behavioral Health Data Highlights

This table shows several key mental and behavioral health data highlights, including indicators related to suicide, drugs, alcohol, mental health, and smoking. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- Okeechobee County exceeded the state in age-adjusted suicide deaths, with rates highest among Okeechobee County non-Hispanic residents and Okeechobee County White residents.
- A greater proportion of middle and high school students reported binge drinking in Okeechobee County compared to their counterparts in the state. Among middle schoolers, the proportion of students who reported binge drinking was nearly twice as high in Okeechobee County compared to the state of Florida overall.
- A greater proportion of adults in Okeechobee County were current smokers compared to their counterparts across the state. Notably, almost one-quarter of all Okeechobee County non-Hispanic White adults were current smokers in 2019.

Figure 12: CHA Mental and Behavioral Health Data Highlights, 2016-2020

Indicator	Location		Race		Ethnicity	
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Black	White	Hispanic or Latino Origin	Non-Hispanic
Age-Adjusted Suicide Deaths (Rate Per 100,000) (2020)	13.1	15.2	0.0	17.7	0.0	21.5
Age-Adjusted Opioid Deaths (Rate Per 100,000) (2020)	29.9	26.2	-	-	-	-
Middle School Students Who Report Binge Drinking (%) (2016)	3.2%	6.2%	-	-	-	-
High School Students Who Report Binge Drinking (%) (2016)	10.9%	13.7%	-	-	-	-
Indicator	Florida	Okeechobee County	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic	
Adults who Engage in Heavy or Binge Drinking (%) (2019)	18.0%	14.2%	-	14.0%	21.5%	
Adults who had Poor Mental Health on > 14 of the Past 30 Days (%) (2019)	13.8%	17.5%	-	17.5%	13.7%	
Adults who are Current Smokers (%) (2019)	14.8%	20.1%	-	24.9%	9.1%	

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2019
Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Opioid Dashboard, 2020

CHA Snapshot: Health Resource Availability and Access Profile – Hospital Utilization Data Highlights

This table shows the top five principal diagnosis groupings for Okeechobee County residents in 2021.

- Among Okeechobee County residents, vaginal deliveries accounted for the largest percentage of discharges in 2021 (4.7%).

Figure 13: CHA Hospital Utilization Data Highlights, 2021

Principal Diagnosis Group	Discharge (Count)	Discharge (Percent)
Single liveborn infant, delivered vaginally (ICD Code Z38.00)	350	4.7%
COVID-19 (ICD Code U07.1)	337	4.5%
Sepsis, unspecified organism (ICD Code A41.9)	320	4.3%
Single liveborn infant, delivered by cesarean (ICD Code Z38.01)	171	2.3%
Hypertensive chronic kidney disease with stage 5 chronic kidney disease or end stage renal disease (ICD Code I12.0)	169	2.2%

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), 2021

CHA Snapshot: Health Resource Availability and Access Profile – Healthcare Facility Capacity Data Highlights

This table shows the rate of beds per 100,000 population for various facility types in Florida and Okeechobee County, including hospital beds, nursing home beds, adult psychiatric beds, child and adolescent psychiatric beds, and adult substance use beds, in 2020.

- Okeechobee County has lower rates of hospital beds, adult psychiatric beds, child and adolescent psychiatric beds, and adult substance abuse beds. Notably, there are no adult psychiatric beds, child and adolescent psychiatric beds, or adult substance abuse beds in the county.

Figure 14: CHA Health Care Facility Capacity Data Highlights, 2020

Facility (Rate Per 100,000)	Florida	Okeechobee County
Hospital Beds	307.6	237.0
Nursing Home Beds	386.5	426.7
Adult Psychiatric Beds	20.6	0.0
Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Beds	3.0	0.0
Adult Substance Abuse Beds	1.7	0.0

Source: Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), 2020

CHA Snapshot: Health Resource Availability and Access Profile – Healthcare Provider Supply Data Highlights

The table below shows the rate of providers per 100,000 population in Florida and Okeechobee County.

- Okeechobee County had lower rates of Physicians, Dentists, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Specialists, Registered Nurses, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Psychologists, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists compared to the state of Florida. Notably, there are no Certified Nurse Specialists or Psychologists in Okeechobee County, and the rates of Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Licensed Mental Health Counselors were exponentially lower in Okeechobee County compared to the state.
- Okeechobee County had a higher rate of Licensed Practical Nurses compared to the state of Florida.

Figure 15: CHA Health Care Provider Supply Data Highlights, FY2020-2021

Provider Type (Rate Per 100,000)	Florida	Okeechobee County
Physicians	314.0	106.7
Dentists	56.7	19.0
Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner	205.3	71.1
Certified Nurse Specialist	1.3	0.0
Licensed Practical Nurse	279.7	343.7
Registered Nurse	1,334.5	770.4
Licensed Clinical Social Workers	49.7	11.9
Licensed Mental Health Counselor	57.3	23.7
Psychologists	23.4	0.0
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist	10.1	4.7

Source: Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance, 2021

CHA Snapshot: Health Resource Availability and Access Profile – Health Insurance Data Highlights

The following table shows key health insurance indicators, including the proportion of adults with any type of health care insurance coverage and the proportion of adults who could not see a doctor in the past year due to cost. As available, this information is depicted by race and ethnicity.

- A lower proportion of adults in Okeechobee County had any type of health insurance in 2019 compared to their counterparts in the state of Florida. Notably, only about half of all Okeechobee County Hispanic adults had any type of health care insurance coverage in 2019.
- In 2019, almost one-quarter of all Okeechobee County Hispanic adults could not see a doctor in the past year due to cost, compared to 15.1% of county adults overall.

Figure 16: CHA Health Insurance Data Highlights, 2019

Indicator	Location		Race and Ethnicity		
	Florida	Okeechobee County	Non-Hispanic Black	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic
Adults With Any Type of Health Care Insurance Coverage	84.2%	76.5%	-	87.0%	51.8%
Adults Who Could Not See a Doctor in the Past Year Due to Cost	16.0%	15.1%	-	12.6%	22.6%

Source: Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System telephone survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida Department of Health Division of Community Health Promotion, 2019; Florida Health CHARTS, Agency for Health Care Administration, 2019

Community Themes and Strengths Assessment

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment provides insight into the thoughts, opinions, and concerns of community residents. This assessment aims to understand what residents feel is important to the community, how quality of life is perceived by residents, and what assets can be used to improve community health. From September to October 2022, eighteen Resident Focus Groups were conducted with 128 Okeechobee County residents. These sessions were held virtually and in person, allowing residents to voice their opinions and experiences related to health in Okeechobee County in a discussion-based format. These sessions were conducted in English and Spanish and lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. Major themes from these sessions are summarized in the figure below.

Figure 17: CHA Community Themes and Strengths Assessment Highlights

Current Community Strengths	Healthcare and Health Education Touchpoints	COVID-19 Impacts
• The outdoor environment and natural resources, such as parks • Sense of community and neighbors helping neighbors • Committed community organizations that serve residents	• In-county sources of health care: free clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms • Out-of-county sources of health care: specialists, dentists, therapy, eye doctors, OB/GYN and birthing services • Sources of health information: social media/internet, medical professionals, community organizations, friends/family members, pamphlets, flyers, and local radio	• Changes to daily life • Economic hardship • Mental health and emotional wellbeing • Interrupted access to social services, resources, and medical care • Local response challenges, such as access to testing and vaccinations

Areas of Emphasis	Opportunities
• Health issues: mental and behavioral health, chronic health conditions, conditions related to aging, accidents and unintentional injury, teen births, overweight/obesity, dental health, and pollution (lake) • Causes: lack of awareness/education/health literacy, individual and cultural behaviors and beliefs, environmental factors, financial constraints/health insurance, provider availability • Most affected groups: elderly, low-income/without insurance, young people, undocumented and migrant residents, people of color, residents with disabilities, those who speak English as a second language	• Limited in-county services • Barriers to access, such as transportation, healthcare system navigation • Support services and infrastructure related to the social and economic factors, such as cultural and linguistic barriers • Systems of support, such as community health workers • Education on resources available

Forces of Change Assessment

The Forces of Change Assessment identifies forces, such as trends, factors, or events that affect the context in which the local public health system operates. Examples of such forces include legislation, technology, and socioeconomic trends that have an impact on the community and the local public health system. HCSEF utilized Key Informant Interviews to gather perspectives on forces that should be considered during the CHIP development. Key Informant Interviews were conducted with nine informants from local organizations, such as state-agencies, social service organizations, and faith-based organizations, as well with representatives from low-income, medically underserved communities and communities of color. These informants identified several Forces of Change, including technology, climate change/natural disasters, political tensions, the economy, factory-style healthcare delivery, oversaturation of information, and the emergence of Fentanyl in the community. The following figure outlines the findings from these sessions and provides insight into the current Forces of Change affecting the Okeechobee County Local Public Health System and community overall.

Figure 18: CHA Forces of Change Highlights

Key Health Issues and Populations with Unmet Needs	Strategies to Create a Healthy County	Current Community Strengths	Challenges and Barriers in Maintaining Health
•Chronic health conditions •Substance use and behavioral health •Mental health •Oral Health •Residents who suffer in silence •Communities of color (Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino) •Migrant and agricultural communities •Elderly •Low-income, uninsured communities	•Increased collaboration to increase access (A single-entry point of care/referral system) •Access to basic needs •Public transportation, affordable housing, livable wages, healthy food •More in-county providers and specialists •Quality of Life	•Resiliency •“Our strength is our people” •Sense of Community and community-based values •Genuine care and commitment from agencies •Partnerships among agencies providing low-to-no-cost services •Physical environment	•Lack of: Transportation, Mental health services, Health education, Insurance, Providers/specialists in-county •Food insecurity •Language barriers •“Cowboy Mentality” and family dynamics/cycles •Built environment (low walkability, etc.)

Opportunities	Suggestions for Improvement	Forces of Change	COVID-19 Impacts
•Single-entry point system •Public transportation •Availability of providers and specialists in the county •Equitable distribution of services and information •Community health workers •Improved built environment (walkability, sidewalks, bike lanes, healthy food sources) •Addressing the digital divide and digital literacy •Affordable, safe housing and stable employment •Retain and employ residents in the county •Mental health services for residents and for children	•Central hubs/single-entry point of care systems •Awareness/education •Partner engagement and commitment to action •Federal and state-level funding/advocating to increase resources •Community health workers and patient navigators •Public transportation system •Equitable job opportunities	•Technology •Climate change/natural disasters •Political tensions •The economy •Factory-style healthcare service delivery •Oversaturation of information •Fentanyl	•Loss of life •Increased isolation, fear, and stress •The political climate impacted health •Impact on access to care (digital divide and exacerbated health issues) •Economic impact •Impact on local public health system workforce

Overview of the CHIP Process

MAPP Phase 4: Identifying Strategic Issues

In April 2023, following the completion and publication of the 2022 Okeechobee County CHA, partners met to review the CHA findings and begin the CHIP development process. The CHIPP reviewed data from the CHA, Healthy People 2030, and the Florida State Health Improvement Plan and prioritized the top opportunities for improvement in the county.

The strategic priority areas identified for the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP were:

- **Maternal and Child Health**
- **Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use)**
- **Linkage to Care**
- **Economic and Social Mobility and Stability**

MAPP Phase 5: Developing Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and an Action Plan

In May 2023, the CHIPP convened to engage in a root cause analysis and draft goals, objectives, and strategies for each priority area. To conduct the root cause analysis, the group participated in a “5 Why’s” activity to identify and explore a deeper understanding of barriers to health related to each priority area. The CHIPP utilized breakout groups to ensure each member had the opportunity to provide input and perspective on all four priority areas. The group also reviewed several evidence-based strategies for each priority area and provided insight on these strategies based on their experiences in the community. From there, the CHIPP worked together to refine and enhance the goals, S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Realistic, Time-bound) objectives, and strategies. HCSEF also connected with individual providers and organizations in between meetings to garner feedback from those who could not attend the sessions.

The CHIPP met again in May 2023 to review the goals, objectives, and strategies and incorporate new suggestions and revision provided by partners. The CHIPP then discussed the activities, action steps, measures, and key partners for each strategy, completing the first full draft of the CHIP action plan. Additionally, HCSEF used partner input from the meetings and direct feedback received in between meetings to further refine the action plan.

In June 2023, the CHIPP met for a final session to review the action plan and finalize objective targets. This meeting also served as an opportunity to ensure buy-in for the proposed activities from the involved partners and consensus on all elements of the Plan. The group discussed implementation and ways in which they can work together to advance this work.

MAPP Phase 6: Action Cycle

The CHIPP will implement the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP beginning in July 2023. The CHIPP will carry out these efforts throughout the Plan’s five-year term. The CHIPP will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor activities, evaluate progress, and update the Plan to increase effectiveness.

OKEECHOBEE COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

From September 2022 through June 2023, the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County, HCSEF, and CHIPP worked together to conduct a thorough CHA and used these findings to develop a comprehensive, data-driven CHIP for Okeechobee County. The following section highlights the purpose of the CHIP, the methods used to develop the CHIP, and how the CHIP should be used throughout the community to expand impact and contribute to resource development and strategic planning outside of the CHIP process.

Purpose

The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP is a five-year strategic plan to address health issues based on the findings from the Okeechobee County CHA. While the Okeechobee County CHIPP, a diverse group of community stakeholders, played a vital role in the development of this Plan, the CHIP is intended to be used by all stakeholders and community members to inform systematic and evidence-based decision making to improve the health of Okeechobee County residents. This Plan is also a “living” document that may be updated by the partners to ensure that the needs of the community are continually being met, and all updates will be published annually.

Methods

The goal of the CHIP is to clearly outline a plan of action to address key health priorities identified in Okeechobee County. To develop the CHIP, HCSEF facilitated four meetings with the CHIPP to prioritize the opportunities for improvement in the county. To determine the top priority areas, the CHIP reviewed the most recent available data included in the CHA, engaged in discussion, and participated in prioritization activities. Specific goals, strategies, and objectives related to each priority are defined in this Plan, along with activities, key action steps, measures, and lead community partners. These items are defined in detail to facilitate collaboration and strategically target resources to help address each health priority. It is important to note that the CHIPP recognized several important health indicators throughout this process, and, while these are not all directly addressed in this iteration of the Plan, each emerging health need is important and will be considered for future health planning activities in Okeechobee County. Additionally, partners will continue to work collaboratively to connect networks and residents with this work, ensuring broad community representation and continuity of services.

How to Use the CHIP

Community Health Improvement Plans strive to strengthen local public health infrastructure, aid and guide countywide planning, foster collaboration and capacity-building, and, ultimately, enhance quality of life for residents. The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP was created by community partners who live and work in the community, and all elements were driven by stakeholder and community member input and data analyzed during the CHA. Local stakeholders and community members are encouraged to review the Plan, reflect on the suggested goals, and consider how to participate to help improve the health of Okeechobee County residents.

Below are some suggested ways in which you can help our community achieve these goals:

- Promote the CHIP strategies and activities in the community
- Support programs, policies, initiatives and campaigns aimed at addressing the health priorities outlined in the CHIP
- Share the goals of the CHIP, as well as the findings of the CHA that drove these goals, with the community to raise awareness
- Be an advocate in the community for public health improvement practices, including healthy behaviors, policies, systems, and environments
- Lead by example and practice healthy behaviors in your home, workplace, and social circles
- Share your resources whether it be time, support, funding, or expertise to strengthen health improvement efforts in Okeechobee County

STRATEGIC HEALTH PRIORITIES AND ACTION PLANS

This section of the report outlines an actionable, impactful plan for health improvement in Okeechobee County. Goals, strategies, and objectives related to each priority are defined in detail in the following pages, along with activities, key action steps, measures, and lead community partners, to facilitate collaboration and target resources to help address each health priority.

A **goal** is a broad, general statement about a desired outcome. It represents the destination the community hopes to reach within each priority area.

The **objectives** are more specific and detail what the community hopes to achieve and by when. Whenever feasible, this plan's objectives are S.M.A.R.T., meaning they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant/realistic, and time-bound. Each of the objectives are **aligned with national and/or state priorities**, such as those found in Healthy People 2030 and the Florida State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP).

The **strategies** detailed in the plan are the ways in which the CHIPP will achieve the objectives. Examples of **evidence-based interventions and programs** are outlined for each priority area to guide how the detailed CHIP strategies are modeled. The **activities**, **key action steps**, and **measures** for each strategy provide more detail on how the strategies will be implemented.

The action plans in the CHIP aim to:

- Address the structural issues and root causes of the identified health priorities
- Address health disparities and focus on improving conditions and health outcomes in the community
- Utilize data to measure disparities and to monitor the impact of interventions
- Outline approaches that are relevant and realistic given the available time, resources, and competing priorities
- Devise an action plan that can have a wide-reaching community-wide impact
- Detail measurable objectives to evaluate progress
- Engage a broad range of community stakeholders
- Support ongoing and existing efforts in the community, leveraging partnerships and increasing collaboration
- Implement evidence-based interventions and models for community health improvement
- Include interventions that encourage healthy behavior changes, while also addressing structural and systemic barriers

Key partners are listed in the action plan for each activity. These key partners were identified by the group as having relevant experience and expertise related to the priority area activities. Serving as lead agencies, these key partners will oversee implementation efforts for each of the strategies within each priority area and report progress during the Okeechobee County CHIPP meetings.

The goal of the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP is to provide direction for local community health improvement planning efforts. To ensure the CHIP is making meaningful impact with these efforts, the CHIPP will conduct ongoing evaluation of the priority area action plans. Any updates made to the Plan are approved by the CHIPP and will be published annually.

Priority Area: Maternal and Child Health

Maternal and Child Health – Why Address It?

Maternal health refers to the health of women and children during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. While significant progress has been made in the last two decades in this area, most maternal injuries and deaths are preventable.⁸ The American Public Health Association states that maternal and child health is an important public health issue because: 1) there is an opportunity to reduce preventable deaths and improve the health and well-being of women, children, and adolescents; 2) many women, infants, and children have limited access to adequate nutrition and to essential, quality health services and education; and 3) investments in prevention, health care, and education span across generations.⁹

Living a healthy lifestyle, as well as receiving proper care before, during, and after pregnancy, can lower the risk of pregnancy complications. Certain conditions can occur during this time, such as anemia, anxiety, depression, diabetes, heart conditions, hypertension, hyperemesis gravidarum (morning sickness), infections, and an unhealthy weight.¹⁰ Receiving prenatal care is a critical part of pregnancy that benefits both the mother and baby and offers the opportunity for health education, treatment of any current or past health conditions, and prevention of potential issues.¹¹ Further, babies of mothers who do not receive prenatal care are three times more likely to be born at a low birth weight and five times more likely to die compared to those born to mothers receive prenatal care.¹²

Once a baby arrives, a parent has many things to consider, including, newborn screenings, child safety, and child development. Each year there are approximately 3,400 sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID) in the United States among infants under one years old. The most reported reasons include sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed.¹³ While healthcare professionals do not know the exact cause of SIDS, research shows there are steps parents and caregivers can take to reduce the risk. Education and health promotion for new parents on child safety topics like safe sleep, hot vehicle education, infant CPR, water safety, child passenger safety, injury preparedness reduce risks and ensure the overall well-being of children. By providing mothers and fathers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to ensure their children's safety, it empowers them to create a secure and nurturing environment that is important for future health.

The Okeechobee County CHIPP chose Maternal and Child Health as a top priority area to improve maternal health outcomes. The following table shows the goals, strategies, and objectives that will help guide work on this priority area within the community. Additionally, there are best practices and evidence-supported initiatives specific to this priority area.

⁸ World Health Organization. (2023) *Maternal health*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/health-topics/maternal-health>

⁹ American Public Health Association. (2022) *Maternal and Child Health*. Retrieved from <https://apha.org/topics-and-issues/maternal-and-child-health>

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023) *Pregnancy Complications*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-complications.html>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2021) *Prenatal care*. Retrieved from <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/prenatal-care>

¹² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2021) *Prenatal care*. Retrieved from <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/prenatal-care>

¹³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023) *Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/sids/data.htm>

Figure 19: Maternal and Child Health Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Priority Area 1: Maternal & Child Health			
Goal 1.A: Improve maternal health outcomes for residents of Okeechobee County.			
Strategy 1.A.1: Educate Okeechobee County expecting mothers/new mothers and their support systems on maternal and child health topics and available resources and services.			
Objective 1.A.1.1: Increase the proportion of births to mothers with adequate prenatal care based on the Kotelchuck Index from 61.6% of Okeechobee County births in 2021 to 75% in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS]			Alignment: Florida SHIP - MCH2 Healthy People 2030 - MICH-08
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 1.A.1.1.1: Promote the Pregnancy Center services among residents to increase awareness Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Develop and disseminate marketing material to community Engage residents in care and link them to services as needed	# of new/expecting mothers seen at the Pregnancy Center	Pregnancy Center Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc. Helping People Succeed Healthy Families Program
Activity 1.A.1.1.2: Increase community knowledge of Healthy Start's Prenatal Care Vouchers, as funding allows Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Market the Prenatal Care Voucher program among residents Provide vouchers to eligible residents, as funding allows	# of residents that are recipients of Healthy Start's Prenatal Care Vouchers	

Activity 1.A.1.1.3: Host the Annual Community Educational Baby Shower to increase knowledge of local resources and providers Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Plan event logistics and engage providers/resources Market the Annual Community Educational Baby Shower among residents	# of community members that attend the Annual Community Educational Baby Shower	
Activity 1.A.1.1.4: Educate support systems, such as fathers and family members, through the Fatherhood Program Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Promote the Fatherhood program among Okeechobee County residents Engage fathers in the Fatherhood program and provide education and resource connection	# fathers connected	
Activity 1.A.1.1.5: Engage the community in Healthy Start's CONNECT Coordinated Intake and Referral (CIR) Telephonic Program Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Educate the community on Healthy Start's CONNECT Coordinated Intake and Referral (CIR) Telephonic Program Refer mothers and families to Healthy Start's CONNECT CIR Telephonic Program	# of residents that completed a CIR Initial Intake	Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc. Helping People Succeed Healthy Families Program Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.
Activity 1.A.1.1.6: Support students through the School District TAP Program Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide curriculum-based education to new teen mothers Provide support and link new teen mothers to resources as needed	# teen students linked to a paraprofessional as a part of the TAP program	Okeechobee County School District

Objective 1.A.1.2: Decrease the number of infant deaths (aged 0-364 days) from 4 in 2021 to 0 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS]			Alignment: Florida SHIP - MCH2.3, ISV1.1, ISV1.2, ISV1.3, ISV1.5 Healthy People 2030 - MICH-14, MICH-02
Activity 1.A.1.2.1: Promote child safety best practices among residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide education on child safety topics such as safe sleep, hot vehicle education, infant CPR, water safety, child passenger safety, and more.	# residents educated # of residents that received child passenger safety education and car seat installations through the Healthy Start Program	Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc. Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County
	Attend the Fetal & Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) Community Action Group (CAG) to assist in the fetal and infant death review program	# of community providers that attend this event	
	Provide local demonstrations on safe sleep and child passenger safety in high-traffic areas throughout the community	# of demonstrations provided by Healthy Start (i.e. traveling mini-crib safe sleep exhibits and child passenger safety exhibits) # of community members that are present during the demonstration	
Activity 1.A.1.2.2: Increase the community's knowledge on doula care and the associated impact doula services have on birth outcomes	Refer pregnant women and postpartum women to Healthy Start's Birthing and Postpartum Doula Program	# of residents that complete a Doula Intake # of residents that birthed with a doula in attendance	Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.

Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Enroll clients in Healthy Start's Birthing and Postpartum Doula Program		
---------------------------------	---	--	--

Maternal and Child Health – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives

Centering Pregnancy

Centering Pregnancy is a scientifically supported evidence-based practice that is proven likely to decrease disparities. Expected outcomes include improved prenatal care, improved birth outcomes, and other potential outcomes such as increased patient satisfaction. This strategy focuses on group maternity care, incorporating health assessments, education, and support with groups of eight to ten women with similar gestational ages. These women are able to learn care skills, participate in discussions, and support one another through the program.¹⁴

Early Head Start (EHS)

Early Head Start (EHS) is a scientifically supported evidence-based strategy that is likely to decrease disparities, as well. This federally funded program provides a comprehensive approach for pregnant women and parents with low incomes and children aged zero to three years old. Focus points of the program include childcare, parent education, health and mental health services, and family support. The expected benefits of the program include improved cognitive and social emotional skills. Other potential benefits include improved family functioning, reduced aggression, reduced stress, improved parenting, increased school readiness, increased family income, reduced hospital utilization, and increased access to oral health care.¹⁵

¹⁴ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2016). *Centering pregnancy*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/centeringpregnancy>

¹⁵ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2018). *Early Head Start (EHS)*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/early-head-start-ehs>

Priority Area: Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use)

Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) – Why Address It?

The CDC broadly defines chronic diseases as conditions that last one year or more and require ongoing medical attention and/or limit daily living activities. In 2021, three of the top five leading causes of death in Okeechobee County were chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, and chronic lower respiratory disease.¹⁶ Many chronic diseases are caused by risky behaviors, including tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use, and are preventable.¹⁷

Mental health includes the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of a person, and mental illnesses are among the most common health conditions in the country. More than one out of five adults in the United States live with a mental illness, and over one out of five youth (ages 13-18) have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.¹⁸ In 2019 in Okeechobee County, 17.5% of adults reported having poor mental health on more than 14 of the past 30 days in 2019.¹⁹

Substance use is the use of alcohol, tobacco products, drugs, inhalants, and other substances that can be consumed, inhaled, injected, or otherwise absorbed into the body with possible dependence and other detrimental effects.²⁰ There are common risk factors that contribute to both substance use and mental health disorders, resulting in the likelihood of people experiencing both.²¹ It is worth noting that the United States is in the midst of an opioid epidemic, with approximately 75% of the nearly 92,000 drug overdose deaths in 2020 involving an opioid. In 2020, the age-adjusted opioid death rate in Okeechobee County was 26.2 per 100,000 population, which was an increase from 19.5 per 100,000 population in 2019.²²

Chronic diseases, mental health, and substance use have a complex, interrelated relationship, and research suggests that mental and physical health are equally important to achieving overall health. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, people with depression have an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and other illnesses; Similarly, the presence of chronic disease increases the risk for mental illness.²³ Poor physical and mental health outcomes are impacted by social and economic factors, such as housing security, education, unemployment, child abuse and neglect, neighborhood conditions, and social support.²⁴

The Okeechobee County CHIPP chose Healthy Lifestyles as a top priority area to improve residents' quality of life. The following table shows the goals, strategies, and objectives that will help guide work on this priority area within the community. Additionally, there are best practices and evidence-supported initiatives specific to this priority area

¹⁶ Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Department of Health, Division of Public Health Statistics and Performance Management, 2021

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). *About chronic diseases*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm>

¹⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023) *About mental health*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

¹⁹ Florida Health CHARTS, Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2019

²⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022) *Substance Use*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/sources-definitions/substance-use.htm>

²¹ National Institute of Mental Health (2023) *Substance Use and Co-Occurring Mental Disorders*. Retrieved from https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/substance-use-and-mental-health#part_2423

²² Florida Health CHARTS, Division of Public Statistics and Performance Management, 2022

²³ National Institute of Mental Health. (2021). *Chronic Illness and Mental Health: Recognizing and Treating Depression*. Retrieved from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/chronic-illness-mental-health>

²⁴ National Institutes of Health. (2019). *Social determinants of health in mental health care and research: a case for greater inclusion*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6696493/>

Figure 20: Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Priority Area 2: Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, & Substance Use)			
Goal 2.A: Improve the quality of life among Okeechobee County residents by addressing factors that impact resident health, including chronic disease, mental health, and substance use.			
Strategy 2.A.1: Educate Okeechobee County residents on health topics to enhance knowledge and influence healthy decision making in an effort to improve chronic disease health outcomes.			
Objectives: • Objective 2.A.1.1: Increase the proportion of Okeechobee County adults who have a healthy weight from 24.6% in 2019 to 30% in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS/BRFSS] • Objective 2.A.1.2: Increase the proportion of Okeechobee County students (middle school and high school) who have a healthy weight from 56.4% in 2022 to 65% in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS/Florida Youth Tobacco Survey]			Alignment: Florida SHIP - CD2.1, CD2.4, CD4.1, CD4.2, CD6.1, SEC3.3 Healthy People 2030 - NWS-01, NWS-03, NWS-04, NWS-05
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 2.A.1.1.1: Provide education to residents through Chronic Disease Self-Management programs/fall prevention programs Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Promote and provide Chronic Disease Self-Management educational courses to residents	# residents trained	Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network (LORHN)

Activity 2.A.1.1.2: Provide health literacy workshops/trainings to educate residents on what personal health means Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Promote and provide health literacy workshops/trainings to residents	# residents trained # of workshops/trainings held	Indian River State College
Activity 2.A.1.1.3: Conduct outreach to improve healthy food access and educate residents on available resources for health living Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide education to community members related to SNAP benefits, WIC, and other benefits available to low-income and food insecure residents Provide outreach and nutritional information in both English and Spanish Connect residents to the Treasure Coast Food Bank to access healthy foods	# of residents provided with information on healthy food sources # of nutrition informational materials distributed in English # of nutrition informational materials distributed in Spanish	Treasure Coast Food Bank Okeechobee County Quality of Life Coalition

Strategy 2.A.2: Educate residents on the services and resources available to address mental health issues in a timely and comprehensive manner.			
Objectives: Objective 2.A.2.1: Reduce the proportion of adults who had poor mental health on > 14 of the past 30 days from 17.5% of Okeechobee County adults in 2019 to 15% of Okeechobee County adults in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS/BRFSS] Objective 2.A.2.2: Reduce the age-adjusted suicide death rate in Okeechobee County from 22.0 per 100,000 population in 2021 to 0.0 in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS]			Alignment: Florida SHIP - MW1.2, MW2.2, MW4.1, MW4.2, MW4.3 Healthy People 2030 – MHMD-01, MHMD-02, MHMD-03, MHMD-04, MHMD-07, MHMD-R01, EMC-D06
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 2.A.2.1.1: Increase awareness of mental health services and providers by referring residents to available resource Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Connect residents with the 211 Resource Guide Educate residents on crisis resources, such as the 988 line	# guides distributed # people reached with 988 promotional materials/information	211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)
Activity 2.A.2.1.2: Engage Okeechobee County providers and residents in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Expand MHFA trainer capacity in Okeechobee County through Train-the-Trainer programs Engage providers, stakeholders, and residents in MHFA trainings	# trainers in Okeechobee County # participants in MHFA courses	School District of Okeechobee County NAMI Martin County Mental Health Collaborative Indian River County St. Lucie County Roundtable

			Okeechobee Children's Services Council Our Village Okeechobee SEFBHN
Activity 2.A.2.1.3: Implement the Zero Suicide Initiative in Okeechobee County Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide and promote QPR (questioning, persuading to seek help, referring to help) training Provide and promote Clinical QPRT training	# Okeechobee County people trained in QPR # Okeechobee County people trained in QPRT	Hanley Foundation Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)

Strategy 2.A.3: Educate residents on substance use prevention, treatment and support resources, and services available to Okeechobee County residents.			
Objectives: • Objective 2.A.3.1: Reduce the age-adjusted rate of overdose deaths from all drugs in Okeechobee County from 38.8 per 100,000 population in 2021 to 0.0 in 2028. [FL Health CHARTS/Substance Use Dashboard/FL Dept of Law Enforcement] • Objective 2.A.3.2: Reduce the proportion of Okeechobee County middle and high school students who engaged in binge drinking from 7.0% in 2022 2016 to 5.5% in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS/BRFSS]			Alignment: Florida SHIP - MW3.4 Healthy People 2030 - SU-03, SU-09
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 2.A.3.1.1: Provide Narcan Kits to community members Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Promote the use and availability of Narcan among residents Provide education on Narcan	# Narcan kits distributed	RiteLife Services Hanley Foundation Treasure Coast Opioid Taskforce
Activity 2.A.3.1.2: Increase Okeechobee County representation in the Treasure Coast Opioid Taskforce Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify individuals/organizations to represent Okeechobee County in the Taskforce Promote Taskforce engagement among partners Attend monthly Taskforce meetings	# Okeechobee County representatives engaged in the Taskforce	Our Village Okeechobee 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County Treasure Coast Opioid Taskforce Faith Farm Ministries

Activity 2.A.3.1.3: Provide education and outreach in the schools on alcohol and marijuana Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide the Peer Support Program to students Educate students using the Big Life Journal curriculum Educate students using the WISE curriculum	# students educated	Prevention Coalition at Our Village Okeechobee School District of Okeechobee County
---	--	---------------------	--

Healthy Lifestyles (Chronic Disease, Mental Health, and Substance Use) – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives

Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSM) Programs

Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSM) Programs are a scientifically supported evidence-based practice that focus on self-monitoring and medical management, decision making, or adoption and maintenance of health-promoting behaviors to support patients' active management of their condition. These programs highlight educational and behavioral interventions that can be delivered in a variety of settings. The expected outcomes of CDSM programs include improved health outcomes, increased healthy behaviors, improved quality of life, and increased self-efficacy. Other potential benefits include improved mental health, reduced hospital utilization, improved chronic disease management, and improved care for chronic conditions.²⁵

Culturally Adapted Health Care

Culturally Adapted Health Care is a scientifically supported strategy that is rated likely to decrease disparities. In this strategy, health care is tailored to patients' norms, beliefs, values, language, and literacy skills. This may include efforts to match specialists to patients by race or ethnicity, adapt patient materials to reflect patients' culture, language, or literacy skills, offering education via community health advocates, implementing patient involvement strategies, and more. Emphasis is put on social, psychological, and economic factors at play to improve care and positive health outcomes. Expected benefits of this strategy include improved health outcomes, improved mental health, improved health-related knowledge, improved chronic disease management, and increased cancer screening. Other potential benefits include increased patient satisfaction, reduced hospital utilization, improved quality of life, adherence to treatment, increased tobacco cessation, improved dietary habits, improved weight status, improved patient-provider communication, improved prenatal care, and reduced drug and alcohol use.²⁶

Behavioral Health Primary Care Intervention

Behavioral Health Primary Care Intervention is a scientifically supported strategy that is likely to decrease disparities. This strategy utilizes mental health and/or substance abuse screenings and treatments in primary care settings. When implementing this strategy, efforts may include coordination between primary care providers, case managers or behavioral health consultants, and mental health specialists. Tools such as telehealth can support integration. The expected benefits of this strategy include improved mental health, increased adherence to treatment, improved quality of life, and increased patient engagement and satisfaction. Additional potential benefits include reduced drug and alcohol use.²⁷

²⁵ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2018). *Chronic disease self-management (CDSM) programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/chronic-disease-self-management-cdsm-programs>

²⁶ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2020). *Culturally adapted health care*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/culturally-adapted-health-care>

²⁷ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2018). *Behavioral health primary care integration*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/behavioral-health-primary-care-integration>

Priority Area: Linkage to Care

Linkage To Care – Why Address It?

There are many factors that can impact the ability to access health care services, including insurance status, geographical location, and broadband access. Approximately 17% of Okeechobee County residents did not have health insurance in 2020.²⁸ Lack of insurance often leads to missing or delaying routine health services, inability to establish a primary care provider, and financial barriers when obtaining necessary healthcare services and medications. It is crucial to implement strategies aimed at increasing insurance coverage rates to ensure individuals can access essential healthcare services, including preventive care and treatment for chronic conditions.²⁹

As mentioned, geographic location can also hinder access to healthcare services. Individuals residing in areas with a shortage of primary care providers or healthcare facilities and with low broadband access, such as rural communities, may face challenges accessing regular health appointments and health education opportunities. This can negatively impact general understanding of diet and lifestyle behaviors, subsequently contributing to issues like chronic diseases and other adverse health outcomes.

In 2021, 73% of Okeechobee County households had an internet subscription, leaving more than a quarter of households without internet.³⁰ Working to increase the proportion of residents with internet subscriptions provides an opportunity for residents to access care via telehealth services, which is particularly beneficial for those with mobility challenges, transportation barriers, or living in rural areas. Whether through in-person visits or remote consultations, interventions that focus on enhancing access to healthcare professionals and improving health communication play a significant role in ensuring that more individuals can receive the care they require.³¹ Additionally, telehealth promotes continuity of care, by enabling ongoing communication between patients and healthcare providers. It also provides the opportunity for regular follow-ups, monitoring of chronic conditions, medication management, preventive care, reducing mortality, and improving mental health.³²

The Okeechobee County CHIPP chose Linkage to Care as a top priority area to improve access to health care services for residents through expanding health insurance coverage and internet subscriptions. The following table shows the goals, strategies, objectives, activities, key action steps, measures, and key partners that will help guide the CHIPP to work on this priority area within the community. Additionally, there are best practices and evidence-supported initiatives specific to this priority area.

²⁸ United States Census Bureau (2021). *Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table?tid=ACSST1Y2021.S2701>

²⁹ Healthy People 2030. (2020) *Health Care Access and Quality*. Retrieved from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/health-care-access-and-quality>

³⁰ United States Census Bureau (2020) *Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions*. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table?q=broadband&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S2801>

³¹ Healthy People 2030. (2020) *Health Care Access and Quality*. Retrieved from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/health-care-access-and-quality>

³² County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2016). *Telemedicine*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/telemedicine>

Figure 21: Linkage to Care Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Priority Area 3: Linkage to Care			
Goal 3.A: Improve access to health care services for residents of Okeechobee County.			
Strategy 3.A.1: Enhance linkage to care supports, such as tools to access telehealth, telehealth policies, navigation assistance, and other resources, particularly among those living at a geographical disadvantage.			
Objectives: Objective 3.A.1.1: Increase the proportion of Okeechobee County residents who have health insurance coverage from 83.4% in 2020 to 90% in 2028. [Source: US Census ACS, S2701] Objective 3.A.1.2: Increase the proportion of Okeechobee County households with an Internet subscription from 73.0% in 2021 to 85% in 2028. [Source: US Census ACS, S2801]			Alignment: Florida SHIP- SEC2.2 Healthy People 2030 - AHS-01, AHS-04, HC/HIT-05
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 3.A.1.1.1: Increase access to telehealth among rural residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Assist households with obtaining internet access Assist households with obtaining smart devices to utilize during telehealth visits	# households reached with internet access assistance through these efforts # smart devices given for telehealth appointments	Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network (LORHN) Telehealth Advisory Group (TAG) Okeechobee County Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.

Activity 3.A.1.1.2: Promote the adoption of telehealth policies among providers who serve Okeechobee County residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Provide education to providers on the benefits of telehealth Provide linkage to technical assistance for providers Encourage providers to adopt telehealth policies	# telehealth policy adoptions made by providers # providers linked to telehealth technical assistance	Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network (LORHN) Telehealth Advisory Group (TAG) Okeechobee County Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.
Activity 3.A.1.1.3: Promote the MySidewalk Platform to increase resident knowledge of and access to available services and resources Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Update MySidewalk with current resources and services in Okeechobee County Promote the platform among residents through social media posts, flyers, community meeting speaking opportunities (public comment opportunities; ex. Board of County Commissioners), and more	# residents who access My Sidewalk	Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)

Activity 3.A.1.1.4: Provide insurance enrollment assistance and education to rural residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify and engage key partners to provide enrollment assistance to rural residents Engage local health and human service partners to promote enrollment assistance services among their clients	# residents who receive insurance enrollment assistance	Florida Community Health Centers, Inc. The Health Insurance Navigation Program through Epilepsy Alliance Florida Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach/Treasure Coast (SHINE Program) 211 Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Okeechobee County Library Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County (MySidewalk)
Activity 3.A.1.1.5: Promote the Okeechobee Health and Safety Expo among rural residents and potential vendors Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify and recruit new vendors to expand the resource options available at the Expo for residents Promote the Expo among residents	# vendors at the Expo # resident attendees at the Expo	Health and Safety Expo Planning Committee Okeechobee CHIPP

Linkage To Care – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives

Telemedicine

Telemedicine (also referred to as Telehealth) is a scientifically supported strategy that is proven likely to decrease disparities when utilized effectively. This strategy uses technology to deliver health care services, including diagnostic, consultative, and care services. Telemedicine can supplement services for patients who would benefit from frequent monitoring and provides services to individuals in areas with limited access to care, such as those in a rural setting. The expected benefits of Telemedicine include increased access to care. Other potential benefits include improved mental health, reduced mortality, increased medication adherence, reduced vehicle miles travels, and reduced emissions.³³

Health Insurance Enrollment Outreach and Support

Health Insurance Enrollment Outreach and Support is a scientifically supported strategy that focuses on assisting individuals with health insurance needs and enrollment. This strategy is supported by strong evidence to have a potential to decrease disparities. Such programs may assist individuals whose employers do not offer affordable coverage, who are self-employed, or those who are unemployed. Individuals may receive assistance enrolling or re-enrolling in coverage. Outreach efforts in this strategy can include efforts such as community health worker interactions, mass media and social media campaigns, school-based efforts, case management, local event outreach, online outreach, and more. The expected benefit of this strategy is increased health insurance coverage. Another potential benefit is increased awareness of health insurance availability.³⁴

³³ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2016). *Telemedicine*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/telemedicine>

³⁴ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2022). *Health insurance enrollment outreach and support*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/health-insurance-enrollment-outreach-support>

Priority Area: Economic and Social Mobility and Stability

Economic and Social Mobility and Stability – Why Address It?

Economic stability is another social and economic factor that influences health, as it provides ability to access essential resources necessary for maintaining and improving quality of life.³⁵ Social mobility refers to a person's change in socioeconomic status, regardless of the socioeconomic background of their parents, their gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, birthplace, or other social and economic factors that impact health beyond their control. Low levels of social mobility can contribute to persistent economic instability and inequities. Additionally, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds experiencing low social mobility may find it difficult to improve their economic circumstances, leading to intergenerational poverty and inequality.

By implementing policies, programs, and interventions that support economic and social mobility and stability, communities can reduce health inequities and social vulnerability and improve resiliency to environmental factors, such as changes in climate or natural disasters, which can exacerbate issues faced by under-resourced populations.³⁶ Examples of ways to improve economic and social mobility and stability include improving financial literacy, access to employment opportunities, and access to stable and affordable housing and transportation options for residents. Additionally, implementing policies that assist individuals in affording essential needs such as food, housing, healthcare, and education can effectively alleviate poverty and enhance overall health and well-being.

The Okeechobee County CHIPP chose Economic and Social Mobility and Stability as a top priority area to create a community where residents are financially thriving and employed, in addition to having access to stable housing and transportation options. The following table shows the goals, strategies, objectives, activities, key action steps, measures, and key partners that will help guide the CHIPP to work on this priority area within the community. Additionally, there are best practices and evidence-supported initiatives specific to this priority area.

³⁵ Rural Health Information Hub (2022) *Programs that Focus on Improving Economic Stability*. Retrieved from <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/sdoh/2/economic-stability/index>

³⁶ Wolkin, A., Patterson, J. R., Harris, S., Soler, E., Burrer, S., McGeehin, M., & Greene, S. (2015). Reducing Public Health Risk During Disasters: Identifying Social Vulnerabilities. *Journal of homeland security and emergency management*, 12(4), 809–822. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsem-2014-0104>

Figure 22: Economic and Social Mobility and Stability Priority Area Goals, Strategies, and Objectives

Priority Area 4: Economic and Social Mobility and Stability			
Goal 4.A: Create a community where Okeechobee County residents are financially thriving and employed.			
Strategy 4.A.1: Link residents to information and resources on financial literacy and employment.			
Objectives: Objective 4.A.1.1: Decrease Okeechobee County's unemployment rate from 4.1% in 2021 to 2.0% by 2028 [FL Health CHARTS, US Census ACS] Objective 4.A.1.2: Increase the median household income in Okeechobee County from \$47,020 in 2021 to \$55,000 by 2028 [FL Health CHARTS, US Census ACS]			Alignment: Florida SHIP- SEC4 Healthy People 2030 - SDOH-01, SDOH-02, SDOH-03
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 4.A.1.1.1: Conduct financial literacy trainings for residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Promote and provide financial literacy workshops/trainings to residents	# residents trained in financial literacy	South State Bank Indian River State College
Activity 4.A.1.1.2: Promote job opportunities and job fairs to link residents to open positions Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify job opportunity lists and job fair events, including the development of a community job fair	# job fairs hosted in Okeechobee County # school-based job fair events and educational opportunities	CareerSource Heartland Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County
	Promote these among residents, especially youth who are moving into the workforce and those seeking second-chance employment	# residents reached with job opportunities # residents successfully linked with a job	Okeechobee County School District Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office Heartland Rides

Activity 4.A.1.1.3: Engage residents in vocational job trainings Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify needed vocational trainings Recruit residents to participate in trainings Provide residents with training	# residents trained	CareerSource Heartland
Activity 4.A.1.1.4: Work with local employers to help train employees Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify eligible employers Promote the training program Recruit employers/employees to participate	# employees assisted with job training # employers connected	CareerSource Heartland
Activity 4.A.1.1.5: Provide career building training, including but not limited to resume workshops and/or interview preparation workshops, for residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Market trainings to residents, especially youth who are moving into the workforce Conduct trainings in Okeechobee County	# residents trained	Indian River State College Chamber of Commerce of Okeechobee County Okeechobee County School District CareerSource Heartland AARP

Activity 4.A.1.1.6: Increase the adoption of second-chance hiring policies among Okeechobee employers Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Educate employers on the benefits of second-chance employment Lead a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce for employers to raise awareness on second-chance hiring policies and practices	# employers receiving information on second-chance employment # of hiring policies implemented	Department of Children and Families Tobacco Free Florida Okeechobee CareerSource Heartland Chamber of Commerce
Goal 4.B: Improve access to stable and affordable housing among residents of Okeechobee County.			
Strategy 4.B.1: Provide education and communication on housing options in Okeechobee County to assist residents in identifying housing options.			
Objective 4.B.1.1: Decrease the percentage of Okeechobee County residents with severe housing problems from 12.4% in 2019 to 10% in 2028. [Source: FL Health CHARTS, US HUD]			Alignment: Florida SHIP- SEC4.2, SEC4.3 Healthy People 2030 - SDOH-04
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 4.B.1.1.1: Conduct advocacy efforts to support the development of affordable housing options in the county and to create private and public relationships to decrease homelessness and provide safe housing for residents. Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify advocacy opportunities, such as the Affordable Housing Advisory Council Meetings Engage partners to participate in efforts Attend meetings and speak on housing issues in Okeechobee County	# of civic engagement opportunities attended (town hall meetings, meetings with commissioners, etc.)	The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) of Okeechobee County Early Childhood Court (ECC)

Activity 4.B.1.1.2: Promote and provide rental assistance (grants) and assist in the identification of affordable housing options for residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Partners will promote the programs among their networks to help spread the word about these opportunities	# applicants for rental assistance # residents successfully linked with housing	Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)
Activity 4.B.1.1.3: Promote and provide homeowner trainings (HUD approved courses) to help assist residents transitioning from renting to owning a home Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Partners will promote the programs among their networks to help spread the word about these opportunities	# trainings completed	Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)
Activity 4.B.1.1.4: Promote and provide the purchase assistance program to assist homebuyers with down payment and closing costs Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Partners will promote the programs among their networks to help spread the word about these opportunities	# applicants	Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)

Activity 4.B.1.1.5: Monitor potential affordable housing projects to create private and public relationships to decrease homelessness and provide safe housing for residents. Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify potential projects Follow progress of projects Promote any successful plans among community members to garner support for such initiatives	# affordable housing projects in development	Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) Okeechobee County Affordable Housing Committee Heartland Homeless Coalition Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP)
Activity 4.B.1.1.6: Connect with Habitat for Humanity and other organizations to engage in the CHIP and provide assistance to residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify potential organizations Connect with organizations Engage these organizations in the CHIPP	# organizations connected to the CHIPP group	Our Village Okeechobee Okeechobee County Affordable Housing Committee Habitat for Humanity St. Lucie County Philanthropic agencies

Goal 4.C: Create a community where all Okeechobee County residents have access to transportation to work, school, health services, and other locations.			
Strategy 4.C.1: Provide education and communication on transportation services available to Okeechobee County residents.			
Objective 4.C.1.1: Increase the number of riders who use Heartland Rides service from an average of 707 monthly trips in 2022 to an average of 800 monthly trips by 2028. [Source: Heartland Rides/Central Florida Regional Planning Council]			Alignment: Florida SHIP: SEC2, SEC3 Healthy People 2030 -EH-02
Activities	Key action steps	Measures	Key partners
Activity 4.C.1.1.1: Increase awareness of transportation options in Okeechobee County among residents Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Distribute materials to residents to provide education on transportation options	# rack cards distributed	Heartland Rides/Central Florida Regional Planning Council Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP) Okeechobee County Quality of Life Coalition
Activity 4.C.1.1.2: Assist eligible and interested clients with completing a Heartland Rides Rider Registration Form Timeframe: July 2023- June 2028	Identify and refer residents to Heartland Rides Aid residents in completing the Heartland Rides Rider Registration Form	# completed Rider Registration Forms	Heartland Rides/Central Florida Regional Planning Council Okeechobee County Community Health Improvement Plan Partners (CHIPP) Okeechobee County Quality of Life Coalition

Economic and Social Mobility and Stability – Best Practices and Evidence-Supported Initiatives

Rural Transportation Services

Rural Transportation Services include transportation options such as publicly funded buses and vans running on fixed routes and schedules, flexible pick-up and drop-off services that offer on-demand transportation, or volunteer ride-sharing programs. These services focus on offering transportation across rural areas that lack established public transportation systems, providing residents with a way to get to appointments, public spaces, and more. The expected benefits of this strategy include increased mobility and increased access to health care. An additional potential benefit is increased access to employment. This strategy is likely to decrease disparities.³⁷

Housing Trust Funds

Housing Trust Funds work to make housing more affordable and attainable by assisting homebuyers with low incomes through down payment support, counseling, interest subsidies, or gap financing. These programs also create or maintain housing for families with low incomes, subsidize rental housing, and/or support non-profit housing developers. This strategy has several expected benefits, including increased access to affordable housing and increased access to quality housing. Other potential benefits include reduced energy expenditures and reduced energy use.³⁸

³⁷ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2017). *Rural transportation services*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/rural-transportation-services>

³⁸ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. (2022). *Housing trust funds*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/housing-trust-funds>

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Figure 23: Community Resource List

Partner/Agency	Relevant Services
211 Palm Beach Treasure Coast	211 Palm Beach Treasure Coast offers resources, information, and programs for residents, including initiatives related to suicide prevention, services for youth, seniors, caregivers, and veterans, as well as hurricane/disaster education and resources. Residents can dial 211 to access the confidential community helpline and crisis hotline to receive immediate guidance and support. More information can be found here: https://211palmbeach.org/
Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast	Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast offers a helpline, as well as programs and services such as caregiver training, congregate meals, counseling, Diabetes Self-Management courses, home delivered meals, nutrition counseling, and much more. More information can be found here: https://www.aaapbtc.org/
Big Brothers Big Sisters	Big Brothers Big Sisters is the nation's largest donor and volunteer-supported mentoring network, who foster the development of positive relationships among youth. Community-based mentoring and school-based mentoring programs are offered. More information can be found here: http://bbbsbig.org/
Big Lake Missions Outreach	Big Lake Missions Outreach is a non-profit organization that was started to help the homeless population in Okeechobee County. Services offered include but not limited to hot meals five days a week, food pantries, referrals, small household items, clothes, personal hygiene items, annual toy giveaway, winter blankets and jackets, school supplies, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/BigLakeMissionsOutreach/
Breakthrough Recovery Services	Breakthrough Recovery Services is a private rehab located in Okeechobee, Florida. Breakthrough Recovery Services specializes in the treatment of alcoholism, dual diagnosis, opioid addiction, and substance abuse.

	More information can be found here: https://www.rehab.com/breakthrough-recovery-services-okeechobee
Camelot Community Care	Camelot Community Care serves children and families experiencing abuse, neglect, behavioral health, and substance abuse issues. Available programs include: Foster Home Recruitment and Licensing, Treatment Foster Care, Family Safety & Preservation Services More information can be found here: https://camelotcommunitycare.org/palm-beach-treasure-coast
CareerSource Heartland	CareerSource Heartland offers hiring events, training opportunities, career counseling, job search and placement services, workshops, and much more. More information can be found here: https://careersourceheartland.com/
Chobee Clubhouse	Chobee Clubhouse is associated with the Mental Health Association in Indian River County (MHA) and is dedicated to the recovery of people who struggle with mental illness. Members are given the opportunity to achieve self-recovery through community reintegration, education, healthy lifestyles and relationships, skill development, and gainful employment. More information can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02UACWNUGPPcfMJvrpm1Tir6KgFkX772ebMcgHyYKPhoErt5grAku6WAvHQ9C5zudl&id=100093303263786
City of Okeechobee	The City of Okeechobee offers programs, services, and resources related to public safety, libraries, emergency services, parks and recreation, economic development, public safety, transportation, community events, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.cityofokeechobee.com/
Coalition for Independent Living Options (CILO)	CILO is a private non-profit, client-directed civil rights organization for children and adults with all types of disabilities. CILO's independent living skills department provides services such as food pantry assistance, independent living skills classes, educational advocacy for children with disabilities, job-readiness

	training, adaptive equipment loans, home modifications (if funding is available) and information & referral services. More information can be found here: https://www.cilo.org/
Communities Connected for Kids	Communities Connected for Kids is a community-based care lead agency contracted with the Department of Children and Families that provides oversight and coordination of the child-welfare system. Services and programs provided directly to the community includes: Road to Success, caregiver support, family group conferencing, and training for dependency case managers. More information can be found here: https://cckkids.net/
Early Learning Coalition (ELC) of Indian River, Martin, and Okeechobee Counties	The Early Learning Coalition offers subsidized child care assistance and programs that give children a competitive start in life. ELC is responsible for the planning and implementation of school readiness and voluntary pre-kindergarten services in the three-county area. Additionally, the Coalition is responsible for making decisions to meet the early education and child care needs of the children in our communities. More information can be found here: https://www.elcirmo.org/
Early Steps Treasure Coast	Early steps provides early intervention services to eligible children, birth to 36 months, with significant developmental delays or a condition likely to result in a developmental delay. Early intervention is provided to support families and caregivers in developing competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop. More information can be found here: https://www.easterseals.com/florida/programs-and-services/early-intervention/Early-Intervention-Early-Steps.html
East Coast Migrant Head Start Project	East Coast Migrant Head Start Project was established to provide services to migrant farmworkers and their children by providing holistic, high-quality early childhood education services for children and families in a nurturing, culturally sensitive environment and by providing services and advocating for children and families in their other areas of need. More information can be found here: https://www.ecmhsp.org/
Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.	Florida Community Health Centers, Inc. is a Federally Qualified Health Center that focuses on providing accessible, cost-effective, high-quality, and comprehensive health care to all residents.

	Services include telehealth, mental health and substance use services, care management, Women's Health, OB/GYN Care, Behavioral Health, X-Rays, laboratories, health benefits coordination, Adult Primary Care, Pediatrics, Pharmacy, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.fhcinc.org/
Florida Rural Legal Services	Florida Rural Legal Services was established as a private non-profit corporation, and provides free civic legal assistance to indigent families and low income elderly people, as well as legal assistance to migrant workers throughout the state. Florida Rural Legal Services help clients with the following types of legal problems: Consumer Employment, Public Benefits and Economic Stability, Housing, Elder, and Farmworker Law. Additionally, Civil Rights and Family Law services are provided. More information can be found here: https://www.frls.org/
Hanley Foundation	The Hanley Foundation's mission is to eliminate addiction through prevention, advocacy, treatment, and recovery support. In addition, the foundation provides financial aid scholarships for individuals who could not otherwise afford addiction treatment. More information can be found here: https://hanleyfoundation.org/
Health Council of Southeast Florida	The Health Council of Southeast Florida offers services and resources to improve the health of residents by promoting access to quality health and human services. Initiatives include HIV education and prevention, services and support for persons living with HIV/AIDS, community health workers, health literacy, health research and data, the Florida Asthma Coalition, Healthy Kids Health Futures and the Florida's HEROs recognition, and much more. More information can be found here: https://www.hcsef.org/
Health Insurance Navigation Program through Epilepsy Alliance Florida	The Healthcare Navigation Program at the Epilepsy Foundation of Florida provides in-person education, counseling and enrollment assistance to Floridians wanting to shop and enroll for health coverage, or have questions concerning their health insurance through the federal Health Marketplace. More information can be found here: https://epilepsyalliancefl.org/
Healthy Start Coalition	The Healthy Start Coalition in Okeechobee provides education, support and proven interventions to expecting and new families who are at-risk of a poor birth outcome or delay in development.

	The program focuses on common issues or conditions that occur during pregnancy or in infancy to all eligible families regardless of insurance coverage or citizenship. The program offers programs including home visiting, prenatal education and support, free screenings, parenting education, care coordination, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.healthystartflorida.com/programs-initiatives/healthy-start/
Heartland Rides	Heartland Rides is a mobility information resource to connect residents of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties with available transportation options. Heartland Rides provides a listing of ride options based on your starting location, trip purpose, and any specific needs you may have, such as a wheelchair accommodation or assistance to and from the vehicle. Transportation options include public transit, non-emergency medical transportation, shared-ride services, and other specialized services. More information can be found here: https://heartlandrides.org/
Helping People Succeed	Helping People Succeed transforms lives by realizing potential, creating hope, and building futures through education, counseling, training, and employment. The organization's vision is to help each person, no matter the challenges faced, to achieve success within their own life. More information can be found here: https://hpsfl.org/
Hibiscus Children's Center	Hibiscus Children's Center's mission is to provide safe haven, mental health, preventative care and life skills for at-risk children and families. Children and teens sheltered by Hibiscus are provided therapeutic counseling, their medical needs are met, and they are afforded scholastic, career development and life skills support. Literacy, educational pursuits and fostering a love of learning are integrated into all phases of staff-client interactions. More information can be found here: https://hibiscuschildrenscenter.org/
Indian River State College	Indian River State college offers higher education and workforce training course. More information can be found here: https://irsc.edu/

L.O.T. Health Services	L.O.T. Health Services offers free medical services for residents. Across multiple service sites in the county, L.O.T. Health Services offers services related to Internal medicine, family practice, pediatrics, mental health, cardiology, neurology, general surgery, imaging services, vision, dental, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.lothealthservices.org/
Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network	Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network utilizes Community Health Workers to provide resident education, social support and advocacy, and linkage to needed community resources. Workshops, such as Type 2 Diabetes Self-Management and Chronic Disease Self-Management, and health insurance enrollment assistance are available. More information can be found here: https://www.lorhn.org/welcome.html
Legacy Behavioral Health, Inc.	Legacy Behavioral Health Center, Inc. is a community mental health center that is committed to improving the quality of life and level of performance of emotionally and behaviorally challenged infants, children, adolescents, families, and adults through an array of evidence based and diverse services. More information can be found here: https://legacybhc.com/
Martha's House	Martha's House main purpose is emergency services which encompasses shelter, 24-hour crisis intervention, transportation, food, clothing, and access to donated items. The general advocacy services help women with safety planning, court advocacy, Orders for Protection or Harassment Order assistance, referrals to area agencies, support and information groups, and individual support/advocacy. More information can be found here: https://www.marthashouse.org/
New Horizons of the Treasure Coast and Okeechobee	New Horizons is a comprehensive mental health and substance use recovery agency that provides a safety net for those in crisis, outreach programs to promote resilience and recovery, and community education to help communities achieve health in both mind and body. More information can be found here: https://nhcinc.org/

Okeechobee County Chamber of Commerce	The Okeechobee County's main priority is to strengthen and build on the county's history and tradition in tourism and agriculture while working to diversify the base of industries and encourage the creation of additional high wage job opportunities. The Chamber brings together businesses, supports charitable endeavors, and ensures the development of leadership for future generations. More information can be found here: https://www.okeechobeebusiness.com/
Okeechobee County Parks and Recreation	The basic function of the Parks & Recreation System is to provide daily, year-round recreational opportunities to all citizens of the community. It entails utilizing both indoor and outdoor areas, spaces and facilities for programmed and spontaneous activities. More information can be found here: https://www.co.okeechobee.fl.us/departments/community-services/parks-recreation
Okeechobee County Public Library	The mission of the Library is to provide information and reference services, as well as materials of general interest, to meet the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the citizens of Okeechobee County and, thereby, to enhance the quality of life for those in the community. More information can be found here: https://myhlc.org/okeechobee-county-library/
Okeechobee County School District	The Okeechobee County School District is the largest employer in the county, with almost 900 regular employees. There are currently five elementary schools, two middle schools, one freshman campus, one regular high school, and one alternative high school. Most students come from low and middle low-income families, and about 8% of students are limited in their ability to speak English. More information can be found here: http://www.okee.k12.fl.us/home
Okeechobee Senior Services	Okeechobee Senior Services provide residents age 60 and above access to resources, activities and assistance to promote mental and physical well-being, preserve independence and to improve their quality of life through case management, in-home supportive services, home-delivered meals and programs to enable seniors to remain in their homes and avoid institutionalization for as long as it is safely possible.

	More information can be found here: https://www.co.okeechobee.fl.us/departments/community-services/senior-services
Our Village Okeechobee	Our Village Okeechobee is a non-profit organization that provides families and the community with comprehensive spiritual, cultural, social health and educational experiences, supports charitable endeavors, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/OurVillageOkee/
Pregnancy Center of Okeechobee	The Pregnancy Center exists to serve anyone involved in a difficult pregnancy situation. Free services provided include pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, STI testing, parenting classes for mothers and fathers, material assistance, Medicaid and community referrals, adoption information, and more. Additionally, the Women's Wellness Services Program offers free annual pelvic exams, pap smears, breast exams, STI and lab testing to those who qualify. More information can be found here: https://okeepregcenter.com/
QuitDoc/Tobacco Free Florida Okeechobee	The QuitDoc Foundation is a non-profit organization that is the fiscal agent for the Tobacco Free Partnership of Okeechobee County. The partnership was created to coordinate tobacco prevention and tobacco-free social norms through a combination of community education, youth advocacy, and changes in tobacco policies. More information can be found here: https://tfp-okeechobee.org/
Raulerson Hospital	Raulerson Hospital offers programs and services related to cardiology, emergency care, gastroenterology, imaging services, occupational medicine, orthopedic care, physical therapy and rehabilitation, surgery, women's care, and more. More information can be found here: https://www.hcafloridahealthcare.com/locations/raulerson-hospital/
Real Life Children's Ranch	Real Life Children's Ranch is a non-profit organization and a faith-based ministry that offers residential, family style group foster homes. Real Life Children's Ranch is licensed by the state of Florida to provide group foster homes for boys and girls who have been abused, abandoned and/or neglected. More information can be found here: https://www.rlcr.org/

RiteLife Services	RiteLife Services is a non-profit organization that aims to end all forms of stigma that revolve around mental health, substance use, and homelessness. Services provided include Certified Recovery Peer Support (CRPS), Recovery Community Organization (RCO), NARCAN distribution, case management, food stamps, advocacy, outreach, recovery services, and more. More information can be found here: https://ritelifeservices.org/
Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE)	The SHINE Program provides health insurance information and free, unbiased, and confidential counseling assistance to Medicare beneficiaries, their families, and caregivers. More information can be found here: https://floridashine.org/
Sexual Assault Assistance Program (SAAP) of the Treasure Coast	The SAAP is the Certified Rape Crisis Program for Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin and Okeechobee Counties. Advocates are on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide crisis intervention, information and referrals, advocacy, and accompaniment for both reporting and non-reporting victims of sexual assault. Also offered is a 24- hour confidential live helpline (866-828-7273) answered by a victim advocate staff member. More information can be found here: https://sexualassaultassistanceprogram.org/about-us/
SHIP (State Housing Initiative Partnership) Program	The SHIP Program is a grant from the Florida Finance Corporation to provide purchase assistance, emergency repair, and rehabilitation programs for eligible Okeechobee residents. SHIP assistance has allowed local home owners to repair or replace leaking roofs, damaged septic tanks, failed HVAC systems and more. First time home-buyers have been able to receive down payment and closing cost assistance to make purchasing a home both possible and affordable. More information can be found here: https://www.co.okeechobee.fl.us/departments/ship-housing#:~:text=The%20State%20Housing%20Initiative%20Partnership%20%28SHIP%29%20Program%20is,repair%2C%20and%20rehabilitation%20programs%20for%20eligible%20Okeechobee%20residents.
Suncoast Mental Health Center	Suncoast Mental Health Center provides an alternative to traditional therapy and psychiatric services by creating an environment that nurtures the child, affirms the adolescent, and empowers the adult and family. A comprehensive care and holistic approach to treatment is taken through intakes, billing,

	therapy/counseling, targeted case management, psychiatry, and medication management. More information can be found here: https://www.suncoastmentalhealth.org/
Treasure Coast Food Bank	The Treasure Coast Food Bank is a hunger relief organization that provides direct services and outreach programs to help support children, seniors, and families in need of meals. More information can be found here: https://stophunger.org/
United Way of St. Lucie and Okeechobee	United Way is a foundation that provides a comprehensive range of health and human service needs in St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties. The foundation provides resources to a broad range of nonprofit service providers while holding each of them accountable for producing real, measurable results. More information can be found here: https://www.uwslo.org/
Vocational Rehabilitation	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that helps people who have disabilities get or keep a job. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers. The division provides programs for adults, students and youth. More information can be found here: https://www.rehabworks.org/index.html

SUSTAINABILITY OF EFFORTS

The 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP was developed by the HCSEF, Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County, and the CHIPP. The stakeholders and community members who comprise the CHIPP will continue to oversee implementation of the plan throughout the course of the next five years. While this group leads efforts to implement the activities outlined in the plan, they will meet regularly to discuss the work and consider the sustainability of efforts. The group will continue to engage new partners to build capacity and ensure representative organizations are involved in the efforts. Additionally, the CHIPP will work to educate residents on the CHA and CHIP processes and gain feedback from those most directly impacted by the Plan. In addition to resident engagement, the group will monitor progress towards the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Plan to ensure strategic impact and distribution of resources. As needed, the CHIPP will revise the Plan to meet the needs and evolving health trends of the community.

TRACKING PROGRESS

The CHIPP will meet quarterly throughout implementation of the Plan to assess progress towards goals and objectives. At these meetings, HCSEF will provide updates on objective data and activity measures, as available. Activity measure data will be obtained from key partners leading the activities in the community. All objective and activity measures will be tracked by HCSEF and the CHIPP group to determine progress and focus efforts as needed. All updates will be recorded in the meeting materials distributed after the meetings to ensure clear, consistent communication of progress to all stakeholders, partners, and residents. During the quarterly meetings, partners will also be invited to provide updates on current activities they are participating in, to foster new discussion and collaboration across agencies. Further, in between meetings, the CHIPP will continue to communicate and collaborate on efforts outlined by the Plan.

The CHIPP and HCSEF welcome input, feedback, and insights from community members, stakeholders, and partners throughout the five-year CHIP cycle to ensure the plan is being implemented effectively and improving the health of Okeechobee County residents. Formal annual updates to the Plan will take place each year and will include any newly available data and progress towards the CHIP objectives. Lastly, any formal changes to the Plan will be approved by the CHIPP and published with the annual updates.

GET INVOLVED

As a direct product of community input and engagement, the 2023 – 2028 Okeechobee County CHIP is intended to be a plan for the residents and stakeholders of Okeechobee County. This plan is led by the community, for the community. As such, the Okeechobee County CHIPP invites and encourages all residents, stakeholders, and local leaders to join the CHIP efforts.

For more information on the CHIP or to get involved in the county's health improvement activities, please contact:

Bret A. Smith

Administrator, Health Officer
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County
1728 NW 9th Avenue
Okeechobee, Florida 34972
863-462-5800

Karyna Villalpando, MHA

Health Educator Consultant
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County
1728 NW 9th Avenue
Okeechobee, Florida 34972
863-462-5865

APPENDIX A: OKEECHOBEE COUNTY CHIPP

Figure 24: Okeechobee County CHIPP List

Organization	First Name	Last Name
211 Palm Beach Treasure Coast	Chad	Adcock
Area Agency on Aging Palm Beach/Treasure Coast, Inc.	Nancy	Yarnall
Career Source Heartland	Mary	Smith
Chobee Clubhouse	Brittani	Joiner
Chobee Clubhouse	Stephanie	Busbin
City of Okeechobee	(Mayor) Dowling	Watford
Department of Children and Families	Bob	McPartlan
Early Steps	Claudia	Lawler
EOC of Indian River County/ Head Start	Amber	Thomas
EOC of Indian River County/ Head Start	Christina	Santibanez
EOC of Indian River County/ Head Start	Daniella	Navarro
Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.	Cecilia	Escorbore
Florida Community Health Centers, Inc.	Dave	Honig
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County	Bret	Smith
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County	Karyna	Villalpando
Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County	Vickie	Elkins
Hanley Foundation	Alli	Jimenez
Hanley Foundation	Lindsay	Slattery-Cerny
Hanley Foundation	Taisha	Pierre Merite
Heartland Rides/Central Florida Regional Planning Council	Sarah	Adelt
Helping People Succeed	Tobi	Kogut

Indian River State College – Dixon Hendry Campus (Okeechobee)	Russ	Brown
Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network	Tiffany	Parrish
Legal Aid Society	Danie	Alexandre
LOT Health Services	Cheresse	Tijerina
Martha's House	Patrick	Lawson
Nuestro Pueblo Servicios Inmigracion - Our Village	Maria	Olivares
Okeechobee County School Board	Elisabeth	Garcia
Okeechobee County School Board	Katharine	Williams
Okeechobee County School Board	Wendy	Coker
Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office	Jack	Nash
Okeechobee County State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP)	Jessica	Schooley
Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.	Andrea	Medellin
Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.	Cassidy	Medellin
Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.	Maribel	Martinez
Okeechobee Healthy Start Coalition, Inc.	Priscilla	Helton
Okeechobee Senior Services	Debra	Austin
Our Village Okeechobee	Jess	Olney
Okeechobee Pregnancy Center	Donna	Summerall
Okeechobee Pregnancy Center - Wellness Clinic	Dr. Trinidad (Trini)	Garcia
Quit Doc	Kelly	Owens
QuitDoc/Tobacco Free Florida Okeechobee	Courtney	Moyett
Ritelife Services	Dustin	Cook
Sexual Assault Assistance Program (SAAP) of the Treasure Coast	Alicia	Rolle

The Health Insurance Navigation Program through Epilepsy Alliance Florida	Christine	Pelaez Pena
Treasure Coast Food Bank	Ruby	Aguirre Carnes
Voc Rehab	Cassie	Murphy