

# Lewis and Clark County

## ***Community Health Improvement Plan 2025***

### **Introduction**

In the spring of 2025, Lewis and Clark Public Health and Healthy Together convened a group of stakeholders to create our community's fourth Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The plan outlines strategies to improve the health of all county residents over the next three years.



For the purposes of planning, Healthy Together leadership selected three priority areas based on the results of the Community Health Assessment: 1) Chronic Disease 2) Behavioral Health and 3) Housing.

The leadership team also selected a number of cross cutting issues that impact all priority areas. These include access, health equity and engagement. The plan outlines targeted strategies designed to improve the health of all county residents, with a focus on increasing partnerships, access and equity while considering evidence-based support for all county residents across the lifespan.

## Contributors

Alexia Caldwell, Shodair  
Amber Johnson, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Amy Emmert, St. Peter's Health  
Andy Hunthausen, Lewis and Clark County Commissioner  
Andy Shirtliff, Helena City Commissioner  
Ange Furlong, HUD  
Ann McCauley, Lewis and Clark County  
Ann Pichette, City of Helena  
Annie Daniels, SPH  
Bethany Coe, Southwest Montana Prevention  
Carin McClain, Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH)  
Celeste Jazwinski, League of Women Voters Helena  
Connie Griffith, League of Women Voters Helena  
Drenda Niemann, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Elizabeth Cintron, St. Peter's Health  
Ellie Ray, City of Helena  
Emily Dean, Helena City Commissioner  
Emily McVey, United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area  
Haylie Wisemiller, St. Peter's Health  
Heather Irby, Many Rivers Whole Health  
Heidi Jacobs, St. Peter's Health  
Ingrid Lovitt, Shodair Hospital  
Jackie Girard, HUD  
Jackie Mohler, Family Outreach  
Jakob Miles, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Jamie Palagi, Intermountain Children's Home and Services  
Jeff Buscher, United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area  
Jen Papini-Chapla, Many Rivers Whole Health  
Jeni Leary, PureView Health Center  
Jesse Heide, YWCA Helena  
Jillian Danesi, Lewis and Clark County Criminal Justice services  
Jolene Jennings, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Jordan Evertz, Helena Food Share  
Julian Thorne, PureView Health Center  
Julie Bir, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Karrie Fairbrother, St. Peter's Health  
Kathryn Manz, FSH Health Corps/Good Samaritan Ministries  
Katie Loveland, Facilitator

Keegan Shea, Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office  
Kelly Sauter, Shodair  
Linda Cleatus, St. Peter's Health  
Lindsay Walter, St. Peter's Health  
Lizzie Carlson-Thompson, RMDC Head Start  
Maddie B, Helena Food Share  
Madeline Turner, PureView Health Center  
Madysen Hachler, St. Peter's Health  
Mark Nay, St. Peter's Health  
Mattie Andersen, St. Peter's Health  
Maureen Bjerke, St. Peter's Health/Early Childhood Coalition  
Megan Duncan, PureView Center  
Melissa Baker, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Michael O'Neil, Helena Housing Authority  
Michaela Cordora, UM Student/St. Peter's Health  
Paige Furlong, Housing and Urban Development  
Paul Golter, Resident  
Rachael Hagen, Volunteers of America  
Rachel Jefferies, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Rhonda Safford, Resident  
Russ Bell, St. Peter's Health  
Ryan Lehman, Instar Community Services  
Sarah Hanson, Southwest Montana Prevention  
Sarah Sandau, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Sonja Rulon, St. Peter's Health  
Steffani Turner, Veteran's Affairs  
Suzanne Morgan, AWARE, Inc.  
Tegan Maynard Hahn, St. Peter's Health  
Terese Kelley Brewer, PureView Health Center  
Theresa Ortega, Good Samaritan Ministries  
Tricia Wagner, Shodair  
Tyler Waglett, AWARE, Inc.  
Tyler Zimmer, Intermountain Children's Home and Services  
Villette Burk, Lewis and Clark Public Health  
Vivi Tyler, Lewis and Clark Public Health

# Chronic Disease

## *Root Causes*

- High food prices, especially for healthy, unprocessed food
- Lack of access to free, year-round spaces for physical activity, including for children
- Increased rates of stress, depression, and substance use
- Lack of insurance, investment in prevention and universal screening, access to care coordination, and stigma related to asking for help

## *Vision*

- A community where all people have what they need to live an active and healthy lifestyle, including affordable and nutritious food, accessible opportunities for physical activity, and routine, preventative healthcare

## *Metrics*

- Colorectal, lung female breast cancer incidence
- Asthma hospital admissions and emergency room visits
- Cardiovascular disease mortality

## *Focus Areas for Chronic Disease*

- Make the healthy choice the easy choice
- Access to screening, preventative care and care management
- Partnerships and advocacy

## *Assets and Resources*

- Healthy Communities Coalition
- Aging Well Work Group
- Helena Regional Sports Association
- CONNECT referral system
- Lived experience of coalition members
- Supportive healthcare providers and public health advocates

## Chronic Disease Focus Area 1:

### Make the healthy choice the easy choice

STRATEGY	LEAD
Continue Harvest of the Month programming in the community	St. Peter's Health
Work toward achieving county-wide age-friendly designation	Lewis and Clark Public Health and Aging Well Workgroup
Assess and expand transportation options, especially for seniors	Rocky Mountain Development Council
Increase access to healthy lifestyle programs	Aging Well Workgroup
Host free, family-friendly community wellness events throughout the year such as the Helena Fun Fest	St. Peter's Health
Support wellness activities for youth, including school funding, nutrition education, and opportunities for physical activities and wellness	District Wellness Committee
Promote and expand SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) education and Senior Farmer's Market Vouchers	Healthy Communities Coalition
Support free community activities that promote active transportation such as bike and walk to school days, bike rodeos and active transport to work events	Bike Walk Montana

## Chronic Disease Focus Area 2:

### Access to screening, preventative care and care management

STRATEGY	LEAD
Continue and expand use of the CONNECT Referral System for chronic disease programs in the community	Lewis and Clark Public Health, St. Peter's Health
Broaden access to chronic care management services by increasing coordination among care team members	St. Peter's Health
Establish more mobile mammography events	Lewis and Clark Public Health, Intermountain Health/St. James Hospital
Expand reach and impact of mobile outreach van and chronic disease support, especially in rural areas	Lewis and Clark Public Health, PureView
Engage RNs working in acute care to educate on prevention and connect patients to community supports through discharge planning	St. Peter's Health

## Chronic Disease Focus Area 3:

### Partnership and advocacy

STRATEGY	LEAD
Advocate for national and state Medicaid and Medicare access and reimbursement	Confluence, American Public Health Association
Share opportunities for ongoing education for policy makers	Healthy Communities Coalition
Continue Early Childhood Collaborative's work	Early Childhood Collaborative, St. Peter's Health
Ensure coalitions and collaboratives align and communicate regularly	Healthy Communities Coalition

### Behavioral Health

#### Root Causes

- A culture of isolation and independence, including distrust of government and the medical establishment
- Increasing financial pressures and stress as the cost of living rises, individuals are more socially isolated and our social safety net frays
- Alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are more accessible and affordable than healthcare.
- The rise of cell phones contributes to loneliness and social isolation.
- Disconnected, underfunded and understaffed systems of care with excessive red tape. Almost no state or local investment in prevention.
- Fragile system of Medicaid coverage that many providers do not accept and whose reimbursement rates do not always cover the cost of care
- Access to lethal means including guns and opioids
- Policy makers disconnected from the people that the policies are meant for

#### Vision

- Every community member engaging in safe and healthy relationships, free from violence, substance misuse and toxic stress.
- Behavioral healthcare that is fully accessible when and where it is needed, without stigma.
- A community characterized by trust, connectedness, and resilience.

### *Metrics*

- Suicide mortality
- Binge drinking among adults
- Tobacco use among adults
- Depressive disorder among adolescents and adults
- Marijuana, alcohol, vapor products and any illegal drug use among adults

### *Focus Areas for Behavioral Health:*

- Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention
- Substance Use Prevention
- Behavioral Health Continuum of Care

### *Assets and Resources*

- Local Advisory Council
- Safer Communities Montana Coalition and funding
- Suicide Prevention Coalition
- LOSS (Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors) Team
- Substance Misuse Coalition
- Local Community Mental Health Center, working to open a crisis stabilization facility
- Existing Mobile Crisis Response Team
- Peer support specialists

## Behavioral Health Focus Areas 1:

### Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention

STRATEGY	LEAD
Outreach and engagement to promote suicide prevention and safe storage to community organizations ranging from public schools, colleges, food banks, and gathering places.	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention Coalition
Increase availability of safe storage options in the area	Safer Communities MT
Increase awareness of 211 resource line and 988 crisis line for self-referral for behavioral health and crisis response	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention Coalition, LAC
Host and promote community events to spread awareness and prevention items	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention Coalition
Distribute prevention items (988 information, lethal means prevention, substance use harm reduction) to community partners	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention and crisis coalitions, LAC, Substance Misuse Coalition
Promote safe storage of guns and prescriptions and safety planning for the community	Suicide Prevention Coalition, Safer Communities MT
Provide training and increase available trainers for evidence-based prevention curriculum and tools in community, including schools, social service organizations, businesses, county partners, medical and behavioral health providers (e.g. ASIST, QPR, Safety Planning).	Suicide Prevention Coalition, St. Peter's Health
Resource the Mobile Crisis Team with secondary prevention resources and supports	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention Coalition
Research and create implementation plan for strategies to increase social connectedness	LCPH, St. Peter's Health
Hold educational and informational meetings for policy makers and advocating for suicide prevention policy	Safer Communities MT, Suicide Prevention Coalition

## Behavioral Health Focus Area 2:

### Substance Use Prevention

STRATEGY	LEAD
Research and implement initiatives to reduce stigma	Substance Misuse Coalition
Raise awareness and availability of harm reduction solutions in the county	Substance Misuse Coalition
Support and promote early prevention in schools and the community	Substance Misuse Coalition
Investigate other sources of funding including a drug free communities grant	Substance Misuse Coalition
Host and promote sober activities/events for the community	Substance Misuse Coalition
Continue to strengthen and support Substance Misuse Coalition efforts	Substance Misuse Coalition
Increase substance use prevention and interventions through rural outreach with the use of the Mobile Clinic	PureView Mobile Clinic, Substance Misuse Coalition



## Behavioral Health Focus Area 3:

### Behavioral Health Crisis and Continuum of Care

STRATEGY	LEAD
Increase number and types of behavioral health providers	Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council
Increase knowledge of and access to services in rural communities including	Mobile Crisis Response Team Community Coalition, Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council
Support provider mapping for behavioral health continuum of care	Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council, JG Research & Evaluation
Develop more transition options such as crisis receiving and stabilization facility, detox, group homes and memory care	Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health Systems Improvement Leadership, Local Advisory Council, Crisis Coalitions
Increase access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for SUD	Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council
Expand and enhance care coordination among community providers	Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council
Increase the interaction and communication between providers	Substance Misuse Coalition, Local Advisory Council
Three Phase development of the Journey Home Crisis Facility	Crisis Facility Community Coalition
Build a collaborative discharge planning team practice and policy from crisis to continuum of care.	Local Advisory Council, Mobile Crisis Response Team
Utilize peer support staff for crisis and continuum of care follow-up support	Local Advisory Council, Crisis Coalitions
Identify transportation options for individuals accessing behavioral health services	Local Advisory Council, Mobile Crisis Response Team Coalition, Substance Misuse Coalition

# Housing

## Root Causes 2025

- As our community grows, housing demand outpaces housing supply. There are not enough units in general and clearly a lack of affordable units. The incentives and workforce needed to build affordable homes are lacking.
- The gap between wages and the cost of housing continues to widen, while the cost of building materials rises.
- As unstably housed individuals spend a higher percentage of their income on housing, homelessness increases, and those who remain housed struggle to meet other basic needs and face mounting levels of stress and economic pressure.
- 2024 continuum of Care Evaluation showed need for improved services across local Access Points for persons seeking housing
  - Improved Training for Access Point Facilitators
  - Streamlining Services and shared info across Access Points
  - Seeking partnership with local shelter, a key missing partner

## Vision

- Secure, consistent and affordable housing in a safe neighborhood for every person. A community that champions humane housing for all.

## Metrics 2025

- Total household units available, by type, compared to population
- Percent of household units that are owner or renter occupied
- Number of affordable housing units needed to meet shortfall
- Number of affordable housing units built
- Average cost of building (per square foot)
- Housing ownership continuum available in Lewis & Clark County:
  - Number of Emergency Shelters beds
  - Number of Transitional Housing units
  - Number of Permanent Supportive Housing units
- Average percentage of household income spent on rent or mortgage, broken down by income group

### *Focus Areas for Housing*

- Continuum of Housing supports
- Policy and Advocacy
- Partnerships and Data Collection

### *Assets and Resources to Support the Work*

- Continuum of Care – Managed by United Way of Lewis and Clark County
- Providers: God's Love, Family Promise, Good Samaritan, Helena Housing Authority, PureView Health, St Peters Health, AWARE, Helena Indian Alliance, Many Rivers Whole Health, Lewis and Clark County Detention Center, Rocky Mountain Development Council, Veterans Administration, Volunteers of America, Law Enforcement, Child Protective Services
- City and County have passed pro-development policies such as allowing ADUs and multi-family housing in the city limits
- City holds an \$1 million Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- City is not tied to single family zoning laws
- State is currently considering providing funds in State Housing Fund

## **Housing Focus Area 1**

### **Continuum of Housing Supports**

STRATEGIES	LEAD
Find funding for Housing Navigator position and other prioritized housing related positions as identified by MTD task Force	Move the Dial Task Force
Fund additional shelter facilities and beds	All shelter facilities and Move the Dial Task Force
Support renovation and maintenance of existing building and low-income housing to maintain stock	Move the Dial Task Force
Seek out emergency and other funding to prevent loss of housing for those unstably or precariously housed	Move the Dial Task Force
Establish a formal Supportive Housing Program	United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area
Study options for the development of senior and multi-generational housing	Move the Dial Task Force
Support ongoing Peer Support programs, Independent Living, Good Neighbors United, and other programs designed to keep persons housed	Good Samaritan Ministries, United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area
Expand the FUSE program	St. Peter's Health
Support re-development of Helena Housing Authority Properties	Helena Housing Authority
Incentivize and educate landlords to accept housing vouchers	Helena Housing Authority

Study what existing buildings and infrastructure could be utilized to provide supportive housing units for low-income individuals, voucher holders, and families	City of Helena
Study what assets and resources exist for developing affordable housing including opportunity zones and the use of federal lands	Move the Dial Task Force
Promote Infill Development including the development of incentives	City of Helena

## Housing Focus Area 2

### Policies and Advocacy

STRATEGY	LEAD
Develop a community awareness campaign and hold Town Hall meetings to inform and listen.	United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area
Develop ongoing education and communication for renters, advocates, business owners and other stakeholders	Move the Dial Task Force
Advocate for state housing funding for affordable rental development, rental preservation and 1 <sup>st</sup> time home buyers	Move the Dial Task Force
Finish SB 382 implementation with Montana Land Use and Planning Act	City of Helena
Promote state legislation to fund state housing trust fund-SB 405	Community advocates
Encourage Inclusive policies to insure accessibility to those with criminal records, behavioral health issues and a history of evictions.	Move the Dial Task Force
Increase federal fair market rent rate for Montana.	Collaboration
Develop and implement a "How to build an ADU" training for homeowners along with education for homeowners about the benefits of and policies supporting ADU development	City of Helena

## Housing Focus Area 3

### Housing Capacity, Data Collection and Partnerships

STRATEGY	LEAD
Re-Engage a "Move the Dial" Task Force of Public, Non Profit, Government, Business, Contractors, and lenders to set focus for a clear path forward	United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area, City County Chamber
Begin the process of conducting a new Housing Needs Assessment Survey for 2026	Task Force
Increase ongoing communication between Nonprofits, Government, public and private Sector	Task Force