

**Wake County Community Needs Health Assessment  
Implementation Plan  
UNC REX Healthcare, 2019-2021**

Under the leadership of Co-chairs Wake County Commissioner Sig Hutchison and UNC REX Healthcare President Steve Burriss, the Wake County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was completed in May 2019. Since then, the CHNA has served as a guide to educate and drive strategic planning efforts aimed to fulfill the UNC REX mission and improve the health of all in our community.

UNC REX is required to produce its own implementation plan in response to the CHNA findings. As a leader of health and wellness in our community and core stakeholder of the CHNA, UNC REX also contributes to collective plans led by Wake County.

In 2019, Wake County leadership launched a new initiative, Live Well Wake, was born to combine the efforts of the Wake County Population Health Task Force and CHNA Stakeholder team. This new approach will better address and represent the complex, growing needs affecting community health and in turn, raise the profile of this important work.

Wake County is the second largest county in North Carolina, gaining an average of 56 new residents daily in 2018, with 37 due to domestic and international migration. The rapid, continued change across the healthcare industry, changing consumer interests and diverse regional demographics dictate a need for flexibility in planning and development of strategic action plans that address the five priority areas identified in the 2019 Wake County CHNA:

- **Transportation Options and Transit**
- **Employment**
- **Access to Care**
- **Mental Health/Substance Use Disorders**
- **Housing and Homelessness**

**Transportation Options and Transit**

Consumers need to be able to reach the healthcare they need, when they need it. As the Triangle region grows, transportation options and transit need greater evaluation. As one of Wake County's largest employers, UNC REX will continue to have an interest in initiatives that address transportation for patients, co-workers and the community.

1. Evaluate transportation options to and from primary care and specialty clinics, increase standardization of transportation screening and expanding the standard for that need.
2. Expand navigator models to assist patients when scheduling multiple appointments to reduce travel.
3. Provide leadership on local boards such as the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce Regional Transportation Alliance and Blue Ridge Corridor Alliance to have a voice in decisions concerning mass transit and other transportation options.
4. Provide patients with expanded options for transportation to medical appointments or upon discharge from the Emergency Department including medical Lyft, e-vouchers and bus passes. Support non-profit organizations who assist underserved populations in need of reliable and/or consistent transportation to/from provider visits.

5. Expand mobile health outreach, mammography and heart & vascular screenings, to reach people closer to where they live and work, especially in underserved areas.

### **Employment**

UNC REX is one of the largest employers in Wake County with more than 6,500 co-workers. A high-quality organization attracts high-quality people. And a strong, diverse workforce is needed to provide high-quality health care, remain a competitive employer and offer continued investment in the community. UNC REX is consistently recognized as the preferred hospital in Wake County and honored by top decile national rankings in co-worker satisfaction.

1. Emphasis on talent recruitment and retention across skilled labor and professional positions with intentional outreach to diverse populations.
2. Investments in smart growth, new care models, work structures and collaborations for operational and fiscal efficiency.
3. Monitor and support fair living wage and other benefits costs to assist co-workers in Wake County who experience a higher cost of living.
4. Commit to execute the Health Equity Pledge, cultivating a diverse workforce. Expand cultural competency training.
5. Make investments in co-workers through co-worker resource groups (ERG's), volunteerism, career mobility/workforce development, mentoring, scholarship, professional designations and inclusive leadership.
6. Expand health services in southern Wake County, including the opening of a new community hospital on the campus of UNC REX Healthcare of Holly Springs, bringing approximately 200 jobs to the area.
7. Continue to support Wake County Economic Development initiatives including the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce EDGE program, which aims to attract businesses to the Triangle, and grow the region.

### **Access to Care**

As the market moves from volume-based to value-based care, UNC REX will analyze high quality, innovative solutions to reduce costs, improve care and promote prevention and wellness. Growth of online and mobile engagement opportunities such as the educational unhealthtalk.org, MyChart and UNC Health App will continue to reduce system complexity, making it easier for consumers to navigate the healthcare landscape. Continued strategic analysis of the area, demographics and future projections for Wake County will be used to evaluate locations and scope of services in planning. UNC REX treats every patient regardless of their ability to pay, and will continue to offer generous charity care and financial assistance programs.

1. Pursuit of innovative solutions to assist consumers and patients including virtual care and regional care models to increase accessibility and offer multiple touch points into the health system. Open regional patient access centers offering centralized scheduling and referrals to remove administrative barriers and allow for greater focus on patient care.
2. Evaluate staffing across the primary care network including licensed clinical social workers and community health workers to best address patients' health complexities and reduce readmissions.
3. Construction and openings of multiple new locations and services including a new 50-bed hospital in Holly Springs, UNC Outpatient Children's Services, inpatient pediatric program at UNC

- REX Hospital, Panther Creek Medical Office building, Cancer Center, Urgent Care and other primary providers at new or expanded locations for greater access to high-quality healthcare.
4. Provide education to address proper utilization of emergency departments, urgent care centers and primary care facilities and, promote free classes and resources including community talks, podcasts, screenings, nutrition and cooking classes, online tools and more.
  5. Pilot programs to better understand patient behaviors and navigation patterns to enhance internal processes.
  6. Explore engaging, interactive ways beyond hospital walls to connect with consumers through education, community outreach, telehealth or alternatives.
  7. Implement a new community platform to assist with trackable referrals pertinent to social determinants of health and community resources and evaluate next steps in the Wake County Healthy Opportunities pilot program.
  8. Develop measurable objectives with community partners who support underserved populations through programs and services.
  9. Extend the American Hospital Association's Knockout pneumonia effort to improve vaccine rates among chronically ill patients by providing at no cost.
  10. Review opportunities to address food insecurity. Promote utilization of UNC REX's Food Pantry, the only hospital-based food pantry in the Triangle, via social determinants of health screening in Epic. Evaluate program and consider adding a second location at the new community hospital in Holly Springs. Review opportunities to address other aspects of food insecurity.

### **Mental Health and Substance Abuse**

UNC REX made significant investments in mental and behavioral health in the last three years. In December 2017, an eight-bed behavioral health zone with access to an activity area and natural sunlight opened in the Emergency Department. This is a safe environment for patients until discharge to outpatient services or transferred to an appropriate inpatient psychiatric facility. The behavioral health infrastructure in Wake County remains fragmented, difficult to navigate and hindered by gaps in services and greater resources are needed. UNC REX will continue to be a voice in the conversation regarding mental health and substance use disorder with partners in Wake County. This is vital in coordinating patient care and delineating available services across agencies, resulting in more appropriate referrals, avoiding redundancies and developing shared strategic priorities. The opioid addiction crisis has not spared the Triangle. UNC REX aims to pursue solutions that address the unique needs of those suffering with mental illness, behavioral health and substance abuse.

1. Advocate for mental and behavioral health across the County, pushing for expanded support for mental and behavioral health funding and beds.
2. Continue financial and operational support for specialized behavioral health and medical care at UNC WakeBrook and the UNC REX Hospital Emergency Department behavioral health zone.
3. Integrate behavioral health within primary care to offer problem-solving therapies and online virtual/technical assistance on substance use disorders and other topics through Project ECHO.
4. Build awareness around reducing the stigmas surrounding mental health through partnerships with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Foundation of Hope's Walk for Hope, Healing Transitions and Triangle Family Services.
5. Pursue collaborations with clinical partners for patients facing prolonged hospitalization for complications of substance abuse where they can concurrently receive dedicated substance abuse treatment, increasing individual success and decreasing rates of relapse, antibiotic resistance and re-hospitalization.

6. Develop a program to dispense opioid reversal kits to selected patients at high risk for unintentional opioid overdose, in keeping with professional society guidelines and similar programs emerging at peer facilities nationwide.
7. Analyze opioid stewardship best practices. Increase community education and awareness of opioid abuse. Enroll UNC REX Emergency Department the E-Qual collaborative to institute opioid initiatives, including dedicated staff to evaluate data, offer education on opioid abuse and biases and, change prescribing practices.
8. Encourage Standardized Opioid Prescribing Schedule (SOPS) to help guide providers in the amount of opioid to prescribe based on the patient procedure, thereby reducing the number of opioids prescribed.
9. Expand the use of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) for surgical procedures, a multi-modal strategy aimed to control pain, speed recovery and reduce opioids. We also encourage the use of

### **Housing and Homelessness**

Health problems may cause a person's homelessness as well as be exacerbated by the experience. Those living with mental health and substance use disorders who are homeless are more likely to have immediate, life-threatening physical illnesses and live in dangerous conditions. Health and homelessness are inextricably linked.

1. Broadly implement and refine the EPIC module to integrate social determinants of health (SDOH) in care delivery models.
2. Incorporate questions targeting SDOH and provide patients with referral sources to best address non-medical needs.
3. Support for Wake County's pilot paramedic program to help address admissions among high risk-patients.
4. Bolster support for crisis intervention services in the Emergency Department and post-discharge follow up including home health visits to shelters.
5. Continue support of Wake County and other non-profit initiatives that address affordable housing, such as Habitat for Humanity and Triangle Family Services.

### **Commitment to Community**

UNC REX celebrated a milestone of caring for the community for 125 years in 2019. A deep history of giving back will remain for years to come.

UNC REX continues to offer one of the most generous charity care policies in the state, ensuring that eligible individuals receive medically necessary care regardless of their ability to pay. The program provides patients with relief of most financial obligation if the patient's income falls at or below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Last year, this amounted to \$121 million or \$332,000 a day of free care provided to patients.

In addition to providing community health benefits, UNC REX supports organizations that emulate our mission and the priorities of the community health needs assessment. Collaboration and action with like-minded citizens and business leaders who share the vision of making Wake County a highly desirable and healthier place to live and work will drive the commitment.

UNC REX will remain highly engaged in core planning of the new Live Well Wake effort. Details of this new, broader initiative with greater Wake County Human Services will continue to unfold after the submission of this implementation plan to the UNC REX Healthcare Board of Directors for approval. UNC REX is committed to fulfill its mission of inspiring hope and healing communities across the Triangle.

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