

“Until All Children are Well”
Community Health
Implementation Strategy
FYE’s 2025-2027

Purpose

This Implementation Plan translates the findings of the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) into prioritized, measurable, and actionable strategies that advance Driscoll Health System’s vision: **Until all children are well** — while addressing the most significant health needs of children, expectant mothers, and families across the 31-county service area.

The following implementation strategy is planned for the three-year cycle to include fiscal years ending 2025, 2026, and 2027.

Introduction

This CHNA implementation plan is intended to serve as a joint strategy for the Driscoll Children’s Hospital in Corpus Christi and the new Driscoll Children’s Hospital in Rio Grande Valley. Together, these hospitals serve a 31-county service area and an estimated population of 740,217 children under the age of 18.

Driscoll Children’s Hospital is a tertiary care regional referral center offering complex and comprehensive medical and surgical care for children. In May of 2024, Driscoll opened a new facility in Edinburg, Texas, the first licensed children’s hospital along the South Texas border. Driscoll Children’s Hospital Corpus Christi and Driscoll Children’s Hospital Rio Grande Valley combined had more than 252,013 clinic visits, including 75,166 ER visits, performed more than 13,429 surgeries, had 6,945 Admissions, and 7,247 Observation patients in 2025.

Driscoll has five additional children’s specialty clinics located throughout South Texas, offering 32 subspecialty services. Comprehensive Surgical Services include general surgery, cardiovascular, orthopedic, and neurologic care. Driscoll also sponsors maternal fetal medicine clinics that seek to improve birth outcomes for the region. Quick care centers located throughout South Texas provide urgent care for children.

2025 Combined Facilities:

- Over **670** Doctors on Medical Staff in more than **32** specialties
- More than **4,500** employees and **246** volunteers
- **5th** largest private sector employer in Corpus Christi
- **30** Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) beds
- **35** Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) beds
- **60** Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) beds (Corpus Christi)
- **87** Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) beds (24 Corpus Christi; 63 RGV)
- **18** surgical suites
- Pediatric Subspecialty Centers located in Corpus Christi, Harlingen, Laredo, McAllen, El Paso, Brownsville and Victoria
- Pediatric Cardiology Clinics
- Child Abuse Resource and Evaluation Team
- One of 210 pediatric residency programs in the United States with **53** pediatric residents
- Texas A&M University Affiliation (affiliated with 34 colleges and universities across Texas and the United States)
- Accredited by The Joint Commission (TJC)

Identifying Health Needs

Driscoll Health System remains steadfast in its mission to improve the health of the 957,137 children in its 31-county service area. Through an analysis of interviews, focus groups, Driscoll Health System data, and 400 publicly available health indicators, the following priorities and potential strategies were identified:

Driscoll Children’s Hospital Priorities	Correlated Community Health Need
<p>1. Access to Primary and Specialty Care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to care remains one of the most pressing issues across the region due to the limited number of providers serving a large, sparsely populated service area with special health care needs. • School-based mobile clinics, telehealth partnerships, community paramedic services, and community health workers (CHWs) were potential strategies recommended by the community to address significant travel burdens, reduce ER visits, and assist patients with care navigation, case management, and financial assistance.
<p>2. Mental Health and Well-Being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth mental health emerged as a need among community participants due to increasing rates and concerns of anxiety, depression, emotional trauma, and behavioral issues—often linked to poverty, isolation, stigma, and lack of support. • While crisis services are limited and families rely on emergency care for mental health needs, the community is appreciative of the ongoing efforts to embed mental health professionals in school settings.
<p>3. Drivers of Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to food, transportation, financial stability, and trusted community resources are interconnected drivers of child health. • Limited public transit, costly commutes for maternal and specialty care, and fear among undocumented individuals may result in delayed care, unmanaged chronic conditions, and emergency room (ER) use. • Community members recommended exploring collaborations to improve nutritional literacy, improve access to care, and provide support services in rural areas, “food deserts,” and colonias, where culturally appropriate programs and trust are crucial.

This implementation plan provides a clear pathway from overall findings to actionable insights that build on ongoing efforts. In FY2025, Driscoll invested more than \$894 million in community benefit programs, including charity care, health professions education, and community health improvement. Driscoll Health System remains committed to collaborating with partners to build a healthier future for every child in South Texas.

PRIORITY #1: Access to Primary and Specialty Care

Ensure Families and Children have Access to Primary and Specialty Care

Access to pediatric primary and specialty care remains a critical and persistent challenge for families, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Barriers include a shortage of pediatric providers and specialists, limited appointment availability resulting in long wait times, and significant travel distances required to obtain care. These challenges are compounded by transportation limitations, financial constraints, and fragmented care coordination systems. As a result, many families delay seeking care or rely on emergency departments for non-urgent health needs, contributing to higher healthcare costs and less effective continuity of care.

To address these gaps, it is essential to strengthen the pediatric healthcare infrastructure by expanding workforce capacity, incentivizing providers to practice in high-need areas, and increasing the use of telehealth and mobile health services. Enhancing care coordination between primary care providers, specialists, and community-based organizations can improve timely access and ensure more holistic care delivery. Additionally, improving health system navigation support for families—through patient navigators or community health workers—can help reduce barriers and connect children to the right level of care more efficiently.

The goal is to provide timely, equitable access to pediatric primary and specialty care, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas. Driscoll Children’s Hospital, in coordination with Driscoll Health Plan, will further increase the Community Retention Program to encourage pediatric residents to remain in South Texas.

Strategies

- Increase telehealth utilization for specialty consults and follow-ups
- Enhance targeted recruitment of pediatric specialists in high-gap disciplines
- Expand the Community Retention Program for pediatric residents committing to underserved communities.

These strategies will be measured by monitoring the average referral-to-appointment wait time (by specialty and market) and reviewing the number of mobile/telehealth encounters delivered and provider vacancies and turnover rates.

PRIORITY #2: Mental Health and Well-Being

Expand Mental Health Access

Youth mental health concerns including anxiety, depression, trauma, and behavioral challenges—were consistently identified by both families and providers as a growing and urgent need. Despite the increasing demand for services, access to appropriate pediatric mental health care remains limited due to workforce shortages, long wait times, and a lack of specialized providers trained to work with children and adolescents. These challenges are often exacerbated in rural and underserved communities, where services are scarce and stigma surrounding mental health can further delay care.

Barriers such as cost, transportation, language differences, and limited integration between physical and behavioral health systems contribute to gaps in timely diagnosis and treatment. As a result, many youth experience worsening symptoms, disruptions in school and family life, and increased reliance on crisis services or emergency departments.

Expanding access to mental health care requires a multifaceted approach, including increasing the pediatric behavioral health workforce, integrating mental health services into primary care and school-based settings, and leveraging tele-mental health to reach underserved populations. Strengthening early identification and screening efforts, particularly in pediatric and community settings, can help ensure children receive support before conditions escalate.

The goal is to improve access to early, responsive mental and behavioral health services for children and adolescents, expand the continuum of care and support a (PHP) Partial Hospitalization Program. By doing so, Driscoll Children’s Hospital could decrease the utilization of the ED for mental health services.

Strategies

- Expand school-based mental health programs.
- Expand integrated primary care practices, offering mental health services.
- Advocate for sustainable reimbursement models for pediatric mental health services.

These strategies will be measured by tracking school-based mental health encounters, student attendance, number of ED encounters and number of completed behavioral health screenings.

PRIORITY #3: Drivers of Health

Expand Navigation to Improve Health Outcomes

Food insecurity, transportation barriers, financial strain, and limited access to trusted navigation support are key social drivers of health that significantly impact care access and overall health outcomes. These challenges are particularly pronounced in rural areas and among immigrant communities, where individuals often face additional barriers such as language differences, cultural gaps, and limited familiarity with the healthcare system. Without adequate support, families may struggle to access appropriate services, delay seeking care, or experience fragmented and inefficient care pathways.

Expanding navigation services—such as community health workers, patient navigators, and care coordination programs—can play a vital role in bridging these gaps. These supports help individuals understand their healthcare options, connect to primary and specialty services, and access critical resources such as food assistance, transportation, and financial support programs. Trusted navigators who reflect the communities they serve can also improve engagement, build trust, and reduce disparities in care utilization. To improve outcomes, efforts should focus on integrating navigation services across healthcare, social services, and community-based organizations. Strengthening partnerships, investing in culturally and linguistically appropriate services, and leveraging data to identify high-need populations can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. By addressing both clinical and social needs through coordinated navigation support, health systems can improve access, reduce avoidable utilization, and promote more equitable health outcomes for children and families.

The goal is to address Drivers of Health that directly impact child and maternal health outcomes, increase insurance and care navigation and provide more care coordination support.

Strategies

- Expand partnership collaborations focused on healthy food programs, care coordination and benefit navigation.
- Improve process for referrals to food, housing, transportation, and financial assistance resources.
- Enhance transportation support furthering implementing cost-effective and safe options.

These strategies will be measured by monitoring referrals and reviewing navigation rates.

Adoption/Approval

Driscoll Children's Hospital's Board of Directors approves the Implementation Strategy that has been developed to address the priorities of the Community Health Needs Assessment. Driscoll Children's Hospital will utilize this Implementation Strategy as a roadmap to collaborate with the community to address the priorities, particularly for the most vulnerable.



Mary D. Clark
Chair
Board of Directors

6/4/2026

Date



Eric Hamon
President and CEO

6/4/2026

Date