



HealthWest

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY2024-2025

I. INTRODUCTION

HealthWest serves as Muskegon County's Community Mental Health Service Provider and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic. Organized as a department of Muskegon County, HealthWest serves approximately 8,100 Muskegon County residents per year at more than 8 service locations. HealthWest provides these services by managing a budget of roughly \$100 million per year, comprised mainly of Medicaid, state, local and grant funds.

HealthWest provides developmental disability, mental health, substance use, physical health, laboratory and pharmacy services internally, and manages a network of 100 Medicaid-funded service providers who provide additional services to our community.

The HealthWest strategic plan is updated annually and serves as the framework for the agency's decision-making process. The plan serves as an opportunity for the agency to recognize and communicate its priorities while improving transparency of the agency's operations.

A. Strategic Plan Development

The HealthWest strategic plan serves as a guide for the agency's policy and financial priorities, while helping agency leadership better plan for the use of agency resources. The development of the plan allows for input from numerous stakeholders and creates a framework to ensure accountability in agency operations. Regular updates on the progress of objectives identified by the plan will be provided to the HealthWest Board of Directors and other community stakeholders.

B. Plan Input

HealthWest relied on extensive and diverse streams of input to develop the plan, including:

- i. Comprehensive Needs Assessment: This assessment used a survey to capture input from individuals in services at HealthWest, community stakeholders and partners, local municipalities, and members of the HealthWest provider network.
- ii. HealthWest Staff: All teams at HealthWest conducted a SWOT analysis to provide input on the agency's internal strengths, internal weaknesses, external threats and external opportunities in an effort to identify topics to be addressed by the strategic plan. Staff also evaluated and assessed the goals outlined in the agency's previous strategic plan, and provided input as to the agency's current needs.
- iii. HealthWest Consumer Advisory Committee: Input was solicited from the HealthWest Consumer Advisory Committee.
- iv. HealthWest Board of Directors: The HealthWest Board of Directors were presented with a draft plan and were given the opportunity to identify their own priorities for inclusion in the agency strategic plan.

C. Scope of Plan

HealthWest is routinely tasked with addressing current and emerging needs, while also creating policies and procedures to advance the agency mission and improve the quality of service delivery. This plan is intended to guide HealthWest leadership in:

- Setting policy and budget priorities
- Managing and identifying funding sources
- Administering agency resources and staff
- Managing the HealthWest provider network and other contractual needs
- Identifying and engaging in community partnerships
- Identifying and using data to track agency progress

II. ABOUT HEALTHWEST

A. Mission, Vision, and Values

Our Mission

To be a leader in integrated health care, inspiring hope and wellness in partnership with individuals, families, and the community.

Our Vision

Building a healthier, more informed, and inclusive community through innovation and collaboration.

Our Values

Our values are the compass of our agency. We strive to emulate diversity, development, excellence, and integrity in all that we do.

Person-Focused: We believe that everyone has unique lived experiences and by recognizing and understanding those personal differences we can help achieve better health outcome.

Development: We believe that all persons have the ability to continually grow and learn.

Excellence: We work to be the very best in our field and embrace innovation, creativity and continual improvement.

Integrity: We hold ourselves accountable and operate with fairness and honesty.

B. HealthWest Activities and Services

HealthWest provides mental health, substance use, intellectual/developmental disability and integrated care services through a blend of internal staff and an extensive external provider network. Services are provided in a variety of settings, including in-office, telehealth, home-based, within our

county jail, at our local schools and within our community.

Internally, HealthWest employs more than 450 staff who fill a variety of roles, including:

- Behavioral health crisis services such as crisis stabilization, 24-hour mobile crisis response, a crisis residential unit and a community-wide 24-hour behavioral health Warm Line.
- Outpatient counseling
- Correctional services including Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, recovery coaches, embedded clinicians with local law enforcement agencies and in-jail treatment teams.
- Occupational, physical and speech therapy
- Adult and youth mental health and intellectual/developmental disability case management
- Integrated nursing and substance use supports
- Youth behavioral supports and autism services
- School-based clinicians and parent support partners
- Transition age, infant mental health and wraparound services
- Clubhouse services
- Integrated health and psychiatric services
- Ancillary services such as housing and employment assistance, veteran system navigation and groups
- Outreach, prevention and community psychological first aid
- Administrative services such as finance, human resources, IT, training, building maintenance, customer services, quality assurance, and recipient rights

The HealthWest provider network consists of 100 Medicaid funded service providers and continues to grow. HealthWest's network includes core provider agencies, specialty providers, direct service providers, a Designated Collaborating Organization (DCO) and behavioral health home providers.

- HealthWest has more than 300 consumers living in and receiving community living support from specialized residential homes operated by 37 contracted providers. These homes are primarily located within Muskegon County or within a short drive from the area.
- HealthWest contracts with 22 substance use disorder prevention and treatment providers who are reimbursed via a combination of fee for service contracts as well as various grants.
- HealthWest contracts with 18 providers for a combination of community living supports and vocational supports to assist our consumers in living to their fullest potential within their own community.
- HealthWest contracts with four agencies specializing in evidence-based therapy for children with autism. We are currently providing services to 53 Muskegon County children through these services. HealthWest also contracts with one specialized residential provider for youth with autism.
- HealthWest currently has one contracted Designated Collaborating Organization (DCO) providing mild to moderate therapy services to more than 200 open consumers. This particular contract collaboration is pursuant to our status as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic.
- The network also includes two consumer-run service providers.

C. Management, Oversight and Governance

HealthWest is a department of Muskegon County and receives staffing and financial oversight from the elected Muskegon County Board of Commissioners. HealthWest is also governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Muskegon County Board of Commissioners. This board is responsible for oversight of the agency's programmatic direction and includes three county commissioners, multiple individuals with lived experience with the behavioral health system, and community leaders with expertise in the behavioral healthcare setting.

As a Community Mental Health Service Provider, HealthWest receives additional oversight from its Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan, the Lakeshore Regional Entity, as well as the State of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services. HealthWest is also accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, or CARF.

Internally, HealthWest is led by an executive director and executive team, which includes our chief financial, chief clinical and chief information officers. The agency also employs a Leadership Team consisting of director and manager-level staff, which helps to provide guidance and insight to the agency's executive leadership on big picture and day-to-day operational items.

III. BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LANDSCAPE

HealthWest analyzed the internal and external trends in the behavioral healthcare setting to help educate and inform our strategic plan. This analysis included a review of qualitative and quantitative data related to service delivery, feedback from our annual Needs Assessments, policy and healthcare trends, and other relevant materials.

1. National Landscape

- **Lingering Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic**

HealthWest has played a large role in Muskegon County's public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including hosting vaccination clinics, testing, contact tracing, marketing and other logistical supports. Despite the rollback of federal emergency orders and HealthWest's role in the community response, individuals served by HealthWest continue to report infections and deaths related to the pandemic. Moreover, many of the populations served by HealthWest continue to be at higher risk for more serious complications, including death, upon infection. Studies continue to show the pandemic had a substantial impact of the mental health of our community. Rates of anxiety, depression, and substance use disorder have increased since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the National Institutes of Health. The pandemic has also changed the way services are delivered at HealthWest, including the continued use of telehealth expansion and the development of remote work agreements for some HealthWest staff. HealthWest also continues to respond to the impact of the pandemic on our provider network by increasing rates for all providers in an attempt to stabilize the system. HealthWest continues to advocate for increased autism and CCBHC rates.

- **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC)**

HealthWest continues to serve as a local demonstration site for the federal expansion of the CCBHC program. CCBHCs are non-profit or local government entities that must provide comprehensive and coordinated services, serve all people regardless of insurance status or ability to pay, adhere to stringent quality and cost reporting requirements, and utilize a state-developed prospective payment system. CCBHCs are required to provide nine core services, including 24-hour behavioral health and mobile crisis response, immediate screening and risk assessment, patient-centered treatment planning, outpatient mental health and substance use services, outpatient primary care screening and monitoring, targeted case management, psychiatric rehabilitation services, peer support counseling and family support, and intensive mental health care for active-duty military and veterans. Through this program, HealthWest has contracted with Services of Hope as a Designated Collaborative Organization.

The CCBHC program has provided HealthWest an opportunity to create a fund balance and utilize earnings from the prospective payment system. However, it has also created a level of risk at both the PIHP and CMH level. Should HealthWest's Medicaid Base and Supplemental payments not cover all the costs to provide these services, then those costs would need to be covered at the CMH/CCBHC level. Full risk is held at the CCBHC level for any individual that is receiving these services and is not eligible for Medicaid or Healthy Michigan coverage. A significant amount of HealthWest's State General Fund, Local Funds, and savings from CCBHC Supplemental payments during the first two years of the State pilot have been needed to cover services provided to CCBHC eligible individuals without Medicaid.

- **Nationwide Workforce Shortage**

HealthWest continues to be impacted by the nationwide healthcare worker shortage. Muskegon County has been identified as a Health Professional Shortage Area due to a lack of mental and physical health providers. These staffing shortages have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and have had a meaningful impact on the agency's ability to deliver some services in a timely fashion. HealthWest has increased its recruitment and retention efforts and has reduced its annual turnover rate by roughly 19 percent.

2. State/Local Landscape

- **Community Census Profile**

Muskegon County is a community of roughly 176,000 people on the shores of Lake Michigan. The county is a blend of urban, suburban and rural communities. Roughly 76 percent of the county population identifies as white, 13.6 percent identify as African American, and 5.8 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. The county is also home to 1,380 individuals of Native American ancestry and includes the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. Nearly 3.5 percent of households speak a language other than English. Roughly 7.1 percent of residents are military veterans. The county's employment rate is roughly 56 percent and the median household income is just over \$58,000 (nearly \$9,000 less than the state average), according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Muskegon County's poverty rate is 14.3 percent, roughly

7 percent higher than the state average, and roughly 22 percent of residents under the age of 18 live in poverty. Only 22.4 percent of county residents possess a bachelor's degree or higher, a rate 30 percent less than state average.

- **Community Health Profile**

The U.S. Census Bureau reports 15.7 percent of Muskegon County residents live with a disability, which is roughly 10 percent more than the state average. Just over 4 percent of residents live without health care coverage. Muskegon County is the state's 69th healthiest county, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reports the county has higher rates of premature death, smoking, excessive drinking, adult obesity, teen births and sexually transmitted infections when compared to the rest of the state. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also reports there is one primary care physician for every 1,760 county residents, well short of state and national averages.

- **Standard Cost Allocation**

Standard Cost Allocation (SCA) is a financial model being implemented by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to help the agency better understand the variations in benefit cost and administrative expenses reported by the state's 10 PIHPs. One of the key observations identified from the project, thus far, has been the difference in cost allocation methods employed by the CMHSPs and the significance these variations are contributing to the variation in reported benefit unit costs and administrative expenses. The methodology that was created in the SCA is to establish a standard approach to allocating defined expenses incurred by the CMH and PIHP in providing the services and performing the administrative functions that are necessary under the behavioral health managed care program. The outcome of the SCA model will support future PIHP Medicaid medical loss ratio reporting required by the federal government as well as the Encounter Quality Initiative reporting. In order to meet SCA guidelines, HealthWest had to create an entirely new Chart of Accounts and implement a time sheet system. This remains a heavy burden on all HealthWest staff along with Muskegon County administrative staff. All CMHs are required to be 100 percent compliant with the SCA model by Oct. 1, 2024.

- **Lack of Affordable Housing and Transportation**

The lack of safe and affordable housing is one of the most powerful barriers to recovery, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Nearly 1,900 occupied housing units in the area are considered substandard, while 16,661 occupied housing units are housing cost burdened, according to a 2023 Housing Needs Assessment of Muskegon County conducted by Bowen National Research. The report also showed, "there is limited available inventory among multifamily rentals and pent-up demand for housing serving lower-income renter households." Data shows that roughly 12 percent of county households experienced a severe housing problem, including overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities or lack of plumbing facilities.

Transportation continues to be a barrier for many individuals receiving services at HealthWest. In 2020, the Muskegon Area Transit Service cut nearly in half its number of bus routes, including dropping Satur-

day and evening services. All of the existing routes serve the county's urban and suburban core, leaving rural residents without reliable public transportation options. This lack of transportation is routinely identified as a barrier by individuals in services at HealthWest and greatly reduces our ability to provide services outside of traditional business hours.

- **Elevated Suicide and Overdose Rates**

Muskegon County has experienced a sharp increase in suicides and fatal drug overdoses in recent years. In 2023, Muskegon County reported 86 fatal drug overdoses, according to preliminary data from the Muskegon County Medical Examiner. This was a 10 percent increase from the previous year and 54 percent higher than the annual average over the past decade. Preliminary medical examiner data from 2023 also showed 39 reported suicides in Muskegon County, an 11 percent decrease from the previous year. Despite the year-over-year decrease, the county's suicide total remains roughly 20 percent higher than the county's annual average over the past decade.

- **Demand Outpacing Availability of Some Services**

Some services continue to experience a lack of local providers, which is creating a wait list among consumers. Services with wait lists include employments services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, community living supports, specialized residential, psychological services - ADHD testing, autism and medication assisted treatment. These provider shortages can lead to substantial wait times for some services or lead to services being provided by providers outside of Muskegon County.

- **Settlement of Outstanding Financial Liabilities**

HealthWest was able to secure payment of its past financial liabilities from the Lakeshore Regional Entity. The payments, released in two installments, totalled nearly \$15.2 million.

3. Results of HealthWest Stakeholder Survey

A survey of individuals in HealthWest services, our Consumer Advisory Committee and other community stakeholders showed that 46 percent of respondents identified that Muskegon County needed more attention on the behavioral health needs of youth, including increased focus on trauma, the need for more school-based care, better coordination with schools, as well as the need for additional inpatient beds, community living support services and youth groups. Additional themes that appeared in survey results included drug use within the community, increased rates of suicides and the lack of local behavioral health providers.

4. Internal SWOT Analysis

All HealthWest teams completed a SWOT analysis of the agency as part of the strategic planning process. In total, 26 analyses were completed by HealthWest teams. The following themes were identified

based on staff responses:

- **Internal Strengths**

- Teamwork and Collaboration: Multiple mentions of working together, supporting each other, and collaborating with other departments or agencies.
- Innovation: References to being innovative, creative, and open to new ideas.
- Leadership and Vision: Descriptions of visionary leadership and leadership support for staff.
- Community Engagement: Strong partnerships with the community and engagement with diverse providers.
- Staff Wellbeing: Emphasis on staff care, including compassion, empathy, and support.
- Continuous Improvement: Focus on excellence, efficiency, and willingness to adapt and change.
- Client-Centered Care: Providing person-centered treatment, caring for clients, and offering a variety of services.
- Training and Development: Opportunities for growth, training, and professional development.
- Organizational Support: Supportive leadership, strong organizational skills, and a caring work environment.
- Flexibility and Adaptability: Ability to be flexible, adaptable to change, and willing to accommodate needs.

- **Internal Weaknesses**

- Communication Issues: Various mentions of communication problems, including lack of transparency, miscommunications, and poor communication between teams and departments.
- Staffing Challenges: Concerns about high caseloads, lack of staff, and burnout among employees.
- Leadership Concerns: Lack of leadership understanding or support for ancillary programs, as well as a lack of clarity on clinical definitions and roles.
- Organizational Culture and Change: Challenges related to organizational culture, resistance to change, and lack of a defined organizational culture.
- Training and Development: Issues with training absorption, lack of job-specific training, and challenges in on-boarding new staff.
- Process and Planning: Disorganization, lack of planning for sustaining projects, and difficulties in sustaining projects.
- Accountability: Lack of accountability, follow-through on projects, and adherence to policies and procedures.
- Resource Constraints: Lack of cars for community outreach, lack of funding, and limitations in resources and equipment.
- Workload and Time Constraints: Concerns about high workloads, time constraints, and not enough time to complete tasks.
- Inter-agency Collaboration: Barriers to advancement between agencies, lack of collaboration between departments, and difficulties in working with external partners.

- **External Opportunities**

- Community Engagement and Outreach: Strategies to increase agency presence in under-served areas, improve reputation, and build positive relationships with the community and county staff.
- Professional Development: Focus on ongoing training and development opportunities for staff to enhance skills and stay updated on industry best practices.
- Collaboration and Partnerships: Emphasis on collaborating with other agencies, community partners, and educational institutions to improve services and resources.
- Funding and Grants: Efforts to seek and secure additional funding, grants, and resources to support agency programs and services.
- Better Space Allocation: Identify spaces to better meet the needs of HealthWest staff and consumers while presenting a more professional image.
- Care Coordination and Integration: Enhancing care coordination and integration with other services, such as law enforcement, mental health court, and medical/dental services.
- Staff Well-being and Support: Addressing staff needs, such as better pay, benefits, professional growth opportunities, and work-life balance.
- Communication and Transparency: Improving internal and external communication, transparency in plans, and sharing of information across teams and departments.
- Continuous Quality Improvement: Focus on accreditation, data-driven decisions, and ongoing improvement of processes and services.
- Community Resource Utilization: Identifying and utilizing untapped resources in the community, such as educational institutions, non-profits, and other service providers.

- **External Threats**

- Regulatory Challenges: Concerns about redundant and burdensome regulatory requirements, as well as changes in regulations impacting providers and agencies.
- Funding and Financial Challenges: Issues related to funding cuts, economic uncertainty, and insurance-related challenges such as copays and coverage changes.
- Staffing and Workforce Issues: Challenges with staff turnover, shortages, burnout, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified candidates.
- Community Engagement and Partnerships: Efforts to improve relationships and collaboration with community partners, shelters, and other agencies.
- Lack of Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Resources: Concerns about community violence, drug trends, and lack of resources for recovery and treatment programs.
- Transportation: Challenges related to transportation accessibility and availability for clients attending appointments or accessing services.
- Communication and Coordination: Issues with communication between agencies, hospitals, and primary care providers, as well as challenges in coordinating care efficiently.
- Infrastructure and Safety: Concerns about building safety, security, and pest control, as well as limitations in space and resources.
- Stigma and Perception: Challenges related to the stigma of being a CMH, negative perceptions, and lack of understanding of the work by the public, politicians and regulators.

- Technology and Cybersecurity: Concerns about cybersecurity threats, the use of AI, and the need for secure messaging systems.

IV. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Implement an approach to better understand the needs of those we serve and ensure access to quality, person-centered care for all

- **Objective 1:** Reduce health disparities as identified by HealthWest and the LRE contract.
- **Objective 2:** Ensure HealthWest leadership understands the needs of our community and those we serve and strives to make decisions to meet those needs.
- **Objective 3:** Foster fair and transparent hiring and employment practices to ensure staff have clear expectations and an equitable path to resources, career development and advancement.
- **Objective 4:** Reduce staff turnover.
- **Objective 5:** Strengthen agency leadership's ability to meet the needs of our staff, those we serve and our oversight authorities.

2. Position HealthWest for Excellence by Maintaining Status as a CCBHC and Fulfilling Our Responsibilities of Being a Community Mental Health Services Provider

- **Objective 1:** Identify and engage community organizations whose work would bolster our service array.
- **Objective 2:** Maintain a system for data monitoring, analysis, performance improvement, and timely reporting to ensure compliance with federal, state and local quality standards.
- **Objective 3:** Strengthen community-based partnerships to improve the health and wellness of our entire community.
- **Objective 4:** Increase outreach and engagement of priority populations as defined by the LRE Contract, CCBHC, other oversight authorities and HealthWest leadership.
- **Objective 5:** Implement programs and services to address gaps in the HealthWest service array.
- **Objective 6:** Implement and support all evidence-based practices as identified by the CCBHC program.
- **Objective 7:** Improve integration and coordination of care for persons served.
- **Objective 8:** Improve the experience of care of persons served to ensure better health outcomes.
- **Objective 9:** Reduce the administrative burden for direct services staff to increase the availability of time for service delivery.
- **Objective 10:** Ensure all aspects of the HealthWest service array are developed and implemented with long-term sustainability in mind.
- **Objective 11:** Support efforts to improve the quality of life of individuals in services.

3. Develop Sustainable and Responsive Systems for Ongoing Development, Learning, and Growth

- **Objective 1:** Ensure staff and agency leaders have the competencies needed to meet the needs of our agency, staff, individuals in services, and our oversight authorities.
- **Objective 2:** Increase community knowledge of behavioral health topics to support a healthier, more trauma-informed Muskegon County.
- **Objective 3:** Increase the opportunities for individuals in services to have meaningful input on the operations of HealthWest and our service delivery.
- **Objective 4:** Support efforts to increase the engagement and development of individuals in services.

4. Demonstrate High Integrity in All Business Operations

- **Objective 1:** Align staffing and systems to meet the needs of a changing public behavioral health landscape.
- **Objective 2:** Define and structure roles within the Quality Assurance department to support continuous quality improvement throughout HealthWest.
- **Objective 3:** Ensure agency communications and operations support the needs of our agency, individuals in services, and oversight authorities.
- **Objective 4:** Ensure HealthWest facilities meet the needs of our agency, individuals in services, and oversight authorities.

IV. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, County Health Ranking & Roadmaps, <https://www.county-healthrankings.org/health-data/michigan/muskegon?year=2023>
- United States Census Bureau, Muskegon County Profile, https://data.census.gov/profile/Muskegon_County,_Michigan?g=050XX00US26121
- Muskegon County Medical Examiner, 2022 Annual Report, <https://mimedicaexaminer.com/sites/default/files/2023-07/2022%20Annual%20Report%20Final.pdf>
- Bowen National Research, Housing Needs Assessment Muskegon County, Michigan, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1T-JpjhxoJy4boASBUr2tD6Tp5rniflOj/view>