The CentraCare Health – Melrose Implementation Strategy is a roadmap for how community benefit resources will be used to address the health needs identified through the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which CentraCare Health and its affiliated hospitals (along with support from community partners) conducted between 2012 and 2013.

As a respected leader in healthcare delivery, CentraCare Health takes seriously the role it plays in promoting community health and well-being. In addition to providing high-quality inpatient, long term and outpatient care, additional services are made available to the community in the form of community benefit programs. These programs were developed in reaction to identified needs in the community and are an example of how CentraCare Health and its affiliated hospitals utilize available resources and expertise to help address barriers to good health, particularly among underrepresented and underinsured populations.

Conducting a CHNA is an important first step in identifying and responding to community health needs. It should be noted that the CHNA (and corresponding implementation strategy) is an extension of the work routinely carried out by CentraCare Health to assess the effectiveness of its services and identify areas for improvement.

Building on a Solid Foundation

CentraCare Health has a lengthy track record of identifying and testing promising practices for replication throughout the system by leveraging the expertise of staff and by working collaboratively with community partners. Along these lines, the implementation strategy—or better yet the action plan that will guide the overall strategy—is an initial blueprint for how resources and expertise will be mobilized to advance community health given what was learned from the CHNA.

System-wide Goals

The process of conducting a CHNA revealed several system-wide goals that CentraCare Health and its affiliated hospitals will continue to work towards. These goals include:
• Continuing to collaborate with county public health to identify significant health risks and develop action plans based on survey findings and shared objectives

• Identifying new partnerships and strengthening already existing partnerships with local community organizations and public entities

• Expanding and supporting efforts to improve culturally competent care

• Standardizing measurements of community benefit programs across the CentraCare Health system

• Enhancing the community’s knowledge of community benefit programs

Although a system-wide approach was adopted for parts of the CHNA, each hospital within CentraCare Health was ultimately responsible for identifying specific health needs in the community it serves and for developing an implementation strategy (community benefit plan) to address these needs.

This report details how the implementation strategy was developed; how health needs were identified and prioritized during the CHNA process; and finally, what actions will be taken to address the needs that emerged as a result of the CHNA.

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**How the Implementation Strategy Was Developed**

The implementation strategy described here was created in reaction to the findings from the CHNA carried out collaboratively by CentraCare Health hospitals along with the support of community partners.

The CHNA produced a comprehensive overview of the current state of health in the region served by the hospitals, and from this process emerged six health priority areas, or themes. Each hospital was charged with the task of identifying specific health needs within the priority areas and to develop an implementation strategy to help address the identified needs.

**Reflecting on Community Benefit**

To begin the process of developing an implementation strategy in response to the specific health needs identified, select members of the CHNA Advisory Task Force, working on behalf of the hospital facility they represent, were assigned the responsibility of reviewing existing community benefit activities, including both system-wide initiatives and programs geared towards individual hospitals and the communities they serve.
The database of current community benefit programs was updated and organized according to the six health priority areas. The programs were then reviewed by Task Force members in order to: 1.) determine those that most align with prioritized health needs, and 2.) consider what activities should be enhanced or modified, and finally 3.) help standardize methods for recording community benefit activities.

Reviewing the community benefit programs in light of the findings from the CHNA made clear the fact that CentraCare Health currently provides a wide-range of services and activities that align with the health priority areas established during the CHNA. Task Force members took note of these programs and considered how they could be supported and expanded upon. To facilitate this process, Task Force members developed goals and corresponding action plans, including strategies to leverage partnerships with community organizations and local public health to positively impact the health of the community.

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**Health Needs and How Priorities Were Established**

Members of the CHNA Advisory Task Force gathered public health data from a range of local, state and national sources. Information also was obtained from social service organizations and online databases. This data were analyzed by observing rates and trends and by making comparisons to state and national benchmarks. Prior to the data analysis cycle, however, a set of criteria were developed to aid in the selection of health indicators for review. These criteria consist of the following questions:

- Which health indicators stand out due to declining trends and/or high rates of occurrence?
- Based on these indicators, where is the community doing worse, on average, compared to the county, the state and the nation?

Using the criteria mentioned above, members of the CHNA Advisory Task Force worked through a list of over one hundred different health indicators. These health indicators touched on the major contributors of personal health and well-being, including socio-economic factors, demographics, physical environment, clinical care and health behaviors.

Around this time, CentraCare Health carried out a series of community engagement strategies, including focus groups, key informant interviews and surveys. CentraCare Health collaborated with county public health officials to create an innovate five-county regional behavioral health and opinion survey, the results of which will be known in fiscal year 2014.

What resulted from the initial review of health indicators, and the fact-finding missions described above, was a list of nearly 20 health needs. These health needs were incorporated into a ranking tool which members of the CHNA Advisory Task Force used to prioritize the top health needs, or areas for improvement.
Prioritization Process

To prioritize identified health needs, CHNA Advisory Task Force members devised a set of criteria. The criteria that were used are listed below.

- **Community Impact**: size of issue; severity of condition; consequences of not doing something

- **Potential for Change**: known strategies to make a difference; adequate human resources and expertise available; adequate time for planning, implementation and evaluation

- **Economic Feasibility**: cost of internal resources and potential cost of external resources

- **Community Assets**: lack of existing programs addressing issue; inadequate programs that need support; need for collaboration

- **Value and Mission**: the health issue falls within the hospital’s overall mission and core competencies

Each member of the Task Force ranked individual health needs based on the agreed upon criteria mentioned above. The composite scores of the ranking exercise identified six health issues, or themes. The results of the prioritization process were shared with CHNA Task Force members who discussed how the outcomes would help inform the implementation strategy and community benefit planning.

**Priority Health Areas**

The prioritization process identified these six community health issues

- **Access to Primary Care**

- **Culturally Competent Care**

- **Heart Disease Morbidity and Mortality** (Primarily in Benton County)

- **Linguistically Competent Care**

- **Mental Health Services**

- **Stroke Morbidity and Mortality** (Primarily in Benton County)
Working from this list of priority health areas, each hospital within CentraCare Health identified specific health needs relevant to the communities they serve. The specific needs identified by CentraCare Health – Melrose are:

- Access to Primary Care
- Culturally Competent Care
- Linguistically Competent Care

With these needs determined, select members of the CHNA Advisory Task Force, working on behalf of the hospital they represent, evaluated current community benefit activities in light of what was learned during process of conducting the CHNA. These individuals were then assigned the responsibility of determining how community benefit programs can better address the needs that were identified.

What the Hospital Will Do to Address Health Needs

CentraCare Health – Melrose will maintain its engagements with the CHNA Advisory Task Force to ensure effective collaboration and communication with the other hospitals that operate under CentraCare Health. The CHNA Advisory Task Force will continue to meet during the three year period in which the implementation strategy will unfold. During this time, the group will:

- Identify what other community organizations are doing in regards to health priority areas
- Develop specific goals and metrics to monitor and measure progress and outcomes
- Communicate short-term and long-term results of action plans with the community

Looking to the Future

Based on the findings and priorities established by the CHNA, and upon reviewing the existing community benefit activities, CentraCare Health – Melrose will continue to support the system-wide initiatives outlined below and will participate in localized adaptations (as described in the action steps) of these programs with regard to the specific needs of the community served by the hospital.

Culturally Competent and Linguistically Appropriate Care

CentraCare Health has embarked on a multi-year, system-wide initiative to improve the ability of the organization, its staff and health care providers to serve members of cultural minorities,
immigrants and non-English speaking residents of CentraCare Health’s service area. This initiative, which is currently in the final stage of development, will be deployed in Fiscal 2014. Components of the project thus far have included:

- A cultural competency organizational assessment
- Diversity workforce assessment
- A language access audit
- Provider survey on cross-cultural health care issues
- Employee focus groups

Subsequently, focus groups have been conducted with specific populations on their perspective of the cultural and linguistic competency of CentraCare Health.

The work plan, to be implemented beginning in FY 2014, is currently under final development and will be finalized by the end of FY 2013.

**Action Plan**

In addition to participating in the health system initiative, CentraCare Health – Melrose will focus on the following, specific action steps:

- Improve the availability and competency of translators for delivery of services to hearing-impaired and non-English-speaking patients.

- Acquisition of translations of health care documents into languages spoken in the CentraCare Health – Melrose service area by significant numbers of individuals.

- Continue to encourage applications for employment from applicants with minority status and limited English proficiency

- Where appropriate, refer non-English speaking patients to parenting and breastfeeding classes at CentraCare Health facilities

- Provide cultural competency training to staff and physicians

**Access to Care**

Access to care is a broad priority area that encompasses access to providers, physical and economic factors and access to needed services. Consequently, improving access to care is a multifaceted and complex initiative. CentraCare Health advances this initiative by actively recruiting caregivers with the necessary skills to meet the health care needs of its service areas. CentraCare Health also subsidizes the St. Cloud Hospital/University of Minnesota Family Medicine Residency Program intended to specifically train family medicine providers to practice in rural communities in Minnesota.
CentraCare Health supports the training of the next generation of caregivers (providers) through internships and clinical training. Additionally, access to care is improved through services like behavioral health and activities such as Project H.E.A.L, in which volunteer physicians and nurses provide free monthly health care screening clinics at local churches and social service agencies.

**Action Plan**

While supporting the CentraCare Health system-wide initiatives to improve access to care, CentraCare Health - Melrose will focus on the following, specific action steps:

- Continue to work with county public health to evaluate survey findings concerning access to care and develop collaborative responses to these findings
- Explore partnership with Project H.E.A.L. – a program of the CentraCare Family Medicine Center that provides health screenings at social service organizations to meet the needs of those who are otherwise unable to access health care
- Continue to assess the need for increased assisted living services for seniors and explore the possibility of building a new facility to address this need
- Improve access to education classes, including the diabetes initiative, and create a system that better tracks progress made in these classes

**Approval**

This action plan was approved by the CentraCare Health – Melrose Board of Directors on June 24, 2013.