



# Strategic Plan 2022 - 2024

Howard County Health Department  
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## Introduction

The Howard County Health Department's Strategic Plan for 2022-2024 provides a roadmap for the department over this three-year period. The plan reflects priorities for significant improvements in specific programs and support services, highlighted among the entirety of the work the department does to further the health and well-being of those in the county.

The strategic planning effort included a reexamination and reassertion of our mission, vision, and values, as well as the development of five strategic priorities. The plan stresses improvement of both specific health issues in the community and capacity and systems within the department to be able to optimally address the community needs. *Behavioral Health*, *Healthy Lifestyle*, and *Maternal Infant Health* are the department's 2022-2024 priorities for improvements in our community. *Workforce* and *Infrastructure* are our focuses for internal capacity improvement. The community-oriented priorities align with the Howard County Community Health Improvement Plan that serves as the strategic plan for the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition. For each of the five priorities, working groups developed Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps for the coming years, bearing in mind our mission, vision, and values. The priorities, goals, and action steps are summarized in this document.

## Mission and Vision

**MISSION:** To promote, preserve and protect the health and well-being of all in Howard County.

**VISION:** A model community in which health equity and optimal wellness are accessible for all who live, work, and visit Howard County.

## Values

**LEADERSHIP:** We advocate for and implement effective public health practices. We are a trusted source of health services and information.

**HEALTH EQUITY:** We are proactive in identifying and removing barriers so that every person has the opportunity to achieve their full health potential.

**INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE:** We encourage innovation and pursue excellence in our endeavors.

**COLLABORATION:** We cultivate and preserve partnerships to achieve common goals based on a shared vision.

**CULTURE OF RESPECT & CARING:** We value and respect our staff, community partners, and all those we serve.

**ADVOCACY:** We inform, educate and empower to initiate change.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** We practice mutual respect, transparency, and accountability.

**INTEGRITY:** We value the public's trust and pledge to provide the highest standard of service.

## Strategic Priorities

<b>BEHAVIORAL HEALTH</b>	Mental health and prevention of substance misuse are foundational to a healthy community.
<b>HEALTHY LIFESTYLE</b>	Active living and healthier food and beverage choices in a healthy environment decrease the burden of chronic disease.
<b>MATERNAL INFANT HEALTH</b>	Equitable healthcare for pregnant women leads to healthier babies.
<b>WORKFORCE</b>	A competent and dedicated workforce that reflects the community we serve is the backbone of an effective local health department.
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	Comprehensive and accessible policies, and clear communications, data, and technology systems enable efficient daily operations and continuation of essential services.

## Goals and Key Action Steps

**Behavioral Health:** Mental health and the prevention of substance misuse are foundational to a healthy community.

**Goal 1:** Decrease suicide rates across the lifespan

- Expand use of screening tools by providers
- Expand communications campaigns to include various age groups and populations
- Convene partners to raise awareness of the problem and available resources
- Build on connections with NAACP and other partners to expand work with youth of color
- Increase awareness of the co-responder model being used in Howard County (mental health worker accompanies law enforcement on a Grassroots crisis call response)

**Goal 2:** Decrease drug and alcohol misuse

- Continue to provide Narcan and fentanyl test strip training
  - Train transitional housing staff
  - Train population experiencing homelessness
- Connect residents with resources such as peer support services and behavioral health providers
- Promote training of specialty providers on safe prescribing practices
- Launch binge drinking campaign to raise awareness of the problem

**Goal 3:** Support efforts to integrate behavioral health into primary care

- Continue technical assistance to behavioral health providers offering services in Howard County
- Facilitate connections to the BHA for providers interested in the integrated care model
- Continue promoting evidence-based interventions offered by HCDrugFree (e.g. Guiding Good Choices)
- Promote psycho-geriatric service supports to caregivers and linkage to the MD Coalition of Families

**Goal 4:** Mitigate social isolation

- Use a screening tool to gauge the degree of social isolation among HCHD clients across programs
- Raise awareness of the many services offered by HCHD
- Reactivate the HCHD “Let’s Talk about Mental Health” Campaign
- Continue collaboration via LHIC to raise awareness of resources available through partners to address isolation and stress
- Connect to Peer Recovery Support Services as needed to address social isolation and possible increased substance use

**Healthy Lifestyle:** Active living and healthier food and beverage choices in a healthy environment decrease the burden of chronic disease.

**Goal 1:** Increase engagement in opportunities to prevent and address chronic disease

- Collaborate with partners to implement communications strategies to promote care and self-management resources
- Continue to support data-driven decision-making and quality improvement practices for collaborative communication strategies
- Expand use of CAREAPP to help connect with local disease prevention resources

**Goal 2:** Increase opportunities for engagement in physical activity for all

- Facilitate a systems approach to increase access to resources with community partners
- Promote activities in limited resource housing communities

**Goal 3:** Increase opportunities for making safe and healthier food and beverage choices

- Facilitate a systems approach to increase access to healthier food/beverage choice resources with community partners
- Promote activities in limited resource housing communities
- Facilitate culturally congruent and practical (e.g. meal planning) nutritional support for priority communities, including reproductive-aged women of color
- Continue food safety inspections and training to help prevent food-borne illness
- Promote food safety in nutrition-related education efforts in community settings

**Goal 4:** Improve opportunities to engage with the physical environment to support health

- Collaborate with key agencies on community plans to improve the built environment by promoting healthy and safe activity
- Raise awareness among county residents of community plans and how they can have an impact on them

- Make recommendations as appropriate in development planning
- Increase the number of residents testing their well water for radium
- Increase the number of residents testing their homes for radon

**Maternal and Infant Health:** Equitable healthcare for pregnant women leads to healthier babies.

**Goal 1:** Improve early access to a respectful prenatal care experience for reproductive-aged women of color

- Increase early enrollment into prenatal care through messaging and work with providers
- Collaborate with partners to increase access to implicit bias training for providers and staff

**Goal 2:** Decrease disparities in preterm and low birth weight births

- Support community efforts to close gaps in prenatal support and education
- Improve care coordination for pregnant HCHD clients
- Expand use of CAREAPP for care coordination for pregnant women

**Goal 3:** Promote equitable access to bias-free and culturally congruent prenatal and post-partum support services

- Improve access to doula and midwifery services
- Improve access to breastfeeding support
- Collaborate to expand curriculum-based home visiting programs
- Facilitate access to anti-racist, culturally congruent education for home visiting staff

**Workforce:** A competent and dedicated workforce that reflects the community we serve is the backbone of an effective local health department.

**Goal 1:** Increase career development opportunities for staff

- Support individual career development plans
- Develop core competencies
- Provide cross training
- Promote learning/training opportunities
- Create a buddy system
- Develop a mentoring program

**Goal 2:** Improve staff retention and recruitment

- Provide training/support to supervisors
- Establish wellness committee
- Facilitate access to mental health resources
- Explore means to ease succession
- Expand recruitment efforts for attracting diverse staff members

**Infrastructure:** Comprehensive and accessible policies, and clear communications, data, and technology systems enable efficient daily operations and continuation of essential services.

**Goal 1:** Establish department-wide and program-specific procedures to support daily operations and facilitate smooth staff transitions

- Review and update existing department-wide policies

- Programs complete Overview and Training Plans to facilitate succession and identification of key program policies/procedures
- Maintain tracking systems to keep department-wide, bureau, and program policies up to date
- Identify specific staff positions to monitor revision of program and bureau policies; include this responsibility in appropriate position descriptions

**Goal 2:** Establish data platforms for bureaus that will enhance the collection, storage, and retrieval of information to facilitate data-driven decision making and impactful and efficient program management

- Create and update document libraries on HCHD Intranet
- Provide training to staff to optimize use of HCHD Intranet
- Fully utilize functionality of health records systems
- Establish a database for the Bureau of Behavioral Health
- Make database software available to others in HCHD as needed

**Goal 3:** Improve internal communications across bureaus

- Establish regular meetings of new Supervisors' Forum, with platform for shared resources and communications
- Develop inter-bureau work groups that align with strategic priorities or are organized for ad-hoc needs
- Make new "Employee Resource Guide" accessible on HCHD Intranet
- Make other HCHD and bureau specific content/resources available via HCHD Intranet

## Plan Implementation

The five workgroups formed around the strategic priorities plan to meet at least every six months in order to review progress toward the goals and objectives set out in action plans developed with metrics, timeframe for actions, and persons responsible. The plans are considered working documents and will be updated and revised as needed. If the context of a particular objective changes or new data illustrate that an alternative strategy or objective is needed, these changes will be considered by the workgroups.

In reviewing progress in achieving strategic objectives, workgroups will continue to use a systems approach and will deploy quality improvement techniques to address areas where implementation is stalled. Additional process owners and in-house experts will be brought in to form quality improvement teams as needed to move forward on specific action steps.

## Acknowledgements

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