Overview:

As an active member of the Health Care Council of the Lehigh Valley (HCCLV), Sacred Heart HealthCare System worked in collaboration with four other regional, non-profit acute and post-acute care hospitals and the Dorothy Rider Pool Trust to develop the region’s Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). The hospital partners of the HCCLV include:

- Sacred Heart HealthCare System
- Lehigh Valley Health Network
- St. Luke’s University Health Network
- Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital
- KidsPeace

In addition to the development of the CHNA, the HCCLV collaborated on the Action Plan for Allentown Community Benefits Service Area. Sacred Heart, as approved by its Senior Leadership Team and the Sacred Heart HealthCare System Board, has made a strategic decision to adopt this plan and fully participate in the collaborative efforts to implement as much as is realistically possible in the course of the next three years.

The HCCLV will be responsible for the implementation of this Action Plan in order to maintain a collaborative effort.

Additional Action Items:

Sacred Heart HealthCare System truly believes that it is their mission to address the causes of morbidity in its service area and thus has decided to add additional efforts to their Action Plan. Again, this is in addition to fully participating in the implementation of the Action Plan for Allentown Community Benefits Service Area.

In every instance, these needs are identified in the CHNA as priority health issues in the HCCLV’s Community Health Needs Assessment.

Improving Access to Care

During the development of the Action Plan for Allentown Community Benefits Service Area, it is clear that access to care in its service area is an issue of critical importance. Sacred Heart intends to take the following, immediate steps to address this concern:
**Action Item One:** Sacred Heart HealthCare System owns and operates Allentown Family Practice (AFP) which is located in the Sigal Center on the Sacred Heart Hospital primary campus in Downtown Allentown. This facility treats approximately 18,000 patient visits per year, of which 75% are Medicaid patients.

Sacred Heart heard the concerns expressed by residents in its own service area during the Allentown public hearings that its hours of operation are not conducive for treatment.

*To address this, Sacred Heart intends to add evening hours to the Allentown Family Practice.*

- **NOTE:** This action item will address all six leading causes of death and illness in the Lehigh Valley as identified in the CHNA.

**Action Item Two:** During the Allentown public hearing, it was clear that navigating the myriad of applications and regulations related to enrollment in Medical Assistance or private insurance can be very intimidating and thus a barrier to seeking health care.

*To address this, Sacred Heart intends to place a caseworker (through Sacred Heart’s participation in the ARMDS program) directly in the Sigal Center to assist people to enroll in insurance including Medical Assistance.* This will essentially create a one-stop-shop for those who are uninsured or underinsured and are in need of treatment.

- **NOTE:** This action item will address all six leading causes of death and illness in the Lehigh Valley as identified in the CHNA.

**Action Item Three:** Sacred Heart HealthCare System owns Sacred Heart Pediatric and Adolescent Services (SHPAS) in its Sigal Center. It sees approximately 19,000 patient visits annually, 80% of who utilize subsidized health insurance. Few of these children receive annual physicals.

Of our total patient base, 575 of these children suffer from a chronic ailment, virtually all of whom are enrolled in a subsidized health insurance plan. More than 80% fail to schedule and/or keep follow-up appointments for their chronic care.
In an attempt to increase the number of preventative physicals as well as increase the number of visits for treatment for chronic illness, Sacred Heart intends to develop a Preventative Care Program for our Pediatrics department. This program targets outreach efforts to those patients who are diagnosed with a chronic illness as well as develop outreach strategies to increase the number of children who receive annual physicals.

- NOTE: This action item will specifically address the causes of HEART DISEASE, LUNG DISEASE and COMPLICATIONS AS A RESULT OF DIABETES as identified in the CHNA.

Action Item Four: Sacred Heart HealthCare System operates a highly successful community health program known as Parish Nursing. In effect, Parish Nursing places highly trained Registered Nurses into houses of worship in its immediate service area. (It should be mentioned that no preference is given to a particular religion or denomination; rather the individual operations are chosen based on need, size, location and ability of the congregation to support the program).

Parish Nurses visit these houses of worship during set schedules and each Parish Nurse is assigned a particular location. This helps make the program very easy to access for clients.

It was mentioned during the Allentown public hearings that the hours of operation and location of hospital and physician offices are often inconvenient for those who need treatment. The parish nurse program has been demonstrated to be a strong answer to those concerns.

Currently, Sacred Heart services five locations. Because this program has been proven to be successful and cost effective, it is the intention of Sacred Heart HealthCare System to expand upon its parish nursing program by adding additional locations.

- NOTE: This action item will address all six leading causes of death and illness in the Lehigh Valley as identified in the CHNA.

Action Item Five: Sacred Heart operates a highly successful triage department known as Health Call. This allows patients within the Sacred Heart system to speak with a registered nurse to assess the severity of an ailment and determine whether or not a patient should come to the emergency room for treatment, follow-up with their PCP within a designated time frame, or be offered home care advice so they can treat their symptoms on their own.
In a continued effort to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits, Sacred Heart will pilot a program offering Health Call as a community triage center. If this proves to be successful and useful to the community, Sacred Heart will consider expanding.

- NOTE: This action item potentially will address all six leading causes of death and illness in the Lehigh Valley as identified in the CHNA.

**Action Item Six:** The rising number of incidents of domestic violence is of particular concern to Sacred Heart. There are two primary community organizations that address domestic violence prevention and provide services to victims: Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley and Crime Victims Council of the Lehigh Valley.

Along with those two community partners, Sacred Heart will explore and implement a strategy to streamline admissions for those victims of domestic violence in need of immediate, emergency treatment by developing an emergency room “fast-track” system.

- NOTE: This action item will specifically address the cause of INJURY/VIOLENCE as identified in the CHNA.

**Addressing Behavior Issues**

During the development of the *Action Plan for Allentown Community Benefits Service Area*, the health care systems recognized that they can play a role in helping people choose healthier lifestyles and taking control of their chronic illnesses. Sacred Heart intends to take the following, immediate step to address this concern:

**Action Item Seven:** Diabetes continues to plague the Allentown community. Not only do residents lack access to healthier eating options and fail to exercise at the recommended levels, but those who suffer from diabetes struggle with controlling their disease.

Sacred Heart already offers a self-care program for diabetes sufferers. However, more should be done to increase our ability to educate those folks who are afflicted with this disorder, particularly our inpatients.

As such, Sacred Heart HealthCare System will continue to add diabetes education services which could include hiring a certified diabetes educator for inpatients.
**Action Item Eight:** The neighborhood surrounding Sacred Heart Hospital lacks access to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. This was brought up by the residents of this community during the Allentown public hearing.

Fortunately, there exists an organization that helps connect people with healthier food options by bringing organic fruits and vegetables direct from a local farm to a neighborhood: the Greater Lehigh Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local. This organization currently does not have a presence anywhere in the City of Allentown including the community most directly served by Sacred Heart.

**Sacred Heart HealthCare System will partner with Greater Lehigh Valley Buy Fresh Buy Local and a local community development organization, the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (Jordan Heights Neighborhood) to establish a presence in this community.** If this program is successful in year one, Sacred Heart will continue its support and partnership with the goal of expanding its impact.

- NOTE: This action item will specifically address the cause of HEART DISEASE and COMPLICATIONS AS A RESULT OF DIABETES as identified in the CHNA.

**Addressing Environmental (Community) Issues**

Sacred Heart HealthCare System is located in a high poverty area of the Lehigh Valley and its neighborhood suffers from a higher violent crime rate than many other parts of the community. Whereas the hospital cannot be solely responsible for curtailing illegal and highly dangerous behaviors, it can take advantage of opportunities to play a stronger and better role in monitoring these activities and communicating with the appropriate social and law enforcement agencies.

Like many urban areas, the City of Allentown suffers from violence and other societal problems as a result of criminal gang activity and sex trafficking. With a number of direct entries into our community (such as Parish Nursing and School Based Health Care Clinics just to name two), Sacred Heart has the ability to be a strong partner in increasing public education on these subjects and curtailing their existence.

Sacred Heart intends to take the following, immediate step to address these concerns:
Action Item Nine:

Sacred Heart will develop a strategy of increasing awareness of gang activity with its employees and create a policy of procedures if it is suspected or discovered.

- NOTE: This action item will specifically address the cause of INJURY/VIOLENCE as identified in the CHNA.

Action Item Ten:

Sacred Heart will develop a strategy of increasing awareness of sex trafficking with its employees and create a policy of procedures if it is suspected or discovered.

- NOTE: This action item will specifically address the cause of INJURY/VIOLENCE as identified in the CHNA.
Implementation Strategy for Additional Action Items:

Sacred Heart Hospital will establish the *CHNA Action Plan Oversight Board* that will meet regularly. This Oversight Board will be responsible for:

1) Planning and implementing of the Action Items;
2) Monitoring and recording the success of each of the Action Items;
3) Communicating with the targeted community in order to adjust Action Items and community health strategies to increase its effectiveness;
4) Providing continuous feedback to the Sacred Heart Senior Leadership Team and Board of Directors as well as the Health Care Council of the Lehigh Valley; and
5) Developing additional Action Steps to continue to address the causes of morbidity and mortality as denoted by the 2013 Community Health Needs Assessment

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