

# 2026 COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Connecticut Children’s 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) identified five priority areas that significantly affect the health and well-being of children and families in the greater Hartford region:

- Healthy, Stable, and Secure Housing
- Access to Nutritious Food
- Access to Physical, Mental, and Behavioral Healthcare
- Educational and Occupational Opportunities
- Safe Neighborhoods and Violence Prevention

Through focus groups, surveys, community conversations, and analysis of available data, residents and stakeholders consistently described not only the presence of need, but the experience of navigating fragmented systems. Families shared challenges related to repeated intake processes, inconsistent follow-up, limited coordination across agencies, and barriers that erode trust over time.

Beneath the five priority areas, a common theme emerged: children and families are more likely to thrive when systems are coordinated, trusted, and aligned around shared responsibility.

The 2026–2028 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) builds on these findings by focusing on system-level priorities that strengthen how services are delivered, how communities are engaged, and how protective factors are reinforced. Rather than introducing entirely new initiatives, this plan clarifies direction, aligns existing efforts, and advances cross-sector strategies that improve how families experience care and support.

Over the next three years, Connecticut Children’s will prioritize:

1. Strengthening integration and coordination across health, housing, education, and safety systems.
2. Deepening trust, engagement, and co-design with community partners.
3. Reinforcing protective factors and resilience through aligned clinical, community, and policy strategies.

These priorities reflect an ongoing commitment to collaboration, learning, and shared accountability. As partnerships deepen and alignment strengthens, Connecticut Children’s will continue refining approaches that connect clinical excellence with community capacity so that every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy, safe, and thriving.

Through its Office for Community Child Health, Connecticut Children’s maintains a durable infrastructure that links clinical excellence with upstream community efforts so children and families can thrive. The Office serves as connective tissue across health, housing, education, and safety systems – convening partners, strengthening community

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capacity, and aligning strategy with shared child and family outcomes. This institutional infrastructure supports sustained cross-sector collaboration, shared accountability, and long-term population health impact, helping to ensure that community health priorities remain embedded in the organization's core mission and operations over time.

## 1. Strengthen Integration and Coordination

### Three-Year Direction

Connecticut Children's will strengthen cross-sector integration, so families experience care as coordinated, continuous, and responsive rather than episodic and disconnected. Building on the findings of the 2025 CHNA, efforts will focus on improving referral pathways, aligning data and accountability mechanisms, and reinforcing collaboration across health, housing, education, and safety systems. These integration efforts directly advance the CHNA's five priority areas by strengthening how systems function together around shared child and family outcomes.

### Priority Actions

- Advance shared referral and navigation processes across clinical and community systems to reduce duplication and improve continuity of support.
- Enhance data alignment and cross-program coordination mechanisms to support improved follow-up and shared accountability, including examining how existing initiatives that generate actionable data can inform broader system-wide alignment.
- Strengthen cross-sector convening structures that align policy, funding, and service delivery around shared child and family outcomes.
- Continue refining coordinated-care models to ensure seamless, family-centered transitions across preventive, behavioral health, and specialty services.

### Operational Platforms Advancing This Work

Integration efforts will be advanced through established initiatives that demonstrate coordinated approaches, including North Hartford Ascend, the Care Coordination Collaborative Model, Hartford Youth Health Identification and Linkage Consortium (HYHIL), Building for Health, Educating Practices, Co-Management Program (CLASP) and the Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program. These platforms offer opportunities to pilot, refine, and expand integration strategies in collaboration with community partners.

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As these efforts evolve, attention will focus on whether families experience fewer barriers navigating services, whether referral processes become more seamless, and whether partners demonstrate greater alignment around shared outcomes.

## 2. Advance Trust, Engagement, and Co-Design

### Three-Year Direction

Connecticut Children's will deepen trust and shared ownership across systems by expanding meaningful community engagement and embedding co-design principles into program development and governance structures. Strengthening trust is essential to improving access, participation, and sustained impact. Across each of the five CHNA priority areas, strengthening trust and shared decision-making will support greater participation, more culturally responsive strategies, and improved long-term outcomes.

### Priority Actions

- Expand structured opportunities for community voice to inform program design, implementation, and evaluation across priority areas.
- Embed co-design practices into cross-sector initiatives to ensure strategies reflect lived experience and cultural relevance.
- Strengthen governance and advisory structures that include family and community representation in decision-making processes.
- Support workforce development and training that reinforces trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and strength-based approaches.

### Operational Platforms Advancing This Work

These efforts build upon initiatives that center resident and family voice, including North Hartford Ascend's community governance model, Childhood Prosperity Lab's innovation and co-design work, Connecticut Newborn Screening Network's family advisory structures, SCOR's integration of nutrition access into pediatric care, and Youth Suicide Prevention Center partnerships with schools and campuses.

Over time, progress will be reflected in broader community participation in decision-making, clearer incorporation of lived experience into program refinement, and strengthened engagement across culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

## 3. Promote Protective Factors and Resilience

### Three-Year Direction

Connecticut Children's will prioritize strengthening protective factors at the individual, family, and community levels to support long-term resilience and reduce preventable harm. Efforts will align clinical care, community partnerships, and policy engagement to reinforce safe, stable, and nurturing environments for children. By reinforcing the conditions that allow families to thrive, these efforts advance each of the CHNA's priority areas, including housing stability, access to nutritious food, healthcare access, educational opportunity, and safe neighborhoods.

### Priority Actions

- Advance cross-sector collaboration addressing housing stability, environmental safety, and violence prevention as interconnected drivers of child health.
- Align clinical and community strategies that strengthen early identification, prevention, and family support.
- Support policy and advocacy efforts that reinforce safe neighborhoods, healthy homes, and equitable access to care and resources.
- Promote resilience-building initiatives within schools, health systems, and community organizations.

### Operational Platforms Advancing This Work

Protective-factor strategies will be reinforced through initiatives such as the Healthy Homes Program, Injury Prevention Center and Safe Kids Connecticut, Community Violence Intervention partnerships, REACH training initiatives, Easy Breathing and Easy Breathing for Schools Asthma Programs, and coordinated early childhood and family support efforts across clinical and community settings.

As these strategies mature, attention will focus on strengthened cross-sector collaboration, expanded prevention capacity, and sustained alignment between policy, clinical practice, and community-based supports.

Collectively, these priorities are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Strengthening integration improves trust. Deepening trust enhances protective factors. Reinforcing protective factors reduces fragmentation over time. While specific initiatives may advance one priority more visibly than another, the opportunity across the next three years is for all programs and partnerships to contribute to integration, trust-building, and

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resilience simultaneously. As Connecticut Children's continues to learn alongside community partners, these system-level lenses will guide ongoing refinement and alignment with the goal that children and families experience care that is coordinated, responsive, and grounded in shared responsibility.

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