



At Connecticut Children's, we play a central role in helping communities understand and respond to what children and families need to thrive. Through close partnership with families, community organizations, and public systems, we work to identify priorities, align resources, and design solutions that improve child health and well-being across Hartford and beyond.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit hospital, part of this responsibility includes conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years, as required by the federal government. The CHNA is one of the primary ways we identify the most pressing health needs in the community and translate those insights into strategies, programs, and partnerships.

How does Connecticut Children's conduct the CHNA?

For the most recent assessment, completed in 2025, Connecticut Children's partnered with the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut and other community stakeholders to gather data from sources including Data Haven, the Connecticut Hospital Association, Hartford social workers and nurses, and Hartford residents. This data-driven approach ensures that programs and initiatives target the areas of greatest need.


We also recognize that behavioral, genetic, and social/environmental factors determine 90% of children's health, development, and well-being outcomes. These factors are especially critical in areas of concentrated poverty, where limited access to nutritious food, safe housing, quality education, and behavioral health services can have outsized impacts on children and families.

What did we learn from the 2025 CHNA?

The CHNA highlighted five priority areas:

- Access to nutritious foods
- Access to physical, mental, and behavioral health care
- Educational and occupational opportunity
- Safe neighborhoods and violence prevention
- Healthy, stable, and secure housing

These findings inform all community programs and partnerships at Connecticut Children's, ensuring interventions are data-driven, community-centered, and aligned with long-term outcomes.

A photograph of a young girl with dark skin, wearing glasses and colorful braids. She is wearing a bright red t-shirt with a graphic and black pants. She is standing outdoors, possibly at a community event, with other people and a red flag visible in the background.

How did these findings inform our work?

The 2026–2028 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) builds on the CHNA findings and focuses on three interconnected priorities:

1. **Strengthen Integration and Coordination** – Ensuring families experience care as continuous, coordinated, and responsive, rather than fragmented or episodic.
2. **Advance Trust, Engagement, and Co-Design** – Deepening community partnerships and embedding lived experience into program design and governance.

3. **Promote Protective Factors and Resilience** – Supporting children and families by reinforcing safe, stable, and nurturing environments and reducing preventable harm.

These priorities provide the **framework for all programs and initiatives**, which put these principles into action across Hartford and beyond.

What do these priorities look like in practice?

All of Connecticut Children’s community-focused programs are coordinated through the **Office for Community Child Health**, which serves as the connective infrastructure linking clinical care, community initiatives, and cross-sector partnerships. The Office ensures that efforts are **aligned with CHNA priorities, integrated across systems, and grounded in data and community voice**, so families experience care as continuous, coordinated, and supportive.

<p>Healthy Homes Program Healthy Homes works to prevent and address hazards in children’s homes, such as lead, mold, and unsafe structures. The program focuses on improving housing quality, stability, and safety to support children’s health, development, and long-term well-being. The embedded Building for Health initiative also connects families to community resources that address social influencers of health.</p>	<p>Newborn Screening Network The Connecticut Newborn Screening Network ensures that newborns with flagged screens are quickly identified and connected to expert follow-up care across multiple locations. By linking families with specialists, genetic counselors, and nurses, the Network creates a seamless system that supports early detection and timely intervention for rare genetic conditions.</p>	<p>Childhood Prosperity Lab The Childhood Prosperity Lab partners with communities to co-design innovative strategies that improve children’s health, development, and well-being where families live, learn, work, play, and pray. By embedding community input into every stage, the Lab ensures solutions reflect local priorities and are practical, effective, and sustainable.</p>
<p>Care Coordination Collaborative Model This model ensures children and families move smoothly between preventive, behavioral, and specialty services, aligning clinical care with community supports to reduce duplication and strengthen trust.</p>		<p>Youth Suicide Prevention Center The Youth Suicide Prevention Center strengthens integration and coordination by creating systems that identify youth at risk early and equip schools, clinics, and communities to respond consistently. Through research, training, and universal screening, the Center helps ensure support is aligned, timely, and effective across settings.</p>
<p>Injury Prevention Center The Injury Prevention Center coordinates programs such as Safe Kids Connecticut, the Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP), and Community Violence Intervention partnerships. Together, these programs prevent injuries and reduce exposure to violence through education, advocacy, safer environments, and connecting children and families to supportive services.</p>	<p>North Hartford Ascend North Hartford Ascend connects children and families in the North Hartford Promise Zone with the services and supports they need to reach their full potential, from prenatal care through career readiness. By linking programs and services across sectors, Ascend helps children and families navigate systems more seamlessly and thrive.</p>	<p>Start Childhood Off Right (SCOR) SCOR advances integration and coordination by embedding food insecurity screening within both Emergency Department and Primary Care settings, ensuring families are consistently identified and supported across points of care. SCOR then connects families to immediate resources like produce vouchers redeemable at local grocery stores, creating a more seamless and responsive system that helps address food insecurity and support family well-being.</p>

How we are showing up for kids and families

Connecticut Children's supports kids and families across every part of life, from safe housing to early diagnosis to mental health, safety, and basic needs. **Healthy Homes** improves living conditions by addressing hazards like lead and mold, while the **Injury Prevention Center** and related programs help reduce harm from accidents and violence through education, safer environments, and community partnerships.

Early identification and coordinated care are also key focuses. The **Connecticut Newborn Screening Network** ensures Connecticut babies who need follow-up testing are quickly connected to care for more than **70 rare genetic conditions**, supporting early treatment and healthy development. **The Youth Suicide Prevention Center** strengthens early identification and response, with **1 in 5 patients screened in the Emergency Department found to be at risk for suicide** and more than **2,500 youth in Connecticut identified and connected to care each year**. The **Care Coordination Collaborative Model** helps families move more smoothly between preventive, behavioral, specialty, and community-based services.

Basic needs and community conditions are addressed through efforts like **Start Childhood Off Right (SCOR)**, which uses universal screening for food insecurity in emergency and primary care settings, recognizing that nearly **1 in 4 Connecticut families with children is affected**, and connecting families to immediate supports. Educational opportunity is also a key concern in the community, and **North Hartford Ascend** has improved **kindergarten readiness by 12.7 percentage points** in the last year, with **18.2% of students ready for kindergarten in 2024–25**, the highest level to date.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

- Connecticut Children's provides a **data-driven understanding of community needs** that guides programs and partnerships.
- Through the **Office for Community Child Health**, the system maintains a **coordinated infrastructure** connecting clinical care with upstream community efforts.
- Programs address both immediate needs and upstream drivers, reinforcing **protective factors, resilience, and long-term well-being**.
- In 2026, Connecticut Children's will report progress toward the 2025 CHNA in the **annual Community Benefit Report**.

