

From 2022 to 2025, the Washtenaw Health Initiative (WHI) has continued to advance its mission of improving health and reducing health disparities across Washtenaw County through cross-sector collaboration, community engagement, and data-driven action. With support from the City of Ann Arbor and other local partners, WHI has facilitated partnerships among health systems, social service agencies, and community-based organizations to address pressing health challenges, coordinate care, and strengthen the local safety net. This summary highlights key accomplishments made possible in part through the City's ongoing investment in regional health and wellbeing.

2022

- **Centering Lived Experience.** Recognizing the value of the addition of a Community Ambassador to the WHI Steering Committee in 2021, the WHI added an additional ambassador to the steering committee, and began planning to launch a larger Community Advisory Board to help guide efforts aimed at improving health in our most vulnerable communities.
- **Responding to the Opioid Epidemic.** The WHI's Opioid Project planned and hosted a return of the 2022 Washtenaw Opioid Summit, while keeping local stakeholders up to date on both local and state level changes to policies affecting access to SUD treatment and support resources. The event drew 141 participants from over 60 different organizations committed to reducing substance use-related harms in our community.
- **Understanding Community Needs.** With facilitative and convening support from the WHI, Michigan Medicine, Trinity Health, and Chelse Hospital completed and published a joint Community Health Needs Assessment a year early to evaluate their priority health need areas and the toll that COVID-19 has had on these specific health needs. In completing this assessment collaboratively, these health systems can address needs in specific communities while also ensuring that these efforts are organized at a broader county level.

2023

- **Launching the Community Advisory Board.** Guided by WHI's dedicated Community Ambassadors, the WHI began recruiting members for a new working group of community residents tasked with identifying our community's most pressing needs and co-designing solutions aimed at addressing them. In recognizing the value of lived experience, CAB members are compensated for their time and participation.
- **Addressing Transportation Barriers for Older Adults.** The WHI's Healthy Aging Collaborative workgroup hosted a transportation summit in March 2023 to discuss transportation challenges for the county's aging population—and ways to address those challenges. The event welcomed speakers from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (The Ride), and Feonix – Mobility Rising, a national nonprofit that aims to reduce transportation barriers. This summit laid the groundwork for the development and implementation of a "Transportation Hub" for older adults in Washtenaw County that assisted residents in scheduling and payment for transportation services outside of non-emergency medical transportation.

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2024

- **Supporting Opioid Settlement Fund Allocation.** States, counties, and local municipalities around the US have begun receiving portions of over \$50 billion dollars in settlement funds from opioid manufacturers and distributors for their role in fueling the opioid epidemic. Locally, the facilitator of the WHI's Opioid Project workgroup was selected to serve on the Washtenaw County Opioid Settlement Steering Committee. Leveraging the workgroup's stakeholders, the steering committee supported a countywide effort to conduct focus groups and interviews with substance use treatment providers and residents with lived experience in substance use and recovery to identify resource and service gaps that could be supported with settlement funds. Additionally, the group made recommendations to county leaders on the development of an RFP process to ensure equitable distribution of funds that directly address identified needs.
- **Supporting Stable Housing for Older Adults.** Much like the workgroup did with transportation, the WHI's Health Aging Collaborative spent 2024 focusing on identifying root causes of housing instability among older residents. To address one of these main causes, the collaborative partnered with the Washtenaw Housing Alliance on a shared housing program, which aims to address the housing needs of seniors by matching them with others who have space to share. This approach not only provides affordable housing options but also helps combat social isolation by creating supportive living arrangements. This support included the development of a case statement and other preparatory work for the program including defining the program's goals, identifying the resources needed, and thinking through the logistics of matching seniors with housing.

2025

- **Improving Systems of Care.** The WHI has begun centering our work in 2025 around developing initiatives that better integrate health and social services. This integration is crucial for addressing the complex needs of individuals, particularly in underserved communities. In a kickoff summit hosted in March, over 100 participants from across key sectors—health care organizations, social service organizations, local and state government, Medicaid Health Plans, and community residents gathered to take on a shared challenge: how can we better integrate systems to improve health, equity, and quality of life in Washtenaw County? Since the summit, the WHI has convened stakeholders who have been working in this space to begin development of a pilot Community Care Hub project. A Community Care Hub is envisioned as a centralized, backbone organization that helps coordinate services across trusted community-based organizations (CBOs), offering shared functions like data management, referral intake, service reimbursement, and other shared services and technical assistance.

Looking Ahead

As WHI looks to the future, our focus will continue to collectively advance health and social services integration across Washtenaw County. By deepening collaboration across WHI workgroups and our stakeholders, the WHI aims to build a more coordinated and equitable local system of care. This alignment will not only strengthen the foundation of the emerging Community Care Hub pilot, but also ensure that the voices of residents, providers, and community organizations remain central in shaping a more responsive, person-centered network of support.

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