

# RESPONDING TO THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF THE SARATOGA REGION

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*2020 Community Service Plan Update*



SARATOGA HOSPITAL

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## 125 YEARS AS THE REGION'S LEADING HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

**We have been Saratoga's hospital for 125 years. During that time, we have grown from a small facility in a three-story house to a regional provider with 20+ locations. Today's Saratoga Hospital has campuses in Saratoga Springs, Malta, and Wilton and a medical group with more than 250 providers in over 30 specialties. We also are one of four affiliates of the Albany Med Health System, the Capital Region's largest and only locally governed health system. Equally important, we are a community partner, committed to improving the health of our region now and in the years to come.**

As a New York hospital, with our regional partners, every three years Saratoga Hospital participates in a comprehensive health needs assessment and uses that information to tackle our community's most pressing health-related issues. The most recent assessment was completed in 2019. Based on its findings, as well as on significant input from community-based organizations and other stakeholders, for 2019-2021 Saratoga County chose to focus on two New York State "Prevention Priorities": obesity and substance use.

A detailed implementation plan was developed in 2019. In this 2020 Community Service Plan Update, we report on our progress to date.

It's important to note that the plan was developed before the coronavirus pandemic, which forced us to temporarily suspend some programs and services. Through a combination of commitment, flexibility, and ingenuity, we have introduced safe alternative delivery methods for many programs and services. For example, our free bariatric surgery seminars were moved online in May and continued at the previous rate of two per month. Even so, the impact of the pandemic is undeniable and, in some cases, has affected community outreach efforts.



## *Tackling obesity*

Obesity has a significant negative impact on physical and mental health and quality of life. People who are obese are at higher risk for conditions—including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer—that are among the leading causes of death in the U.S. Of particular concern is the rising rate of obesity among very young children who, increasingly, are developing what used to be considered adult health problems.

In Saratoga County, the obesity rate (body mass index, or BMI, of 30 or higher) for adults is 25.7%, slightly higher than that of adults statewide. For children ages 2 to 4, the obesity rate is 17%, which is higher than in surrounding counties and New York state. Our goal is to reduce obesity among those already facing weight-related issues and to promote the healthy habits that prevent obesity in the first place.

### **To achieve these objectives, in 2020 Saratoga Hospital:**

- Continued to provide free informational seminars on bariatric surgery. Of the 21 sessions, 16 were held online after the start of the pandemic.
- In January, February, and March, hosted support group sessions for individuals dealing with weight and weight-loss-related issues.
- To promote breastfeeding, offered seven sessions of our free “Breastfeeding Basics” program; also hosted 24 breastfeeding support group meetings.
- Continued to provide individualized nutrition counseling at several Saratoga Hospital primary care practices and our Saratoga Community Health Center.
- To help address food insecurity and build healthy eating habits, continued to offer a variety of nutritious options at our Saratoga Community Health Center Nutrition Resource Center. This year’s Thanksgiving food drive to stock the center was our most successful ever.
- Offered a variety of diabetes-related programs and services, including “Healthy Lifestyle Habits for Managing Diabetes,” “Eating Tips for People Living with Diabetes,” “Nuts & Bolts of Preventing Diabetes,” diabetes support groups, and medical nutrition therapy.
- Added 28 plant-based items to the hospital menu, offering patients plant-based options for every meal.
- Continued to offer healthy food options in the hospital cafeteria.

## *Targeting substance misuse*

Although Saratoga Hospital and our community partners recognize the adverse effect that alcohol, tobacco, and the array of illegal drugs have on community health, our focus for 2019-2021 is on opioid misuse. Data shows that, despite a decline in upstate New York, opioid deaths are on the rise in Saratoga County. The local increase is fueled, in part, by the growing penetration of fentanyl, which is overtaking heroin as an opioid-related cause of death in Saratoga County.

The impact of opioid misuse is felt throughout our community. Opioid misuse is linked to the spread of infectious disease, neonatal abstinence syndrome in newborns, higher healthcare costs, and greater use of emergency services. The social and economic toll is also significant and includes increases in crime, job loss, poverty, and the number of children placed in protective custody.

**Saratoga Hospital takes a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to treating and preventing substance misuse. In 2020 we:**

- Continued to provide addiction medicine services at our Saratoga Community Health Center, where we also can easily connect patients to high-quality affordable behavioral health and other services. To ensure continuity of care during the pandemic, we transitioned as many patients as possible to our telehealth platform.
- Sought and was awarded a \$25,000 grant, through the MVMA Program Excellence and Innovation Initiative, for our Interdisciplinary Opioid Management Program. The program integrates pain management clinical pharmacists and a substance abuse counselor in Saratoga Hospital Medical Group primary care practices to help monitor, manage, and reduce the use of opioids for chronic pain relief.
- Used the evidence-based “Eat, Sleep, Console” model of care to treat neonatal abstinence syndrome.
- Provided free community education, including one session each on naloxone/Narcan training and on addiction treatment and interventions.

*An enduring commitment to improving community health*

As the Saratoga region’s leading healthcare provider, Saratoga Hospital plays a unique, essential role in ensuring and advancing the health of our community—today, tomorrow, and for decades to come. Therefore, in addition to focusing on our two “Prevention Priorities,” in 2020 we continued our significant, ongoing efforts to meet our community’s current healthcare needs and anticipate those of the future.

A primary emphasis is to increase access to care, especially for underserved populations. Through Saratoga Hospital Medical Group, we added providers in high-demand specialties and introduced much needed services, such as wound healing. We invested in technology and facilities, always seeking smarter, better ways to deliver care.

Equally important, we expanded and strengthened the relationships that make effective collaboration possible. Those relationships are proving invaluable in our regional efforts to respond to the pandemic—and will remain essential to future efforts to achieve the common goal of a healthier community.



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