

RESPONDING TO THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS OF THE SARATOGA REGION

2021 Community Service Plan Update



SARATOGA HOSPITAL

An affiliate of  ALBANY MED


TACKLING OBESITY AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

As a New York hospital, every three years Saratoga Hospital works with our regional partners to conduct a comprehensive health needs assessment and use that information to tackle our community's most pressing health-related issues. For 2019-2021, Saratoga County and Saratoga Hospital chose to focus on two New York State Prevention Priorities: obesity and substance misuse.

A detailed [implementation plan](#) was developed in 2019. This 2021 Community Service Plan Update reports on Saratoga Hospital's most recent efforts.

It's important to note that the 2019-2021 implementation plan was created before the coronavirus pandemic, which forced us to make some adjustments. Through a combination of commitment, flexibility, and ingenuity, we have introduced safe, alternative delivery methods for many programs and services. We also have found innovative ways to respond to certain needs that worsened during this public health crisis.

The impact of the pandemic is undeniable and likely will last for years. As always, Saratoga Hospital will identify and address the resulting challenges in future planning efforts and in the services we provide.



Tackling obesity

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—and the related potentially life-threatening health conditions—in the first place.

To help achieve these objectives, in 2021 Saratoga Hospital:

- Offered 24 free informational seminars on bariatric surgery. Sessions were conducted online due to the pandemic and were extremely well-attended.
- Conducted 12 pre-operative nutrition classes.
- Introduced the newest weight-loss medications to support pre- and post-operative patients who need help losing weight. The medications also are prescribed for patients with obesity who are not candidates for bariatric surgery.
- To accommodate increased demand for bariatric services, expanded our Saratoga Bariatric Surgery and Weight-Loss Program offices, adding six patient exam rooms, two nutrition services offices, a nurses station, and a physician assistant office.
- Added a second scale room, also in response to increased patient demand.
- Began offering point-of-care HGB A1C testing as an additional patient convenience. The on-site blood draw also facilitates more timely results.
- Earned reaccreditation as a comprehensive bariatric facility by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP), a quality program of the American College of Surgeons (ACS).
- Was once again designated a Blue Distinction Center for Bariatric Surgery as part of the Blue Distinction Specialty Care program.
- Offered free Breastfeeding Basics sessions and breastfeeding support group meetings to promote breastfeeding. This practice is linked to lower rates of childhood obesity and other significant health benefits.
- Provided individualized nutrition counseling and support services at the hospital's primary care, endocrinology, and bariatrics practices, as well as at our Food and Nutrition Services offices and our Saratoga Community Health Center.
- Continued to offer Nutrition Rx, a weekly multidisciplinary program for patients at our Saratoga Community Health Center who are working to improve their health through diet and exercise changes. The program also helps address food insecurity by supplying each participant with a weekly bag of fresh produce, donated by a local farm, along with recipes on how to use that produce. Data on improvements in participants' BMI, HbA1c, LDL, blood pressure levels, and readiness to change is encouraging.
- Conducted food drives to improve access to healthy foods for the Greater Saratoga community.

- Offered a variety of diabetes-related programs and services, including:
 - Nuts & Bolts of Preventing Diabetes
 - Diabetes support groups
 - Eating Tips for People Living with Diabetes
- Held seven free, virtual weight-loss sessions of Sustaining Healthy Lifestyle Habits: A Weight-Loss Support Group, hosted by our registered dietitians.
- Publicized our nutrition and weight-loss related services and educational programs through extensive use of social media and other promotional outlets.

Targeting substance misuse

Even before COVID-19, opioid-related deaths were on the rise in Saratoga County. The pandemic has brought a dramatic increase in the number of fatal drug overdoses and the need for prevention and treatment services.

Saratoga Hospital takes a comprehensive, interdisciplinary approach to treating and preventing substance misuse. In 2021 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.
- Provided free countywide training on how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose and administer naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug.
- Partnered with Saratoga County Public Health and the Prevention Council to install a needle disposal kiosk and medication collection kiosk in Corinth, which has the largest concentration of population in the northern/northwestern part of Saratoga County.
- Sought and was awarded \$35,000 in grants—\$25,000 through the MVMA Program Excellence and Innovation Initiative and \$10,000 from the JM McDonald Foundation—for our Interdisciplinary Opioid Management Program. The program integrates a pain management clinical pharmacist and a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse specialist in our primary care practices to improve the care delivered to patients on long-term opioid therapy. Results are promising and include the following:
 - Sustained improved compliance with obtaining a signed controlled substance agreement and urine drug screen.
 - A three-fold increase in completing assessments for the consequences of alcohol and substance misuse.
 - A reduction in the number and strength of opioid prescriptions.
 - A reduction in the concurrent use of opioids and benzodiazepines.
- Used the evidence-based “Eat, Sleep, Console” model of care to treat neonatal abstinence syndrome.
- Partnered with our community on the Above and Beyond Challenge, which invites businesses and individuals to join hikes that raise funds and awareness for our Addiction Medicine Program at Saratoga Community Health Center.

Improving community health

As the Saratoga region's leading healthcare provider, Saratoga Hospital plays an essential role in ensuring and advancing the health of our community. In addition to focusing on our two prevention priorities, in 2021 we continued with 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, including primary care, neurology, cardiology, infectious disease, pediatric ophthalmology, and breast surgery. We introduced new services and continued to invest 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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