

# Community Health Implementation Strategy

FY 2022-2025

# Executive Summary

ECU Health Bertie Hospital (formally Vidant Bertie Hospital) is a six-bed hospital in Windsor, NC that provides surgical, emergency, medical/surgical, laboratory and radiology services, as well as specialty and primary care clinics. The hospital also offers outpatient behavioral health services and physical, speech, and occupational therapy. The hospital operates ECU Health Family Medicine-Windsor, a primary care physician practice, and has a telemedicine link with the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University.

ECU Health Bertie is one of nine hospitals that comprise ECU Health. ECU Health is a regional health system serving 1.4 million people in 29 counties throughout rural eastern North Carolina. Most of the counties served by ECU Health are listed in the top 40 most economically distressed areas in the state (67% of ECU Health's counties are classified as Tier 1 counties; 33% of the counties are classified as Tier 2 counties). The system consists of ECU Health Medical Center (an academic medical center), eight community hospitals, an ambulatory surgery center, wellness and rehabilitation facilities, home health agencies and other independently operated health services. ECU Health is affiliated with the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. The mission of ECU Health is to improve the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina. Our vision is to become a national model for rural health and wellness by creating a premier, trusted health care delivery and education system. Integral to our mission is our commitment to be responsive to our community's needs and to provide high quality, cost-effective health care services.

## Description of Community

The primary service area for ECU Health Bertie Hospital is Bertie County. Bertie County encompasses 741 square miles, 42 square miles of which are water. The major town in Bertie County is Windsor, the county seat. Other Bertie County communities include Askewville, Aulander, Colerain, Kelford, Merry Hill, Lewiston-Woodville, Powellsville and Roxobel.

As of 2019, the population of Bertie County was 18,947, evenly divided between males and females. Whites composed 35.2 % of the total population; Blacks/African Americans 61.6 %; and Hispanic or Latino of any race at 2.1%. Approximately 13% of county residents do not have health insurance. Almost 19% of residents are Medicaid eligible.

Bertie County is designated as a Tier 1 county, meaning it is one of the 40 most economically distressed counties in the state. Bertie County's median income per household is \$35,527, which is below North Carolina as a whole. Additionally, the poverty rate in Bertie County for 2015-2019 is 23%, well above the state rate of 15%. Approximately 78.4% of Bertie County's residents over the age of 25 years have a high school degree or higher, compared to the state rate of 87.8%. These factors contribute to the health challenges identified in the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment.

## Participants

### Health ENC – 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment

Initiated in 2015 by the Office of Health Access at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Health ENC grew out of conversations with health care leaders about improving the community health needs assessment (CHNA) process in eastern North Carolina. Health ENC, now a partnership among county health departments and hospitals in eastern NC, coordinates a regional CHNA in 33 counties of eastern North Carolina. In addition, the Health ENC Program Manager works to build coalitions and partnerships that will address health issues identified through the regional CHNA process.

As part of the assessment process, members of ECU Health Bertie Hospital and Albemarle Regional Health Services worked collaboratively to distribute a community health opinion survey to various segments of the population in Bertie County. The survey was printed in English and Spanish and distributed to a broad range of people in the community, targeting different income levels, including underserved members of the community, the elderly, and the general population. In addition to the paper surveys, a web-based survey tool was developed by Health ENC and made available to the public through different email lists. The survey was also publicized through the local newspaper and social media. The survey was used to collect primary data from April – June, 2021. A total of 393 community members completed the survey. Due to the situation with COVID-19 in our counties, we did not hold focus groups for this cycle but focused our efforts to make sure surveys closely mirrored the population demographics.

### Community Key Stakeholder Group – Bertie County

The following community stakeholders were represented in the planning, data review and prioritization process for the 2022 Bertie County CHNA:

- ECU Health Bertie Hospital
- Albemarle Regional Health Services – Bertie County
- Bertie County Commissioners
- Three Rivers Healthy Carolinians
- ECU Health

## ECU Health Bertie Hospital Development Council Community Benefits Grants Program

ECU Health is committed to improving the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina. We partner and serve community members throughout the continuum of care. With our mission at the forefront of our efforts, ECU Health Medical Center (formerly Vidant Medical Center) made a substantial donation to the ECU Health Foundation (formerly Vidant Health Foundation) in 1998 to establish the Community Benefit and Health Initiatives Grants program. In 2006, the program extended its outreach by establishing a Regional Community Benefits Grants program which works with ECU Health regional hospitals to distribute grants to their communities.

The goal of the program is to support outreach projects that focus on wellness and prevention strategies. The Community Benefit Grants program supports community partners to educate people about disease prevention and management, provide people with the knowledge and tools to be successful in their own health care and establish programs within communities, making them available and more accessible to community members who need these programs/services. ECU Health Bertie Hospital distributes over \$100,000 annually to various agencies/organizations in Bertie County.

The committee's funding focus areas are based on the health priorities identified in the most recent CHNA.

## **2022 Community Health Priorities for Bertie County**

The comprehensive 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment for Bertie County included significant input from community members, as well as a wealth of information from local, state, and national data sources. Key stakeholders reviewed primary and secondary data. Following an in-depth discussion of the assessment data and existing community resources, the key stakeholder group selected three health priorities for focus over the next three years.

These three health priorities are:

- Chronic Disease
  - Healthy Lifestyles
  - Substance Abuse
- \*All with an emphasis on Access to Care

# Implementation Strategies

## Priority Health Need: Chronic Disease

**Goal: To reduce the rate of chronic disease in Bertie County through education and prevention efforts and early detection, along with improving the health and well-being of people living with chronic disease.**

### Strategies:

- Promote preventative health screenings and health coaching.
- Offer transitional care services to connect patients with chronic conditions to community services.
- Inform providers, churches, schools, and community partners about local services and maintaining overall health through education and awareness activities.
- Offer stroke education/screenings to different businesses and community partners to raise awareness and prevention.
- Host annual Men's Health, Pink Power (women's health), and Heart Health education and awareness events for Bertie County community members at no charge.
- Continue to provide specialty health care services in the ECU Health Bertie Hospital Outpatient Services Center, reducing the need for community members to travel outside the community for these services.
- Provide advance care planning and psychiatric advanced directives education and outreach in local community to assist community members with proactive planning around End of Life care.
- Partner with the American Cancer Society to support the Bertie Relay for Life.

## Priority Health Need: Healthy Lifestyles

**Goal: To improve the health status of the community by promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors and treating whole self with "lifestyle medicine".**

### Strategies:

- Participate in the Three Rivers healthy Carolinians initiatives, which promote healthy nutrition and physical activity within Bertie County.
- Promote the use of Telehealth/Vidant Now to get services to community members.
- Continue existing partnership with Bertie County Schools to provide a certified athletic training program.
- Partner with community organizations and agencies to implement NCCARE 360 in Bertie County to connect patients to local services to meet identified care needs/whole well-being.
- Promote preventative immunizations to community members.
- Continue to partner with the Good Shepherd Food Pantry to address food insecurity in Bertie County.
- Continue to educate elementary school students about Healthy Lifestyles and the importance of positive health behaviors through the Teddy Bear Fair program.
- Have "Teddy", the hospital mascot continue to make experiences at young kids events/activities to promote healthy habits in the community.

- Co-lead the Safe Kids Chowan County partnership focused on educating the public on child safety and prevention activities – reaches Bertie County. This partnership also provides car seats and car seat safety checks for community members.

## Priority Health Need: Substance Abuse

**Goal: To educate Bertie County community of the dangers of substance abuse and connect those in need with the appropriate health resources.**

### Strategies:

- Promote local resources to the community at large, as well as those who may have substance abuse issues.
- Participate in the Tobacco Free Living Coalition and Trillium Community Collaborative program advisory committee.
- Continue the Pain Management – 6 Building Blocks of Opioid Management program.
- Educate patients and community members on the appropriate ways to dispose of medication, as well as how to access drug disposal drop boxes at the Bertie County Sheriff's Department.
- Partner with Albemarle Overdose Prevention Committee to actively participate in initiatives focused on preventing medication drug overdoses, presenting responsible pain management and promoting substance use treatment and support services.
- Collaborate with Bertie County Public Schools to implement evidence based programming for middle and high school students focused on substance use/abuse called "Catch My Breath".

## Approval

ECU Health Bertie Hospital's Implementation Strategy for 2022-2025 was approved by the ECU Health Community Hospitals' Board of Directors on July 26, 2022.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, ECU Health Community Hospitals' Board of Directors

7/26/22

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date