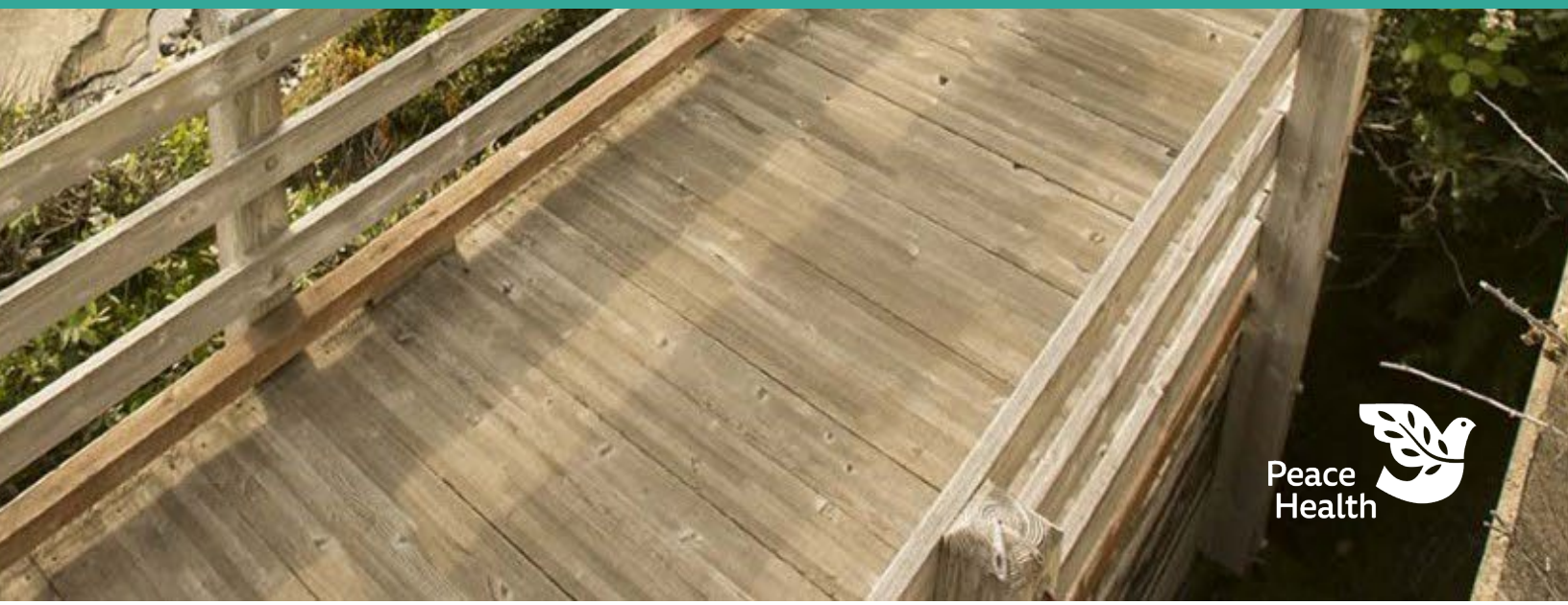




# A Vital Bridge with the Community

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center

2025 Community Health Needs Assessment



# Our report to the community

## The importance of a Community Health Needs Assessment

Every three years, each PeaceHealth location conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as required by the 2010 Patient Care and Affordable Care Act.

Tax-exempt hospitals like ours — as defined by IRS Section 501(r) — use the CHNA to report current community needs, statistics and activities. We are also expected to develop an Implementation Strategy outlining our plans to improve the health and well-being of the communities we serve.

We see our CHNA report and Implementation Strategy as much more than a requirement or obligation. Through this narrative, we are presenting the story of our dedication and service to the community and people we serve. Beyond traditional medical services and care, we are committed to helping people in need.

Click to view previous editions of our [CHNA](#) and [Implementation Strategy](#).

## What is our community needs assessment process?

We conducted a thorough review of publicly reported data from national, state, and local sources to assess our community's needs. We convened community stakeholders from multiple sectors to review the data and provide feedback on community-wide needs. Our data collection and analysis were completed in the fall of 2024.

## Our key findings

Our assessment aligns with national trends and often indicates that the challenges and priorities being faced locally are part of broader, widespread issues.

Our assessment identified a critical call for improved health equity for the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer plus (LGBTQ+) communities, those living in rural and remote areas, children and teens, low-income families, people with mental health and physical disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness.

Investment in housing availability and affordability for families was a key theme, as well as supporting housing access and options for our unhoused and medically fragile community members. Access to healthcare, getting care in a timely manner, wrap-around services for frequent healthcare utilizers and individuals in crisis, retail pharmacy access, and transportation for healthcare needs were highlighted. We further identified the need for access to mental health care and substance abuse treatment and prevention, noting a concerning trend of worsening mental health among Lane County residents, especially youth. The need for support services, including childcare and after-school programming, food security and access to healthy food, was noted. Aging in place, or the ability of older adults to live in their own homes safely as they age and ensuring that the aging population has access to necessary support services was highlighted.

Our assessment also acknowledged a decrease in the workforce and subsequent strain on filling crucial roles in our community.

We hear these needs, and we are committed to leveraging our resources, funding, voices and partnerships to address disparities and gaps to provide whole-person care in Lane County.



## Who we are and what we believe In

Located in Florence, on the beautiful Oregon coast, PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospital opened its doors to the local community in 1989. PeaceHealth Peace Harbor is a critical access hospital and Level III trauma center. It offers a wide spectrum of healthcare services, including general medicine, women's health, maternity care, emergency services, general surgery, orthopedics, mental health, rehabilitation, and diabetes care.

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center's primary service region encompasses the rural communities of Florence, Mapleton, Swisshome, Deadwood, Dunes City and Westlake in Lane County, Waldport and Yachats in Lincoln County and Reedsport in Douglas County. This geographical spread is why it's critical that PeaceHealth, as the region's major hospital system, provides equal access to high-quality, appropriate and integrated community care. With a focus on serving the needs of each patient, from hospital care to recovery, we are committed to patient safety, transparency, and continuous improvement.

Florence and its surrounding coastal communities are closely knit. Some residents can point to multi-generational ties to this gem on the coast, while others have moved here more recently, drawn in by its beauty. When a need emerges, our community rallies to solve it. This includes our many PeaceHealth caregivers who selflessly step in to help where needed, whether it is part of their work or as a volunteer at one of our many community organizations and events. Our needs have been magnified since the start of this decade. Housing continues to be a chronic issue. Access to mental healthcare is a top concern, and we work closely with community and county partners to bolster a safety net that protects our most vulnerable.



### About PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center

**8.6**

Average daily census

**21**

Total licensed beds

**4.4**

Average length of stay (days)

**918**

Inpatient discharges

**62,421**

Outpatient clinic visits

**1,901**

Surgeries

**11,246**

ED visits

**39**

Births

**398**

Caregivers

**237**

Physicians and clinicians

Source: PeaceHealth FY 2024

## Building a network of care from the inside out

We recognize that change starts from within, believing that our caregivers can best focus on others when we put our focus on caring for them. With more than 4,000 employees throughout the Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend service area — PeaceHealth is one of the largest employers in Lane County. Our caregivers are a vital part of our community, and we recognize the weight and responsibility of caring for both our community and our caregivers. We are committed to implementing change that is reflective of our core values: respect, stewardship, collaboration and social justice. PeaceHealth's Mission Integrity and Cultural Fulfillment hosts Caregiver Resource Groups (CRGs). CRGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that serve as a resource for members who have shared cultural identities and/or life experiences. These groups create an inclusive environment to advocate for shared interests, build awareness among PeaceHealth Caregivers, engage in external community partnerships, enhance culturally responsive care, and build a culture of belonging at PeaceHealth.

*“Rural communities such as Florence are bearing a disproportionate brunt of the disparity in healthcare, and we are developing internal programs and leveraging the strengths of our food security systems and educational institutions to ensure robust services are in place to serve everyone. We are dedicated to making the central coast a healthier, more inclusive and vibrant community for all.”*

*— Jason Hawkins, chief administrative officer,  
Peace Harbor Medical Center*

## The community we serve

The population in Florence grew by 10.99% between 2010 and 2020, while Lane County and Oregon experienced increases of 8.89% and 10.6%, respectively. The population in Lane County and Florence is predominantly white, at 79.2% and 88.3%, respectively, followed by the Hispanic/Latino community at 10.2% and 4.6%. A significant portion (39.7%) of residents in Florence are over 65, while only 19.6% of Oregon's population is over 65.<sup>1</sup> The median age in Florence is 57.7, notably higher than the state and national median age. This could impact healthcare services and retirement planning for aging residents.

<sup>1</sup> Florence City Statistics, 2023

## A growing community... Florence, Oregon

**9,483** Population

**10.99%** 2010-20 population growth

*Survey 2019-2023 and US Census 2010-2020*

## Florence's race and ethnicity profile

**88.3%** White

**4.6%** Hispanic/Latino

**2.3%** Black/African American

**2.2%** Asian

**1.9%** Two or more races

**0.8%** American Indian/  
Alaska Native

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019-2023*

# Supporting health justice for all

## Our Mission

We are committed to our Mission: We carry on the healing mission of Jesus Christ by promoting personal and community health, relieving pain and suffering, and treating each person in a loving and caring way. We are driven by our belief that good health, prevention and community well-being are fundamental rights. We support health justice for all and are especially called to be in service to the most vulnerable members of our community. And we believe that every person should receive safe and compassionate care — every time, every touch.

## Poverty and the connection to health and wellbeing

Poverty and health are deeply interconnected and impact individuals and communities. According to the World Health Organization, people living in poverty have a decreased life expectancy and increased child mortality rates.

Poverty profoundly impacts the social drivers of health (SDOH) — the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These factors are responsible for a significant portion of health inequities within and between societies. Poverty shapes these drivers in ways that worsen health outcomes and increase vulnerability to disease.

## Poverty's expansive grip

The poverty rate in Florence is 10.6%, which is lower than the county and state poverty rates of 15.3% and 11.9%, respectively. To expand the picture of poverty in our community, ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, broadens the picture of poverty to include those just above the federal poverty level. These are individuals and families who earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the cost of living for the county and do not qualify for financial assistance.

According to 2022 data from the United Way, the ALICE rate in Florence is 51.6%, exceeding that of the county and state. Many ALICE individuals and families continue to struggle, especially with the rising cost of household essentials such as housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and technology. This highlights the need for targeted equitable support for individuals and families at or below the federal poverty level.



	Florence	Lane County	Oregon
At or below the Federal Poverty Rate <sup>2</sup>	10.6%	15.3%	11.9%
Below ALICE threshold (ALICE + Poverty) <sup>3</sup>	51.6%	47%	45%

## PeaceHealth’s commitment to health equity

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients, caregivers and the greater healthcare community. With the goal of eliminating healthcare disparities, PeaceHealth aims to ensure that all communities receiving care at PeaceHealth are treated justly and respectfully, with equitable access to opportunities and resources and by transforming structures that perpetuate injustice. We partner with diverse organizations, communities, and sectors to address social, economic and environmental factors that impact health. These partnerships aim to improve health outcomes for underserved populations, reducing disparities and ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for health.

## PeaceHealth’s health equity partner

There are a lot of wonderful things about raising children in the tiny rural communities of Oregon, like Mapleton. Abundant in natural beauty and outdoor opportunities, Mapleton is situated on the Siuslaw river, about a thirty-minute drive from Peace Harbor Medical Center. But the drive can be unpassable during the long rainy season. When children and teens are navigating their unique challenges as they grow and learn, waiting weeks or months for a counseling referral is not an option.

The [Mapleton Community Resource Center](#) located in Mapleton Middle School and Siuslaw Student Resource Center in Siuslaw Elementary School provides a safe, convenient location for families to get the mental health care and support they need, regardless of insurance coverage or family income. The centers offer easily accessible counseling, behavioral assessments, wraparound care and referral assistance. While teens 14 and older can self-refer to the services, family involvement in counseling is strongly encouraged to help everyone find ways to support each other, address specific issues, improve communication and conflict resolution skills and deepen connections.

The Community Resource Centers were formed by a grassroots coalition of local leaders in healthcare, education, social services and business who sought to create sustainable, accessible programs to help individuals and families in the community. Operated in partnership between Mapleton School District, Siuslaw School District, and PeaceHealth Medical Group at Peace Harbor Medical Center, this collaboration is not just a response to immediate needs but a long-term commitment to fostering

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2019-2023

<sup>3</sup> United Way, 2022

emotional resilience, reducing stigma around mental health, and creating a healthier community for western Lane County's youth.

Studies have linked access to counselors with improved attendance and lower disciplinary and suspension rates. Access to school counselors improves academic outcomes, social-emotional development, and post-secondary enrollment. Unfortunately, the students who could benefit the most from counselors typically have the least access to them.<sup>4</sup>

To ensure comprehensive and timely access to mental health services, PeaceHealth providers offer virtual visits for students in need. "Having mental health services in the school is a game-changer," said Peace Health Medical Group Oregon chief medical officer Robin Virgin, M.D. "It allows us to meet students where they are and provide the help they need without delay."

PeaceHealth looks forward to continuing to grow the availability of onsite, easily accessible mental health and counseling services to students and their families in western Lane County.



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<sup>4</sup> EdResearch for Recovery, January 2022, Mandy Savitz-Romer & Tara P. Nicola, Harvard Graduate School of Education Brief No. 21 "Building High Quality School Counseling Programs to Ensure Student Success."



# Our community health pillars

We are determined to help create a healthy community beyond the walls of our medical centers and clinics. Our four pillars inform the purpose of community health. Across these pillars is the awareness of our solemn responsibility to protect the most vulnerable and underserved people in our communities while promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do. These four pillars include:

- **HOME:** Improve access to service-enriched housing,
- **HOPE:** Increase education and access to treatment and prevention of dependence,
- **CARE:** Expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers, and
- **NOURISH:** Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being.

## Bridging the gap in our community

Our priority is to provide the overall best care possible to our entire community. To do this, we need to provide an equitable system of support that recognizes needs, focuses on overcoming barriers and builds resiliency for key segments in our community, including:

- Youth, seniors, BIPOC communities and those who identify as LGBTQ+,
- Low-income families,
- People experiencing mental health needs,
- People experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness,
- People with disabilities, and
- People living in rural areas.

*"The Community Health Needs Assessment process serves as a conversation starter that leads to an understanding of our communities that statistics cannot create alone. At PeaceHealth, we find value and joy in building the relationships that make those conversations never-ending."*

*– Liz Dunne, PeaceHealth President and CEO*

## Recognizing inequities and elevating partnerships

We are stronger when we work together, this is why community-based partnerships like the ones described in this CHNA report are crucial to our community's success. They enable all of us to address social drivers of health and improve care and access — regardless of where individuals are in their health journey.

In service to our community's most vulnerable members, PeaceHealth has partnered with the [Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane](#), [Florence Farmers Market](#), [Mapleton](#)



Home



Hope



Care



Nourish



[Food Share](#), [Siuslaw Valley Christian](#), [Soroptimists International](#), [Western Lane Mobile Integrated Health](#), [Siuslaw Outreach Services](#), [Western Lane Crisis Response](#), [Florence United Methodist Church](#) and [Food Backpack for Kids](#) to support essential community programs.

## Community benefit contributions in western Lane County

PeaceHealth has a long history of support in the communities we serve. In 1989, Florence civic leaders approached PeaceHealth with a request to build and operate a new hospital, and the legacy of community benefit in Western Lane has continued throughout the decades. Guided by a commitment to compassionate care and equitable access, we have prioritized investments in programs, services and partnerships that address critical health needs and foster a healthier, more resilient community. Our community is blessed with a strong network of nonprofit service organizations delivering programs designed to improve physical and mental health and increase access to care. PeaceHealth is proud to support these partnerships and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

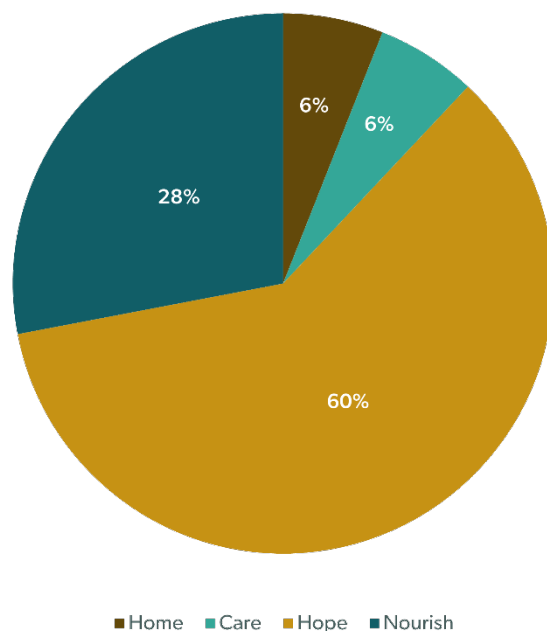
In 2024, PeaceHealth contributed over \$1.2M in community benefit cash donations to community partner organizations in Lane County, many of whose stories are told in the pages of this report. To assist our nonprofit community partners in maintaining sustainable operations in suitable facilities, PeaceHealth contributed an additional \$600,000 of in-kind, no-cost and low-cost property leases for clinical and administrative workspaces in the community.

As the largest employer and healthcare system in the region, we are committed to healthcare workforce development programs and creating pathways to healthcare careers for underserved communities. This commitment drove an additional \$810,000 in cash investment to nursing and career technical education programs in Lane County.

## Looking Ahead

While we are proud of our community benefit investments and partnerships, we recognize that much work remains. Rising healthcare costs, health inequities and the increasing need for behavioral health and substance abuse treatment in Lane County require sustained effort and innovation. As we expand our community benefit partnerships, we remain diligent in ensuring that our community benefits extend to those who need it most.

PeaceHealth community benefit cash contributions in western Lane County (FY 2024)





## Community Priority: Improve access to childcare and affordable housing

### Community need

Lane County, including Florence and the surrounding Siuslaw region, is a designated childcare desert. This means that three children are waiting for every childcare spot available. The area has 640 children aged 0-5 years but has only 152 childcare slots (licensed and exempt), including Head Start. Working families struggle to find childcare, and local employers have resoundingly called for childcare options to solve the challenges they face with recruitment, hiring, retention, attendance, and productivity. The lack of available, affordable, quality care impacts every family and the local community at large but hits moderate- and lower-income families particularly hard. Parents in rural areas like Florence and surrounding communities cannot find reliable childcare, which can lead to stress, anxiety, lost employment opportunities, and lower family income.

### Childcare cost burden in Lane County

- 45%** of income spend on childcare vs. 33% in Oregon and 27% nationally
- 1,500** the number of slots needed to remove the “childcare desert” status

Source: County Health Rankings 2024

### Elm Park Early Learning Center

The development of the Elm Park Early Learning Center in Florence marks a significant step toward improving community health and well-being for families needing affordable housing and childcare. This innovative facility, designed to provide onsite early childhood education co-located with 32 apartment units serving families at or below 60% of the area median income, is more than a place for learning — it’s a catalyst for healthier families, stronger connections, and a brighter future for the



Rendered image

*“The community thrives when families have access to affordable housing and high-quality childcare. Elm Park is the culmination of collaborations among city and state government, public education, and nonprofit organizations serving the community.”*

— Layne Morill, project developer

communities of Western Lane County. “Elm Park is not just a school or an apartment building — it’s a place where families can come together, support each other, and build a stronger community,” comments Holly Mar-Conte, Lane County Childcare Sector Strategist.

Underlying Elm Park Early Learning Center is the knowledge that a child’s early years are foundational not only for education but also for overall health. Working closely with [Lane Community College Quality Care Connections](#), the center will bring Florence four new early learning and childcare classrooms serving up to 80 children aged three months to five years. [Head Start of Lane County](#), a partner in Elm Park, will operate two classrooms, and local community providers will staff the other two classrooms. Evidence-based early education builds children’s social skills, emotional resilience, and healthy routines that carry over into adulthood and contribute to better long-term health outcomes. An expansive outdoor play area will encourage children to be active and explore the outdoor world, promoting physical fitness, reducing stress, and fostering social interaction — all critical components of childhood learning and development.

The Florence community has formed a nonprofit, Siuslaw Childcare Friends, to support, sustain, and expand childcare and early learning in the Florence area. A volunteer board of experienced childcare professionals and community leaders will guide the organization. The board’s focus will be mitigating staffing challenges through the recruitment, training, placement, and housing of childcare workers and the development of a volunteer network to support childcare workers and providers, including the Head Start program in Western Lane.

“Healthy habits start early,” says Jason Hawkins, Chief Administrative Officer at PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center. “Programs like Elm Park can set children up for a lifetime of wellness by introducing these practices at a young age.”

The Elm Park Early Learning Center will support working parents by offering affordable, high-quality care and education, allowing parents to enjoy greater peace of mind knowing their child is safely cared for. Beyond its direct benefits to children and parents, the Elm Park Early Learning Center strengthens the Florence community.

Peace Harbor Medical Center is excited to partner with Elm Park Early Learning Center on our aligned values of respect, stewardship, collaboration, social justice, and personal and community health. As the doors of Elm Park’s housing and early learning center open, families in Florence can look forward to a brighter tomorrow — one where more children can grow, thrive, and contribute to a healthier, more connected community.

## Elm Park Early Learning Center by the numbers

Addressing the needs of at-risk youth

4	early childhood education classrooms
80	maximum number of children served
32	apartments for income eligible families



## Community Priority: Improve access to crisis response services

### Community need

Like a physical health crisis, a mental health crisis can be devastating for individuals, families, and communities. While an individual crisis cannot be fully predicted, we can plan how we structure services and organize approaches to meet best the needs of those individuals who experience a mental health crisis. Too often, that experience creates an undue burden on the person, law enforcement, emergency departments and justice systems.

Recent data show that the United States is in a mental health crisis experienced by people of all ages. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in five adults in the US experience mental illness each year. This trend was observed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but has been worsened by pandemic-related factors. Many adults in the US reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression, with approximately one in five reporting these symptoms in 2023. Nationwide, 5.8 million emergency department visits occurred in 2021, with mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders as the primary diagnosis.<sup>5</sup> The need for crisis response services remains abundantly clear.

### Western Lane Crisis Response

Western Lane Crisis Response (WLCR) program offers crucial crisis intervention and community support. This evidence-based, innovative program provides immediate, compassionate assistance to individuals facing a wide range of crises — from mental health emergencies and grief to displacement from fires, trauma, and homelessness. Beyond emergency responses, WLCR extends ongoing support to individuals, families, and first responders, ensuring a stable and nurturing environment for those in need.

WLCR's journey began humbly, offering basic community services led by local chaplains through Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue — now Western Lane Fire and EMS Authority (WLFEA). In 2019, this initiative evolved into a Mobile Crisis Response Team, and by 2023, the program was re-branded as Western Lane Crisis Response (WLCR). The name change reflects a broader mission beyond mobile mental health services, emphasizing the program's connection to WLFEA and its multifaceted support capabilities.

WLCR serves individuals in Florence, Mapleton, Swiss Home, Deadwood, Westlake and the surrounding areas, responding to situations that can overwhelm even the strongest

### Mental health needs in western Lane County

- 90** people for every mental health provider available, vs. 150 in Oregon and 320 nationally (source: 2023 county health rankings)
- 12<sup>th</sup>** where Oregon ranks for youth suicide (source: 2022 county health rankings)
- 14.2** Oregon's youth suicide rate per 100,000 vs. 10.0 nationally (source: 2022 county health rankings)
- 10<sup>th</sup>** leading cause of death in Oregon (source: CDC)



<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



individuals or families. The crisis response team can meet individuals where they are, offering immediate, compassionate assistance. For those in crisis, the WLCR team offers more than just a response — they provide hope, stability and a way forward. Their certified professionals — trained in areas like peer support, community health and mental health — arrive as a team of two and are available 24/7 year-round. When a two-person response isn't feasible, support is provided by phone.



*"The strength of our team is in how we collaborate — not just with each other but with law enforcement, emergency services and other community partners. We're all working together to create a safety net for those in need, and that's so important."*

— Melissa House, program manager, WLCR

WLCR not only addresses immediate crises but also focuses on reducing the strain on local first responders. By working alongside law enforcement, fire and EMS, they help free up resources, allowing those teams to attend to other urgent needs in the community. This working relationship with local law enforcement is key, with WLCR ensuring their presence in mental health and high-risk situations to assess and ensure safety.

In addition to crisis response, WLCR's ongoing support services are enhanced by their Outreach Coordinator. The Outreach Coordinator collaborates with law enforcement and PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Hospital to identify high utilizers of emergency services and mental health care, providing these individuals with resources to improve their quality of life and avoid recurring crises. The program also partners with the Boys and Girls Club, employing a Youth Client Advocate who works directly with at-risk youth. This advocate offers much-needed guidance and emotional support, ensuring that young people facing challenges have someone to turn to.

"People don't choose when or where a mental health crisis happens, but knowing there's a team like ours to show up can make all the difference," said Kristy Simmons, crisis responder. "It's work that matters and our community really relies on it."

WLCR's client advocates play a crucial role in providing extensive follow-up within 72 hours of an initial crisis. This proactive approach ensures that individuals receive timely, personalized support to address their ongoing needs, connect with vital



resources, and reduce the likelihood of future crises. By maintaining these close connections, WLCR reinforces stability and resilience in the lives of those they serve.

With ongoing support from Peace Health and other community partners, WLCR will continue to provide crisis services, helping the community's most vulnerable members navigate their most challenging moments.



## Western Lane Crisis Response community impact

2024	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Total number of calls per month	63	44	53	34	37	50	37	66	83
Mental health/suicidal ideation	23	8	10	7	13	16	12	11	24
Grief/trauma	3	4	5	4	3	8	3	8	5
Homelessness	12	12	15	4	6	7	8	14	7
Family disputes/welfare checks	3	4	7	3	3	5	3	9	15
Drugs/alcohol	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	6
"Other" life crisis	20	13	14	10	10	12	8	18	23
Requested to respond to Justice Department	7	9	1	1	0	2	3	5	9
Requested to respond to PeaceHealth hospital	7	7	6	1	2	5	3	11	9
Prevented from going to PeaceHealth hospital or being detained by law enforcement	33	16	25	16	16	31	11	29	48
Resolved without a higher level of care	48	24	37	25	29	39	27	52	70
Number of diversions (relieving law enforcement from scene or preventing a response)	47	28	45	29	32	38	28	53	74

## PeaceHealth Investment

Western Lane's Crisis Response program will receive \$250,000 through a donation from PeaceHealth's community impact fund. The funds will be allocated in phases throughout fiscal year 2025.

## Partnering to expand critical behavioral health services in Lane County

Lane County Health and Human Services and PeaceHealth have built a strategic partnership with the goal of building a co-located behavioral health campus. The campus will be home to PeaceHealth's new behavioral health hospital, and the adjacent Lane County will construct the [Lane Stabilization Center \(LSC\)](#).

By entering an exciting innovation of private-public partnerships, the two facilities will provide a convenient and centrally located collection of behavioral health resources for the community.

In partnership with [LifePoint Health](#), the new Behavioral Health Unit will be a standalone inpatient behavioral health hospital close by PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend. The 96-bed facility will nearly triple PeaceHealth's current inpatient behavioral health capacity and intensive outpatient programs will also be offered at the new location. Lane County Health and Human Services is partnering with [Connections Health Solutions](#) to open the Lane Stabilization Center, which will provide immediate access to behavioral health care and treatment for youth and adults. The center will offer rapid, intensive treatment that prioritizes compassionate and personalized care, filling a critical gap in our community's behavioral health system.



“Our inpatient behavioral health hospital and the county’s stabilization center will fill a critical need in our community with full, wrap-around care at a time when individuals need it the most,” said Alicia Beymer, chief administrative officer, PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend. “Not only will both facilities vastly expand our resources, but thanks to this innovative public/private partnership, we will be better equipped to more efficiently connect people with the best care for their needs and have an even greater positive impact in our community.”



# Community Priority: Improve access to afterschool programming in western Lane County

## Community need

As a rural community, Florence is not only a recognized childcare desert but is additionally burdened by a poverty rate that is two percent higher than the rest of the state of Oregon.<sup>6</sup> When families struggle to access childcare, this can be particularly daunting for youth and teens who may be asked to help with the childcare of younger family members while still needing this care and oversight themselves.

## The Boys & Clubs of Western Lane County

The [Boys & Girls Club of Western Lane \(BGCWL\)](#) provides a safe space for children and teens to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. Their programs supplement education and nurturing that helps shape young people's lives and foster leadership, community engagement, and personal growth. The community benefit partnership between BGCWL and Peace Harbor Medical Center amplifies that potential, addressing the holistic well-being of children and youth and ensuring they will have the key tools to thrive in every aspect of life.



BGCWL's commitment to an inclusive and welcoming environment for elementary through high school-aged children, alongside PeaceHealth's shared values of diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice, ensures that every family in the community has access to programs without encountering barriers. When parents know that their children have access to equitable and high-quality childcare, they feel more secure and supported, creating a ripple effect of well-being throughout the community.

Prioritized programs promote healthy lifestyles and equip young people with the knowledge and tools to make informed choices about their current and future well-being. Culinary programs can be incredibly rewarding, offering youth valuable skills and experiences. Learning how to cook not only contributes to their nutritional knowledge but also promotes independence and fosters a lifelong skill.

In 2023, BGCWL provided 10,565 nutritious meals, and youth participated in 533 culinary experiences. Encouraging children to give back to the community through volunteering is a meaningful way to instill a sense of empathy, responsibility, and community engagement. As a top priority, the Club provided 400 hours of community service in 2023. Prioritizing literacy is crucial for the holistic development of youth. Reading not only enhances language skills and communication but also promotes

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<sup>6</sup> Florence, Oregon poverty rate data — Information about poor and low-income residents living in this city.





*"Grant funding has been transformative for us, enabling us to expand programs that nurture the social, emotional and academic development of our youth. They have amplified our mission to foster leadership, independence and personal growth creating a brighter, more equitable future for every child in our community."*

*– Vanessa Buss, Former CEO, Boys & Girls Club of Western Lane County*

critical thinking, creativity and deeper understanding of the world. In 2023, BGCWL provided youth with 48 unique experiences and exposures to literacy. By providing activities and programs in 3-D printing and computer literacy, BGCWL fosters an interest in technology and engineering among youth that ensures more equitable access to opportunities in STEM-related fields.



## PeaceHealth Investment

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Community Medical Center's community benefit collaboration with Boys & Girls Club Western Lane helps address the multifaceted needs of young people and steer them toward a healthier, more promising future. This collaboration is a testament to how community organizations and healthcare providers can work together to create stronger, healthier communities.

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center has been a longtime supporter of BGCWL and has donated \$15,000 in community benefit funding to the Boys & Girls Club of Western Lane since 2022.

### Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane by the numbers

<b>10,565</b>	nutritious meals provided
<b>533</b>	culinary experiences
<b>400</b>	hours of community service
<b>48</b>	unique literary experiences



## Community priority: Address food insecurity

### Community need

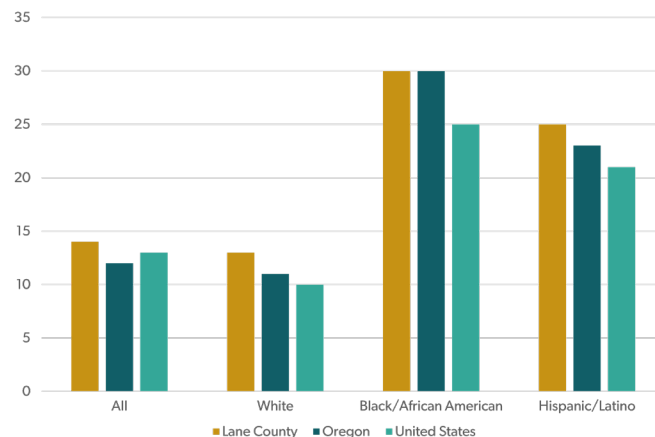
Food insecurity, defined as limited or uncertain access to adequate food, is a pressing issue that affects communities across the United States. Food insecurity increases the risk for multiple chronic health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease and mental health disorders,<sup>7</sup> and places a burden on the healthcare system due to longer hospital stays and higher readmission rates for adults in food-insecure households. Lane County's food insecurity rate of 14.6% exceeds that of the state and national level at 13.1% and 13.5%, respectively,<sup>8</sup> stressing the importance of targeted programs aimed at reducing food insecurity in our communities.

Western Lane County, including Florence, has a higher per capita number of individuals over 65 years of age compared to other parts of the state. According to the USDA, roughly seven million older Americans (1 in 11 of those age 60+) faced food insecurity in 2022. Older adults experiencing food insecurity can't always get the healthy food they need, adding an extra strain to an already fixed income and increasing their risk of chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and mental health issues.<sup>9</sup>

### Food insecurity and health

- Increased risk for multiple chronic health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and mental health disorders.<sup>10</sup>
- Burden on the health care system and increased costs. Longer hospital stays and higher readmission rates for adults in food-insecure households.<sup>11</sup>
- Increased risk for adverse health outcomes and health disparities.<sup>12</sup>

Food insecurity by race/ethnicity, 2022  
Lane County and comparison



### Food scarcity in western Lane County

- 1/3** of the Florence population routinely or intermittently uses the food bank (Source: Florence Food Share 2024)
- 61%** of school age children in Lane County qualify for free or reduced-price school meals (Source: Oregon Dept. of Education, Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch, 2022)

<sup>7</sup> National Institute on Minority Health and health disparities, 2024

<sup>8</sup> Map the Meal Gap 2022, Feeding America

<sup>9</sup> Feeding America, 2022

<sup>10</sup> National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, 2024

<sup>11</sup> Men F, Gundersen C, Urquia ML, et al. Food insecurity is associated with higher healthcare use and costs among Canadian adults. Health Affairs. 2020;39(8):1377-85

<sup>12</sup> Healthy People 2023

## Veggie Rx at the Florence Farmers Market

Veggie Rx is a produce prescription program used as a medical treatment or preventative service for patients. Patients are eligible due to a diet-related health risk or condition, food insecurity or other documented challenges accessing nutritious foods and are referred by a healthcare provider or health insurance plan.

Clinicians write "prescriptions" for fresh fruits and vegetables for patients with diet-related health challenges and food insecurities. Typically, healthcare providers prescribe prescriptions to patients who redeem them at farmers' markets or for community-supported agriculture (CSA) membership and occasionally at retail outlets.

When appropriately done, Veggie Rx programs are designed to improve healthcare outcomes, optimize medical spend and increase patient engagement and satisfaction. Patients enrolled in Veggie Rx programs report behavioral, mental and physical health improvements, while the local economy and small farms benefit from produce sales.

Veggie Rx programs represent partnerships among local health care organizations, coordinated care organizations and the organizations that manage the programs.



*"We often worry about whether our food will run out before we have money to buy more. Even though we know that fresh fruits and veggies are an important part of a healthy diet, they are expensive, so we don't buy them in the winter. During the Market season, the Rx Program gives us access to them. I feel so much better in the summer."*

*– Veggie Rx program participant*

In 2022, cooking classes were added to the market based on a need identified via participant surveys. The interactive classes are taught by Farmers Market staff and a retired diabetic education specialist, providing a forum for participants to ask questions and learn how to use seasonal produce. An appropriate food storage class was also added after survey results indicated spoilage often prevented individuals from purchasing produce. After costs, spoilage was the second reason participants did not buy fruits and vegetables.



By the end of the 2024 farmers market season, it is expected that over 700 Veggie Rx prescriptions will have been written by PeaceHealth providers since program inception in 2021. Veggie Rx vouchers are good for \$20 per family at the Farmers Market in Florence. Patients with a \$20 Veggie Rx voucher can also use the supplemental nutritional assistance program (SNAP) benefit of \$20 and a match up to \$20 from the market for a total of \$60 to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables.

### PeaceHealth investment

The PeaceHealth Foundation provided the initial funding for the Veggie Rx pilot in 2021, and since then, Peace Harbor Medical Center's Community Collaboration Committee has funded the program yearly. To date, funding has exceeded \$35,000.

### Final thoughts

At PeaceHealth, we recognize that the journey to health and well-being is constant. Driven by our belief that good health, prevention and community well-being are fundamental rights, we are humbled and honored to serve and learn from our communities. Our Community Health Needs Assessment process holds us accountable for listening and learning from our communities and informs the development of our Community Health Improvement Plan. The needs are forever evolving — and so are we. We pledge to continue our collaborative work in the community and invite you to join us in our pursuit of health justice for all.

### Veggie Rx by the numbers

**276** participants

**19** markets

**\$5,720** amount participants "spent" at the markets

