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Higgins General Hospital



COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

FY 2014-2016





HIGGINS GENERAL HOSPITAL

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Executive Summary

Tanner Health System, a nonprofit regional health system serving a nine-county area of west Georgia and east Alabama, has a rich tradition of providing benefit to the communities it serves. People's needs prompted the origins of Tanner Health System and remain the chief concern today—best articulated through the development of Tanner's robust, mission-driven community health strategy. At the core of this community health strategy is to focus on the "health" as much as the "care" in health care and prioritize the health status improvement of the communities Tanner serves as a vital goal of the healthcare system. Today's healthcare environment is one of challenge, change and complexity, yet through collaborative efforts and unique partnerships, Tanner strives to fulfill its mission: ***To provide quality healthcare services within our resource capabilities; to serve as a leader in a collaborative effort with the community in providing health education, support services and care for all citizens.***

In 2012, Tanner Health System's two acute care hospitals—Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton and Tanner Medical Center/Villa Rica—and Tanner's critical access hospital, Higgins General Hospital in Bremen, each began the process of conducting a comprehensive Community Health Needs Assessment to further identify the health needs of their communities and develop an Implementation Strategy responding to appropriate population sub-groups and health conditions for improved community health.

These comprehensive, multifactor assessments included the collection and analysis of quantitative data, as well as qualitative input directly from residents gathered through community surveys, interviews and focus groups. Through the assessment process, Tanner has identified the greatest health needs among each of its hospital's communities, enabling Tanner to ensure its resources are appropriately directed toward outreach, prevention, education and wellness opportunities where the greatest impact can be realized.

In selecting priorities, Tanner considered the degree of community need for additional resources, the capacity of other agencies to meet the need and the suitability of Tanner's expertise to address the issue. In particular, Tanner looked for health needs that require a coordinated response across a range of healthcare and community resources. Upon lengthy review of the Community Health Needs Assessment findings, the priority areas to be addressed during FY 2014-2016 by Higgins General Hospital include: (1) Access to Care; (2) Chronic Disease Education, Prevention and Management; and (3) Mental Health. Each priority area will have specific and measurable goals, objectives and outcomes.

The Community Health Implementation Strategy for Higgins General Hospital will serve as an engine to build population health capacity through the internal alignment of hospital and health system governance, management and operations with the organization's community benefit mission; as well as developing diverse community partnerships that engage people, ideas and resources across multiple settings to create a synergy of health and prevention efforts that will have a lasting effect on people's health.

Responding to the needs identified in the Community Health Needs Assessment, this document details the Community Health Implementation Strategy for **Higgins General Hospital**. This Implementation Strategy will be rolled out over the next three years, from FY 2014-FY 2016.

Community Profile

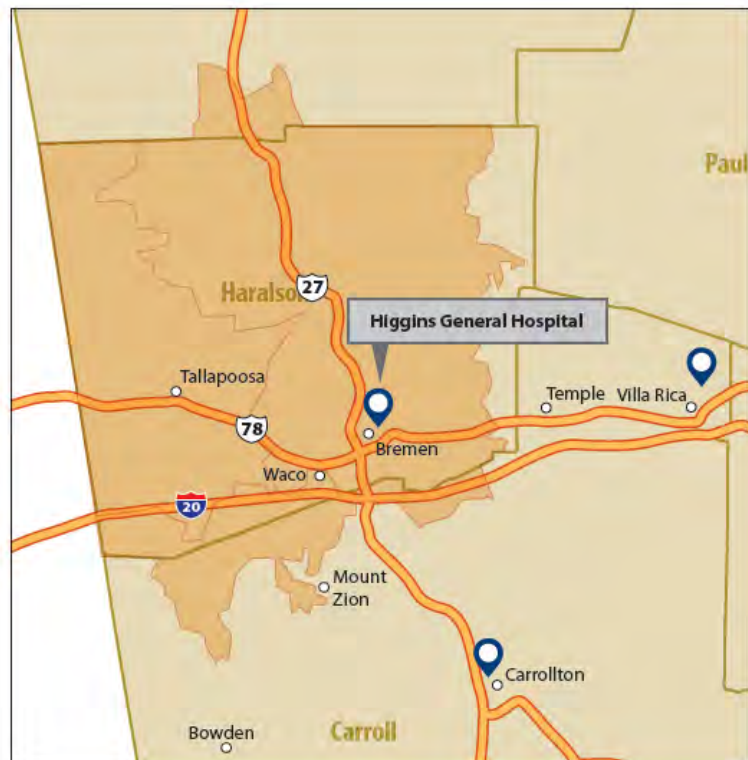
Higgins General Hospital

Located in Bremen, Georgia, Higgins General Hospital is a 25-bed critical access hospital, providing its community with a variety of comprehensive inpatient and outpatient medical services, including: 24-hour emergency care; state-of-the-art medical imaging, including nuclear medicine and full-time MRI services; outpatient surgery, mammography, cardiology services, laboratory testing, inpatient care, critical care services, an innovative swing bed program and more. As part of Tanner Health System, patients at Higgins General Hospital have access to Tanner's full continuum of care.



Definition of Community Served

The community served by Higgins General Hospital, for the purposes of the Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy, is defined as the facility's primary service area. The Higgins General Hospital primary service area majorly resides in Haralson County, encompassing the zip codes of Bremen, Buchanan, Tallapoosa and Waco, Georgia.



The close proximity of Tanner Health System's acute care hospitals (within a 12-20 mile radius of each other)—Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton and Tanner Medical Center/Villa Rica—and the critical access hospital, Higgins General Hospital, provide west Georgia residents multiple access points for a variety of healthcare-related services; these facilities work collaboratively to leverage existing assets and resources throughout Tanner's overall primary service area of Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties to best meet the health needs of their communities.

Strategy Development

Community Health Needs Assessment Process

The assessment process was conducted in two phases: Phase One, which consisted of the collection and review of secondary quantitative data from existing public health data and reports; and Phase Two, which included the collection of primary, qualitative data through community surveys, key informant interviews and community focus groups.

Multiple public health data sources were analyzed during Phase One of the assessment process to identify and prioritize community needs. These included national, state and local demographic and community health databases. Vital statistics of the leading causes of death were examined utilizing the Georgia Department of Public Health's Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS). Disease incidence data was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) databases. Additionally, county-level indicators include data sources from the 2013 County Health Rankings report, Healthy People 2020 objectives and the Community Need Index.

For Phase Two, Tanner Health System's community benefit team developed the Community Health Needs Assessment plan in October 2011. This plan was introduced to the Tanner Medical Center, Inc. Board of Directors on October 10, 2011 for approval. The survey period for the public ran from November 2011-February 2012 (Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties) and reopened from January 2013-February 2013 (Heard county). Tanner reached out to a vast area of the community through its *Healthy Living* magazine, published quarterly and distributed to 46,525 homes, as well as through an additional 3,000 copies distributed to area medical offices and public areas in Tanner facilities throughout Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties. In addition, Tanner conducted three mass e-mail messages to 6,500 community members who have voluntarily joined the health system's e-mail distribution list—these e-mail blasts went out on November 30, 2011, December 30, 2011 and February 25, 2012; 2,600 paper surveys were distributed to various community events at senior centers, schools, housing authorities and to high-risk groups in Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties; and members of the boards of Tanner Medical Center, Inc. and Tanner Medical Foundation, Inc. were provided surveys to be completed at their November 2011 board meetings.

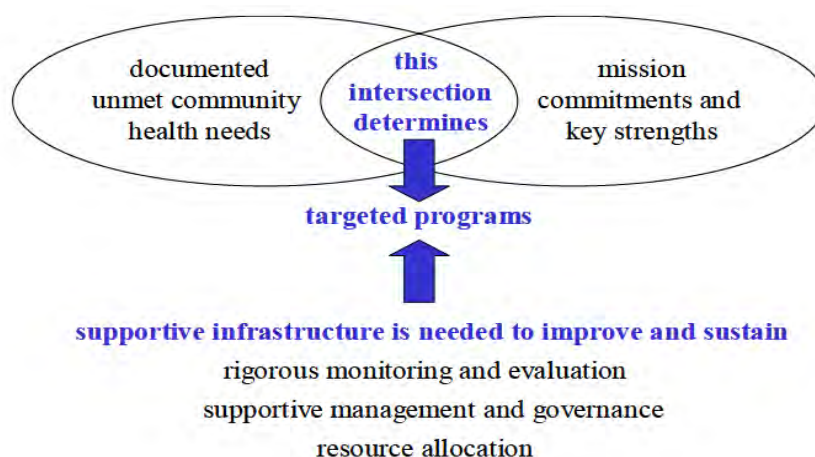
Along with the large-scale effort to collect data from community surveys during Phase Two, the community benefit team also conducted community focus groups throughout Tanner Health System's primary service area of Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties. The focus group for Higgins General Hospital consisted of community leaders, public officials, school officials, businesses and social service organizations. Additionally, two key informant interviews were held: one with Jack Birge, MD, chairman of the Carroll County Board of Public Health; and another with Cherry Toney, a certified nurse practitioner practicing in two rural primary care clinics in Carroll County and a clinic in Heard County. These focus groups and interviews provided more in-depth information regarding the leading health issues and priorities in the area, as well as the opportunity to identify potential partners for future collaborations to address the health issues found in the community. For further public health input, the assessment was reviewed by representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), including the DPH's commissioner and state health officer, Brenda Fitzgerald, MD.

Prioritization and Response to Findings

Members of Tanner Health System’s administrative and community benefit teams reviewed internal and external data sources for population demographics and health needs, results of the community health needs survey data and input from community focus groups. Utilizing these sources, members prioritized needs based on the following criteria: size, severity, long-term impact and the health system’s ability to address the need.

Higgins General Hospital’s Community Health Implementation Strategy reflects the organization’s overall approach to community benefit by targeting the intersection between the identified needs of the community and the key strengths and mission commitments of the organization (Figure 1). Tanner has established leadership accountability and an organizational structure for ongoing planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation of community benefit activities, which are integrated into Tanner’s multi-year strategic and annual operating planning processes. Higgins General Hospital collaborated with Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton and Tanner Medical Center/Villa Rica for the development of its Implementation Strategy, leveraging assets and resources in mutually advantageous efforts to enhance community health improvement initiatives.

Figure 1: Addressing Community Needs



As a result of extensive analysis and discussion of both quantitative and qualitative health needs data and information, the top health priorities identified in Higgins General Hospital’s Community Health Needs Assessment, to be addressed within the Community Health Implementation Plan for FY 2014-2016 are as follows:

➤ Access to Care

An aging population, coupled with a flagging economy and an increasing prevalence of chronic disease, creates a variety of access-to-care issues relating to both affordability and availability of care.

Underlying factors identified by secondary data and primary input from community surveys and a focus group resulted in the need to improve access to health care. Tanner will seek to enhance existing programs and develop new ones by strategically allocating financial resources, materials, expertise and advocacy to build on what is already in place in the community. Tanner will continue to work with

individuals and families to promote access to medically necessary healthcare services by maintaining an accessible financial assistance program, providing charity care and self-pay discounts to qualifying patients. Additionally, staff and leadership will work collaboratively with key community partners to promote a seamless continuum of care.

➤ **Chronic Disease Education, Prevention and Management**

Unhealthy lifestyles and the growth of chronic disease are increasingly affecting individual quality of life and overall community health in the west Georgia region. As Tanner addresses these growing healthcare needs and the changing landscape of healthcare delivery, the importance of prevention and wellness, as well as the ability to provide well-coordinated care, is paramount. Primary input from local representatives, combined with secondary data analysis indicates an increased need for chronic disease education, prevention and management resources and programs in the community.

The increased prevalence of chronic disease in west Georgia has led Tanner to take the lead on improving the health status of its region. In 2012, Tanner approved a five-year strategic plan which includes the development of a community health/community benefit division of Tanner Health System—supporting Tanner’s efforts to expand and sustain the necessary capacity to prevent chronic diseases, detect them early, manage conditions before they become severe, and promote healthy living through prevention and wellness initiatives in the communities that Tanner serves.

Supplementing the efforts of Tanner Health System’s community health/community benefit division, in September 2012, Tanner was awarded a Community Transformation Grant (CTG) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), designed to create community solutions to problems created by chronic disease and their underlying risk factors. The CTG program will guide, advance and accelerate Tanner’s community health strategy, including the implementation of a comprehensive, two-year community health collaborative—‘Get Healthy, Live Well’— that will seek to reach in excess of 150,000 individuals (children, adults and seniors) in Carroll, Haralson and Heard counties through a variety of policy, environmental, programmatic and infrastructure interventions to promote healthier lifestyles.

Over the two-year, ‘Get Healthy, Live Well’ project period, evidence-based community health strategies will be implemented as a coordinated effort spanning multiple sectors (schools, work sites, hospitals and clinics, early childcare centers, faith-based institutions and the wider local community) to achieve both comprehensive and focused population-targeted impact, consisting of interventions aimed at addressing the overarching Healthy People 2020 goals:

- Attain high quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death.
- Achieve health equity, eliminate health disparities, and improve the health of all groups.
- Create healthy and safe physical environments that promote good health for all.
- Promote quality of life, healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Additionally, strategies will align with the National Prevention Strategy’s “Strategic Directions” of: (1) Tobacco-free living; (2) Active Living and Healthy Eating; (3) High Impact Quality Clinical and other Preventive Services; and (4) Healthy and Safe Physical Environments.

'Get Healthy, Live Well' will be steered by a Leadership Council and multiple sub-group Task Forces, who will work together to establish, advance and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life in west Georgia. Guided by a comprehensive action plan, the 'Get Healthy, Live Well' Leadership Council and Task Forces will engage people, ideas and resources across multiple settings to create a synergy of health and prevention efforts that will have a lasting effect on people's health.

Additional efforts by Tanner to further address chronic disease include the expansion of integrated care models which deliver clinical care in tandem with health promotion and disease prevention/management efforts.

➤ **Mental Health**

Mental health is essential to a person's well-being, healthy family and interpersonal relationships and the ability to live a full and productive life. Mental health is important to monitor because it is associated with increased occurrence of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and cancer. Mental illness is also associated with lower use of medical care, reduced adherence to treatment therapies for chronic diseases and higher risks of adverse health outcomes. It has also been reported that rates for both intentional (e.g., homicide, suicide) and unintentional (e.g., motor vehicle) injuries are two to six times higher among people with a mental illness than in the population overall.

Alarming, a large percentage of Georgia's population is affected by poor mental health, while quality services to address those needs are few. Tanner Health System will seek to improve the access and availability of advanced, life-enhancing behavioral health services to people in Georgia's communities through Willowbrooke at Tanner's many programs and services. From Willowbrooke at Tanner's inpatient facility to its many ground-breaking outpatient programs, people throughout Georgia have access to a single source for a vast range of therapies and treatments, allowing for a consistent and reliable system of treatment. Current services that Willowbrooke at Tanner provides will be expanded with the addition of outpatient services in Cartersville, along with the addition of beds to its inpatient unit in Villa Rica. Willowbrooke at Tanner will also continue to work closely with community schools, agencies, service providers and emergency departments to ensure a team approach to ensuring patients get well and stay well.

Needs Not Addressed

Community focus group participants voiced concerns regarding access to dental care services. While not directly addressed in Tanner's Implementation Strategy, Tanner will continue to partner with local dentists and oral surgeons to provide urgent dental care in the health system's emergency departments and clinics, along with working collaboratively with providers, social service and community organizations to promote routine dental care. Tanner also provides financial assistance to a local indigent clinic, the Rapha Clinic, which provides dental care to those without insurance or the means to afford such care.

Implementation Strategy

Access to Care

Improve Access to Care

- **Increase access to convenient care for non-acute issues in the community through development of immediate care centers.**
 - Open an immediate care center in Bremen.
- **Increase access to quality, transitional care rehabilitation services.**
 - Open a Comprehensive Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit (CIPR) at Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton.
 - Continue to promote and provide services through the Swing Bed Program located at Higgins General Hospital.
- **Decrease barriers to care through patient transportation services.**
 - Implement transportation assistance services for Tanner cancer patients, supported through Tanner Medical Foundation's recently established Cancer Patient Transportation fund.
 - Continue to provide indigent patient transportation services to area residents, supported by Tanner Medical Foundation's Indigent Taxi Fund.
- **Increase access to high-quality preventive services in the community (action items noted below under 'Chronic Disease Education, Prevention and Management').**
- **Provide safety net care for the low-income, uninsured individuals in the community.**
 - Continually evaluate financial assistance and self-pay discount policies and practices to ensure optimal access.
 - Continue to provide financial support to local community-based indigent clinics.
 - Develop an operational model for an additional community clinic in the west Georgia region that would be sponsored, in part, by Tanner and increase access to care, provide cost-effective care and establish a financial model of supporting uncompensated care.
- **Support an increase in the number of physicians and healthcare professionals in the region through recruitment and medical education support.**
 - Continue to provide medical and nursing scholarships to students, ensuring Tanner will have a qualified pool of talent available for future recruitment.
 - Continue to recruit highly-skilled medical professionals and specialists to join the healthcare team at Tanner.

- Continue to provide support to local nursing school programs at the University of West Georgia and West Georgia Technical College.
- **Increase access to mental health services in the community (action items noted below under ‘Mental Health’).**

Chronic Disease Education, Prevention and Management

Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use

- **Implement evidence-based strategies to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke and reduce tobacco use among youth and adults.**
 - Support the adoption and implementation of smoke-free policies in the community by providing technical assistance to area companies and organizations.
 - Implement a community-wide education initiative to reduce tobacco use, protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke and promote cessation services.
 - Recruit and train facilitators to lead Fresh Start smoking cessation programs.
 - Provide outreach education in local middle and high schools promoting the health benefits of tobacco-free living, including the implementation of an interactive theatrical play highlighting tobacco-free living.
 - Implement youth focus groups to further identify and respond to needs regarding tobacco use by area youth.

Prevent and Reduce Obesity, Increase Physical Activity and Improve Nutrition

- **Increase accessibility, availability, affordability and identification of healthful foods in the community.**
 - Establish the West Georgia Regional Food System Collaborative to assess local food and agricultural systems and make recommendations for improving food and nutrition environments.
 - Conduct a community-wide food and healthy living assessment.
 - Implement community gardens to increase access to healthy, affordable foods and teach individuals how to grow their own nutritious foods.
 - Promote and expand farmers’ markets as access points to healthy, affordable food, including the addition of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to accept food stamp benefits at the farmers’ markets.

- Recruit and train volunteer culinary and nutrition experts to implement the Cooking Matters program, a cooking-based nutrition education course designed to teach low-income families how to prepare healthy meals on a limited budget.
 - Explore opportunities to partner with local grocery stores, convenience stores and restaurants to highlight healthy food options.
- **Improve nutrition and physical activity practices in schools.**
- Collaborate with the USDA’s HealthierUS School Challenge and the “Take 10” program to promote and improve local school environments related to physical activity and nutrition.
 - Through a regional training event, educate superintendents and other school representatives on wellness policies and programs promoting physical activity and nutrition.
 - Provide support and technical assistance to schools on the implementation of wellness policies and nutrition and exercise programs.
- **Improve nutrition and physical activity practices in early childcare settings.**
- Through a regional training event, educate early childcare providers on wellness policies and programs promoting physical activity and nutrition.
 - Provide support and technical assistance to early childcare providers to enhance wellness program participation and implementation.
- **Improve nutrition and physical activity practices in faith-based institutions.**
- Through a regional training event, educate churches on wellness policies and programs promoting physical activity and nutrition and promote utilization of the Congregational Health Index (CHI), Self Assessment and Planning Guide.
 - Provide support and technical assistance to churches to enhance wellness program participation and implementation.
- **Improve nutrition and physical activity practices in work sites.**
- Through a regional training event, educate companies on wellness policies and programs related to physical activity, nutrition, chronic disease, breastfeeding and tobacco use.
 - Provide support and technical assistance to companies to enhance wellness program participation and implementation.
 - Continue to cultivate a healthier workforce at Tanner through programs like Health Bridge/chronic disease management, health coaching and the Tanner Health Source gyms.
- **Educate the community about policies and practices to support breastfeeding in health care, community, workplaces and learning and childcare settings.**

- Implement a community-wide education initiative about the health benefits of breastfeeding and the link to obesity prevention.
- Encourage organizations to establish policies and programs that support breastfeeding mothers.

➤ **Improve physical activity and nutrition practices throughout the community.**

- Initiate a community-wide education initiative to raise awareness on the importance of physical activity and healthy eating.
- Promote, implement and evaluate a 12-week community-wide weight loss challenge and education program utilizing the Get Healthy West Georgia online exercise and nutrition tracking program. Provide weigh-in stations throughout the community.
- Implement point-of-decision prompts to promote physical activity and the use of stairs. Initiate a community-wide educational initiative for the use of stairs.
- Promote the Get Healthy West Georgia initiative by participating in multiple community events to educate the community about healthy eating (to include community-wide cooking classes), exercise and healthy lifestyles.

Increase Access to and Demand for High-Impact Quality Preventive Services

➤ **Implement systems to improve delivery of clinical preventive services.**

- Implement Educating Physicians in the Communities (EPIC) obesity prevention training for local clinicians.
- Utilize the EPIC program to develop educational materials, including a childhood obesity toolkit, for use in pediatricians' offices.
- Expand the Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) model of care to additional Tanner Medical Group practices to enhance health promotion and disease prevention/management efforts.

➤ **Provide outreach to increase use of clinical preventive services by the population.**

- Implement a community-wide education initiative to "Know Your Numbers" to increase control of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity.
- Tanner's "Mammography on the Move" digital mammography unit to provide mammograms and bone density screenings throughout the community.

➤ **Implement evidence-based strategies for the early detection, prevention and management of diabetes in the community.**

- Implement community-wide trainings on the National Diabetes Prevention Program.
- Initiate a community-wide education initiative to increase diabetes prevention awareness.

- Implement a diabetes peer support program to provide ongoing diabetes self-management support to residents with diabetes.

Improve the Community Environment to Support Health

➤ Educate the community about comprehensive approaches to improve community design to enhance walking and bicycling and active transportation.

- Partner with the Friends of the Carrollton Greenbelt to promote sections of the Greenbelt as they are opened (completion of 16 mile trail scheduled for 2016).
- Develop a comprehensive region-wide listing of play areas and walking trails to be included on the Get Healthy West Georgia website: www.GetHealthyWestGeorgia.org.
- Promote existing well-lit and well-maintained walking trails in the community.
- Develop an analysis of play and exercise spaces in and around housing authority areas. Provide technical assistance to ensure adequate play and exercise spaces in these areas.
- Implement a regional Complete Streets workshop to educate community leaders on the addition of complete streets strategies to improve community design to enhance walking, bicycling and active transportation.

➤ Improve the community environment to support healthy eating practices and increase the accessibility, availability, affordability and identification of healthful foods.

- Partner with local farmers to implement farm tours, promote farmers' markets and educate the community on sustainable agricultural practices.
- Implement community gardens to increase access to healthy, affordable foods and teach individuals how to grow their own nutritious foods.
- Implement community-wide cooking classes.
- Continue to use locally-grown foods in Tanner's cafeterias.

Promote Shared Ownership of Community Health

➤ Continually develop and engage collaborative partnerships at the local, regional, statewide and national levels to further identify, implement and evaluate strategies to address factors that contribute to chronic disease and the overall health of the community.

- Engage the multi-sector 'Get Healthy, Live Well' Leadership Team and Task Force members to work together to establish, advance and maintain effective strategies that continuously improve health and quality of life in the community.

- Implement an annual Community Health Summit to provide a forum to discuss and share successes and challenges regarding community health improvement activities and to inspire individuals and community partners to take a proactive role in improving community health.
- Continue to build community capacity through the identification of: community assets; local, state and national partners; and experts in the field of community health improvement—all of which can be mobilized to address health-related problems and environmental factors that contribute to health risks.

Mental Health

Promote Mental Health

- **Increase access to mental health services in the community.**
 - Expand the capacity of Willowbrooke at Tanner’s inpatient unit in Villa Rica through the addition of 30 beds.
 - Evaluate substance abuse programs in the community to improve the current delivery of services to address this growing need.
 - Continue to implement innovative therapies at Willowbrooke at Tanner, including equine therapy, art therapy, drumming therapy and pet therapy.
- **Strengthen the linkage and referral system between mental health providers and other service organizations.**
 - Continue to collaborate and communicate with local service agencies, such as area Juvenile/Truancy Courts, Department of Family and Children services, Department of Juvenile Justice, physician offices, schools, etc. to further identify and respond to gaps in mental health services in the community.
 - Continue to educate healthcare professionals about mental health patient needs, offering continuing education credits in the areas of mental health treatment and related issues.
- **Reduce stigma of mental illness in the community.**
 - Increase community awareness of the available behavioral health services and programs offered by Willowbrooke at Tanner through continued educational media initiatives and community outreach efforts.

