

# Strategic Plan



Northern Counties  
HEALTH CARE



*Step by Step*

4/01/26-3/31/29

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**Caledonia  
Home Health  
Care & Hospice**

**Concord  
Health  
Center**

**Danville  
Health  
Center**

**Hardwick  
Area  
Health Center**

**Island Pond  
Health &  
Dental Center**

**Northern  
Counties  
Dental Center**

**Northern  
Express Care  
Newport**

**Northern  
Express Care  
St. Johnsbury**

**Orleans  
Dental  
Center**

**St. Johnsbury  
Community  
Health Center**

# Introduction

Across the nation—and especially in regions like Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, rural health care continues to face extraordinary pressures: Workforce shortages, rising costs, shifting regulations, and increasing patient needs are placing unprecedented strain on providers and communities. At the same time, the expectations of patients and families are evolving, and the pathway to long-term financial stability is becoming more challenging. Yet amid this uncertainty, Northern Counties Health Care (NCHC) remains steadfast in our mission of providing high-quality, compassionate, community-centered care.

Over the past several years, NCHC has worked diligently to strengthen our organization for the future. We serve more individuals than at any point in our history—over 40% of residents in one of Vermont's most medically underserved regions. This growth is a testament to the trust of our patients, the commitment of our partners, and the dedication of our staff. It also underscores the essential role we play in the health and wellbeing of the Northeast Kingdom.

This Strategic Plan is grounded in deep listening and careful analysis. It reflects the voices of our communities through the Community Health Needs Assessment; the insight of our Board, management team and staff; and a clear-eyed assessment of our strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Together, this process revealed three priority need domains for the region: Behavioral Health, Access to Care and Services, and Health-Related Social Needs; alongside a shared understanding that the next three years will require stability, resilience, and thoughtful decision-making.

In this environment, NCHC is aiming to take the stress out of the system and creating a sustainable, predictable foundation while innovating where it is responsible and achievable. Our Touchstones of **Sustainability**, **Trust**, **Excellence**, and **Patient Experience** will guide us each **STEP** of the way.

We believe in the resilience of our region and in the extraordinary people who make NCHC what it is. Guided by our mission and vision to reimagine and transform health care by empowering people and elevating communities, we will continue working to ensure that every person in the Northeast Kingdom has access to coordinated, high-quality care that meets their needs.

We invite you to join us in this next chapter of our journey. **Step by Step**, together, we will build a healthier future for the individuals, families, and communities we serve.

*Louisa Driscoll*  
Louisa Driscoll  
NCHC Board President

*Christopher Towne*  
Christopher Towne  
NCHC Chief Executive Officer



# Background

This strategic plan is the culmination of nearly two years of work between leaders from across our regional health system, in collaboration with our Board and Senior Leadership Team.

In January 2024, the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) Coordinated Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Steering Committee was established to lead the region's first collaborative CHNA process. Between February and May, extensive secondary data analysis occurred. Primary data collection approaches were developed and implemented between April and August. Between September 2024 and June 2025, the final CHNA draft report was developed and then approved by the Steering Committee in July.

From July through September 2025, NCHC's Strategic Planning Committee performed additional secondary data collection and analysis to take into account recently updated publicly available data as well as key internal data. The Strategic Planning Committee developed and distributed additional surveys for Board and staff members, and then pulled all data together for collective analysis and prioritization by NCHC's Senior Leadership Team and Board of Directors at a full day Strategic Planning retreat on September 19, 2025.

This retreat provided the Strategic Planning Committee the foundation for revalidating our Values, updating our Mission and Vision Statements, aligning around four Strategic Goals and accompanying priorities and broad metrics for success over the next three fiscal years.





# Strategic Plan

## GOALS

### *Advance* **SUSTAINABILITY**

Exercise responsible stewardship of resources

### *Cultivate* **TRUST**

Promote communication, transparency, and alignment for strengthened relationships with patients, staff and communities

### *Promote* **EXCELLENCE**

Foster a culture of continuous improvement, quality, and innovation through strong partnerships and shared learning

### *Improve* **PATIENT EXPERIENCE**

Assure access to coordinated, high-quality care that meets community needs, reduces barriers, and improves health and well-being

## PRIORITIES

Diversify and stabilize revenue resources

Optimize operational performance and resource management

Stabilize workforce

Increase organizational accountability

Develop leadership and management capacity

Ensure care delivery reflects reliability, respect and responsiveness to patients' needs and preferences

Advance clinical practice and quality

Expand data-informed decision making

Establish a structured workforce development and education framework

Assess priority gaps in care

Enhance patient engagement

Ensure personalized care that meets each individual's needs and circumstances

## METRICS



**Financial health**



**Recruitment and retention**



**Employee engagement and experience**



**Patient satisfaction**



**Employee engagement and experience**



**Health outcomes**



**Access**



**Patient satisfaction**



**Health outcomes**

# Values

**MUTUAL RESPECT AND TRUST** – working together and providing care that respects every individual's dignity, privacy, and culture.

**EXCELLENCE** – investing in our most valuable asset, our employees, is crucial to delivering high quality care.

**TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION** – working within NCHC and with community partners to provide a continuum of health care and social support.

**STEWARDSHIP AND SPIRIT OF SERVICE** – serving our communities with integrity and intention in all our interactions.

**RESILIENCE** – approaching every challenge as an opportunity to pursue creative solutions, achieve financial sustainability, and deepen our resolve.





**To reimagine and transform  
health care by  
empowering people and  
elevating communities**

**Guided by compassion and  
driven by excellence,  
we provide high-quality,  
accessible  
community-centered care**



**Vision**



**Mission**



# Strategic Goal #1

## *Advance* **SUSTAINABILITY**

Exercise responsible stewardship of resources

### **Priorities**

- Diversify and stabilize revenue sources
- Optimize operational performance and resource management
- Stabilize workforce



### **Measuring success**

- ✓ Financial health
- ✓ Recruitment and retention







# Strategic Goal #2

## **Cultivate TRUST**

Promote communication, transparency, and alignment for strengthened relationships with patients, staff, and our communities

### **Priorities**

- Increase organizational accountability
- Develop leadership and management capacity
- Ensure care delivery reflects reliability, respect, and responsiveness to patients' needs and preferences



### **Measuring success**

- ✓ Employee engagement and experience
- ✓ Patient Satisfaction

# Strategic Goal #3

## Promote EXCELLENCE

Foster a culture of continuous improvement, quality, and innovation through strong partnerships and shared learning

### Priorities

- Advance clinical practice and quality
- Expand data-informed decision making
- Establish a structured workforce development and education framework



### Measuring success

- ✓ Employee engagement and experience
- ✓ Health outcomes







# Strategic Goal #4

## *Improve* **PATIENT EXPERIENCE**

Assure access to coordinated, high-quality care that meets community needs, reduces barriers, and improves health and wellbeing

### **Priorities**

- Assess priority gaps in care
- Enhance patient engagement
- Ensure personalized care that meets each individual's needs and circumstances



### **Measuring success**

- ✓ **Access**
- ✓ **Patient satisfaction**
- ✓ **Health outcomes**

# Thank You

On behalf of the Northern Counties Health Care Strategic Planning Committee, we would like to thank the hundreds of community members, staff, and partners from across our regional and State health system who contributed their voice, expertise, excitement, and ideas to the process of creating our community health needs assessment, and this subsequent strategic plan. This plan reflects the insight, dedication, and heart each of you brought to the process. Your unwavering commitment to our patients, our mission, and to one another inspires us every day. We are truly grateful—and excited to move forward together as we put this plan into action.



Sung-Hee Chung, Board Secretary and Strategic Planning Committee Co- Chair



Adrienne Hutchin, Board Vice President and Strategic Planning Committee Co- Chair



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