

TriHealth and bi3  
Butler County Needs Assessment  
**Final Report**

November 2023



C H Smith & Associates, LLC dba Scale Strategic  
TriHealth and bi3

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# Needs Assessment Overview

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TriHealth and bi3 engaged Scale Strategic Solutions, and its collaborators, Strategik513 and DEEP Consultants, to conduct a needs assessment for Butler County, Ohio. The goals of the study were to:

- Create a detailed assessment of health and healthcare needs for Butler County.
- Recommend strategies for TriHealth to improve access to healthcare and address health disparities in the county.
- Identify community organizations and groups for future engagement in the county.
- Develop an equity-focused action plan.

TriHealth and bi3 will use the needs assessment to inform their healthcare access and delivery strategy in the county.

## Methodology

The needs assessment was conducted in two phases. Phase One focused on a review of quantitative data on health in Butler County. The research team mined existing public health data sets such as previous community health needs assessment: the 2023 Bulter County Public Health Community Survey; the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Places Data, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), and Social Vulnerability Index; Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Medically underserved area designations; National Center for Health Statistics; Mapping Medicare Disparities Tool; and County Health Rankings. Proprietary data for TriHealth were also incorporated into the study. A June 2023 one-page summary of the initial quantitative findings is in Appendix A.

Based on the findings in Phase One, the research team conducted a second phase focused on a review of best practices in the field and qualitative data. Community health improvement plans of local hospitals were reviewed. Preliminary research on emerging practices in the field were also incorporated in the analysis. One focus group of four (4) Tri-Health social service workers and eight (8) interviews with community professionals were held in August and September 2023. The research team also hosted two community forums. The first forum was held on September 18, 2023, in Middletown and had thirty (30) attendees. Seventeen (17) people attended the second forum on October 8, 2023, in the city of Hamilton.

The transcripts from the interviews, focus groups, and forums; community forum flipcharts; and individual notes from community forums were thematically coded. Please note that the qualitative phase includes a sample of voices from the total priority population. Forum members self-selected to be a part of the study and may not be representative of the county. The quantitative and qualitative data are to be considered as a starting point for informed community engagement for implementation of the selected strategy. A written summary of

the interviews was produced in September 2023. The focus group and community forum data, along with the interview information, are included in this final report.

A steering committee consisting of representatives from key community stakeholders was involved in reviewing the data after each phase. The committee provided preliminary insights to shape additional areas of inquiry. Committee members also offered greater context and considerations based on the data. They also facilitated connections to other community leaders and assets, and additional data sources to contribute to the study. The list of steering committee members is in Appendix B.

As culminating resources, Scale Strategic Solutions, DEEP Consultants, and Strategik513 have produced this final report and an action guide. The final report will serve as a detailed summary of the needs assessment and its findings. The action guide is a practical, focused document to support TriHealth and bi3 in transitioning into implementation. Please find the Action Guide in Appendix C.

# Butler County Needs Assessment Findings

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## County Demographics

Butler County, Ohio is home to 388,420 residents.<sup>1</sup> Demographic data are to be considered in evaluating approaches to health equity. The major cities with populations over 40,000 people are Hamilton, Middletown, and Fairfield.

According to 2022 US Census Bureau data, 81.8% of the population identifies as White, 10.2% as Black or African American, and 4.7% as Asian. Middletown has a higher proportion of African American residents (11.4%) compared to the county percentage, and Fairfield has a higher representation of African American (15.8%) and Asian residents (5.6%). People of two or more races, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders make up the remaining 3.3% of the population. Residents of a Hispanic or Latinx ethnicity comprise 5.7% of the county population: 8.5% of Hamilton residents; 7.1% of Fairfield residents; and 4.6% of Middletown residents.

Age distribution in the cities and countywide are comparable. Butler County residents over the age of 65 years are 16.2% of residents while people under the age of 18 years are 23.1% of the population.

Median household income in Butler County between 2017-2021 in 2021 dollars was \$72,281.<sup>2</sup> However, select cities within the county have a substantially lower median household income. The median household income is \$41,749 for Oxford (a college town), \$47,116 for Middletown, \$50,034 for Hamilton, and \$63,418 for Fairfield. Middletown has the highest percentage of residents living in poverty at 20.4%. Hamilton has 16.4% of its population living in poverty while Fairfield is at 7.1%. Butler County overall is at 11.6% for percentage of persons in poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, July), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/butlercountyohio/PST045222>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, (2022, July). <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/butlercountyohio/PST045222>

## Social Determinants of Health

Economic conditions and other factors within the county impact the social determinants of health. The social vulnerability index is one indicator to pinpoint the disparities and needs. The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) helps to identify areas that may need additional resources to thrive. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) uses United States Census information to calculate the social vulnerability index on four key themes comprised of a total of 16 social factors. The four key themes include socio-economic status; household characteristics; minoritized status; and housing type and transportation access.

The score ranges from 0-1 (0 is lowest vulnerability to 1 which is the highest vulnerability). A review of the 2020 Butler County data indicates that while the overall county score was .5862, Middletown, Hamilton, Fairfield, and Oxford census tracts have the highest SVI scores.

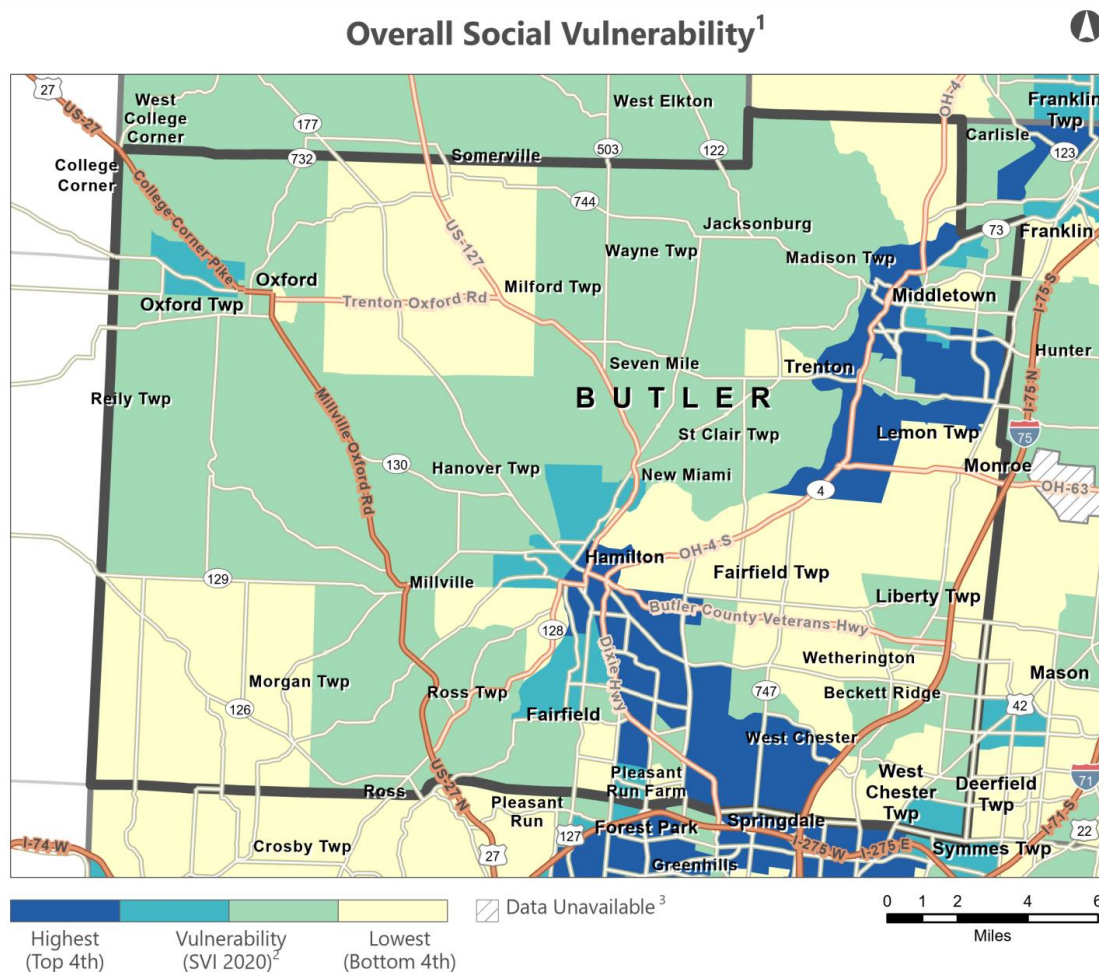


Figure 1: Social Vulnerability Index Map for Butler County, Ohio, 2020. Source: [https://svi.cdc.gov/Documents/CountyMaps/2020/Ohio/Ohio2020\\_Butler.pdf](https://svi.cdc.gov/Documents/CountyMaps/2020/Ohio/Ohio2020_Butler.pdf)

## Transportation

Access to reliable transportation can promote health equity and reduce health disparities by providing access to needed primary and specialty services, as well as healthier food options. The lack of reliable and timely public transportation options emerged as a major issue in Butler County. The interviews, focus group, and community forums mentioned the challenge of transportation multiple times and provided context to the transportation dilemma. The following quote highlights the distinction between Butler County and services available at a TriHealth hospital in Hamilton County.

*“Transportation is huge. When I came here, I came from Good Sam [located in Hamilton County], so we just had bus tokens. You come here [Butler County], there's absolutely nothing. So, these patients were just like, you got to find somebody to pick you up.”- Social Worker Focus Group*

The Middletown forum discussed the twelve (12) rides-per-year limit that patients on Medicaid or Medicare can receive, but that is not enough for many patients with chronic conditions. The rides may also have additional passengers which extends the duration of the road trips to the doctor, and some of those trips are to doctors in Cincinnati or Dayton areas. The Butler County Transit Authority offers transportation in the county, but it has specified routes that are not always convenient to access care.

Residents have shown interest in ridesharing apps, but they noted that the cost for rideshare services are expensive.

## Housing

The lack of affordable housing and increasing number of homeless residents also creates health inequities. Community members and professionals see up-close the relationship of housing availability and affordability to health disparities.

*“If people don't feel safe and have a stable environment, all the treatment I can provide in the world isn't going to make as much of an impact if they haven't got somewhere safe to go. So, I would say housing is number one.” -Interview of Professional*

Housing insecurities cause major stress and may prohibit individuals from focusing on their health and healthcare:

*“Some of our moms are living with family members, are homeless or don't know where they're going, they're [living] couch to couch. And if they're pregnant or have a newborn, that's hard. That's what you wake up to every day, you're thinking about, 'Where are we going to lay our head at tonight?’” -Social Worker Focus Group*

Opposition to housing serving people with mental health needs or low-income households is also a barrier to improving the housing stock. This came up in the community forum in Hamilton and in an interview with a healthcare professional:

*“We have a whole division for mental health housing. The problem is in Butler County even if an organization would like to add more housing, they're facing the issues with NIMBY, “The Not In My Backyard Issue”, or especially in the city of Hamilton, there's a revitalization happening, similar to what they did with Over the Rhine years ago. That's happening in downtown Hamilton. And even though it's a city that's rich with resources and easier transportation, they don't want any of that stuff coming in. They don't want recovery housing; they don't want low-income housing.” -Interview of Professional*

Health systems are getting more involved in addressing housing insecurity because of its impact on health. Bon Secours Mercy Health has established an affordable housing trust fund to offer low interest loans for low-to-moderate income households.

### More Social Drivers Impacting Health

Additional elements, such as undocumented status and food access, are social determinants of health which emerged as priorities throughout the needs assessment process that are not factored in the SVI. An estimated 6,600 undocumented immigrants<sup>3</sup> were living in Butler County as of 2018. Those individuals have difficulty accessing care due to financial constraints, lack of understanding of the American healthcare system, stigma, and fears of deportation. The CDC's Places data, shown below, highlights the challenges of food access in the county, which can be a significant contributor to health disparities.

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<sup>3</sup> New Americans in Butler County Brief 2021, [https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/NAE\\_GTCN\\_Butler\\_Brief\\_2021.pdf](https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/NAE_GTCN_Butler_Brief_2021.pdf)



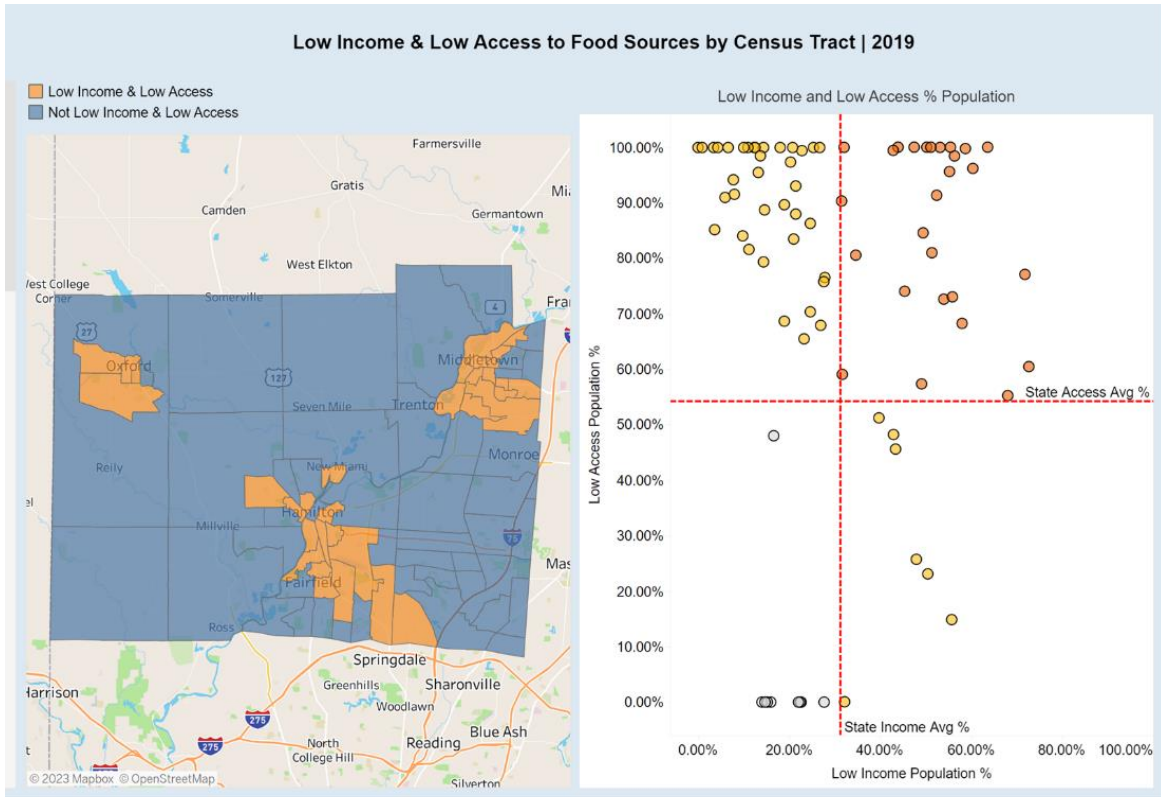


Figure 2: Low Food Access and Low-Income Status by Census Tract for Butler County, 2019. Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/places/index.html>

Once again Middletown, Hamilton, and parts of Fairfield and Oxford have the greatest vulnerability as indicated above.

## Access

Many health systems have a presence in the county. Hospitals in Butler County include:

- Cincinnati Children’s Hospital- Liberty Campus
- The Christ Hospital Medical Center- Liberty Township
- UC Health – West Chester
- Mercy Health- Fairfield
- Kettering Health- Hamilton
- TriHealth Bethesda Butler
- McCoullough-Hyde Memorial Hospital

In addition, Kettering Health- Middletown and Premier Health’s Atrium Medical Center, operate hospitals in Middletown adjacent to the Butler County border. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) operate in the county, including Primary Health Solutions, provide primary care, preventive healthcare, oral, dental and mental health services regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

While many health systems offer services in Butler County, access needs exist. There are significant specialty access needs due to a limited number of available specialists who are both open to new patients and/or accept all insurances, including Medicaid.

### Provider Availability

The 2023 Community Survey conducted by the Butler County Health Department found that 17.5% of respondents from the City of Middletown, 11.8% from the City of Hamilton, and 11.4% for the Butler County Public Health Service area overall, disagree with the statement “I have a care provider that I can see in a timely manner for routine care and unexpected issues.”<sup>4</sup>

Because of the limited number of providers in the county, Hamilton residents in the study reported going south for care in Hamilton County/Cincinnati, and Middletown residents in the study discussed care in both Dayton and Cincinnati. This was discussed in community forums, interviews, and the focus group. An example is highlighted here:

*“They wanted a primary doctor, but they couldn't afford to drive up [To Dayton]. She said, ‘And the problem is, if we go and accept that appointment up in Dayton, then we have to stay with that office in Dayton.’”-Social Worker Focus Group*

An analysis of Tri-Health primary care providers for the Butler Market, performed by the Chartis Group, found that thirteen TriHealth primary care providers were accepting new patients, but most had a wait time of two weeks or more for a first-time appointment.<sup>5</sup> The Chartis analysis also identified nine specialties with limited access in Butler County:

- Bariatric Medicine
- Cardiology
- Podiatry
- Physical medicine and rehabilitation
- Pulmonology
- Urogynecology
- Neurology
- Pain
- Dermatology

Stakeholders who spoke with the Scale research team as a part of the qualitative study wanted more access to specialists in psychiatry, neurology, obstetrics, oncology, gerontology, radiology, and endocrinology.

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<sup>4</sup> Butler County Public Health (2023, May)

<sup>5</sup> Data provided to Chartis Group via Jason Schwartz, Brad Hall, Physician Roster, PCP Access in Butler Submarket, EPIC Next available appointment reports, MGMA benchmarks

County ratios of residents per health provider (regardless of health system) are higher than the state and national averages as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Ratio of residents to providers. Source: County Health Rankings, <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/ohio/butler?year=2023>

Clinical Care Providers	Butler County	Ohio	United States
<b>Primary Care Physicians (2020)</b>	1,850:1	1,290:1	1,310:1
<b>Dentists (2021)</b>	1,930:1	1,550:1	1,380:1
<b>Mental Health Providers (2022)</b>	370:1	330:1	340:1

While the County Health Rankings data may appear to have a reasonable ratio of mental health providers to residents, this is not the practical experience—particularly for psychiatric providers and in-patient mental and behavioral health, according to the statements in community forums, the focus group, and interviews with professionals.

*“Most providers have a very long wait list, or if you call a local provider to get in to maybe let's say, get some medication for your anxiety or depression, it might be a three to six month wait until you can be seen for that initial appointment.” -Interview of Professional*

Butler County Public Health reference data from the 2021-2022 Health Resources Files that shows there are 5.13 psychiatric Doctor of Medicine (MDs) per 100,000 residents in Butler County compared to an Ohio ratio of 10.04 psychiatric MDs per 100,000 Ohioans. There are 0.51 psychiatric Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.s) per 100,000 Butler County residents compared to 0.87 per 100,000 at the state level. The number of psychiatric providers in the county would need to double to meet the ratios at the state level. This reinforces the statements heard in the community for greater mental health access, especially for psychiatric conditions.

Stakeholders are also concerned about shortages in healthcare staff overall, including staffing in nursing facilities and availability of home health aides. These statements were shared in the community forums:

*“ [Nursing and rehabilitation facilities] contract their staff... so there’s a lack of continuity here because people who come in who’ve never been there before, see you a day, and they ain’t coming back. .... And they’ll not know the patients and them not knowing the patients, they don’t know what to look for. And so, there are things that get missed and the patient suffers the consequences whereas if you go someplace where the staff are employed by that place, they work there on a regular basis, they know the clients, they know the patients.” – Community Forum*

*“The whole home health aide thing is also atrocious. -Because you can’t find one. Because it’s a cutthroat world. Those that are of quality are in high demand. And you find your elderly, your loved ones being taken care of fairly haphazard[ly] or family being worn out because of what it takes.”– Community Forum*

The professionals are also feeling the pinch of staffing shortages and turnover. Healthcare organizations and the professionals in those organizations are suffering from problems with retaining staff because of burnout and finding replacements to those that leave:

*“I think that the primary challenges that I have experienced, and I would say experienced firsthand and by talking to other folks is burnout, if I have to give it one term.... it's been generally harder to hire people, harder to keep people who might be new hires...”- Interview of Professional*

### Payer Mix, Insurance Coverage, and Costs

Americans are facing challenges affording healthcare. Even when insured, Americans spent an average of \$1,763 out-of-pocket before hitting their deductible in 2022<sup>6</sup>. National Survey data indicates that forty-three percent (43%) of working age adults were “under” insured in 2022. Forty-six percent (46%) surveyed indicated they delayed or skipped care as a result of concerns regarding ability to pay for care<sup>7</sup>.

Community survey data indicates that 54.6% of Butler County residents have private insurance through their employers. Medicare and Medicaid are the next two largest payers. TriHealth specific payer data for Butler County for inpatient care indicates Medicare HMO and traditional Medicare as the highest payers with 29.4% and 24.3% respectively. Outpatient payer mix indicates that Medicaid HMO is the largest payer at 36.7% followed by private payer insurance (26.8%) and Medicare HMO (12.3%).

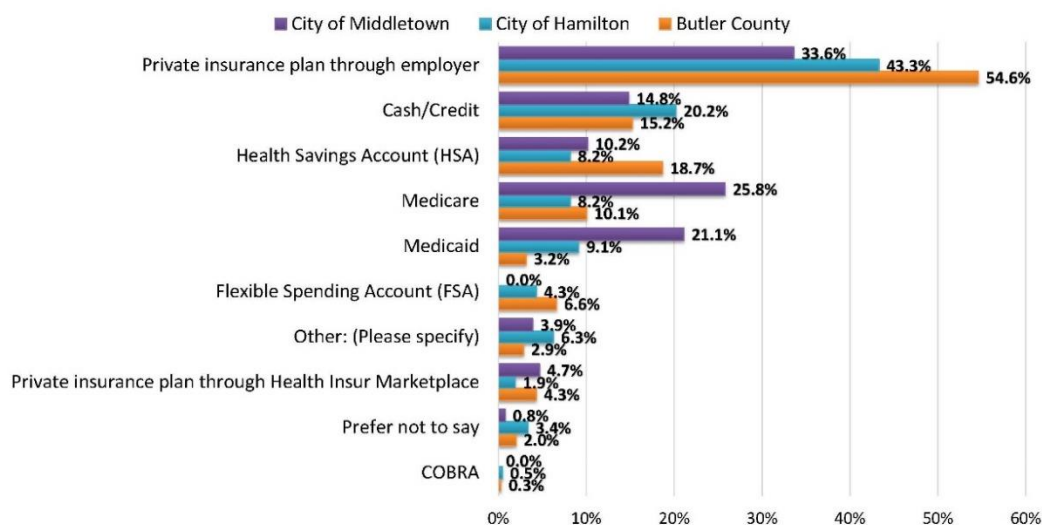
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<sup>6</sup> KFF analysis of National Health Expenditure (NHF) data. (2021), [https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-spending-healthcare-changed-time/#Local%20and%20federal%20expenditures%20on%20public%20health,%20US%20\\$Billions,%201970-2021](https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-spending-healthcare-changed-time/#Local%20and%20federal%20expenditures%20on%20public%20health,%20US%20$Billions,%201970-2021)

<sup>7</sup> The Commonwealth Fund, The State of U.S. Health Insurance. (2022), <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2022/sep/state-us-health-insurance-2022-biennial-survey>

# How Survey Respondents Pay for Health Care

## 2023 Community Survey Results



Community Survey, May 4, 2023

Figure 3: Survey responses on how Butler County residents pay for health care, 2023. Source: Butler County Public Health 2023 Community Survey. Butler County Stakeholders in the interviews, focus group, and forums conducted by the Scale research team discussed the complex system of medical insurance coverage and the cost of care. The quote below shows the intersection of cost and coverage barrier

*“If the insurance is high, the medication is high, and your copay is high, and so you’re not going [to the doctor]. And then, the limited insurance options. So, if you have Medicaid or Medicare insurance but if that doctor leaves or is full, it’s hard for you to find a doctor somewhere else to be able to fit your needs.” –Community Forum*

Those with Medicaid or Medicare often have a hard time finding providers that will accept this insurance. The focus group of social workers shared an example where a Butler County woman had to be referred to assisted living in Cincinnati because there were no Medicaid assisted living waivers available in Butler County. They also talked about how they could not arrange a therapist appointment because the available therapist did not take the specific insurance coverage. One focus group member said:

*“Having to rely on Medicaid for [mental health] therapy means you’re not going to get therapy.”-Social Worker Focus Group*

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, nationally 4 out of 10 adults have delayed care due to cost and 27% of prescription abandonment is a result of cost challenges. People with private or public insurance coverage may also have difficulty paying the co-pay or are experiencing delays in care. A community member shared this:

*“If you have to go to a specialist and you want to go, and they want to charge you \$35. And then some people don’t have \$35. It’s happened to me when I had to have surgery*

*and they were like you need to get this done. If you don't pay this amount of money, they weren't going to do the surgery." -Community Forum*

Health systems are working creatively to alleviate the financial burdens on patients. Referrals to charitable pharmacies, such as St. Vincent DePaul's Charitable Pharmacy, are prominent to help patients with low-incomes receive no-cost prescription medication.

Premier Health has started a community health voucher program to help patients cover the costs of treatment of breast and cervical cancer.

## Telehealth

While lack of transportation, limited provider availability, and insurance gaps can be barriers to healthcare access, a strategy that became more prominent during the pandemic to expand access was telehealth.

*"Yeah, being here in Oxford, in the corner of the county and considered a rural part of the county, access to specialty care is definitely a need. And so, I would say, opportunities for assistance with transportation is definitely something, access to private areas with good internet for telehealth access. It's also another wonderful way to access healthcare if somebody can't physically get there. I would say the transportation piece is the biggest barrier, and then telehealth's a way to overcome it as well." -Social Worker Focus Group*

Telehealth was mentioned as a welcome solution for some sectors of the community. However, for those that lack access to quiet spaces, internet, or technological know-how, the value of telehealth was in doubt.

*"For a lot of these folks in nursing homes or in assisted living, it's difficult. They don't get out to go see a provider. And telehealth, although telehealth helps, that's not their preferred method of communication." -Interview of Professional*

Based on practices in the field and suggestions from those who participated in the qualitative study, telehealth is best delivered when a patient can go to a community hub near their home and access care from a location with reliable technology and support from community navigators.

## Community Health Workers

Another more consistently proven strategy is deploying community health workers (CHWs). Kettering Health Hamilton and Mercy Fairfield have prioritized the use of community health workers in their community health improvement plans.

Several other community organizations are coordinating and deploying community health workers. Community First Solutions is embedding CHWs in emergency rooms in a hospital to connect patients with mental health and substance use disorder needs to support resources for recovery. Butler County Educational Service Centers has utilized CHWs focused on maternal health and infant vitality, and the county has seen a reduction of the African American infant mortality rate by 63.58% over six years.

### Health Conditions, Diagnoses and Treatment

The access to care and services must be aligned to the most prevalent diagnoses as well as the conditions with the direst outcomes.

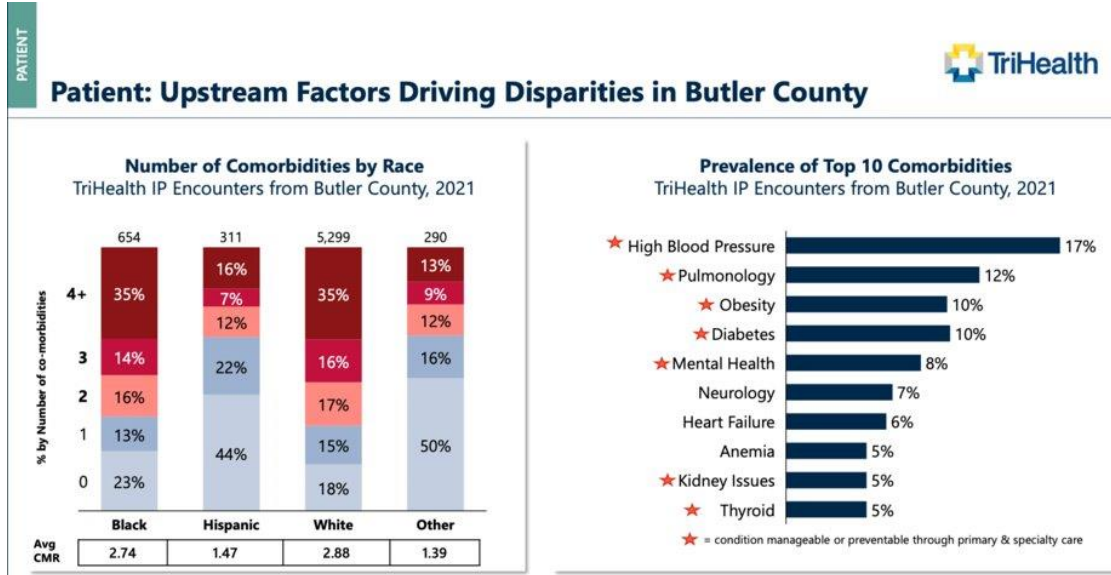
For TriHealth in Butler County, the most prevalent diagnoses were cancer, type 2 diabetes, and infant deliveries. Reaction to severe stress was not in the top five but its numbers doubled from 2021-2022. See the table below.

Table 2: Trends in Diagnoses in TriHealth Facilities in Butler County, Source: TriHealth

Rank in Volume	Diagnosis Code	Count, 2020	Count, 2021	Count, 2022
1	ENC SCREENING MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS	3,892	4,506	4,781
2	TYPE 2 DIABETES MELLITUS	3,420	3,854	4,275
3	LIVEBRN INFNT ACCRD PLACE BRTH&TYPE	4,256	4,165	4,210
12	REACTION SEVERE STRESS & ADJUST D/O	323	889	1,651

TriHealth patients in Butler County also have a high number of co-morbidities. White and Black communities are 35% of the patients with 4+ co-morbidities. The top co-morbidity in the region is high blood pressure. See the figure below.

Table 3: Number of Comorbidities by Race and Prevalence of Co-Morbidities for TriHealth Inpatient Encounters in Butler County, Source: Chartis Group courtesy of TriHealth



TriHealth facilities in Butler County have a significantly high number of preventable inpatient stays with 4,740 per 100,000 whereas Ohio has 4,338 per 100,000. Nationally it is 3,767 per 100,000. TriHealth-specific Emergency Department rates are greater than 50% in Butler County across all races. Problems with access to lower acuity services in other categories may be leading to higher emergency department visits.

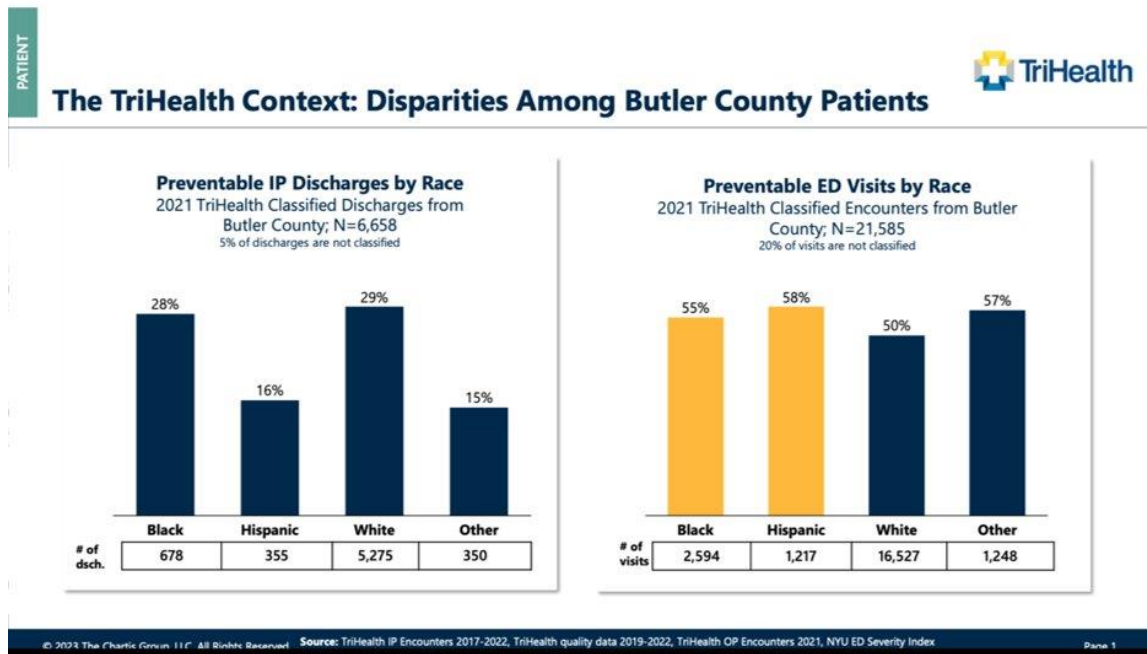


Figure 4: Preventable inpatient stay discharges and preventable emergency department visits by race in TriHealth Butler County facilities, Source: Chartis Group



The service data within Butler County for Tri-Health can be further understood with complementary external data on the most common conditions and services.

## Cancer

The most common cancers in the county are prostate, breast, lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, and uterine.<sup>8</sup> Prostate cancer rates are rising significantly whereas other cancer rates in the top five are declining or relatively steady.

Cancer is the only top condition that does not mirror the social vulnerability index patterns. People throughout the county are affected. See the chart below:

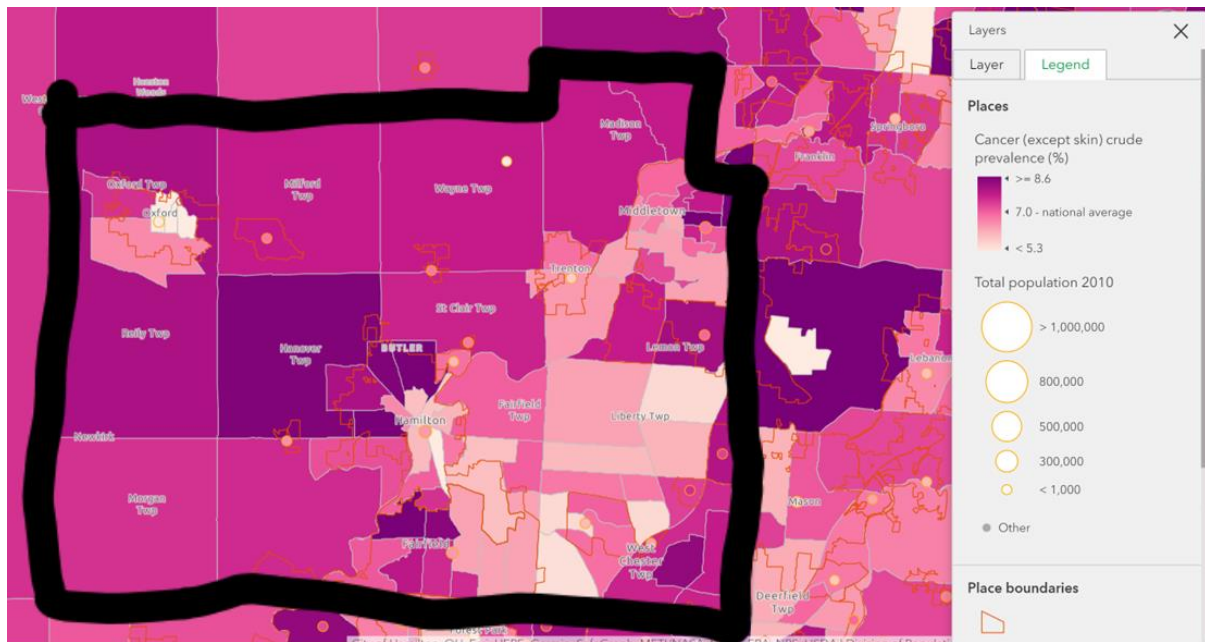


Figure 5: Cancer prevalence in Butler County by census tract, Source: CDC Places Data, 2020

## Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 Diabetes is the second most common diagnosis and is in the top three of comorbidity conditions. Its prevalence follows closely the patterns in the social vulnerability index with greater concentrations in Middletown census tracts but with lower representation in Oxford. Food access issues can exacerbate diabetes management. One professional suggested a greater focus on food as medicine to address diabetes.

*“Actually, food as medicine would be probably the most important thing. The reason I say that is because we’ve got some excellent clinicians that do work with our diabetic*

<sup>8</sup> Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Public Health Information Warehouse. 2016-2020 data set. These data were provided by the Ohio Department of Health. The Department specifically disclaims responsibility for any analysis, interpretations, or conclusions.

patients, but the support they need is not just medicine. It is truly lifestyle changes and being able to get the right foods. So, in my perfect world, we would have access to prescribing foods for patients.”-Interview of Professional

A health professional interviewed during the needs assessment process also highlighted the need for endocrinologist:

“I think that the thing that we're probably missing is endocrinologists. And I think that the entire community is short on endocrinologists. There's a few people out there that really need that support from the specialists. And that's very difficult to get.”-Interview of Professional

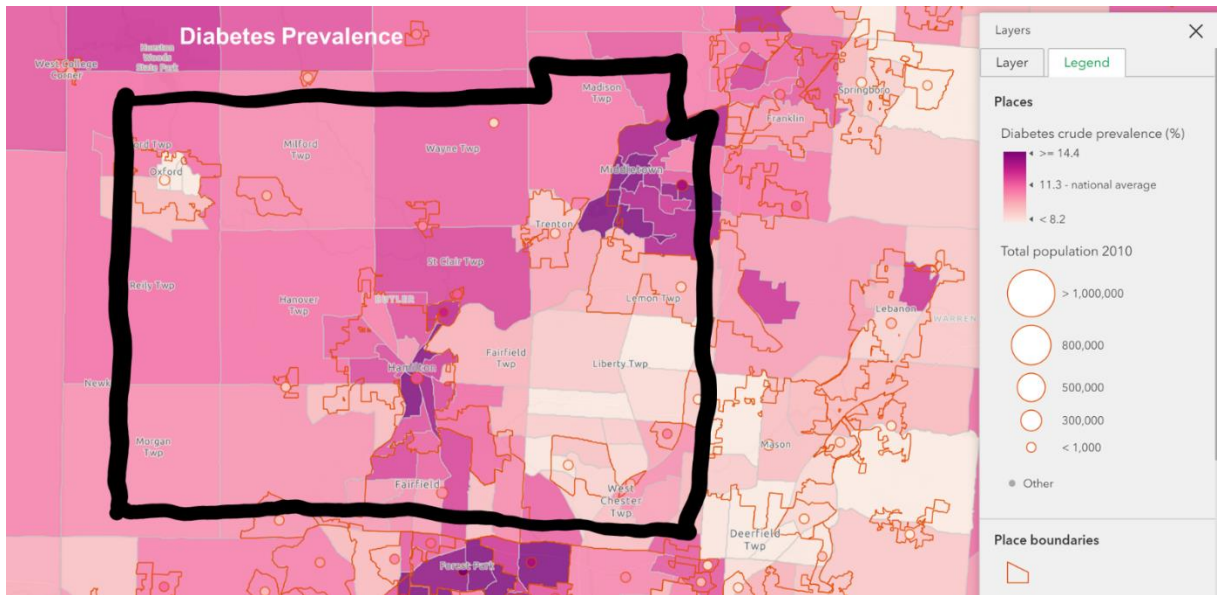


Figure 6: Diabetes Prevalence in Butler County by census tract, Source: CDC Places Data, 2020

## High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is the top co-morbidity and again, has patterns similar to the Type 2 diabetes prevalence.

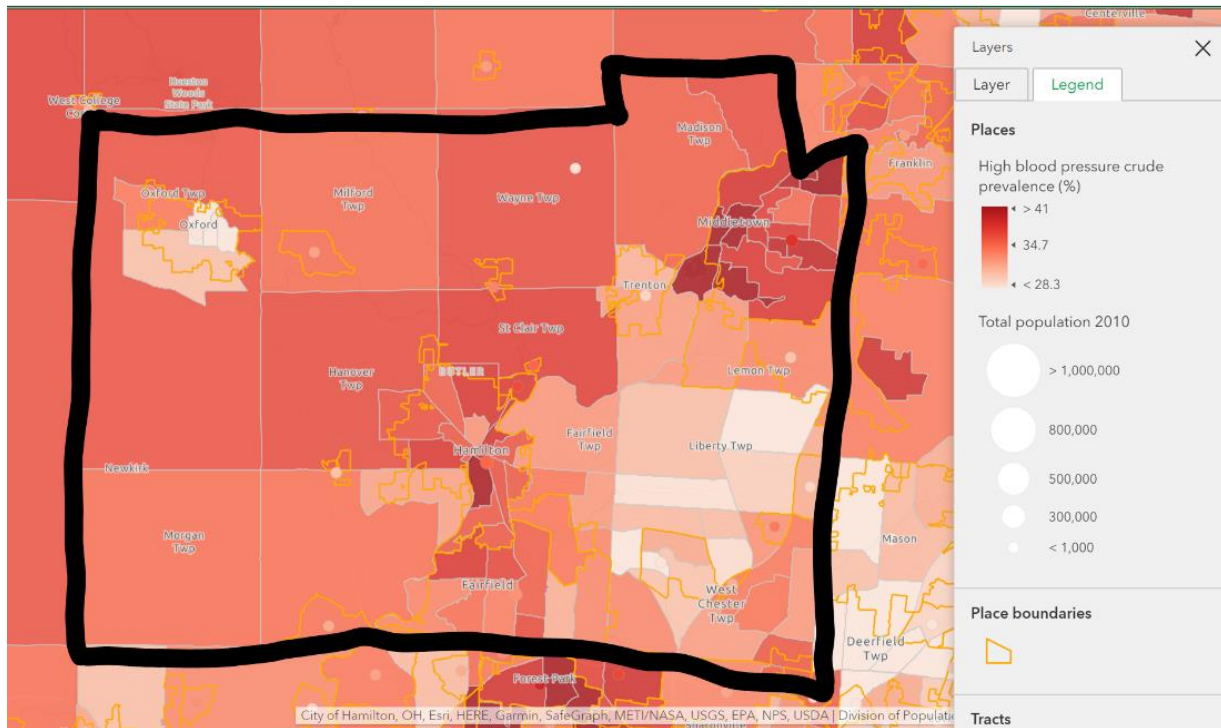


Figure 7: High Blood Pressure Prevalence in Butler County by census tract, Source: CDC Places Data, 2020

This data shows a great need for chronic disease management and efforts for chronic disease prevention.

## Mental Health

SkYROCKETING rates of mental health diagnoses exist in Butler County and this dilemma is further exacerbated by the access challenges related to the availability of mental health providers as well as access to insurance and affordability issues. There is a high number of overdose deaths in Butler County at 49 per 100,000 residents which is significantly higher than the national average of 23 per 100,000 residents as well as higher than the state average of 38 per 100,000 residents<sup>9</sup>. The opioid prescription rate in 2017 was 65.8 for Butler County, while the prescription rate for the nation was 43.3%, and for Ohio was 47.4%<sup>10</sup>. The Deaths of Despair ratio for Butler County is 80.8 per 100,000 versus 47.5 per 100,000 people nationally<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> 2023 County Health Rankings for Butler County <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/ohio/butler?year=2023>

<sup>10</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration (2017)

<sup>11</sup> U.S. News & World Report. (2022), <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/ohio/butler-county#overview>

Those who are providing care or are the first responders to mental health crises expressed their concerns:

*“The week prior we had a spike in overdose deaths and suicides the previous week. So, we've been seeing a lot of that ever since I've been here, for at least two years, and I think that the biggest driver is there's not a lot of treatment for addiction services, for mental health crisis in Butler County. A lot of people have to go either to Dayton or Cincinnati for a lot of those things.”-Interview of Professional*

*“They're trying to put a crisis stabilization unit in Butler County that's being led by the Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board. And although that's a good effort to help with folks that are more in an immediate crisis, the issue goes beyond that. So even if they open this crisis stabilization unit, it's only about 24 to 72 hours. Where do they go after that?”-Interview of Professional*

*“Well, in our ED, the nightmare scenario is that a child wants to commit suicide comes to our ED, and we can't find inpatient beds for them. That is a huge problem in Oxford.”- Social Worker Focus Group*

Stakeholders in the needs assessment study particularly noted the lack of mental health providers for the young people in Butler County and in Southwest Ohio at large. One story was shared about a family who only had a referral to a provider in Columbus for mental health services for their child. Other statements in the qualitative study evidenced similar experiences:

*“We have a lot of adolescents being raised by their grandparents who just cannot get any mental health care.”-Social Worker Focus Group*

*“Finding a youth provider is like a needle in a haystack. You're not going to get in children's hospital for six months. So sorry, that's unacceptable for the community. That's just about anywhere, that's Butler County, Hamilton County.”-Interview of Professional*

At least one professional in the study expressed concern about perceptions of harm with vaping, cannabis use, and gambling and is also impacting mental and behavioral health among youth. These dynamics are creating more demand for a range of prevention and intervention services for youth.

There are community efforts to increase mental health services for several age groups in the county. Modern Psychiatry and Wellness, LLC is partnering with the Greater Miami Valley YMCA to offer mental health services for a half day per week at the Booker T. Washington Community Center in Hamilton for adults and children, starting at age 7.

## Maternal Health and Infant Vitality

One example of an effective community strategy resulting in an improvement in health outcomes is the significant reduction in the Black infant mortality rate for Butler County. The period average from 2016 to 2022 shows that Black infants were twice as likely to die compared to White infants, reflected in a rate of 12.5 to 5.9 respectively. However, rates have been consistently dropping since 2018. In 2022, the Non-Hispanic Black Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of 5 was lower than the Non-Hispanic White IMR of 5.9<sup>12</sup>.

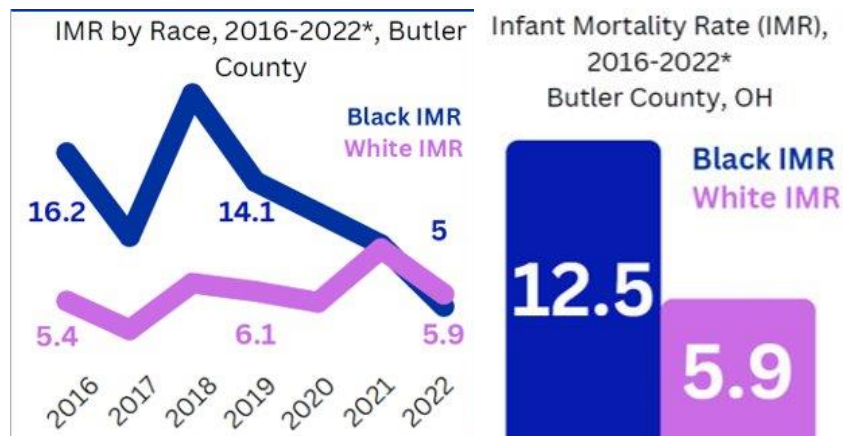


Figure 8: Infant Vitality Report compiled by Butler County General Health District, 2022

This is a promising finding as it illustrates that the health trajectory in Butler County is responding to effective community engagement, health education and access to resources through community health workers. Representatives from Butler County ESC and Me & She Doula participated in the needs assessment qualitative study and expressed interest in working with TriHealth and bi3 in expanding services. In addition, regional initiatives such as Queens Village have expanded into Butler County with support of bi3 and have been well received among community members.

## Experience with Care

Healthcare access is not only about availability of care and condition specific treatment but the quality of the healthcare experience. The experiential needs range from health education to resource navigation to the bedside manner of healthcare staff.

<sup>12</sup> Butler County General Health District. Infant Vitality Report (2022)

## Education and Communication

Forum participants were aware of several health systems in the area; however, they were concerned about lack of awareness about which systems provide specific services and how to access those resources.

Patients also did not feel there were many auxiliary services available within the county. For example, comments from the community forums expressed difficulty in finding support groups for a variety of disease management needs. In addition, stakeholders expressed frustration in understanding what to ask and when to ask it. One stakeholder mentioned this dilemma when deciding where to go for physical rehabilitation.

*“Knowing what questions to ask when you’re assessing facilities for rehab and things like that. You don’t know what you don’t know until you realize that you should’ve known and then you end up in a bad situation because you didn’t know” – Community Forum*

Stakeholders attending the community forums championed getting the word out about services and health programming through health fairs, mobile clinics, and readily available FAQ sheets.

Forum participants elevated the importance of trusted people, either community ambassadors or community health workers, in reaching people. Here is an excerpt from a small group report out from a community forum:

*“We said education was a key solution... And we talked about different ways that the information could be shared. So, there are community ambassadors. So maybe increasing those number of ambassadors and not just doing that but the ambassadors could be able to talk to their neighbors. You know, we’ve already discussed that emailing and what-not does not always help and is not always effective. But that face-to-face conversations are effective. Right. So, if you can’t do large things on a large scale coming together with a small group of people and then those people go out and talk to their group of friends. And then their group of friends talk to their group of friends.” – Community Forum*

Part of the need to communicate is helping residents see the value and importance of healthcare, particularly preventative care and screenings. A community professional stated:

*“I think education on the importance of screening and screening as preventative, as opposed to screening as ‘something’s wrong and I’m going’. Some community outreach and education that are specific to the populations that are not being served in the same manner as those in the more affluent areas, I think that there’s a big need.”- Interview of Professional*

The need to reach men regarding their preventative health was mentioned by members of the steering committee and in an interview:

*“I think that the percentage of men that come in for preventive care are so, so small. They don't come to the doctor, I guess, almost until it's too late.”-Interview of Professional*

### Language and Culture

Community forum participants emphasized the need for multilingual resources, including access guides, mobile apps, and professional translators. Stakeholders were concerned that individuals who need language services are not aware of language translation supports within the health care system. Resources in Spanish were explicitly mentioned among stakeholders as a need. A community needs assessment performed for Head Start, the federal early childhood program for low-income families, in Butler County found that among the dual language learning children in the program, 42.33% spoke Spanish, 21.4% spoke Nepali, 12.09% a Middle Eastern language such as Arabic, 10.23% spoke French, 4.65% spoke Twi (predominantly used in Ghana), and other languages had representation of less than two percent.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to language, culture and cultural norms of communication and health care are to be considered for delivery in care. According to 2018 trend data, the top countries of origin are Mexico, India, China, Vietnam, and Philippines for the county<sup>14</sup>. Based on the Head Start children's language data, migration patterns from Nepal and other Nepali speaking countries (e.g., Bhutan, Brunei) as well as Middle Eastern communities are to be considered. The presence of French and Twi speakers may be a nod to an increasing presence of people originating from Ghana and other West African countries.

### Dignity in Care

Some stakeholders expressed feelings of disrespect and a lack of dignity in care tied to concerns about response time, time it takes to travel to appointment, and the willingness to render care with outstanding financial obligations. Bias in the quality of care based on real or perceived economic status was particularly discussed in the focus group in Middletown. The input was not specific to experiences with TriHealth providers.

*“Whether it's you go and you're at your appointment and you have to wait past your appointment time, whether you have to make a phone call and they put you on hold forever, or whether you get through and it takes forever to send you the information, so we need better response time” -Community Forum*

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<sup>13</sup> The Doris Bergen Center for Human Development, Learning and Technology, Miami University (2022), <https://butlerfcfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Butler-County-Community-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> New American Economy. (2021), [https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/NAE\\_GTCN\\_Butler\\_Brief\\_2021.pdf](https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/NAE_GTCN_Butler_Brief_2021.pdf)

*“I went to the hospital for a kidney stone. And I waited in the emergency room forever to get service and they waited for my sister to get there to pay the \$185 dollars before they even attended to me in the hospital.” -Community Forum*



## Helpful Partners and Resources

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While there are various gaps identified during the discussions with both healthcare workers as well as individuals in the community, the assessment also identified various organizations that are helping bridge some of those gaps.

Complementary medical providers may have referred to teaming with TriHealth to deliver services. This includes having TriHealth professional serve on community boards and helping to facilitate the presence of specialists and services in community health clinics:

*“They've been a good partner to us actually, both TriHealth and McCullough-Hyde, in offering us some space to do our bloodborne pathogens prevention program, syringe exchange program in the Oxford area.”-Interview of Professional*

Not only are there collaborations on delivery of services in Butler County, but there are also various types of support from community-based organizations. Faith communities offer places to gather. Cancer support organizations help provide transportation, food, and emotional support. Maternal health programs also provide emotional support. Below are select quotes from interviews:

*“Our faith communities have been a recent addition specific to mental health supports.”-Interview of Professional*

*“There are key partners wherever you look, whether it's the faith community opening up buildings to have spaces that are unused potentially during the week, libraries, other social service agencies for telehealth suites, are places that we are definitely looking at.”-Interview of Professional*

*“And we partner with Queens Village, so we do walk and talks once a month with Queens Village and bringing Queens Village to Butler County and having a great partnership with them so mamas can have somewhere to vent and talk and be connected with others.”-Interview of Professional*

Stakeholders also referenced public-private partnerships:

*“I think I did mention, but WIC [Women, Infants, and Children program] has been a great partner. We do have a community health worker there also. So, everyone knows about WIC, or they don't know about WIC they usually find out about WIC and go to WIC. So, we're trying to catch our clients where they are.” -Interview of Professional*

The three public health districts in the county- Butler County, City of Hamilton, and City of Middletown may also be strategic partners to address the county's needs.

Community coalitions with representatives from many sectors play a role in advancing health focused on health:

*“We have three coalitions under our umbrella. One of them is specific to the City of Hamilton. One of them is specific to suicide prevention, and one of them is specific to tobacco advocacy policy, which has expanded out a little bit more from that. The MHARS board, fabulous, wonderful people, and just an organization to work with. The Family and Children First Council and all that they bring, our local elected officials, I would say specifically Hamilton City Council, Oxford City Council, city employees...” - Interview of Professional*

The community forum in Middletown also mentioned an initiative led by the Middletown Safety Council regarding health ambassadors at the community level as an opportunity for engagement.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

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## Potential TriHealth Strategies for Improvement

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data, the recommendations listed below emerged as the most salient opportunities to act to meet the needs of Butler County and advance health equity and outcomes. More specific details of the recommendations are included in the Action Guide in Appendix C.

- A. Increase access to primary and specialty care providers with new permanent sites, mobile clinics, or satellite placements at community partners.
- B. Leverage and expand maternal and child health programming.
- C. Maximize the use of community health workers and embed them in facilities.
- D. Expand capacity among collaborators to address mental health and behavioral health including inpatient services and services for youth.
- E. Collaborate with local government agencies, community partners, and peer hospital systems.
- F. Provide financial solutions to improve health access and outcomes including connections to charitable pharmacies, transportation grants, and community health vouchers.
- G. Reimagine health and wellness promotion to better support prevention and disease management for diabetes, stroke, and hypertension.
- H. Promote existing language and cultural services and provide access guides and leverage relationships to advance awareness of resources and services.
- I. Continue staff training to support respectful care and to minimize bias in delivery of services.
- J. Connect the identification of social determinants of health to the availability and provision of resources to address needs.

These recommendations intersect and many can work in tandem to advance health access in Butler County. For example, TriHealth could engage more CHWs to carry out programming strategies for maternal health. In working with mothers, the community health worker can administer screening tools for social determinants of health and subsequently connect mothers to community resources. The CHW may also speak the mother's primary language and promote health and wellness fairs for parents and families.



Figure 6: An example of how recommendations may intersect in implementation

## Maintaining Equity Focus

Equity must be centered in the pursuit of recommendations, strategies, and partnerships. An area of promise in addressing health disparities is infant vitality and maternal health for Black women and infants. The models of community engagement, education, and training in Butler County for improving infant vitality and maternal health can be reviewed for lessons to apply for other health priorities.

Increasing access to health in Butler County must have a focus on socio-economic disparities. The social vulnerability index by census tracts shows where attention in Butler County should be focused:

- Middletown
- Hamilton
- Fairfield

The census tracts with the greatest social vulnerabilities also have the highest prevalence of diabetes and high blood pressure.

When it comes to co-morbidities among people in Butler County who had in-patient stays at Tri-Health, prevalence was comparable by race for Black and White populations. However, stakeholders referenced racial disparities regarding vaccination rates and preventive health care. Disparities in preventative access for men was also a theme that emerged in the assessment. TriHealth and bi3 can continue to monitor data to follow outcomes by race and gender.

Stakeholders in the qualitative study did not express concerns about interactions with TriHealth providers but expressed concerns with other providers. TriHealth should train and support its staff members and their community partners so that they have the tools and skills to engage the diversity of communities in Butler County respectfully and in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Understanding bias and perceived dignity with respect to socio-economic status and the way it may intersect with other cultural or demographic characteristics can be addressed.

In addition, access to care is inequitable geographically, considering comparisons to resources in other counties. Many Butler County residents must travel to Dayton or Cincinnati for specialty care and have significant transportation barriers in accessing the care.

### Next Steps

TriHealth and bi3 leadership are encouraged to develop a health improvement plan specific to Butler County that is informed by this assessment. The recommendations in the Action Plan must be taken into consideration with the resources available now and in the future. Strategic engagement with the steering committee and organization identified in the study will be crucial to effective deployment of the plan to meet the health needs of the county.

# Butler County Needs Assessment

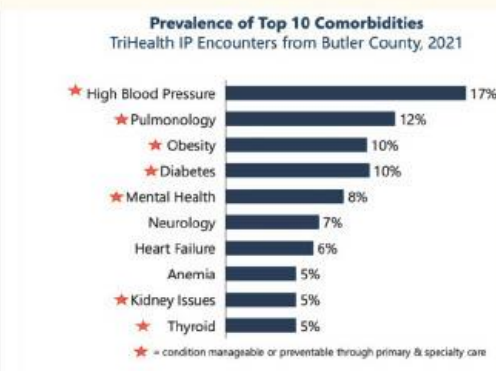
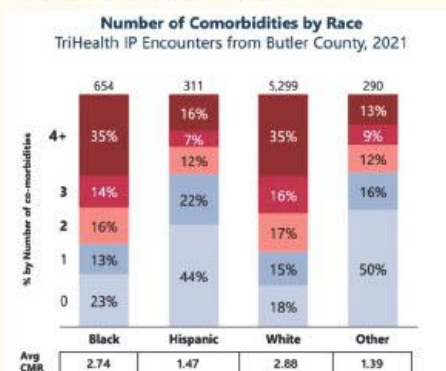
## Access

Clinical Care		Butler (BT) County	Ohio	United States
Uninsured		8%	8%	10%
Primary Care Physicians		1,850:1	1,290:1	1,310:1
Dentists		1,930:1	1,550:1	1,380:1
Mental Health Providers		370:1	330:1	340:1

- There is a **mental health crisis** in the county and a substantial **mental health provider shortage** (only one provider per 370 residents).
- Butler County falls in a gap between Cincinnati providers and Dayton providers.
- Diagnoses for stress related conditions doubled from 2021 to 2022.
- Both Middletown and Hamilton are designated by HRSA as Dental Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).
- Primary care and dental provider numbers in Butler County are significantly low, falling notably short of both state and national numbers.
- There is also limited specialty care access in Butler County.

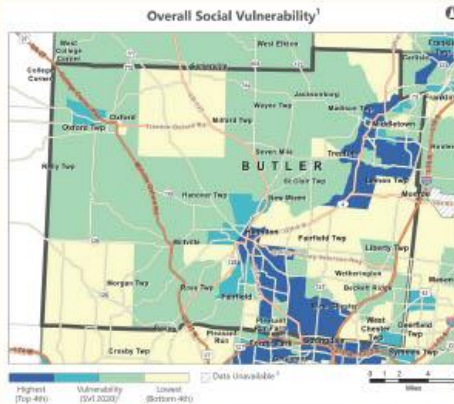
## Operations

- Preventable Hospital stays in Butler County are significantly **higher than the state and national level** but over the years this number has been declining consistently.
- TriHealth specific preventable Emergency Department rates are greater than 50% in Butler County (all races).



# Butler County Needs Assessment

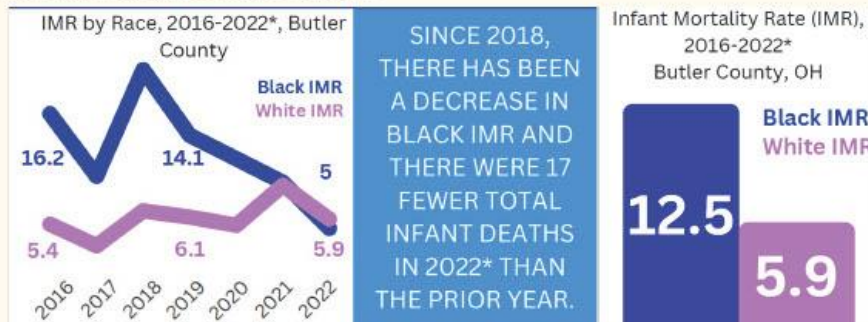
## Equity



- The census tracks that are experiencing the highest Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) include:
  - **Middletown**
  - **Hamilton/Fairfield**
  - **and Oxford**
- This population has a **high number of co-morbidities**.
- White and Black communities are both experiencing 35% of the population with 4+ co-morbidities.

## Health Conditions

- Community data indicates a high prevalence of **asthma, high blood pressure and cancer**.
- Drug overdose rates for Butler County are higher than the state and national average.
- Top TriHealth Specific Diagnosis: **Cancer, Type 2 diabetes, Maternity, Orthopedics, Cardiology**
- **In positive news**, the Black infant mortality rate has been consistently dropping since 2018.
- In 2022, the Non-Hispanic Black Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of 5 was lower than the Non-Hispanic White IMR of 5.9.
- From **2016 to 2022, Black Infants were twice as likely to die** compared to White infants, reflected in a rate of 12.5 to 5.9 respectively.
- The comprehensive Infant mortality report shows the complete picture of the Infant mortality rate in the region.



Sponsored by TriHealth and bi3



June 2023

## Appendix B

### TriHealth and bi3 Needs Assessment and Steering Committee Liaisons

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Frank Nation	Vice President Mission and Culture	TriHealth, Inc.
Anne Seibert	Director of Nursing	Bethesda Butler County TriHealth Hospital
Kiana Trabue	Vice President, Strategic Partnerships	Bethesda Inc. & bi3
Jena Bradley	Director, Community Partnerships	Bethesda Inc. & bi3

### Steering Committee Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Erik Balster	Health Commissioner	Butler County General Health District
Pam Cottle	President and CEO	Butler County United Way
Robert Dunham	Director of Clinical Services	TriHealth
Melissa Gayle	Manager of Care Management	TriHealth
Mandy Marcum	Early Intervention Team Supervisor	Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Brittany McGuiness	Medicaid Program Supervisor	Butler County Education Services Center
Susan Murray	Director, Strategic Planning	TriHealth
Jackie Phillips-Carter	Health Commissioner	City of Middletown Health Department
Linda Smith-Berry	Director	Good Samaritan Free Health Center
Ebony Tipton	Director	Booker T. Washington Community Center
Emily Tosh	Project Manager	TriHealth
Kim Whitton	Director of Community Impact	Butler County United Way
Tira Williams	Director of Health Disparities	TriHealth



## Appendix C

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Please reference the Butler County Needs Assessment Summary and Action Guide document attached.

# Butler County Needs Assessment Summary and Action Guide

November 30, 2023



C H Smith & Associates, LLC dba Scale Strategic  
Solutions, Strategik513, D.E.E.P. Consultants

TriHealth and bi3

## Overview

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After a review of the quantitative data, qualitative interviews and passionate conversations with residents of Butler County who desired change; we offer the following findings, and recommendations. Butler County is a community with vast health care needs that are being met via a fragmented healthcare system which has led to scarcity, major access issues, poor health outcomes, and concerns of quality from residents. While The Christ Hospital Medical Center, Kettering, TriHealth and the Mercy Health, and UC Health operate hospitals in the county, residents access much of their specialty care outside of the county which creates challenges. Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) such as a lack of affordable, efficient transportation and financial constraints exacerbate the issue. A comprehensive population health strategy is needed. The community needs major healthcare resources and healthcare entities that desire to make a bold commitment to managing the health of the population in collaboration with other healthcare organizations, payers, community leaders, and health departments in the area. A solution for the population will require collaboration and investment.

## Summary of Findings

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### Barriers to Care

**Specialist/Key Services Access** - Patients expressed concern that there are limited opportunities to receive specialty care within Butler County. Many patients also expressed a reluctance to travel outside of Butler County for care. The distance to Dayton or Cincinnati for care options created a barrier, particularly to those without transportation. Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicate severe shortages of primary care and specialty care services particularly for cardiology, orthopedics, dental care, mental health services, pulmonology, endocrinology, urology and podiatry.

These shortages are intensified when factoring in that many providers do not have available appointments in the near term or are not accepting new patients, causing patients to look for other alternatives. Butler County has a high preventable hospital stay ratio compared to the national benchmark (3,840 vs 2,809) due in large part to the fact that patients have limited access to healthcare. The emergency room serves as a key access point yet at higher cost. Patients with Medicaid insurance expressed concern that it is difficult to find a provider that is willing to accept this insurance.

When determining locations for services special attention should be paid to address the areas that scored high on the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) which include Hamilton, Middletown and Oxford.

**Cost** - The cost of services was a barrier to care for many patients. Many expressed that even with health insurance the deductibles and copays that are the patient's responsibility are barriers to care as they often do not have the payments at the time of service and increasingly payment is required prior to care. Some expressed having to reduce the number of medications taken because they could not afford to pay for their prescriptions. Nationally, in 2025 the Inflation Reduction Act will limit the out-of-pocket expenses of Medicare patients; however, the new limits will still pose a problem for lower income individuals.

**Transportation** - Patients expressed the intense need for additional transportation options within Butler County. Current available options are cumbersome or are not timely and would result in a patient potentially having to spend an entire day commuting to services in order to see one specialist outside of the county. There is limited bus service available, and ride share services are cost prohibitive. An individual managing a complex health condition would need to dedicate multiple days of their time to seek treatment which is not feasible when trying to work or manage other life issues.

**Scheduling** - Patients expressed concern that scheduling appointments for care is one of the barriers to treatment. If their primary care physician makes a recommendation, they have difficulty securing appointments. TriHealth data supports that patients for select specialties may have to wait 2-7 weeks for an appointment.

**Resource Awareness** - Patients expressed concern that when managing their care, they are aware that several health systems are in the area however, the care offered is very fragmented and they do not know which system provides specific services and how to access those resources. Patients also did not feel there were many auxiliary services available within the county. A patient, for example, being treated for breast cancer in Hamilton County would have care coordination services and wrap-around services from other non-profit organizations. However, Butler County patients expressed that they are confused as to which resources, if any, are available and it leads to frustration. Care coordination services via social workers, health educators, nurse case managers or Community Health Workers (CHW) would offer patients much needed health and social service advocates that understand all of the options available and can point them in the right direction. Patients felt strongly that such services would be of great help. Community Health Workers in Butler County have proven extremely impactful in engaging the community for maternal child health.

**Mental Health & Substance Use Access**- There is a high number of overdose deaths in Butler County at 49/100k residents, which is significantly higher than the national average (23/100k residents) as well as higher than the state average of 38/100k residents. Stress-related diagnoses have doubled from 2021 to 2022, further indicating the need for mental health professionals. The opioid prescription rate is 65.8 for Butler County, while the prescription rate for the nation is 43.3%, and that for Ohio is 47.4%. The Deaths of Despair ratio for Butler County is 80.8/100k vs. 47.5/100k nationally. The situation is dire and additional resources should be devoted to adding access. Residents expressed frustration when the only alternative for treating many teenagers is to send them to Columbus for care. Given the high prevalence of substance use disorder and increasing trends related to youth and geriatric mental health needs, additional resources are needed.

**Undocumented status** - An estimated 6,600 undocumented immigrants were living in Butler County as of 2018. Those individuals have difficulty accessing care due to financial constraints, lack of understanding of the American healthcare system, stigma and fears of deportation. An individual who is ill would most likely access services via the emergency room due to limited alternatives. Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants in Ohio have limited access to health insurance since federal and state government policies make them ineligible for many of those resources. Undocumented immigrants often go years without needed health care and often resort to the emergency room when their health care needs are really dire. Our focus group

with the Care Health navigators in TriHealth system corroborated this information. The Care health navigators reported that they had numerous encounters with undocumented immigrants in dire health needs, who were then deported to their home countries since there, "was nothing we can do for them at that point."

Given the lack of federal and state policies, the only action available at the local level is building trust with the undocumented immigrants and providing them with free or low-cost healthcare access either through mobile clinics or community clinics and providing affordable non-insurance options to this community.

**Housing Insecurity** – Multiple professionals and community members pointed to housing insecurity as a significant problem in Butler County affecting health access and health care. Affordable housing availability in general, and for those with mental and behavioral conditions, was acknowledged as a pivotal foundation for mental health in Butler County.

**TeleHealth Access** - While TeleHealth services can potentially improve access for some communities, the use should take into account limitations for select patients. While some community stakeholders noted that they have successfully leveraged telehealth, many individuals in Butler County do not have access to adequate broadband internet. In addition, Seniors may have difficulty navigating digital access to receive care. Without the necessary technology, accessing telehealth services is challenging, if not impossible.

## Recommendations

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### Increase Access to Primary & Specialty Care Providers

There is a dire need to increase physician access to ensure better quality of care and outcomes for the Butler County community. This can be accomplished in a number of ways.

**New Health Clinics** - The introduction of new healthcare clinics that provide access to primary care, preventative services and select specialty services is needed. The county needs resources that are anchored in Butler County to improve access. These centers could be solely owned by TriHealth or a partnership with other Butler County healthcare organizations or the health department. Today the high number of preventable hospital stays is partially driven by the lack of low acuity access points available to the community. The use of Nurse Practitioners could allow additional access.

**Satellite Access in Collaboration with FQHCs and Community Partners** - Under this model a designated specialist would provide services one day a week in Butler County in a location convenient to those with the greatest need. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) such as Primary Health Solutions would be a great alternative as they are anchored in the community and many patients have existing relationships with these facilities. Other venues could also include community recreation centers such as the Booker T. Washington Community Center.

TriHealth can reference internal data produced by the Chartis Group which highlights the most pressing care needs to prioritize which specialties to locate at new clinics and partner institutions.

**Mobile Health Centers** have also been used effectively to improve patient access to services. This would allow care to be rendered in Butler County eliminating transportation barriers and improving preventative care and specialty care access. Additionally, combining the services offered to include key social services would also benefit the community greatly.

Where appropriate such services could be augmented using telemedicine. In interviews, stakeholders suggested that a **telehealth community room** could offer a valuable solution for patients without access to reliable technology. This dedicated space could provide a controlled environment with the necessary technological support, ensuring uninterrupted consultations with healthcare providers. However, additional stakeholders have expressed concern about the utilization of a room and community comfort with the options.

To ensure that primary care providers, free clinics and FQHCs are aware of any new services designed to improve access, special attention should be given to **promoting those services** to Butler County providers and the community who may not be familiar with the services provided by TriHealth.

## Maternal and Child Health Programming

TriHealth and bi3 can continue to leverage and expand maternal health programming by offering support for high-risk pregnant patients via patient-centered services. Existing initiatives within Butler County by organizations such as Butler County Educational Service Center have demonstrated value and effectiveness. Through the efforts of Community Health Workers and organizations such as Butler County Educational Services Center the African American infant mortality rate in Butler County was reduced by 63.58% over a six-year timeframe – such results are impressive and speaks volumes for the effectiveness of the model.

Additional partnerships, specific to Butler County, with organizations such as Cradle Cincinnati's Queens Village and Me & She Doula could expand upon those wins. To date, the leaders of these programs have a great interest in working with TriHealth and have been granted funding from bi3 which has laid the foundation for success. A specific opportunity exists to partner with Butler County Educational Service Center to add community health workers to the Emergency Department of Bethesda Butler leveraging existing funding the organization has secured. Presently, the organization indicates that Bethesda Butler, while it does not have a maternal delivery unit, is the only hospital that they do not work with.

## Community Health Workers & Increased Social Determinants of Health Screening

**Community Health Workers** CHWs help to facilitate access and improve the quality of care available to patients. The use of CHWs has proven to be an effective care model nationally and locally. The recommendation would be to expand these services to address key disparities related to mental health and substance use as well as key diseases that plague the community such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease. These services could be offered in partnership with another health system, a community organization such as the Council on Aging or a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) looking to have a greater impact.

TriHealth can maximize **SDOH screening tools** regarding access barriers and social determinants of health. The screening tools can be leveraged by CHWs and other patient navigators to determine how patients can be connected to resources and assist patients in following their care plans. One of those tools, [Find Help](#) (previously Aunt Bertha), is a national portal whose primary function is to facilitate the process for connecting individuals to community-based resources. Find Help as a resource has the benefit of monitoring health-related social needs/SDOH needs of the patient population and provides robust analytics around the needs of the community that we serve. Additionally, Find Help has the capability to connect to local Community-Based Organizations through their "claimed" members system. Once the CBOs claim their organization on the Find Help system, the CBOs can then close the loop on the referrals.

Consideration should also be given to additional transportation solutions such as **Uber Health** or transportation grants to **offset rideshare fees** to get directly to services. This would mitigate the challenges of long travel and bus rides and encourage better management of chronic conditions. This will also increase a sense of dignity among patients who are often daunted by public transportation or existing services that are disproportionately time consuming.



Combating **housing insecurity** among TriHealth patients in Butler County is also mission critical. Teaming strategically with partners to mitigate the impact of housing insecurity will have a long-term return on the health of Butler County. Butler County Commissioners are considering investing approximately **\$8m of federal pandemic relief funds to fight homelessness**. Nationally, many hospital systems are contributing to similar efforts as housing instability is a key SDOH and impacts access and quality of services. Locally [Bon Secours Mercy Health System](#) has established an [affordable housing trust fund](#). Consideration should be given to how to make an impactful contribution in this space.

### Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Diagnoses within TriHealth for mental health conditions have increased significantly over the last three years. Opportunities to improve mental and behavioral health services intersect with recommendations to increase access in Butler County to specialty care providers, including psychologists, psychiatrists, and treatment centers. The additional specialty providers must also take Medicaid and Medicare eligible patients or have alternative funding services to accommodate patients in low-income households.

Professionals consistently called for expanding capacity for **in-patient behavioral health treatment**. In partnership with the [Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services \(MHARS\) board](#), TriHealth should monitor the growth in in-patient capacity and community feedback for and against new facilities. MHARS currently has a proposal to convert a former nursing facility to provide ten observation chairs and ten private rooms for mental health services. TriHealth leadership should investigate opportunities to potentially partner or refer patients to this new resource.

Addressing mental health and substance use at younger ages was also critical. TriHealth and bi3 can work with **school-based health clinics**, predominantly run by [Primary Health Solutions](#) in the county, to plan a continuum of mental and behavioral health care including but not limited to gambling, vaping, and other substance use prevention; mental health specialists on site; and a strong referral pathway for the most severe mental health conditions among youth. TriHealth and bi3 can also consider **embedding peer supporters or community health workers** with specialty in substance use disorder and mental health in emergency rooms to assist with transition to recovery. This model has been piloted by [Community First Solutions](#) in another hospital.

### Health Advocacy

To be successful, county and city funding may be necessary to augment services provided by TriHealth and other healthcare organizations. **Developing relationships with city and county governments** to provide input and guidance regarding existing resources and to weigh in on effective ways to improve healthcare delivery in Butler County is necessary. The promotion of your Butler County strategy with these audiences will be key to garnering attention and interest in support of collaborative initiatives.

## Health System Collaboration

The most recent Butler County needs assessment declared that one of the concerns is **collaboration among the health systems** to reduce duplication and increase effectiveness. Since that time, each health system has declared a Butler County specific strategy designed to address mental health access, homelessness, maternal child health and other issues. Formal discussions between the systems to coordinate and collaborate would be beneficial.

## Community Based Partnerships

Partner with community-based organizations countywide to improve health support and infrastructure in Butler County. Consider the needs of various demographic groups in relation to prevention (e.g., increasing preventive screenings for men) and disease management (e.g., support groups and health lifestyle supports for patients with diabetes). A **list of potential partners** is included at the end of this guide.

## Patient Health Care Grants

As out-of-pocket spending for copays, deductibles and coinsurance continue to increase, Americans are facing an average out-of-pocket spend of \$1,763 annually. This creates a major barrier to care for individuals with insurance yet unable to afford care, rendering them **underinsured**. Some organizations have offered grants to offset these expenses and would cover out-of-pocket medication costs, health insurance premiums, copays, and deductibles for select patients. Already in Butler County, Premier has begun offering a **community health voucher** program designed to assist patients to cover the costs of treatment for breast and cervical cancer.

## Charitable Pharmacy

Costs of prescriptions was expressed as a barrier to care. TriHealth could partner, sponsor, and promote the services of [St. Vincent DePaul's Charitable Pharmacy](#) which offers no-cost prescription medication and includes residents of Butler County. This could be a valuable resource for patients who need additional assistance paying for medication. Nationally 1 in 4 patients abandon their medication treatment plan because they are unable to afford services.

## Health and Wellness Promotion

TriHealth and bi3 can introduce **health promotion programming focused on prevention for Diabetes, Stroke, and Hypertension**, anchored in community organizations that have been proven to be effective in reaching at-risk populations such as barbershops, community centers, and faith-based organizations. In addition, increase cancer prevention outreach by offering early screening and detection services offered in Butler County. Promotions, including **health fairs, fitness events, exercise programs**, mobile screening stops, increase awareness and healthcare literacy. In addition, wellness offerings that provide exercise classes or a community gym(s) would allow Butler County residents to participate in improving their health status.

## Promote Language Services & Create New American/Immigrant Outreach

Individuals who need language services are not aware of language translations supports within the health care system. TriHealth can increase **outreach with materials and community liaisons in multiple languages** to the growing population of New Americans and established Butler County residents who do not have English as their first language. TriHealth can consider the

impact to cultural knowledge and connection with the global diversity among Butler County residents. According to 2018 trend data, the top countries of origin are Mexico, India, China, Vietnam, and Philippines for the county. Data from a 2022 study of Head Start learners in Butler County, cited the most common languages spoken by their dual language learners were Spanish, Nepali, Arabic, and French.

### Respectful Care

In community forums, particularly in Middletown, respect and dignity of care was critical to quality health care provision and had been lacking in a variety of interactions with healthcare providers from various institutions. TriHealth and provider partners should continue to educate and train professionals on engaging with a diversity of cultures and people in low-income communities. This may include training regarding biases (e.g. racial bias, socioeconomic, substance use disorder bias were perceived by members in qualitative study) that affect dignity of care. It may also include some cultural understanding including cultural norms among ethnic or religious groups in the county. While the qualitative study heard more specific concerns regarding dignity of care and potential bias, engaging more stakeholders can help identify specific needs to improve culturally and linguistically appropriate standards.

### Patient Navigation Tools

Community members may be overloaded with information. TriHealth may develop **access guides** to help patients navigate services (transportation, phone numbers for key services, and community resources).

**Butler County Needs Assessment Potential Partners List**

<b>Organizations</b>	<b>Engagement Focus/Purpose</b>	<b>Website</b>
17 Strong	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.17strong.org">www.17strong.org</a>
American Cancer Council Road to Recovery	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/road-to-recovery">www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/road-to-recovery</a>
American Cancer Society	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.cancer.org">www.cancer.org</a>
American Cancer Society and 501C4 ACS CAN	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.fightcancer.org">www.fightcancer.org</a>
BCCP (Breast and Cervical Cancer Project)	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.bcccp.org">www.bcccp.org</a>
Booker T. Washington Community Center, YMCA	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.btwcsc.org">www.btwcsc.org</a>
Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Project	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/breast-cervical-cancer-project">https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/breast-cervical-cancer-project</a>
Butler Behavioral	Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.bbhs.org">www.bbhs.org</a>
Butler County Corrections	Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.butler.miamivalleyjails.org">www.butler.miamivalleyjails.org</a>
Butler County ESC	Education Services, Community Engagement and Support, Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="http://www.bcesc.org">www.bcesc.org</a>
Butler County Health Department	Health Department	<a href="http://www.health.bcohio.gov">www.health.bcohio.gov</a>
Butler County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Services Board	Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.bcmhars.org">www.bcmhars.org</a>
Butler County Prevention Coalition and Addiction Taskforce	Behavioral Health, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.bcpctat.org">www.bcpctat.org</a>
Butler County Suicide Prevention Coalition	Behavioral Health, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://envisionpartnerships.org/what-we-do/prevention-coalitions/bcspc">https://envisionpartnerships.org/what-we-do/prevention-coalitions/bcspc</a>
Butler County YWCA	Behavioral Health, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.bcfymca.org">www.bcfymca.org</a>
Cancer Action Network	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.cancer.org">www.cancer.org</a>
Cancer Family Care	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.cancerfamilycare.org">www.cancerfamilycare.org</a>
CenterPoint Health (Federally Qualified Health Center)	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services, Behavioral Health	<a href="https://www.centerpointhealth.org/">https://www.centerpointhealth.org/</a>
Charitable Pharmacy - St. Vincent de Paul	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services	<a href="https://www.svdpcincinnati.org/pharmacy/">https://www.svdpcincinnati.org/pharmacy/</a>
Cincinnati Childrens Hospital	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services	<a href="http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org">www.cincinnatichildrens.org</a>
City of Hamilton Health Department	Health Department	<a href="http://www.hamilton-oh.gov">www.hamilton-oh.gov</a>
City of Middletown Health Department	Health Department	<a href="http://www.cityofmiddletown.org">www.cityofmiddletown.org</a>
Coalition for a Healthy Community- Oxford	Community Engagement and Support, Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.healthyoxfordarea.org">www.healthyoxfordarea.org</a>
Community Building Institute- Middletown	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.cbmiddletown.org">www.cbmiddletown.org</a>
Community First Solutions (Federally Qualified Health Center)	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services, Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.community-first.org">www.community-first.org</a>
Community Health Alliance	Community Engagement and Support, Behavioral Health	<a href="https://communityhealthalliance.com/about/">https://communityhealthalliance.com/about/</a>
Council on Aging Southwestern Ohio	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.help4seniors.org/">https://www.help4seniors.org/</a>
Edgewood City Schools	Education Services, Transportation Assistance	<a href="http://www.edgewoodschools.com">www.edgewoodschools.com</a>
Envision Partnerships	Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.envisionpartnerships.org">www.envisionpartnerships.org</a>
Fairfield City Schools	Education Services, Transportation Assistance	<a href="http://www.fairfieldcityschools.com">www.fairfieldcityschools.com</a>
Fairfield Hallelujah Nepali Ministry	Faith Based Organization, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://halleluianepalic.wixsite.com/website">https://halleluianepalic.wixsite.com/website</a>
Family and Children First Council	Community Engagement and Support, Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="http://www.fcf.ohio.gov">www.fcf.ohio.gov</a>
Grace United Methodist Church in Hamilton	Faith Based Organization, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.hamiltongrace.org">www.hamiltongrace.org</a>
Hamilton City Council	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.hamilton-oh.gov">www.hamilton-oh.gov</a>
Hamilton City Schools	Education Services, Transportation Assistance	<a href="http://www.hamiltoncityschools.com">www.hamiltoncityschools.com</a>
Health Care Access Now	Community Engagement and Support, Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services	<a href="https://healthcareaccessnow.org">https://healthcareaccessnow.org</a>

Hope House Mission	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.hhmission.org">www.hhmission.org</a>
Koinonia Nepali Church of Cincinnati	Faith Based Organization, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.kccloves.com/">https://www.kccloves.com/</a>
Lane Public Library	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.oplin.org/fal/?searchSelect=county&amp;search=Butler">https://www.oplin.org/fal/?searchSelect=county&amp;search=Butler</a>
Me & She Doulas	Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="https://meandshedoula.com/">https://meandshedoula.com/</a>
Middletown City Schools	Education Services, Transportation Assistance	<a href="http://www.middletowncityschools.com">www.middletowncityschools.com</a>
Middletown Connect- Safety Council of Southwestern	Community Engagement and Support, Behavioral Health	<a href="https://www.safetycouncilswohio.org/middletownconnect">https://www.safetycouncilswohio.org/middletownconnect</a>
MidPoint Library System (West Chester number)	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.midpointelibrary.org">https://www.midpointelibrary.org</a>
NAACP- Middletown	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.3194naacp.org">www.3194naacp.org</a>
Northeast Indiana Doula and Lactation Consultants	Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="http://www.neidoula.com">www.neidoula.com</a>
Oxford City Council	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.cityofoxford.org/government/city_council/index.php">https://www.cityofoxford.org/government/city_council/index.php</a>
Oxford Senior Center	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.oxfordsenior.org">www.oxfordsenior.org</a>
Pancreatic Cancer Network (PanCAN)	Cancer Care and Support	<a href="http://www.pancan.org">www.pancan.org</a>
Payne Chapel AME	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/PayneChapelAMEHamilton/">https://www.facebook.com/PayneChapelAMEHamilton/</a>
Pink Ribbon Good	Cancer Care and Support, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.pinkrbbongood.org">www.pinkrbbongood.org</a>
Primary Health Solutions (Federally Qualified Health Center)	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services, Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.myprimaryhealthsolutions.org">www.myprimaryhealthsolutions.org</a>
Project Milk Mission	Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="http://www.projectmilkmission.org">www.projectmilkmission.org</a>
Queens Village	Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="https://www.blackwomenforthewin.com/">https://www.blackwomenforthewin.com/</a>
Refreshing Springs Church of God in West Chester	Faith Based Organization, Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.refreshingspringschurch.org">www.refreshingspringschurch.org</a>
Society's Road to Recovery (Volunteer)	Cancer Care and Support, Transportation Assistance	<a href="http://www.cancer.org/involved/volunteer/road-to-recovery">www.cancer.org/involved/volunteer/road-to-recovery</a>
Sojourner	Behavioral Health	<a href="https://sojournerrecovery.com/services/">https://sojournerrecovery.com/services/</a>
St. Vincent de Paul	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.svdpcincinnati.org/">https://www.svdpcincinnati.org/</a>
Talawanda City Schools	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="http://www.talawanda.org">www.talawanda.org</a>
Talbert House	Behavioral Health	<a href="http://www.talberthouse.org">www.talberthouse.org</a>
The Butler County Prevention Coalition	Community Engagement and Support, Behavioral Health	<a href="https://butlercountycoalition.org/">https://butlercountycoalition.org/</a>
Ultimate Care Pharmacy	Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services	<a href="http://www.ultimatecarepharmacy.com">www.ultimatecarepharmacy.com</a>
University of Cincinnati- Infectious Disease	Community Engagement and Support, Healthcare and/or Pharmacy Services	<a href="https://www.uhealth.com/services/infectious-diseases/">https://www.uhealth.com/services/infectious-diseases/</a>
Women Infant and Children Program	Infant and/or Maternal Health	<a href="https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Women-Infants-Children">https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/Women-Infants-Children</a>
YMCA	Community Engagement and Support	<a href="https://www.gmvymca.org/">https://www.gmvymca.org/</a>