

Community Health Needs Assessment
and Implementation Plan
Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc., 2021



Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc.

- **Big Sandy, Montana**

Big Sandy, Montana is a small, rural town located in northcentral Montana. Big Sandy was named after Big Sandy Creek and was originally a site for freighters to stop at the local saloon when traveling from the Missouri River south of town to Fort Assiniboine twenty-eight (28) miles north. The first general store was established in 1900 and Big Sandy continued to grow from that time on. Once the Great Northern Railway was established, Big Sandy increased its population of homesteaders and became a center for trade and shipping (Big Sandy Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, 2017). Today, Big Sandy remains primarily an agricultural community. Big Sandy's population was 560 in 2019 according to census data on the United States Census Bureau website (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Currently, Big Sandy remains consistent at 598 residents (Suburban Stats, Inc., 2020).

- **Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc. (BSMC)**

- **Description and Service Area**

Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc. (BSMC) is the largest employer and vital part of the Big Sandy community. The non-profit organization was established in 1965 when a group of community members raised funds to build the facility at which time it obtained 501(c)(3) status. "This allowed Big Sandy to build its first health care facility using all donated money, material, and labor" (Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc., n.d.). The practice began as a nine (9) bed hospital with a physician clinic. In 1985, the community came together once again to add a twenty-two (22) bed nursing home to the facility, making it an eight (8) bed Critical Access Hospital, twenty-two (22) bed Long Term Care Facility, and Rural Health Clinic. Then in 2019, the Board of Directors made the decision to voluntarily decertify its Nursing Home and convert to a twenty-five (25) bed Critical Access Hospital and Rural Health Clinic. Each entity has its own

designation and certification; but the corporation as a whole is governed by a Board of Directors and administrated by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The organization is owned by the community who elects five (5) board members. Each member is a part of the Big Sandy community and holds office for two (2) year terms. An annual meeting is held at the end of each calendar year where the community is encouraged to attend and vote. Monthly meetings are also held and are open to the public as well.

Current Services

Current services offered at BSMC per entity:

- Critical Access Hospital
 - Emergency Room
 - Observation or Inpatient
 - Swing Bed or Rehabilitation
 - Laboratory
 - Radiology
 - Physical Therapy
 - Pharmacy
 - Dietary
 - Telehealth
 - Contracted services, such as Hospice
 - Long Term Care
 - Skilled Nursing
 - Inpatient
 - Physical Therapy
 - Pharmacy
 - Activities
 - Social Services
 - Dietary
 - Outpatient Nursing Services

- Rural Health Clinic
 - Primary Care
 - Urgent Care
 - Immunizations
 - Wellness Visits
 - Pre-operative Exams
 - Sports Physicals
 - DOT's

- **Previous Big Sandy Medical Center CHNA**

The previous Community Health Needs Assessment, completed in 2018, was conducted using a seven-page survey mailed to all post office boxes and physical addresses in the BSMC service area, including zip codes 59520 and 59521. The returned surveys, 73 out of 520 sent, were reviewed and the results compiled and presented with conclusions and summaries. The entire CHNA report, including results, conclusions, and summary, and the subsequent Implementation Plan are available in pdf form on the organization's website at www.bsmc.org (Big Sandy Medical Center, Inc., n.d.).

Based on the data review, the author surmised that the survey method used to obtain information was not ideal at the time, considering the lower return rate compared to past years. The 2015 CHNA had a return rate of 17% with the 2018 CHNA at 14%. The process of sending paper surveys in just one mailing may limit the rate of returned surveys. This may also cause one to question whether the data obtained accurately reflects the population. It was concluded that considerations for future CHNA's must include additional opportunities for residents to respond.

One suggestion from the 2018 CHNA was "to involve the entire community, BSMC would be wise to hold a focus group discussion with representatives from local agencies, businesses, and services" with attendees to include "a member of the BSMC Board of Directors, the Directors of Big Sandy Activities and Big Sandy Senior Citizen Center, a member of the Chamber of Commerce and local Rotary chapter, local business owners, and a representative from Big Sandy Schools" (Community Health Needs Assessment 2018, May 2018). Three focus group questions were suggested to initiate discussions regarding perceptions and vision of community health and how BSMC could help to improve health and quality of life in the community.

Another area to note from the 2018 CHNA was to “focus on providing health information to better connect and educate community members” moving forward. “Educating communities leads to empowering its members to care for themselves and one another through a community-wide support system.” Finally, the author suggested BSMC develop an official strategic plan to include updating its vision, mission, and purpose and review services (current and needed) related to the health needs of the community “The challenge will be to effectively address community health needs in the face of sicker, older, and underinsured patients with fewer resources” (Community Health Needs Assessment 2018, May 2018).

Community Health Needs Assessment 2021

Process

Community leaders and stakeholders were invited to a focus group session held on April 27, 2021. This diverse group of individuals are from various organizations and populations within the community, representing the broad interests of the community in BSMC’s service area. The following is a list of those invited:

- Angel Johnson, FNP, Chouteau County Health Department
- Heather Wolery, Principal of Big Sandy Public Schools
- Kelly Haaland*, Superintendent of Big Sandy Public Schools
- Crystal Geyer, Director of Big Sandy Senior Citizens Center
- Danielle Weaver*, Pharmacist at Big Sandy Pharmacy
- Heather Pleninger, Director of Big Sandy Activities
- Sheri Moore, President of Big Sandy Rotary Club
- Rhonda Works, Chairperson of Big Sandy Medical Services Foundation
- Lisa Sipler*, President of Big Sandy Medical Guild
- Rob Brandt*, CEO, Mountain View Medical Center, Cypress Healthcare, LLC
- Krystyl Kulbeck*, PA, Big Sandy Medical Center
- Zane Bendig, NP, Big Sandy Medical Center

- Leah Griffith*, CEO, Big Sandy Medical Center
- Colette Terry*, CFO, Big Sandy Medical Center
- Harvey Keller*, Chairman of Big Sandy Medical Center Board of Directors
- Bob Nelson*, Vice-Chairman of Big Sandy Medical Center Board of Directors
- Nicole Allderdice*, Secretary-Treasurer of Big Sandy Medical Center Board of Directors
- Ann Quinn*, Trustee, Big Sandy Medical Center Board of Directors
- Anna Bold*, Trustee, Big Sandy Medical Center Board of Directors

*Signifies those in attendance at focus group session.

The objectives of the focus group were to identify one to three health needs to address in the Implementation Plan and to decide what information is needed from the 2021 CHNA survey as part of the Implementation Plan. The group began by reviewing the recently updated BSMC Mission, Vision, and Values (Exhibit 1) and defining the community it serves. This information was also recently provided to Stroudwater, a company commissioned to perform a Market Assessment/Demand Modeling project for BSMC (Exhibit 2). According to the report, the primary service area (PSA) includes Big Sandy, Box Elder/Rocky Boy, and Loma. Included in a secondary service area (SSA) are the small towns on the Hi-line from Rudyard to Chinook, including Havre; from Chinook south to Winifred; and the Fort Benton/Geraldine area. The PSA represents 5,127 individuals with the total service area at 23,867 residents.

The other body of work that was suggested in the 2018 CHNA and already completed at the time of this report was a Strategic Planning Session conducted by the Board of Directors held on March 13, 2021. The Board updated BSMC's Mission, Vision, and Values during that meeting. Strategic planning attendees also discussed the services BSMC currently offers the community and what services may be needed in order to better care for overall health needs. The knowledge and insight gained from those discussion along with Stroudwater's Market

Assessment/Demand Modeling combined with the 2021 CHNA are expected to provide valuable information and data for the Board to move forward with its strategic planning efforts.

Next, the group discussed the focus questions mentioned in the 2018 CHNA in order to initiate conversations regarding the overall health of the community. The questions were:

1. What is your vision for a healthy community?
2. What is healthy about our community?
3. What is unhealthy about our community?
4. What is your perception of BSMC overall and of specific programs and services?
5. What can BSMC do to improve health and quality of life in the community?

The focus group agreed their vision for a healthy community would include more active, healthy lifestyles; less illness; access to mental and behavioral health services; and education related to available resources, health awareness, and services offered. Healthy things about the community included some opportunities for physical fitness; sports and activities for children; the local pharmacy and grocery store; and BSMC. Unhealthy aspects of the community include not having sufficient access to activities for physical fitness; decrease in organized community events; prevalence of alcohol consumption and vaping in the youth; overuse of electronic devices; overweight population; and poor roads and routes to obtain and seek emergency services.

The focus group's perception of BSMC's programs and services included both positive and negative topics. Physical Therapy and emergency services were described as excellent services the community uses and needs. Another positive attribute that improves the perception of BSMC are its medical providers. All agreed they are invaluable to the organization. Areas of opportunity for improvement included education and marketing. Specifically mentioned were the need to provide education regard insurances, estate planning, and Alzheimer's and dementia. Marketing what BSMC currently offers as well as exploring other specialties needed were also areas to focus on. Specific medical specialties were listed with a few being podiatry,

dermatology, mental and behavioral health, orthopedics, neurology, and urology. Visiting specialists with Clinic hours would benefit the community. Finally, when asked what BSMC can do to improve the quality of life in the community, once again, the focus group discussed education and marketing opportunities.

In order to assess the health needs of the community, the focus group utilized this discussion in combination with information obtained from the past two CHNA's conducted at Big Sandy Medical Center in 2015 and 2018 as well as personal perceptions based on each attendee's role in the community and experiences. There were eight areas identified: (1) education; (2) mental health services; (3) additional services offered at BSMC; (4) physical activity; (5) aging services; (6) chronic diseases; (7) daycare; and (8) cancer prevalence. Those concerns were then narrowed down to two areas of focus. The first community health need the group agreed to focus on was education. This will be a community-wide initiative to include collaborations between stakeholders where appropriate. For instance, developing an education program where BSMC medical providers and other professionals provide education to students and a Diabetes Management Program offered to all ages and provided by a BSMC medical provider.

The second community health need to focus on was regarding BSMC services. Attendees agreed marketing what BSMC currently offers is vital to community members accessing services. In addition, exploring other services BSMC can provide to address the unmet health needs of the community. The Market Assessment/Demand Modeling analysis will be used in conjunction with what the focus group listed. The 2021 CHNA survey results will also provide vital insight as to what the community perceives as necessary services for BSMC to provide.

At the end of the focus group session, attendees offered their perspectives in designing a method of distributing the survey tool to be conducted as part of the 2021 Implementation Plan.

Due to past poor return rates, the distribution of the survey tool needs improvement from just a one-time mailing. The focus group agreed to explore other options for respondents, such as an online survey tool; ability to print the survey tool from BSMC's website; and offering to assist with completing the survey. Several reminders through various methods, including the local newspaper, social media platforms, the BSMC website, and others, will also be provided along with ample time to complete and return the survey.

It was agreed that the survey tool content should focus primarily on what services are being utilized and what are needed locally. In addition, it would be important to know why community members in the service area are not obtaining services at BSMC; if there are any barriers that can be addressed. Basic demographics and insurance information would also be helpful in identifying potential educational and outreach programs in the future. The following is a brief overview of topics to include in the survey tool:

1. Demographics
2. Use of BSMC primary care services
3. Why were services at another facility obtained
4. "Did you know" section, asking about utilization of current services
5. Respondents' health
6. Medical/additional services obtained
7. What additional services should BSMC offer to meet the needs of the community

Attendees agreed to finalize the survey tool as the final step in the initial CHNA process.

Implementation Plan

The first objective of the Implementation Plan, completed on May 10, 2021, was a market analysis conducted by Stroudwater. The analysis was procured after the BSMC Board of Directors identified it as an action item during their Strategic Planning Session on March 13,

2021. The results of the market analysis will be distributed to all focus group attendees along with the compiled data from the CHNA survey.

The next objective is to actually dispense the updated Community Health Needs Assessment Survey Tool (Exhibit 3) to residents in the BSMC primary and secondary service areas. The survey tool will be mailed to post office boxes and physical addresses of all households in the service area. An online platform will be developed and advertised for respondents to use. The survey tool will also be posted on BSMC's website, providing a third option. Announcements and reminders will be planned in order to optimize the number of responses. Once surveys are received on the due date, the same method of data collection and compilation as past CHNA will be used. A written report of the results will be made widely available to the public along with this previously published CHNA report adopted by the Board of Directors during its May 2021 monthly meeting.

The focus group will meet again to review and discuss the information obtained. This session will allow all stakeholders to provide input into further phases of the implementation plan to include specific strategies and activities to address the two defined objectives. These will be ongoing in the next three years with communication, coordination, and collaboration between stakeholders. Frequent evaluations of effectiveness and sustainability will also be part of these strategies to ensure the Big Sandy community's health needs are being addressed sufficiently and appropriately.

References

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