

## **Executive Summary**

### **Facility Overview**

PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center is a 14-bed critical access hospital serving southern Lane County and northern Douglas County, Oregon. The facility provides emergency care, inpatient services, and outpatient ambulatory care, with 179 caregivers serving over 43,000 outpatient visits and 13,600 emergency department visits annually.

### **Assessment Process**

This 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment examined publicly reported data and convened community stakeholders in fall 2024 to identify health priorities and guide the organization's Implementation Strategy for addressing community needs.

### **Key Findings**

The assessment identified critical needs for improved health equity among BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, rural populations, and other vulnerable groups. Priority areas include housing availability and affordability, timely access to health care services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, workforce shortages, and support services including child care, food security, and transportation.

### **Community Investment**

In 2024, PeaceHealth contributed over \$1.2 million in community benefit cash donations to partner organizations in Lane County, plus \$600,000 in low-cost property leases and \$810,000 for health care workforce development programs.

### **Priority Initiatives**

The report highlights partnerships addressing four key pillars: HOME (housing access), HOPE (substance abuse prevention and treatment), CARE (expanding health care access and workforce), and NOURISH (food security). Featured programs include Career and Technical Education, mental health services through South Lane Mental Health, the new South Lane Community Health Center, and food security initiatives including Veggie Rx.

## **Biggest Gaps in Service and Barriers to Care**

### **Access to Care**

South Lane community was designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area for primary and dental care, ranking among the top two Oregon areas with the highest level of need. The community experienced the highest rate of oral health-related emergency department visits in Lane County and the second highest in the state.

### **Mental Health and Behavioral Health**

Lane County faces a concerning trend of worsening mental health, especially among youth. Oregon ranks 12th nationally for youth suicide with a rate of 14.2 per 100,000 compared to 10 nationally. Mental health is the 10th leading cause of death in Oregon. The need for crisis response services, substance abuse treatment, and prevention remains critical.

### **Workforce Shortages**

Critical shortages of health care workers are especially acute in rural communities, creating strain on filling crucial roles and limiting the community's capacity to provide timely care.

### **Services for Vulnerable Populations**

Significant gaps exist in wrap-around services for frequent health care utilizers and individuals in crisis. Transportation for health care needs presents a major barrier, particularly for rural residents.

### **Pediatric and Specialized Services**

Particularly underserved were intensive pediatric dental procedures and services for individuals with Oregon Health Plan, affecting the most vulnerable populations including families living below the federal poverty level.

### **Timely Access**

Getting care in a timely manner was highlighted as a significant challenge, indicating capacity and availability issues within the existing health care system.

## **The Unique Needs of the Community**

### **Rural Health Care Challenges**

Rural communities bear a disproportionate brunt of health care disparity, especially when addressing acute needs like homelessness and mental health. The geographic isolation of Cottage Grove and surrounding communities creates barriers to accessing specialized services and requires local solutions.

### **Economic Vulnerability**

Fifty-one percent of households in Cottage Grove fall below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold, compared to 47% in Lane County. The poverty rate is 14.3%, with almost 50% of local families with children under 5 living below the federal poverty level, indicating widespread financial strain affecting access to necessities.

### **Food Insecurity**

Lane County's food insecurity rate of 14.6% exceeds state and national levels. Significant disparities exist among racial and ethnic groups, with Black and Hispanic/Latino populations experiencing substantially higher rates of food insecurity than the overall population.

### **Workforce Development**

The community needs pathways for local students to enter health care careers and remain in the area. Critical access to Career and Technical Education programs helps address both workforce shortages and provides economic opportunities for young residents.

### **Community Resilience and Collaboration**

Despite challenges, the Cottage Grove community demonstrates remarkable resilience and collaborative spirit. Since 1998, when the community came together to save the bankrupt hospital, residents and organizations have consistently united to build a local rural health care system ensuring equal access for the most vulnerable.

### **Cultural Diversity**

The Hispanic/Latino population makes up 8.2% of Cottage Grove residents, and 8.1% identify with two or more racial groups, requiring culturally responsive care and bilingual services to meet the needs of this diverse community.

## **Strengths of the Community**

### **Strong Collaborative Partnerships**

PeaceHealth has built robust partnerships with local government and community organizations including South Lane School District, South Lane Mental Health, Community Health Clinics of Lane County, Lane Community College, and Be Your Best. These partnerships work together to tackle pressing concerns and create a healthier, more equitable community.

### **Community Resilience**

The Cottage Grove community has consistently demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity. Since 1998, individuals and organizations have come together quickly and creatively to build a local rural health care system that supports the entire community and ensures equal access for the most vulnerable.

### **Nonprofit Network**

The rural community is blessed with a strong network of nonprofit organizations delivering programs designed to improve physical and mental health and increase access to care. Organizations work tirelessly in areas of hope, home, nourish, and care to sustain the community.

### **Health Care Workforce Development**

Career and Technical Education programs provide hands-on learning opportunities and pathways to health care careers, with 95% of CTE students graduating high school—10% higher than other students. These programs help develop the local health care workforce and encourage students to remain in their home communities.

### **Innovative Service Delivery**

The community has implemented creative solutions including the new South Lane Community Health Center, therapeutic mental health services through EMDR and neurofeedback, Veggie Rx programs at farmers markets, and comprehensive family support services through Family Relief Nursery.

### **Caregiver Commitment**

With 179 employees, PeaceHealth is one of the largest employers in the area. The organization prioritizes caring for caregivers through programs like Caregiver Resource Groups, recognizing that caregivers can best focus on others when they are supported and valued.

## **Priorities and Goals**

### **Community Health Pillars**

PeaceHealth has established four pillars to guide community health work: HOME (improve access to service-enriched housing), HOPE (increase education and access to treatment and prevention of dependence), CARE (expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers), and NOURISH (address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being).

### **Health Care Workforce Development**

PeaceHealth donated \$10,000 to support Career and Technical Education in South Lane School District, providing students with pathways to health care careers while addressing critical workforce shortages. The hospital also invested \$810,000 in nursing and career technical education programs in Lane County.

### **Mental Health and Behavioral Health Expansion**

PeaceHealth donated \$10,000 to South Lane Mental Health for EMDR training and \$10,000 for community-based mental health services. The hospital is partnering with LifePoint Health to build a 96-bed standalone behavioral health hospital that will nearly triple current inpatient capacity, alongside Lane County's new stabilization center.

### **Primary and Dental Care Access**

PeaceHealth contributed \$300,000 to help establish the South Lane Community Health Center, a federally qualified health center offering medical, dental, and integrated behavioral health care. The facility addresses critical shortages in primary and dental care for underserved populations.

### **Food Security Initiatives**

PeaceHealth donated \$3,500 to pilot the Veggie Rx program at South Valley Farmers Market, providing produce prescriptions for patients with diet-related health challenges and food insecurity. The hospital also supported Family Relief Nursery with \$7,000 for their diaper relief program.

#### **Family Support Services**

PeaceHealth contributed \$5,000 to Family Relief Nursery's home visiting program, supporting wraparound services that include therapeutic early childhood education, respite care, parenting classes, and essential supplies for families in need.

#### **Community Benefit Investment**

In 2024, PeaceHealth contributed over \$1.2 million in community benefit cash donations to partner organizations, plus \$600,000 in low-cost property leases for clinical and administrative spaces, demonstrating sustained commitment to addressing community needs.

#### **Health Equity Focus**

PeaceHealth aims to eliminate health care disparities by ensuring all communities receive just and respectful treatment with equitable access to opportunities and resources. The hospital partners with diverse organizations to address social, economic, and environmental factors impacting health, with particular focus on BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, rural populations, and vulnerable groups.