

## **Executive Summary**

### **Organization Overview**

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center is a critical access hospital and Level III trauma center located in Florence, Oregon, serving the rural communities of western Lane County since 1989. The facility has 21 licensed beds, 398 caregivers, and provides comprehensive services including emergency care, maternity services, mental health treatment, and general medicine.

### **Assessment Process**

This Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was conducted in fall 2024 through analysis of publicly reported data and input from community stakeholders across multiple sectors, as required by the 2010 Patient Care and Affordable Care Act for tax-exempt hospitals.

### **Community Profile**

Florence has a population of 9,483 with 10.99% growth from 2010-2020. The community is predominantly white (88.3%) with a median age of 57.7 years and 39.7% of residents over 65. The poverty rate is 10.6%, while 51.6% of households fall below the ALICE threshold, indicating significant financial strain beyond traditional poverty measures.

### **Key Findings**

The assessment identified critical needs for improved health equity among vulnerable populations including BIPOC communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, rural residents, youth, low-income families, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness. Priority areas include housing affordability and availability, timely access to health care services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, support services such as childcare and food security, transportation, and aging-in-place resources. Workforce shortages compound these challenges across the community.

### **Priority Areas and Initiatives**

PeaceHealth is addressing identified needs through four community health pillars: HOME (housing access), HOPE (substance abuse treatment and prevention), CARE (community caregiver engagement), and NOURISH (food security). Major initiatives include supporting the Elm Park Early Learning Center to address childcare deserts, funding Western Lane Crisis Response for mental health emergencies, partnering with Boys & Girls Club for youth programming, and implementing Veggie Rx produce prescription programs at farmers markets.

### **Community Investment**

In 2024, PeaceHealth contributed over \$1.2 million in community benefit cash donations to Lane County partner organizations, \$600,000 in reduced-cost property leases, and \$810,000 toward health care workforce development programs. The organization is also partnering with Lane County to develop a co-located behavioral health campus featuring a 96-bed inpatient facility and stabilization center.

### **Commitment**

PeaceHealth remains committed to leveraging resources, funding, partnerships, and advocacy to address health disparities and provide whole-person care, guided by core values of respect, stewardship, collaboration, and social justice in pursuit of health equity for all community members.

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

### **Access to Mental Health and Behavioral Health Services**

The community 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 10.0

nationally. While Lane County has relatively good mental health provider ratios (90 people per provider vs. 150 statewide), the need for mental health crisis response, substance abuse treatment and prevention services significantly exceeds available resources.

#### **Timely Access to Health Care**

Residents face challenges getting care in a timely manner. The rural geography creates transportation barriers, particularly during the long rainy season when roads can become impassable. The need for wrap-around services for frequent health care utilizers and individuals in crisis was specifically highlighted, along with concerns about retail pharmacy access.

#### **Childcare Desert**

Western Lane County is designated a childcare desert with three children waiting for every available childcare spot. The area has only 152 licensed childcare slots for 640 children aged 0-5 years, requiring 1,500 additional slots to remove this designation. Families spend 45% of income on childcare compared to 33% statewide and 27% nationally.

#### **Housing Availability and Affordability**

Housing continues to be a chronic issue, with critical needs for both affordable housing for families and supportive housing options for unhoused and medically fragile community members. The ALICE rate of 51.6% indicates that over half of households earn less than the cost of living despite being above the federal poverty level.

#### **Food Insecurity**

Lane County's food insecurity rate of 14.6% exceeds state (13.1%) and national (13.5%) levels. One-third of Florence's population routinely or intermittently uses the food bank, and 61% of school-age children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Access to healthy, affordable food remains a significant barrier, particularly for older adults on fixed incomes.

#### **Rural Geographic Barriers**

The rural nature of communities served creates multiple access challenges including transportation for health care needs, limited services in remote areas, and difficulty accessing specialized care. The 30-minute drive from Mapleton to Peace Harbor Medical Center can become impassable during inclement weather.

#### **Work Force Shortages**

The assessment acknowledged a decrease in the workforce and subsequent strain on filling crucial roles throughout the community, impacting the availability of health care services and support services across all sectors.

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

#### **Aging Population**

Florence has a significantly older population with 39.7% of residents over age 65 compared to only 19.6% statewide. The median age is 57.7 years, notably higher than state and national averages. This creates specific needs for aging-in-place services, support for older adults to live safely in their homes, and access to necessary support services. Roughly seven million older Americans face food insecurity, and those on fixed incomes struggle with the rising costs of health care and healthy food.

#### **Rural Geographic Isolation**

The community's rural coastal location creates unique challenges. Florence and surrounding communities like Mapleton, Swisshome, Deadwood, Dunes City, and Westlake are geographically spread across western Lane County into Lincoln and Douglas Counties. Roads can become

impassable during the long rainy season, making access to health care facilities, schools, and services particularly challenging. This isolation amplifies the need for local, accessible services.

#### **Small, Close-Knit Community Character**

Florence and surrounding coastal communities are closely knit with multi-generational ties. Many residents have deep roots in the area, while others are drawn by its natural beauty. When needs emerge, the community rallies together to solve problems. This includes PeaceHealth caregivers who volunteer at community organizations and events beyond their work duties. This collaborative spirit shapes how services and partnerships are developed.

#### **Critical Access Hospital Service Area**

As the region's only critical access hospital and Level III trauma center, PeaceHealth Peace Harbor serves as the primary health care provider for a geographically dispersed rural population. The hospital must provide equal access to high-quality, appropriate, and integrated community care across a wide service area with limited alternative options.

#### **Seasonal Population Dynamics**

As a coastal community, Florence experiences seasonal population fluctuations that impact service demand and resource availability throughout the year, affecting everything from health care utilization to farmers market access.

#### **Limited Infrastructure**

The community faces infrastructure limitations including lack of retail pharmacy access, limited public transportation options, and fewer support services compared to urban areas. The childcare desert status and workforce shortages are particularly acute in this rural setting.

#### **Multi-County Service Area**

Peace Harbor Medical Center's primary service region spans three counties (Lane, Lincoln, and Douglas), creating coordination challenges and requiring partnerships across multiple jurisdictions to address community needs effectively.

### **Strengths of the Community**

#### **Strong Network of Nonprofit Organizations**

The community is blessed with a strong network of nonprofit service organizations delivering programs designed to improve physical and mental health and increase access to care. Partner organizations include Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane, Florence Farmers Market, Mapleton Food Share, Siuslaw Valley Christian, Soroptimists International, Western Lane Mobile Integrated Health, Siuslaw Outreach Services, Western Lane Crisis Response, Florence United Methodist Church, and Food Backpack for Kids.

#### **Collaborative Community Spirit**

Florence and surrounding coastal communities are closely knit, with residents who rally together when needs emerge. This includes multi-generational ties and a strong volunteer culture. PeaceHealth caregivers selflessly step in to help where needed, both as part of their work and as volunteers at community organizations and events.

#### **Innovative Public-Private Partnerships**

The community demonstrates strength in forming grassroots coalitions and partnerships across sectors. Examples include the collaboration between school districts, health care providers, and community organizations to create Community Resource Centers, and PeaceHealth's partnership with Lane County to develop a co-located behavioral health campus.

#### **Better Mental Health Provider Ratios**

Lane County has 90 people for every mental health provider available, which is significantly better than the state average of 150 and the national average of 320, indicating relatively strong mental health infrastructure compared to other regions.

#### **Natural Beauty and Outdoor Opportunities**

The coastal location provides abundant natural beauty and outdoor opportunities that support physical activity, mental well-being, and quality of life for residents, particularly children growing up in communities like Mapleton.

#### **Major Employer Presence**

PeaceHealth is one of the largest employers in Lane County with more than 4,000 employees throughout the Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend service area, providing economic stability and employment opportunities for the region.

#### **Committed Health Care Provider**

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center has served the community since 1989 with 398 caregivers and 237 physicians and clinicians, demonstrating long-term commitment to providing comprehensive health care services including emergency care, maternity services, mental health treatment, and general medicine as a critical access hospital.

#### **Substantial Community Investment**

In 2024, PeaceHealth contributed over \$1.2 million in community benefit cash donations, \$600,000 in reduced-cost property leases, and \$810,000 toward health care workforce development programs, demonstrating significant financial commitment to community well-being.

#### **Educational Partnerships**

Strong partnerships exist with educational institutions including school districts and Lane Community College to support workforce development, early learning programs, and student services that address health and social needs.

#### **Food Security Infrastructure**

The community has established food security programs including the Florence Farmers Market with SNAP matching programs and the Veggie Rx prescription initiative that connects health care with nutrition access.

### **Priorities and Goals**

#### **Four Community Health Pillars**

PeaceHealth has established four pillars that inform community health priorities: 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 Equity Focus**

The hospital prioritizes improved health equity for vulnerable populations including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, those living in rural and remote areas, children and teens, low-income families, people with mental health and physical disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. PeaceHealth aims to ensure all communities receive just and respectful treatment with equitable access to opportunities and resources.

#### **Childcare and Affordable Housing**

PeaceHealth is partnering with Elm Park Early Learning Center to address the childcare desert. The facility will provide 32 affordable apartment units for families at or below 60% of area median income co-located with four early childhood education classrooms serving up to 80 children aged three months to five years. This addresses both housing affordability and childcare access simultaneously.

**Mental Health Crisis Response**

The hospital invested \$250,000 through its community impact fund to support Western Lane Crisis Response (WLCR), which provides 24/7 crisis intervention services. WLCR offers immediate assistance for mental health emergencies, grief, trauma, and homelessness, helping reduce strain on emergency departments and law enforcement. The program includes an Outreach Coordinator who identifies high utilizers of emergency services and connects them with resources.

**School-Based Mental Health Services**

PeaceHealth Medical Group operates in partnership with Mapleton School District and Siuslaw School District to provide mental health services at Community Resource Centers located in schools. These centers offer easily accessible counseling, behavioral assessments, wraparound care, and referral assistance regardless of insurance coverage or family income. PeaceHealth providers offer virtual visits for students in need, ensuring timely access without delay.

**Behavioral Health Campus Expansion**

PeaceHealth is partnering with LifePoint Health to develop a 96-bed standalone inpatient behavioral health hospital near Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend, nearly tripling current inpatient behavioral health capacity. The facility will also offer intensive outpatient programs. This campus will be co-located with Lane County's Lane Stabilization Center, creating a comprehensive behavioral health resource hub.

**Youth Support and After-School Programming**

The hospital has donated \$15,000 to the Boys & Girls Club of Western Lane since 2022, supporting programs that provide safe spaces for elementary through high school-aged children to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. Programs include culinary education (533 experiences in 2023), community service (400 hours in 2023), literacy programs (48 unique experiences), and STEM education through 3-D printing and computer literacy.

**Food Security and Nutrition Programs**

PeaceHealth has invested over \$35,000 in the Veggie Rx program since 2021, where providers write prescriptions for fresh fruits and vegetables for patients with diet-related health challenges and food insecurity. Over 700 prescriptions have been written, redeemable at the Florence Farmers Market. The program includes cooking classes and food storage education to maximize produce utilization and reduce spoilage.

**Workforce Development**

The hospital invested \$810,000 in nursing and career technical education programs in Lane County to address workforce shortages and create pathways to health care careers for underserved communities, recognizing the critical need for qualified professionals across all sectors.

**Caregiver Resource Groups**

PeaceHealth's Mission Integrity and Cultural Fulfillment hosts Caregiver Resource Groups (CRGs), which are voluntary, employee-led groups for caregivers with shared cultural identities and life experiences. These groups create an inclusive environment, build awareness, engage in community partnerships, enhance culturally responsive care, and build a culture of belonging internally.

**Property and Facility Support**

The hospital contributed \$600,000 in in-kind, no-cost, and low-cost property leases for clinical and administrative workspaces to assist nonprofit community partners in maintaining sustainable operations in suitable facilities.

**Comprehensive Community Partnerships**

PeaceHealth partners with diverse organizations across multiple sectors to address social, economic, and environmental factors that impact health, working with organizations including Siuslaw Valley Christian, Soroptimists International, Western Lane Mobile Integrated Health,

Siuslaw Outreach Services, and Florence United Methodist Church to support essential community programs.