

Community Impact Report 2023



A Message from Chanda Chacón, MPH, FACHE President & CEO



I am excited to share the 2023 Children’s Nebraska Community Impact Report. This report highlights the work and dedication of our Children’s team toward living our mission of improving the life of every child through exceptional Care, Advocacy, Research and Education. It emphasizes our commitment to the communities where our patients and families live, learn and play.

This year’s report features many ways in which Children’s responds to health-related needs identified in our communities.

- The COPE program is training primary care providers to address the behavioral health needs of their patients with confidence.
- A tuberculosis case identified in late 2023 resulted in rapid activation of our team to test hundreds of children and support their families.
- An intern program for high school and college students offers experience in healthcare, building a future workforce pipeline.
- Project ADAM trains and prepares schools to respond to sudden cardiac arrest, improving outcomes and saving lives.

You’ll find these stories and more among the pages of this year’s report.

The quality of a child’s health is largely influenced by factors in their own schools, neighborhoods and communities. Children’s Nebraska is committed to improving child health by sharing our resources and nurturing relationships with community partners to contribute to the best possible health outcomes for kids, their families and caregivers.

Sincerely,

Chanda Chacón, MPH, FACHE
President & CEO

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MISSION

To improve the life of every child through exceptional Care, Advocacy, Research and Education.

VISION

To be a global leader for children’s health.

VALUES | INNOVATION | COLLABORATION | ACCOUNTABILITY | RESPECT | EXCELLENCE

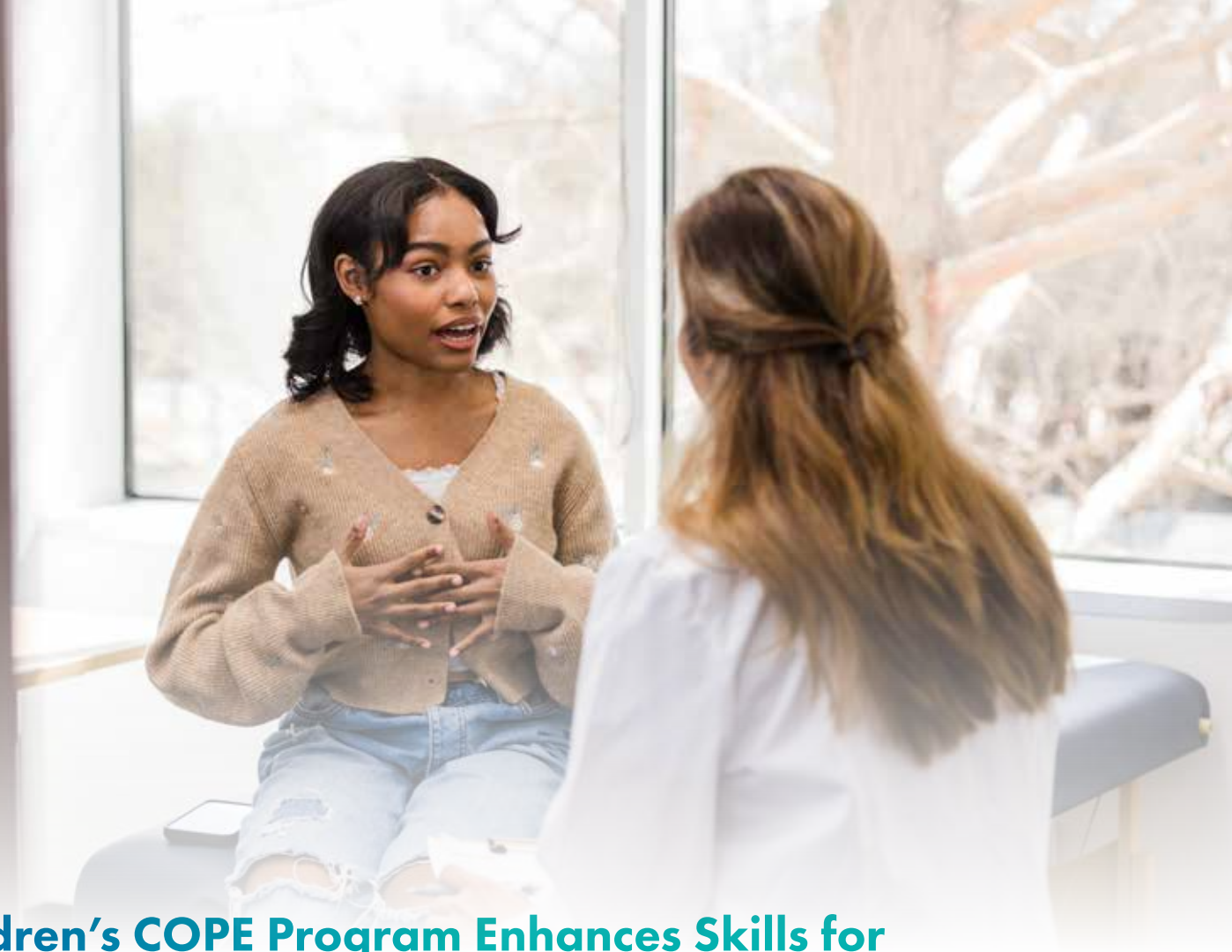
OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Children’s Nebraska is committed to improving health equity for all children. We collaborate widely, engage our community, advocate tirelessly and invest intentionally in the future of all children, particularly those in greatest need.



Total patient visits **708,391**

Unique patients served **156,888**



Children’s COPE Program Enhances Skills for Pediatric Mental Health Needs

According to the 2024 Pediatric Community Health Needs Assessment, more than 22% of children in the Omaha area have been diagnosed with anxiety, up from 10% in 2015. Youth ages 13 to 17 and those from very low-income families are experiencing the highest rates of anxiety.

Finding a mental health professional who can help a child in a timely manner can be challenging. “There is a pediatric mental health crisis in Nebraska, and a third of the state’s counties have no behavioral health provider of any kind,” says Jennifer McWilliams, MD, Children’s division chief of Pediatric Psychiatry and medical director for Children’s Outreach for Provider Education (COPE) program. “We need to rethink how care is delivered and who best to meet the needs of families than the primary care providers in their own communities — the providers they trust and have established relationships with.”

With the help of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, Children’s Nebraska launched the COPE program in 2023 with a focus on training the state’s primary care providers to treat and manage mild to moderate mental health conditions in their pediatric patients. Developed in partnership with the REACH Institute, participating providers learn how to assess and manage conditions like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, ADHD and suicidality

in a pediatric population through lectures, table activities and role playing. After the training, Children’s team of child and adolescent psychiatrists continue providing guidance through COPE’s consultation services for behavioral health therapies, psychiatry and medication management.

“Providers can call in with therapeutic questions, check dosing for more complicated cases or request a mental health navigator to help patients transition to higher levels of care,” explains Dr. McWilliams. “We want to train primary care providers, but we also want to ensure they feel supported and have the right tools available to make clinical decisions that follow best practice.”

In year one, 94 providers completed 20 hours of instruction, meaning Nebraska has 94 more medical professionals better equipped to address the state’s mental health crisis due to the work of COPE.

A project of the **Mental Health Innovation Foundation** Partners include: **Kiewit** **CBRE**

EXPANDING ACCESS TO PEDIATRIC BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER AT CHILDREN’S NEBRASKA

Opening in early 2026, in partnership with the Mental Health Innovation Foundation, the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center at Children’s Nebraska will provide a collaborative, world-class model of comprehensive behavioral and mental health care with inpatient, outpatient and partial hospitalization services, co-located with medical health needs.

38,851 PATIENTS SCREENED FOR DEPRESSION **24,722** TOTAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PATIENT VISITS

Urgent Care in Kearney Increases Access to Behavioral Health Care

The first of its kind in Nebraska, Children’s Behavioral Health Urgent Care – Kearney is dedicated to addressing the urgent behavioral and mental health needs of children and adolescents up to 22 years of age.

The urgent care fills a crucial need for Behavioral Health services in central and western Nebraska. The clinic opened July 1, 2024, and is co-located with Children’s primary care office in Kearney to improve access to crisis stabilization, psychiatric evaluation and short-term bridge care.

The Kearney clinic was funded in part thanks to funding allocated to the state of Nebraska by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. It is part of Children’s plans to develop, pilot and open innovative pediatric mental health urgent care centers in Omaha and central/western Nebraska, focused on addressing the nationwide mental health crisis at the state level and providing earlier intervention across the mental health care continuum.



Children’s Behavioral Health Urgent Care – Kearney celebrated its ribbon cutting ceremony on September 30, 2024 in partnership with McKenna’s Rae of Hope Foundation, City of Kearney and the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce.



Children's Team Responds to Community Tuberculosis Exposure

When a significant pulmonary tuberculosis exposure put hundreds of children in the Omaha area at risk, the team at Children's Nebraska came together to ensure children were cared for and screened for this highly contagious illness.

Led by the Children's Infectious Disease team, a weekend clinic tested 272 patients and responded to 247 calls to the hotline over three days. "This is truly the most important work we do — caring for the patients who need us, and being the very best for kids," says Megan Connelly, DNP, APRN-NP, vice president, Community Health & Advocacy.

Children's and Kari Neemann, MD, an infectious disease specialist at Children's, received a Challenge Coin award from the Douglas County Health Department for the quick and thorough response.

The Challenge Coin is a prestigious award to acknowledge significant achievements, dedication or exemplary service and serves as a tangible reminder of the community's appreciation and respect.



Left to right: Justin Frederick, deputy health director, Douglas County Health Department; Megan Connelly, DNP, APRN-NP, vice president, Community Health & Advocacy, Children's Nebraska; Kari Neeman, MD, infectious disease specialist, Children's Nebraska; Dr. Lindsay Huse, health director, Douglas County Health Department.



Mom Donates More than 8,600 Ounces of Breastmilk in Honor of Late Son

While facing the unimaginable loss of her 8-month-old son, George, Kelly turned her grief into action. With support from her family and Children's Nebraska's Lactation team, she donated more than 8,600 ounces leading up to George's first birthday.

The donation was processed by Children's Nebraska's Milk Depot. A Milk Depot is a healthcare or community organization that completes required screening of donor moms and collects and stores raw frozen breastmilk for donation to a Milk Bank. Children's partners with Mother's Milk Bank Colorado to help collect donated milk from qualified donors in our area and safely transports it to Mother's Milk Bank for screening, pasteurization, processing and distribution across the country.

Kelly's tremendous gift was distributed to 29 facilities in 11 states, including Nebraska, impacting nearly 50 families across the country.

"My donation was because of him. It was hard, but George kept me going to donate for other babies," Kelly says. "Even after he passed, I continued to donate for him and I just kept thinking of how he's making a difference for his friends in the neonatal intensive care unit or anyone struggling with breastfeeding. That meant the world to me."



Shortly after he was born, George was diagnosed with polymicrogyria, a condition characterized by abnormal development of the brain before birth. During his NICU stay, Kelly began to pump, and milk was provided through George's g-tube.

Child Health Research Institute Researchers Launch Rural Pediatric Obesity Study

Children's Nebraska and the University of Nebraska Medical Center unite in an innovative partnership to empower impactful pediatric research through the Child Health Research Institute (CHRI). From developing medications to treat pediatric brain tumors to exploring new surgical technologies to address epilepsy, CHRI members are changing and saving the lives of children.

Obesity poses a major health risk to children, contributing to elevated morbidity and mortality from cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. CHRI members Russell McCulloh, MD, director of clinical and translational research operations, Children's Nebraska, and Ashley Deschamp, MD, a pulmonologist at Children's, received funding from the National Institutes of Health for leading Nebraska's involvement in a national study to examine interventions for treating pediatric obesity among underserved rural children and families. Clinics located in Hastings, Kearney, Norfolk and Wahoo will enroll up to 64 participants.

"We are excited to launch this study for so many reasons," Dr. McCulloh says. "Obesity affects rural children more commonly than their urban counterparts, so we regularly hear from parents and public health leaders that they would welcome support in this area."

"This study will not only test methods of reducing obesity, but in so doing, could help us address the other serious health risks associated with being overweight," Dr. Deschamp adds. "If we can demonstrate a model that works to help children manage their weight, the downstream effects could be life changing for these kids, their families and the greater health system."



Child Health Research Institute



353
RESEARCH STUDIES

\$17.7M
INTERNAL & EXTERNAL RESEARCH FUNDING

470+
INDIVIDUALS DEDICATED TO CHILD HEALTH RESEARCH



The Journey to Health Equity: Social Determinants of Health at Children’s Nebraska

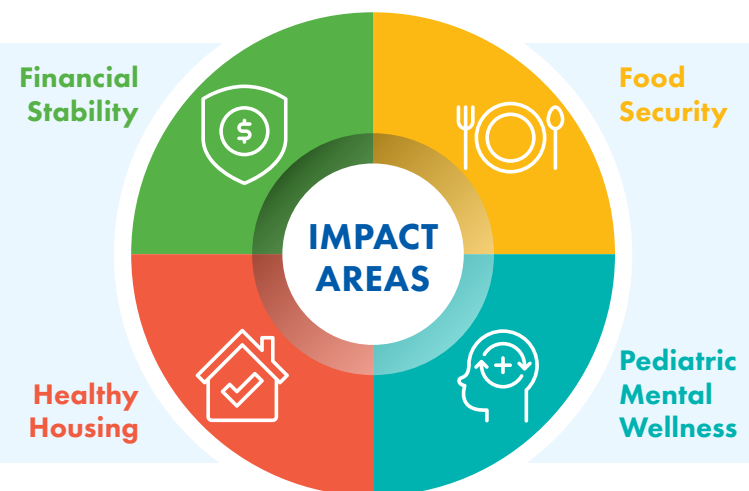
It is widely published that 80 percent of a person’s health is determined by factors in their immediate environment such as safe housing, transportation and access to healthy foods. These factors, known as social determinants of health (SDOH), largely influence the length and quality of a person’s life. Children who lack these basic human needs spend more time in the doctor’s office, and less time learning, playing and growing into healthy adults.

Health equity is reached when every person has the opportunity to achieve their full, healthy potential regardless of socio-economic status, access to resources and/or social capital. Driven by a mission to enhance health equity, especially for underrepresented children and families, Children’s Community Health & Advocacy team collaborates with key partners to positively influence the social determinants of health that bring everyone closer to health equity.

Identifying the need starts with data. Every three years, Children’s is a key leader in administering the Pediatric Community Health Needs Assessment (P-CHNA) for the region. This assessment identifies areas of need in our community and is published so the information can be shared. Compiled by surveying parents, caregivers and community members, this assessment provides an important snapshot of the community’s current health status, needs and issues.

Following the completion of the 2021 P-CHNA, Children’s Nebraska developed a three-year implementation strategy plan (ISP) defining four priority impact areas where our teams could positively influence child health and guide our efforts from 2022 through 2024.

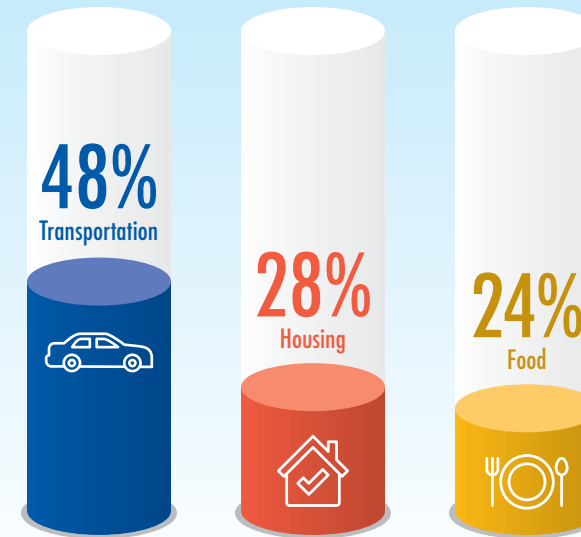
As a result of planning conversations using the P-CHNA data, alignment with Children’s strategic plan and the desire to address strategies for which health equity is needed, four impact areas were identified and prioritized, three of which are SDOH needs: financial stability, food security and healthy housing.



SDOH SCREENING

Screening for SDOH needs has been a long-time practice at Children’s Nebraska. When they arrive, patients and families are screened for basic needs like food, housing and transportation by Children’s Social Work team who then offer supports to families to help meet these immediate needs. For example, a caregiver screening positive for food insecurity may receive a voucher for a meal in the cafeteria while their child is having a procedure at the hospital. A family from outside the Omaha area may receive a gas voucher to fill up the tank for a long drive home after their child is discharged.

The Social Work team then helps families find longer-term resources to address more chronic situations. For example, Unite Nebraska offers a platform to connect families to community resources like WIC and SNAP for food assistance. Children’s Social Work team can develop plans for transportation to medical appointments using services like Uber Health. Children’s has partnered with United Way of the Midlands to connect their 211 Resource Hub directly to the Children’s GO app so families can easily identify community organizations that may be able to help address their needs.



2023 Most Requested SDOH Interventions for Children’s Patients

Social determinants, such as food insecurity, financial instability, lack of transportation resources and lack of healthy housing, are consistently identified community health needs impacting many families.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS FROM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY PLAN WORK INCLUDE:

- With the goal of raising awareness and building broader understanding of SDOH needs in our patient population and community, **Children’s team organized “community learning tours”** to various nonprofit organizations with mission alignment to one of the four impact areas.
- **The team convened a group of stakeholders** to further support planning for the Healthy Housing initiative with the Mid-America Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit and identified an internal Healthy Housing physician champion, Hana Nieber, MD, medical director, Allergy & Immunology at Children’s Nebraska.
- **Children’s Community Health & Advocacy team awarded 10 grants** of \$25,000 each to Nebraska nonprofit organizations with programs in alignment with one of the four impact areas. The funds are distributed over two years. Awardees participate in a series of learning sessions to share resources and enhance their ability to collect and share impact data.
- **To improve pediatric mental wellness, Children’s continued work on the Zero Suicide project**, a collaboration between Children’s Hospital Association, Cardinal Health Foundation and the Zero Suicide Institute. To better identify and support youth experiencing suicidal ideation, we enhanced screening tools to align with evidence-based practices and made all tools available in patient care areas.





Sports Medicine Team Equips Community Responders to Care for the Injured Athlete

Every year prior to the fall sports season, Liz LaBombard and Alicia Simmons, Children's Nebraska athletic trainers, facilitate training and education for the Bennington Fire/EMS crews, Bennington football coaches and Children's Sports Medicine team. Providing education and training for all personnel who may be caring for Bennington athletes ensures best practices are utilized and athletes receive the highest level of care possible. Participants learn about roles and responsibilities, and all practice hands-on equipment removal with football players in full equipment.

If an athlete is suffering from exertional heat illness, EMS/fire and coaching personnel are educated on cooling first and transporting second. "It is incredibly important that we get these athletes cooled as quickly as possible prior to transporting by EMS," LaBombard says. "Coaches are taught to use cold water immersion to cool an athlete in these situations."

"We take sport safety very seriously and train to be prepared for any emergency that may arise," says Kody Moffatt, MD, Sports Medicine division chief at Children's Nebraska. "It's imperative that everyone be on the same page to avoid delays in care."



Creating a Path for Future Healthcare Workers

Growing the healthcare workforce of the future is a key initiative and strategic plan goal for Children's Nebraska. One of the ways our team responds to the shortage of healthcare workers is through the Pathways to Healthcare internship program.

Pathways interns spend the summer working in clinical departments at Children's Nebraska while also exploring potential career opportunities in healthcare. The program offers career development activities such as resume and cover letter training and mock interviews. Students participate in a speaker series to learn about different departments within Children's Nebraska. Community organization tours expose them to health needs in the local population and post-secondary school visits introduce them to education pathways for pursuing their career interests. At the conclusion of the summer, each intern presents on a project completed through their clinical rotations.

Pathways to Healthcare is designed for high school students who are members of groups determined to be underrepresented in medicine. Up to 15 students, ages 16 to 19, are accepted each summer. Students are referred from participating youth-focused organizations. Recommendations for the 2024 cohort came from Avenue Scholars, Girls Inc., Latino Center of the Midlands, North Star Foundation and UNMC High School Alliance. Students are selected after an interview with their referring organization and with representatives at Children's Nebraska.

Pathways students tell us their intern experiences have made a difference in their future career plans. "We had a student come in certain they wanted to go into physical therapy. After observing a surgery in the operating room, they are now considering becoming a heart surgeon," says Katie Kodad, program manager for Culture and Inclusion.

The hands-on environment helps students gain real experience working in healthcare. "I really loved my experience in Neurodiagnostics. I was so excited to get up and come to work every morning. I interacted with a lot of patients, and I think that's what made it really special," says one Pathways intern.

Summer interns explored careers in the following departments:

- CARES Ambulatory Service & Recovery
- Child Life
- Lab/Pathology
- Med Surg
- Neurodiagnostic/Sleep Lab
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- Pediatric Intensive Care Unit
- Radiology
- Rehab
- Respiratory Therapy
- Urology

In addition to Pathways to Healthcare, Children's Nebraska offers a number of other engagement opportunities including Career Quest, a half-day experience where high school students can explore healthcare careers. For more information, contact: careerquest@ChildrensNebraska.org





Project ADAM Heart Safe Schools Program Prepares Nebraska Communities to Save Lives

Children’s Nebraska was designated a Project ADAM affiliate hospital in 2022. Project ADAM’s Heart Safe Schools program ensures schools have well-maintained automated external defibrillators (AED), CPR/AED trained staff and a practiced plan to respond to a sudden collapse on campus, giving students, staff and visitors the best possible chance to survive a sudden cardiac arrest.

Since Children’s launched Project ADAM in Nebraska, more than 110 sites have been designated “Heart Safe.” AEDs and CPR training save lives. Four “saves” have been reported in Project ADAM-designated school buildings since Children’s became an affiliate.



Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) received the district-wide Heart Safe School designation for its 70 school buildings and sites. LPS is the first district in Nebraska to achieve this status.



Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the Nebraska State Athletic Association (NSAA) requires that all school athletics and activities coaches and sponsors have CPR/AED training every two years. Children’s is supporting this effort by building a database of training locations so coaches can identify a convenient location to secure CPR/AED certification anywhere in the state.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a leading cause of death in the United States. Nearly 90% of those who suffer an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest do not survive. Survival rates decrease by 10% with each minute of delayed defibrillation. The only way to treat sudden cardiac arrest is CPR combined with an AED to shock the heart. Access to AEDs is key to Project ADAM’s Heart Safe Schools designation. School staff receive training on the placement locations within the school building and on proper AED use.

To ensure schools have working AEDs readily accessible, Children’s distributed 85 AEDs to schools during the 2023-24 school year. Schools receiving the AEDs have agreed to complete the Project ADAM Heart Safe designation within one year. Distribution of the AEDs was funded in part by the generosity of Children’s Nebraska Foundation donors. Future donations will allow Children’s to distribute even more AEDs and potentially save more lives.



Concordia Junior/Senior High received “Heart Safe” designation during the 2022-23 school year.

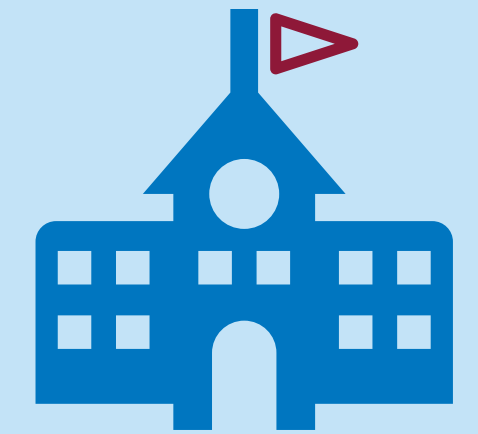
Matthew Sorensen, MD, is an electrophysiologist at Children’s Nebraska’s Criss Heart Center and serves as the regional medical director for Project ADAM. “I have been impressed that so many schools across Nebraska have AEDs without any required mandates,” says Dr. Sorensen. “Nebraskans are committed to doing the right thing because they are invested in the safety of their children and their communities. This has given us a significant head start, and we are getting attention nationally for rapid program adoption in rural and urban communities. This has enabled us to take a leadership role in Project ADAM across the nation for tracking AED usage statistics and long-term outcomes of victims of sudden cardiac arrest with many children’s hospitals across the country.”



Angelina is a Lincoln Public Schools student who experienced cardiac arrest at school. Her experience inspired the school district to achieve Heart Safe designation for all buildings.



Availability and awareness of AEDs is critical in responding to a sudden cardiac arrest. Pictured here are (from left to right): Matthew Sorensen, MD, regional Medical Director for Project ADAM, Kim Castellano, Project ADAM coordinator, and Holly Dingman, director, Community Health & Advocacy.



Heart Safe School Project ADAM

Project ADAM stands for Automated Defibrillators in Adam’s Memory. It is a national initiative named for Adam Lemel, a 17-year-old who collapsed and died from sudden cardiac arrest in 1999 while playing basketball. Defibrillation could have saved his life. Adam’s parents collaborated with Children’s Wisconsin to create the program in his memory.

Heart Safe Schools have taken all the steps necessary to safeguard the health of students, including:

- Ensure AEDs are available and accessible
- Have a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) emergency response plan and trained emergency response team
- Perform SCA drills annually
- Maintain equipment and designation

Community Impact 2023

Children's Nebraska's Community Benefit programs reach patients, families and community members throughout Nebraska and across the United States. Here are some key metrics that highlight our impact.

CAROLYN SCOTT RAINBOW HOUSE

Children's hospitality house offers a home away from home for families who travel more than 90 miles for care.

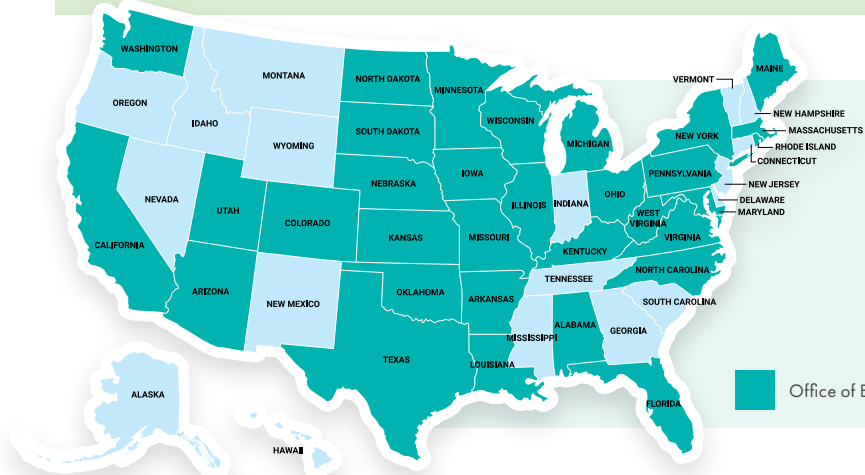
29,532 TOTAL GUESTS (ADULTS & CHILDREN) **11,111** OVERNIGHT STAYS

GUESTS CAME FROM **36 STATES** **67%** OF FAMILIES FROM NEBRASKA **20%** FROM IOWA **5%** FROM SOUTH DAKOTA



Office of Education

Since 2017, Children's has hosted student learners from **32 US states** and the District of Columbia, representing **120+ colleges and universities** and **72 majors and professional programs**.



Office of Education Training

EMS Tier Program



Children's Transport team assists in pediatric emergency response when requested by local city/county emergency medical units. In 2023, Children's team responded to **39 requests** for pediatric expertise.

Pediatric Trauma Nurse Training



Pediatric Trauma Nurse Training prepares emergency nurses for life-threatening trauma care and is available to nurses in any hospital system.

37 certified in the Trauma Nurse Core Course

17 certified in Advanced Trauma Care for Nurses

Injury Prevention



Our injury prevention team distributed **195 car seats** to ensure child passenger safety for families in need.

Visionmobile



1,384 students received vision exams during the 2023-24 school year.

974 students received glasses as a result of the exam.

Volunteer and Community Service



Children's gives each employed team member eight hours of paid volunteer time every year. In 2023, team members volunteered **2,353 hours** in the community.

Children's team members committed **2,871 hours** to service on non-profit boards and professional organizations.

Community Benefit Expenses

2023 Children's Financial Commitment to Community

TOTAL COMMUNITY BENEFIT: **\$205.9 MILLION** (34% OF ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENSES)



Category Expense Summaries

Pediatric Access to Care **\$68.5 MILLION**

Children's provides specialty care close to home for kids in Nebraska. Nebraska Pediatric Providers employs our physician team, fulfilling a critical access to care need in our state.

Health Professions Education **\$27.5 MILLION**

As an academic teaching hospital, Children's provides valuable community benefit by educating the next generation of caregivers. This investment includes direct financial support of medical education, internships, residencies and fellowships, as well as nursing and allied health education programs. Children's is also the region's leader in pediatric-specific continuing medical education, reaching healthcare professionals throughout a five-state area. In 2023, Children's touched the lives of 2,314 learners.

Research **\$9.4 MILLION**

Children's is committed to expanding pediatric expertise in medicine and developing new innovations, treatments and cures. By funding research that advances knowledge about childhood health and diseases, we aim to improve the lives of children across the region and around the world.

Community Health Improvement **\$6.5 MILLION**

So much of a child's health is influenced by their home, school and neighborhood. Children's supports programs, education and services outside of direct patient care designed to improve overall community health by responding to identified social determinants of health needs. Additionally, Children's provides contributions to non-profit organizations whose work impacts community health needs and aligns with its mission.

Behavioral Health and Home Health Subsidized Health Services **\$4.6 MILLION**

Children's supports several clinical programs that have been identified as addressing a need in the community despite a financial loss to the hospital. Clinical services that meet the needs of the region's child-patient population delivered at a financial loss after reimbursement and charity care considerations are recognized, including Behavioral Health and Home Healthcare services.

Unreimbursed Medicaid **\$84 MILLION**

Children's accepts any patient covered by Medicaid insurance. The unpaid costs of Medicaid programs and the total benefits for the poor reflect the shortfall from payment methods employed by government programs versus the actual costs to provide care.

Financial Assistance* **\$5.4 MILLION**

Free and discounted healthcare is provided for patients who qualify for Children's Financial Assistance programs. Eligibility is based upon family income, size and other circumstances. When outside sources have been exhausted, or when families identify themselves as unable to pay, team members assist them in applying for uncompensated care.



*Financial Assistance Policy Summary: To help all children receive the care they need, Children's provides financial assistance for medically necessary and emergency care to patients who meet eligibility requirements. Children's Financial Assistance policy can be found at [ChildrensNebraska.org/hospital-experience/billing-insurance-medical-records/financial-assistance/](https://www.childrensnebraska.org/hospital-experience/billing-insurance-medical-records/financial-assistance/)

