

2026 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2027–2029

Introduction

St. Vincent Health (SVH) will use the findings and recommendations of the 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to guide its community health improvement efforts during 2027–2029. The CHNA identified three strategic priorities where SVH can have the greatest impact: improving billing education, programs, and responsiveness; enhancing specialty-care services and processes; and expanding the healthcare workforce to meet community needs.

The implementation plan recognizes the realities of providing healthcare in a rural, isolated community and focuses SVH resources on initiatives that are achievable, measurable, and sustainable. The plan also emphasizes partnerships with regional healthcare providers and community organizations when services cannot reasonably be provided locally.

The three-year approach will progress from:

- building the foundation in 2027
- expanding and integrating services in 2028
- evaluating and sustaining improvements in 2029

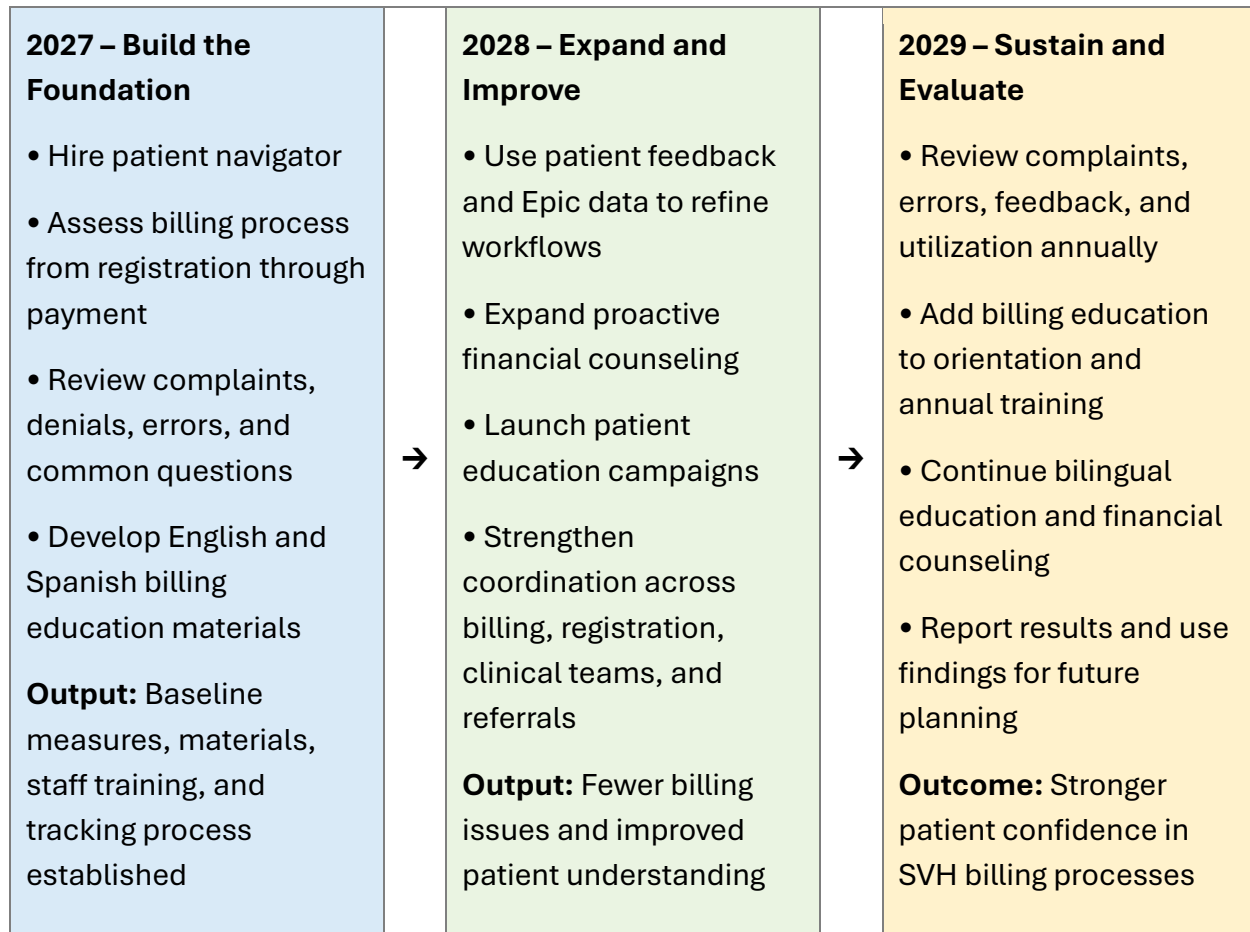
PRIORITY 1: Improve Billing Education, Programs, and Responsiveness

CHNA Need

Billing concerns were identified as an important reason residents seek care outside Lake County. Nearly one in four survey respondents identified billing issues as a reason for traveling outside the community, including concerns about hidden costs, coding discrepancies, out-of-network services, and referral issues. The CHNA also found that nearly half of survey respondents identified cost as a barrier to healthcare access.

SVH has already taken steps to address these concerns, including hiring a financial counselor in 2026 and standardizing registration staff training. The next phase will build on these efforts by improving transparency, patient education, financial assistance navigation, and responsiveness. St. Vincent Health will also be transitioning to Epic EMR in the 2nd quarter of 2027. This transition and the training involved will vastly improve billing processes in 2027 and beyond.

Key Activities Map: Billing



2027 – Build the Foundation

Measures/Outcomes

- Billing education materials developed in English and Spanish.
- 100% of registration/front-end staff receive annual billing and financial-assistance training.
- Baseline established for billing complaints, billing-related patient contacts, and billing/referral errors.
- Financial counselor utilization tracked.
- Patient satisfaction with billing communication established as a baseline.

2028 – Expand and Improve

Measures /Outcomes

- Reduction in billing-related complaints from the 2027 baseline.
- Increase in patients receiving financial assistance information.
- Reduction in identified billing/referral errors.
- Improvement in patient-reported understanding of billing and financial options.
- Increased awareness of SVH financial counseling and assistance programs.

2029 – Sustain and Evaluate

Measures/Outcomes

- Sustained reduction in billing-related complaints and errors.
- Improved patient understanding of financial responsibility and available assistance.
- Improved patient confidence in SVH billing processes.
- Billing education and financial navigation become established components of the SVH patient experience.

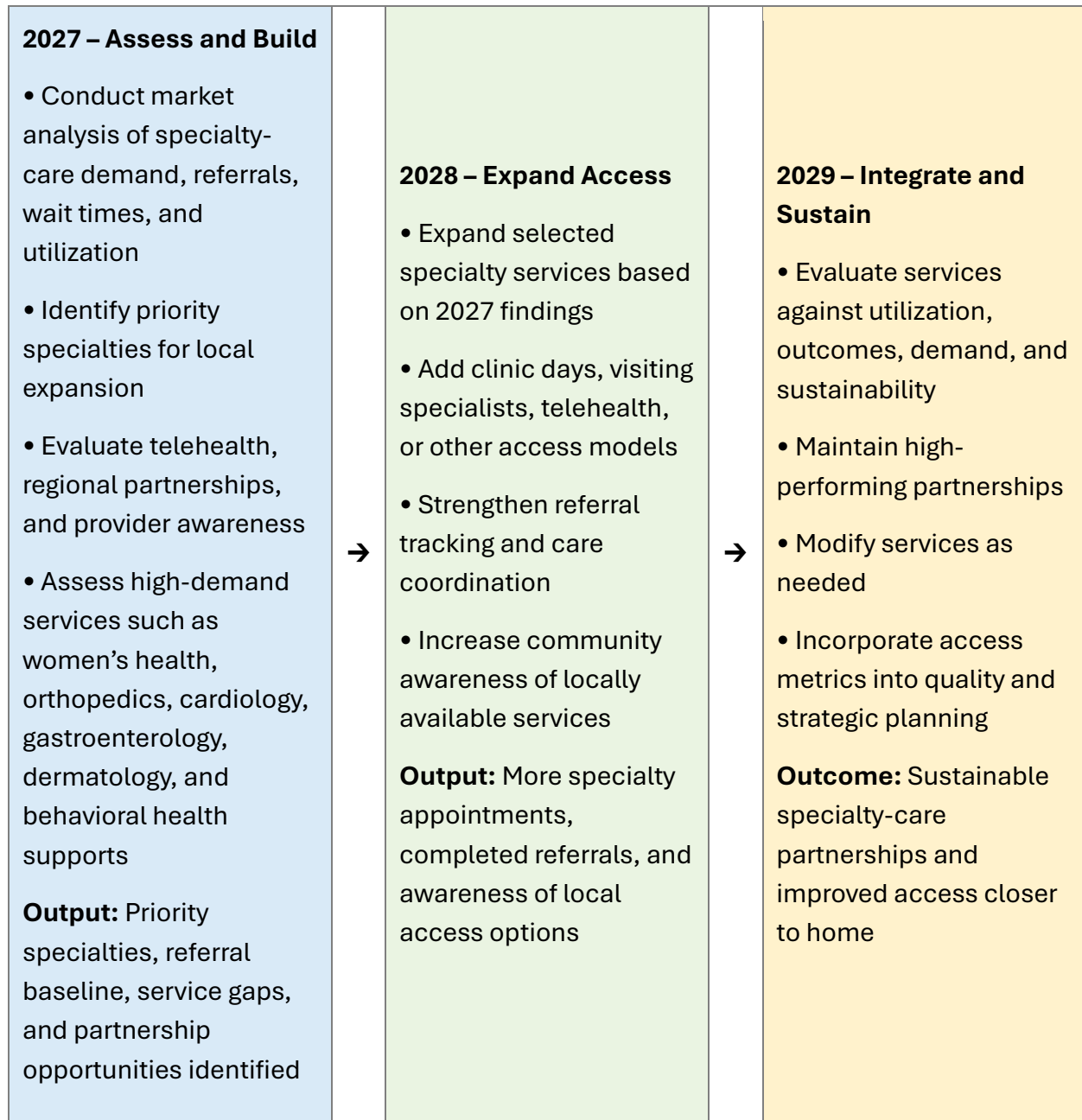
PRIORITY 2: Enhance Specialty-Care Services and Processes to Meet Community Needs

CHNA Need

Specialty care was the most frequently requested service expansion in the 2026 community survey, identified by 44% of respondents. Residents specifically identified orthopedics, cardiology, dermatology, gastroenterology, surgery, women's health, and other specialties as services for which they frequently travel outside the community.

The CHNA recognizes that SVH cannot provide every specialty locally. Therefore, the strategy will combine targeted local specialty expansion, telehealth, improved referral processes, and regional partnerships.

Key Activities Map: Specialties



2027 – Assess and Build

Measures/Outcomes

- Specialty service needs assessment completed.
- Priority specialties identified and approved by leadership.

- Number of specialty partnerships established or expanded.
- Baseline referral volume, referral completion, wait times, and out-of-area referrals established.
- Provider education materials developed describing available SVH specialty services.

2028 – Expand Access

Measures/Outcomes

- Increase in specialty appointments available through SVH or SVH-supported partnerships.
- Increase in completed specialty referrals.
- Reduction in unnecessary out-of-area travel for selected services.
- Increased community awareness of available specialty services.
- Patient satisfaction with specialty-care coordination.

2029 – Integrate and Sustain

Measures/Outcomes

- Greater access to high-demand specialty services.
- Improved coordination between SVH and regional specialty providers.
- More patients able to receive appropriate specialty care closer to home.
- Stronger referral relationships and reduced barriers to completing specialty care.
- Sustainable specialty-care partnerships aligned with community need and SVH capacity.

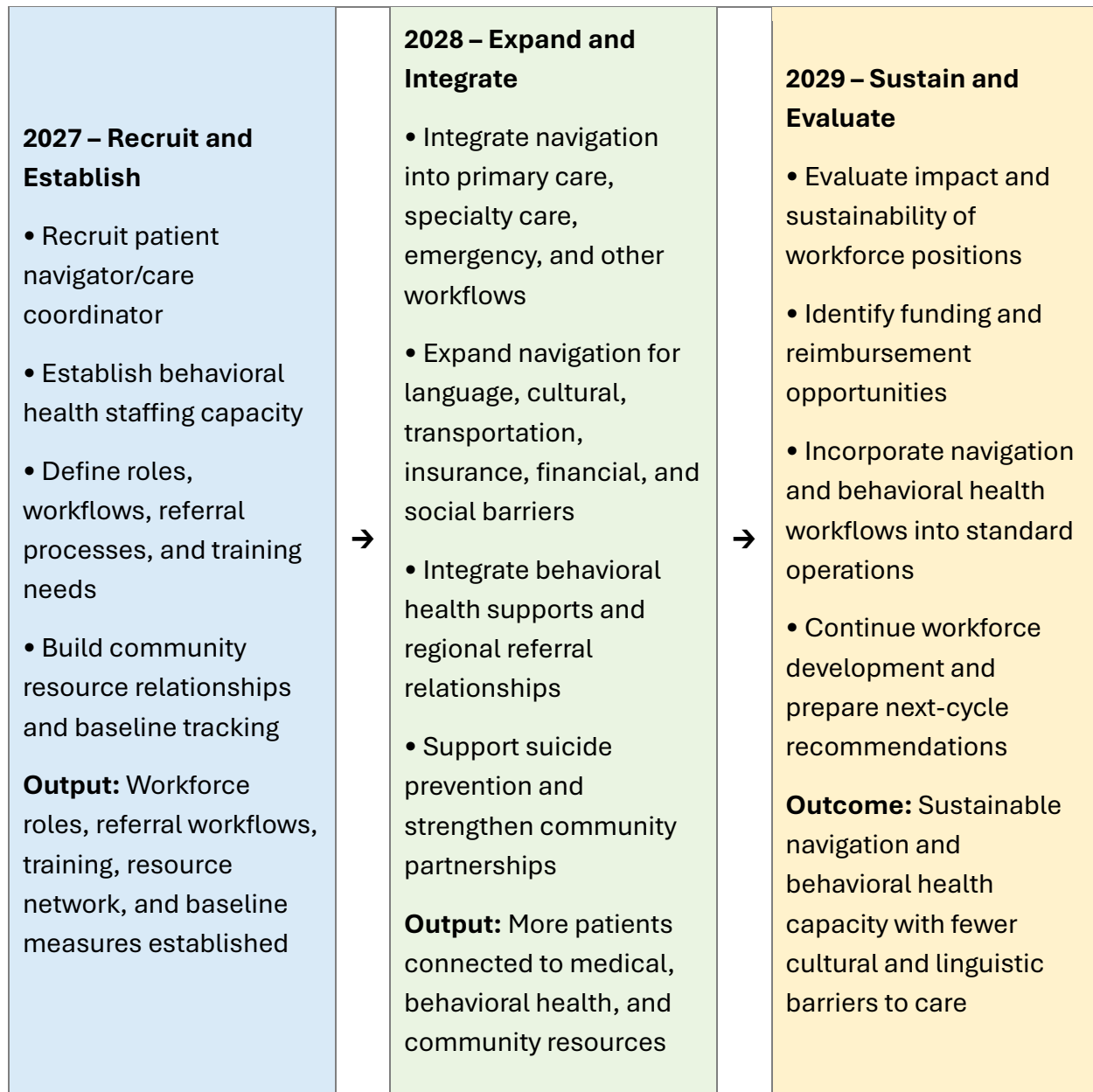
PRIORITY 3: Expand the Workforce to Meet Community Needs

CHNA Need

The CHNA identified cultural and linguistic responsiveness and behavioral health workforce capacity as significant opportunities. Approximately 33% of Lake County residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 19% speak a language other than English at

home. The CHNA specifically recommends hiring a patient navigator who reflects the community's culture and hiring a licensed clinical social worker to address behavioral health needs.

Key Activities Map – Workforce/Community Needs



2027 – Recruit and Establish

Measures/Outcomes

- Patient navigator/care coordinator hired.
- LCSW or equivalent behavioral health capacity established.
- Staff complete required cultural responsiveness and care-coordination training.
- Number of patients receiving navigation services tracked.
- Number of behavioral health referrals and successful connections tracked.
- Community resource referral network established.

2028 – Expand and Integrate

Measures/Outcomes

- Increase in patients receiving navigation services.
- Increase in successful connections to needed medical, behavioral health, and community services.
- Reduction in missed appointments associated with identified access barriers.
- Increase in behavioral health referrals successfully connected to care.
- Increase in patients reporting that their cultural and linguistic needs are being met.
- Increased use of interpreter and culturally responsive services.

2029 – Sustain and Evaluate

Measures/Outcomes

- Sustained patient navigation and behavioral health capacity.
- Improved connection to healthcare and community resources.
- Reduced cultural and linguistic barriers to care.
- Improved behavioral health referral and care coordination.
- Stronger regional partnerships supporting behavioral health and social needs.
- A more culturally responsive workforce aligned with the needs of Lake County.

Implementation and Accountability

SVH will monitor implementation of the three priorities through an annual CHNA Implementation Review.

Key Activities



Key Performance Areas

Across all three priorities, SVH will monitor:

- Access to services
- Patient experience and satisfaction
- Billing complaints and responsiveness

- Financial counseling utilization
- Specialty referral volume and completion
- Specialty-care wait times
- Out-of-area referrals and travel when measurable
- Patient navigation utilization
- Behavioral health referrals and successful connections
- Cultural and linguistic responsiveness
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Community and patient feedback
- Sustainability of new services and partnerships

Community Engagement

SVH will continue engaging patients, community members, providers, public health partners, and regional organizations throughout implementation. Patient and community feedback will be used to evaluate whether initiatives are addressing the barriers identified in the 2026 CHNA and to identify emerging needs.

Conclusion

The 2027–2029 CHNA Implementation Plan provides SVH with a focused and measurable framework for responding to the priorities identified by the community. The plan builds on work already underway, including financial counseling, expanded specialty partnerships, earlier clinic access, and new clinical services.

By improving the patient billing experience, strategically expanding specialty-care access, and developing a workforce capable of addressing cultural, linguistic, behavioral health, and care-coordination needs, SVH can strengthen access to care while remaining responsive to the realities of rural healthcare.

The goal is not to provide every service locally, but to ensure that Lake County residents can understand their options, access the care they need, navigate the healthcare system successfully, and receive appropriate care as close to home as possible.