



# Wayne County Health Report

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## **Abstract**

This report examines the healthcare, education, workforce, and public health needs of Wayne County, Iowa, highlighting the unique challenges faced by this rural community. Through a gap analysis, the report identifies critical workforce shortages, particularly in healthcare, and explores strategies to enhance recruitment and retention of healthcare professionals. Opportunities for improvement include increasing staffing levels, partnering with local educational institutions to create pathways for students into healthcare careers, and utilizing telehealth to address mental health service shortages. The report further recommends community engagement initiatives such as career fairs, student loan repayment programs, and flexible work environments to attract and retain staff. By aligning these strategies with the Healthy People 2030 objectives, the report underscores the importance of addressing mental health, healthcare access, and substance use disorders.

## **1. Introduction**

This report investigates Wayne County's needs related to healthcare, education, workforce, and public health by using interviews, county resources, and state-level data for comparison. This rural county in southern Iowa faces distinct challenges in healthcare and workforce development.

## **2. Gap Analysis: Healthcare Workforce Gaps**

### **Opportunities**

Retention for healthcare workers in Wayne County is very high due to night and weekend differentials and sign on bonuses. However, Wayne County can improve working conditions and job satisfaction by increasing staffing numbers and partnering with local educational institutions. Increasing staffing numbers would take a lot of stress off healthcare workers and improve job satisfaction. By partnering with local educational institutions, this would give students an opportunity to explore healthcare jobs and have a direct path into working in healthcare. There are not many opportunities for students in Wayne County to go into the healthcare field, so providing these opportunities would enhance recruitment.

The closest college to Wayne County is Indian Hills Community College which is approximately an hour away (Indian Hills Community College, 2023). This makes it difficult for students to explore healthcare classes or get certifications while in high school. It is also a lengthy drive for students who may be looking to live at home while pursuing a healthcare degree. Currently there are opportunities for students to shadow in the hospital if they are interested in a specific healthcare career. Having more partnerships with local high schools and community colleges could help improve the number of individuals pursuing a healthcare career. This could be done by providing a hybrid schedule which would allow students to take online courses and go in person once or twice a week for hands-on activities.

Similarly to education, the healthcare field can utilize online resources to improve healthcare and patient outcomes. There is currently a mental health provider shortage in Wayne County with the wait being months (Iowa Health and Human Services, 2024). The hospitals and clinics in Wayne County can utilize telehealth to provide more mental health services to patients. This can open positions for providers who will work remotely and not live in Wayne County but still provide care to residents of the county who may need mental health treatment or are unable to travel for treatment.

### **3. Gap Analysis: Healthcare Workforce Development for High school students**

#### **Opportunities**

##### *Enhancing Recruitment and Retention*

Career fairs and workshops within the community - One way to get local students more educated on healthcare career opportunities is to organize community events at schools or public events. Many high school students may not know about all the career path options they have after high school, and hosting workshops or fair booths with more information could be very beneficial. Promoting and providing more information on specifically the Wayne County Hospital health care system could enhance recruitment.

##### *Health Care Employee Repayment Programs*

Local clinics and the hospital in Wayne County could improve employment retention rates by considering student loan repayment plans. With these types of programs, new graduates that are pursuing their health care career from certain institutions could qualify for repayment of their loans and school tuition. Certain criteria such as the specific institution the individual attended, and having a sign-on contract that requires employment for a given amount of time would be required. Additionally, by accepting a variety of different institutional programs for this kind of plan, this could allow more individuals to meet the criteria and work for the local facility.

##### *Workplace Environment and Feasible Scheduling*

Another way to enhance recruitment and enhance retention is by displaying how good a work environment is. Clinical leadership teams must promote positive work environments and flexible schedules, if possible, to their employees. By doing so, new graduate students looking for a career are likely to consider employment there, especially coming onto a new job. Furthermore, these employees are likely to stay working there longer if they feel comfortable and have good job satisfaction.

#### **Expanding Training and Education Programs**

##### *Online Courses and Hybrid Classes*

Online and hybrid courses can encourage further training and education for those who do not live close to health care resources. Students interested in nursing, radiology, etc., may attend online courses through colleges that are perhaps in the state, but still too far to drive every day. For example, students living in rural Iowa towns in Wayne County may take online courses 80% of the time but could meet in person several times a month. Meeting in-person several times a month or semester would foster academic engagement while providing flexibility for these students.

### *Youth Engagement Opportunities in Wayne County*

Another important aspect of expanding training and education of these health care careers is to reach out to the younger generations earlier on. Before and after-school programs for elementary and middle school students could consider career exploration activities. These programs could consider having guest speakers that work in local health care visit or organize educational games for younger students to learn and enjoy. The purpose would be to give these young students a basic idea of what a health care career is like but also create fun activities while they learn.

## **4. Healthy People 2030 Objectives (OR Global Sustainable goal)**

**Mental Health** - As mentioned in Part A, there are concerns of mental health resources in the community. Many individuals experiencing crises will go to the emergency department to seek treatment but still may not get the help they need. There is a significant lack of providers in the area for mental health counseling and treatment, making Wayne County's most significant concern mental health care.

**Access to Health Care** - Residents in Wayne County can be at a disadvantage when it comes to health care access because of transportation needs, lack of providers, or lack of coverage. According to an interview with a local hospital employee, a significant barrier for patients is dealing with Medicare Advantage Insurance plans.

**Substance Abuse and Addiction** - The purpose of this objective is to reduce the use of substances such as opioids or alcohol in a community and create more access to treatment. As noted in Part A, Wayne County unfortunately struggles with substance use disorder and limited help resources in their region.

## **5. Develop a population focused Nursing Diagnosis supported by the Healthy People 2030 goal**

- Risk for Impaired Mental Health related to limited access to mental health resources, as evidenced by socioeconomic factors affecting well-being in the Wayne County population.
- Ineffective Health Maintenance related to lack of access to healthcare services, as evidenced by socioeconomic barriers, and low health insurance coverage among residents of Wayne County, Iowa (US News Healthiest Communities, n.d.).
- Risk for Substance Use Disorders related to increased availability of substances, social isolation, and limited access to treatment, as evidenced by reports of rising substance use rates, lack of care facilities, and high levels of social isolation in community surveys from Wayne County (US News Healthiest Communities, n.d.).

## 6. Community Engagement

No further interviews were conducted.

## 7. Evidence-Based Recommendations (Community/Population Intervention)- MDH Intervention Wheel MDH Intervention Wheel Recommendations:

- Strategy: Outreach and Advocacy to Expand Mental Health Services.
  - Rationale: Wayne County has a high unmet demand for mental health services, along with extremely long wait times for first appointment.
  - Increasing access to mental health services is critical to address the mental health issues in the county. Integrating telehealth services can greatly improve mental health outcomes Wayne County by enhancing access to more residents in the community and ensuring continuous care.
  - Implementation:
    - Outreach: establishing telehealth mental health sessions in collaboration with state resources such as the University of Iowa. Community health nurses can help coordinate these appointments and advocate for funding to subsidize services, making them more accessible to low-income residents.
    - Advocacy: engage local stakeholders and public health agencies to support the expansion of mental health telehealth services with grants and policy initiatives.
- Strategy: Community organizing to create High School Nursing Education pathways.
  - Rationale: Creating nursing education pathways in high school helps with early exposure to healthcare careers. This initiative not only addresses the workforce shortages in healthcare but also strengthens the local health infrastructure. When students engage with healthcare training at an early stage, they are more likely to pursue careers in healthcare within their community.
  - Implementation: Partnering with Wayne County high schools and the IISC project to develop structured pathways for students interested in nursing careers. These pathways could include opportunities like job-shadowing, CAN programs, hand-on workshops, all supported by Wayne County Hospital and Indian Hills Community College.

- Strategy: Collaboration with local clinics to improve access to drug abuse recovery services and treatment.
  - Rationale: increased access to treatment and recovery services in Wayne County helps with addressing substance abuse. Many residents struggle with substance use and would benefit from expanding local treatment options
  - Implementation:
    - Mobile treatment clinics can help directly address the accessibility issue. These clinics can help provide substance abuse assessments, counseling, and treatment services, making care more accessible to those who may not seek help otherwise due to fear of stigma or lack of knowledge about available resources. It also provides a non-threatening environment where people will feel more comfortable asking for counseling services, encouraging more people to seek support.
    - Collaborating with local healthcare clinics to integrate substance abuse treatment into existing healthcare services will comprehensively address the various needs of individuals with substance use disorders. This could include establishing a screening protocol in clinics to identify individuals at risk of substance abuse. Those who screen positive would be implemented into an immediate referral system in partnerships with other specialized organizations.
    - Additionally, by collaborating with local clinics, we can promote that patients receive coordinated care that goes beyond just addressing their substance use.

## **8. Explore Collaboration Opportunities**

### **Collaborator: Secondary School Guidance Counselor at Wayne Jr/Sr High School**

Potential Contribution: Offer educational advice and programs at community colleges that do dual enrollment with the high school. Provide contacts with learning, job-shadow and job opportunities with the hospitals and pharmacies.

### **Collaborator: School Guidance Counselor at Seymour Community School District**

Potential Contribution: Offer educational advice and programs at community colleges that do dual enrollment with the high school. Provide contacts with learning, job-shadow and job opportunities with the hospitals and pharmacies.

### **Collaborator: Wayne County Hospital and Clinics**

Potential Contribution: Collaborate to offer job shadow opportunities for high school students who have interests in different occupations in the hospital. Students could also sign up to volunteer at the hospital.

**Collaborator: Hy-Vee Pharmacy in Corydon, Iowa**

Potential Contribution: Collaborate to offer job shadows or jobs to high school students who have an interest in a career as a pharmacy technician or pharmacist.

**Collaborator: Wayne County Public Health**

Potential Contribution: Collaborate to offer job shadows or jobs to high school students who have an interest in public health nursing or administration.

**Collaborator: Indian Hills Community College**

Potential Contribution: Offer career fair on areas in healthcare and information about the healthcare academies Indian Hills offers for dual enrollment. Along with these academies they can get job shadows or possible internships at hospitals or clinics.

**Collaborator: Corydon Dental Clinic (or any other dental clinic)**

Potential Contribution: Collaborate to offer job shadows to high school students who have an interest in a career as a dental hygienist, dental assistant, or a dentist.

**Collaborator: Every Step Care and Support (Hospice)**

Potential Contribution: Collaborate to offer job shadows or jobs to high school students who have an interest in end-of-life care or administration with hospice.



## 9. Conclusion

The report identifies critical gaps and challenges in Wayne County's healthcare workforce, particularly regarding high school students career development. The distance to Indian Hills Community College, over an hour away, limits students access to essential healthcare training and certifications. Furthermore, the shortage of healthcare providers, especially in mental health services, exacerbates the issue. However, opportunities exist to address these challenges. Initiatives like career fairs and student loan repayment programs can enhance recruitment and retention of healthcare staff. Expanding online and hybrid education options, alongside youth engagement activities, can spark interest in healthcare careers among high school students.

Engaging these students in healthcare career exploration is vital for building the workforce in Wayne County. By fostering partnerships between educational institutions and local healthcare providers, we can create clear pathways for students to gain hands-on experience and insight into various healthcare roles. This proactive approach not only addresses workforce shortages but also strengthens the overall healthcare system in the community. Investing in the next generation of healthcare professionals is essential for ensuring the well-being of Wayne County residents and meeting their future healthcare needs.

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