



Mat-Su Health Foundation Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

2022 Community Health Needs Assessment



Year 2 Evaluation – 2024

2023-2025 Community Health Improvement Plan



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Introduction

Welcome to the Year 2 Evaluation Report for the implementation strategies from the 2022 Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) / Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (MSRMC) Community Health Needs Assessment.

This summary report highlights the activities, outcomes and impact accomplished by the two organizations individually and collaboratively during calendar year 2024 toward achievement of the four major goals outlined in the 2022 Community Health Improvement Plan.

The 2022 needs assessment and the implementation strategies are framed from the lens of the Well-Being Portfolio, developed by the Rippel Foundation, which offers a way of looking at the health of a community from the point of view of a total health ecosystem. The wheel has two sides: one that describes urgent services (the kind anyone under adversity would need to temporarily regain or restore their health and well-being) and one that describes vital conditions (those that not only have the potential to improve health and well-being but also prevent harm and avert the need for urgent services). Addressing vital conditions usually includes approaching problems at the system level, whereas urgent services provide solutions to address a problem on a temporary basis. Urgent services will always be needed, but ideally, there will be less of a need as efforts to improve vital conditions are increased. These are wrapped in efforts to increase Belonging and Civic Muscle, so that all individuals have fulfilling relationships and social support that people need to thrive.

When all components of the ecosystem work together, the health of the community increases.



Implementation Strategies

The 2022 Community Health Improvement Plan defines four broad goals for the Mat-Su region:

Goal One

Mat-Su Residents are safe and cared for through a well-coordinated system of care that is responsive to adverse and traumatic experiences impacting physical health and mental well-being.

Goal Two

Mat-Su residents have equitable access to resources that ensure health, wellness, and safety.

Goal Three

All Mat-Su residents have opportunities for improved economic mobility through lifelong learning and meaningful work.

Goal Four

All Mat-Su residents feel accepted, supported, included, and experience a sense of belonging.



Our Ways of Working

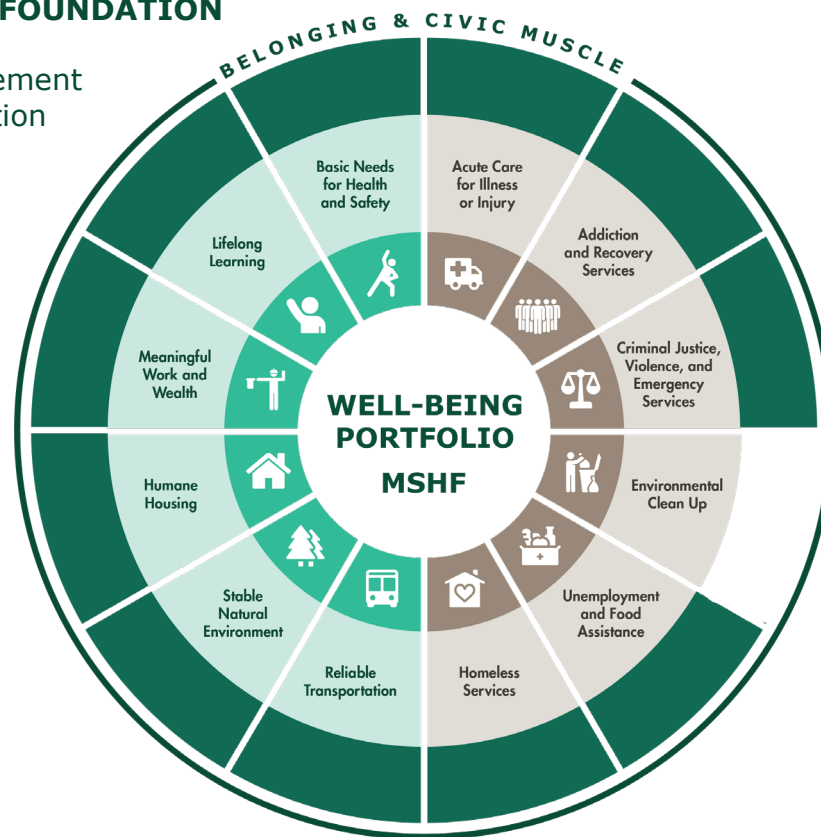
Shaded blocks outside of the well-being portfolio represent implementation strategies directed toward those areas of the portfolio based on the “ways of working” of the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) & Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (MSRMC).

MSHF and MSRMC are also working collaboratively in 4 areas of the portfolio:

- Meaningful Work and Wealth
- Lifelong Learning
- Basic Needs for Health and Safety
- Acute Care for Injury or Illness

MAT-SU HEALTH FOUNDATION

Funding Priorities
Community Engagement
Research & Evaluation
Policy Reform



MAT-SU REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

New Clinical Capacity
New Practitioners
Staff Training & Competencies
Prevention, Education, Screening



Vital Conditions

In 2024, Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded **\$26 million** in grants and scholarships.



Community Engagement

The Mat-Su Health Foundation is learning and growing in how we engage and connect with the Mat-Su community. Program Officers partner with community leaders to host convenings where key stakeholders come together to discuss and share ideas and build partnerships to address issues like food insecurity, workforce development, and youth behavioral health.

Connect Mat-Su partnered with Mountain Pacific Quality Health and MSRMC to plan and host the Mat Su Collaborative Care Summit connecting healthcare and social service providers. In addition, Connect Mat-Su created and launched community user plus platform with Mat-Su Public Health with 15 community users accessing the platform. Mat-Su Council on Aging initiates partnership with Connect Mat-Su to provide Information and Referral in support of winter readiness for older adults.

The Mat-Su Behavioral Health in Schools program expanded its reach during the reporting period by adding services at two additional schools: Meadow Lakes Elementary and Big Lake Elementary. This expansion reflects growing recognition of the importance of accessible mental health support for students. In addition to expanding school-based services, significant progress was made in formalizing the Hello BABY collaborative. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and operational agreements were established among partner organizations, providing a strong foundation for coordinated service delivery and shared responsibilities across the initiative.

R.O.C.K Mat-Su concluded its Parent Leadership Learning Series and as a result Youth 360 launched a parent advisory committee. This year there were 78 partner organizations meaningfully engaged in work. A total of 206 individuals participate in braided stories and 61 children were served through the FIT Court.

MSHF staff participate on several statewide and national collaboratives. A few of these include AK Court Improvement Project, Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Statewide Advisory Committee, Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health Policy and Systems Develop Workgroup (OCS Plans of Safe Care) and Alaska Impact Alliance.

Research and Evaluation

The MSHF fosters a learning culture, using data to inform our work and supporting evaluations of key initiatives like Behavioral Health in Schools, Youth 360, High Utilizer Mat-Su, Crisis Now, Connect Mat-Su, and Hello BABY. Also in 2024, MSHF commissioned an evaluation of the scholarship program that assessed the impact of the scholarships on the community and on scholars' careers and professional development.

In addition to the ongoing evaluations, the foundation also supports assessments aimed to understand Mat-Su residents' experiences to better understand community needs and assets. In 2024, through the work of the Healthy Aging Stakeholder Gathering and leadership of the Mat-Su Council on Aging, surveys were sent to all Mat-Su residents over age 55 and to older adult service providers to understand the needs of our aging residents. A Mat-Su food security assessment was also commissioned, with results being published in 2025.

Policy Reform

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) is proud to have played a pivotal role in advocating for significant investments in early childhood education, childcare, and healthcare, which have been successfully included in the FY25 Alaska State budget. These investments are crucial for ensuring that all families, regardless of income, have access to safe, reliable childcare, enabling them to participate fully in the workforce.

Increased Funding for Childcare: The FY25 budget includes an additional \$30.5 million for the Child Care Benefits line item. This funding is aimed at bolstering the Child Care Program Office (CCPO) in the Department of Health and supporting existing programs that have proven effective. MSHF's advocacy efforts focused on highlighting the importance of these programs in providing quality childcare and supporting working families.

Support for Childcare Providers: The budget allocates \$15 million in direct operating grants to childcare businesses through the Child Care Grant program. This funding is intended to help support current childcare businesses, provide incentives for new businesses to start, and stabilize the childcare sector. MSHF emphasized the need for financial support to ensure the sustainability and growth of childcare providers, which are essential for meeting the demand for childcare services.

Head Start Programs: An additional \$5 million has been allocated for Head Start programs in the Department of Education & Early Development budget. This funding aims to expand access to early education for low-income families. MSHF advocated for increased funding for Head Start programs, recognizing their critical role in providing early educational opportunities to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Childcare Assistance: The budget includes \$6.1 million to expand family access to childcare assistance. This funding is designed to help families earning less than 105% of the state median wage by adjusting subsidies to reflect the actual average cost of providing childcare. MSHF's advocacy efforts highlighted the importance of making childcare affordable for low- and middle-income families, ensuring that all children have access to quality care.

Support for HB 89: MSHF supported HB 89, which was adopted into SB 189 (Child Care Bill). This bill represents one of the largest state investments in childcare in Alaska's history. It includes increased funding for childcare assistance and business tax credits to incentivize investment in childcare programs.

Healthcare Workforce Training: MSHF supported legislation to join the multistate nurse licensure compact, ongoing support for the WWAMI and SHARP programs, and investments in data systems to monitor workforce needs. The budget included investments in workforce development programs, including healthcare training and support for the SHARP program.

Support for HB 344: MSHF's advocacy efforts focused on ensuring that vulnerable populations, including low-income families and older Alaskans, have access to essential resources. By supporting HB 344, MSHF worked to address the needs of these groups and promote equity in access to food and healthcare. MSHF helped to raise awareness about the bill's benefits and mobilize support for its passage. HB 344 raises the income threshold for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), allowing more families to qualify for food assistance. This change is essential for ensuring that working families who may not have qualified under previous guidelines can now access the support they need to provide healthy meals for their households. The bill also allows SNAP participants to have savings while using the program. This provision is crucial for helping families build financial stability and resilience without the fear of losing their food assistance benefits.

The advocacy efforts of the MSHF have significantly influenced the policies and funding priorities in the FY25 Alaska State budget and the bills passed by the Alaska State Legislature in 2024. These efforts have led to substantial investments in early childhood education, social determinants of health, workforce development, and equitable access to high-quality healthcare, aligning with MSHF's goals to improve health, well-being, and equity for all Alaskans.

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

The MSRMC increased clinical capacity and access to services in 2024 by adding 17 new providers and opened up a second Cath Lab to improve access to cardiac services. Surgeries increased 9%, deliveries increased 5% and behavioral health services increased 2.7%. Progress has been made toward establishing a Family Medicine residency program, with the first class of residents planned for 2028.

MSRMC also completed its Trauma Level 3 Site verification and in early 2025 received notification that they are now a Level 3 Trauma Center, the first in Alaska. Emergency department visits also increased 7%.



Goal One

Mat-Su Residents are safe and cared for through a well-coordinated system of care that is responsive to adverse and traumatic experiences impacting physical health and mental well-being.

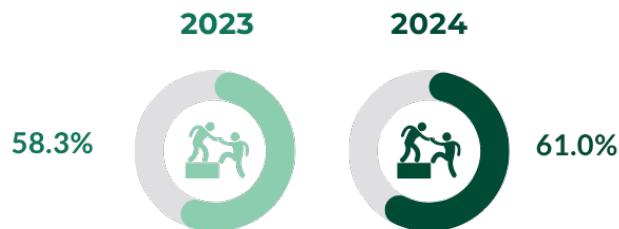
Mat-Su Health Foundation

CONNECT MAT-SU

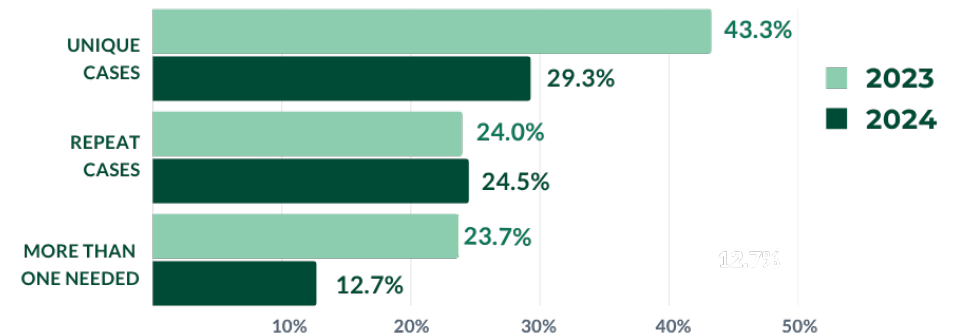
Connect Mat-Su is a comprehensive health and social services information and referral hub that provides a physical and virtual resource center linking residents with immediate access to the information, referrals, and direct assistance specific to the Mat-Su.

Individuals who have used Connect Mat-Su as a resource receive a follow up survey to find out if they received the help they needed from the community providers that Connect Mat-Su provided as a resource for their specific need.

CLIENTS REPORT THEY RECEIVED THE HELP THEY NEEDED FROM COMMUNITY PROVIDERS



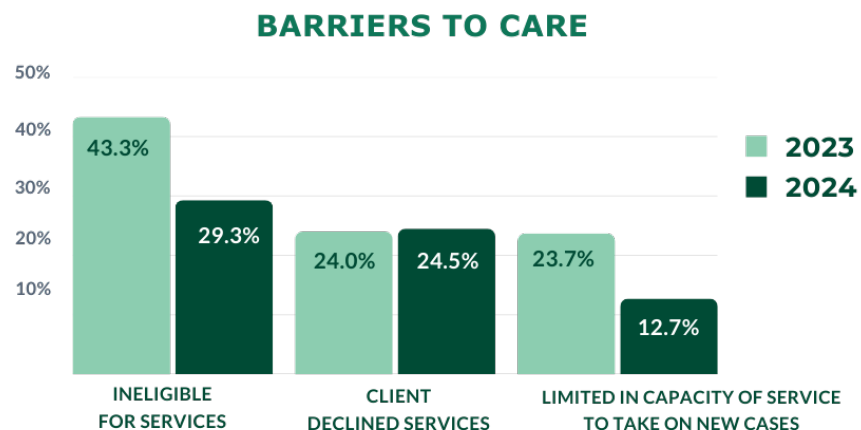
CONNECT MAT-SU CASES



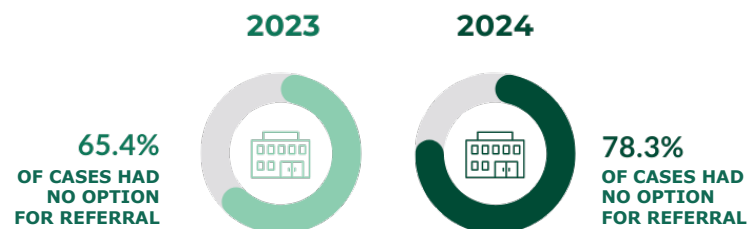
Connect Mat-Su counts each information and referral encounter as a "case." A "unique case" means one individual, even if they had multiple encounters. Some cases involve more than one need, meaning the person was looking for help in multiple areas during that encounter.

BARRIERS TO CARE & SYSTEM GAPS

Connect Mat-Su staff track gaps in the system to find out which services or supports are missing or hard to access for Mat-Su residents. A system gap is noted when staff cannot find any available resource to refer someone to for a specific need. Most of the gaps identified in 2023 and 2024 were related to temporary shelter, indicating there were not available or appropriate resources to make a referral to.



SYSTEM GAPS RELATED TO TEMPORARY SHELTER



CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM ACADEMY

Crisis Intervention Team (“CIT”) Program has been awarded Gold Level Certification through CIT International. A CIT Program is a community partnership of law enforcement, behavioral healthcare professionals, and individuals and family members impacted by mental illness, substance use disorder, or intellectual and development disabilities, to improve community response to behavioral health crises. CIT focuses on improving the crisis response system, advocating for needed services, training first responders, and strengthening partnerships across the community.

R.O.C.K MAT-SU

Facilitated Attuned Interactions (FAN) training is a framework for practitioners working with families, particularly those with young children, to build stronger relationships and enhance their reflective practice. It emphasizes attunement, which involves being aware of and responsive to another person's emotional needs and state. The FAN approach helps professionals understand and address the needs of families in the moment, while also promoting self-awareness and regulation in the practitioner. This training was completed as part of the 6 month learning series.

Stewards of Children®, teaches adults practical actions they can take to reduce instances of child sexual abuse in their organizations, families, and communities. Stewards of Children® is one of the only award-winning, evidence-informed, adult-focused child sexual abuse prevention trainings in the United States proven to increase knowledge and change behavior. This year 10 individuals participated in Stewards of Children® workshops and 11 individuals participated in the Stewards of Children® facilitator training.

UNDERSTANDING ACES AND RAISING RESILIENCE WORKSHOPS



41.4%
INCREASE IN THE
NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS



30
NEW FACILITATORS ON AVERAGE
ARE TRAINED ANNUALLY

FACILITATED ATTUNED INTERACTIONS 6-MONTH COHORT

2023
20
TRAINED



2024
19
TRAINED

CRISIS NOW

MSHF is working with partners, including Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, to implement the Crisis Now system in the Mat-Su. Crisis Now gives law enforcement and first responders an appropriate option for people in crisis to receive short-term mental health treatment quickly, keeping them out of jails and emergency rooms, and better serving the needs of both the person in crisis and the first responders dispatched to help them. This collaborative “no wrong door” approach will expand the number of facilities that can conduct a 72-hour evaluation, add a new, less restrictive level of care; and lead to faster, more appropriate response to crisis events. In 2024 Crisis Now added another 24/7 mobile crisis team to expand its reach.

FUNDING

In 2024, Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded **\$5,646,843** to address **Urgent Services**

Addiction & Recovery Services **\$1,971,062**
Acute Care for Illness or Injury **\$1,608,707**
Homeless Services **\$1,123,595**



Unemployment & Food Assistance **\$626,805**
Criminal Justice, Violence & Emergency Services **\$316,674**
Environmental Clean Up **\$0**

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center



**11.8
DAYS**

THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY FOR THE INPATIENT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH UNIT IS 11.8 DAYS. PATIENTS ARE TYPICALLY NOT TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER FACILITY ONCE THEY ARE ADMITTED.

905 STAFF TRAINED

USING TEAMS ALC DE-ESCALATION TRAINING WHICH INCLUDES TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES



Patients present to the emergency departments across the state. MSRMC inpatient behavioral unit is for adults only. It is 16 beds and all rooms are dual occupancy, although often times patients are too acute to have a roommate upon admission. This limits the hospital's capacity and therefore prolongs adult patients in crisis from being admitted. The MSRMC expansion will address bed capacity for adults and adolescence which should decrease hold times for behavioral health patients in emergency departments.

To address the long wait before transfer to a higher level of care, MSRMC has continued to work on their plan to for a 23-hour crisis stabilization unit, while providing stabilization service as part of the Emergency Department model. MSRMC is also working on a plan to increase inpatient bed capacity. The hospital continues to partner on community collaborations such as High Utilizers Mat-Su (HUMS), Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), Drug-Endangered Children MDT and Crisis Now. Hospital Social Workers and Care Managers receive Drug-Endangered Children (DEC) training which focuses on recognizing and responding to the needs of children affected by parental substance abuse and drug activity.

The hospital has implemented a new electronic medical record system which will allow electronic referrals to be made from the hospital directly to Connect Mat-Su which will improve discharge screening and referral outcomes for MSRMC. In 2024, 278 referrals were made from MSRMC to Connect Mat-Su to assist patients with information and provide referral services.

In November, the MSRMC opened up a second Cardiac Cath Lab. The hospital completed an evaluation of the Chest Pain Center and added primary PCI designation to its Chest Pain Center certification. Additionally, MSRMC achieved Level 3 Trauma Certification making it the first Level 3 Trauma center in the state.

Goal Two

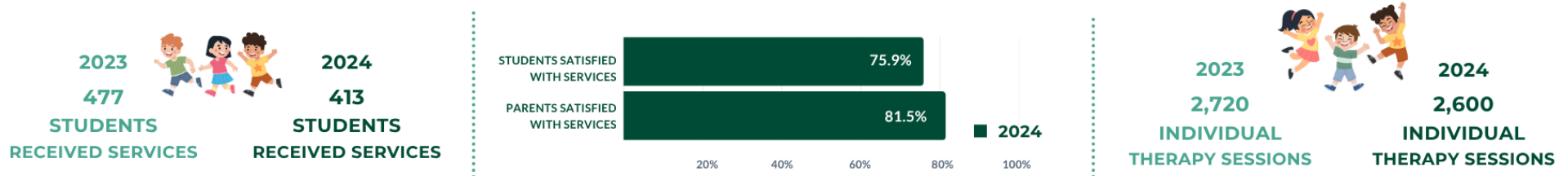
Mat-Su residents have equitable access to resources that ensure health, wellness, and safety.

Mat-Su Health Foundation

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

The Behavioral Health in Schools (BHIS) program integrates behavioral health services for mild to moderate mental health concerns into 15 schools across the Mat-Su Borough School District (MSBSD). Research consistently shows that mental health concerns—such as anxiety, depression, and stress—can significantly impact overall academic performance. Providing counseling services in the school settings ensures that support is accessible, improves student attendance and wellbeing, and prevents issues from escalating.

The BHIS program provides services in both traditional and alternative schools and includes students in elementary, middle, and high school. In 2024 the program expanded its workforce, which allowed the addition of one elementary school and added 3.5 days of service to three other schools. Two sites bill for services, billing a total of \$200,000 in six-months.



“I have really been helped personally through this program. It is amazing to have someone that I can talk to that is not a part of my friend group or family. It has really helped me come out of my shell.”

— STUDENT

My child’s behavior at school has improved so much. My child is able to participate in class more and there are less episodes that cause me to have to pick my child up early.

— PARENT

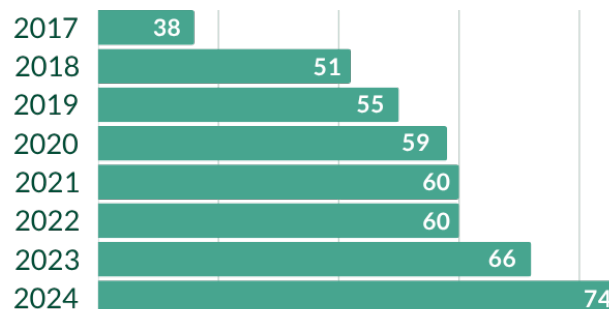
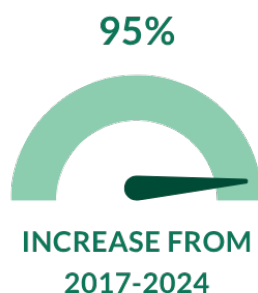
CONNECT MAT-SU

Expanded use of Connect Mat-Su Community User Plus Platform to 11 Mat-Su Public Health staff in addition to Sunshine Community Health Center, Mat-Su Health Services, and Daybreak. In FY24, Connect Mat-Su finished the build out of the CM database to allow for care coordination among Hello BABY network providers. Connect Mat-Su coordinated and helped organized a summit for health care and social service providers to come together and talk about social care and landscape in the community and out of that gathering of lot of providers and came together to start conversation on data inoperability and how to collaborate together.

R.O.C.K MAT-SU

R.O.C.K Mat-Su is a collaborative of community members, including individuals and organizations, joining together to promote family resilience and reduce child maltreatment. R.O.C.K. Mat-Su works to strengthen the social fabric and influence systems that affect kids and families through the borough, all in support of achieving the goal of ending child abuse in Mat-Su.

Collective Impact Partner Growth



YOUTH 360

The Mat-Su Health Foundation continues to fund and support the Youth 360 program housed at United Way Mat-Su. The program, based on the Icelandic Prevention Model, supports afterschool and summer programming for youth at Wasilla and Houston locations. In 2024, Youth 360 received \$220,000 from MSHF, served 589 youth and launched the Family Connections Committee. MSHF began a new partnership in 2024, funding \$100,000 to Northgate Alaska Church, to open a second Y360 location in Wasilla.

SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS

As the older adult population continues to grow in the Mat-Su there is increasing demand for services that support aging in place. The Mat-Su Health Foundation funded four grants, totaling \$640,000, to support operations and nutrition services at the Upper Susitna Senior Center, Upper Su Food Pantry Ripples program, Wasilla Area Senior Center, and Palmer Senior Citizen Center.

Alaska and the Mat-Su have a high veteran population per capita, and many veterans chose to retire in the Mat-Su. The Alaska Warrior Partnership was funded \$45,000 to support winter preparedness and wellness checks for isolated, aging veterans.

Participation in social and cultural activities is important for the health and wellbeing of aging adults. MSHF funded two grants for the Arctic Winter Games, one with Chickaloon Village Traditional Council and one with Knik Tribal Council, to support and increase elder and community engagement in the games. The grants included funding for vehicles to be used for transport during the games. Those vehicles are now used to provide transportation for social services.

FOOD ACCESS

In addition to specific food access funding for seniors, MSHF also funded a total of \$1,066,470 to support food security in Mat-Su for individuals, families, and children. The MSHF hosted four food convening and six field trips in 2024 to support learning and community partnerships.

STAFF PARTICIPATION

4 FOOD SYSTEM CONVENINGS (2024)

6 FIELD TRIPS

- FOOD BANK OF ALASKA, FRONTLINE MISSION, AND MAT-SU FOOD BANK (ALL IN WASILLA)
- FOOD BANK OF ALASKA IN ANCHORAGE
- CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES' REFUGEE FARMS IN ANCHORAGE
- GOOSE CREEK PRISON FOOD SERVICE/POINT MACKENZIE FARM



HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION

The MSHF invested \$1,350,000 in affordable housing projects, resulting in 84 units funded (under construction or built). In 2024, 76 units came available for lease. Another 24 units, to begin leasing in 2025, were completed and issued a certificate of occupancy at the end of December 2024.

In 2024, MSHF funded \$550,000 in local match to leverage state and federal funds for transit services provided by Sunshine Transit (\$220,000) and Valley Transit (\$330,000).

Have invested \$315,000 in the Housing Alaskans a Public Private Partnership (HAPPP) statewide housing.

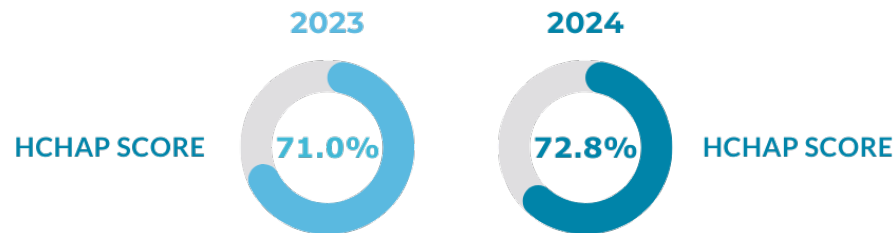
FUNDING

In 2024, Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded **\$7,820,275** to address **Vital Conditions**



Basic Needs for Health and Safety	\$3,186,553
Humane Housing	\$2,495,805
Thriving Natural World	\$1,547,896
Reliable Transportation	\$590,021

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center



HCAHPS scores are a standardized way to measure patient satisfaction with their hospital experience. These scores are collected through the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, which is administered to patients after they are discharged from a hospital. The survey asks patients about various aspects of their care, including communication with doctors and nurses, responsiveness of hospital staff, pain management, and the overall hospital environment.

MSRMC added a primary care physician, which allowed the hospital to serve 567 additional patients. The hospital added new providers in existing specialty areas and now have several infectious disease professionals with a regular presence in the hospital. The hospital has continued to collaborate with Sunshine Community Health Center to support expanded clinical services for the Upper Susitna Valley, for example the Talkeetna cardiology clinic.

The hospital achieved The Joint Commissions Health Care Equity Certification which focuses on ensuring fair and just access to healthcare for all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances. This involves addressing systemic barriers and disparities in healthcare delivery, access, and outcomes. Key components include culturally competent care, effective communication, and addressing social determinants of health.

Goal Three *All Mat-Su residents have opportunities for improved economic mobility through lifelong learning and meaningful work.*

Mat-Su Health Foundation

To support workforce recruitment and retention, the Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded two strategic grants totaling \$25,000 to CCS Early Learning. These grants provided loan repayment incentives through the State of Alaska's SHARP program to two staff in high-demand roles, covering a three-year period. Additionally, a \$64,450 grant was awarded to Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults (MSSCA) to support two direct service professionals with similar three-year incentives. Both grants included funding for employee and employer match requirements and remain active.

Recognizing the need to meet growing demand for educational support, the Foundation established a dedicated scholarship department in 2024, hiring both a Program Officer and Program Associate. This new team has focused on improving scholarship processes, outreach, and recipient support. As a result, 518 students received funding. Ongoing efforts to strengthen scholar and alumni connections included the launch of a newsletter via Constant Contact, featuring resources and event updates. Scholars were also invited to share graduation news and participate in media highlights. In December 2024, the scholarship program hosted its first in-person event, drawing 18 alumni and current scholars and capturing six video testimonials.

In support of healthcare innovation, MSHF invested \$50,000 in Health TIE, a program that connects Alaska healthcare providers with startups to pilot innovative solutions and overcome implementation barriers. Workforce development (WFD) efforts continued in 2024 with two convenings attended by a total of 60 stakeholders. Additionally, three meetings coordinated by Healthy Futures helped re-engage members of the Alaska Workforce Development Coalition.

Progress also continued on the Teaching Health Center initiative aimed at establishing a medical residency program in the region. MSHF staff and consultants participated in the Alaska GME Summit and hosted four exploratory meetings in 2024. Key stakeholders from local healthcare organizations joined the planning process, which concluded the year with collaborative work on the mission, vision, and core values for a future residency training consortium.

FUNDING

In 2024, Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded **\$6,956,264** to address **Vital Conditions**



Lifelong Learning
Meaningful Work and Wealth

\$5,417,897
\$1,538,367



Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a one-year transition-to-work program that provides training and education to young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It takes place at Mat-Su Regional Medical Center where participants gain real-world job experience through internships and receive support from a team of educators, job coaches, and business staff. The ultimate goal is to help participants achieve competitive, integrated employment, with many becoming employed at Mat-Su Regional Medical Center upon program completion. The past two years 100% of participants found employment after completing the program.

PROJECT SEARCH

2023

8 GRADUATES



2024

6 GRADUATES



2023

7

PROVIDERS RECRUITED



2024

17

PROVIDERS RECRUITED



90.96%

RN RETENTION



PROVIDERS RECRUITED

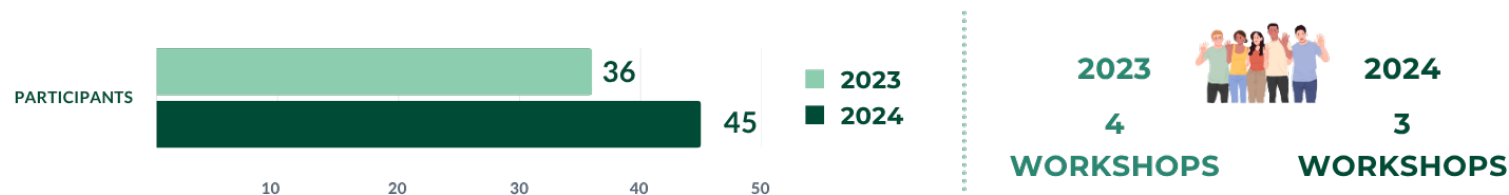
- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| » 3 - Infectious Disease | » 2 - Behavioral Health |
| » 3 - Urgent Care | » 2 - Internal Cardiologist |
| » 2 - Gastroenterologist | » 2 - Mid-Level OBGYN |
| » 2 - Mid-Level Cardiac | » 1 - Dermatology |
| » 2- Orthopedic | » 1 - Wound Care |

Goal Four *All Mat-Su residents feel accepted, supported, included, and experience a sense of belonging.*

Mat-Su Health Foundation

BRAIDED STORIES

Braided Stories is a program created by R.O.C.K. Mat-Su, a collaborative of community members – including individuals and organizations – joining together to promote family resilience and reduce child maltreatment. R.O.C.K. Mat-Su created the Braided Stories: Building Equitable Communities for Alaska’s Children & Families workshop because understanding and addressing historical trauma in the Mat-Su is critical to achieving its vision. The workshop aims to engage community members and social change leaders in an educational experience that will deepen their understanding of systemic racism, as a catalyst to make systemic and cultural change in their spheres of influence.



DESIGN CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

Design Connections™ was developed by Ayse (pronounced Eye-shay) Birsell based on her design thinking principles, the Mat-Su Council on Aging (MCOA) and the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) as a pilot health intervention to address loneliness and social isolation among older adults in the Mat-Su. The Design Connections™ Workshops were created to encourage older adults in the Mat-Su in Alaska to age into meaningful social connections rather than isolation through the use of design thinking practices (optimism, empathy, holistic, what if questions, collaboration). The pilot program consisted of four workshop sessions over a four-week period with two cohorts of 20 older adults ages 58-86, for a total of 40 participants.

“It really helped me transform my life...I’m a happier person and when I’m out and about, I just smile at people more. So, it’s just sort of given me a new outlook on life, a happier one.”

— DESIGN CONNECTIONS™ PARTICIPANT

”There’s a transition point in life, where all of a sudden you realize, oh my God, I’m old. And it comes associated with some physical disabilities, maybe a little bit of mental challenge, and you have to find your way through that.”

— DESIGN CONNECTIONS™ PARTICIPANT

See link for video about the program Design Connections: **Healthy Aging Through Community Connections**

An evaluation of the pilot program shows that participation in the Design Connections workshops led to statistically significant changes in an increased sense of purpose, an increased sense of happiness, and a decreased sense of loneliness. The Mat-Su Council on Aging continued monthly social gatherings of those who participated in the workshops. Each month, there were anywhere from 10 to 20 people. These gatherings have some social connections activities and have also included some type of healthy aging focus. A sub-set of this group of older adults is now preparing a similar workshop program by and for older adults.

R.O.C.K MAT-SU

Family Contact Improvement Partnership held a day-long convening to review language used in the program materials to ensure that it was culturally sensitive and relatable.

R.O.C.K Mat-Su launched the Learning Series, which is a 6-month cohort designed to develop leadership and capacity for incorporating lived experience into partner organizations.

HELLO BABY

BABY SHOWERS



LOCATED IN:
TALKEETNA, PALMER, SUTTON, WASILLA

169
PARTICIPANTS



88 BAGS GIVEN



FUNDING

In 2024, Mat-Su Health Foundation awarded **\$2,596,882** to address **Belonging and Civic Muscle**



Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

STAFF TRAINED ON DEI AND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TO ADDRESS INEQUITIES IN HEALTHCARE



2023
100%
OF STAFF



2024
100%
OF STAFF

11 SENIOR CIRCLES



593 ATTENDEES

WALKS WITH A DOC, AND PHYSICIAN OFFICE STAFF LUNCHEONS







MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION



Mat-Su Health Foundation

777 N. Crusey St., Suite A201, Wasilla, AK 99654