



Advancing Population Health to Improve Children's Health



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Foreword

As Nemours Children's Health pursues our mission to create the healthiest generations of children, we are fundamentally changing how we think about health, shifting from focusing solely on the delivery of health care to the concept of Whole Child Health — fostering the optimal developmental, physical, mental, and behavioral health of all children, inside and outside our walls. The Nemours Whole Child Health model will align high-quality health care, effective population health management, and high-impact population health initiatives to set all children on a trajectory for a healthy life. Currently, Nemours Children's, other pediatric health systems, and community-based organizations have a variety of innovative and effective population health strategies to promote child health and well-being, but these often operate in silos, limiting their reach and impact. Advancing population health requires Nemours Children's and other child health stakeholders to work together to improve the entire ecosystem in which children live, learn, play, and grow.

Nemours Children's will redefine health, starting with children, to ensure the health and well-being of America's future adult population. We will implement our bold Population Health Strategic Framework across our system and beyond by providing leadership and support to other sectors and spurring action at the institutional, community, state, and national levels. With this framework, we are launching an optimal health-for-all model that has the potential to realign how our nation's health system dedicates resources, pursues policy change, and measures progress towards improved child health and well-being at the population health level. A Nemours Children's comic, *Advancing Population Health to Create the Healthiest Generations: A Tale of Three Children*, illustrates what our framework could look like in action for children and families. It's about systems change, shifting the focus of the health system to emphasize Whole Child Health, extending far beyond treating disease.

Our approach is supported by a recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine titled *Launching Lifelong Health by Improving Health Care for Children, Youth, and Families*, which demonstrates how child health is foundational to population health. Nemours Children's cannot advance population health alone. We need other health systems, sectors, communities, and policymakers to join us in collaboratively implementing population health strategies to help all children thrive. We invite you to embrace our vision, use our Population Health Strategic Framework, and join us in leveraging and aligning our collective expertise, innovative ideas, and resources to create the healthiest generations of children. We look forward to leading with you as we learn and adjust these strategies to achieve success for children and families. Together, we can create an ecosystem that is organized to achieve a shared purpose: improving and optimizing the health of children, families, and our communities.

For questions, please email nationaloffice@nemours.org.



About Nemours Children's Health

Nemours Children's focuses on ensuring everything we do — our medical care, research, education, prevention, and advocacy efforts — is focused on our vision of creating the healthiest generations of children. Nemours Children's serves Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland, Georgia and Florida with 2 freestanding hospitals, over 70 primary, urgent, and specialty care locations, and 20 collaborating hospitals. As a system, we offer pediatric primary, urgent, specialty, and hospital care. Nemours Children's is powered by some nearly 10,000 employees and serves more than 500,000 unique patients with nearly 2.2 million encounters annually.

A Complex Problem Needs a New Paradigm

Nemours Children's provides excellent, high-quality, compassionate care with a focus on understanding and treating our patients' health and well-being. Across the country, hundreds of pediatric health systems, health centers, physician practices, and clinics do the same, providing millions of kids with excellent clinical care. And yet, despite decades of increased healthcare spending, system reforms, research and innovation, a child born in America has a lower life expectancy and a higher likelihood of living in poverty than a child born in any other peer nation.^{1,2} As a result of longstanding patterns in the distribution of resources and opportunities in the U.S., children from historically marginalized groups and children living in poverty face significantly more barriers to health and well-being than their peers. Barriers to children's health tend to accumulate over time, contributing to the decline in adult health. Life expectancy in the U.S. is declining, and the roots of the trend are in childhood.³

Across our nation, families with children are grappling with complex, interrelated, and pervasive environmental conditions and unmet needs that inhibit their access to health, opportunity, educational success, and overall well-being. In 2022, nearly 1 in 3 children experienced food insufficiency and 1 in 7 experienced housing instability. Only 63% of 3- to 5-year-olds were "on track" overall for kindergarten readiness and only 60% of all children between the ages of 6 and 17 met the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's criteria for "flourishing."⁴

Sectors that address the root causes of health impacting children and families are siloed and fragmented, making it difficult to successfully address the entire spectrum of needs. Policies, programs, and funding for social services are generally sector-specific and administered by a patchwork of local, state, and federal agencies in addition to private institutions and funders. Even when agencies and organizations with different focuses want to collaborate, there are significant barriers to doing so, largely because each entity has its own eligibility criteria, administrative procedures, and funding restrictions to navigate.

Our nation faces four complex challenges in its current approach to improving children's health:

- Barriers to optimal health for children are pervasive and getting worse, especially for children living in economic or social conditions that put them at increased risk of poor health outcomes.⁵

1 Rakshit, S., McGough, M., Amin, K. How does U.S. life expectancy compare to other countries? Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker. <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-life-expectancy-compare-countries/#Life%20expectancy%20at%20birth,%20in%20years,%201980-2022>. Published January 30, 2024. Accessed September 23, 2024.

2 Poverty rate. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development website. <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/indicators/poverty-rate.html>. Accessed September 23, 2024.

3 Goldstick, J., Cunningham, R., and Carter, P. 2022. "Correspondence: Current Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States." *New England Journal of Medicine* 386(20): DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2201761

4 2022 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources

5 Ndugga, N., Hill, L., Artiga, S. Key Data on Health and Health Care by Race and Ethnicity. Kaiser Family Foundation website. <https://www.kff.org/key-data-on-health-and-health-care-by-race-and-ethnicity>. Published June 11, 2024. Accessed September 23, 2024.

- Health and social services programs serving children are generally underfunded and difficult to access and/or navigate.
- Policies and payment models for health and social services incentivize disease treatment, not prevention.
- Where shifts in resources have been made toward prevention, they have prioritized early diagnosis and ongoing treatment and management of disease among adults — not opportunities for disease prevention starting in childhood and the promotion of children’s overall well-being.

Leveraging our unique role as a health delivery system, employer, anchor institution, community partner, and national advocacy and policy voice for children’s health, Nemours Children’s is leading a paradigm shift centered on optimal health for all. Our Population Health Strategic Framework reorients how health systems spend resources, build public support, align incentives, and measure outcomes. The approach recognizes complexity and centers on serving all children and families in a community.

Applying a population health framework, we must:

1. Direct health and social services spending through a population health lens. Reorienting public and private resources across sectors (health, education, economic mobility, food security, housing) through a population health lens will strengthen partnerships from the local to the state and national levels focused on prioritizing improved outcomes for children. These partnerships will work to layer and leverage resources comprehensively to create environments where all children can be healthy and thrive. The Whole Child Health Alliance, led by Nemours Children’s, offers solutions and a set of [policy recommendations](#) that, if enacted, could support, spread, and sustain such approaches in communities across the country.

2. Build public will for population health. Changing the health care and social services spending paradigms requires creativity and collaboration to build the public and political will and legislative momentum to drive long-term investments in America’s health. Building public and political will also means demonstrating that investing more in children fuels economic growth and is required for the U.S. to maintain its competitive edge in a global economy. A National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report determined that child poverty could be reduced by half over 10 years with an investment of \$110 billion per year and could avert between \$800 billion and \$1.1 trillion in annual costs stemming from child poverty.⁶

3. Adopt a generational perspective for population health outcomes. Since we are aiming for outcomes we know will take generations to achieve, we know that progress toward outcomes will be measured in decades rather than monthly or even annually. Defining success by measuring only near-term results may generate false negatives that curtail work before results begin to show. A generational perspective also means setting children on a healthy trajectory today to support well-being throughout their life and for generations to come. For example, the three-generation approach supports the health of children now, the adults they will become, and the new families they will create in the future.⁷

Leveraging our unique role as a health delivery system, employer, anchor institution, community partner, and national advocacy and policy voice for children’s health, Nemours Children’s is leading a shift towards an optimal health for all paradigm in pediatric health care and population health. This population health approach reorients how health systems spend resources, build public will, align incentives, and measure outcomes. The approach recognizes complexity and centers on ensuring all children can thrive.

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>. 2019.

⁷ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Launching Lifelong Health by Improving Health Care for Children, Youth, and Families*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/27835>. 2024.

Operationalizing Population Health at Nemours Children’s

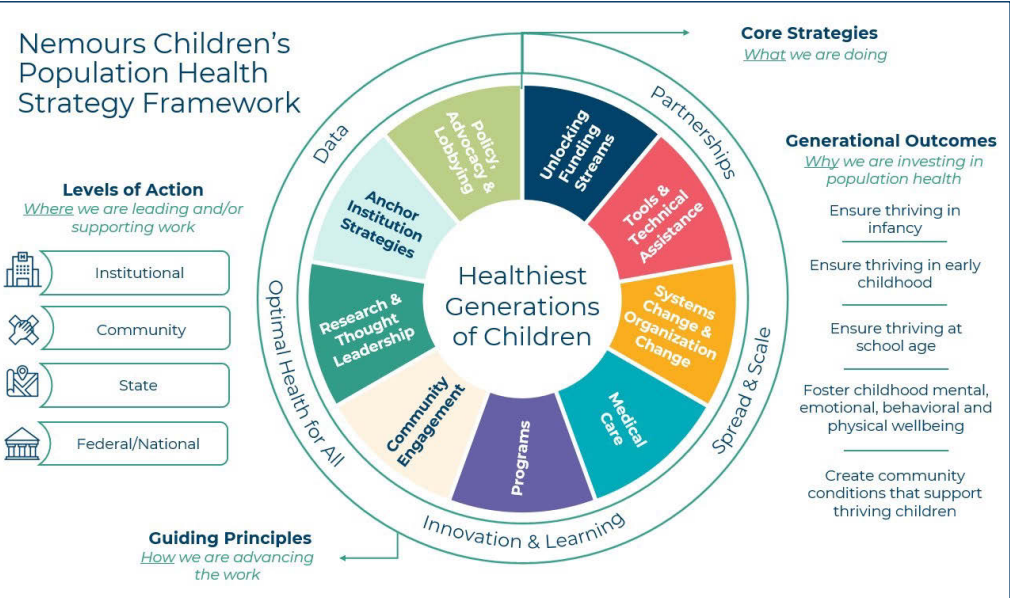
Operationalizing population health at a national scale requires a movement that expands beyond the healthcare sector. Nemours Children’s is committed to operationalizing the Population Health Strategic Framework internally and working with other sectors and partners to move it forward at the local, state, and national levels. Nemours Children’s *Advancing Population Health to Create the Healthiest Generations: A Tale of Three Children* comic shares what operationalizing population health could look like for individual children and families. It also demonstrates why we believe this Population Health Strategic Framework is imperative to improving child health and well-being. As a first step, we have developed this framework to formalize and coordinate the population health work that Nemours Children’s has embraced for years while laying out how we will shift to a system-wide focus on optimizing conditions for health in our communities.

This document provides insight into our Population Health Strategic Framework and outlines what we have done to date, our progress toward our goals and where we are headed. While we will continue to evolve this framework in response to what we learn along the way, we are sharing our path forward to inspire others in the work for optimal population health. We are still early in the process but pledge to create accountability for our work and its results — accountability to ourselves as a system, to the healthcare sector, to our partners, and, most importantly, to children and their families.

We invite you to join us in creating the healthiest generations of all children: our patients, children in our communities, and all children across the country.

Population Health Strategic Framework

The Nemours Population Health team began developing the framework in 2023 with the goal of making a larger impact on optimal population health. That process included conducting an external scan of best practices, emerging evidence, and data about what is needed to advance population health. The team also conducted an inventory and assessment of Nemours Children’s activities to identify what work should continue and opportunities for new investments or better alignment. Leveraging Nemours Children’s Strategic Plan, the resulting Population Health Strategic Framework articulates Nemours Children’s **long-term goals, guiding principles, core strategies, levels of action, and indicators of success**, and clarifies how Nemours Children’s affects positive change through collaboration with partners, policymakers, researchers, and others.



The framework reflects our current state. We will continually evaluate and adjust it as the work progresses to incorporate what we learn along the way and add insight into how we are applying each component.

Generational Outcomes – *Why We Are Investing in Population Health*

As an outcome-driven institution, we developed the framework with a clear vision in mind — identifying the mutually reinforcing outcomes that will guide our ongoing pursuit of the healthiest generations of children. Achieving these outcomes will require sustained effort; we must act now to set all children on a path to lifelong well-being.

Our framework pledges to:

- **Ensure thriving in infancy, early childhood, and school age:** We work to support all children in reaching their full potential throughout their childhood. Each distinct stage of development is influenced by a variety of factors that we can address with our partners. For example, giving all infants and young children access to quality early care and education where teachers apply best practices to support development and healthy eating and physical activity will help build a foundation for healthy growth and development.
- **Foster childhood mental, emotional, behavioral, and physical well-being:** Well-being is multidimensional and we need to align our efforts and investments accordingly — both within our health system and with our community partners. For example, screening for nonmedical needs during primary care visits can reveal risks such as food insecurity or transportation issues. By identifying and addressing these stressors early, we can help create the stable, supportive environments children need to flourish in every dimension of health.
- **Create community conditions that support thriving children:** As an anchor institution committed to the communities we serve, we have a responsibility to do what we can to create safe, healthy communities where children’s holistic needs are met. One example is the creation and expansion of workforce pipelines that leverage partnerships with local high schools and vocational schools to connect community members to clinical training, and upon completion, quality healthcare jobs at Nemours Children’s. The pipelines help to launch careers and foster economic opportunities that support thriving families and communities.

Generational Outcomes

Ensure thriving
in infancy

Ensure thriving in
early childhood

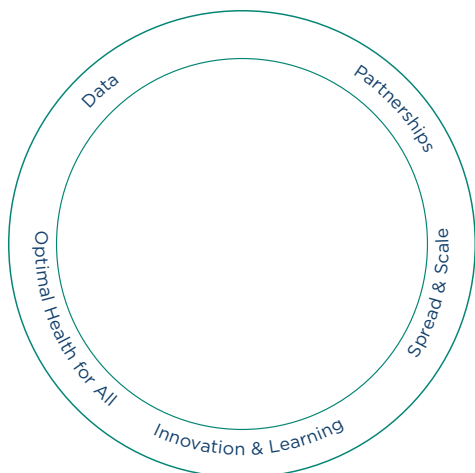
Ensure thriving at
school age

Foster childhood mental,
emotional, behavioral and
physical well-being

Create community
conditions that support
thriving children

Guiding Principles – *How We Are Advancing the Work*

We have established a set of guiding principles to keep our efforts consistently aligned with our desired outcomes. These will serve as the foundation for all strategies and activities.



- **Apply Innovation and Learning:** We seek to contribute to the evidence base in the population health field by innovating through piloting and plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycles that result in new knowledge. We prioritize knowledge-sharing and learning, seeking expertise from our communities, patients, partners, and colleagues to build trust and leverage what we know and learn.
- **Pursue Optimal Health for All:** To achieve optimal population health for all children, we work to break down the barriers to access health care and other services that keep children from achieving their optimal health, starting with those who face the greatest barriers. This includes improving access to quality health care, education, safety, and economic opportunities. Ensuring that everyone can reach their full health potential will serve as the cornerstone to our approach.

- **Engage and Activate Partnerships:** We engage with partners within health care and in other sectors, such as early care, education, and housing, to tackle critical child health issues and advance population health. We convene and participate in networks and collaboratives at the local, state, and national levels (such as the Whole Child Health Alliance) to advance new thinking, accelerate learning, and increase investment in child health across sectors.
- **Enhance Spread and Scale:** When something is working, we seek to spread it to additional sites and communities and scale it to reach significantly more children through partnerships, thought leadership, advocacy, and other tactics. This ensures that effective solutions, such as nonmedical needs screening for a pediatric population, are not limited to one place and time.
- **Leverage Data:** Data inform our strategic decisions and interventions and demonstrate both what is working and where gaps exist. We track and measure indicators connected to the health outcomes in our model and adjust based on what they show us.

Core Strategies — *What We Are Doing*



Our population health strategies are designed to work in synergy – each important on its own, but most powerful when deployed together. No single strategy can achieve optimal population health alone; it is their coordinated, collective application that drives impact.

While many of these strategies are already in place, the Population Health Framework enables us to align and deploy them more intentionally — leveraging multiple, evidence-informed approaches across our work. Where proven strategies do not yet exist, we will pursue innovative solutions to close the gap.

These strategies directly align with our outcomes and are grounded in our guiding principles. When activated together, they represent the strongest path forward.

- **Anchor Institution Strategies:** A member of the Healthcare Anchor Network since 2021, we pursue anchor strategies that leverage our institutional assets, business practices, and policies to promote greater economic opportunity, thriving communities, and a healthy environment for our associates, their families, our patients, and community members.
- **Community Engagement:** We help community-based organizations build their capacity to address root causes of health in our service areas through sponsorships and partnerships. We forge relationships with community leaders and members to support their efforts to promote population health and incorporate their lived experience to improve our programs and services.
- **Unlocking Funding Streams:** We work to unlock a broad range of funding streams for these efforts through partners and public resources (e.g., state and federal dollars or philanthropic partners) as well as leverage Nemours Children's own assets (e.g., community benefit, employee volunteerism, anchor strategies, sponsorships, etc.).
- **Medical Care:** We provide excellent and accessible care to meet the medical needs of children, from preventive care to treatment for injury or illness.
- **Policy, Advocacy, and Lobbying:** We advocate, lobby, and engage in local, state, and federal policy issues related to children's health. We serve as a voice for children and are a trusted advisor and resource to policymakers and partners, providing our expertise and experience to help inform them.



- **Programs:** We implement evidence-informed and innovative programs that address individual needs — such as providing food, hygiene products, and connections to community resources and social safety net programs. We offer parents and caregivers training and educational programs that build their capacity and equip them to support their children's physical and behavioral health.
- **Research and Thought Leadership:** We conduct research that investigates the connection between health outcomes and the factors that contribute to health such as early care and education, nutrition, and workforce development. We elevate best practices and promising innovations through publications, peer-reviewed articles, webinars, conference presentations, and network engagement. We lean into our convenor role to lead coalitions and bring together local, state, and national leaders around critical children's health issues, raising awareness about prevalent needs and leading solutions.
- **Systems Change and Organizational Change:** We work to improve the critical systems that serve children and families, including in our own clinical facilities. We implement internal policies that support the health and well-being of Nemours Children's associates and their families. We also advise partners on how to effect change through their own structures and policies, such as early care and education, state licensing systems, and promoting healthy eating best practices to enhance the quality of services and improve outcomes for children and families.
- **Tools and Technical Assistance:** We build the capacity of community groups and institutions across the country to support children. For example, we design tools and programs that early childhood educators and schools can use to improve school readiness and promote healthy lifestyles.

Strengthening Children's Health: Collaboration

Mia is a middle school student who experienced bullying from her classmates. As a result, she would often ask her parents to let her stay home from school to avoid seeing those classmates. Mia's school is a part of the [*Data Access for Student Health \(D.A.S.H.\)*](#) initiative, a data sharing collaborative between Nemours Children's Health, Colonial School District, Delaware Health Information Network, and The Data Service Center to combat chronic school absenteeism. Since Mia is a Nemours Children's patient and her parents consented to participate in the initiative, Nemours Children's was alerted to Mia's absences. A Nemours Children's care coordinator called Mia's parents to discuss what was causing Mia's absences and how they could help address the issue. After Mia's parents explained the bullying Mia was experiencing, the care coordinator contacted Mia's school guidance counselor to collaborate on a plan for how the guidance counselor could support Mia at school. The care coordinator then followed up with Mia's parents to let them know the guidance counselor would be an advocate for Mia at school. The next time Mia was bullied at school, she asked to see the guidance counselor. The counselor provided Mia with emotional support and strategies to help Mia feel safer at school. The counselor also addressed the bullying behavior with Mia's classmates and worked with them to identify and address what was driving their behavior. With this support in place at school, the bullying ended and Mia stopped asking to stay home from school. She felt more comfortable and supported at school, and her grades began to improve.

Adopting systems changes to allow data sharing between schools and primary care providers allows this institutional level strategy to advance children's health by supporting better academic performance and high school graduation rates, which in turn reduces the likelihood students will engage in risky behaviors.

Action Levels — Where We Work

Each core strategy can be applied at multiple levels of action concurrently.

- At the **Institutional Level**, we look at what we can do within and across the Nemours Children's system.
- At the **Community Level**, we look at how our strategies can be applied with, within, and for communities, including the ones where we have a footprint. This means supplementing our community health needs assessment (CHNA) process with locally specific strategies reflecting community, child, and family voices.
- At the **State Level** we look at how our strategies impact children and their families in our regions, what we can do within the states' specific contexts, and what implications the work has for other states.
- At the **Federal/National Level**, we look at what implications our work has for children and their families across the country, as well as how our strategies can influence federal policy and national institutions for children's health.

Levels of Action



Institutional



Community



State



Federal/National

Applying a Synergistic Approach

The table below outlines a few examples of Nemours Children's population health initiatives showing how we integrate multiple strategies and target various levels of action to address multiple contributors to children's health. Moving forward, we will build upon our existing initiatives to enhance their impact, extend their reach, and seek new ways to fill identified gaps.

List of Selected Examples of Current Nemours Children's Population Health Initiatives

Current Population Health Initiative	Core Strategies	Level(s) of Action
Nemours Children's Reading BrightStart! We offer early literacy training, professional development, curricula, and resources for early learning centers and schools.	• Technical Assistance and Tools • Programs • Research and Thought Leadership • Community Engagement	• National • State • Community
Workforce Pipelines We partner with vocational high schools and community colleges to provide clinical training to community members for frontline clinical roles, and Nemours Children's hiring of program graduates.	• Anchor Institution Strategies • Systems and Organizational Policy Change	• Institutional • Community
Ginsburg Institute Community Grant Program Grants are issued to Central Florida community-based organizations addressing local needs related to food and nutrition, economic stability, mental health, and quality education to bridge the gap between research and real-world application.	• Community Engagement • Research and Thought Leadership • Programs	• Community

Advocacy for Policy Change to Reduce Child Food Insecurity We collaborated with Delaware lawmakers, Delaware State Education Association, school administrators, and the Food Bank of Delaware to promote passage of House Bill 125 — Universal School Meals. The bill is now law and provides free breakfast and lunch to Delaware students who are eligible for reduced-price meals under the federal School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program.	• Policy, Advocacy, and Lobbying	• State
Advocacy to Improve Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes We collaborate with national partners to advocate for policies to improve maternal and infant health care. Nemours Children's works with partners like the March of Dimes to advocate for legislation that would make a meaningful difference in preventing prematurity and maternal mortality and improving maternal mental health. This has included successfully advocating for the passage of the PREEMIE Reauthorization Act which will reauthorize federal funding for programs, research, and education to prevent preterm births, reduce infant mortality, and improve pregnancy outcomes.	• Policy, Advocacy, and Lobbying	• National
Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Technical Assistance Program We lead efforts to advocate for, and partner with, state-level organizations to implement a program to embed nutrition and physical activity best practices in early care and education (ECE) settings and systems. With annual congressionally appropriated funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the program provides training, technical assistance, and other resources to support state organizations to create healthier child care settings and systems.	• Technical Assistance and Tools • Research and Thought Leadership • Programs • Systems and Organizational Policy Change	• State
KidWell Network We support this physician-led, clinically integrated network of providers and healthcare systems that works to coordinate care across providers to improve Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures for children across Delaware.	• Medical Care	• State

Indicators – *How Much We Are Moving the Needle*

Nemours Children’s has identified 12 core clinical and nonclinical indicators that we will track at the community, local, state, and national levels to assess the impact of our strategies and partnerships and guide our work. We will use a variety of data available from public sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *KidsCount*, the Child Opportunity Index and the U.S. Census Bureau. These indicators help us prioritize what we do, stay informed about what is working, and identify where we need to lean in through our core strategies and activities. As we implement the framework, we will incorporate additional data and measures that communities tell us are important to them. Moving the needle on these indicators is a long-term investment that will produce intergenerational returns.

Indicators of Success

Child	Increased percentage of children who received both preventative medical and dental care	Increased percentage of third graders whose reading skills are at or above grade level	Increased percentage of children who have received all recommended vaccinations	Increased percentage of children whose weight falls into a “Healthy” BMI category
	Increased percentage of children (ages 3-17) who needed mental health care and received it	Decreased percentage of children who experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the past 12 months	Increased percentage of children (ages 3-4) who are enrolled in school (including nursery school, preschool)	
Family	Increased percentage of children who are food secure	Increased percentage of children who live in families with at least one parent who has regular, full-time employment	Increased percentage of children who live in families with incomes above the poverty line	Increased percentage of children who live in households where less than 30% of income is spent on housing
Community	Improved Child Opportunity Index Score for communities in which Nemours Children’s works			

Strengthening Children's Health: The Possibilities

When Yasmine's parents took her to the pediatrician for her 6-month check-up appointment to receive her immunizations, they were struggling to afford groceries and sometimes Yasmine's parents would skip meals. At the appointment, they completed a nonmedical needs screening during check-in. During the appointment, the pediatrician noticed they answered that they have difficulty affording food and asked them if they wanted help accessing food programs. Yasmine's parents told the doctor they would appreciate the help. A staff member at the clinic provided Yasmine's parents with nonperishable food from the clinic's Nemours Children's Cares Closet, and a care coordinator referred them, with their consent, to the local 211 agency. Within a week, 211 reached out to Yasmine's parents to walk them through applying to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). During the discussion, it also came up that Yasmine's parents often went without groceries to afford their rent each month. 211 connected Yasmine's parents with a community-based organization to help them find a more affordable apartment. All these connections to services were noted in Yasmine's medical chart by 211. This allowed the care team at the clinic to know the family was receiving the support they needed.

At Yasmine's 12-month appointment at a clinic closer to the family's new home, the clinical care team prompted Yasmine's parents to again complete the nonmedical needs screening. The care team noted that while Yasmine's parents did not list any current needs, they saw in Yasmine's chart that the family had received help from 211 and other community organizations to address their food and housing needs. In talking with Yasmine's parents, the care team learned the family was no longer skipping meals and that between SNAP benefits and more affordable rent, they were able to buy fruits and vegetables for Yasmine to try. Yasmine's parents explained that over those months, they had experienced improvements in their own physical health and less stress.

Implementing a nonmedical needs screening program is an institutional-level strategy that supports children's health by ensuring a child and family's nonmedical needs are met. Data illustrating the prevalence of patient families' nonmedical needs, whether patient families with needs are successfully connected to services, and whether their needs were resolved, allows for health systems to understand the needs of their patients and families and the availability of resources and support in their communities. Ensuring families have access to nutritious food, affordable transportation, and stable housing supports better physical and mental health outcomes for children and families.

Determining Roles

In our implementation planning process, departments across our organization will identify the roles that Nemours Children's will fill for each of the activities in its plan.

- When **leading**, Nemours Children's will play a driving role in advancing a strategy, convening partners, and promoting alignment on an issue.
- In a **supporting** role, we will collaborate with, empower, and support other organizations in the child health ecosystem (e.g., schools, community-based organizations, and libraries) to bring about changes that advance children's health.
- If the work is aligned with the framework but outside of our current expertise or capabilities, we will **track** strategies deployed by other stakeholders and consider ways we can build our capacity to support that work moving forward.

As we move forward with this framework, we expect that our efforts will primarily fall into the first two categories.



Implementing, Monitoring, and Evaluating the Framework

We are embedding the Population Health Framework within our broader strategic priorities to ensure alignment, accountability, and sustained focus on improving population health across our service areas and beyond.

In support, teams across the organization will regularly map and inventory ongoing activities aligned with the Core Strategies. These inventories will be aggregated at the department level to allow us to evaluate how current, evidence-informed activities align with key performance indicators, identify unmet needs or over-investment, and make adjustments to optimize resource use and impact.

This shift will likely influence how we allocate staff time and resources to better align with our strategic goals and deliver measurable outcomes.



Strengthening Children's Health: Imagining the Future

Jordan is a high school student who struggles with depression and anxiety. Jordan's parents were very concerned that he might harm himself and they sought support. In addition to therapy, one of the resources they found was Sean's House — a physical space for teens and young adults who are experiencing mental health challenges. Sean's House is staffed 24/7 with certified peer specialists who are trained to engage in safe, supportive, and confidential conversations with other young people in need of tools and resources to lead an empowered life. Since then, Jordan has been able to apply the coping skills he learned at Sean's House, and he is now taking steps to help other young people by becoming a Peer24 Support Specialist. Additionally, Jordan's parents were able to attend parent education workshops, led by Nemours Children's psychologists, to better understand how to support Jordan when he is having a hard time.

Nemours Children's provides funding to the Unlocke the Light Foundation in Delaware to champion efforts focused on accessible mental health support and resources in the community, including peer specialists at Sean's House and Sean's Rooms, modeled on Sean's House, across the state. Nemours Children's contributes content expertise and staff time to the development and facilitation of special programming, such as mental health summits and workshops that engage youth and parents/trusted adults, around topics specific to teens and young adults to create a culture of empowerment and support. Nemours Children's also sponsors Unlocke the Light and Sean's House events to reduce the stigma around mental health and suicide, empower the voices of the community, and ensure every parent, caregiver, and young person knows about the services offered. The partnership with the Unlocke the Light Foundation bridges effective mental health services in the clinical setting with community-based mental health strategies and supports to reduce mental health disorders and suicidality in a holistic way.

Through community engagement and support, Nemours Children's strengthens the impact of services offered by community-based organizations rooted and trusted in the community, a community level strategy supporting the safety and mental health of children and youth by helping bring effective suicide prevention strategies to scale in a community.

Achieving the Generational Outcomes in our framework is a long-term process, requiring us to continually assess and refine our implementation plans, using Plan-Do-Check-Act cycles with evolving internal data systems and capabilities.

In addition to regularly reviewing our population health activities and their alignment to our Core Strategies, we will monitor and evaluate their impact utilizing the 12 core indicators to identify what is working, where there are gaps, and how we are engaged across levels of action.

We will also learn from other current tracking and measurement systems and use them to adjust our approach and measure our impact, such as:

- Metrics used by the Healthy Neighborhoods Healthy Families community development initiative to assess the impact of community revitalization on children's health
- County health rankings
- The National Survey of Children's Health

Additionally, in the communities we serve, we are considering ways to connect our Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan processes with additional survey and engagement activities. Our goal is to both understand communities' most pressing needs and ensure that the communities inform our implementation plans.

Finally, we will also seek to demonstrate and document proof-points for where our influence progresses directly and via partnerships.



Bridging Health Care and Population Health

Nemours Children's seeks to address the medical and nonmedical drivers of health by meeting the holistic needs of every child and family where they are, when they need it, and in the manner they want support. As Nemours Children's develops implementation plans for our Population Health Framework, we are already taking steps to advance population health in innovative ways that build connections between traditional healthcare services and services that address nonmedical needs. One example of programs that could be spread and scaled includes improving access to healthcare services for families facing transportation barriers by better leveraging Nemours Children's digital platforms for video visit appointments and health information. Another is providing financial support to community-based violence prevention organizations in Delaware that work on suicide prevention, youth court re-entry programs, education and training, and provide safe spaces for play.

Nemours Children's will grow its current school-based attendance interventions to support children thriving at school age. We will also contribute to expanded school-based resources and mental health supports for all students through our school-based health centers, support asthma management interventions across Delaware, and help raise state immunization rates and well-child visits to the highest in the nation.

Nemours Children's will also enhance our existing nonmedical needs screening process for patients and families by closing our referral loops to ensure families receive the services and supports they need. During an appointment, when patient families indicate they have a nonmedical need they want help addressing, Nemours Children's refers families to community organizations that can help them resolve those concerns. In the future, there will be a mechanism that will allow those community organizations to confirm patient families received the support they needed. This will empower us to better serve as a hub for children and families and pair our high-quality medical care with confirmed connection to community supports.

We are exploring opportunities to expand and leverage Nemours Children's care integration services that are currently offered in Nemours Children's primary care practices in Delaware, Florida, and Pennsylvania, and the KidWell Network clinically integrated network community pediatric practices, as well as through a team dedicated to serving Nemours Children's patients with medical complexity. Care coordinators help patient families navigate the healthcare system, health insurance systems, and other systems to improve health outcomes for patients.

Nemours Children's also is partnering with Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield to deploy a team of community health workers for children diagnosed with asthma to provide home evaluation, trigger identification, education, and resources to any Nemours Children's patient with Medicaid insurance coverage. This will allow Nemours Children's to work further upstream to create healthy home environments for children and achieve better health outcomes for children.

We look forward to sharing more new and innovative approaches to Whole Child Health as our implementation of the Population Health Framework progresses.

Applying the Framework Moving Forward

Nemours Children's is in the early stages of laying the foundation to create community conditions that support thriving children. To create environments that address root causes of health, Nemours Children's is:

- Implementing the inaugural Nemours Children's community impact investment in the REACH Riverside community revitalization project in Wilmington, Delaware. Nemours Children's multimillion dollar, low-interest community impact loan is supporting the redevelopment of the Kingswood Community Center by helping unlock federal tax credits, state funds, and philanthropic contributions. After construction is complete, the Kingswood Community Center will have an on-site, high-quality early care and education center, a Nemours Children's Health clinic, a multipurpose community space, and more, in an integrated approach to supporting child and family health and well-being.
- Advancing Whole Child Health delivery and financing models at the national level through leadership of the Nemours Children's Whole Child Health Alliance. This alliance informs policy and highlights payment and delivery models that will enable Nemours Children's and other child health providers, payers, community-based organizations, and multisector partners to advance whole child health.
- Building capacity and strengthening the partnerships between community-based organizations through the work in Central Florida of the Ginsburg Institute at Nemours Children's Health. The Ginsburg Institute provides grants and convenes and partners with key stakeholders to collaboratively implement promising strategies and pilot innovative approaches to support quality education, ensure access to mental health services, foster economic stability, and enhance food security as strategies to promoting health opportunities for all children.

Conclusion

In the years ahead, our Population Health Strategic Framework will guide efforts to advance Nemours Children's work across the communities we serve.

As we build on our work, we will engage associates and partners, strengthen and scale our anchor strategies, and explore new opportunities to invest in communities. We will leverage our convening power, thought leadership, and ability to align resources to bring together healthcare systems, social service agencies, and child-serving organizations — advancing a model that supports the healthiest generations of children.

We will pilot, evaluate, refine, and scale what works — partnering with communities to address the root causes of health and achieve shared goals. We will also identify and support aligned efforts across the ecosystem, connecting and amplifying solutions for greater impact.

This is our commitment: to operationalize our population health strategy by building public will, shaping policy, and aligning funding streams to prioritize keeping children healthy from the start.

We will share what we learn — but we cannot do it alone. No single pediatric health system can solve this in isolation. The challenge is complex, and our vision is bold. Join us as we work to reimagine health — starting with children — and ensure the health and well-being of America's future adult population.

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Glossary

For purposes of this paper, Nemours adopts the definitions listed below.

- **Align Outcomes:** Ensure that all aspects of health care delivery work together to achieve the best possible results for patients.
- **Anchor Institution:** Anchor institutions were first defined as institutions that have significant infrastructure investment in a particular community and are therefore unlikely to leave that community.⁸ Over time, the common understanding of anchor institutions has evolved to largely include universities, hospitals, and other large nonprofits that are physically rooted in, tend to be large employers of residents of, and have significant infrastructure assets in a particular community.⁹ Anchor Institutions use a “place-based” lens to make decisions related to directing hiring, purchasing, and investing to promote greater economic opportunity and address root causes of poor community health outcomes.¹⁰
- **Nonmedical Social Needs:** Social and economic needs that individuals experience that affect their ability to maintain their health and well-being.
- **Optimal Health for All:** Optimal health for all means that everyone has a fair opportunity to be as healthy as possible.
- **Population Health:** Population health is the interdisciplinary approach to achieving positive health outcomes within a specific geographic region or regions. Population health encompasses the health, economic, and social outcomes of all people in a particular community. This definition of population health is grounded in public health principles and not restricted to covered lives or attributable population definitions.¹¹

8 Fulbright-Anderson, K., Auspos, P., Anderson, A. *Community Involvement in Partnerships with Educational Institutions, Medical Centers and Utility Companies*. The Aspen Institute. January 2001.

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10 Anchor Mission Communications Toolkit. Healthcare Anchor Network. 2020. <https://healthcareanchor.network/2020/02/anchor-mission-communications-toolkit/>

11 Kindig, D. and Stoddart, G. March 2023. “What Is Population Health?” *American Journal of Public Health* 93 (3): pp. 380-383. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.93.3.380>

- **Population Health Improvement:** Population health improvement is the collaborative and systematic approach to measurably improve health outcomes for a group of people or a community through preventive health strategies.¹²
- **Population Health Management:** According to the American Hospital Association, “population health management refers to the process of improving clinical health outcomes of a defined group of individuals through improved care coordination and patient engagement supported by appropriate financial and care models.”¹³ For Nemours Children’s, population health management is the area of our work specifically focused on disease management, improved health, and care coordination for our patients.
- **Root Causes of Health:** Root causes of health are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.
- **Systems Change:** Systems change is the process of addressing root causes of issues (rather than symptoms) by transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics, and policies to create a system that operates in a fundamentally different way. Nemours Children’s specifically pursues systems change to improve the ability of institutions and large-scale systems to serve children and families equally. As an example, we are aiming to align outcomes across key indicators, structures, and resources to find ways to align and integrate best practices and support community level efforts to improve health opportunities for all.

12 Delgado P., Binzer K., Shah, A., et al. “Accelerating Population Health Improvement.” *BMJ*. 2021 373(966): doi: 10.1136/bmj.n966.

13 Population Health Management page. American Hospital Association website. <https://www.aha.org/center/population-health-management>. Accessed September 23, 2024.