



WHOLE CHILD HEALTH ALLIANCE

Advancing the Key Elements of Whole Child Health: Provider Case Studies

Nemours Children's Health



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Introduction

[Nemours Children's Health](#) is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two freestanding children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary, urgent, and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's Hospital, Delaware (NCHDE), located in Wilmington, is a 260-bed facility, serving nearly 100,000 unique patients in 2024. NCHDE has a payer mix of about 58% Medicaid for inpatient utilization. Nemours Children's Hospital, Florida (NCHFL), located in Orlando, is a [135-bed facility](#), serving nearly 75,000 unique patients in 2024. NCHFL has a payer mix of over 70% Medicaid for inpatient utilization.¹

Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a Whole Child Health model, which provides innovative and high-quality medical care while also addressing the nonmedical factors that impact health. Nemours Children's provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families, and communities it serves. Nemours Children's also powers [KidsHealth.org](#) — a pioneer and leader in pediatric health content trusted by millions worldwide for 30 years to keep families healthy. Recognizing that health depends on more than medical care, our enterprise strategy aims to go "[well beyond medicine](#)," advancing [Whole Child Health](#) through innovative clinical, population health, and payment strategies.



Nemours Children's Whole Child Health Approach

Population Health Strategy Lays the Foundation for Whole Child Health

Leveraging its unique role as a health delivery system, employer, community partner, and national advocacy and policy voice for children's health, Nemours Children's deploys population health strategies that promote Whole Child Health. Our population health work reflects how the health system spends resources; builds public support and meaningfully engages partners; aligns incentives; and measures outcomes to improve the entire ecosystem in which children live, learn, play, and grow. Nemours Children's implements this work across the health system and in partnership with other child- and family-serving organizations at the institutional, community, state, and national levels to promote synergy and catalyze greater impact. In addition to the patient- and community-level interventions described throughout this case study, this strategy promotes Whole Child Health at a population level.

¹ These statistics are based on data from fiscal year 2024.



Nemours Children's National Office of Policy and Prevention

Nemours Children's National Office of Policy & Prevention (National Office) accelerates pediatric population health improvement and health system transformation through federal policy and advocacy as well as practice and prevention strategies. The National Office collaborates with other health systems and sectors to improve health for all children. A few National Office initiatives include:

- **Federal Policy and Advocacy.** The National Office works with the U.S. Congress, the federal executive branch, and national partners on federal policy changes and thought leadership opportunities that help create positive conditions for children to grow up healthy and thrive.
- **Nemours Children's Reading BrightStart!** *Reading BrightStart!* offers literacy activities and education for parents and educators of young children since evidence suggests that literacy is a predictor of long-term health. To date, Reading BrightStart! tools and resources have helped nearly 300,000 children in 38 states.
- **Initiatives to Support Military Families.** Given our close proximity to major military installations, Nemours Children's has spearheaded several initiatives to support military-connected children, families, and employees, including developing a *military-connected families identifier* on patient-families' registration and electronic health records. In addition, Nemours Children's is a founding member of the Hidden Helpers Coalition (led by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation and Wounded Warrior Project) and a co-chair of the Coalition's Health & Wellness subcommittee.
- **Healthy Kids, Healthy Future.** Through *Healthy Kids, Healthy Future*, we provide resources and tools to organizations across the U.S. to train child care providers to promote healthy lifestyles, specifically focused on obesity prevention through healthy eating and physical activity.
- **Whole Child Health Alliance.** The Whole Child Health Alliance, of which Nemours Children's is a founder and Steering Committee member, brings together multisector stakeholders that seek to accelerate the adoption of Whole Child Health delivery approaches supported by sustainable financing models.

Implementing an Integrated, Preventive Approach to Address Children's Holistic Needs

Nemours Children's addresses children's holistic needs by providing an array of services that go "*well beyond medicine*." Across all primary care locations in Delaware, and some locations in Pennsylvania and Florida, we ensure children have access to physical, mental, and behavioral health services, as well as resources to address children's nonmedical needs.

Integrated Primary Care. To increase access to *behavioral health services*, Nemours Children's leverages an integrated primary care model that embeds mental health providers in the primary care setting. Behavioral health clinicians in primary care conduct mental health screenings (e.g., depression and anxiety screenings), identify the early signs of mental health conditions (e.g., changes in behavior like sleeping or eating, or changes in mood), and conduct evaluations and provide support, including parenting support.² Primary care providers can also consult behavioral health clinicians to support treatment for children with behavioral needs. For children who need mental health services, this model integrates brief (i.e., three to four sessions), evidence-based behavioral health services into the primary care setting. As part of the primary care team, behavioral health providers may also provide episodic consultation and care to patients and families throughout the pediatric lifespan, contributing

² In Delaware, behavioral health providers also evaluate children for additional conditions.

to the continuity of their primary care at Nemours Children's. When needed, behavioral health providers may refer children to longer-term services. The goal of integrated primary care is to promote well-being and provide just-in-time access to preventive and early intervention behavioral health care.

While Nemours Children's has implemented an integrated primary care model in Delaware for more than two decades, Nemours Children's launched its integrated primary care model in Florida in 2021 with the support of a grant from [TD Bank](#). In its first full year of implementation with support from TD Bank, NCHFL's Central Florida Behavioral Health Program saw 1,006 unique patients, completing a total of 5,543 patient visits. To date, the Central Florida Behavioral Health Program has seen 2,344 unique patients and completed 15,991 behavioral health visits. The models in Florida and the Delaware Valley are now sustained by billing insurance as well as federal grants.

Addressing Children's Developmental and Behavioral Needs. In both Florida and the Delaware Valley, Nemours Children's [developmental behavioral pediatricians](#) assess children's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development and develop care plans to support the child's success and well-being. The specialists treat conditions including learning differences, developmental delays, behavioral issues, and a myriad of other conditions. In Florida, pediatric residents, who are trained by developmental behavioral pediatricians, offer a free, eight-week parent training program to support the parents of children with developmental needs.

Florida's Pediatric Acute Telemental Health (PATH) Program

The [PATH program](#) provides rapid access to [mental health services](#) to children in northeast and central Florida as well as the Florida panhandle, in part by partnering with six primary care offices that previously lacked access to preventive mental health services. Through this program, PATH providers screen patients for behavior, depression, anxiety, and nonmedical needs. Children and their families can receive brief, evidence-based telemental health care, parenting support, and information to address concerns about behaviors and conditions, such as sleep problems, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, PATH allows children with more urgent needs to access services quickly and, if necessary, connect with a higher level of care, avoiding emergency department visits. Case managers assist families in addressing nonmedical needs. This program was originally funded by a philanthropic donation and is currently funded through a Health Resources and Services Administration grant.

Between August 2023 and December 2024, the PATH program completed 1,596 appointments, screened more than 300 patients ages 12 and older for depression, and, on average, scheduled appointments nine days after screening. While outcome data is not yet available, Nemours Children's plans to begin to track metrics related to depression, anxiety, behavior, and other outcomes. By providing rapid access to mental health care, this program aims to prevent mental health issues from escalating to help children lead healthy lives.

Patient Story

A mom, concerned about how her 12-year-old daughter was managing feelings related to social adjustment, peer relationships, and stress, called Nemours Children's seeking help. Nemours Psychology offered her daughter a PATH video appointment, and the mental health provider saw the patient over video shortly after she was referred. After conducting two video sessions with the adolescent and communicating with her mom over the phone and through the Nemours Children's app, the provider conducted a warm handoff to longer-term mental health services. The family was pleased with PATH and the help getting connected with the support that she needed longer-term.

Addressing Nonmedical Needs. Across Nemours Children's clinical locations in the Delaware Valley and some clinical locations in Florida, providers conduct universal screening for nonmedical needs such as food security. When providers identify nonmedical needs, they can refer patient-families to care coordination or community-based resources. Nemours Children's leverages a [care management team](#) comprised of [social workers](#) and registered nurses to help patient families address drivers of health and barriers to care like transportation, or access to insurance coverage.

Fostering Thriving Communities

Nemours Children's leverages community partnerships with schools and local providers to advance Whole Child Health for its patients and the broader community it serves.

Delaware School-Based Health Centers. Nemours Children's [partners](#) with the Delaware Division of Public Health and three Delaware school districts to operate 17 [school-based health centers](#), which provide integrated physical and behavioral health services in early education centers, elementary schools, middle schools, and academies (i.e., first through eighth grade schools) at no cost to patient families. Nemours Children's bills Medicaid and commercial insurance plans for these services and contracts with participating school districts and funding partners to cover some of the remaining cost of services. Across all participating schools over the 2024–2025 school year, there were 5,856 school-based health center appointments for 1,303 unique patients.

Data Access for Student Health. In addition to providing health care services in schools, Nemours Children's partners with [Colonial School District](#) and the Delaware Health Information Network on the [Data Access for Student Health](#) (DASH) data sharing program. Through this program, a chatbot alerts our care coordinators and parents/guardians if students miss three or more consecutive days of school. Nemours Children's care coordinators will reach out to the student's family if the student misses 10 days during a given school year. This data sharing arrangement helps primary care providers intervene to support students when absenteeism is related to physical or mental health issues.

Central Florida Behavioral Health Hub and School Partnerships. NCHFL leads the [Central Florida Behavioral Health Hub](#) (BHH), which aims to increase access to mental health services for children and adolescents across the region, including in rural areas, by preparing primary care providers to address nonacute mental health needs.³ The BHH trains community-based pediatricians to identify and treat mental health conditions to prevent them from escalating. The BHH care coordinators connect children and families to mental/behavioral health providers as well as additional community resources as needed. In addition to the training provided through BHH, Nemours Children's partners with the Orange County School District to implement two national behavioral health programs:

- [Sources of Strength](#) provides a peer-led, strength-based suicide prevention intervention. Nemours Children's is also working with the Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida to implement this program.
- [Zones of Regulation](#) teaches children skills to identify and regulate their emotions.

Supporting Families With Nutritious Food. Across Delaware and Florida, Nemours Children's partners with community organizations to help patient families access nutritious food.

- **Delaware Valley.** Nemours Children's has established [several initiatives](#) to address food insecurity in the Delaware Valley, including establishing Cares Closets (i.e., pantries stocked with nonperishable food items and other essentials for families) in some of its primary care clinics. Additionally, Nemours Children's launched investment partnerships with four local food banks to support their backpack programs, which help fill the nutritional gap for children who lack access to school meals during weekends, school breaks, and summer months. Nemours Children's has also provided funding for other organizations' food pantries, further extending access to nutritious food. Lastly, Nemours Children's has invested in Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids, a seed-to-table school garden initiative, and sponsors six Delaware schools, providing funding for garden construction and program implementation to promote hands-on nutrition education.



³ This program is part of the [statewide](#) network.

- **Florida.** To address food insecurity in Florida, Nemours Children's participates in [Blessings in a Backpack](#) and operates the Family Resource Center in Orlando, which provides access to nutritious food and other supplies, as well as community resources and classes. Additionally, our Ginsburg Institute funded 4Roots, an agriculture organization focused on "food as medicine," and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida to establish a community garden.⁴ Through this grant, the organizations provide the community with fresh, locally grown produce. Additionally, Nemours Children's pediatricians and dietitians provide weekly nutritional and culinary education classes to participants. Lastly, Nemours Children's Health, Pensacola funds a pilot program providing a box of food to patient families upon discharge. They also partner with a local food pantry to provide diet-specific food boxes to patient families in need.

Community-Based Interventions to Address Asthma in the Delaware Valley. In the Delaware Valley, Nemours Children's helps improve childhood asthma control by addressing the causes of asthma flares. To do so, [Nemours Children's](#), collaborating with Highmark through a Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield Blueprints for the Community Fund grant, leverages community health workers (CHWs) who work with patient families to identify and address in-home asthma triggers. CHWs can also refer patient-families to medical-legal partnership services that take a legal approach to addressing the nonmedical factors that impact asthma. With support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Nemours Children's collaborates with the American Lung Association, Delaware Health and Social Services, nonprofits, and schools to implement a variety of activities, including community-based education, home interventions, and care coordination.

Financial Support for the Community

In addition to engaging in community-based programs, Nemours Children's makes financial investments in its community, as described below.

Leveraging its Role as a Business in the Community. To create community conditions that promote health and well-being for children and families, Nemours Children's supports its community and local economy in a number of ways. For example, Nemours Children's helps community members access and advance health care careers, while also focusing on reducing its environmental impact to preserve a healthy environment for children and families. Furthermore, Nemours Children's recently implemented its inaugural [community impact loan](#) to support the redevelopment of the Kingswood Community Center in Wilmington, Delaware. With our investment in the Kingswood Community Center, a vital community hub for delivering programs that support child and family health and well-being, the center can expand and scale its services for families, which advances our goal to achieve long-term, sustainable community health improvements.

Financial Support for Community Organizations. Nemours Children's investments in community organizations reflect its commitment to advancing Whole Child Health. In 2024, Nemours Children's supported initiatives addressing food insecurity, positive youth development, maternal and child health, emotional and behavioral well-being, and violence prevention. Through 24 strategic investment partnerships and 40 sponsorships across the Delaware Valley, Nemours Children's provided approximately \$860,000 in financial support, positively impacting more than 90,000 children and families.



⁴ "Food is medicine" involves promoting [nutrition](#) to improve health.

Journey to Pay for Health

As part of its commitment to improving Whole Child Health, for more than a decade, Nemours Children's has invested in the core capacities needed to achieve sustainable financing. This has included building out its infrastructure (e.g., finance, data, Health Information Technology, care integration), investing in community partnerships, redesigning care models and ultimately, building out a strategy to “pay for health.” Supports to this evolution include a strong commitment from internal leadership, strong community partnerships, years of learning from experts in the field, a Health Care Innovation Award in Delaware from the Innovation Center at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and support from state leadership.

Nemours Children's has established value-based contracts with Medicaid managed care organizations and commercial payers. In Delaware, these contracts are negotiated by the [*KidWell Network*](#), a wholly owned subsidiary of Nemours Children's and partnership with privately owned primary care practices. The KidWell Network is the only pediatric clinically integrated network and accountable care organization in the state that aims to improve outcomes, increase efficiency and access, reduce costs, and solidify the partnership with independent primary care providers in the community. To date, KidWell has been successful in improving [*quality scores*](#), which translates to quality outcomes and shared savings, achieving a total greater than \$43 million in incentives including categories such as shared savings, quality performance, utilization, and care coordination goals since 2020.

In January 2025, Nemours Children's and Delaware Health and Social Services [*announced*](#) an agreement to create a first-of-its-kind pediatric global revenue budget financing model for the children enrolled in Delaware's Medicaid program. The payment model aligns financial incentives to shift toward a “pay for health” approach that encourages greater investments in care models that improve health outcomes. This program is a next step in our Whole Child Health model, integrating Nemours Children's primary, specialty, and hospital care with health initiatives that impact all of Delaware's children.

Conclusion

The Nemours Children's “well beyond medicine” approach infuses a Whole Child Health lens across its system-wide strategy. It is advancing this approach through its focus on population health, integrated approaches to addressing behavioral health and nonmedical needs, community-based partnerships, and interventions to address childhood chronic disease. Recent steps toward “pay for health” financing offer promise to further scale population health approaches and expand effective care models, offering valuable insights for advancing Whole Child Health.



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