



# Community Health Needs Assessment

## **MED**RVA Healthcare

(Richmond Eye & Ear Healthcare Alliance)  
2023



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# FOREWORD

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MEDRVA Healthcare is an independent, not-for-profit, healthcare organization based in Richmond, Virginia. It opened to the public in 1952 as the Richmond Eye Hospital. Today MEDRVA Healthcare includes two outpatient surgery centers with 16 operating and procedure rooms, an imaging center, the region's only low vision center, and the MEDRVA Foundation.

The first MEDRVA Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was published in December 2018 with a consecutive Assessment done in 2020. The 2018 Assessment established a baseline to identify community health needs and examine deficiencies. As part of the organization's 2023 Assessment, MEDRVA has refined the measures used to evaluate the needs in the Greater Richmond community. This data was analyzed to identify the communities with the greatest unmet health care needs and will be used to support future needs based on the services that the organization provides.

In the Greater Richmond area, diverse localities face varied healthcare and economic challenges and service gaps. Through MEDRVA's research and analysis for this CHNA, multiple service gaps were identified within the region MEDRVA serves. These were identified through surveys with local health clinics, reports like the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the U.S. Census Bureau, free clinic annual reports and many other resources. The following six service gaps rose to the top of our list:

- Access to Primary Care Services
- Vision Care
- Transportation Barriers
- Specialty Care Access
- Health Education and Outreach
- Support for the Elderly and Homebound

MEDRVA is dedicated to both maintaining its current efforts and introducing new initiatives to tackle the health issues spotlighted by the CHNA. With a growth trajectory in revenue and donations since 2008, MEDRVA aspires to set a standard for its peers in consistently enhancing specialty medical access and uplifting community health.

The findings from the 2023 Needs Assessment will assist MEDRVA in planning and prioritizing future activities including, allocating resources, providing eye screenings to pre-k school-aged children, low vision services, and donating its surgery center and procedure rooms, when appropriate, for surgeries, and imaging center services. This Assessment will be used as a resource for organizational officials, staff and others to plan initiatives to improve the health of our region and underserved communities.

Although Greater Richmond has historically been a somewhat healthy area, that does not mean that there isn't work to do to help those in need. MEDRVA sees its CHNA as another tool in the toolbox to inform its opportunities to improve those core health indicators that lay the foundation for creating a healthier region for all residents.

Taylan Bozkurt  
Chief Executive Officer  
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# INTRODUCTION

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The ACA mandates specific healthcare providers and institutions to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) triennially to gauge the health requirements of their respective communities. These assessments not only provide valuable insights for health organizations to tailor their community contributions but also boost the alignment between health organizational benefits and broader community health improvement endeavors.

MEDRVA Healthcare, operating as an alias of Richmond Eye & Ear Health Care Alliance (REEHA), has compiled an assessment focusing on the healthcare necessities of Virginians in its operational zone, emphasizing particularly on economically disadvantaged and medically underserved groups.

This document outlines MEDRVA's organizational makeup, services offered, the methodology adopted for the CHNA, a prioritized list of health needs, prevailing community resources, and the ensuing steps to cater to the highlighted requirements.

MEDRVA remains dedicated to enhancing its philanthropic initiatives and rolling out practical measures to cater to the needs spotlighted in this study.

## Organization Structure of MEDRVA

MEDRVA Healthcare is a Virginia Nonstock Corporation that is tax-exempt pursuant to IRC Section 501(c)(3). MEDRVA provides charitable services directly to the community and through its operating affiliate Surgery Center at Stony Point (SCSP) and Surgery Center at West Creek (SCWC), two specialty outpatient surgical hospitals located in Henrico and Goochland County, as well as its MEDRVA Imaging Center at West Creek and the Low Vision Center at Stony Point. MEDRVA holds a controlling interest in SCSP and manages SCSP's day-to-day operations.

MEDRVA's predecessor was the Richmond Eye & Ear Hospital, which closed its inpatient acute care hospital in June 2002 and transferred its operations to SCSP. The employees of MEDRVA are included among the nearly 350,000 working in Virginia's non-profit sector, the state's second largest industry.

## Needs Assessment Approach and Methodology

MEDRVA's dedicated team, consisting of staff and consultants, orchestrated the foundational research for the CHNA and systematically evaluated the community needs. Throughout 2023's winter and spring, the team convened both in person and virtually, ensuring comprehensive preparations for the CHNA while keeping a pulse on the research's progress.

For a well-rounded perspective, they reviewed a variety of resources published from 2018 to 2023. These resources provided insights into community demographics, healthcare needs, and the reliability of the publishing entities. To gain an even deeper understanding, the team identified and engaged key stakeholders, nonprofits and organizations within the communities MEDRVA serves, establishing a structured method for gathering their insights.

Armed with knowledge from these diverse sources, the team embarked on an analysis. They compared the identified community and healthcare needs against available resources to ascertain priority areas. A thorough account of this assessment and the subsequent priorities are provided below.

## Resources Utilized for the CHNA

The Team employed a holistic strategy to evaluate the health concerns of the community using both primary research and secondary research. Drawing from a range of public data and community input from local organizations such as Access Now, the Goochland Free Clinic, Powhatan Free Clinic, Crossover Ministry Healthcare, the Health Brigade, City of Richmond and others, this assessment paints a detailed picture of the health and healthcare environment in the service areas. Their approach amalgamated community participation, data analytics, and feedback analysis to pinpoint key focus areas.

### Primary Data

Community feedback played a pivotal role. Insights were harvested via email surveys. A comprehensive list of respondents is provided in this section.

Additionally, the Team tapped into various community resources to gain a broader perspective on the health and demographic profiles of MEDRVA's serviced communities.

### Secondary Data

To gather quantitative health-related information for MEDRVA's service area, we relied on various authoritative public data repositories. These encompassed demographics, healthcare resources, county rankings, social and behavioral health patterns, and disease trends.

Esteemed sources such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and its County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (2022), US Census, US Department of Health and Human Services, Virginia Department of Health, County Health Rankings online, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention were consulted.

# CHNA OVERVIEW

This assessment was organized into seven sections which are summarized below.

## MEDRVA Service Area

An overview of the greater Richmond area is provided, including total population estimates, age data, poverty data and race/ethnicity data from the 2020 U.S. Census estimates.

## Community Health Concerns

Being a mix of both urban and rural areas has implications for health status and healthcare services. This section of the Needs Assessment addresses some of the challenges of serving this type of area with varying demographics and needs and offers some important planning considerations to address health needs.



## Community Service Gaps

This section examines general health status in our service area, which has the poorest health outcomes. After comparing general health status across the region, this section highlights six basic health needs/community service gaps including: Access to Primary Care Services, Vision Care, Transportation Barriers, Specialty Care Access, Health Education and Outreach, and Support for the Elderly and Homebound.

Health behaviors were addressed in the health status and needs section, because of the role they play in health outcomes. COVID-19 was also addressed in this section because of the importance of its immediate impact upon health status and its implications on health disparities.

## Ideas and Suggestions for Improvement

Affordability and accessibility in healthcare are of paramount concern. MEDRVA has the potential to significantly impact the Richmond community by strengthening its collaborations with local NGOs like Access Now, Powhatan Free Clinic, and others, to provide surgeries at reduced rates for those economically challenged. By diversifying the range of surgeries offered, particularly in areas underserved by local hospitals, and considering the use of new and innovative technologies, MEDRVA can cater to a broader audience, including those in remote areas or with transportation issues. Moreover, MEDRVA should continue its efforts in transparent pricing, and the offering of Pre-K vision screenings (expected to start in 2024), can promote early detection and intervention, which could decrease the need for invasive procedures.

Addressing community service gaps, particularly in vision care for the pre-k population and dental care, is crucial. MEDRVA can extend its reach by partnering with likeminded community organizations. Collaborations with local transportation services, currently being considered for low vision patients, can further enhance accessibility, ensuring patients have smooth journeys to their healthcare destinations.

Lastly, to address broader community health concerns and service gaps, MEDRVA can champion non-profit health institutions through grant advocacy and volunteer programs. By consistently supporting Medicaid,



MEDRVA can also ensure that the economically challenged community members receive essential care. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of adaptability and preparedness. As the healthcare landscape evolves, MEDRVA, with its innovative approach, can play a pivotal role in shaping Richmond's healthcare future.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The Greater Richmond-area, with its mosaic of diverse localities, grapples with unique healthcare and economic challenges. These complexities come into sharper focus when considering the pivotal role that MEDRVA's advanced surgery centers, imaging center, and low vision center play in offering specialized and comprehensive services. The CHNA analysis underscores five predominant health imperatives for the communities under MEDARVA's care: affordable care, specialist healthcare access, widespread health issues, the necessity for non-profit health facilities, and a sustained allegiance to Medicaid and charitable endeavors.

MEDRVA, with its unwavering dedication, stands committed to these identified health necessities. By bolstering current undertakings and spearheading new initiatives, they are not merely content with improving the status quo—they aim to revolutionize the healthcare landscape. The remarkable journey of revenue and philanthropic strides since 2008, when the MEDRVA Foundation was officially launched and began making significant contributions to community organizations<sup>A</sup>. This bears testimony to MEDRVA's resilience and ambition, setting it as a beacon for its contemporaries. This trajectory underscores their relentless drive to expand specialty medical access and fortify community health.

In synthesizing insights from the CHNA and informed consultations with the Team, MEDRVA is at a pivotal juncture. Richmond's healthcare narrative finds itself interwoven with MEDRVA's mission, and with a vision rooted in collaboration, innovation, and an unyielding commitment, the promise of a healthier tomorrow becomes an attainable reality, both in the present tapestry and the unfolding chapters of the future.

# MEDRVA SERVICE AREA

An analysis of MEDRVA's patient data from the past three years indicates that the organization primarily provides outpatient surgical services to patients in the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area<sup>B, C</sup>, which includes the following locales: Amelia County, Caroline County, Charles City County, Chesterfield County, City of Richmond, City of Petersburg, City of Hopewell, City of Colonial Heights, Cumberland County, Dinwiddie County, Goochland County, Hanover County, Henrico County, King and Queen County, King William County, Louisa County, New Kent County, Powhatan County, Prince George County, and Sussex County. MEDRVA's services also include the cities of Fredericksburg, Williamsburg, and Emporia.

## Demographics

The U.S. Census Bureau<sup>U</sup> reported the region's population as 1,441,765. Gender composition was similar to that of the nation, with 51.9% of the area identifying as female compared to 51.1% nationally. Age demographics were also comparable to the U.S. with 5.5% aged 5 and under, 78.7% aged 18 and over, and 16.5% aged 65+ compared to 5.6%, 77.9% and 16.8%, respectively. Compared to the nation, a substantially larger percentage of the area's population was Black (27.5% vs. 12.9%) and substantially smaller percentages of the state population were Latinix (13.3% vs. 19.1%) and White (57.1% vs. 75.8%).

## Education

Compared to the nation, the area had high school education attainment (91.38% vs. 91.0%)<sup>U</sup> and a lower proportion of residents aged 25+ earning a bachelor's degree or higher (23.5% vs. 37.7%).

## Economics

In the Richmond metropolitan region, there was a 3% increase in the median household earnings from 2019 to 2022, as reported by the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS)<sup>G</sup> from the U.S. Census Bureau. By 2022, the median income in this region was \$81,388, an ascent from \$78,981 in 2019 when adjusted for inflation. On the other hand, Virginia's median earnings saw a decline of roughly 2.84%, moving from \$88,382 to \$85,873. The proportion of people in the Richmond area earning an annual salary between \$50,000 and \$75,000 dwindled from 18% in 2019 to 16% in 2022. Conversely, there was an uptick in the segment earning more than \$100,000 annually, with the percentage rising from 34% to 41%. At the national level, there was a 1.6% dip in the median household income during the same period, once inflation adjustments were made.

## Poverty

The average household income for this region of Virginia was \$70,059 compared to \$74,580<sup>N</sup> for the nation. This region has a higher percent of individuals who live below the federal poverty line compared to the nation (12.33% vs 11.5%).

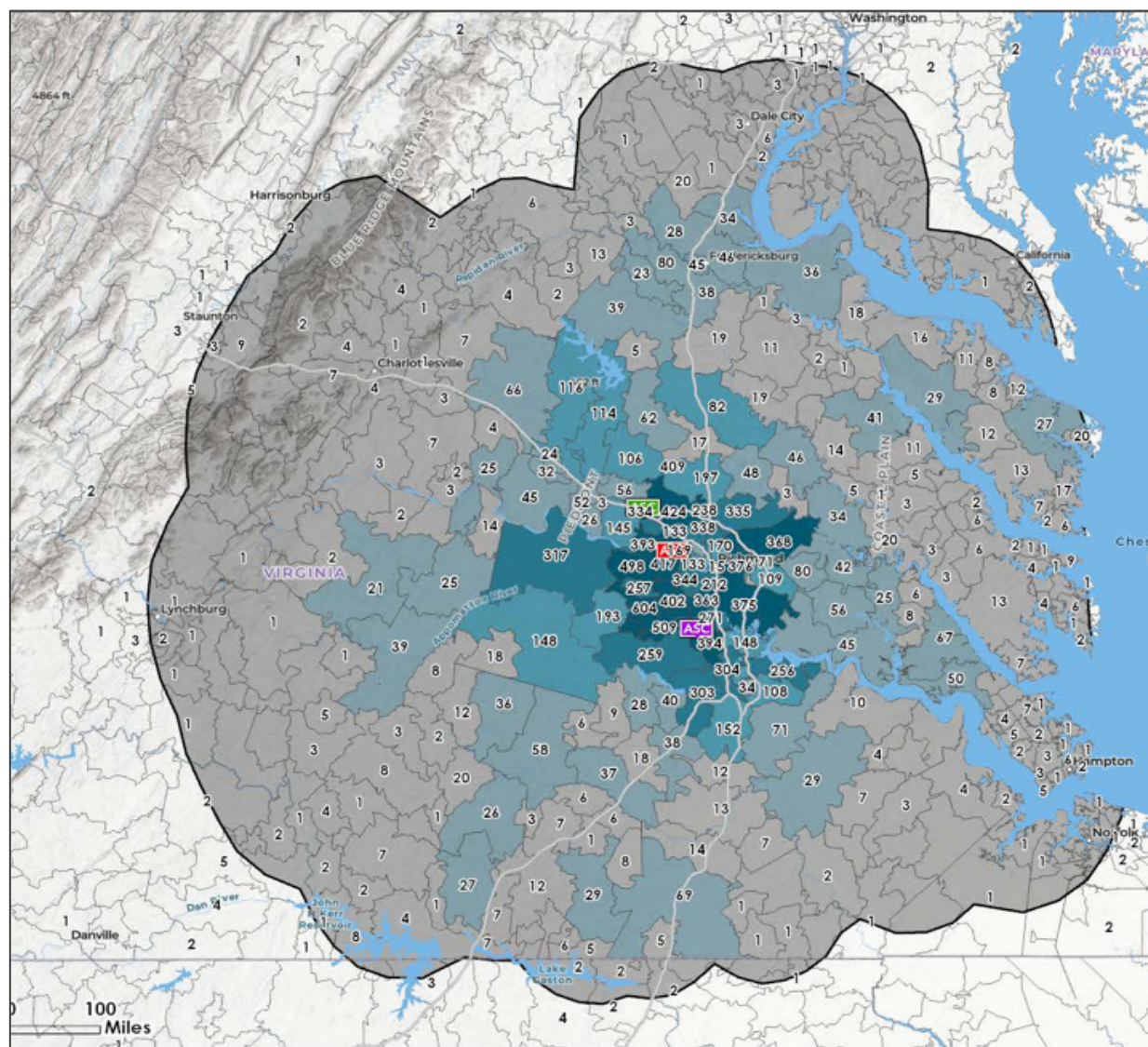
## Overall Health Indicators

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings<sup>E</sup> reports that the percent of uninsured Virginian's < 65 years old was 9%, compared to 10% for the nation. The percent uninsured stayed the same from the 2019 report (9%).

Looking at the top five areas of MEDRVA's patient origin area<sup>x</sup>, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, Powhatan, Richmond City, the area's rate for excessive drinking was 17.75%<sup>w</sup> in 2022 compared to the national rate of 20%; and the area's rate for smoking was 16.25%<sup>w</sup> compared to the national rate of 16%. Additionally, the ratio of population to primary care physicians per the area was an average of 2,860:1, compared to the national primary care ratio of 1310:1; for dentists, the area's ratio was 2,405:1 compared to 1,400:1 nationally; and for mental health providers, the ratio was 555.1 in the area vs. 350.1 for the nation.

# SERVICE AREA MAP

MEDARVA is located within the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area of Virginia. The map<sup>D</sup> below was developed through MEDRVA's internal documents and patient information, and illustrates both the location of the organization and the regions<sup>B</sup> where its patients originate<sup>C</sup>.



# COMMUNITY HEALTH CONCERNS

The Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area, a diverse community with both urban and rural areas, faces multifaceted healthcare challenges. Addressing these challenges progressively will undeniably elevate the community's health standards. After a comprehensive review, we have identified five pivotal sectors that would benefit from thoughtful attention and proactive measures: Affordable Healthcare, Availability of Specialized Care, Prevalent Health Challenges, the Role of Non-Profit Health Establishments, and Consistent Support for Medicaid and Philanthropic Health Initiatives.

## 1. Affordable Healthcare:

Every individual deserves access to affordable health services. Despite its fundamental significance, this remains a challenge in areas like the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area. A joint effort of community leaders and healthcare professionals is needed to widen avenues to reasonably priced health insurance and to champion initiatives that moderate healthcare expenditures. Approaches like community medical centers, flexible pricing, and transparent healthcare pricing policies can provide residents with essential services without undue financial strain.

## 2. Availability of Specialized Care:

Based on our research and statistical trends<sup>P</sup> from many of the area's top free clinics, the community offers primary, dental, and specialty care encompassing services like hypertension, diabetes treatment, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, and gynecology. Medical care includes management, labs, and charity referrals, while dental services range from prophylaxis to dentures. Additionally, there's mental health counselling, psychiatrist services, and holistic case management addressing broader health determinants. Specialized healthcare, mainly centered in Richmond's metropolitan zones, might be less accessible to residents in peripheral/rural or overlooked areas within the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area. Telehealth emerges as a promising solution, offering remote consultations and ongoing care. Collaborative efforts between healthcare institutions and local administrative bodies can facilitate the presence of specialists in these areas, ensuring equitable access to advanced treatments.



## 3. Prevalent Health Challenges:

Based on our research and statistical trends from many of the area's top free clinics, the communities with the most need face significant health challenges, including prevalent conditions like hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, diabetes, depression, and obesity. Many individuals are seeking medical attention after extended gaps in care, underscoring the importance of medication management. As of summer 2023, there's an increasing demand for respiratory care due to deteriorating air quality. Additionally, there's a noted emphasis on specialized care, such as diabetic eye exams, endocrinology consultations, and physical therapy. To uplift communal health standards, it's pivotal to recognize and address the predominant health



concerns. Techniques like community health reviews and a data-driven approach can spotlight these concerns. Once identified, focused strategies, health literacy drives, and preventive actions can be introduced to address these concerns, emphasizing enhanced lifestyle choices and streamlined healthcare access.

#### **4. Role of Non-Profit Health Institutions:**

Non-profit health entities play a vital role in serving marginalized sections, typically those devoid of insurance or with limited coverage. With their role becoming increasingly crucial, community reinforcement through volunteering, financial contributions, and advocacy is essential. Strengthening the non-profit healthcare framework will invariably enhance healthcare accessibility for marginalized populations.

#### **5. Consistent Support for Medicaid and Philanthropic Health Initiatives:**

For numerous Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area residents, Medicaid and philanthropic healthcare are indispensable safety nets. Their continued success requires thoughtful contributions from both the corporate and government sectors. Campaigning for sustained allocations, expanded qualification criteria, and simplified registration can enhance the reach of these programs. Simultaneously, motivating healthcare establishments to join philanthropic healthcare drives can further bolster this support network.

Addressing the healthcare aspirations of the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area is a shared responsibility, necessitating synergies between healthcare professionals, administrative bodies, not-for-profit entities, and the community at large. By emphasizing affordable healthcare, enhanced specialized care accessibility, addressing dominant health challenges, fortifying non-profit health centers, and unwavering support for Medicaid and philanthropic initiatives, we can steer towards an all-encompassing health upliftment. Together, we can create a community where health is a shared priority and a collective endeavor.



# COMMUNITY SERVICE GAPS

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Richmond, the historic capital of Virginia, is a thriving hub of history, culture, and a diverse community. However, despite its vibrancy, Richmond confronts several healthcare challenges. Let's explore these challenges, backed by data available up to 2022.

## 1. Access to Primary Care Services

According to the HRSA's data<sup>F</sup> from 2021, Richmond had multiple Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary care. This signifies a pronounced imbalance in the distribution of healthcare resources. Such disparities are more evident in low-income neighborhoods, where access is limited and wait times extended.

## 2. Vision Care

Data from Conexus<sup>Y</sup> reveals alarming gaps in vision care for school-aged children. Remarkably, 1 in 4 school-aged children has a vision problem severe enough to impact learning<sup>2</sup>. The issue becomes more acute in economically challenged communities served by Conexus, where 1 in 3 children faces vision problems<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, before entering school, a mere 15% of children will see an eye care professional<sup>2</sup>. Across the U.S., over 10 million children struggle with vision problems, potentially hampering academic performance<sup>2</sup>. Delinquency in juveniles can also be linked to vision issues, with 70% of juvenile delinquents having an uncorrected vision problem<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, children with uncorrected visual acuity less than 20/20 are three times more likely to fail a grade in school<sup>2</sup>.

## 3. Transportation Barriers

A 2019 Richmond transit study<sup>J</sup> suggested that several areas, predominantly underserved ones, lacked robust public transport links to key medical facilities. For many residents, especially those without personal transportation, this posed significant challenges to accessing timely medical care.

## 4. Specialty Care Access

Residents in need of specialized medical care often faced hurdles. A 2020 state health report<sup>L</sup> showed Richmond residents sometimes waited weeks or even months for appointments with specialists or had to travel to other cities for certain treatments.

## 5. Health Education and Outreach

While Richmond made strides in health education, there were still pockets of the community lacking essential knowledge on preventative health measures. Data<sup>M</sup> from local health campaigns in 2021 highlighted the need for more expansive and inclusive health education efforts.

## 6. Support for the Elderly and Homebound

Richmond's elderly population was growing, as indicated by 2020 census data<sup>N</sup>. As a result, there was a surge in demand for services tailored to seniors, from home healthcare to facilities equipped for chronic conditions or cognitive challenges.

### **Note about COVID-19**

While the CHNA team focused on statistics and research<sup>DD</sup> from community organizations and other entities, these reports did not include the effects and outcomes of the global pandemic COVID-19. Most of the free clinics and other charitable healthcare providers in the community that were surveyed had seen effects from the pandemic. Still recovering from the pandemic and its effects, free clinics continue to experienced an increase in patients that have lost their jobs and health insurance.

With this in mind, MEDRVA understands that it should anticipate that the needs of its services will continue to be great in the years ahead. The organization will work to meet those needs the best way possible and true indicators of the needs become prevalent.

### **Addressing These Gaps**

Addressing the healthcare community service gaps in Richmond is an ongoing effort. While the city has made progress, data from recent years underscores the need for continuous adaptation and collaboration. With informed strategies, Richmond can move closer to achieving a comprehensive and equitable healthcare system for all its residents.

# CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

## How MEDRVA Can Address Richmond's Health Needs Concerns and Service Gaps

The Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area stands as a testament to diversity and evolving healthcare needs. While the community thrives in many aspects, there exist pronounced health concerns and service gaps that require attention. As pivotal players in the healthcare landscape, MEDRVA's with its independent surgery centers, imaging center, low vision program, pre-K screening efforts, and more, possess both the flexibility and the specialized focus needed to address these challenges. The following ideas show strategic steps our organization can adopt to effect meaningful change.

### 1. A Surgery Center Perspective to Addressing Community Health Concerns

Affordability remains a key concern in healthcare. Our organization has and can continue to make a significant impact by partnering with local NGOs, such as Access Now, Powhatan Free Clinic, Goochland Free Clinic, Crossover Ministry, Health Brigade and more, as well as, businesses, and philanthropic entities to offer surgical procedures at subsidized rates for the economically disadvantaged. Additionally, our offering of a transparent pricing model, devoid of hidden charges, can reassure patients and make their healthcare journey predictable and less daunting. MEDRVA was the first in the Richmond region to make its prices available on its website.

The availability of specialized care is another crucial area of intervention. By diversifying the range of surgeries offered, especially in domains underserved by local hospitals, our surgery centers can cater to a broader section of the community.



Considering the prevalent health challenges in our service area, regular community health screening events can make a world of difference. Early detection often translates to timely intervention, potentially reducing the need for invasive surgical procedures. Furthermore, educational workshops focusing on prevalent health issues can empower the community, making them aware of surgical solutions and the importance of post-operative care.

Non-profit health institutions play a foundational role in the community. By establishing collaborative partnerships with these entities, like the relationships MEDRVA has established with Access Now, Powhatan Free Clinic, Goochland Free Clinic, Crossover Ministry, Health Brigade, and others, our surgery centers can offer services at reduced rates or even for free on designated days, thereby reaching those who are often sidelined

due to financial constraints. Additionally, fostering a culture where surgeons and medical staff volunteer their expertise at community health events can strengthen the bond between the center and the community it serves.

Medicaid remains a lifeline for many. MEDRVA's surgery centers, by actively collaborating with Medicaid, can offer certain procedures at more accessible rates, ensuring even the underserved have a chance at quality surgical care. Initiatives to raise funds through the MEDRVA Foundation, be it through charitable events or collaborations, can also underpin surgeries for those who are economically challenged.

## 2. A Surgery Center Perspective to Addressing Community Service Gaps

With the stark vision issues brought to light by our previous work with the pre-k population and the work of Conexus in our community, MEDRVA can make a marked difference by hosting pre-k eye screenings and partnering with Conexus to offer glasses to those children needing them. Offering these screenings for free and partnering with others throughout the Richmond community, can address a significant service gap.

Accessibility goes beyond medical services. Additionally, by allying with local transportation services, centers can ensure patients have information to help them identify discounted ride options, making their surgical care journey smooth from start to finish.

The gap in dental care in Richmond is palpable. If infrastructure, economics and expertise allow, MEDRVA's surgery centers and medical staff can further offer surgical dental procedures, addressing both primary and complex oral health needs.

Another topic identified as a need focuses on Richmond's aging population<sup>CC</sup>, which brings with it unique healthcare needs. By tailoring surgical procedures and post-operative regimes specifically for the elderly, MEDRVA can ensure these section of our community receives care that's both effective and sensitive to their specific requirements.

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## Additional Recommendations for Addressing the Greater Richmond Metropolitan Area's Health Concerns and Service Gaps

### 1. Addressing Community Health Concerns

First and foremost, our organization's other entities such as the MEDRVA Low Vision Center, pre-k screening, and our Foundation's additional initiatives, such as funding medical equipment and in some cases staff at area free clinics, allows us to continue to support our community's health needs in a large variety of additional strategies and services.

The challenge of specialized care availability is not to be overshadowed. One can imagine a fleet of mobile medical units, charting courses to the farthest reaches of the Richmond region. Parallel to this, the establishment of public health workshops can illuminate primary care providers with specialized care techniques, erasing the boundary that often exists between generalists and specialists and paving the way for timely interventions.

At intervals, the region should play host to community health fairs, turning into arenas for screenings of conditions like hypertension, diabetes, and depression that cast long shadows. MEDRVA can also participate in these health fairs by offering vision and hearing screenings for pre-k children. Alongside these fairs, the air should be filled with health education campaigns, emphasizing the value of regular check-ups and the power of early diagnosis. The intent? To sow the seeds for a proactive, health-conscious community.

The story of non-profit health institutions is one of unwavering dedication to the marginalized. To ensure they continue their noble mission, it's imperative they stand on solid financial ground. Championing their cause through

advocacy for grants – be it local, state, or federal – can provide them with the means to broaden their horizons. Since 2020, the MEDRVA Foundation has donated more than \$3 million to health clinics, community organizations such as the Children’s Museum of Richmond, Richmond Performing Arts, the salaries of health professionals at several community free clinics, and other organizations and initiatives throughout our community. Charity care was also provided through the MEDRVA Low Vision Center at Stony Point. MEDRVA (Richmond Eye & Ear Health Care Alliance), will continue to make donations in 2024 and beyond. Furthermore, by igniting community health volunteer programs, the expertise of medical students, such as those we partnership through our relationships with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and the wisdom of retired healthcare professionals can be harnessed, enriching the healthcare tapestry.

And as the narrative unfolds, the spotlight should also shine on the consistent support for Medicaid and philanthropic health initiatives. By demystifying Medicaid's benefits and streamlining its enrollment process, a greater fraction of the populace can be sheltered under its wings. Concurrently, a call to action for local businesses to join MEDRVA to allocate portions of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) endeavors towards health initiatives can ensure a ceaseless flow of resources and backing.

## 2. Addressing Community Service Gaps

Richmond's challenges, with its many faces, demand solutions that are both expansive and malleable. A renewed focus on primary care access and mental health can set the stage for bridging healthcare divides. Special attention to children's vision, taking cues from Conexus's data, is the key to preemptive action and staving off future complications. The hurdles of transportation, the need for enhanced dental care, and the quest for widespread specialty care also vie for attention. Moreover, health education and outreach efforts must cast a wider net, ensuring no resident remains untouched. And as the pages turn and Richmond's senior population swells<sup>CC</sup>, there's a clarion call to design services that resonate with their unique needs, ensuring their later years are painted in hues of health and contentment.

The echo of the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a somber reminder. It underlines the imperatives of adaptability, tenacity, and foresight. MEDRVA, along with the other healthcare custodians of the community must remain vigilant, always on their toes, ready to meet the ever-changing demands of the times.

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