

## CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND COLLABORATION DEFINE A CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITAL'S COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT



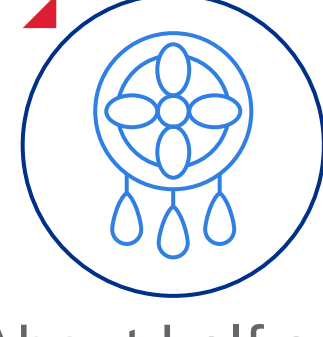
**Wagner Community Memorial Hospital Avera**, a 15-bed non-profit hospital in South Dakota, faces distinct challenges in providing care to its patients.



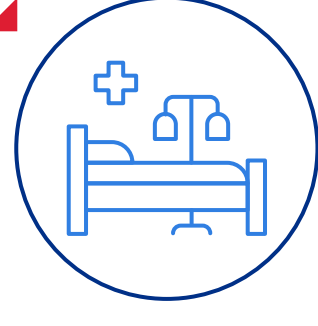
Dispersed community of 3,000 people.



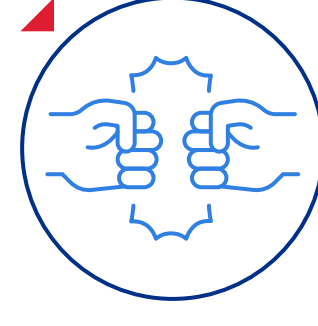
Approximately 30% fall below the federal poverty line.



About half are American Indians with unique barriers to health care.



2,400 ER visits a year.

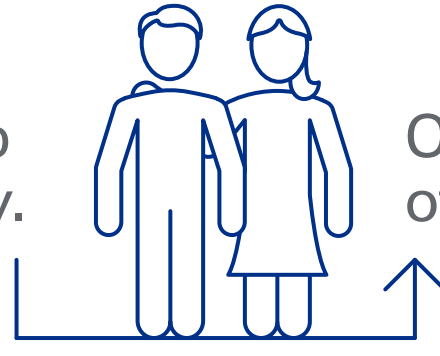


Violence tops CHA needs.



To develop a CHA that better reflects community health needs, the Wagner team aimed for trust and transparency every step of the way.

CHA leaders have deep roots in the community.



One leader is a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Focus group participation was expanded to include members from organizations directly involved with residents including:

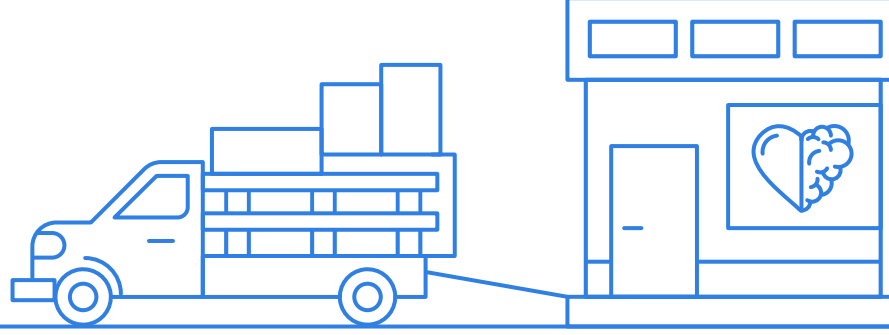
- ▶ Indian Health Services
- ▶ Yankton Sioux Tribal Police
- ▶ Emergency medical technician
- ▶ Community health nurse
- ▶ South Dakota State University Extension

- ▶ Each member contributes and votes on questions to include in the community survey.
- ▶ Openness, equality and acceptance define meetings.
- ▶ Emails and meeting notes keep conversations going.

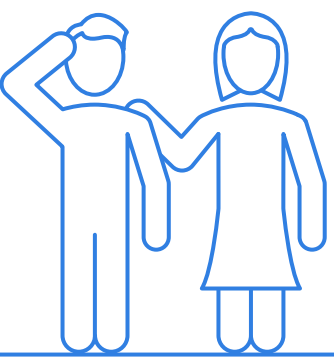
Persistence and collaboration paid off. A survey of the community drew a big response with candid feedback.

The CHA survey revealed mental health issues and substance use disorders as the community's top priorities.

Wagner immediately went to work:



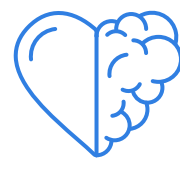
Redeveloping an unused facility into a five-office behavioral health clinic.



Increasing access to mental health care by adding a second counselor and making services available five days a week.



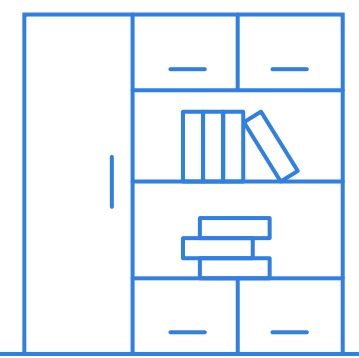
Hiring a general behavioral health care intern.



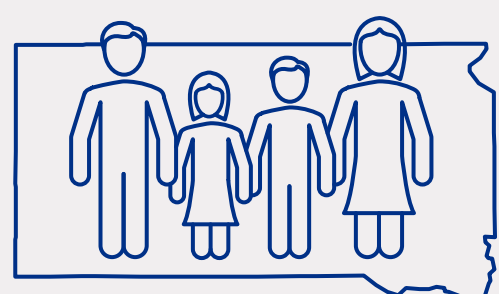
Hiring a substance use disorders counseling intern.



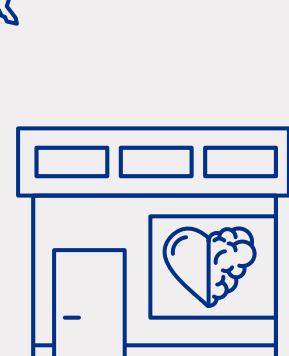
Increasing staff education and available resources.



Behavioral health care visits increased from two to three weekly to eight to 10 daily.



▶ South Dakota's Medicaid expansion made counseling more accessible for children and adults.



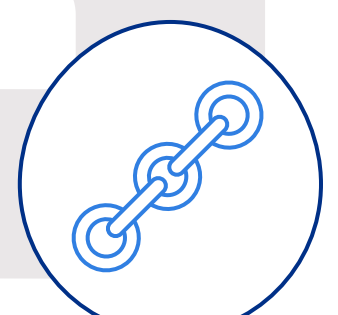
▶ Wagner's behavioral health clinic helps fill the gap for the local school, which has 1,000 students and only three counselors.

Wagner responded to other priorities identified in the CHA survey by:



▶ Expanding staff and community education.

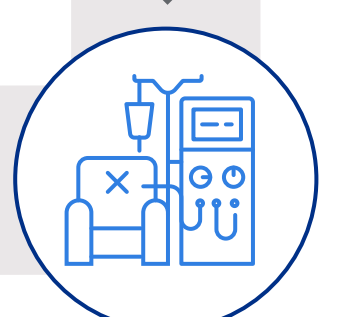
Linking people to local resources for diabetes, obesity and heart disease.



▶ Introducing community members to cardiac rehab and exercise options, including:

- 24-hour gym
- Community swimming pool
- New fitness room

Ensuring its dialysis center remains a vital resource.



▶ Widely implementing telemedicine.

The community has enthusiastically embraced Wagner's new CHA-informed initiatives — which the hospital attributes to one simple rule: **Be willing to hear everyone out.**