



Community of Hope's 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

In 2026, Community of Hope (COH) worked with Optum to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment. The goal was to understand the needs, experiences, and priorities of the communities we serve so that Community of Hope can continue our essential programs and adjust priorities and services if needed. The Assessment included a review of district-wide and ward-level quantitative data that is available through the America's Health Rankings® database and other public sources. We also received feedback from more than 1,400 Community of Hope patients and community members through a survey sent via text message in April 2026.

We found that, overall, Washington, DC has strong healthcare resources but persistent inequities persist, causing many families to face barriers to healthcare, housing instability, food insecurity, chronic health conditions, and mental health challenges. These issues are interconnected: when housing, transportation, food, or finances become unstable, often health suffers as well.



The Needs Assessment confirmed that Community of Hope's healthcare, housing, and family support services align closely with the issues community members identified as their greatest concerns. Eighty-two percent of survey participants rated Community of Hope services as "Extremely Valuable," reinforcing the importance of strengthening existing services that support health, housing stability, and well-being.



Who Participated in the Survey

- 1,423 respondents
- 74% identify as female
- 66% earn less than \$20,000 per year
- 53% receive Medicaid benefits
- 39% live in Ward 8
- 39% identify as a parent or guardian



Top Concerns

- Mental health (25%)
- Healthcare access, affordability, & insurance (22%)
- Chronic conditions (14%)
- Substance use/addiction support (12%)
- Affordable housing & housing-related costs (11%)
- Food access and wellness (9%)

“They just care so much about people.”



Access to care remains a challenge.

Many survey participants reported difficulty getting healthcare when they needed it. Districtwide data shows that DC has nearly double the number of providers than the national average, but access remains uneven. Transportation was a particularly significant obstacle, causing many respondents to miss or cancel appointments.

By the Numbers

- 22% *delayed or skipped needed care.*
- 37% *missed or canceled an appointment because of transportation problems.*
- 51% *reported they could always access healthcare when needed.*



Maternal health requires more than prenatal care.

Survey results found that many expecting parents face challenges that extend beyond healthcare alone. Housing instability, mental health concerns, transportation barriers, and financial hardship all affect maternal and infant health outcomes. Districtwide data show ongoing maternal health disparities, including higher rates of low birth weight and lower rates of first-trimester prenatal care in some wards, particularly Wards 7 and 8.

By the Numbers

- 69% *of pregnant families reported annual incomes below \$20,000.*
- 38% *of pregnant families reported housing instability.*
- 27% *of pregnant families reported mental health challenges.*
- 21% *of pregnant families were not receiving care from a healthcare provider for their pregnancy.*



Housing stability is a health issue.

Homelessness in DC is substantially higher than the national rate and nearly 37% of DC households experience housing cost burden, reinforcing that housing instability is not only a social challenge but a major driver of health access, stress, and family well-being. Throughout the assessment, community members consistently described how unstable housing affected their physical health, mental health, and ability to access care.

By the Numbers

- 23% *reported unstable housing.*
- 46% *said housing instability made it harder to access healthcare.*
- 46% *of those experiencing housing instability were at immediate risk of losing their home.*

“[I] Cannot focus on health when I worry about my living arrangements.”



Chronic conditions and mental health continue to affect families.

Mental health and chronic disease were among the most common concerns identified in the assessment. Heart disease and cancer are the two leading causes of death in Washington, DC, with the highest mortality intensity concentrated in Wards 5, 7, and 8. Districtwide data also show premature mortality above the national rate and 26% of adults living with obesity. Mental health risks also remain significant: 13% of adults report frequent mental distress, drug deaths are nearly double the national rate, and excessive drinking is higher in DC than nationally.

By the Numbers

53% *reported at least one chronic condition.*

30% *experienced mental health challenges in the past year.*

Mental health was the top issue respondents wanted addressed.

“It has affected my mental health, triggering my anxiety and not being able to deal with the day.”



Food security matters for health.

Food security remains closely connected to overall health and well-being. Ward-level data show these pressures are especially acute in Wards 7 and 8, where child SNAP enrollment is highest and residents face the greatest population-to-grocery-store ratios in the District. Survey results affirmed the strong relationship between food security and health.

By the Numbers

44% *worried about having enough food.*

39% *skipped meals because of cost.*

Looking ahead

Community of Hope will use these findings to strengthen existing programs, deepen partnerships, and continue addressing the issues community members identified as their highest priorities. Community priorities reinforce the continued relevance of Community of Hope's Strategic Plan 2025-2029. The Strategic Plan includes actions around expanding access for medical, emotional wellness, and maternal child health services, as well as addressing social drivers of health through connections to resources. Community of Hope's programs to prevent and end homelessness are one piece of the solution for the challenge with finding affordable housing. Finally, the Plan calls for centering client voice, partnering with other organizations, advocating for policy change, and implementing a neighborhood-based strategy to connect residents to resources through the Family Success Center. By addressing both immediate needs and the underlying factors that influence health, Community of Hope works every day to help individuals and families be healthy, housed, and hopeful.

We are grateful to all the community members who shared their perspective and to Optum for their assistance in compiling all of the information.

[Read the full Optum report.](#)