

Answers to Questions About the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative

As of March 5, 2024

1. What is the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative?

The Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative is a Wisconsin 193 cooperative created to improve access to affordable healthcare in the Chippewa Valley. The Cooperative expects to receive a 501c3 tax exempt status from the IRS. The Cooperative is considering all different types of services, programs, and facility options to fill the gaps that will be left by HSHS exiting Western Wisconsin – everything is on the table including an independent, community hospital

2. Why did you form the Cooperative?

The CVHC was formed six weeks after HSHS announced it is leaving the region by April 21, 2024, because we understand we need to move quickly to put the cooperative in place now, so that we can help avoid the devastating experience that other regions have had after losing so many primary care services and hospital beds. We can't wait to see what happens to plan for the future; we need to take action now to make sure that the region has the access to the healthcare it needs to thrive.

HSHS's decision to exit Western Wisconsin means it's closing Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals which together have 292 staffed hospital beds, and all Prevea Clinics which serve 45,000 patients across a wide area of Western Wisconsin. This is impacting at least 1,400 jobs, access to essential services, and support of many critical county programs.

3. Why a Cooperative?

After significant research and evaluation, we determined that the cooperative structure provides the most flexibility and ensures that the community benefits from the organization and has governance of the organization, so that decisions for our community are made by people in our community, not by administrators outside of the region.

4. What's a Formation Board?

A formation board made of “Organizers” who develop corporate structure, member classes and the bylaws that will govern the Cooperative, while it also considers different operational plans. Once those are in place, the board of directors will be elected. This process generally takes up to eight-to-twelve months, although the formation board is already moving fast to put the required elements in place. Operational planning will be happening during this time.

We announced the formation board now because we felt it was important to let the community know that we're doing this and moving quickly. We believe this is the right thing to do for the community.

5. Who are the Organizers?

The Organizers for the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative are seven local business and community leaders with a deep and wide range of experience and expertise who have volunteered their time to form the Cooperative because they believe so strongly that the HSHS decision could have a devastating impact on our region, and they're willing to move quickly now to start addressing access to affordable healthcare.

The Organizers are:

Patti Darly, Lori Geissler, Peter Hoeft, Mickey Judkins, Bob Krause, Thomas Larson, and Eric Rygg.

6. What's an Independent Physician?

An independent physician is a doctor who owns their own medical practice and has key decision-making rights for the practice. Importantly, independent physicians have the freedom to meet their patients' needs individually, and can work with multiple health systems and hospitals, offer all treatment choices, and refer patients anywhere necessary to receive the best care possible. Independent physicians are generally able to provide primary care services for up to 30% less than healthcare systems.

The Cooperative anticipates working with independent physicians throughout the region, including OakLeaf Medical Network, to ensure the Chippewa Valley community has community-governed services, programs, and facilities.

7. Can I donate to the cause?

Yes. We are diligently working on that now and should have that set up in the next two weeks.

8. Will the cooperative be working with the Chamber Task Force that was set up by Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls, and Menomonie Chambers of Commerce?

That the three chambers moved so quickly to form a task force and convene the community is a great thing for the community. We have reached out to the Task Force to figure out how best to collaborate. We see the Cooperative as an important piece of the puzzle that will solve the healthcare crisis created by HSHS leaving the area.