



ST. MARY'S COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Year 2022-2026

Approved December 2021



Record of Changes		
Date	Type of Change	Change Made By:



Acknowledgements

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to all St. Mary's County community St. Mary's County Board of Health (BOH) and St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) team members who informed the development of the organization's third agency strategic plan, including those who participated in strategic plan focus groups and anonymous strategic planning surveys.

We are also very grateful to the Strategic Planning Committee members below for volunteering their time and expertise toward the development of the Strategic Plan.

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Foreword

A strategic plan is a road map for our agency that gives us directions to where we want to go in the future. It helps us assess the tools and resources we have, and guides us to make decisions that move us closer to our shared vision. It engages all employees in working toward a common goal, while providing the framework for measuring our progress along the way.

As a health department, we provide a wide range of services, from one-on-one clinical appointments for vaccines and family planning, to activities that impact whole communities, such as restaurant inspections and coordinating behavioral health services. But though each health department employee has a different job, we are all working toward that same vision of a healthy, safe community. And we can't do it alone – community partners are an integral part of our strategic plan, and even our mission.

While the work of public health will never be done, it will grow and change with the successes, challenges, and needs of our community. The strategic plan is a big picture map, guiding us over the next five years. The work plan that accompanies the strategic plan will be a “living document” that can be updated annually or as needed to reflect new resources, new programs, and new priorities.

The strategic planning process helped us define and illuminate our vision and determine the steps we need to take to create a St. Mary's County where all residents enjoy health and wellness. We look forward to the challenge of implementing this plan and working together with all of our employees, our partners, and county residents to bring about our vision of “*protecting and promoting healthy choices, opportunities and environments for all who live, work, and play in St. Mary's County.*”

Due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, all focus groups were conducted virtually. These discussions explored the community's perception of health in St. Mary's County, the community's needs and strengths, barriers to being healthy and accessing services in the community, perceived opportunities to address these needs in the future, and questions centered around the COVID-19 pandemic. Facilitators were trained and a structured guide was used across all discussions to ensure consistency in the topics covered. A brief synopsis of the research components are presented in Annex A of the Strategic Plan.

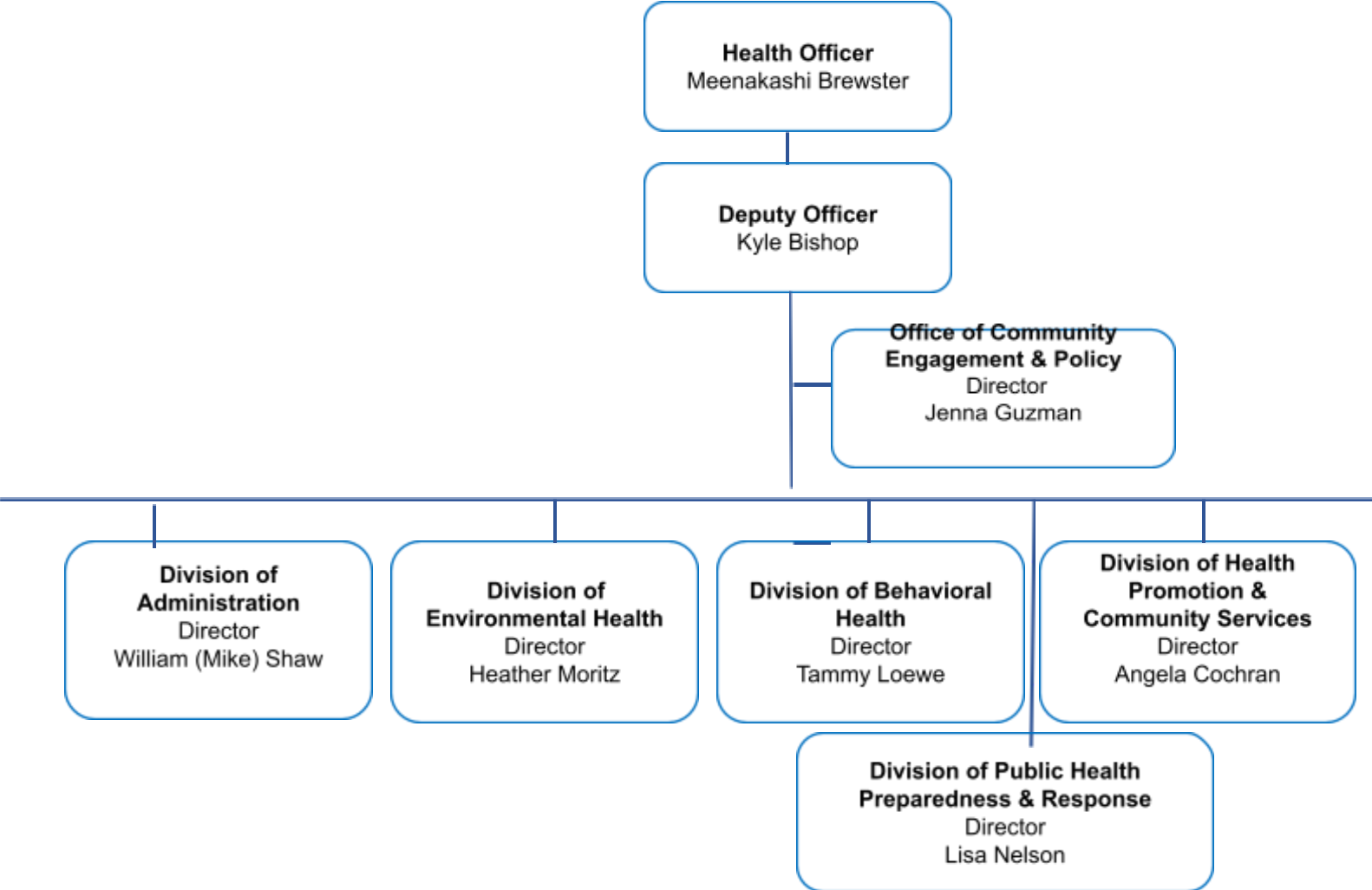


St. Mary's County Health Department Overview

The St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) is the local health department for St. Mary's County, Maryland. Under the direction of the county's Health Officer, Dr. Meenakshi G. Brewster, SMCHD is responsible for protecting and promoting the health of all St. Mary's County residents. Within the scope of its resources, the health department delivers a variety of services to our community, based on local health needs and federal, state, and county regulations. As the county's leader in public health, the agency is committed to ensuring that community members have access to personal and environmental health services and information.

SMCHD conducts operations through five internal divisions and one office, each responsible for specific public health functions in the St. Mary's community:

St. Mary's County Health Department





Vision

The St. Mary’s County Health Department protects and promotes healthy choices, opportunities, and environments for all who live, work, and play in St. Mary’s County.

[updated December 3, 2020]

Mission

St. Mary’s County Health Department protects and promotes a healthy community by:

Empowering and informing our residents, visitors, and those who work in St. Mary’s County about public health issues
Strengthening and mobilizing community partnerships
Identifying and addressing systemic and cultural barriers that have resulted in health inequities
Implementing culturally sensitive programs to ensure access to public health services
Investigating hazards and maintaining a safe and healthy environment
Assessing and monitoring health status to identify community health needs
Informing development of policies that address public health issues
Preparing for and responding to public health emergencies
Building and supporting a diverse and skilled public health workforce

[updated December 3, 2020]

Values

SMCHD takes P.R.I.D.E. in its work as a public health leader:

Professionalism	We pledge competent, consistent, and evidence-informed public health services in a timely, effective manner.
Respect	We value all of our team members and residents while treating each other with respect and cultural sensitivity.
Integrity	We honor the public’s trust and pledge to maintain the highest standards of accountability and ethics.
Diversity	We value the diversity in our county and will work towards achieving health equity.
Education & Health Communication	We provide effective, responsive, and timely communication and excel in our role as a trusted source of health information.



Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Objectives

Through the strategic planning process, St. Mary's County Health Department identified three strategic priorities: Health Equity, Strengthen Public Health Capacity, and Standardize Public Health Processes. Detailed goals and objectives for each priority are delineated below.

Priority 1: Health Equity

Goal 1. *Improve accessibility of services (e.g., physical locations, ADA compliance, language, literacy, etc.)*

Objective 1.1 By December 31, 2023, Establish a system of measuring the accessibility of services. (1) Literacy, (2) Language, (3) Location **a.** Designate a team member responsible for ADA compliance assessment and measurement. **b.** Identify tools of assessment and a regular schedule of implementation and assessment.

Objective 1.2 By June 30, 2026, Increase the number of SMCHD programs with an access point in Great Mills and Lexington Park region. **a.** Establish baseline of current SMCHD programs. **b.** Leverage existing SMCHD locations, such as Spring Ridge Middle School School Based Health Center and the Behavioral Health Hub for future programs. **c.** Utilize technology to increase direct access to services, such as telehealth kiosks.

Goal 2. *Increase staff competency relating to health disparities and equity.*

Objective 2.1 By June 30, 2026, increase team members' understanding of health equity principles. **a.** Assess team member knowledge about principles of health equity. **b.** Incorporate training on health equity into team member professional development.

Goal 3. *Improve agency programs to advance health equity.*

Objective 3.1 By June 30, 2026, develop and implement a targeted mixed media communication strategy to increase community awareness about health equity and the impact of social determinants of health.

Objective 3.2 By June 30, 2026, increase the number of health disparity data dashboards/reports from 0 to 1. **a.** Include in dashboard/report assessment of health disparities on topics of health care access and quality of health care services, including identification of barriers to such.



Objective 3.3 By June 30, 2026, establish a baseline of agency initiatives to address health equity.

Objective 3.4 By June 30, 2026, Increase utilization of Community Health Workers (CHW) by public health services and programs. **a.** Develop baseline of CHW usage. **b.** Identify strategies to increase CHW usage.

Priority 2: Strengthen Public Health Capacity

Goal 4. *Advance program and services within the Division of Behavioral Health.*

Objective 4.1 By June 30, 2026, Increase crisis de-escalation skills of employees. **a.** Develop a strategy to assess current skill sets in crisis response and de-escalation. **b.** Develop Crisis Response Training and de-escalation exercises for staff. **c.** Develop an implementation plan, including frequency and training procedures.

Objective 4.2 By June 30, 2026, increase the number of SMCHD Behavioral Health service access points in St. Mary's County from zero to three. **a.** Track and assess usage of access points.

Objective 4.3 By June 30, 2026, develop a system of behavioral health crisis stabilization services for St. Mary's County. **a.** Identify and acquire funding to develop and sustain behavioral health crisis stabilization services for St. Mary's County. **b.** Acquire CARF accreditation for stabilization services. **c.** Identify walk-in stabilization receiving facility. **d.** Develop Mobile Response Team. **e.** Implement Crisis Call Center.

Goal 5. *Increase from zero to one internal IT development programs.*

Objective 5.1 By January 31, 2022, develop initial phase of Computer Network Specialist Trainee program. **a.** Send staff to certification training programs. **b.** Recruit Computer Network Specialist Trainee and implement Trainee program. **c.** Recruit Computer Network Specialist Supervisor. **d.** Develop IT capacity plan for all agency locations. **e.** Recruit or contract with cybersecurity specialist and develop cybersecurity agency plan.

Goal 6. *Develop a robust public health emergency preparedness infrastructure for future emergency response.*

Objective 6.1 By June 30, 2026, increase the surge workforce for emergency preparedness. **a.** Develop curriculum and recruit first cohort for Public Health Workforce Corps training program. **b.** Assess program effectiveness.

Objective 6.2 By June 30, 2026, increase the clinical systems readiness. **a.** Implement electronic PPE/supply inventory system.



Objective 6.3 By June 30, 2026, assess and develop the local public health infrastructure, including staffing, and service capacity. **a.** Assess current workforce education, expertise, and potential areas for growth. Determine future agency needs and determine how those needs are fulfilled with current staffing and/or with additional recruitment plans. **b.** Develop formal 1, 3, and 5 year staffing plan for each division. **c.** Develop structure and format for personal development plan documentation and review process and identify responsible parties for developing and reviewing PDPs. **d.** Develop policy and financial resources to support, prioritize, and standardize professional development. **e.** Create an ongoing and sustainable leadership development program that includes formal training and mentorship components.

Objective 6.4 By June 30, 2022, increase the safety and security of staff and facilities. – **a.** Recruit security lead and security officer. **b.** Complete safety assessments of all SMCHD facilities. **c.** Obtain GPS and video for state vehicles. **d.** Recruit staff with cybersecurity preparedness specialization.

Goal 7. *Develop/Build Out Violence Injury Trauma unit*

Objective 7.1 By June 30, 2026, increase the number of mentors in the community to improve capacity for Youth Mentoring Program.

Objective 7.2 By June 30, 2026, create a coordinated and sustainable referral system to connect youth to community resources. **a.** Assess usage of the referral system.

Objective 7.3 By June 30, 2026, establish an ongoing clinical outreach training on ACEs and SUD.

Priority 3: Standardize Public Health Process

Goal 8. *Develop program specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS)*

Objective 8.1 By June 30, 2023, assess current program specific SOPS.

Objective 8.2 By June 30, 2026, develop standard practices for agency-level and program specific SOPS, including where they are stored, format, how they are shared, and how they are formalized and reviewed.

Goal 9. *Develop agency succession planning*

Objective 9.1 By June 30, 2023, identify and appoint a backup/lead for each division/office. **a.** Develop leadership and programmatic capabilities of backup/lead.

Objective 9.2 By June 30, 2026, identify single points of failure within the agency and develop mitigation strategies.



Objective 9.3 By June 30, 2023, develop and implement formal COOP training plan.

Objective 9.4 By June 30, 2023, develop a plan for employee progression in class specification series that have that ability and those that don't in order to prepare for future staff separations.

Goal 10. *Enhance agency onboarding/offboarding infrastructure.*

Objective 10.1 By May 1, 2022, complete onboarding/offboarding needs assessment. a. Utilize qualitative and quantitative data collected from surge, non-surge staff and supervisors regarding their onboarding/orientation experience in relation to HR and individual units.

Objective 10.2 By September 1, 2022, relaunch orientation with incorporated feedback.

Objective 10.3 By June 30, 2023, develop division/unit specific onboarding plans to continue integration of new staff to the agency beyond the formal HR onboarding process.

Linkage to St. Mary's Community Health Improvement Plan

The Healthy St. Mary's 2026 local health improvement plan, developed by the Healthy St. Mary's Partnership, focuses on addressing four key health priority areas for St. Mary's County residents: Behavioral Health (BH), Chronic Disease (CD), Environmental Health (EH), and Violence, Injury, and Trauma (VIT). The plan articulates several objectives and suggested strategies for accomplishing population health improvement related to these health priority areas. The full Healthy St. Mary's 2026 plan is available at www.HealthyStMarys.com.

The St. Mary's County Health Department (SMCHD) Agency Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 aligns with the agency's efforts to support implementation of the Healthy St. Mary's 2026 plan. By accomplishing strategies of several agency strategic plan objectives, the health department is assisting the county in implementing strategies of several Healthy St. Mary's objectives. These linkages are noted in the following table.

SMCHD Agency Strategic Plan Objectives	Healthy St. Mary's 2026 Objectives	Description of Linkage
Priority 1: Goal 1, 1.1	EH-6	Establishing a system of measuring the accessibility of services directly links to increasing local transportation options and assistance to support healthcare and healthy food access.



Priority 1: Goal 1, 1.2	CD-4, EH-6, EH-8, EH-9	Increasing access points to services reduces racial disparities in CD control and prevention; transportation helps deliver these services and reduces food insecurity and housing problems.
Priority 1: Goal 3, 3.1	CD-4	Advancing health disparities via reporting health disparity data can help lead to more programs designed to reduce racial disparities in CD.
Priority 1: Goal 3, 3.3	CD-4	Advancing health disparities via reporting health disparity data can help lead to more programs designed to reduce racial disparities in CD.
Priority 2: Goal 4, 4.1	BH-1, BH-5	Increasing de-escalation skills of employees can reduce ED visits related to BH and reduce the number of emergency petitions made by the sheriff's office.
Priority 2: Goal 4, 4.2	BH-1, BH-3	Increasing the number of BH access points, such as telehealth behavioral health services, can reduce ED visits related to BH.
Priority 2: Goal 4, 4.3	BH-1, BH-3, BH-5	Developing a system of BH crisis stabilization service for St. Mary's County, including telehealth behavioral health services, can reduce ED visits related to BH and reduce the number of emergency petitions made by the sheriff's office.
Priority 2: Goal 7	VIT Goals	Developing/Building out a Violence Injury Trauma unit directly connects to the HSMP goals of the Violence, Injury, and Trauma Team's goals to help reduce violent crimes, suicide rates, bullying, domestic violence, and the number of adults who report 3 or more adverse childhood experiences.
Priority 2: Goal 7, 7.2	VIT Goals	Developing/Building out a Violence Injury Trauma unit directly connects to the HSMP goals of the Violence, Injury, and Trauma Team's goals to help reduce violent crimes, suicide rates, bullying, domestic violence, and the number of adults who report 3 or more adverse childhood experiences.



Linkage to SMCHD Quality Improvement Plan

The St. Mary’s Health Department (SMCHD Agency Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 supports implementation of the SMCHD Agency Quality Improvement (QI) Plan. Many strategic plan objectives link to and serve as a foundation for the QI plan. Some of the linkages are noted in the following table.

SMCHD Strategic Plan Objectives	SMCHD QI Plan Sections	Description of Linkage
Priority 1, Goal 1	Goal—Increase language translation services for clients with LEP	Improving the accessibility of services directly supports the QI Goal to increase language services for clients with LEP.
Priority 2	Goal—Increase participation in the SMCHD Summer Public health Academy	Increasing participation in the SMCHD Summer Public Health Academy directly strengthens public health capacity.
Priority 3		



Strategic Planning Overview

St. Mary’s County Health Department’s Strategic Plan was carefully developed over eight months between November 2020 and June 2021* through an organization-wide effort that was organized and facilitated by an external consultant with expertise in local public health and strategic planning as well as the SMCHD strategic planning committee. Community stakeholders and staff across all levels of the health department were invited and included throughout the effort, which included five focus groups (one with St. Mary’s community partners, one with the SMCHD executive team, one with the SMCHD leadership team, and two with SMCHD employees), five surveys (one of St. Mary’s County community stakeholders, one of SMCHD staff members, and 3 of the Strategic Planning Committee), and three strategic planning sessions. Insights gained from each part of the process informed subsequent steps. Further details on the timeline and each step of the process are provided below.

Strategic Planning Timeline

November 10, 2020	Strategic Planning Launch Meeting
December 15, 2020	Focus Group with St. Mary’s Community Stakeholders
January 5, 2021	Focus Group with SMCHD Executive Team
January 7, 2021	Focus Group with SMCHD Leadership Team
January 12, 2021	Focus Group with SMCHD Employees
January 14, 2021	Focus Group with SMCHD Employees
February 2-28, 2021	St. Mary’s Community Stakeholder’s Survey
April 20, 2021	Strategic Planning Session #1
April 27, 2021	Strategic Planning Session #2
May 4, 2021	Strategic Planning Session #3
June 7, 2021	Strategic Plan Draft
June 30, 2021	Strategic Plan Review
August 10, 2021	Strategic Planning Goals & Objectives Review*
September 1, 2021	Strategic Planning Goals & Objectives Review*
November 10, 2021	Strategic Planning Goals & Objectives Review*
December 2021	Strategic Plan Approved

*The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the timely completion of the Strategic Plan