



# Delivering community benefit: Climate and health

Addressing social and environmental determinants of health to create resilient communities



## Why bringing climate into a hospital or health system's community benefit activities is essential:

### A changing climate creates significant health risks:

- Climate change affects social and environmental determinants of health: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food, and secure shelter. Globally, the World Health Organization estimates climate change related deaths already exceed 150,000 per year.
- Health care systems are already experiencing the health impacts of climate change in their communities in increased heat-related illness, asthma and respiratory disease, insect-borne diseases, and injuries and premature deaths from extreme weather events and sea-level rise.
- More than 70 percent of doctors recognize climate is affecting the health of their patients, according to surveys conducted by researchers at George Mason University's Center for Climate Change Communication.

### Gain added benefits by:

- Leveraging hospital staff's environmental and facilities expertise in community health needs assessment work.
- Pursuing health activities that also benefit the environment or improve community resiliency.
- Tackling the social and environmental determinants of health.
- Advancing greater recognition for community health work by aligning it with environmental and climate goals.

The Get Started Guide walks through how to bring climate into a hospital or health system's community benefit process.

### Coordinate environmental stewardship and community health activities to amplify impact:

*“Aligning our environmental stewardship strategic plan and tactical workflows with community benefit outreach is a game changer. It redefines the work as central to Providence's core strategy of creating healthy communities. It's now about the health of the communities we serve, not just reducing our waste streams and increasing our bottom-line efficiencies.”*

- Richard Beam, Providence St. Joseph Health  
Chief Environmental Officer

*“Connecting climate risk and our health work makes good sense at the system and hospital level.”*

- Dora Barilla, Providence St. Joseph Health  
Community Investment Executive Leader

## Key steps for environmental and community benefit staff

1

### **BUILD A TEAM**

Identify environmental stewardship and community benefit staff to collaborate on this project.

2

### **IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES**

Identify opportunities to incorporate climate co-benefits into community benefit work at hospital and system level.

3

### **INTEGRATE INTO CHNAs**

Incorporate climate change and health into community health needs assessments.

4

### **TAKE ACTION**

Pursue community health strategies with climate co-benefits.

5

### **CLAIM THE BENEFITS**

Document climate co-benefits in IRS reporting.

6

### **SHARE FINDINGS**

Communicate health and environmental connections to health care leadership and community stakeholders.

#### **Resources to get started:**

[Community Benefit: Impact on Climate Change and the Environment](#), Catholic Health Association

[Leveraging Community Benefit Activities to Address Climate Change and Environmental Risks](#)

Additional tools and resources are available through [Practice Greenhealth membership](#).