

STRATEGIC PLAN

2026

Charleston
Dorchester Mental
Health Center

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About Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center

For more than 70 years, the Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center (CDMHC) has served the residents of Charleston and Dorchester counties with compassionate, recovery-focused mental health care. As one of 16 community mental health centers comprising the outpatient division of the South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (BHDD) – Office of Mental Health (OMH), CDMHC plays a vital role in ensuring that individuals and families across the Lowcountry have access to quality behavioral health services.

Our mission is clear: to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses. Guided by this mission, CDMHC helps patients identify their personal goals and works collaboratively with them to achieve lasting recovery. The center operates two main outpatient clinics, an off-site crisis stabilization unit, and an administrative building, providing a comprehensive network of care.

CDMHC offers a wide range of evidence-based programs for adults, children, adolescents, and families. Services include outpatient treatment, mobile crisis and emergency response teams, unsheltered outreach, school-based mental health programs, and specialized initiatives such as mental health court. In addition, the center conducts assessments for community partners including the courts, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Social Services.

Beyond clinical care, CDMHC provides support services that address barriers to recovery such as housing, financial instability, and access to healthcare and education. Vocational support and life skills programming further empower patients to live independently and fully. The center also houses a call center that supports the statewide Mobile Crisis teams and the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, extending its impact across South Carolina.

Through strong partnerships with local agencies, schools, businesses, and community organizations, CDMHC works to reduce stigma, expand resources, and increase access to mental health services. By combining innovation, collaboration, and advocacy, CDMHC continues to play a central role in promoting mental health and recovery throughout Charleston and Dorchester counties.



Executive Summary

The Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center remains steadfast in its mission *to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses*. As we transition from the accomplishments of 2025 into the opportunities of 2026, this Strategic Plan provides a clear direction for strengthening our workforce, enhancing patient care, and ensuring organizational effectiveness.

Our priorities for 2026 reflect both the evolving needs of our patients and the commitment of our staff to excellence in service. They are organized around three central themes:

- **Staff Appreciation and Retention**

Our staff remain the cornerstone of our success. In 2026, CDMHC will prioritize staff appreciation and retention by recruiting and retaining qualified frontline professionals, recognizing contributions across all roles, and fostering a culture of respect and collaboration. Efforts will be made to improve communication across the center, reduce institutional silos, and encourage constructive, problem-solving dialogue at every level.

- **Providing Quality Patient Care**

At the heart of our mission is the delivery of quality patient care. We will continue to provide compassionate, evidence-based mental health services while seeking opportunities to expand access within the community. Strengthening collaboration with other offices of the BHDD will ensure that patients benefit from a coordinated and comprehensive system of care.

- **Increasing Effectiveness and Efficiency**

To sustain our mission, CDMHC will also focus on increasing effectiveness and efficiency. Reducing the burden of clinical documentation will allow staff to dedicate more time to direct patient care. Maintaining financial stability through balanced budgeting and reinforcing accountability across operations will safeguard the center's long-term viability and ensure responsible stewardship of resources.

Our work is guided by the following values:

- **Recovery** – CDMHC treats the person, not the illness, supporting each individual in creating and achieving their own vision of recovery.
- **Quality** – CDMHC employs evidence-based interventions and ongoing training to ensure patients receive the highest standard of care.
- **Advocacy** – CDMHC builds strong community partnerships, expands resources, and works to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness.
- **Innovation** – CDMHC continually explores new and creative approaches to meet the evolving needs of the community.

This *Strategic Plan* reflects CDMHC's ongoing dedication to recovery-focused care, organizational excellence, and community partnership. By aligning our priorities with our mission, CDMHC will continue to provide compassionate, effective, and sustainable mental health services to the residents of Charleston and Dorchester counties in 2026 and beyond.

Strategic Planning Process

Purpose of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning provides a structured approach for Charleston Dorchester Mental Health Center to align its mission, values, and resources with the evolving needs of the community. The process ensures that organizational priorities are clearly defined and responsive to both internal and external factors. By engaging in strategic planning, CDMHC strengthens its ability to deliver recovery-focused care, maintain accountability, and adapt to changes in the behavioral health landscape. This plan serves as a roadmap for decision-making, resource allocation, and program development in 2026 and beyond.

Strategic planning helps CDMHC ensure that we are meeting our mission to
“Support the Recovery of People with Mental Illnesses”

CDMHC’s Process of Strategic Planning

The development of the 2026 *Strategic Plan* was guided by a collaborative and inclusive process. Leadership, staff, and community partners contributed insights to ensure the plan reflects both organizational strengths and community needs. The process included:

- Reviewing outcomes and progress from the 2025 Strategic Plan and companion strategic planning documents.
- Gathering input from staff across all levels to identify challenges and opportunities.
- Assessing patient feedback and community engagement data to understand service gaps.
- Consulting with OMH to align priorities with statewide initiatives.
- Facilitating discussions among leadership to refine goals and establish strategic priorities.

This participatory approach ensures that the plan is not only comprehensive but also representative of the voices of those who deliver and receive care.

COMPANION STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Quantified goals, performance measures, and timelines are detailed in CDMHC’s companion strategic planning documents, including the:

- **Accessibility Plan**
- **Risk Management Plan**
- **Performance Improvement Plan**
- **Performance Measurement and Management Plan**
- **Cultural Competency Plan, and**
- **Technology and System Plan.**

This ensures that the Strategic Plan remains focused on mission, vision, values, and priorities, while the companion documents provide the operational framework for accountability and evaluation.

Environmental Scan

To inform the 2026 Strategic Plan, CDMHC conducted an environmental scan to evaluate internal capabilities and external conditions. This included a SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Multi-disciplinary, person-centered treatment approach focused on individual goals, priorities, needs, and culture.	Primary clinics housed in older buildings requiring structural improvements.
Experienced and dedicated staff committed to CDMHC’s mission.	Delays in intake and psychiatric appointments.
Strong community partnerships and active engagement to reduce stigma and provide education.	Inefficient Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, with transition planned for 2026.
Diverse service offerings including crisis response, school-based programs, and outreach.	Clinical documentation requirements creating administrative burdens and revenue challenges.
Partnership with MUSC’s psychiatric resident program, enhancing education and access to physicians.	High volume of emails identified as a staff stressor.
Experienced Executive Team with a collective 125 years of service at CDMHC.	Workforce recruitment and retention challenges.
Extensive training, mentoring, and trauma-informed care support for staff.	Leadership changes within BHDD creating uncertainty and adjustment challenges.
Strong nonclinical teams supporting clinical programs (finance, IT, HR, administration, etc.).	Higher turnover rates impacting stability.
Longstanding relationships with hospitals, EMS, courts, and law enforcement.	
Innovative programs tailored to patient and community needs.	

Opportunities	Threats
Transition to a new EHR system anticipated to improve efficiency and compliance.	Challenges in hiring and retaining staff due to salary limitations, competition, and cost of living.
Expansion of telehealth and digital tools.	Increased overhead costs and financial responsibilities shifted to local centers.
Increased collaboration with other offices of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.	Diminishing market share due to online therapy providers and behavioral health franchises.
Potential new funding streams and grants.	Care coordination moved to Managed Care Organizations, reducing CDMHC's role.
Medicare law changes allowing more licensed staff to become authorized providers.	Reduced referrals and intakes for therapy and nursing services, contributing to budget deficits.
Recently passed legislation (Counselor's Compact Act, H.3784) facilitating reciprocal licensure.	Rising demand for psychiatric services outpacing resources.
Recent agency consolidation which may result in increased collaboration and training opportunities.	Financial pressures and external economic instability.
Strengthening relationships with community school districts to increase collaboration and market share.	Frequent policy changes at the state level impacting service delivery.
Transition to more data-driven strategic planning, improving communication and collaboration.	State-mandated programs operating without sufficient funding.
Continued telehealth services increasing patient access.	Systemic requirements of working in a governmental health agency contributing to employee frustration and burnout.
Strengthened partnership between TriCounty Crisis Stabilization Center and MUSC's Empath Center.	

2026 Strategic Priorities

CDMHC has identified three strategic priorities for 2026. These priorities reflect the center's mission to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses and are informed by the environmental scan and stakeholder input.

Staff Appreciation and Retention

Recruit and retain qualified frontline clinicians

- Explore and use a variety of recruitment methods to fill organizational vacancies.
- Provide structure, training, and support to reduce staff turnover.
- Ensure supervisors are supported by the Executive Team and the Quality Improvement team in retention efforts.
- Develop standardized training and supervision processes to ensure all staff receive consistent training.

Demonstrate appreciation to staff members in all positions

- Recognize the vital role of all staff in providing effective care to patients and communities.
- Work with supervisors to explore opportunities for meaningful recognition of staff contributions.
- Collaborate across all levels to address silos within the center structure.
- Encourage respectful, problem-solving discussions among staff at every level.

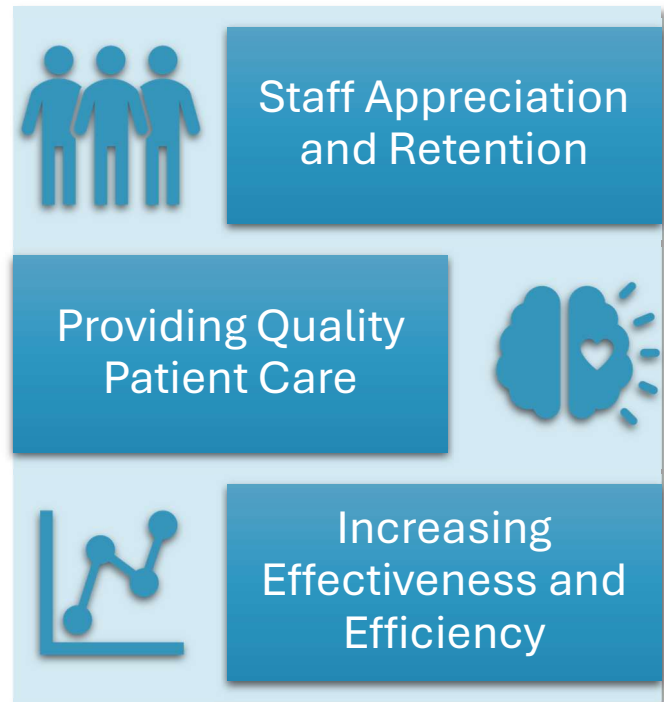
Improve communication

- Streamline center communication to improve efficiency and decrease communication fatigue.
- Improve access to documents regarding policies, procedures, strategic planning, and performance outcomes.

Providing Quality Patient Care

Continue to provide quality mental health care

- Ensure all staff members have access to training for evidence-based treatment.
- Explore additional opportunities to provide training and supervision to staff.
- Identify and overcome barriers to participation in training and supervision opportunities.
- Develop procedures to guide the use and delivery of telehealth mental health services.



Identify opportunities within the community to expand services and access to care

- Engage in community events to decrease stigma related to mental health.
- Meet with community stakeholders to explore opportunities for new programs addressing the needs of individuals experiencing mental illness in the Lowcountry.
- Streamline access to mental health services in the communities served and seek opportunities to improve care availability.
- Increase coordination of care within BHDD, including the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Substance Use Services.

Increasing Effectiveness and Efficiency

Investigate and implement ways to reduce the burden of clinical documentation

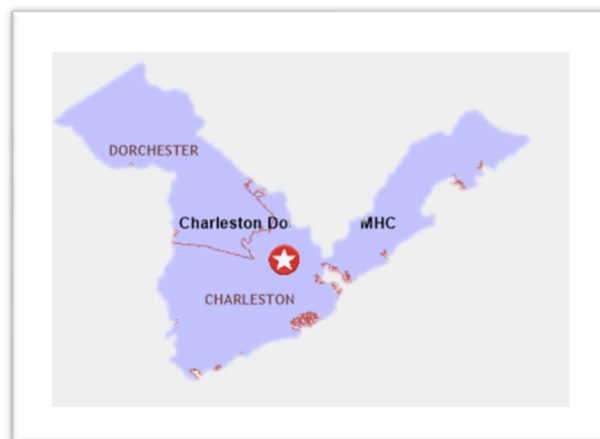
- Implement a new EHR system in 2026 as part of OMH rollout.
- Train staff to use the new EHR while encouraging effective collaborative documentation skills.
- Explore further opportunities to reduce and/or redistribute the burden of documentation as the new system is implemented.

Maintain financial stability through balancing the budget

- Recognize that a balanced budget is essential to the long-term stability of programs.
- Explore ways to cut back on expenses and eliminate unnecessary or redundant expenditures.
- Identify opportunities to increase revenue.
- Explore opportunities to expand market share.

Increase accountability

- Convert strategic planning to include assessment of center strengths and needs.
- Identify data-driven strategies to track progress.
- Ensure center leadership collaborates with supervisors to maintain strengths and address deficiencies.



Implementation and Accountability

CDMHC is committed to ensuring that the priorities outlined in this Strategic Plan are translated into meaningful action. Implementation will be guided by clear responsibilities, structured timelines, and ongoing evaluation to ensure accountability across all levels of the organization.

Implementation Framework

Leadership Oversight

- The Executive Team will provide overall direction and ensure alignment of initiatives with CDMHC's mission and values.
- Management will be responsible for translating strategic priorities into operational practices within their departments.
- The Quality Improvement and Performance Improvement teams will support supervisors and staff by providing training, monitoring progress, and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Staff Engagement

- Staff at all levels will be actively engaged in implementing initiatives, with opportunities to provide feedback and participate in problem-solving discussions.
- Communication channels will be streamlined to ensure staff are informed of strategic priorities, progress updates, and changes in procedures.

Community Collaboration

- Partnerships with hospitals, schools, law enforcement, and other community stakeholders will be leveraged to expand services and improve access to care.
- CDMHC will continue to participate in community events and initiatives to reduce stigma and promote awareness of mental health resources.

Accountability Measures

Operational Monitoring

- Managers and supervisors will track progress on initiatives within their areas of responsibility.
- Regular updates will be provided to the Executive Team to ensure that challenges are identified promptly and successes are recognized.

Data-Driven Evaluation

- Strategic planning will incorporate assessment of center strengths and needs, with data-driven strategies used to measure progress.
- Performance outcomes will be reviewed regularly to ensure that initiatives are achieving intended results.

Financial Stewardship

- The Finance team will monitor budget performance to ensure financial stability and responsible resource allocation.
- Opportunities to increase revenue and expand market share will be explored to sustain long-term operations.

Conclusion

CDMHC enters 2026 with a clear vision, a strong foundation, and a renewed commitment to its mission of supporting the recovery of people with mental illnesses. Guided by its values of **Recovery, Quality, Advocacy, and Innovation**, CDMHC has developed a Strategic Plan that reflects both the strengths of the organization and the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Through the priorities of **Staff Appreciation and Retention, Providing Quality Patient Care, and Increasing Effectiveness and Efficiency**, CDMHC will continue to build a resilient workforce, deliver evidence-based and person-centered care, and strengthen organizational performance. These priorities are supported by a collaborative planning process, a comprehensive environmental scan, and companion documents that provide measurable goals and accountability frameworks.

This plan represents more than a set of initiatives — it is a commitment to the people of Charleston and Dorchester counties. By fostering strong partnerships, reducing stigma, and expanding access to care, CDMHC will continue to serve as a trusted resource for individuals and families navigating mental health challenges.

As CDMHC looks ahead, the center remains dedicated to innovation, collaboration, and excellence. With the collective efforts of staff, leadership, and community partners, CDMHC is well-positioned to meet the challenges of today while preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow.

