



# Community Health Needs Assessment

## Falls Community Hospital and Clinic

June, 2015

---

**TORCH Management Services, Inc.**

Dick Sweeden

[dnmsweeden@hot.rr.com](mailto:dnmsweeden@hot.rr.com)

254.760.3358

## Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	Page	3
2. Community Demographics	Page	5
3. Priorities Identified in Interviews	Page	9
a. Specialty Access	Page	10
b. Major Health Issues Identified	Page	10
c. Availability of Services	Page	10
d. Marketing of Services	Page	11
4. Summary and Recommendations	Page	13
5. Appendix	Page	15
a. Focus Group Questions	Page	16
b. Major Data Sources	Page	17

## Executive Summary

A Community Health Needs Assessment (Assessment) was conducted for Falls Community Hospital and Clinic, (Hospital) on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, through focus groups with a number of community members from throughout Falls County. The value of an Assessment is that it allows Healthcare Organizations to better understand the needs of the communities they serve, with the ultimate goal of improving the overall health of the local citizens. Whether or not an Organization is required by regulation or statute to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment, it is an extremely valuable tool for fulfilling its role in the community.

The Mission of Falls Community Hospital and Clinic is stated as follows: “*providing high quality medical care to the people of Falls County and the surrounding area*”. By listening to members of the community, and by understanding the community demographics, the Hospital can gain information on health status, and on where the gaps in healthcare delivery currently exist. Further, it solidifies the Hospital’s role in the community as a partner in improving the overall health status, and in areas beyond health, such as in education and economic development. The Hospital identifies its’ primary market area as Falls County, with its secondary market to include small sections of McLennan and Bell Counties.

In addition to Falls Community Hospital and Clinic, which operates 36 beds, other hospitals in the area include:

Limestone Medical Center

- o Hospital District
- o 20 beds

Parkview Regional Hospital

- o Investor-owned
- o 58 Beds

Little River Healthcare - Cameron Hospital

- o Investor-owned
- o 10 beds

Little River Health Care - Rockdale

- o Investor-owned
- o 25 beds

Baylor Scott and White Temple

- o Not-for-profit
- o 732 beds

Baylor Scott and White Hillcrest

- o Not-for-profit
- o 576 beds

Providence Healthcare Network - Waco

- o Not-for-profit
- o 301 beds

The Association for Community Health Improvement (ACHI) points out that this Assessment process provides help in understanding where the needs are, and where and how to spend the available health care dollars in a community. ACHI also describes the importance of the Hospital working together as a partner with other local organizations (Schools, Churches, Businesses, other Healthcare entities, etc.) to improve the health of all citizens, from the child to the senior adult. The Mission Statement indicates that the Hospital recognizes its' role in the community.

The Assessment just completed for the Hospital included focus groups with representatives of the following constituencies:

1. Business Leaders
2. School Districts
3. Elected City and County Officials, City Officials
4. Extension Service, Housing Authority
5. Falls County Education Co-operative (Special Education)
6. Hispanic Community/Minister, African American Community/Minister
7. Senior Center representatives
8. Representatives of young families
9. Retired members of community

The list of questions asked of each group is on page 17 in the Appendix. Two groups were conducted at the community center for senior citizens, where the focus was primarily on what the major health needs are, their perceptions of the Hospital, and how they thought the Hospital should respond to those needs. The other groups were held at the Hospital, with a variety of participants in each one. Each group had individuals of varying ages and races, from a variety of communities within Falls County. Some were elected, some employed, some were stay-at-home parents, and some were retired. These groups discussed the three areas mentioned above, as well as what it means to live in a healthy community, and the healthy and unhealthy aspects of Falls County.

Additionally, a telephone interview was held with the Registered Nurse at the Department of State Health Services office in Marlin, who sees patients throughout Falls County. The office sees patients with sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, and those in need of immunizations.

The major health issues within the County as seen by this office beyond its specific focus outlined above include:

1. Diabetes
2. Obesity
3. Hypertension
4. Poor nutrition
5. Mental health and Drug addiction
6. Travel difficulties for the elderly and those in poverty

Results of the Focus Group interviews have been shared with the Administrator of the Hospital. The findings were very broad, but common themes were discovered throughout the interviews and from those interviews, a prioritized listing of the most important issues has been developed.

While opportunities for improvement were presented and captured, it is fair to point out that many positive comments were also made. The community appreciates the availability of emergency and primary care services, and the Hospital's ability to stabilize and then transfer the more critically ill patients. Additionally, the following specific services were highlighted:

1. Rehabilitation staff and services available
2. Quality and tenure of Physicians
3. Friendliness and quality of Hospital and Clinic staff
4. Specialists currently available in the community
5. Quality of Hospital Care

Finally, one of the questions asked of all groups was whether or not they or their families use the Hospital and Clinics. While a few stated that they have a Physician in another community, based on insurance, geography, or specialty needs, most respondents stated that they do utilize Falls Community Hospital and Clinic and/or will do so when the need arises in the future.

## **Community Demographics**

The Census of 2013 showed the population of Marlin, Texas, to be 5,827, a 12.1% decline since 2000. Falls County showed a population of 17,610, a decline of 5% since 2000. There were 1,890 households in Marlin, with an average household size of 2.81. Falls County showed 5,600 households, with an average size of 2.84. The City of Marlin land area is 4.52 square miles, with a population density of 1,288 people per square mile.

The median income for a household in Marlin was \$27,121, compared to \$50,740 for the Texas average, and the estimated per capita income was \$12,166. The median age was 35.4 years, compared to 30.8 years for Texas.

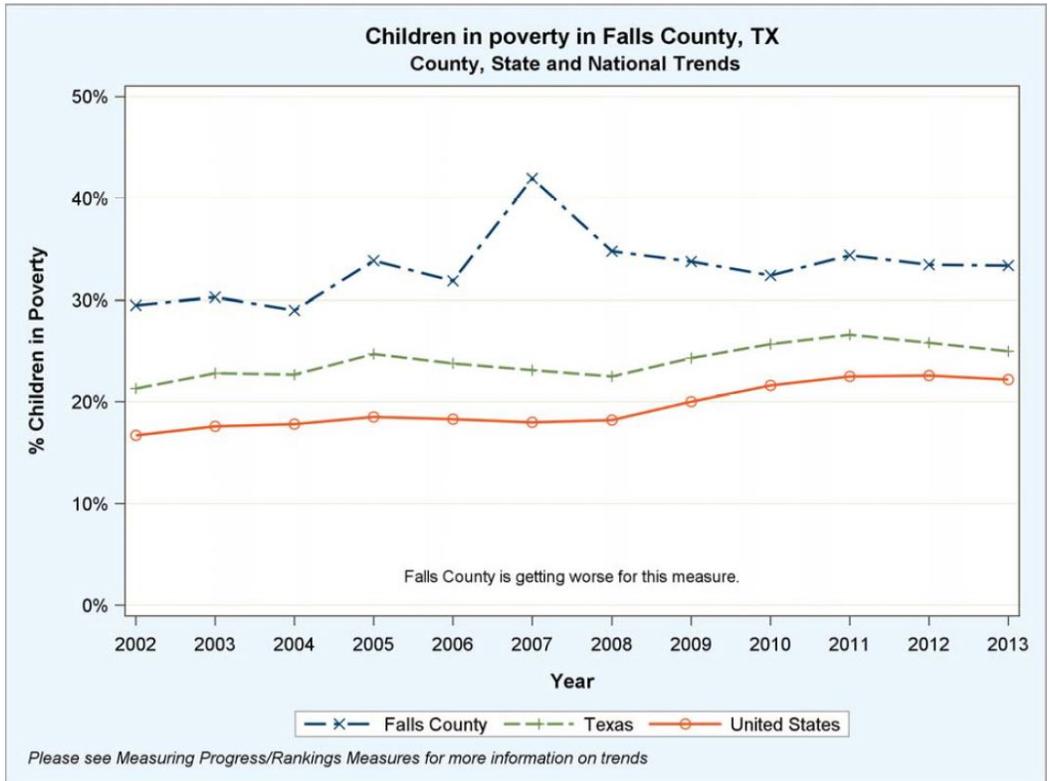
Specific economic measures of Falls County are indicated below:

Figure 1

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Falls Cnty Texas</b>	
<b>Unemployment (3/2015)</b>	4.3%	4.2%
<b>Uninsured Adults</b>	31.0%	31.0%
<b>Uninsured Children</b>	14.0%	13.0%
<b>Living in Poverty</b>	31.3%	17.6%
<b>Children in Poverty</b>	33.0%	25.0%
<b>Children eligible for free lunch program</b>	70.0%	44.0%

The following graph from County Health Rankings shows the trend line for children living in poverty, indicating that the number is growing specifically in Falls County, as well as in Texas and in the United States. County Health Rankings indicates that poverty can result in an increase in the risk of mortality and in prevalence of medical conditions and diseases.

Figure 2



[www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)

County Health Rankings measures poverty by family, taking into consideration the number of family members and the number of children less than 18 years old. If the total family income is less than the poverty threshold, the family is considered in poverty.

The following chart, based on an article published by The Texas Tribune in 2011, gives a breakdown of the total county residents in poverty, based on three age groups, as well as by race.

Figure 3

County residents below Federal Poverty Level	23.4%
Under 18 years of age	33.9%
18-64 years of age	20.0%
65+ years of age	20.2%
White, non-Hispanic/Latino	17.3%
Black	38.9%
Hispanic/Latino	24.2%

American Community Survey, US Census Bureau, The Texas Tribune 12/15/11

Education levels in Falls County, according to [www.quickfacts.census.gov](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov), are as follows:

High School or greater:	74.4% (81.2% Texas)
Bachelor's degree or greater:	10.7% (26.7% Texas)

Further, [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org) reports that 86% of ninth graders graduate in four years, and 37.5% of adults 25-44 years of age have some amount of college.

Falls County is a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for Primary Care and Mental Health Providers, and a Medically Underserved Area (MUA), as designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

In comparison to the Texas state average, the following facts regarding the city of Marlin are important:

- Hispanic race population below state average
- Median age above state average
- Black population above state average
- Median household income less than state average
- Percentage of population with college degree less than state average

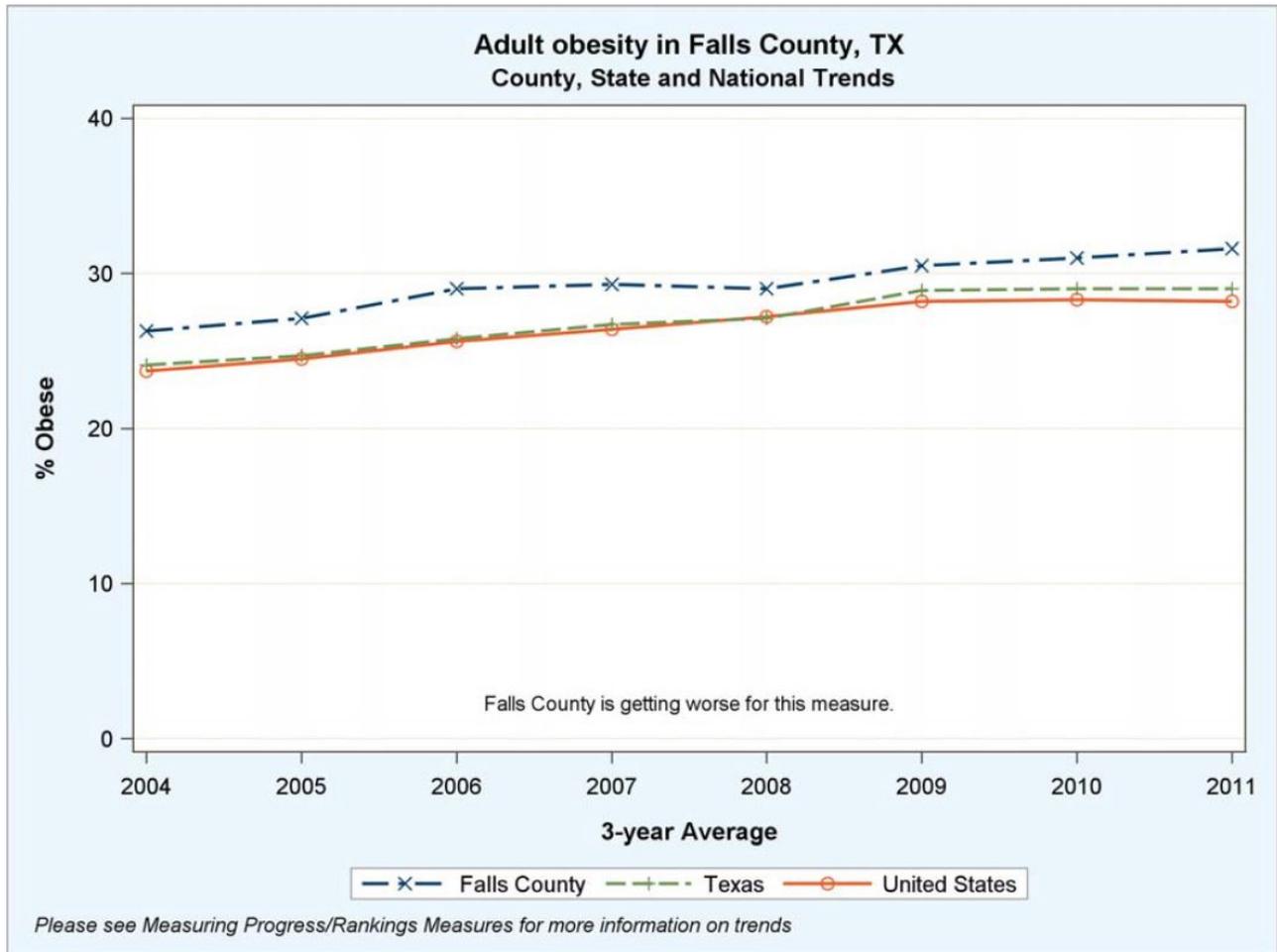
County Health Rankings ([www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)) shows the following measures for Falls County for Adult diabetes and obesity. Additionally, City-data.com ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)) shows the 2012 rate for low-income pre-school obesity:

1. Adult Diabetes rate: 12.0% (9% in Texas)
2. Adult Obesity rate: 32.0% (29.0% in Texas)
3. Low-income pre-school obesity rate: 16.7% (15.7% in Texas)

These rates are comparable to other rural counties through-out Texas. While the numbers are not particularly higher for Marlin and Falls County, these three issues contribute significantly to the cost of health care, and the overall health of the community. All three were brought up in

the Focus Groups as participants discussed major health issues in the community. The rate of Obesity among adults is growing in Falls County, as well as across the United States.

Figure 4



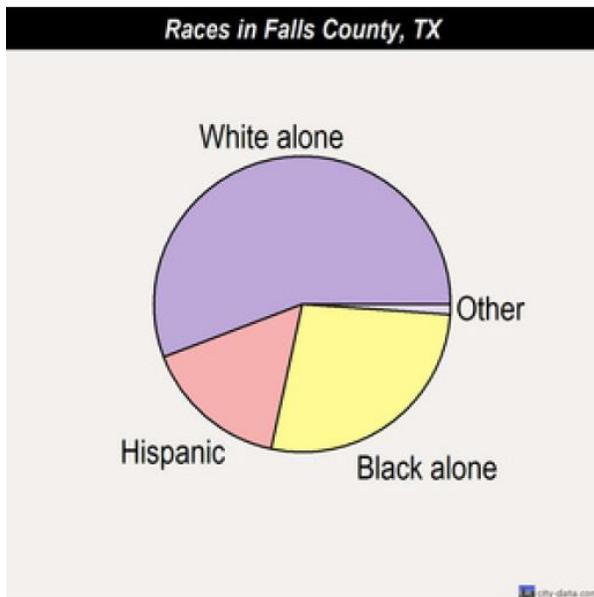
Obesity is an area of concern, both in Adults and in Children, as it can lead to Diabetes, Coronary Artery Disease, Circulatory Disease, and many other chronic conditions, as well as premature death. According to the Texas Diabetes Council, 9.7% of Adults in Texas who are age 18 and above have been diagnosed with Diabetes (approximately 1.8 million people). The Council reports that while there is no significant difference between males and females in the prevalence of Diabetes, the rate increases with age, impacting the elderly. Further, the Council reports that 26,000 Texas youth (less than 18 years of age) have been diagnosed with Diabetes. This is a major area of concern for Healthcare Providers and School Districts throughout the State and Nation.

Of significance to Marlin and Falls County, the Diabetes rate among African Americans and Hispanics is higher than among other races. Additionally, the incidence of hypertension tends

to run high in both populations. The U.S. Census ([www.quickfacts.census.gov](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov)) reported in 2013 that the population in Falls County of White (non-Hispanic or Latino) citizens was 51.7%, and in Marlin, 38.1%. The African American population in Falls County was 25.0%, and in Marlin, 45.5%. By ethnicity, 22.2% of the population in Falls County is of Hispanic or Latino origin, and in Marlin, 23.7%.

The following graph shows similar county data from City-data.com. Although the percentages for African American and Hispanic citizens are slightly different from the Quickfacts data above, they still show the significance of the variety of populations in the area. Consideration should be given to these sectors of the market as education and screening opportunities are developed.

Figure 5



Additional chronic diseases being treated in Marlin and Falls County include Cardiovascular and Respiratory illnesses, along with Congestive Heart Failure, Hypertension, and other related diseases. According to County Health Rankings, Falls County ranks number 122 of 237 Texas Counties in terms of Health Outcomes, showing an improvement from prior years when the ranking was closer to 190 of 237. In looking at Health Behaviors, which feed into Diabetes, Obesity, and other chronic diseases, Falls County ranks number 203 among Texas Counties.

The following table shows the incidence of certain behaviors, and how Falls County compares to best performers in the United States as well as all counties in Texas. Physical inactivity is related to obesity, diabetes, and other health issues, and is common in most communities, particularly rural communities, where opportunities for exercise are limited.

Figure 6

Health Behaviors	Falls County	Top US*	Texas
Physical Inactivity	29%	20%	23%
Access to Exercise	32%	92%	94%
Teen Births**	64	20	55

\*Best performers in US

\*\*Teen births per 1,000 population of ages 15-19

## Priorities Identified in Interviews

Much of the information presented is based on the perceptions of the members of the community, most of whom have had some experience with Falls Community Hospital and Clinic and its services and staff. Even if a comment made was only perception and not based on actual experience, perception is reality to those individuals, and needs to be considered. Additionally, information shared in focus groups and/or interviews is often what gets repeated within the community, and therefore becomes the basis for what people believe about the Hospital.

The following topics were most often repeated by a significant number of participants, and are listed as priorities for the Board and Administration to consider as future planning is being developed.

1. Specialty Access
  - a. Dental care (Smiles on Wheels returning March 5, 2016)
  - b. Wellness visits for women (increase promotion)
  
2. Major Health Issues Identified
  - a. Diabetes
  - b. Hypertension
  - c. Degenerative joint disease
  - d. Aging population
  - e. Mental Health
  - f. Kidney disease
  - g. Dental care
  
3. Availability of services
  - a. Promote Physical Therapy/Chiropractic Care services
  - b. Seek opportunities to partner with other organizations, such as for Mental Health needs (acknowledged Tele-psych program)

4. Marketing of services
  - a. Current capabilities
  - b. Expand/increase publicity of outreach to communities (flu shots, wellness, screenings)

### **Specialty Access**

Participants in the interviews spoke about the value of having the current Specialty Physicians in the community, as well as the presence of skilled Primary Care Physicians. Beyond that, several participants spoke of the need for dental care, especially for those who have no dental insurance and are on limited or no income. It was pointed out that the Smiles on Wheels program will return in 2016. All agreed that the previous experience with this program was quite successful in reaching many who were in need. The Hospital's role in helping to meet this community need was appreciated, and the value of bringing the program back next year is significant. It is a good example of how a Hospital can partner with other organizations to meet community health needs.

Additionally, several participants inquired about access locally for women for wellness checks and preventive care. They acknowledged that access has improved. The Hospital is increasing promotion of this service, as well as sending a Nurse Practitioner to the Mart Clinic twice a month as an additional service.

The specialty care that is available locally is important to the entire community, and especially to the senior population and to the poor, for whom travel is a challenge. The participants in the focus groups commented on the specialists who come to the Hospital now, especially for Cardiology and Podiatry. If there are opportunities to provide additional specialties in the future, the community will benefit from that.

### **Major Health Issues Identified**

While there was a strong appreciation for the Hospital from most participants, there was also a concern for the impact of chronic diseases in Marlin, including Diabetes, Cardiovascular, Cancer, Hypertension, and issues of particular importance to the elderly population, such as Dementia and Joint Disease. As noted earlier, the rate of Diabetes in Falls County is 12.0%, and Obesity in Adults is 32.0%. These two conditions can lead to many other issues related to the Heart and Vascular systems, as well as other health issues. Renal disease was also brought up by participants, and appreciation for the local dialysis center was expressed.

While the Hospital cannot solve all community health issues by itself, there may be opportunities to partner with other organizations to help address the issues of Mental Health. The Hospital could work with others to help address this issue, perhaps through grants or other sources. Most of the participants were not aware of the availability of tele-psych services through the Emergency Room, but were pleased to hear that the Hospital has made those services available. Several, including law enforcement representatives, stated that Mental Health is a

major issue, and they expressed their appreciation for what the Hospital does to address that issue.

In general, participants often spoke of the needs of an aging population, stressing the importance of addressing chronic health issues as well as the importance of a proactive healthy lifestyle. Several participants spoke of the need for an assisted living center in the community.

### **Availability of Services**

In questions asked about the overall health of the community, opportunities for improvement, and ways in which the Hospital can improve the health and quality of life of Marlin, education and/or screenings came up in most interviews. The education included the need for community members to better understand the various diseases affecting them and their loved ones. Beyond that, there is a need for education and support in how to live a healthy life style, in order to mitigate the growth of the most serious diseases. A partnership with the Marlin Independent School District would be one way in which to get education out into the community, by jointly offering nutrition and exercise opportunities for all ages. Opportunities to develop a partnership with the School District should be explored.

As noted earlier, the major health issues in the community that were most frequently mentioned, and which provide opportunities for education, are:

- a. Diabetes and Obesity
- b. Aging population
- c. Hypertension
- d. Degenerative Joint Disease
- e. Mental Health
- f. Cardiac issues
- g. Nutrition (child and adult)
- h. Allergies and other Respiratory ailments
- i. Renal dialysis issues (local dialysis center in Marlin)
- j. Healthy life style

Participants expressed the need for education on nutrition and exercise, and particularly for children and their parents, including the uninsured/underinsured. The Extension Service provides some nutrition classes and preventive health education currently, and opportunities exist for partnering to meet those needs. The Hospital is in a unique position to provide such education, both among the adult population as well as with those under 18 years of age. The rate of Diabetes in children in Marlin appears to be stable, according to several participants, but the rate of Pre-school Obesity for low-income children is at 16.7%, and addressing nutrition and healthy living at an early age is important. Educating the children can be an important first step in educating their parents.

As with every community in the State, Marlin and Falls County have individuals who are dealing with one or more of these issues. The Health Fairs and other screening activities that have been held in the past were described as very important to the community, and participants want

to see these continue. The fact that they were brought up in several focus groups points to the value of some form of community education. Again, as with every community, the growing number of senior citizens presents a special need for education on disease prevention, education, and counseling on specific diseases. The Hospital is encouraged to seek opportunities to partner with other organizations to continue and expand educational offerings.

### **Marketing of Services**

Several participants suggested that many residents are not always aware of the services offered by the Hospital. This is not unusual, in that individuals tend to not be aware, unless they are currently receiving services. It simply means that the effort to market services is an ongoing process, which helps individuals and families realize the great resource that the Hospital is, and helps to keep people in the community for their healthcare needs. Efforts to market the services, the local Medical Staff, and visiting Specialists can be done in a variety of ways, including inviting the community to tour the facility and combining the Open House approach with health screenings and/or education programs. The Superintendent of Rosebud-Lott Independent School District stated that he would like to do more with the Hospital, and would welcome any opportunities that exist. Currently the Scott and White outreach program is more active in that community. The Hospital has developed plans to meet with the Superintendent to address the opportunities.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

In summary, the feedback from the various participants can be very beneficial to Hospital, as the future needs of the Hospital and related clinic facilities are considered. The level of services currently being provided by the Hospital is a prime example of what can be done when the Board, Administration, Providers, and Staff work with the community to provide the right services in the right location, at the right time. Falls Community Hospital and Clinic is indeed a community-based entity, by virtue of the services it offers, and as shown in the Mission Statement. Building on what exists today, listening to the community and to the Staff, and seeking innovative ways to deliver care will benefit the community for years to come. The sharing of the findings from this report with members of the community is a very important step, as it shows not only that the Hospital sought out their input, but that it is listening and willing to address that input. Further, the Hospital is encouraged to ultimately share the implementation plans that will follow.

Recommendations are as follows:

1. Begin to market the availability of the Smiles on Wheels for March 15, 2016, utilizing public media, the Hospital's website, and through communication with the School Districts and Churches whose students and/or members will be eligible for participation. Note: The planning process is already underway.
2. Begin efforts to increase awareness of wellness checks for women in the community. As noted earlier, plans are in process to have appointments offered at the Mart Clinic.

3. Continue to strengthen the services currently being provided that address chronic diseases such as Diabetes, Heart Disease, Hypertension, and others for which the Hospital is the primary leader in the community. For other health priorities such as Mental Health, pursue opportunities to partner with others in the community, to include the Marlin Independent School District and other organizations, such as Churches and Businesses, the City and County, and other Healthcare entities, to include the Texas Department of State Health Services' local office. While the Hospital cannot provide full services for all issues, it can be an important partner in the efforts to improve the overall health status and quality of life in Marlin and throughout Falls County. The provision of telemedicine services for mental health needs is an important service already being provided by the Hospital and it is considering plans to update this information on the web site.
4. Develop an action plan to provide more education on chronic diseases, nutrition, and healthy lifestyle, with focus on all age levels, from school children to senior citizens. Again, utilize partnerships within the community where appropriate to accomplish this. Discussions have been held with the Extension Service, and they are willing to provide many of these educational programs.
5. Consider ways to increase the promotion of Physical Therapy and Chiropractic Care, including making people aware that Scott and White Health Plan will pay for those services.
6. Develop and implement a marketing plan that will help promote the services that are currently available, including the outreach services that can be accessed. Further, there are many good things that occur within the Hospital and its' Clinics, but are not always known outside the organization. The Hospital should communicate those successes on an ongoing basis, so that the citizens of Falls County better understand the value of the staff and services at Falls Community Hospital and Clinic. The Hospital will be updating the web site to help increase the public's knowledge of those services and successes.

TMSI, Inc. is appreciative of Willis Reese and his team, especially Byrleen Terry, for assistance in scheduling the participants for the interviews. We also appreciate all the individuals who took time to share their insights into the health needs of Marlin and the surrounding area. Falls Community Hospital and Clinic is recognized as a vital part of the community, and shows a strong commitment to its' needs. It has been a pleasure to assist you in conducting this Community Health Needs Assessment.

# Appendix

### **Focus Group Questions**

1. What makes a community a healthy place to live?
2. What is healthy/unhealthy about Marlin/Falls County?
3. What are the major health issues in your community?
4. What are your perceptions of Falls Community Hospital and Clinic? Others perceptions?
5. Do you use the Hospital? If not, why not?
6. What can the Hospital do to address the health issues in the community?

## Major Data Sources

1. [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)
2. [www.countyhealthrankings.org](http://www.countyhealthrankings.org)
3. [www.quickfacts.census.gov](http://www.quickfacts.census.gov)
4. [www.hrsa.gov](http://www.hrsa.gov)
5. [www.dshs.state.tx.us/diabetes/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/diabetes/)