



Strategic Plan 2021-2023

Mission

Cedarcrest Center enriches the lives of children with complex medical and developmental needs, supports their families, and collaborates with other community providers to build a continuum of care.

Vision

Cedarcrest Center will be the model for best practices in the care and education of children with complex medical and developmental needs.

Approved and adopted by Cedarcrest Center's Board of Trustees on November 16, 2020
Cedarcrest Center *for* Children with Disabilities
91 Maple Avenue
Keene, New Hampshire, 03431

Introduction

Cedarcrest, Inc. [dba Cedarcrest Center for Children with Disabilities] (Cedarcrest) has a long history of influential and effective strategic visioning and planning programs. The strategic planning processes conducted over the past 30 years highlight the increasingly complex care needed by the children in Cedarcrest's care, the dedication of its staff and volunteers, the implementation of innovations, the need for greater public awareness and advocacy and the organization's fiscal vulnerability due to dependence on limited revenue sources.

This 2021-2023 strategic plan is the successor to one adopted by the Cedarcrest Trustees in 2016 spanning 2017-2020. Strategic themes at that time included evaluating and ensuring the importance of Cedarcrest's role in the continuum of care; prioritizing efforts to enhance and expand the workforce providing care, therapy and education for the children at Cedarcrest and beyond; exploring ways to more effectively sustain the organization and developing existing and new collaborations. Work plans were developed and the organization accomplished many goals and objectives or demonstrating quantifiable progress towards the completion of action plans.

In preparation for its triennial planning, Cedarcrest launched a process that included contracting with Helm & Co. in November 2019. This summary outlines those engaged in the process, data collection methodology, feedback received regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, emerging themes and the goals and objectives in the three-year work plan.

Cedarcrest Center's mission and program focus has remained steadfast for 73 years. Many of the themes from the sun-setting 2017-2020 strategic plan persist and carry over into the current plan (workforce, financial sustainability and evolution of programs and services) as these areas of focus continue to evolve as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and, in some instances, threats to the organization.

The Strategic Planning Committee:

Trustees Cindi Coughlin, Glenn Galloway, Cameron Tease and Kathy Willbarger.

Staff: Cathy Gray, Anne Brnger, Patty Farmer, Kristin Targett

Consultant: Ellen McCahon, Helms & Company

2020-2021 Board of Trustees included Tom Bennett, Donna Dunlop, Kevin Forrest, Matt Goodwin, Ed McCaul, Allen Mendelson, Liz Peets, Bekki Provencher and Gary Tochterman

Cedarcrest Leadership and Managers participating included Karen Gallas, Mike O'Hara, Sheila Carrier, Lori Myers, Bridget Toepfer and Karen Wallace

Research Conducted

The strategic planning process spanned several months starting in November 2019. Information from each source was reviewed then synthesized to develop this plan.

Organizational Assessments and Planning Activities

- Board governance survey
- External stakeholder interviews
- Board and Management Survey
- External Environment/Trends-Pediatric complex care regionally and nationally
- Two part Board and Leadership/Management Retreat

The following outlines information from each source.

Board Governance Survey

Cedarcrest's strategic planning process began with a board governance assessment conducted through an online survey that included the following topics:

- Mission, program and organization planning practices
- Board membership and orientation
- Board structure and practices
- Board and CEO relationship
- Board and staff roles
- Board policy making practices
- Board meetings
- Financial management practices
- External relations practices
- Fundraising practices

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges determined from the Board Governance survey

The Board's Strengths

- Passion for mission
- Work of the committees
- Individuals' qualifications/capabilities
- Commitment
- Engagement & appreciation
- Collaboration
- CEO & board shared commitment

Weaknesses Identified (Areas to Strengthen)

- Succession planning for management and CEO
- Engagement; meeting attendance; participation
- Finance capabilities
- Prioritizing committee work; number of committee members
- Depth of knowledge: internal/external environment

Opportunities for the Board

- Closer relationship to legislative leaders
- Leverage reputation
- Strategic Planning process as team building
- Finance education
- Tighter ties with educational facilities/schools

Challenges Related to Board Governance

- Engaging ALL board members/Fully informed trustees
- Discussing funding challenges at the appropriate level
- Commitments outside of Cedarcrest board (bandwidth)
- Understanding funding structure and impact on the operation of independent nonprofit healthcare facilities in northern New England

Board and Staff Management Survey

Trustees and staff management participated in an online survey conducted between January and February of 2020. Results of this survey are pre-COVID-19. Given the substantive impact of the pandemic on the operations of the organization, some responses may no longer have a material influence. Respondents provided quantitative and qualitative feedback regarding Cedarcrest's scope of programs and services, specific organizational challenges, and priorities for the next twelve, twenty-four and thirty-six months (Pre-Covid-19).

The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges were identified through the Board and staff management survey. (the items in bold were mentioned many times; italicized items a moderate number of times):

Strengths

- Staff: skilled/talented/knowledgeable
- Board
- Management
- Organization's character/culture
- Community support

Weaknesses (Areas to Strengthen)

- **Workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, morale**
- *Reduce the impact of silos on interdepartmental communication*

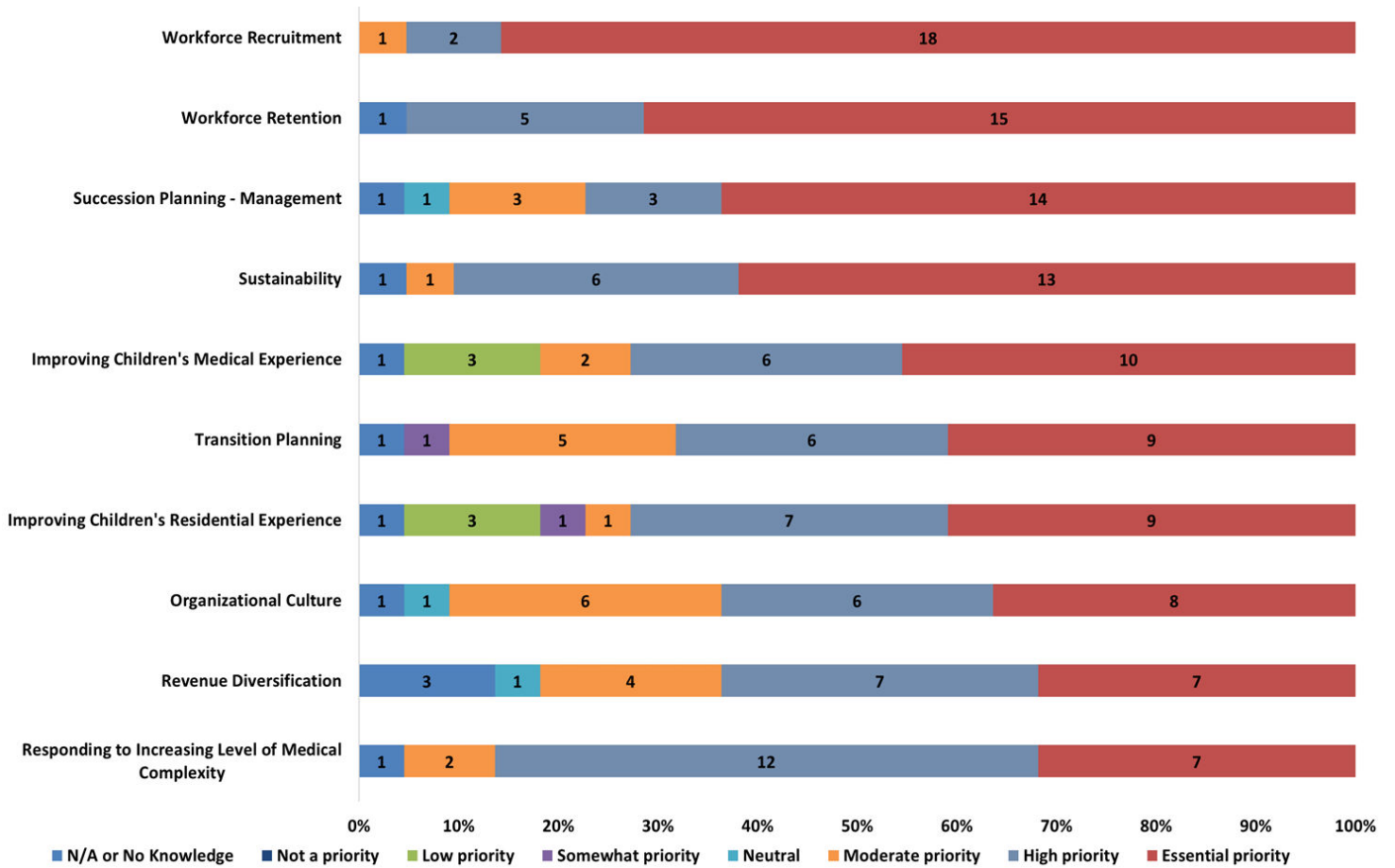
Opportunities

- Organizational change (succession planning)
- Staff recruitment & retention
- Optimizing financial stability
- Marketing services
- Improve use of technology (ie. IT, use of technology in clinical and program areas)

Challenges

- **Workforce shortage/increasing length of position vacancy**
- *Financial vulnerability*, reliance on Medicaid
- Succession planning
- Learning curve for new leaders
- Staff adaptability to change

The top ten priorities based on the internal Board and staff management survey for Cedarcrest's future need to include:



External Influences

External Interviews

External stakeholders provided feedback during phone interviews regarding Cedarcrest's current organizational programs, the need for Cedarcrest as the only tertiary pediatric facility in New Hampshire and Vermont and its reputation. The consultant interviewed professionals in the fields of medicine, education, developmental services, human services-state government, managed care as well as resident/day education student families, allied support and advisory council members. Questions encouraged robust discussion as to what strategic objectives might emerge. It is important to note that Cedarcrest enjoys an outstanding reputation as a quality provider who is a strong community partner. This feedback was consistent throughout the external stakeholder interviews.

The most frequently mentioned themes in the stakeholder input included:

- **Program development** – the majority of these comments related to leveraging existing strengths and the continued evolution of the offerings.
 - Clinical
 - Parent/Family Support
 - School
 - Respite
 - Transition
 - Technology
- **Capacity**
- **Workforce**
- **Financial**

Those interviewed from medical and educational backgrounds were highly complementary of the clinical and educational programs and services offered by Cedarcrest. Comments included references to the following:

- The organizational uniqueness and position in the continuum of care; uniqueness in offering total service “package”
- The need for respite and Cedarcrest's ability to provide short term/respite care including on an emergency basis
- Services offered to children with medical complexity especially those with respiratory needs including ventilator support
- High quality on-site school which integrates speech, occupational and physical therapy as well as equipment coordination needs
- Helping families connect to services
- Strong discharge planning
- Concerns for options for transitions at age 21 years
- Continued need for strong relationships with state government departments and legislators

Interviewees expressed concern regarding Cedarcrest's sustainability and the “what if's” for the children it serves should Medicaid funding experience reductions or costs increase beyond reimbursement.

The expanded need for specialized training for staff, families and other care providers given children's increasing medical complexities.

External Stakeholders identified the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges:

Strengths

- Cedarcrest’s “character” – a five star reputation
 - Outstanding reputation
 - Mission-driven
 - Deep care and compassion
- Staff throughout the organization
- Care delivery
 - Holistic care that is customized to the individual’s needs – “they know and care for the whole child.” “They provide a normal childhood experience as much as possible.”
 - Creating an environment that feels like home. “Doesn’t feel institutional or medical.”
- Services
 - 0-21 care for the medically complex
 - Family-centered services
 - Respite care
 - Vent care
 - Temporary care
 - Family/caregiver training
 - Rehab/skilled care
 - School program/education
- Communications (public relations)-Newsletter, social media
- Quality of maintenance, cleanliness of the facility and grounds

Weaknesses (Areas to Strengthen)

- Leadership succession planning
- Staff position vacancies/workforce challenges

Opportunities

- Leverage existing strengths for greater consistency of census
- Strengthen transition process for children and young adults
- Evolve current clinical/therapy/education program offerings while sustaining quality
- Review of program specific communications
- Evolve family support training offerings
- Build on respiratory care
- Greater emphasis on public education, marketing, advocacy and broader relationship building

Challenges

- Workforce shortage and length of time to fill positions
- Dependence on Medicaid funding

Additionally, interviewees identified the following ongoing needs and concerns that go beyond Cedarcrest’s mission. They include the shortage of nurses who can provide in-home care and respite; increasing behavioral health and mental health co-occurring diagnoses with developmentally disabled children; the shortage of community or residentially based residential transition opportunities for young adults with complex medical and developmental needs and residential and respite care options for adults with complex medical and developmental needs.

Regional and National Trends

Caring for Children with Medical Complexity

A recurring comment of many external stakeholders related to organizational capacity. Noting the reputation of the care and specialization, multiple interviewees voiced a desire for greater capacity; additional Cedarcrest facilities in different geographic locations in NH or residential support for adults (over 21 years) with complex medical and developmental needs.

In May 2020, managers analyzed service inquiries, admissions and discharges of patients over the past 5 years. With the exception of incidences where short term (respite) stays temporarily impacted census, the demand for services did not exceed the availability of beds. Additional research determined that there is insufficient regional or national sources of data regarding children with complex medical needs, or any means to discover future demand for services from key referral sources nor data trends related particularly regarding increases in need for specialized respiratory care.

Care Profile and Capacity-Related Findings

Cedarcrest trends:

- Year over year, average monthly census has been consistent with few annual admissions, discharges and hospitalizations.
- Over the past five years, Cedarcrest has experienced a significant increase in the admission of infants and toddlers. Many leave within 12-24 months transitioning to home once medically stable.
- Over the course of the last 10 years, Cedarcrest has admitted a larger proportion of school-aged children for whom the Division of Children, Youth and Families is involved.
- Health fragility of many of the children greatly influences census and can do so suddenly.
- Short term (respite) stays influence census during high volume times such as school vacations or holidays.

New Hampshire and Northern New England trends:

- Data suggests that a higher proportion of children are in need of ventilator support.

National data:

- The number of children with pediatric complex care needs is increasing nationally overall, this is not a trend within Cedarcrest's geographic scope given the range of options serving these children.
- Children with complex medical diagnoses are presenting a greater scope of care needs with a higher proportion of children requiring assisted respiratory care. Cedarcrest's inclusion of respiratory therapy services as an action stemming from the 2016 strategic plan is a direct reflection of this trend.

Given data reviewed, it was determined that Cedarcrest does not need to increase its residential capacity beyond the 26 beds.

Analysis of Licensing

As an exercise to review suitability of current licensure, the Trustees and staff reviewed various options regarding the positive and negative impacts of each licensing option. The Board of Trustees concluded that current licensure proved to be the best suited for the organization.

The research process additionally identified the following external influences that may affect the organization, its operation and programs:

Scan of External Influences

Workforce Challenges impacting Cedarcrest

- Nursing and LNA staffing shortage/increased competition for fewer in the field
- Extended length of time to fill positions
- Fluctuating unemployment rate influencing recruitment
- Open positions increasing workload impact on existing staff
- Lean organizational structure limits “in house” succession planning

Financial Impacts

- Lack of diversification of funding; Medicaid is the primary funding source
- Out of state reimbursement inequities or delays
- Census
- Staff capacity limits
- Current Medicaid rates are not progressive and do not ensure sustainability

Increased Patient Medical Complexity

- Increased need for staff training and development
- Greater knowledge of technology, medical care interventions needed
- Higher demand for advanced respiratory support (ventilator level care)

COVID-19

- Staffing impact due to sick leave, remote education and extended FMLA
- Demand for additional infection prevention protocols
- Need for greater interdepartmental communication and leadership opportunities
- Reduction in revenue from short term (respite) stays
- Loss of revenue related to day education one to one staffing

Overarching Impact of the Strategic Process and Plan

The planning process provided many opportunities for research review, reflection and discussion.

Overarching outcomes for the implementation of action plans include:

- Enhanced family support and training
- Inter-department collaboration and improved communication
- Continuing to implement state of the art medical care, therapy and special education
- Organization structural review and recommendations
- Greater recruitment and retention of staff
- Financial stability
- Increased awareness of the organization and mission
- Enhanced relationships with collaborators, referral sources and advocates

2021-2023 Strategic Focus Areas, Goal Statements and Objectives

These four strategic priorities create the framework for a set of actions that will result in a stronger, more effective organization:

Organizational Development and Culture

We will build upon our organizational culture to create a supportive work environment of personal growth, professional development and career satisfaction to attract and retain talented, dedicated individuals who are committed to enriching the lives of children with complex medical and development needs.

- Integrate organizational learnings from the pandemic, particularly around interdepartmental communication and collaboration, and implement best practices.
- Become an “employer of choice”.
- Align Cedarcrest’s organizational structure with the evolving needs of the organization.
- Evaluate the business continuity strategies for and with the Leadership team.

Program Innovation and Quality

We will leverage and enhance our existing programs and services to ensure they meet the needs of our children, their families and our community partners.

- Strengthen the strategies to meet training requirements for staff and families.
- Strengthen and improve communication to and from community partners to be clear, consistent and timely and to support the children’s needs.
- Expand respiratory care.
- Transition to a new EMR.
- Explore opportunities to expand services offered to infants and toddlers.
- Strengthen family partnerships and explore resource opportunities that will support families.

Operational Sustainability

We will build on a sound base and create more stability and predictability for a smoother operation.

- Have as positive a margin as is realistically possible for the organization.
- Explore all reimbursement opportunities at the state and federal levels.
- Ensure that funding sources cover program costs at a reasonable rate.
- Evaluate the impact of census and acuity and the impact on fiscal stability.
- Develop a plan for maximizing the use of rental homes.
- Explore opportunities to expand relationships with other organizations that could serve as a resource.
- Continue to build on opportunities to garner outside support through fundraising, grants and planned giving.

External Relations & Communications

We will nurture and grow our external relationships and improve our communications to create more understanding of and support for our mission.

- Assure that Cedarcrest has cohesive and effective external communications that accentuate Cedarcrest’s programmatic strengths, reputation and mission.
- All departments’ external relations efforts will carry consistent communication themes.