



FALL 2023 STATUS REPORT

One out of every two families have difficulty affording a sufficient supply of diapers for their children.

Diaper need affects a family's ability to go to work and school and threatens the health of a family by increasing the likelihood of maternal depression, parental stress, and diaper rash in infants and children.

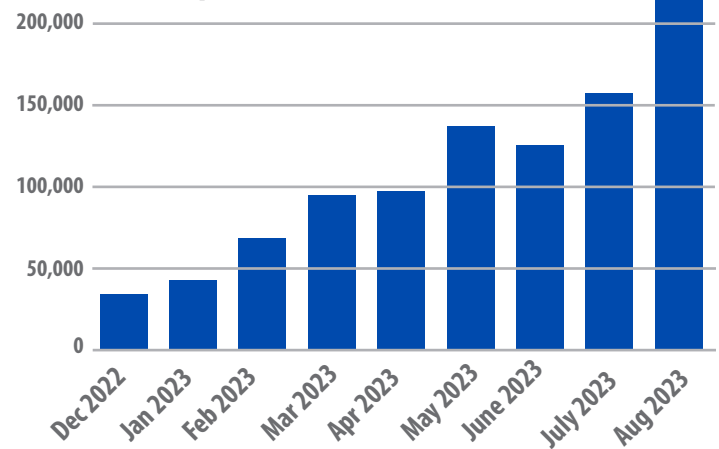
In response to this need, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) partnered with the Diaper Bank of Connecticut (DBCT) to address diaper insecurity through a new statewide program called *Diaper Connections*.

Launched in November, 2022, the program implements screening for diaper need at hospitals and leverages existing local community assets and partnerships to organize distribution channels, and distribute diapers in hospital settings such as labor and delivery units, maternity and pediatric clinics, emergency departments, and primary care sites.

Diaper Connections joins a suite of distribution [programs](#) the Diaper Bank of Connecticut offers in partnership with key community stakeholders, such as community action agencies and other community-based [organizations](#) that work to meet the basic needs of families across the state.

“More than an access point for diapers, *Diaper Connections* is driving toward coordinated, statewide action on maternal and child health.”

Number of Diapers Distributed



More than 2,200 children have been served since launching in November 2022.

All 27 hospitals in Connecticut are engaged in the *Diaper Connections* program and have begun to implement screening for diaper need.

Implementation Progress



All hospitals in Connecticut are engaged in implementing *Diaper Connections*

DIAPER CONNECTIONS PROVIDES A POINT OF ENGAGEMENT TO IMPACT HEALTH OUTCOMES

Diaper Connections provides a point of engagement for care providers to identify diaper need and connect individuals not only to a basic necessity, but also to influence the health and wellbeing of parents and children.

Diaper insecurity is related to several maternal and child health conditions, including maternal depression, poor infant sleep, infant and child urinary tract infections, and diaper rash. Diapers are a material basic need, like food and shelter, and are essential to health and the economic success of families.

Diaper need is also an important structural issue impacting a family's income and the amount of money available to pay for other necessities such as the rent or mortgage or utility bill. Most child care centers and family child care providers require at least seven days' supply of diapers to leave a child at a child care center so that the caregiver can attend work or school. A seven day supply of diapers is an expense that many low-income families cannot afford. In addition, parents who have a job may not have the financial means to pay for diapers in advance and may often miss work or school and, in many cases, lose wages due to work absenteeism.

Diapers are a *health-related social need** and are essential to the health and the economic success of families.

Data from the National Diaper Bank Network found that of parents and caregivers reporting diaper need, **1 in 4 reported having to miss work or school** because they did not have enough diapers to drop their child off at child care, and reported on average **missing 5.1 workdays** in the past 30 days. For a family of four living at the federal poverty line in 2023, missing five days of work a month for a year, equates to **over \$6,000 dollars of lost income**.

* *Health-Related Social Needs* are an individual's unmet, adverse social conditions that contribute to poor health and drive health disparities, including [but not limited to] food insecurity, housing instability, unemployment, and/or lack of reliable transportation.



AIMS TO REDUCE URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS AND DIAPER RASH



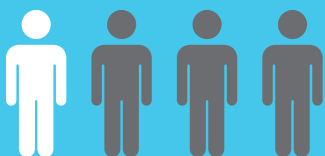
ELIMINATES BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT



IMPROVES PARENT AND CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH



ENGAGEMENT POINT TO ASSIST FAMILIES



1 in 4 caregivers missed work because they did not have enough diapers to drop their child off at child care



Over \$6000 of lost income on average

INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNITY BENEFIT STRATEGY

As all Connecticut hospitals and health systems strive to deliver high-quality care and broad community benefit, *Diaper Connections* provides an important pathway to collectively improve well-being across the state.

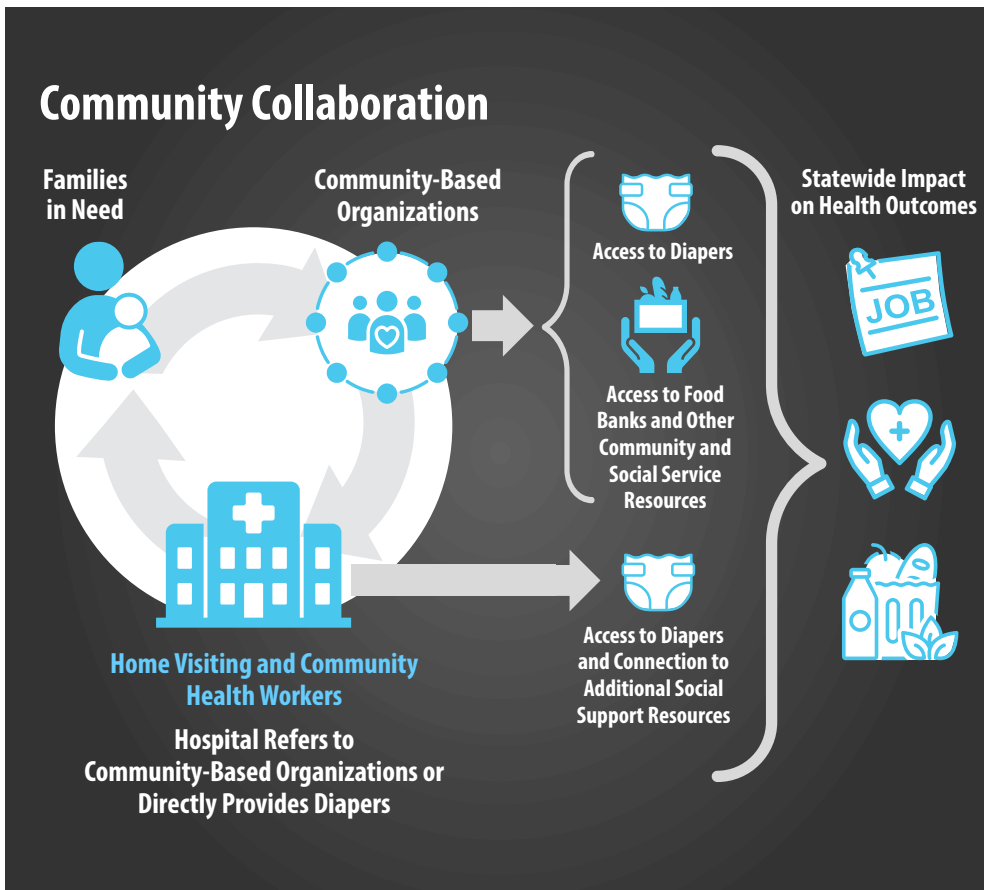
Understanding and addressing diaper need is a way all hospitals and health systems can further advance their work to support healthy families and communities and to address upstream drivers of health including access to employment.

Hospitals and health systems are integrating *Diaper Connections* into their community benefit strategies.

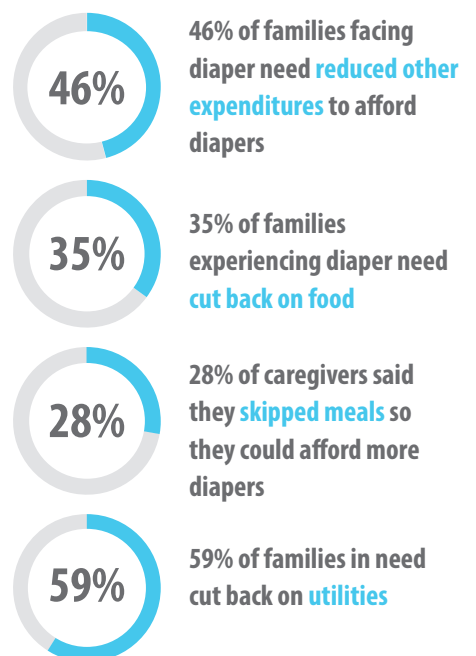
- Coordinating with Community Efforts, Including Home Visiting and Community Health Worker Strategy**
 Some hospitals have already successfully integrated Diaper Connections with existing organizational assets such as Community Health Workers, home visiting programs, food banks, and maternity clinics. By incorporating *Diaper*

Connections into existing strategies, hospitals and health systems are building on their community work already underway, and tying that work into a statewide initiative that will be collectively measured for impact across the state.

- Screening for Health-Related Social Needs**
 Some member hospitals have already worked to integrate screening for diaper need into their approach to build out screening for health-related social needs. Through collaborative, multi-state conversations including CHA, the National Diaper Bank Network, the Diaper Bank of Connecticut, and Epic, one of the most widely used electronic health records systems in the U.S., the work being done here in Connecticut is influencing a national model for screening. A diaper need screening question will soon be added to Epic's pediatrics build available to hospitals in 2024.



Diaper Need Affects the Whole Family



DATA SCIENCE LAYS GROUNDWORK FOR COLLABORATIVE HEALTH IMPACT APPROACH



Through CHA, *Diaper Connections* is working to collect, analyze, and organize data to better understand community need and ability to impact outcomes by addressing upstream drivers of health.

Through *Diaper Connections* each eligible child in a household can receive 100 diapers a month. Participating hospitals and health systems are working to track the number of families screened for diaper need and number of families enrolled who are receiving diapers monthly in the program.

To assess how the coordinated statewide approach to implement *Diaper Connections* not only maximizes the impact of meeting the need at scale, but also augments the capability to maximize the measurement of that impact, CHA is working to track **avoidable healthcare utilization** in pediatric settings and monitor utilization for treatment of pediatric conditions including urinary tract infections and diaper dermatitis. This information will enable hospitals and health systems to quantify the collective impact on health outcomes.

Diaper Connections lays the groundwork for how hospitals and health systems can collectively address and track impact on health-related social needs, in partnership with community-based organizations, generating greater insight into the scope of the impact on families across the state. Some hospitals are already including *Diaper Connections* in their Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs) to meet the needs identified in the communities they serve.

The coordinated approach of *Diaper Connections* not only maximizes impact, but also maximizes the measurement of that impact.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND ADVOCACY

Hospitals are engaging in two pathways for diaper distribution: (1) hospitals screen and refer a patient to a community-based organization for distribution and (2) hospitals screen and distribute diapers within the hospital. The preference is to partner with organizations already serving the community when possible to maximize reach and support established programs and the exceptional work they are doing in their communities.

As more hospitals and health systems work to stand up diaper need screening and distribution systems, they will work to dedicate administrative resources to staff and training, operational resources to the establishment of enrollment protocols as well as storage and delivery of diapers, and increase community partnerships to expand reach and capacity. The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, which provides the diapers distributed through the program and delivers diapers to community partners, will also continue its work in the implementation process. The Diaper Bank of Connecticut and CHA will support hospitals and community partners in collecting data and tracking key metrics on diaper distribution, trends in reported health conditions and overall progress in addressing health needs. Data and key metric tracking will include diaper distribution, and trends in reported health conditions to measure statewide progress in addressing the health needs of babies, toddlers, and their families.

Advocacy Continues

The Diaper Bank of Connecticut and community-based organizations have worked tirelessly to address diaper need across Connecticut. By building a network between community-based organizations and hospitals and health systems, *Diaper Connections* expands on the existing work to provide diapers to families, builds on advocacy efforts to identify diaper insecurity as a health related social need, and explores the implications of diaper need as it relates to health outcomes.



During the 2023 Legislative Session, CHA and the Diaper Bank of Connecticut advocated in support of proposed legislation that sought to provide Medicaid coverage for diapers. By making reimbursement for diapers an eligible medical expense, Connecticut can build upon the work of community partners and *Diaper Connections* to further prevent adverse maternal and child health conditions associated with diaper need. CHA and the Diaper Bank of Connecticut worked closely with lawmakers to introduce and advance the bill, attended advocacy events at the Capitol, submitted testimony, and held press conferences to raise further awareness. While the bill did not pass this year, CHA worked with the Governor's office to pass a bill that involves a commitment by the state to reexamine how Medicaid can identify and address social, economic, and environmental drivers of health and health-related social needs. Significant strides were made in building awareness and support for addressing diaper insecurity and efforts are underway to introduce legislation in 2024.

Medicaid covers over 55% of children under age five.* Diaper need affects 1 in every 2 families. That's why a comprehensive approach is so important. Together, community-based organizations, supported and united through *Diaper Connections*, and Medicaid coverage for diapers, aim to move the needle and lead to better health outcomes for children, parents, and communities.

*2022 Data from Connecticut Department of Social Services and U.S. Census Data