



Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2027 – 2029

June 2026

Contents

1.0	<u>Overview</u>	3
1.1	Northeastern Center History	3
1.2	Mission, Vision, and Shared Values	4
1.3	Demographics	5
2.0	<u>Strategic Plan</u>	6
2.1	Focus Areas and Strategies	6
2.2	Dashboard and Outcomes/Key Performance Indicators	7
3.0	<u>Implementation</u>	9
3.1	Communication	9
3.2	Risk Assessment	10
3.3	Plan Management	11
4.0	<u>Appendix A: Plan Updates</u>	12

1.0 Overview

1.1 Northeastern Center History

At the time of the Community Mental Health Act in 1963, Oaklawn Center in Elkhart provided minimal mental health services to DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben counties, with especially strong ties to LaGrange and Steuben counties. When DeKalb and Noble counties attempted to establish a four-county mental health corporation, the two northern counties declined participation and financial support, so DeKalb and Noble decided to move ahead on their own. In 1970, the Northeastern Psychiatric Clinic, Inc., was formed, located in Kendallville (Noble County). Operating funds were contracted from the state, the building at 305 E. North Street was leased, and a small staff was hired. The clinic was considered an Oaklawn satellite because Oaklawn provided management expertise and part-time psychiatric coverage.

Though the staff of the Northeastern Clinic quickly expanded, demand soon surpassed the clinic's capacity to provide service. The Board and Oaklawn Center decided to seek federal funds for a mental health center through an Initial Operations Grant, which mandated a four-county Board of Directors. In April 1975, the Northeastern Clinic was incorporated as a Community Mental Health Center with a mission to serve the residents of DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben counties. The Center continued with its contractual management arrangement with Oaklawn until 1977, when the Center dissolved its contract with Oaklawn in order to receive ongoing state support.

Northeastern Center (NEC) has a long history helping hundreds of thousands of individuals and families with their recovery from mental illness and substance use disorders, celebrating in 2027, 50 years of helping others. During this time, strategic plans have been developed, revised, and implemented to fulfill NEC's Mission of serving northeast Indiana as a comprehensive Community Mental Health Center (CMHC). NEC currently employs 200+ staff who provide professional behavioral health services to all ages and all residents in a primary service area consisting of four northeast Indiana counties: DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben. The annual budget has grown from \$300,000 to over \$20 million. The Center is accredited by the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). A CARF survey completed in 2023 resulted in a three-year re-accreditation until 2026. Services include a full crisis continuum, inpatient, outpatient, residential, New Hope Clubhouse, wraparound, employment, transportation and targeted case management.

In May 2021, NEC engaged True North Strategic Advisors (True North) to work with the organization and its Board to assist in advancing its strategic plan. The process included assessment, planning and development, and executing the strategic plan. The assessment phase included key stakeholders inside and outside of the agency and occurred via several modalities. The planning and development phase included analysis of assessment findings, incorporating those findings into an actionable plan. Finally, the execution phase included metrics or milestones (outcomes), tactics on how to achieve the metrics (process), and a titrated timeline. The Center utilized this format for fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

The process was streamlined and simplified entering FY2025 with continuation through the present.

While the Center has experienced significant growth since 1977, it continues to hold to its mission of providing accessible, affordable and quality behavioral health services.

1.2 Mission, Vision, and Shared Values

Mission:

Northeastern Center (NEC) helps individuals achieve emotional and mental wholeness through accessible, affordable and quality behavioral health services.

Vision:

As the premier provider of behavioral health services, Northeastern Center is the trusted partner empowering individuals to find hope, recovery, and a path forward.

Shared Values:

Always and everywhere, Northeastern Center's first response is CPR:

- **Compassion** – kindness, caring, and a willingness to help
- **Partnership** – together, achieving a shared goal
- **Respect** – value all individuals

Our Shared Values in expectations and action:

- Empower each other to disagree, make suggestions, and ask questions without the fear of reprisal.
 - Team members should feel safe expressing their views and to seek understanding.
- Advocate for the organization.
 - Play for team NEC. Be a team player through support and collaboration.
- Assume the best of one another.
 - Seek to understand before coming to a conclusion. Extend grace. Many conflicts come from misunderstandings.
- Commit to holding ourselves and others accountable.
 - Accountability doesn't have to be confrontation. This is how organizations get better and move forward.

- Leadership is an action, not a position.
 - Lead from where you are. No matter your title, if you see an opportunity for us to do better, tell someone or do something.
- Excellence in everything, mediocrity in nothing.
 - Excellence means being intentional about doing things the right way all the time even when no one is looking.
- Feedback is a gift.
 - Offer constructive feedback in a respectful manner. Be open to receive feedback and learn from others.
- Encourage and embrace diverse people, cultures, and viewpoints.
 - Seek out those that are different from ourselves. The organization will be stronger as it becomes more inclusive.
- Promote and practice work-life balance.
 - Support personal boundaries and look to provide flexibility while still meeting job expectations.

1.3 Demographics

County	Population (2025)	Race/Ethnicity (2025)	Median Household Income (2024)	Education (2024)
Noble	47,937	88.1% Non-Hispanic 11.9% Hispanic	\$72,859	83.2% with HS Diploma or higher
DeKalb	44,535	96.4% Non-Hispanic 3.6% Hispanic	\$81,096	92.9% with HS Diploma or higher
LaGrange	41,305	95.2% Non-Hispanic 4.8% Hispanic (Estimated 40% of the population is Amish)	\$79,761	58.9% with HS Diploma or higher
Steuben	34,799	94.9% Non-Hispanic 5.1% Hispanic	\$77,285	92.5% with HS Diploma or higher

Information provided by <https://www.stats.indiana.edu/index.asp>

2.0 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan consists of *Focus Areas* and *Strategies*, which includes Outcomes or Key Performance Indicators and Processes (actionable topic areas to achieve desired outcomes).

Focus Area 1 – People (Staff)

Strategies

- **Recruitment/Onboarding**
 - Outcome (What): 60 days or less (average) to fill open staff positions
 - Process (How): NEC will review and improve ongoing
 - Salary and benefits
 - Ease to apply, timely turnaround from application to start date
 - Community partnerships
 - New employee orientation
 - Company culture
- **Retention**
 - Outcome: Decrease staff turnover by 2% until 15% annual realized
 - Process: NEC will review and improve ongoing
 - Salary and Benefits
 - Professional Development
 - Reward opportunities
 - Company culture

Focus Area 2 – Program (Services)

Strategies

- **Provide services to more clients**
 - Outcome: 10% annual increase in unique clients served
 - Process: Identify at least one specific service of focus (ideally evidence-based practice) for SMI, SUD, and SED populations, market
- **Enhance existing services and implement new services resulting in greater service volume**
 - Outcome: Implement services/programs (ideally evidence-based practice) with clinical and fiscal justification. Increase service encounters
 - Process: Implement crisis continuum (hotline, mobile crisis team, crisis receiving and stabilization services), CCBHC, integrated care (with physical health care), telehealth, expanded supported employment

Focus Area 3 – Plan**Strategies**

- **Utilize plan outcomes to develop, implement and support agency priorities**
 - Outcome: Incorporate marketing, technology, Values Development Committee, consumer surveys, and other internal plans into operations
 - Process: Discuss plan results as needed and adjust accordingly
- **Increase community impact**
 - Outcome: Implement Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) project. Increase community partnerships, e.g., JRAC, Specialty Courts, etc.
 - Process: Community Health Needs Assessment, strategic community participation

Focus Area 4 – Process (Infrastructure)**Strategies**

- **Profitability**
 - Outcome: Improve annual margin by 10%
 - Process: Accurate and timely fiscal data, maximize reimbursement, exercise prudent cost controls, explore strategic external awards
- **Quality Improvement/Data**
 - Outcome: Utilize data to evaluate and improve services, compliance with audits, successful CARF survey in FY2027.
 - Process: Maximize electronic health record (HER) capabilities, develop management reporting/business intelligence.
- **Implement Standard Operating Procedures wherever possible**

Dashboard

People	Outcome/KPI	FY2026	Q1-27	Q2-27	Q3-27	Q4-27	FY2027
Recruitment	% of positions filled w/in 60 days						
Retention	2% decrease in TO						

Program	Outcome/KPI	Q4-26 / FY26	Q1-27	Q2-27	Q3-27	Q4-27	FY2027
Client capacity	10% increase in clients served (unique)						
Clinical Services	Enhance services, existing and new, e.g., crisis continuum (988, MCT, CRSS), CCBHC, telehealth, VR, school-based; increase service utilization.						

Plan

Utilize internal plans and surveys to improve services.
Community Impact: Implement SDOH project and increase community partnerships.

Process	Outcome/KPI	Q4-26 / FY26	Q1-27	Q2-27	Q3-27	Q4-27	FY2027
Profitability	10% margin						
Clinical Services	Use data to evaluate and improve services. Compliance with audits.						
SOP	Implement Standard Operating Procedures						

Ongoing attention to the identified Focus Areas shall occur. Senior Management Team (SMT) will meet regularly to discuss progress, challenges and solutions to achieve supporting strategies. Quarterly updates to this Plan shall be documented and reported to the Board of Directors of NEC.

3.0 Implementation

3.1 Communication

Northeastern Center has determined that there are four audience groups with a stake or interest in the Strategic Plan, each with a varying need for details and updates about the plan:

Audience	Information Level	Method
NEC Staff	Staff will be most interested in how the strategic plan will impact them. They will want to understand what the plan means for NEC and for their specific role. They will also want to know periodic updates as the plan is enacted.	• Quarterly “all-staff” notes via email from the CEO, providing all staff with updates on the Strategic Plan and other significant Center-wide happenings • Monthly Town Halls • Team all-staff meetings • All-staff emails / newsletters • Intranet updates
NEC Board	The NEC Board will expect to be kept apprised of Plan progress and updates or changes to the plan. The Board will conduct an annual review of Plan, including approval of any significant updates/changes	The Strategic Plan will be a standing agenda item at regularly scheduled Board meetings with a minimum of an annual review of the plan itself; the Board shall approve the Center’s Strategic Plan.
Community Partners	Organizations and entities that refer to our partner with NEC will want to know how NEC will better serve the community and be the premier provider of behavioral health services because of the strategic plan. They will also be interested to learn updates on new programs, new staff, new access points, e.g., telehealth, etc.	• Press releases • Mailings • Presentations in the community • Annual community luncheons
Consumers / Family Members	Consumers (existing and potential clients) and their families want to learn updates on new programs, new staff, new access points, e.g., telehealth, that could benefit them and help meet their behavioral health needs.	• Mailings • Website

3.2 Risk Assessment

Northeastern Center has identified the following as potential risks or threats to the progress of the Strategic Plan, along with possible mitigation strategies:

Risk	Mitigation / Solution
Key staff changes	NEC SMT will conduct regular succession planning exercises to prepare for key staff changes. In the event of a change to a key staff member, responsibilities would be distributed (either temporarily until the position can be filled, or permanently as a growth opportunity for existing staff). Other mitigation strategies include regular cross communication and cross training to ensure depth of knowledge and coverage.
Financial impact - Reimbursement changes	Through involvement and rapport with the Indiana Council, as well as internal monitoring of reimbursement changes, NEC will stay aware of potential changes and be positioned to respond to them proactively rather than reactively whenever possible. Further, through relationship with an external consultant, NEC will be made aware of new funding opportunities that could bring additional revenue source diversification and protection.
Regulatory changes	NEC will monitor and respond to any potential regulatory changes and/or legislative updates that will impact NEC policies or procedures.
Competitive landscape changes	NEC is in the process of exploring a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) designation, which would allow for a competitive advantage over other local competitors, as well as some additional funding opportunities. NEC can also rely on its financial strength and expansion into new services as assets that will give them an advantage to respond more nimbly to market needs.
Catastrophic events	If a catastrophic event occurred, NEC would rely on the depth of knowledge and expertise within the staff and Board to formulate a swift and appropriate response plan. Examples include: • Unforeseen external forces, e.g., global pandemic • Lawsuit or legal action
Sustainability of the Strategic Plan	NEC staff are responsible for operationalizing the Strategic Plan and therefore must make sure to move at a sustainable pace. Evaluating the Plan timeline, monitoring KPIs, frequent internal communication, and celebrating Plan progress will allow the staff to adapt and pivot if needed, as well as to stay engaged in the overall success and progress of the Strategic Plan.
Other	NEC will utilize the depth of knowledge and expertise within the staff and Board to react accordingly and efficiently to any other risks or threats to the success of the Strategic Plan.

This list is not necessarily comprehensive but is representative of the largest risks at the time of plan documentation. Regular evaluation of risks and mitigation strategies are recommended throughout the duration of the Strategic Plan.

3.3 Plan Management

Action	Description	Frequency	Owner
Plan oversight	Overall responsibility for the implementation, integration, and success of the Strategic Plan	Ongoing	CEO
Updating KPI Dashboard	Gathering of Plan updates and preparation of the KPI Dashboard report for presentation to the NEC Board	Quarterly	CEO
Assessing substantial Plan variations or changes	Annually in June, the Planning Committee reviews the Strategic Plan for the following fiscal year (eff. July 1). The Strategic Plan is then approved by the Center's Board of Directors, also in June. See Section 3.2 Risk Assessment for examples of things that might call for an adjustment to the Plan.	Minimum of Annual review Ad-hoc review if needed	CEO
Review and reflect	NEC staff will debrief on lessons learned as the plan is operationalized and as Action Items are completed. In addition, milestones and accomplishments will be recognized and celebrated to ensure staff engagement and motivation throughout the duration of the Strategic Plan.	Ongoing	CCO

4.0 Appendix A: Plan Updates
