

## **2025-2028 Strategic Plan**

### **Executive Summary:**

Bergen's Promise, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, serves as the designated Care Management Organization (CMO) for Bergen County, NJ, addressing the complex mental health, wellness, and developmental needs of children and youth up to age 21 facing emotional, behavioral, substance use, and intellectual challenges. As part of the NJ Children's System of Care (CSoC), Bergen's Promise employs a Wraparound Approach, supported by integrated Behavioral Health Home services for medical care coordination. This model empowers children and families to overcome challenges, fostering resilience and hope for a better future.

The Wraparound Approach centers on the child and family, engaging them in the decision-making process with a team of professionals and natural supports. This collaborative effort builds a tailored plan of care with services, resources, and community support to help the family achieve their goals. The team works together to implement, monitor, and adjust the plan as needed. Person-centered language is used throughout to ensure a stigma-free environment for youth and families.

With over 11,000 families served since 2002, Bergen's Promise believes the key to success lies in building strong Child and Family Teams, helping families manage everyday challenges and improve well-being. Leveraging innovative technology solutions will be central to improving care coordination, enhancing data-driven decision-making, and expanding access to services for youth and families.

### **Vision:**

As a dedicated public health organization, Bergen's Promise is committed to enhancing the quality of life through an integrated wraparound approach that addresses all aspects of wellness. By collaborating with community partners and using preventive, cost effective strategies, we empower youth and families to build resilience, self-sufficiency, and healthy lives.

### **Values:**

Bergen's Promise is committed to **Professionalism** through its fostering a culture of shared ownership, accountability, integrity, and continuous quality improvement so that our staff are prepared to provide youth, families, and other key stakeholders with the highest quality services.

Bergen's Promise promotes **Talent Engagement and Development** by cultivating a team of professionals who align with our mission. To best serve our community and create opportunities for staff success, we promote an environment of trust, continuous learning, and professional growth.

Bergen's Promise fosters **Healthy and Safe** environments for youth, families, staff, and other stakeholders through a coordinated and comprehensive set of health promotion, wellness and

protection strategies.

Through **Collaboration**, we develop innovative partnerships and system improvements to achieve sustainable outcomes for youth, families, staff, and other key stakeholders.

Bergen's Promise is committed to promoting and demonstrating an understanding of **Cultural Diversity**, respecting the values, preferences, beliefs, practices and identity of our youth, families, staff, and other stakeholders.

Beginning in November 2024 through April 2025, Bergen's Promise engaged in a process to update its strategic plan spanning the period of 2025-2028. The goal was to understand youth and family integrated health and wellbeing needs, identify the Agency's strengths and opportunities, and build consensus on a set of goals and strategies for inclusion in the new plan-to fulfill our Mission of **"Healthy Families, Safe at Home."**

The work was guided by the Agency's Leadership, Board of Directors, and staff, and supported by Br8kFree Strategies, LLC. The process collected existing data from surveys and new feedback from the Agency's stakeholders and consultants. One-on-one interviews and focus groups were conducted with a sample of staff members at all levels within the agency. The 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment for Bergen County, New Jersey gathered input from local stakeholders who work with low income, minority or other medically underserved populations and identified several key areas of opportunity that will additionally inform our strategic initiatives for 2025. Bergen's Promise participated in this assessment as a key informant.

### **Summary of key findings:**

**Access to Health Care Services** is a significant challenge, with barriers such as inconvenient office hours, high prescription and physician visit costs, limited appointment availability, difficulty finding a physician, and lack of transportation. These issues often lead residents to skip prescriptions, rely on emergency rooms, or lack consistent medical care. To address this, Bergen's Promise integrates health and wellness goals into individual plans for all youth, ensuring they have identified dental and primary care providers. Our Behavioral Health Home (BHH) team coordinates medical appointments for youth with complex needs, and transportation support is included in their plans when necessary.

**Mental Health** is a critical concern, with many residents reporting poor mental health, diagnosed depression, chronic symptoms, and high stress levels. Accessing mental health services is a significant challenge, making it a top priority for key informants. While Bergen's Promise does not directly provide adult behavioral health services, our Wraparound Model coordinates resources and partnerships to support parents and caregivers of enrolled youth. Families can connect with the Bergen County Family Support Organization for peer caregiver support and community resources. Bergen's Promise also continuously evaluates provider partnerships and addresses service gaps through a community resource grant, managed on behalf of the Children's System of Care.

**Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Weight** are critical areas of concern, with food insecurity and limited access to fresh produce being widespread issues. Many residents struggle to maintain healthy diets, contributing to high rates of overweight and obesity, particularly among adults. Additionally, the prevalence of asthma in children underscores the need for better support in nutrition and physical activity. Bergen's Promise addresses these challenges through health promotion events open to all youth enrolled as well as activities integrated into youth and family service plans. Examples include partnerships with the Center for Food Action to tackle food insecurity, BHH team coordination with families and physicians on asthma action plans, and a successful two-year grant to expand wellness curricula for youth with obesity and mood disorders.

**Social Determinants** such as housing conditions and substance use, including marijuana, are significant concerns that impact overall community health and well-being. These issues were ranked as top priorities by key stakeholders. Bergen's Promise supports Medicaid enrollment through our Presumptive Eligibility Coordinators, ensuring coverage for all enrolled youth. To address housing needs, Bergen's Promise administers BergenResourceNet.org, a centralized website offering resource and referral information on housing providers and assistance programs. Additionally, we engage in community education, including programs on the effects of vaping through a health promotion grant. We also focus on reducing cultural barriers by ensuring our workforce reflects the ethnic demographics of the population we serve and that our partners provide services aligned with the values and culture of the families we support.

This summary underscores the critical areas identified in the 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment, providing a foundation for our strategic initiatives in 2025.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats:**

The SWOT analysis is a crucial element of our strategic planning process, providing a thorough assessment of our agency's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. This analysis forms the basis for informed decision-making and strategic direction, enabling us to leverage our strengths, address areas for improvement, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and mitigate potential risks. By incorporating the insights from the above county assessment and the SWOT analysis, we aim to enhance our agency's effectiveness, adaptability, and impact in serving our community and advancing our mission.

### **Strengths:**

- Agency commitment to Mission, business and ethical compliance and quality accreditation standards
- Prepared for Future:
  - Strong business continuity procedures and IT structures which allow the agency to continue care management coordination offsite if required.
  - Current financial stability

- Current facility supports capacity for growth
- The agency is poised to be adaptive to changing environment and needs
- Our community involvement allows us to identify gaps in community assets
- Enhanced data analytics/data driven decision making
- Improved staff retention and proactive focus on recruitment efforts minimizes service disruption to families
- Diversity among staff and representative of population served
- Strong health and safety practices internally and in the field
- Our services are provided at no cost to families
- We assist our families to enroll in NJFC, helping qualified families access affordable healthcare
- Existing digital platforms (e.g., BergenResourceNet.org), telehealth capabilities, data systems

**Weaknesses:**

- Need for more political/legislative involvement
- Limited size/diversity of Board of Directors
- The exponential growth of the agency requires review and rightsizing of gaps in systems processes
- Need for formalized processes for communication: community connections, maintaining partnerships/relationships
- Need for formalized processes for alternate funding
- Financial systems collaboration and processes: standard operating procedures and onboarding of new funds
- Nearing end of life IT infrastructure
- Marketing skill set, limited social media presence
- Lack of structured forum for family voice in agency planning

**Opportunities:**

- Increased focus for integrated care in policy and practices statewide
- Prevention opportunities: Youth Justice System, Social Determinants of Health
- There are underserved populations in our county
- Opportunity to streamline processes through technology, AI

- Leveraging NJCMO for Marketing toolkits, standards of communication/messaging across CMOs
- Increased CSOC Services for 0 to 5 age population: knowledge, expertise and training
- Behavioral Health Integration from Fee for Service to MCO's provides opportunity to Strengthen partnerships with Medicaid MCO's
- Leadership training in value-based principles: communication, ownership of outcomes
- Telehealth increases accessibility of services, opportunity for more CFT member participation

#### **Threats:**

- Policy/legislation, changes in administration may threaten funding
- Dependence on Medicaid as sole funding source
- Youth acuity of mental health issues is increasing as the system of care is stressed due to workforce challenges and lack of specialization of treatment modalities
- Workforce challenges
  - Attracting talent in limited market
  - Increasingly limited future workforce
- Changing consumer preferences, mindset shift from patient to consumer and preference for telehealth
- Cybercrime (Nonprofits are one of the top five most targeted industries for cyberattacks).
- Provider shortages, low reimbursement rates for partner provider services; diminished out of home provider/program capacity affects youth/family access to care
- It is unclear how the expansion of CCBHCs will affect the Children's System of Care's sustainability in behavioral health care coordination.
- Lack of shared marketing/advocacy and program impact messaging across CMOs
- The statewide stakeholder feedback that CSoC cannot adequately meet the service capacity needs of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities

Building on the insights gathered through the SWOT analysis, the strategic direction for Bergen's Promise is clear: to enhance program impact while ensuring long-term financial solvency. Strengthening the agency's ability to deliver measurable outcomes will be a key priority, as we align our efforts to achieve greater service delivery and community engagement. At the same time, a robust focus on financial health will allow us to maintain sustainability and resilience, ensuring that our initiatives remain impactful and scalable. The following goals outline the strategic initiatives that will guide our work in the coming years, driving both mission success and financial stability.

### **Three-Year Plan:**

Over the next three years, our organization is focused on achieving the following strategic goals:

- **Enhance quality-of-care management through integrated and person-centered support:**
  - Improve youth and family health outcomes, especially within underserved populations
  - Increase family engagement and build ambassadorship to strengthen the support system for those we serve
  - Leverage technology to enhance care coordination and compliance by implementing electronic risk screening tools for youth and adopting electronic visit verification systems to ensure service integrity and accountability
- **Develop and implement a comprehensive advocacy plan:**
  - Raise awareness of our program's impact
  - Foster partnerships to support local system solvency
  - Build visible and active collaborations with key community stakeholders, including:
    - Local leaders
    - Youth justice systems and law enforcement
    - Education partners
    - Healthcare professionals and professional associations
- **Enhance the financial strength of the agency for long-term sustainability:**
  - Source alternative funding and secure major gifts and planned giving
  - Explore grants that align with the program priorities
- **Elevate BP's employment system to become the premier workplace in Bergen County:**
  - Foster values-based leadership
  - Promote talent engagement and development
  - Enhance cultural competency within the organization to attract, develop, and retain top talent

These strategic goals will guide our organization toward greater impact, ensuring we meet the needs of our communities while securing a sustainable future.