

## **Wheatland Meeting Summary**

### **What Is Working Well in Wheatland**

- Local providers (nurses and physicians) are trusted and long-serving.
- EMS has been improved from volunteers to one with 24/7 paramedics and EMTs operating out of the hospital.
- Long-term care.
  - The community has a "top notch" nursing home.
  - Several hospice entities from Casper and Cheyenne serve the Wheatland area and are described as very involved and helpful.
- Regional hospital.
  - The hospital in Douglas (Converse County Memorial) is highly regarded for providing "excellent care" and having positive, personal relationships with patients. It also has an "excellent ambulance service" that often serves the northern end of Platte county.

### **What Is Not Working Well in Wheatland**

- Non-emergency transportation.
  - Residents must go out of town for nearly all medical procedures, including minor outpatient surgeries, orthopedic surgeries, and various tests.
  - No access to dialysis in the community; no nephrologist at the hospital who can supervise.
  - Some volunteer organizations transport patients, but are not medically trained and thus can't react to emergencies during transport.
  - Travel for healthcare is a significant burden and can be dangerous, especially during winter weather on I-25.
- Behavioral health.
  - Increase in suicides and substance abuse issues, particularly among new arrivals, many are whom are homeless and can't afford care.
  - Lack of services for children with conditions like autism and ADHD.
  - No local detoxification facility.
  - ER doctors, who are not specialists, are left to handle mental health crises. This creates burnout.
- Workforce and education.
  - One speaker described the local healthcare standards of care / clinical practice as "awful," citing concerns about the reduction of clinical requirements for nursing students (LPNs).
  - Recruiting people into healthcare fields like CNA is difficult due to low wages, stress, and being overworked, lack of mentorship and perceived career pathway.
  - Volume-based reimbursement models makes it difficult for medical care to remain sustainable in rural Wyoming.

- No procedures / surgery, etc. at local hospital. Corporate owners consider profit before community needs, and competition from regional hospital (Converse County) makes it difficult to scale locally.
- Housing stock quality in the area is "horrible" and good housing is overpriced, which is a major barrier to recruiting and retaining healthcare workers.

### **What Wheatland Needs**

- Home health, particularly clinical tasks, not just ADL assistance or chores.
- Technology training for older residents to help them access telehealth services and patient portals, breaking down barriers to remote care.