1. POLICY STATEMENT:

a. Impelled by our mission commitment to serve as a healing presence with particular concern for our neighbors who are vulnerable, Via Christi Health (VCH) and its health ministries integrate community benefit into ongoing processes of planning, budgeting, and reporting.

b. In our identity as a healing ministry of the Catholic Church, charged with carrying forward the healing ministry of Jesus, we hold a fundamental commitment to human dignity. We believe that every person is created by God in God’s image and, thus, possesses inalienable worth. Our faith further teaches us that by our very nature we are social beings - “The full achievement of human dignity is possible only within the context of membership and participation in the life of the human community.”1 We thus believe that our provision of community benefit is an expression of our commitment to uphold the dignity of each person by building the common good.

c. Our commitment to the common good and our mission calls us to be excellent community citizens. As such, we hold ourselves accountable to our internal and external constituents for the stewardship of our resources, the enhancement of collaborative efforts and not-for-profit, tax exempt status.

d. VCH recommends that each of its ministries:

   (1) Emphasize faith-based care by communicating the Mission and Core Values of VCH in the promotion of whole-person focused care by including the spiritual dimension in internal and external education efforts.

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1 “The Theology of Community Benefit” by Patricia A. Talone, RSM, PhD; Health Progress, July-August 2005, p. 21.
(2) Implement health and wellness opportunities “in-house” by allocating resources for education to broaden patients’/residents’ perspective and knowledge of health and wellbeing that encompasses the whole person.

(3) Direct efforts to the communities in which we serve by partnering with community organizations to create and support programs that educate about prevention and wellness and support community members taking responsibility for their health.

(4) Align efforts by forming collaborative partnerships with other organizations and agencies on the national, regional and state level to improve health and wellbeing.

2. PURPOSE:

The VCH Community Benefit policy exists to provide structure and accountability in VCH’s efforts to reach out to those in need, to improve the health of the individuals and communities we serve, and to enhance health access. These efforts flow from our identity as a Catholic health ministry. It articulates system-wide oversight and guidance regarding tracking community benefit activities, assessing community health needs, and developing strategic plans that prioritize community benefit programs.

3. SCOPE:

This policy applies to Via Christi Health.

4. DEFINITIONS:

a. Community Benefit: Community benefits are programs or activities that provide treatment or promote health and healing as a response to identified community needs and meet at least one of the following community benefit objectives: 2

   (1) Improve access to health care services;

   (2) Enhance health of the community;

   (3) Advance medical or health care knowledge; and/or

   (4) Relieve or reduce the burden of government or other community efforts.

Community benefit includes traditional charity care, means-tested public programs (e.g. Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program) with unpaid costs, community health improvement services, health professions education, subsidized health services, research activities, financial and in-kind contributions and community benefit operations activities.

In alignment with the Catholic Health Association community benefit guidelines and IRS regulations, VCH does not include bad debt, community-building and leadership activities or the unpaid cost of providing services to Medicare beneficiaries in reporting community benefit expenses.

b. Community Need: Response to a community need is demonstrated when at least one of these criteria is met: 3

   (1) The activity/program is developed in response to a documented health need or problem.

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3 Ibid.
(2) The ministry’s board or management council considers community need as a primary rationale for the health activity/program.

(3) The activity/program is requested by community members or groups and is related to a documented community health need.

(4) Accepted research demonstrates the need for the health service/program.

c. **Health**: A state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

5. **PROCEDURE**:

a. VCH’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values set the framework for the Community Benefit Program. Organizational strategic, operational, financial, and communication plans ensure visibility and commitment for community benefit activities.

b. VCH’s community benefit planning and reporting is done in a manner consistent with *A Guide for Planning and Reporting Community Benefit* ("CHA Community Benefit Guidelines", 2008) developed by the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA) and VHA, Inc.

c. **Roles and Responsibilities**:

   (1) Boards of Trustees participate in the process of establishing Community Benefit Program priorities based on community health assessments, and regularly review reports on progress toward established goals. The VCH Board of Trustees establishes key metric(s) for system-wide community benefit performance.

   (2) Executive leaders are responsible for ensuring that VCH ministries allocate adequate resources to assess, develop, and implement community benefit initiatives that respond to identified health needs of the communities served by the ministries.

   (3) VCH Senior Vice President of Mission Integration provides strategic direction and oversight of community benefit and provides regular reports to VCH executive and governance leadership.

   (4) VCH Director of Community Benefit directs and oversees implementation of the VCH community benefit planning, programming, and reporting initiatives, including the setting of standards and evaluation of effectiveness.

   (5) VCH Community Benefit Advisory Council works with the VCH Director of Community Benefit to ensure that community benefit is reflected in the VCH culture and is visible and evident to employees, patients, residents, and the community.

   (6) In consultation with the VCH Director of Community Benefit, each VCH ministry designates a community benefit point person who is responsible for ensuring the ministry engages in community benefit planning, programming, reporting, and evaluation per VCH policy and standards.

   (7) The VCH Director of Community Benefit serves as contact person for information and guidance regarding the requirements of this policy.

d. In conjunction with annual planning and budgeting processes, VCH ministries prepare an annual Community Benefit Plan, utilizing the *VCH Community Benefit Plan Guide*, which directs the allocation of organizational resources to assess, develop, and implement
community benefit initiatives that respond to identified and prioritized community health priorities.

e. VCH ministries work collaboratively with other community organizations to develop, implement, and assess their Community Benefit Plan.

f. VCH ministries actively participate in regular - at least triennial - community health assessments, collaborating with other community organizations whenever feasible. The *VCH Community Health Needs Assessment Guide* outlines a suggested approach to these assessments.

g. VCH and its health ministries maintain timely and accurate community benefit records.

1. VCH utilizes the Community Benefit Inventory for Social Accountability (CBISA) developed by Lyon Software to identify, track, quantify, and report its community benefit initiatives.

2. VCH ministries provide quarterly community benefit reports to their respective governing bodies and the VCH Director of Community Benefit. The VCH Director of Community Benefit, in concert with VCH Finance, prepares a quarterly community benefit report to present to the VCH Board of Trustees.

3. VCH and its ministries report community benefit on an annual basis in published financial statements and in filed IRS Form 990 reports, helping to assure our accountability to all our internal and external publics and that users of the financial statements and governmental reports are fully cognizant of the community benefit provided by VCH and its ministries in furtherance of our mission commitment and tax-exempt status.

4. VCH ministries prepare annual reports to their communities, including an indication of progress toward their established Community Benefit Plan goals and objectives. The VCH Director of Community Benefit director and VCH Communication Department collaborate to provide direction for and coordination of these reports, utilizing the *CHA Community Benefit Guidelines* as reference.

Responsibility Executive - Signature

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n/a

Board Committee Chairperson - Signature (if Required)  Title