



POPULATION
HEALTH TRUST
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

VISION: Growing Healthy Communities

COVID RECOVERY PLAN

PROGRESS
REPORT



INTRODUCTION

Population Health Trust (PHT) members have evaluated the collective progress on the goal and strategy areas contained in the COVID Recovery Plan.

As a reminder, the COVID Recovery Plan is the follow-up to the 2020-2021 Community Health Assessment. It is intended to bring the community together and focus efforts to help deal with the pressures the pandemic placed, and continues to place, on individuals, families, organizations, and systems in Skagit County.

To view the full plan, please visit www.skagitcounty.net/PHTAC.



Equity



Housing



Access
to Care



Behavioral
Health



Child Care



Economic
and Fiscal
Security



Food
Security

With the breadth and depth of the plan, the level of activation is remarkable. Agencies and organizations across the county have lent their efforts toward the recovery goals established by the Trust. There is, however, much left to accomplish in order to make system changes envisioned in the plan.

The areas most activated were those in which American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding was utilized to drive initiatives forward. What follows is a high-level summary of progress and on-going efforts.



CHILD CARE



CHILDCARE (CC)



CHILD CARE

ARPA funding has provided support for three critical areas of development: 1) work with the local community in retention and expansion of child care, 2) start-up grants for new providers and 3) start-up funding for a pilot employer-based model. Six new family child care providers who are bilingual and take infants have opened and additional new providers are in the pipeline. We have expectations to reach at least 10 new providers, increasing child care slots by around 120 - a huge success in a short time frame considering the overall economic conditions around child care. Additionally, we are close to piloting Skagit County's first employer-based child care model, adding additional slots to a constricted ecosystem.

Collaboration across Trust members (Skagit County Public Health, EDASC, Skagit Community Foundation, Skagit Valley Family YMCA, United General District 304), has resulted in funding to organizations working to improve child care access, communication across sectors to improve information and referrals to child care, and outreach and education to the business community.

Though the Skagit Valley Family YMCA, Skagit Community Foundation, and Child Care Aware NW Washington have all contributed actions to recruit and retain child care providers, the need for a workforce pipeline remains and will continue to be hampered by higher level system barriers resulting from low wages and lack of benefits for child care providers. Recognizing this, the Trust worked to detail how limited access to quality child care impacts the sectors represented by the Trust by producing a two-page informational sheet shared with the community, legislators, and the Skagit County Board of Health to communicate the urgent need for solutions to this complex problem.

STRATEGIES



CC1 Create opportunities for Spanish and Indigenous-Speaking residents to open child care businesses.



CC2 Improve retention of childcare providers.



CC3 Advocate for employer-based on-site childcare.



CC4 Provide support to recruit, retain, and train child care providers.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (BH)



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH (including cross over strategy 2)

ARPA funding allowed the Trust to dig in to behavioral health for two specific populations with access to care challenges: parents planning and starting a new family and Latinx individuals. Two new programs (Perinatal WA Support and Parent Resilience Program and Latinx Mental Health Matters) aimed at stigma reduction and prevention of behavioral health challenges were started.

North Star participants, including the county and cities, collaborated to support, expand, and coordinate social workers and other behavioral health outreach in law enforcement. Skagit County Public Health worked to expand in-school behavioral health supports, the Skagit Valley Family YMCA Anchor Community Initiative hosted trainings on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), and Island Health partnered with the Anacortes School District to provide no barrier mental health services in the middle and high schools, among other actions.

The school-based behavioral health program run by Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) has grown considerably. County funds are leveraging other sources, including a federal Department of Education grant, district contributions, and insurance billings. When NWESD hires in the Concrete School District, school-based behavioral health programming will be in all 7 school districts, including a bilingual, Spanish-speaking mental health professional at Burlington-Edison.

STRATEGIES



BH1 Increase trauma-informed family-oriented programs and therapy for children and parents.



BH2 Expand in-school behavioral health supports.



BH3 Expand social workers and other behavioral health outreach in law enforcement.



BH4 Address backlog of potential behavioral health peers.



CO2 Train the community on impacts of trauma and behavioral health supports.



ACCESS TO CARE

-  complete or significant change
-  progress
-  needs engagement

ACCESS TO CARE (AC)



ACCESS TO CARE (including cross over strategy 4)

Trust partners have taken many actions to improve access to care for underserved populations, ranging from encouraging medical residents to obtain bilingual certification, increasing the number of interpreters in the medical workforce, and improving collaboration between medical providers, bilingual promotoras, and community health workers.

There is also enhanced coordination between partners to reach difficult to access communities. Two significant partnerships include:

- A PeaceHealth United General Medical Center partnership with community-based organizations provide medical screening to some of the most vulnerable community members at a variety of community events. PeaceHealth United General is increasing screening mammograms for tribal communities because this is a barrier to preventive care.
- SeaMar, Community Action of Skagit County, and Skagit County Public Health provide mobile clinics and outreach at senior centers, to individuals experiencing homelessness, Head Start, and in Concrete and Marblemount.

Work is also underway by partners to provide forms and materials in a variety of languages. Community Health Plan of WA has done a lot of work in this area, offering materials in large print, braille, and multiple languages, and a blog that offers health education and tips in 9 languages. PeaceHealth is actively working on a language justice project which will expand in-house interpreters.

STRATEGIES



AC1 Health care providers train and support multicultural/bilingual staff to better serve patients.



AC2 Collaborate on mobile clinics and other options to reach difficult to access communities.



AC3 Health education via social media and health care champions is provided in residents' languages and based on their needs.



AC4 Develop safe and private community telehealth locations.



CO4 In multiple languages, promote the importance of broadband for the health of families and individuals and provide support for accessing and using technology.



EQUITY



EQUITY (EQ)



EQUITY (including cross over strategy 1)

Medical partners (PeaceHealth United General Medical Center, Island Health, Skagit Regional Health and Sea Mar) have been working hard to co-design a patient navigator project to achieve both equity and access to care goals. Currently, they are seeking funding to roll-out a 2-year pilot project.

In the early stages of COVID Recovery Plan implementation, the Trust sought foundational training that could be offered to the community at large. Realizing that this was a complex undertaking due to the wide variety of needs and experiences of community organizations, the Trust conducted internal panel discussions about organizations' DEI pathways and produced a guide for other community partners. View the guide: www.skagitcounty.net/departments/PHTAC

Several Trust organizations and partners have implemented equity-related training. PFLAG Skagit provides extensive training opportunities for the community to learn about ways to be more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. The Skagit Valley Family YMCA hosts programs around sexual orientation and gender identity, Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) sponsored Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) conversations/training for members, several PHT members are participating in training on Targeted Universalism, and the Children's Council of Skagit County has been offering equity training to partners.

Partner organizations are also designing and starting to measure their internal equity strategies. PeaceHealth United General provides a particularly strong example by implementing a DEI Advisory Committee and using data to identify disparities in healthcare access, outcomes, and quality among different populations.

STRATEGIES



EQ1 Expand promotores, patient advocates, and navigators in health care, behavioral health, and mobile clinic settings to ensure language and cultural understanding between patients and providers.



EQ2 Evaluate and measure equity strategies through local and regional quantitative and qualitative data.



CO1 Support a culture of care and belonging in health care and other public service settings that is responsive to the needs of underserved communities through policy development, training, resources and authentic dialogue.



HOUSING

- complete or significant change
- progress
- needs engagement

HOUSING (HO)



HOUSING

Key initiatives and drivers around housing are the North Star initiative, the Housing Consortium, Skagit County Public Health, and the many providers working hard to provide options including Volunteers of America Western Washington (VOA), Community Action of Skagit County, Catholic Community Services, Friendship House, and the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley.

Other Trust partners such as Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG), the Skagit Valley Family YMCA's A Way Home and Anchor Community Initiative, and Skagit Community Foundation are playing strong roles. A key focus has been to maintain services that were expanded using time-limited COVID funding, including the year-round shelter. Through collaborative funding with the cities and advocacy at the state level, we have been able to maintain those programs.

In terms of increasing awareness of housing resources and supports specifically to people of color and other minority groups, Skagit Legal Aid and Help Me Grow Family Resource Navigators/Coordinators are contributing to overall efforts.

STRATEGIES



HO1 Advocate for cross-organizational and cross-jurisdictional efforts on housing affordability and availability.



HO2 Increase diversity of options to address local housing needs.



HO3 Increase awareness of housing resources and supports to people of color and other minority groups.



ECONOMIC & FISCAL SECURITY

-  complete or significant change
-  progress
-  needs engagement

ECONOMIC & FISCAL SECURITY (EFS)



ECONOMIC & FISCAL SECURITY

EDASC is the primary partner focusing on these strategies, but other Trust members are contributing to the overall goal to create meaningful jobs and financial stability for those with the greatest barriers. Examples include United Way's Financial People Project, the Mount Vernon Schools and North Coast Credit Union partnership around financial literacy, and career-connected learning initiatives in school systems.

Most notable in this group of strategies is EDASC's Equitable Economic Development Program focused on underrepresented communities. Jorge Estefan, bilingual business advisor, built the program to connect with and provide technical assistance to help the Latino business community connect with digital government and business platforms and funding mechanisms. In the first year of the program, Jorge assisted 63 established businesses and 14 new businesses, as well as established partnerships with other businesses, organizations, and agencies which will help expand assistance options for Latino business owners.

Trust members are also working to extend collaboration around apprenticeships and career-connected learning, as well as advocating for public funding to improve compensation for child care, behavioral health professionals, and multilingual health care navigators. The Trust has coordinated with Child Care Aware NW Washington's advocacy branch and the North Sound BH-ASO is working with state actuaries to increase rates for behavioral health service professionals. The Children's Council of Skagit County also has an advocacy and policy lead who is advocating for child care.

STRATEGIES



EFS1 Focus employment development, financial literacy, technological support and outreach to underrepresented communities.



EFS2 Promote cross-sector programs for apprenticeships and career-connected learning and develop new approaches.



EFS3 Advocate of public funding to improve compensation for child care providers, behavioral health professionals, and multilingual health care navigators.



CO3 Provide support to recruit, retain, and train child care providers.



FOOD SECURITY

-  complete or significant change
-  progress
-  needs engagement

FOOD SECURITY (FS)



FOOD SECURITY

An intensive Trust workgroup process between April and October of 2023 resulted in a community-wide strategic plan for increasing the stability and resilience of the local food economy. ARPA funding provided support for the workgroup facilitation. The Trust has begun the next phase of community health improvement around food security by inviting additional community partners to a Food Policy Council, which is working to implement the plan.

STRATEGIES



FS1 Support a thorough assets and gaps analysis to understand food security vulnerabilities and create a collaborative vision for collective action.



FS2 Advocate for community-based programs that ensure culturally relevant and nutritious foods are available and affordable.



For additional information about the Population Health Trust or for questions about this report, please contact Kristen Ekstran at kekstran@co.skagit.wa.us or (360) 416-1524.

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