



Population Health Trust January Newsletter

Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health

January 2025

The start of a new year is often a time for reflection and planning. Even if you are not one to make New Year's resolutions, most of us can get behind the idea of doing something to improve our overall wellbeing. One step we can take to improve our wellbeing is to pursue more preventative care. Getting basic preventative care, such as check-ups, screenings, and vaccinations can help to detect conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, or cancer in their early stages, when they are more manageable and treatable.

While we recognize the importance of accessing preventative health services, not everyone in our community has the same pathways for obtaining this essential care. For some, barriers associated with insurance, cost, language and culture prevent them from accessing care.

The [2021 Community Health Assessment](#) (CHA), identified access to care as a priority area for improving health in Skagit. While we learned a lot about the issue during the process, we still felt that there was more to learn. Given this, as part of our 2025 CHA, we launched a series of focus groups to better understand local experiences in accessing care, especially among our Spanish-speaking community members.

At the time of this newsletter, the focus groups are complete, but the analysis has just begun. Early indicators show significant barriers to accessing care are related to the cost of care (both for those with insurance and those that are under/uninsured, navigation of benefits/the medical system, and language/culture. Below is a bit more detail on the identified areas.

Cost/Health Care Navigation

Many participants expressed challenges in affording care, even among those that had insurance. Deductibles, co-pays and co-insurance all add up and are prohibitive for many.

In addition to the fees, participants shared frustrations and challenges with navigating both insurance and the health care system more generally. Some cited a “lack of transparency” in not knowing how much a procedure would cost, while others were not familiar with billing programs or charity care.

Language/Culture

Even when interpretative services were available, patients shared challenges with scheduling these services, the modality of services (in person, by phone, online), and the quality of services. Many interpreters do not have medical training, so focus group participants were concerned that their medical issues were not being effectively communicated to the provider.

As we continue our analysis, additional barriers are likely to emerge. This information along with additional data collection will provide us with a greater understanding of the issue. While the focus groups were conducted with a specific population, many of the barriers they encounter are true for others in our community. At the Trust, we can use this data to develop strategies and initiatives that will improve access to care for all.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping Skagit County healthy!



The Population Health Trust was founded in 2015 and is the Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health. For more information, check out our [website](#).

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