



Population Health Trust February Newsletter

Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health

February 16, 2022

This month we want to share more of the impactful work Trust member organizations are doing to put our Community Health Assessment (CHA) into action. Keep reading for some awesome Trust member organization highlights!

Access to Care: The CHA brought to light the disjointed systems of care that exist across many social and health service industries, making access to these critical needs challenging for those who are most vulnerable. For the youth at Oasis Teen Shelter, this could not be truer. Many of the youth lack family support, may be disconnected from educational systems, and often struggle with behavioral health challenges. Kat Lohman from the Skagit YMCA saw this need for better access to care and applied for funding to meet this need. Kat explained, “as we apply for funding, we are able to cite data from the CHA, and strategically create programs that reflect community needs.”

The CHA stated that it was critical that our efforts “build unity through community connections, inclusiveness, alignment, and a common sense of purpose.” Kat took this statement to heart and was able to secure a grant through A Way Home Washington that coordinates systems to bridge gaps in services for homeless youth. By bringing together community members across different sectors with a shared vision of ending youth homelessness, she hopes that young people will have better access to the services they need and will be supported holistically. To learn more about the A Way Home Washington grant, click [here](#).

Behavioral Health: The CHA was able to shine a light on the need for community organizations to work together to increase behavioral health outcomes for vulnerable populations. Homeless youth are some of our most vulnerable community members; many are recovering from traumatic experiences and are disconnected from needed safety nets. The CHA brought up the need for “safe, supportive spaces for youth to talk about behavioral health issues... without stigma.” Kat used this information from the CHA to apply, and was eventually awarded funding from Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. This funding allows for wrap-around case management, increased behavioral health services, and educational navigation for homeless youth.

Childcare: Both the 2015 and 2020 CHAs highlighted the need for more accessible and coordinated early childhood development systems, and increased funding for childcare resources. The Children’s Council has been tackling these needs and brought the Help Me Grow Framework to Skagit County in 2020. Help Me Grow coordinates early childhood services and resources making them more accessible to families. In addition, it engages medical providers by creating feedback loops between the social services and physicians. Lyndie Simmonds, Trust member from United General Hospital District 304 and

who oversees the Children’s Council, said: “This work was informed by the CHA and adoption of this model came from the work of the PHT.”

The CHA recommended focusing on “better resources and support for families, children, and childcare providers.” The Help Me Grow advisory board formed a Childcare Action Team, largely due to information from the CHA. The action team is comprised of leaders in the local childcare sector, and they are meeting regularly with the purpose of creating solutions to multifaceted challenges, including staffing, funding, professional development, and meeting the needs of diverse families.

Equity: The CHA called out equity as an important vision for Skagit, given the deep disparities that were uncovered during the COVID pandemic. However, the CHA process uncovered that those inequities are not necessarily COVID specific, “there are other barriers to care based on race, gender identity, and ethnic identity.” Help Me Grow has formed an Equity Action Team to “ensure that goals, key activities, policies, and decisions around the implementation of Help Me Grow Skagit are well informed and prioritized in response to experiences, perspectives, and needs of people in marginalized groups in our community.” Help Me Grow is carrying out this CHA vision and has many committed Trust members involved in their equity work.

Next month we will continue featuring the work of the Trust as we get ready to release our Recovery Plan.



[Population Health Trust](#)

kekstran@co.skagit.wa.us