

# ANNUAL REPORT

## SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

2021



*Welcome* to Skagit County Public Health's 2021 Annual Report, an overview of the many fantastic things that our department accomplished in the past year. And what a year it was!



If 2020 was a year for action, 2021 truly was our year for growth.

In 2021, our department grew in numbers, as well as in our depth of knowledge and understanding.

What we learned in 2020—that flexibility and adaptability are critical, and that Skagit County is incredibly resilient during times of struggle—provided the perfect launching pad for Public Health in 2021.

Though we all harbored hopes that 2021 would see the end of the COVID pandemic, in reality, the situation got much worse before it got better. Between Delta and Omicron, our residents were faced with countless challenges. The chronic nature of the pandemic, paired with the ups and downs of each new wave of cases, made for a relentless year.

But in this, Public Health found its stride. We shifted gears from being reactive in periods of crisis to embracing our role of providing consistent, equitable service to all Skagitonians.

We could not have grown in this role without

the unwavering support of our Board of Health. Our County has shown its dedication to the health and well-being of our public time and time again through supporting the many endeavors of this department.

Also, we thank our incredible partners in the community, ever growing in number. It is because of these partnerships that Public Health can achieve its many goals.

And to our public, we say thank you, as well. The pandemic has highlighted the absolute importance of community engagement. We cannot accomplish the tasks at hand without your input, feedback, and trust. This input was a key factor in creating Public Health's 2020-2021 Community Health Assessment, a document that will steer our ship for several years to come.

Lastly, I'd like to recognize my staff. What a team we have here at Public Health! When the going got rough, this team of dedicated professionals truly stepped up to the challenges at hand. We have so much to be proud of as we reflect on 2021. Hopefully, the following pages will do this work justice.

In good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Johnson".

Jennifer Johnson,  
Skagit County Public Health Director

## Our Mission

Skagit is a leader in convening partners to prevent disease, promote wellness, and protect the health of our community.

## Our Vision

We see a thriving, collaborative, and cohesive community where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full health potential.

**P**ublic health is the science of protecting and improving the health of individuals and their communities. This work is achieved in a variety of ways: promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and—perhaps most notable during the pandemic—detecting, preventing, and responding to infectious diseases.

Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or recurring through implementing educational programs, recommending policies, administering services, and conducting research. Public health also works to limit health disparities. A large—if not the most important—part of public health is promoting equity, quality, and accessibility. It is through this equity lens that we continue forward.

Because the positive benefits of public health programs and services can take months or years to materialize, measuring the quality and effectiveness of public health work can be elusive. For this reason, tracking our goals and monitoring progress is so critical to demonstrate community-wide impact over time.

# Skagit County Public Health Strategic Plan

## 2021 Goals & Objectives

### 1 Partnerships & Collective Impact

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Improve alignment and collective impact practices
- Expand efforts to engage and inform policy-makers
- Build trusted relationships throughout the community

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Coordinate health goals and policy agendas with partner organizations
- Actively seek/use community voice in creative ways
- Identify and engage diverse partners

### 2 Messaging & Communication

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Improve delivery of information for health promotion and disease prevention
- Increase awareness of public health priorities and accomplishments

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Expand reach of key health messages
- Improve customer feedback processes
- Create language and messaging that supports health equity
- Use data and stories to help communities understand health and wellness

### 3 Lifespan Health

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Improve programs and care across the lifespan

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Increase programs that support social and emotional wellness
- Increase promotion of healthy eating and active living
- Enhance access to clinical and community services
- Expand behavioral health programs and transition services for incarcerated individuals

### 4 Social Determinants of Health

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Create a recovery-oriented system of care
- Improve housing opportunities and support
- Increase capacity of our community providers

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Build capacity and emphasis on recovery
- Increase access to affordable permanent housing solutions
- Expand recovery housing
- Increase community understanding of housing as a social determinant of health

### 5 Health Protection

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Expand communicable disease prevention efforts
- Reduce risks from environmental exposures and public health emergencies
- Reduce opioid-related deaths

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Increase use of evidence-based strategies to overcome barriers to immunization
- Increase use of education and technical assistance to achieve regulatory compliance
- Implement policies to promote and protect health
- Develop, lead, and implement opioid solutions for individuals of all ages

### 6 Data, Assessments & Evaluation

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVE

- Improve data assessment and program evaluation

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Increase the use of data in departmental decision-making
- Build capacity and framework for evaluation
- Enhance community health assessment and planning processes
- Improve monitoring of emerging public health issues

### 7 Organizational Health & Growth

#### OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

- Improve the quality and efficiency of operations
- Strengthen internal collaboration
- Enhance workforce capabilities

#### STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Standardize departmental processes and procedures
- Improve customer service
- Expand connections and learning
- Increase cross-divisional collaboration

*“Public Health finished our 2021 by revisiting our strategic plan. A new plan will be developed in 2022, incorporating elements from our 2021 Community Health Assessment and 2022 COVID Recovery Plan.”*

– Jennifer Johnson, Director, Skagit County Public Health

# GOAL 1: Partnerships & Collective Impact



## COVID Response Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic showed no signs of stopping in 2021. Though cases dipped after a record high during the winter, April saw what was considered a “fourth wave” in Skagit County and throughout many parts of Washington State. Then, the relative calm of the summer was broken by the Delta variant surge, which spanned from late July through early November.

Public Health was present throughout the ups and downs of 2021, providing critical pandemic response services to county residents. From vaccination and testing to emergency housing and support services, Public Health was at the center of our county’s COVID response.



Communicable Disease staff recording COVID-19 vaccine daily temperature logs; the Vaccine Team posing outside of the COVID-19 vaccine clinic at the Skagit County Fairgrounds.

*“Some of the most meaningful moments came early after the pediatric vaccines were available. The parents were so emotional and grateful for being able to have their children vaccinated at last, for being able to obtain vaccine protection for them, and to maybe even getting back to a more normal life. It was very moving and helped me better understand that what we were doing was an important and valuable service for our community.”*

– Public Health Volunteer

## VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers have been the heroes of Public Health’s pandemic response. Public Health could not have achieved what it did in 2021 without these individuals.

Senior Services Program volunteers also played a huge part of our COVID response. Local senior centers and the Congregate Meal Program were not operating during the first half of 2021, so older adults were added to the Meals on Wheels delivery routes. Hot meals were delivered by a team of wonderful volunteers, providing such a vital service to our senior population during a period of increased need.



Total Volunteers  
2020-2021

227

24

New Volunteers  
in 2021



Approx.

9,015

Volunteer hours  
worked in 2021



Our COVID-19 vaccine team knew no limits in 2021! From the Fairgrounds Site to mobile clinics, our team got creative in 2021.



## TESTING

In total, 10,791 Skagit County residents tested positive for COVID-19 between January-December of 2021. During this time, Skagit County Public Health administered 18,768 rapid antigen tests at the Skagit County Fairgrounds location. Skagitonians five years and older were able to access free testing services throughout 2021, with a brief pause during the early summer.

COVID-19 test data and positivity rates - Skagit County Fairgrounds testing site, 2021



## VACCINATION

Public Health shifted to making COVID-19 vaccination its number one priority in the beginning of 2021. Free COVID-19 vaccinations were made available at first by walk-up and then by drive-through at the Skagit County Fairgrounds. Public Health began by administering vaccines to those considered by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) to be highest risk, eventually opening up to all eligible individuals, including school-age children.

During the summer months, vaccinations went mobile! Public Health staff hosted more than a hundred mobile clinics, popping up at street fairs, churches, community events, and food banks. Equity and low-barrier access to vaccination were at the forefront of our mission.

By the end of 2021, a total of 220,895 vaccine doses had been administered by vaccination providers in Skagit County, with slightly more than 77 percent of all Skagitonians 12 years and older partially vaccinated against COVID-19.

### In 2021, Skagit County Public Health's COVID-19 Vaccine Program accomplished the following:

- Administered **41,812 doses** of COVID-19 vaccine
- Conducted **148** mobile vaccine clinics at **74** different locations around the county
- Spent **51** days vaccinating homebound residents
- Supported Birds Eye Medical mobile vaccine teams in conducting **38** additional mobile clinics in Skagit and surrounding counties
- Assisted other Skagit County vaccine providers by serving as a regional vaccine depot to store larger quantities of vaccine and transfer right-sized amounts to other providers. We conducted **171** vaccine transfers to **11** different clinical providers in 2021.

## CASE INVESTIGATION & CONTACT TRACING

The Skagit County Public Health’s case outreach team made phone contact with 7,920 individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 to ensure their questions were answered and their needs were met during isolation. The team also investigated links to outbreaks in schools, work places, and high-risk settings, such as nursing homes, to try to limit further spread of the outbreak.

## EMERGENCY MOTEL SHELTER PROGRAMS

Public Health continued to provide temporary housing to those struggling to find a safe place to isolate or quarantine. These individuals may have been living in multi-generational households, with high-risk family members, in group settings, or experiencing homelessness. In 2021, 312 individuals were provided temporary housing and meal service during their isolation or quarantine periods.



**POPULATION HEALTH TRUST**  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

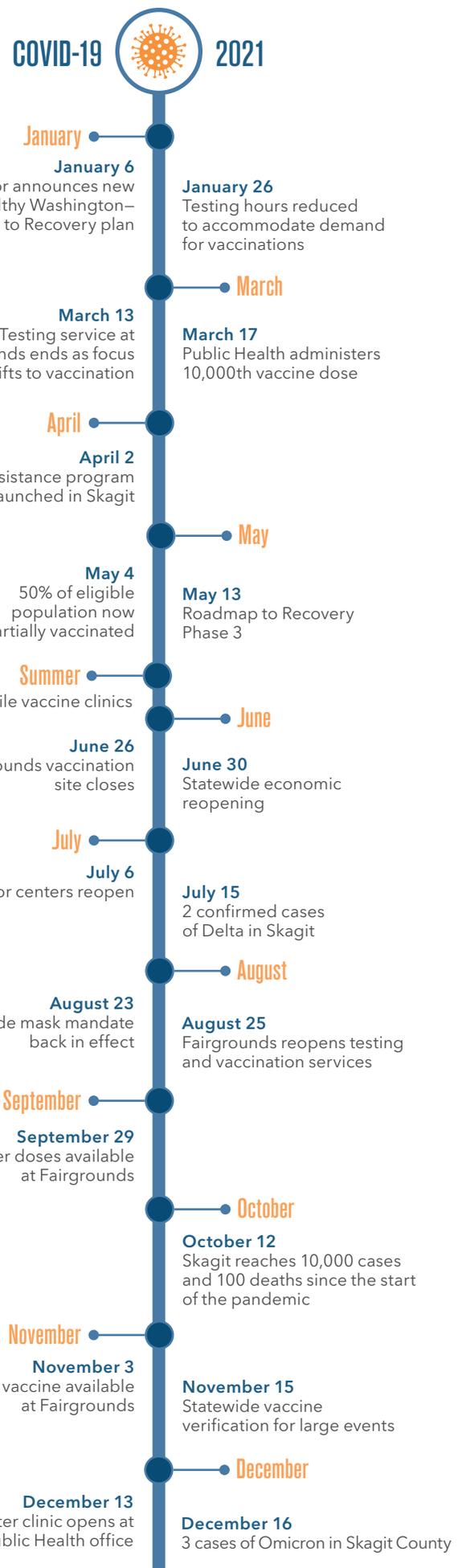
## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

2020-2021 was Skagit County’s Community Health Assessment year. Plans were laid prior to the pandemic for a process that centered around a regional health equity report, but the pandemic required a different approach than had been initiated. Early data of the pandemic confirmed that health equity was a primary concern. The Population Health Trust entered a year of listening to community health needs centered around populations that were likely to fare worse through the pandemic as a result of being challenged by foundational health and wellness needs (social determinants of health) like housing, transportation, access to care, food insecurity, and employment that required interactions with the public or took place in crowded settings. The process focused the quantitative data collection on the issue areas raised by the community and saw an alignment of expressed needs and trends.

Trust Board Members saw early in the process that health equity concerns were arising across population groups and began working to solve these concerns. Within organizations and agencies, as well as among partners, planning began that would lead the Trust into the next phase: strategic planning in the form of a COVID Recovery Plan.

During this time, Public Health was able to hire a new planner who would focus time and attention specifically on addressing the Trust’s health equity goals. A new Community Health Planner for Equity and Inclusion joined Public Health and the Trust at a perfect time to see how the community was expressing the impact of the pandemic on their lives.

The results of the Community Health Assessment can be found online at: [www.skagitcounty.net/PHTAC/Documents/SCPH\\_CHA\\_2021\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.skagitcounty.net/PHTAC/Documents/SCPH_CHA_2021_FINAL.pdf)



## GOAL 2: Communications & Messaging

COVID-19 has had an obvious impact on the relationship between public health departments and the public. As a result of the pandemic, there has been an increased awareness and recognition of Public Health's role and the department's contributions to community health and well-being. In many ways, this has increased trust and positive perceptions among our community members.

For most of the year, communications were very COVID focused. Our department's communications missions centered primarily on keeping the public informed about epidemiologic trends, vaccination information, and

ways to access health services.

Information was shared in a variety of ways: social media, our website, radio, TV, blog, newsprint—even billboards! Public Health gained a dedicated Communications Coordinator in 2021 to oversee and actualize our department's communications goals.

To better serve Spanish-speaking individuals and families throughout the pandemic, Public Health made it a priority to provide all communications in both English and Spanish. Our Community Health Workers helped to identify the best and most effective communications platforms for disseminating information to Spanish speakers, including radio, social media, and print. A weekly COVID-19

update video was produced in Spanish with information about disease transmission rates, local vaccination and testing services, as well as Public Health recommendations and best practices. These videos were shared via social media and the County's COVID-19 webpage.

One of Public Health's newly hired promotoras also worked to share information with Mixteco-speakers in



Snap shots of weekly updates videos, conducted in both English and Spanish.



the community, encouraging individuals to get vaccinated and working with those considered to be vaccine hesitant and/or high risk for infection.

Moving forward, it is the goal of our department to continue building on the trust gained by the public during the pandemic.

Moving forward, it is the goal of our department to continue building on the trust gained by the public during the pandemic. A primary goal is to continue to build trust among those within our Latinx and

BIPOC communities.

## GOAL 3: Lifespan Health

### NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Our Nurse Family Partnership team has had the honor of working with families on the ground during the pandemic and has witnessed the resiliency of our clients,



community, and nursing team. Our nursing team quickly adapted to telehealth services and then to a hybrid of in-person and telehealth, depending on client needs.

The flexibility and growth mindset of

the team has allowed us to continue to serve those most vulnerable during these tumultuous times. We are a relationship-based program and have been creative in how to keep those relationships going with our clients and community. Whether delivering information to client homes, finding ways to safely meet clients and their children, or communicating by text, phone, or video call, we have kept those relationships strong.

We have been a source of support, education, and advocacy in the lives of the women, children, and families with

which we work. We honor and are in awe of the mothers and families in our program, especially because of their adaptability, strength, and resilience as they parent their children throughout the pandemic.



## GOAL 3: Lifespan Health



Our Developmental Disabilities staff was able to get back to community outreach in the fall of 2021. Pictured are staff at the Anacortes Ready to Learn Fair; New Inclusive Hirer sign added to Public Health's service counter window.

### DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

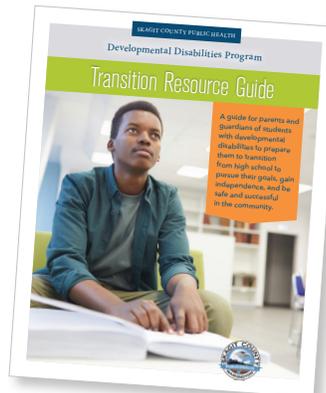
**D**uring the Community Health Assessment, the Trust spoke with individuals experiencing developmental disabilities and their families. Because of higher health risk factors, many of these individuals (who also tend to work as essential workers) had to quarantine to remain safe. Jobs were lost, financial security became threatened, and isolation took a toll. Community organizations, such as Parent-to-Parent, stepped up to provide additional services and supports to families in record numbers. Other agencies that provide services to adults, such as Chinook Enterprises, Sherwood Community Services, and Washington Vocational Services, shifted their service and outreach models to meet the emerging needs of customers. Public Health's Developmental Disabilities (DD) team provided ongoing support in communication, COVID information, and special services, such as specialized vaccine clinics at the Fairgrounds and pop-up clinics at the agencies that requested it.

Additionally, Public Health partnered with state Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) colleagues to devise a statewide COVID-specific funding mechanism to help agencies deal with the fact that the typical billable hours for their work became non-existent while customers were out of the workforce. Fortunately, these efforts succeeded in stabilizing the financial loss for Skagit agencies, and they have all weathered the storm.

### TRANSITIONS SERVICES

Transition from high school into the adult service world for youth with disabilities and their families is a BIG JOB. Learning all there is to know about services, structures, requirements, and getting resources in place could be a full-time endeavor. The Public Health DD Program works hard on behalf of students and families to ease this transition by providing outreach, programming, education, and resources.

*"Many people with developmental disabilities continued to work in frontline positions during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing essential services for our community. More than 100 local businesses are currently employing, or have recently employed, people with developmental disabilities in Skagit County."*



### 2021 Program Accomplishments:

- An updated Transition Resource Guide in English & Spanish
- Bridges Program video explaining the program and its goals in both English & Spanish
- From Sept.-Dec. 2021: 11 Person-Centered Planning meetings were conducted for transitioning youth
- From Oct.-Dec. 2021: Three workshops were held on topics such as the Transition launch event, systems navigation, estate planning, wills, and special needs trust.
- Transition timeline, checklist, and other materials created and made available on our website
- Quarterly Transition newsletter and updates started in Oct. 2021
- Signup for Transition email list available on website so families can access ongoing information, such as the newsletter
- 2022 Transition Resource Fair planning workgroup began preparing for an in-person Transition Fair!



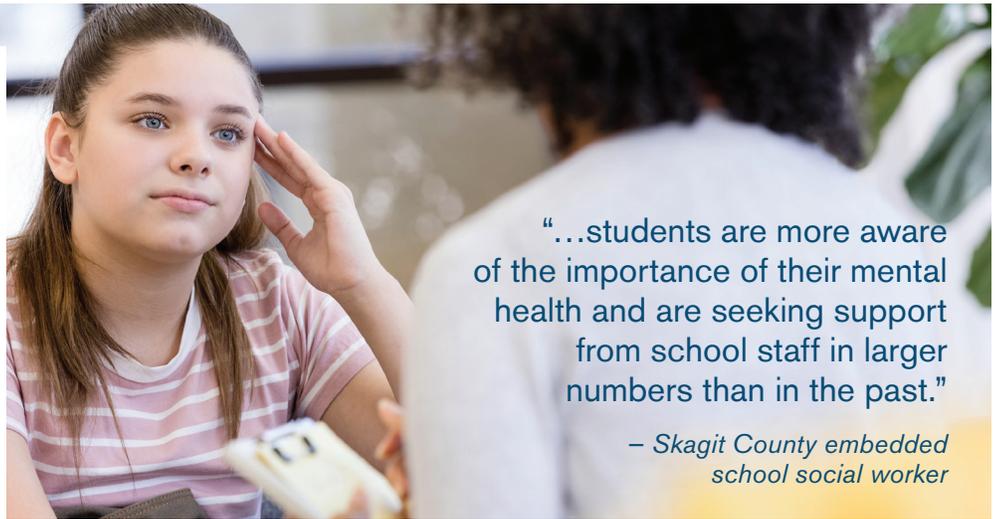
Public Health staff prepping to meet a family with much-needed baby essentials. Services are provided in English, Spanish, and Mixteco.

### FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Skagit County’s Help Me Grow—Family Resource Center stayed very busy during 2021.

Located at the Children’s Museum of Skagit County, the center has been open since October 2020. The center is the brainchild of the Children’s Council of Skagit County and is made possible by federal pandemic relief funding and partnerships with Skagit County Public Health, the Skagit Community Foundation, and private donors.

Through this program, Skagit County families were able to access basic needs assistance, pregnancy and breastfeeding supports, and information about local child care, health and wellness, and special needs supports.



“...students are more aware of the importance of their mental health and are seeking support from school staff in larger numbers than in the past.”

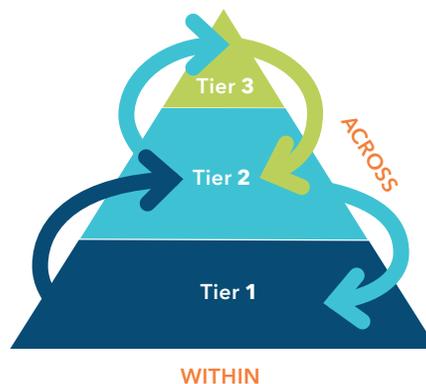
– Skagit County embedded school social worker

### SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

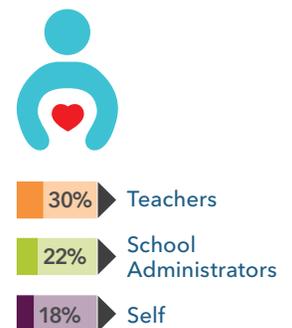
Public Health and local school districts have partnered to fund master’s level School Social Workers at select school campuses throughout the county, with the goals of increasing school attendance, improving academic achievement, and addressing the social and emotional determinants of health and learning. School Social Workers practice Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, meaning services are tailored to the needs of each student. Tier 1 supports include high-quality academic curriculum and practices, positive and consistent behavioral practices, culturally responsive practices, and is accessible by all students. Tiers 2 and 3 involve more specialized assessments and linkages to treatment to address the higher needs of students.

The pandemic has negatively impacted the mental health of the community, and students are no exception. Schools report seeing an increase in students struggling with mental health issues like depression, anxiety, coping with trauma, and substance use, which affect their ability to be fully engaged with their schoolwork. Online schooling was difficult for both students and staff, and the lack of daily interactions made it difficult for social workers to form relationships with students like they had in the past. It has been a rocky transition back to a sense of normalcy and in-person learning. As mental health needs increased during the pandemic, wait times for services, which were already strained, increased. A positive note, however, is that students are more aware of the importance of mental health and are seeking support from school staff in larger numbers than in the past.

### Multi-Tiered Systems of Support



### Students are Referred to School Counselors by:



In 2021, Skagit County was able to allocate federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding towards additional school-based behavioral health services for pre-K to grade 12 students. In addition, Skagit County also partnered with Community in Schools to provide social-emotional supports and case management services at six school sites, with a focus on elementary and middle school grade levels.



## SENIOR SERVICES

In a year of constant change, Senior Services made a difference in our community!



During a particularly cold and icy week, senior meal services were canceled due to safety concerns for volunteer drivers. When one of our staff learned that a 96-year-old woman had no heat in her home, the staff member delivered one of her own space heaters to ensure that the woman was warm.

### Meals on Wheels

2021 was filled with many ups and downs. Our staff, volunteers and supporters helped us stay the course to ensure that every available resource was utilized to keep seniors healthy in our community. Staff and volunteers adapted and created policies to ensure health and safety was prioritized. Through it all, we continued to meet the increased need for Meals on Wheels services. Our client numbers increased by 18% compared to pre-pandemic numbers.



More than ever, our daily meals and visits were essential. Unlike most

counties in the state that provide frozen meals once a week, Skagit County Meals on Wheels continues to serve a daily hot meal. This allows daily contact and wellness checks for our clients and allows family members of clients an added reassurance that their loved ones are safe.



Approximately 1,320 shelf-stable emergency meals kits went out to clients in our community. Staff and volunteers ordered, packaged, and delivered the kits in the fall to help clients during inclement weather and flooding.

### Senior Centers

In July, we reopened our doors to the public. Masks, hand sanitizer, and social distancing all played a role in our safe reopening. Clients slowly began to return to the centers. By the end of 2021, we were at 60% of our pre-pandemic client numbers! Daily meal service resumed along with programming. Safety modifications were made to help bring back classes, tax assistance, entertainment, and activities.



Our amazing staff also played a role in overseeing the COVID-19 call center, and senior center volunteers answered the phones!

### Fundraising

For the second year, our March for Meals fundraising looked a bit different. Bowling Bash was canceled, and an appeal letter went out in its place to all that had participated/donated in the past to this event.

Meals on Wheels was chosen to be a recipient of funds for Haggen's Heroes Against Hunger campaign. Between Sept. 1 and Oct. 26, Haggen guests made donations to the Heroes Against Hunger fundraising campaign by using the pin pad at checkout at the Mount Vernon and Burlington Haggen locations. We received \$13,000!



### Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Senior Services received funding to operate the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Through this program, 460 produce vouchers worth \$40 each were distributed to eligible Skagit County clients to use at local farmers' markets.

Senior Services purchased \$5,000 of produce directly from several local, well-known farmers throughout the summer. Each eligible Meals on Wheels client received several deliveries of fresh fruits and vegetables along with a produce-specific informational brochure.

*"The people who volunteer to provide my meals are irreplaceable in my life. They are a huge part of the support I need to stay living independently... My thank you seems so small compared to all they do week after week for me."*

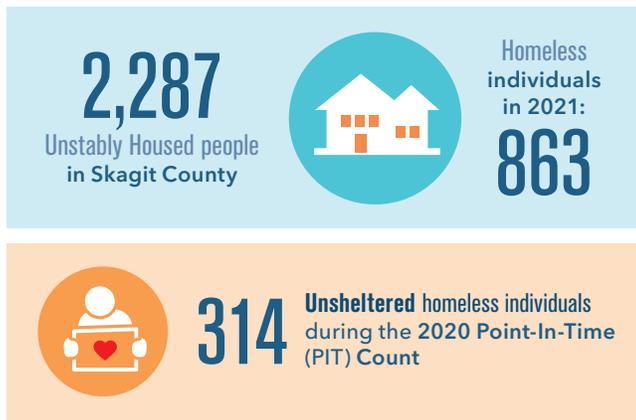
– Meals on Wheels Recipient

## GOAL 4: Systems & Social Determinants of Health

### HOUSING & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Skagit County has continued to grapple with a growing affordable housing crisis, with those living in poverty most directly affected. Individuals and families within our community face the prospect of losing their homes due to precarious financial conditions, domestic violence, health crises, and chronic mental health and substance use disorders. Furthermore, the rising cost of housing increases the risk of people losing their housing and makes it increasingly difficult to find affordable housing.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these housing challenges. As Chief Health Strategist, Public Health continues to make recommendations on innovative funding strategies and identifies key partnerships between agencies that can affect change.



### FIRST STEP CENTER OPENS

In partnership with the City of Burlington and Skagit County, Friendship House opened the Skagit First Step Center located in Burlington in June of 2021. Skagit First Step Center is a 24/7 emergency homeless shelter that includes 45 individual cabins. A total of 217 individuals were served here in 2021.



### EMERGENCY SHELTER

Public Health provides oversight of the county's homeless crisis response system and has advocated tirelessly for adequate access to shelter. The 2020 Homeless Point in Time Count in Skagit County identified 403 individuals experiencing homelessness on one night in January, of which 314 were unsheltered.

When COVID-19 made it unsafe to house people, particularly vulnerable individuals, in congregate settings, Skagit County Public Health began funding additional emergency motel shelter programs through partnerships with Friendship House, Catholic Community Services, Anacortes Family Center, and Northwest Youth Services. The motel programs addressed immediate and critical needs, but it was clear that sustainable shelter resources must be developed.

In June 2021, the City of Burlington opened The Skagit First Step Center comprised of individual prefabricated units, which replaced the temporary winter shelter model with a permanent year-round facility on city-owned land. Friendship House operates the shelter, and Public Health provides capital and operational funding.

### COLD WEATHER SHELTER

During the coldest times of the year, Skagit County works with homeless service providers and motels to add temporary shelter beds for individuals who otherwise would be left outside in dangerously freezing temperatures.

- First Step Cold Weather Congregate Shelter served **74 individuals**
- Average number of nights stayed: **16**
- Law-enforcement drop offs: **29**
- **102 individuals** were offered Cold Weather Motel Vouchers

Additional motel vouchers were made available to law enforcement so officers could drop off individuals at motels throughout the county.

More information about Public Health's emergency response during extreme weather can be found on page 19.

### What is housing instability?

Poverty and unaffordable housing present many challenges, one of which is housing instability.

- Having trouble paying rent and being at risk of eviction
- Being forced to double-up with friends or family
- Living in overcrowded housing
- Living in motels
- Not having financial resources and support networks needed to obtain or maintain permanent housing

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HOMELESS SERVICES RESPONSE, AND EVICTION PREVENTION

The grave economic impacts of COVID-19 produced a wave of housing insecurity. In response, Public Health quickly ramped up new and expanded housing initiatives. This response was not only central to the well-being of those experiencing unstable housing or homelessness, it protected people particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and provided separate shelter to Skagitonians in need of supports so they could maintain isolation or quarantine and prevent the transmission of the disease to others.



### COVID-19-Related Housing Services Included:

- Isolation/quarantine housing and supports services – **\$425,920** for hotel/motel rooms, catered food and delivery, and transportation
- Hotel vouchers for people with high-risk health conditions who were experiencing homelessness – **\$540,208** in services
- Emergency shelter and case management for individuals with severe behavioral health disorders – **\$373,375**
- COVID-specific rental assistance and support services – **\$138,761**
- COVID-specific eviction prevention assistance – **\$9,481,250**

### HOME Program

Access to affordable housing is a great need in our community. Nearly half of renters in Skagit County in 2018 were cost burdened, meaning they paid more than 30% of their monthly gross income on housing. While the data is not yet available for 2021, it would not be surprising if the percentage of cost-burdened households is even higher. Average rents in Skagit County have risen \$454, or 43.5%, since spring 2018.

Skagit County is the lead organization for a regional HOME Consortium that supports affordable housing using funding from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development. Two other counties—Whatcom and Island—and every local jurisdiction in Skagit County participate in the Consortium. The largest funded activity of the HOME Consortium in past years provides direct rental assistance to low-income households. Residents pay up to 30% of their income on rent, and HOME funds cover the remaining cost of rent.

### Eviction Prevention

In response to COVID-19, Skagit County has operated an Eviction Rental Assistance Program since September of 2020. Program funding has come from the CARES Act, The US Department of Treasury, and the American Rescue Act, which have been contracted out to the County via agreements with the Washington State Department of Commerce.

In 2021, the County spent more than \$6.6 million in payments to landlords and local utilities to assist more than 1,000 Skagit County households. Payments to landlords averaged \$6,050 per household, and payments to local utilities averaged \$150 per household. On average, households requested four months of assistance.

Rental assistance funds continue to be an important tool to sustain tenancies and stem the tide of increased housing instability and homelessness in our community.

## HOME Rental Assistance by the Numbers



TBRA: Tenant Based Rental Assistance; \*Data is from the HOME Fiscal Year, July 2020-June 2021, 2021 Out of Reach Report from National Low-Income Housing Coalition



Martha's Place Groundbreaking, Dec 2021. Martha's Place will provide 70 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for households experiencing homelessness in Skagit County.

## PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM

Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington began construction on Martha's Place in November 2021. The supportive housing project has been in the works since 2016 and will be completed in the spring of 2023. The 70-unit project will provide permanent housing and 24/7 on-site supportive services for households experiencing homelessness. Five of the units will be reserved for homeless veterans, including two units that have been provided project-based Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers by the Housing Authority of Skagit County.

The project is funded by Skagit County HOME funds, Skagit County 0.1% Behavioral Health Sales Tax funds, the City of Mount Vernon, Washington State Housing Trust Fund, low-income housing tax credits awarded by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission, Enterprise Community Partners, and Heritage Bank. In addition to a commitment of more than \$3,000,000 of development funds for the construction of the project, Skagit County will be partnering with other funders to support ongoing operations and supportive services costs of Martha's Place when it opens to residents.

## SALES TAX FOR HOUSING AND RELATED SERVICES

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously in September 2021 to implement a new sales tax to fund affordable housing and homeless services. Discussions about implementing the new revenue source began in May 2021 and included conversations with Skagit County cities as well as a series of public hearings to gather feedback from the public. Ultimately, Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley opted to implement the tax in their communities ahead of the County. They joined Anacortes, which implemented the tax in 2019 through a public vote.

The 0.1% sales tax increase amounts to an additional ten cents on a \$100 purchase. The tax should bring in an estimated \$3.3 million annually for housing construction, operations, maintenance, and homeless services. A portion of the funds can also be used for behavioral health treatment programs and services.

When presenting the opportunity, Public Health staff defined the problem they were seeking to address and the priorities for funding:

### Defining the Problem

- Homeless system in Skagit County meets only a fraction of the need
- Every year, homeless system requests are underfunded
- Behavioral health funding used for housing
- We know what works: permanent supportive housing, rental assistance, diversion, shelter

### Priorities

- Operation, maintenance, and services for permanent supportive housing
- Leveraging state and federal funding for the acquisition and construction of affordable housing
- Investing in broader homeless services models
- Expanding emergency shelter capacity

## Skagit County Rental Assistance Program

You're not alone... Approximately 6.3 million renters are behind on rent in the US.

Average payment: **\$6,200/recipient!**

Funding is available for missed or past-due rent payments and utilities not paid or partially unpaid since March 1, 2020.

STEP 1

Get pre-approved and matched with a rental assistance provider.



STEP 2

Complete the application online or with help from a local agency.



STEP 3

Landlord and renter agree to terms and provider-required documentation.



STEP 4

Funds are issued directly to the landlord or utility provider.



[www.skagitcounty.net/renthelp](http://www.skagitcounty.net/renthelp)

\*Eligibility Rules Apply

The new tax receipts started being collected in January 2022, and the four cities and County are currently in discussions about how to collaborate to maximize the impact of the new funds and meet local needs.

## HOUSING AUTHORITY OF SKAGIT COUNTY FAMILY HOUSING PROJECT

Skagit County is also a funding partner on the Housing Authority of Skagit County's Family Housing Project, which started construction in December 2021. This 50-unit project will provide affordable housing for farmworkers and their families as well as community members with disabilities. Skagit County provided \$250,000 in Real Estate Excise Tax funds to support the construction of the HASC Family Housing Project. Eight of the 12 units for households with disabilities will be dedicated to chronically homeless veterans through the VASH program.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT HOMEOWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE PROJECT

The CDBG Homeownership Assistance Project helps low- to moderate-income (LMI) homebuyers purchase a home, giving households a chance to experience the housing stability that

Programs like this are becoming more and more necessary as house prices have increased dramatically and average rent has nearly doubled since 2012, leaving LMI households priced out of this basic necessity.

homeownership provides. Eligible homebuyers who work with partnering nonprofits in Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom counties can access up to \$25,000 in grant funding to reduce

the cost of their mortgages. In 2021, nine households were assisted through this program—four of which were in Skagit County—and now benefit from

affordable, predictable, and stable home costs. Of those nine households, five earned less than 50% of Area Median Income (AMI), and four earned less than 80% AMI.

Programs like this are becoming more and more necessary as house prices have increased dramatically and average rent has nearly doubled since 2012, leaving LMI households priced out of this basic necessity. Between 2020 and 2021, the average price of homes purchased through the CDBG program increased 26.9%. At the same time, the county-wide average sale price of homes in December 2021 increased 18.8% over December 2020.



2020		2021	
Average home price through this program	\$247,542	Average home price through this program	\$314,137
County-wide average sale price December 2020	\$440,000	County-wide average sale price December 2021	\$522,900

### What does 80% or 50% AMI mean?

Here's the chart. This program assists households that earn less than 80% AMI, so \$65,800 for a family of four. Households earning 50% AMI have an annual income of just \$41,150 for a family of four.

FY 2021 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income	FY 2021 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mount Vernon, Anacortes, WA MSA	\$83,200	Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)	17,300	19,800	22,250	26,500	31,040	35,580	40,120	44,660
		Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$)	28,850	32,950	37,050	41,150	44,450	47,750	51,050	54,350
		Low (80%) Income Limits (\$)	46,100	52,650	59,250	65,800	71,100	76,350	81,600	86,900

\*Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development



# GOAL 5: Health Protection



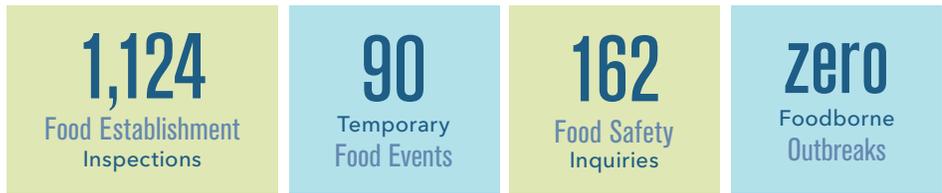
Public Health remained dedicated to its core foundational public health functions that help to ensure Skagitonians are safe and healthy, despite the many challenges posed by the pandemic. The activities in these areas are unique to Public Health and provide the public with key services not delivered elsewhere in the medical or broader community. From ensuring our community has clean drinking water and assessing and removing chemical or microbial threats from the environment, to responding to emergencies that threaten our community's health, these are all our essential and basic responsibilities.

## Environmental Health

The Environmental Health (EH) staff were very involved in COVID and emergency flood response during 2021. We were also still performing the assurance and education roles of the various EH programs below. Also of importance was the creation of a dedicated EH division manager position.

### FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM

- Retail Food Establishments plan review and permitting
- Retail Food Establishment inspections
- Complaint investigations and foodborne illness investigations



### DRINKING WATER QUALITY & QUANTITY

In 2021, EH restarted reviewing drinking water quality and quantity aspects of drinking water applications for development projects. Since 2016, Planning and Development Services had been completing all drinking water reviews for proposed development projects, from home remodels to new residential projects to land divisions.

- EH resumed assurance role for drinking water quality and quantity review in the permitting of new and expanding drinking water uses:
  - Individual residence water
  - Small public water systems (Group B water systems)
  - Large public water systems (Group A water systems)
- Technical assistance and education on drinking water quality
- Waterborne illness investigation

In 2021, the following drinking water sources were evaluated for Quality and Quantity building application projects:

Individual residence wells	190
Public drinking water system – Group B	27
Public drinking water system – Group A	375
Alternative drinking water systems	4



## RECREATIONAL WATERS PROGRAM

### Recreational Shellfish Program

- Biotoxin monitoring and postings at eight recreational shellfish beaches; a total of 92 samples were collected and analyzed, resulting in three harvest warnings or closures
- Education and outreach regarding biotoxins and bacterial contamination issues

### Harmful Algal Blooms

- Sample collection and postings at freshwater lakes
- Education and outreach regarding biotoxins and bacterial contamination issues

### Pools and Spas

- EH permitted 51 pools and spas including swimming pools, spas, spray pools, and float tanks
- Over the course of 2021, 72 inspections were conducted by EH staff

## SECURE MEDICINE DISPOSAL PROGRAM



Skagit's program has operated since 2018. In November 2021, the medicine return program transitioned into a statewide secure medicine return program overseen by Washington Department of Health. The program is now available in all Washington counties.

## ON-SITE SEPTIC SYSTEM PROGRAM

- Permitting new on-site septic (OSS) systems
- Operation and maintenance (O&M) of existing OSS systems
- Repairing OSS systems
- Education and technical assistance
- Several types of financial assistance options to assist with O&M and OSS system repair in the form of rebates and low-interest loans.

2021 On-site Septic Related Activities			
OSS new permits issued	311	O&M rebates	
OSS repair permits issued	135	• # properties issued	259
		• Total dollar amount provided	\$37,600
O&M inspections completed		O&M low-income vouchers	28
• O&M provider performed	3810	Low-interest loan OSS repairs	6
• Homeowner performed	108		

Operation and Maintenance: EH has a robust septic system inspection reminder program. After staff were released from COVID-19 and emergency response activities partway through the year, a list of the most delinquent O&M inspections was developed. Between July and December, 3,597 letters were sent to property owners reminding them that current inspection reports were required.

In addition to inspection reminder letters, properties that have sold are also required to have septic inspections within six months of the transfer to the new owner; 177 letters were sent to new property owners reminding them of the requirement to have their systems inspected.

In 2021, 32 O&M providers were certified by EH to inspect septic systems in Skagit County. Certified providers submitted 3,810 inspection reports.

Skagit County also allows homeowners to inspect their own septic systems under certain conditions. Those conditions include required training, having a gravity septic system, having a recorded drawing, and living away from the marine coastline. In 2021, 108 homeowners submitted inspection reports.

Education is an important tool to encourage property owners to regularly maintain their septic systems. EH offers two online courses, a basic septic system education course (Septics 101) and a more technical course (Septics 201), for people who are interested in inspecting their own septic systems or learning more about the inner workings of their septic systems. In 2021, 391 people took Septics 101; 32 property owners were certified to inspect their own septic systems by taking the Septics 201 training and meeting the other conditions.

### OSS Product Development Permitting Project.

The Washington Administrative Code governing OSS allows for products to be developed and tested under permit by local health jurisdictions. The goal is for the product to be approved and registered by the state Department of Health, then installed throughout Washington. The first of its kind in the region, Skagit County has an OSS treatment product, called Firelight, under permit for testing. The final installation was completed in late fall of 2021. The permit has been renewed for 2022 to continue testing and adjusting the project to meet OSS treatment standards.



## SOLID & HAZARDOUS WASTES PROGRAM

- Solid waste facilities permitting and inspections
- Complaint investigation: illegal dumping and accumulation
- Pollution prevention and technical assistance with businesses
- Drug lab contamination cleanup assurance
- Sharps waste disposal education
- Education and assistance on chemical disposal and exposure inquiries

13

Solid waste processing and disposal facilities permits

231

Solid and hazardous waste inquiries

27

Technical assistance visits to businesses

Processed

94

junk vehicle affidavits

### An example of Public health divisions WORKING TOGETHER to solve a problem...

A property owner initially applied for an OSS repair loan but did not qualify for the low-interest loan program. Environmental Health reached out to a Public Health Community Services staff member who manages a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) home repairs program. This program had



not been used for an OSS repair before, but this project qualified for assistance! Now, the property owner is working directly with a partnering agency that will be able to fix the failing OSS and alleviate the public health threat to both the homeowner and the surrounding neighbors.

## JAIL-BASED BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

COVID continued to have dramatic impacts on jail operations in 2021. Jail staff were able to successfully and creatively find ways to quarantine exposed individuals and isolate those who tested positive, while remaining mindful of laws regarding inmate care and confinement. Quarantine and isolation contributed to anxiety and increased mental health exacerbations. Jail staff took extra steps to address the mental health issues. They increased nursing and deputy visits and provided games and other independent studies/entertainment. Staff also grouped people who entered the jail together or people who were exposed together as to not create a solitary experience.

**1,534**  
COVID-19 TESTS  
completed

**657 doses**  
COVID-19 VACCINE  
administered

**22**  
cases of  
COVID-19

While not having active programs in the jail due to COVID, staff was still able to support and connect people at release to substance use disorder (SUD) and mental health treatment programs and supports.

### Skagit County Jail Behavioral Health by the Numbers

**52**  
drug and  
alcohol  
assessments  
for inpatient  
treatment

**641**  
patients needing  
extensive  
withdrawal  
monitoring;  
these patients  
also were offered  
a chance to  
participate in  
our SUD program

**242**  
people agreed  
to participate  
in SUD treatment  
in the jail and  
were connected  
to same- or  
next-day  
appointments  
at release

**150+**  
naloxone kits  
handed out,  
along with  
information  
about treatment  
options,  
providers, and  
post-release  
overdose risks

**200**  
patients on  
suicide watch,  
an increase  
from  
pre-COVID  
numbers

**1,855** mental health visits throughout the year—the percentage of inmates exhibiting symptoms of mental health disorders and the severity of those symptoms was greater than pre-COVID

COVID brought many challenges but also many opportunities. Lines of communications with all involved in the jail grew in positives ways, which will help address future inevitable dilemmas. Teleconference capabilities improved, which has been very beneficial in providing timely medical and mental health care at all hours and for court hearings while not exposing outside agency employees or the jail population to infection.



Amie Tidrington was awarded the “Anne Jackson Award” for the outstanding way she helped guide the County jail through the COVID pandemic. She not only fulfilled her role as the Correctional Medical Manager, she went above and beyond by helping keep us up to date on practices and policy changes from the CDC and local health officials. Because of her tenacity, the jail kept the COVID virus from spreading within our facility (one of the few) prior to the Omicron variant. When Omicron came about, she helped implement a process that allowed the jail to still operate and not have the virus spread in the facility.

## SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In 2021, after the closure of a nonprofit program, Skagit County brought the Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) in-house. This is a program developed as a result of the local ordinance passed by the Skagit Board of Health in 2018 that made opioid overdose a notifiable condition.

This harm-reduction program reduces the reuse and sharing of needles, lessening the rates of infection and spread of bloodborne pathogens, and used syringes are properly disposed of, keeping the community safer. Additionally, SEP staff develop trust and rapport with clients, which results in many clients engaging in treatment and seeking recovery.

With fentanyl commonly found in illicit substances in our community, it’s becoming increasingly necessary that individuals know what is in the drugs they’re using. Fentanyl is deadly, even in very small doses. The SEP hands out fentanyl test strips to clients who use the service.

Opioid overdoses can be reversed, saving lives. In 2021, the SEP handed out 384 naloxone kits, and 28 overdoses were reversed using these kits. Naloxone can only save lives when friends, family members, and the community have it on hand to administer to someone who is overdosing. Naloxone can be picked up at pharmacies for a cost and is available for free at Skagit County Public Health. Call 360-416-1500 to learn how you can get free naloxone.

**628,880** Syringes  
exchanged

**1,398** Fentanyl test strips  
distributed

**384** Naloxone kits  
distributed

**28** Overdoses reversed by naloxone  
handed out by SEP staff

In addition, the SEP hands out other harm-reduction supplies like sharps containers, water, cotton, hand sanitizer, alcohol prep pads, condoms, bandages, and wound care kits. SEP staff also provides information and makes referrals to other programs, such as substance use disorder or mental health treatment and housing resources.



## EXTREME TEMPERATURES

On August 11, 2021, Skagit County Public Health opened the **Concrete Cooling Center** in response to extreme heat conditions in the upper Skagit Region. The Cooling Center was located at 45770 Main St. in Concrete and operated between noon and 6pm. Two emergency worker volunteers attended the cooling center, and two community members stopped by for relief from the heat. Water and light snacks were provided for guests. Volunteers and guests were required to wear masks while in the center.

Between December 29, 2021, and January 7, 2022, Skagit County Public Health opened a **Warming Center** at the same location in response to extreme cold weather/Winter Advisories. The Warming Center was open from 5pm to 9am the next morning, staffed by temporary Department of Emergency Management (DEM) staff. When staff was available, the Warming Center remained open during the day time as well. The surrounding community generously donated hot meals, snacks, fresh fruit, beverages, blankets, and clothing. Most nights, the Warming Center was at capacity, providing shelter to 10 guests, and the center served 20 different community members during its operation. COVID-19 testing was provided for volunteers and guests; no one tested positive. Community guests and volunteers appreciated the Warming Center, which kept guests safe during dangerously cold temperatures.

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

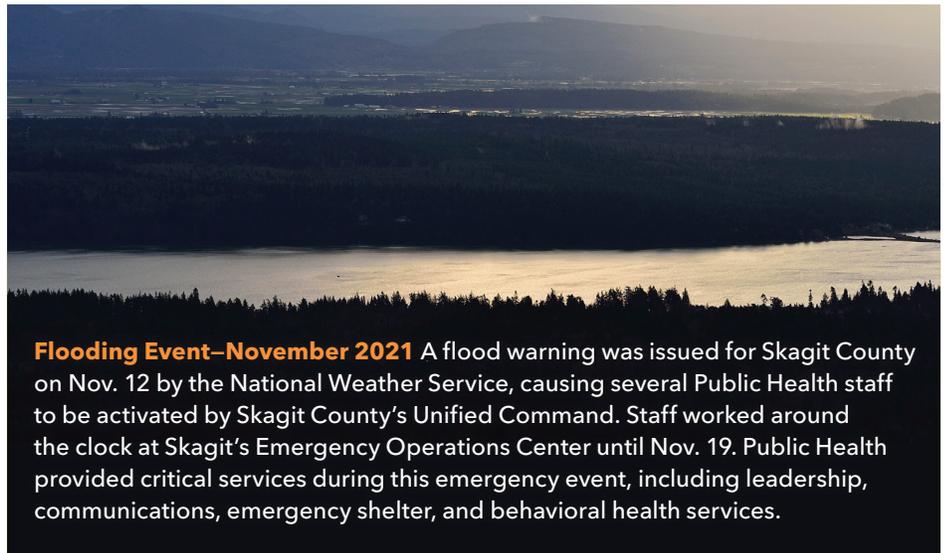
In 2021, a dedicated Communicable Disease manager position was created to best serve the needs of the department and the community as a whole. While the Communicable Disease (CD) Division dedicated almost all staff resources to critical COVID-19 pandemic response efforts, we continued to meet our responsibilities for many other notifiable conditions of public health concern.



Our COVID response team working to reach out to employers regarding COVID-19 cases and outbreaks.

In 2021, the CD Division received notification of more than 600 cases of 22 different non-COVID diseases of public health concern. These included tuberculosis, salmonella, hepatitis B and C, and sexually transmitted infections, to name just a few. Partnering with the Environmental Health Division, we investigated cases for 20 of the 22 conditions, completing 75% of the case investigations and receiving assistance from the Washington State Department of Health for 25% of the investigations.

Thanks to a federal program, the CD team was able to provide treatment for sexually transmitted diseases to 42 individuals who may have struggled to be treated otherwise. We also observed daily tuberculosis therapy for two individuals with active disease to ensure that the months' long daily treatment was completed correctly and the disease cured.



**Flooding Event—November 2021** A flood warning was issued for Skagit County on Nov. 12 by the National Weather Service, causing several Public Health staff to be activated by Skagit County's Unified Command. Staff worked around the clock at Skagit's Emergency Operations Center until Nov. 19. Public Health provided critical services during this emergency event, including leadership, communications, emergency shelter, and behavioral health services.

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE

In 2021, Skagit County's Board of County Commissioners dedicated specific resources to Public Health to develop and implement a local Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The Medical Reserve Corps is a national network of more than 200,000 volunteers, organized locally to improve the health and safety of their communities. MRC volunteers step up to keep their family, friends, and neighbors safe and healthy.

In 2021, Skagit County volunteers dedicated time and expertise at Public Health's testing and vaccination clinics, as well as at Public Health's extreme temperature shelters in Concrete. As the newly created MRC grows, Skagit County will continue to need volunteers for its emergency preparedness and response initiatives.



## VITAL RECORDS

The Vital Records program is a longstanding and key foundational Public Health service. Birth certificates increased in 2021, likely due to increased travel; birth certificates are often

used in securing passports and drivers' licenses renewals. Death certificates also increased, likely due to residents of surrounding counties coming

Vital Records Sales	2020	2021
Birth	3,776	4,690
Death	7,193	8,951
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10,969</b>	<b>13,641</b>

to our office to pick up the documents without waiting for mail delivery. The fee paid by these neighboring county residents offsets the cost incurred by Public Health in providing these certificates. Note: Public Health routinely provides multiple certificates to individuals requesting documents, so the figures in the chart are not related directly to the number of births or deaths during any given year.



On June 2, 2021, Skagit County's superintendents gathered to present Skagit County Public Health Communicable Disease Manager, Polly Dubbel (center), with the Washington Association of School Administrators Honorary Award.

"Polly has been an amazing partner with Skagit County schools, keeping superintendents informed about updated COVID-19 guidance. She provided schools with realistic guidance and allowed districts to safely serve students and families," said Ruth Richardson, Sedro-Woolley Public Information Officer.

## GOAL 6: Data, Assessment & Evaluation

Having a dedicated epidemiologist within the Assessment and Planning Division to work broadly across the department was a huge asset in 2021, as was having the ability to contract for additional planning and assessment expertise. Similarly, the Population Health Trust, a multi-sector advisory group comprised of community partners and subject matter experts, provided Public Health with invaluable input.



### COVID RECOVERY PLAN

In 2021, the Population Health Trust began work on the COVID Recovery Plan, the follow-up to the 2020-21 Community Health Assessment. This document is intended to bring the community together in focused efforts to address the pressures the pandemic

placed—and continues to place—on individuals, families, organizations, and systems within our county.

Some areas of concern include:

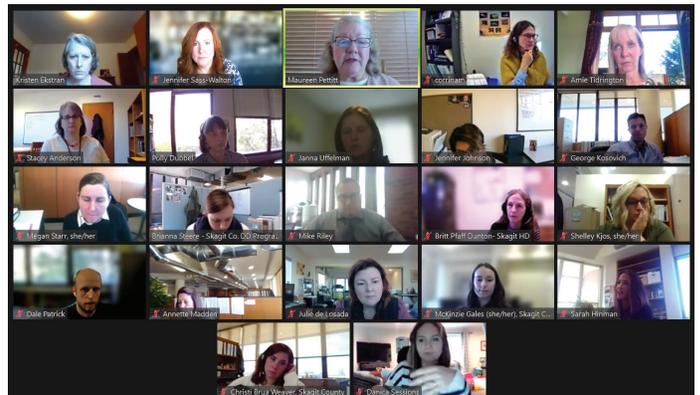
- The disproportionate effects of the pandemic on Skagit's Hispanic/Latino community and other communities of color.
- The overwhelming need for increased behavioral health supports
- The wide-scale disconnection from services and programs that some communities face due to a variety of barriers
- The foundational need for housing, food, employment, and child care
- The need for quick technology shifts to help foster community resiliency in the areas of health care

Public Health staff engaged in some virtual strategic planning and assessment in 2021.

The Population Health Trust has created 17 goals and 26 strategies aimed at tackling the following key areas impacting community health and wellness:

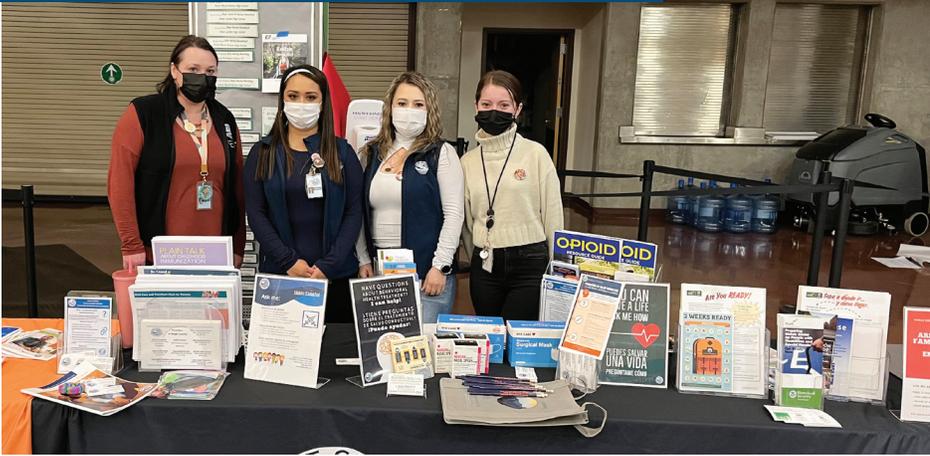
- Equity
- Housing
- Access to Care
- Behavioral Health
- Child Care
- Economic and Fiscal Security
- Food Security

The plan has since been completed and was endorsed by the Skagit County Board of Health during a special session on March 24, 2022.



The full report can be found online: [www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PHTAC/Reportsmain.htm](http://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PHTAC/Reportsmain.htm)

## GOAL 7: Organizational Health & Growth



Public Health staff, representing multiple divisions, working together to get information out to our community! Staff provided information to families covering a variety of public health topics including opioids and substance use prevention, mental health, developmental disabilities, COVID-19 vaccinations and testing, and so much more!

### CAPACITY BUILDING

A major priority for our department in 2021 was hiring more bilingual/bicultural staff. It is incredibly important to have a team that is representative of the community that we serve. The pandemic was eye opening in the way that it highlighted the immediate need to meet community members where they are: to serve individuals in their primary language, to be strategic in our communications approach, and to fight for low-barrier access to services for all people.



### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROMOTORA

Understanding the healthcare system can be tough for most of us. Unfortunately, the behavioral healthcare system can be even more complicated, particularly for individuals who don't speak English. Skagit County Public Health hired a Community Health Worker/Promotora to help individuals navigate the behavioral healthcare system, in both English and Spanish, so they and their loved ones can get the care they need.



*“Promotores(as), or Community Health Workers (CHW), are community members who promote health in their own communities. When CHW are members of underserved populations, they often share a desire to improve conditions in their communities, so that children and their families might know a better way of life. For this reason, their work is often characterized as servicio de corazón—service from the heart.”*

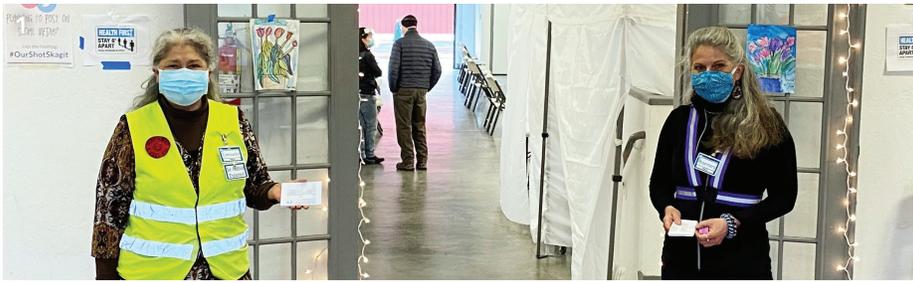
– Center for the Study of Social Policy

### CROSS-COLLABORATION: GOAL TO REALITY

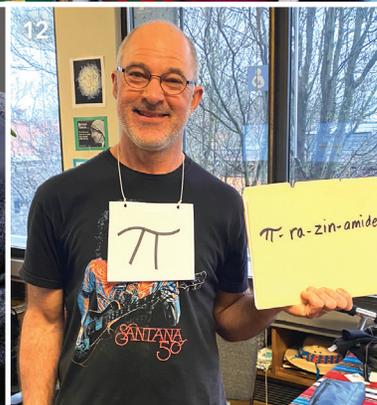
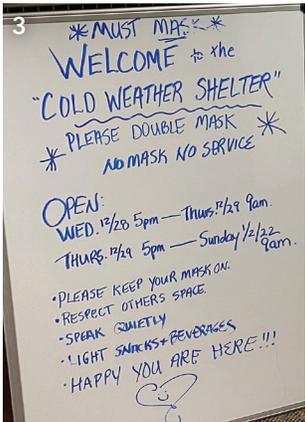
Cross-divisional work used to be a goal here at Public Health but was something that rarely happened. During the pandemic, this way of operating truly became the norm. On any given day, staff from different divisions could be seen brainstorming and working through problems together, resulting in so many incredible outcomes. It was during COVID that the mission and vision of our multiple divisions came together as one.

This cross-collaboration would not have been possible without a flexible, quick-thinking, and adaptive staff. Crossing the divide from one division to another can be uncomfortable at times, but our staff here at Public Health proved time and time again that true collaboration is possible and so incredibly necessary to be effective at responding to the public health needs of our community.

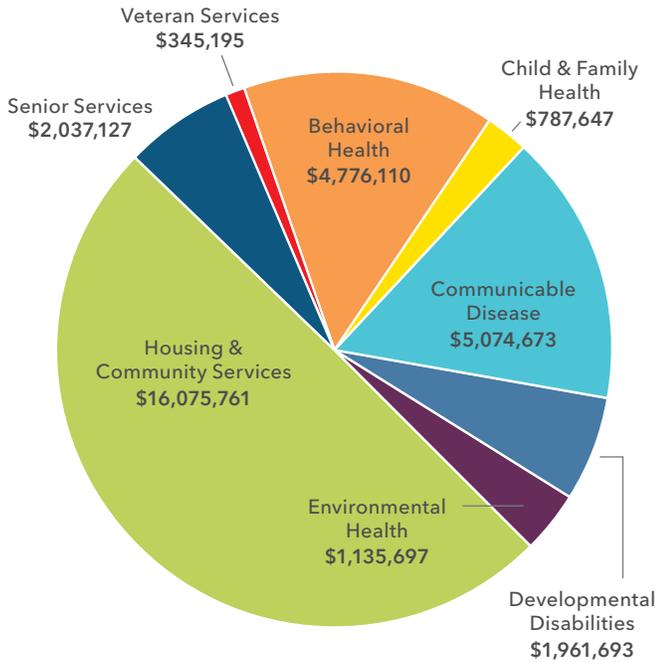
**This cross-collaboration would not have been possible without a flexible, quick-thinking, and adaptive staff.**



**Skagit Valley Public Health in the Community** 1 Vaccine Site staff welcomed guests into the Observation Room at the Fairgrounds following their COVID-19 vaccination. Guests were greeted with kindness, respect, and enthusiasm by our caring staff and volunteers. 2 Kristen Ekstran, Community Health Analyst, leading Public Health staff through findings from the 2021 Community Health Assessment. 3 Sign at the Concrete Cold Weather Shelter. 4 Local seniors finally got the opportunity to socialize following the reopening of Skagit County senior centers in 2021! 5 Mobile outreach staff at the Skagit Transit Station in Mount Vernon, providing free COVID-19 vaccines to community members. 6 Mobile outreach staff canvassing downtown Mount Vernon, encouraging folks to get vaccinated and providing critical health information to residents and local businesses. 7 Environmental Health staff out in the field collecting cyanobacteria samples. 8 Care kits provided through a partnership with the Children’s Museum of Skagit County. All children arriving to the Fairgrounds Vaccine Site for their COVID-19 pediatric vaccine appointment would receive some fun items to take home with them. 9 Spreading a little holiday cheer at local senior center. 10 Environmental Health staff getting festive by creating an on-site septic systems-themed Christmas tree! 11 Meals on Wheels volunteers working hard—in rain or shine—to deliver hot meals to Skagit County seniors. 12 Communicable Disease team celebrating National Pi Day with a little humor...and some tasty treats!



**Skagit County Public Health  
2021 Expenses by Program Type**



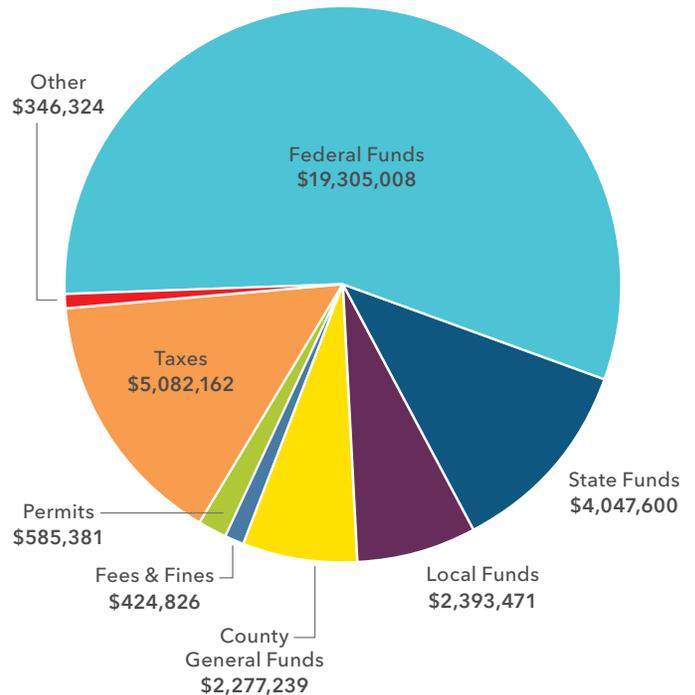
## EXPENSES

Public Health expenses are largely dictated by the availability of dedicated revenue to programming. We actively seek collaboration in all these areas, either by securing new grants and contracts or, when compatible, through partnering with community organizations to advance their initiatives and programming. The COVID-19 pandemic expanded our investments in Communicable Disease and Housing and Homelessness efforts to meet the most critical community needs.

**Skagit County Public Health  
2021 Revenues**

## REVENUES

Public Health receives revenues from a variety of sources. Federal dollars were the highest means of support for initiatives and programming in 2021, totaling approximately \$19.3 million. State funds were also a significant source of funding at approximately \$4.0 million. These funds were greatly expanded in 2021, advancing Public Health’s COVID-19 response, with the federal CARES Act and state grants enabling us to ramp up a wide array of services addressing the community’s most critical needs. Taxes were also a significant revenue source (totaling approximately \$5.0 million), but the great majority of these funds—approximately \$3.9 million—is dedicated by state law to behavioral health services (0.1% of sales tax and millage property tax serving as the sources). Lastly, Skagit County contributed a high level of support from County General Funds, totaling approximately \$2.3 million. Public Health is constantly looking for non-local funds, which expand much-needed Skagit programs and create innovative initiatives.



## Future Directions

This year was perhaps one of the most transformative moments in the history of Public Health. The pandemic brought to light our many strengths and also highlighted areas of needed growth. With our new Community Health Assessment and COVID Recovery Plan, we have the necessary roadmap that will provide direction as we enter 2022 and beyond. It is our hope that you, the reader, will be a part of this journey, keeping our department informed and ever accountable to the needs of our amazing community.



360-416-1500 | [skagitcounty.net/departments/health](https://skagitcounty.net/departments/health) | 700 S 2nd St, Ste 301, Mount Vernon, WA 98273



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