

Mayors of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley and Skagit County Commissioners Joint Statement on Addressing Behavioral Health and Homelessness

Homelessness and behavioral health have been important issues in Skagit County for many years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created and added to housing challenges and exacerbated mental health issues and substance use disorders in our community.

We, your Mayors and Commissioners, are aligning efforts and joining forces to work towards a healthy and thriving community. We are mobilizing our combined forces to do everything in our power to ensure the well-being of every Skagitonian.

Our collaboration is the first step of a multi-phased whole-of-government effort. We will evaluate existing strategies, identify new approaches if/when necessary and execute a plan to ensure we achieve tangible results that incorporate best practices, feedback, and lessons learned from stakeholders, advocacy groups, and other community partners.

To accomplish these goals, Skagit County is contracting with Tenfold Health, a team of experts who will lead our community through a co-design planning and assessment process. This will be a two-phase approach over the course of roughly 24 months:

Phase 1: Develop a Shared North Star Vision for the County

Phase 2: Implementation of Skagit County's North Star Framework, including governance, roles, and resources

To fulfill this mission, we will:

- **Make ending homelessness and addressing behavioral health needs top priorities.** We will prioritize this effort at the highest levels. Elected officials and staff will collaboratively develop strategies to significantly reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and untreated mental illness and substance use disorders. We will draw from experts and stakeholder groups to inform decisions, priorities, and services. We will develop targets, assess progress, and hold ourselves and our partners accountable.
- **Reach underserved community members.** Addressing homelessness and behavioral health will require new approaches to serving community members for whom prior efforts may have fallen short. We will ensure our intergovernmental effort identifies and removes barriers to care and services, so services are equitably available among underserved communities.
- **Ensure the delivery of quality services.** Supportive services are critical to helping people achieve health, recovery, and well-being. Working diligently with our partners, we commit to identifying ways to ensure access to quality behavioral health and housing assistance.

Working to end homelessness and address behavioral health requires a multi-jurisdictional effort. Together, we can enhance how we deliver services and ensure we bring the full force of government to address homelessness and behavioral health.

The County will be using ARPA funds to support Phase 1 and 2 of this project.