



Population Health Trust December Newsletter

Community Advisory Board to the Skagit County Board of Health

December 2023

The holidays are a time to gather in celebration of all that is special about this time of year. We often share food, gifts, and cheer, but we may inadvertently share illnesses. While not every runny nose will require a visit to a healthcare provider, there are times when specialized care is needed. For some, accessing care is as easy as calling their primary care physician or dropping by the local urgent care facility, but for others, accessing care is a challenge.

Too many in our community encounter *affordability* barriers tied to high out of pocket costs, not having enough or the right kind of insurance, or high prescription drug fees. Additional barriers may include *availability*, not being able to make an appointment with a healthcare provider in a timely manner, *accessibility*, how far a person must drive to visit a provider, or *acceptability*, not being able to find a provider that can speak their language or that understands and respects their cultural needs. [1]

We know that access to quality healthcare is essential for achieving and maintaining good health. Given its importance and the complexity of accessing appropriate care, this theme was identified as a priority area by the Population Health Trust.

| <div>ACCESS TO CARE (AC)</div>  | GOALS |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Skagit County residents have access to a wide range of medical and health-related services provided by people who speak their language and understand their culture.2 Everyone in Skagit county can find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions.3 Health care and related services are made available in remote regions and for individuals with minimal access to technology by providers who meet them where they are. |

| STRATEGIES | | | |
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| AC1 Health care providers identify opportunities to train and support multicultural/bilingual staff to better serve the needs of their patients. | AC2 Health care providers, Public Health and other service providers collaborate on mobile clinics and other options to reach more 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 for individuals without access to technology. |

Increasing access to care requires understanding the many and varied barriers individuals encounter as they are unique to each person. Below are actions Trust members, and their organizations, have taken to reduce barriers and increase access to care in our community.

- Skagit Regional Health offers primary care services at Martha's Place, a local facility that provides 70 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for households experiencing homelessness and low-income households at risk of homelessness.
- Island Health has partnered with the Anacortes Family Center (AFC) to guarantee new patient access to primary care in under 30 days. This allows AFC clients to be established with the care team quickly, ensuring they remain qualified for AFC programs.
- PeaceHealth partners with community-based organizations to provide medical screenings to some of our most vulnerable community members through outreach events. Additionally, they are working on a project to increase the number of screening mammograms for tribal communities as access to screenings is currently a barrier for the community.
- Skagit County Public Health provides mobile childhood and adult vaccine clinics, and routinely partners with local organizations, such as Community Action, to connect with individuals that might not otherwise receive certain clinical services.

While there is still much work to be done, attention and effort are being focused on increasing access to care in our community. Look for updates on community-based efforts in future newsletters.

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](#).

Population Health Trust

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References:

1. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3393009/
2. https://skagitcountytrends.org/graph.cfm?cat_id=5&sub_cat_id=4&ind_id=3