



Peninsula Community Health Services

February 21, 2024

Kitsap Public Health District
Attn: Gib Morrow, MD, MPH
Norm Dicks Government Center
345 6th Street, Suite 300
Bremerton, WA 98337-1866

Dear Dr. Morrow:

Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS) appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security Study Team's assessment to survey Kitsap County's healthcare environment.

The resulting study (herein the "Johns Hopkins Report") identifies many gaps and challenges in Kitsap County's healthcare ecosystem. However, the Report is far from exhaustive in its account of positive developments to bridge health care access gaps identified in the study. Unfortunately, the lack of recognition of the strategic partnerships, programs, and community investments undertaken by local providers and governments paints an incomplete picture of the state of health care in Kitsap County. Moreover, the absence of information regarding existing and upcoming programs has a bearing on the Delphi Study Participant Recommendations and Study Team Recommendations, both in terms of prioritization and strategic use of scarce healthcare dollars.

Accordingly, PCHS writes to offer information to supplement the Positive Developments section of the Report. It is our hope that these highlights will provide policymakers with additional context about the state of healthcare services in Kitsap County and instill more faith in our community that local providers are proactively working to find creative solutions to challenges and leveraging opportunities to increase access to quality healthcare services for all Kitsap residents.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kreidler-Moss, CEO
Peninsula Community Health Services



Peninsula Community Health Services

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION FOR JOHNS HOPKINS CENTER FOR HEALTH SECURITY STUDY TEAM'S REPORT ON HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN KITSAP COUNTY, WASHINGTON

INTRODUCTION

Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS) participated in the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security Study Team's Delphi study to survey Kitsap County's healthcare environment.

The resulting report identifies many gaps and challenges in Kitsap County's healthcare ecosystem. However, the report is far from exhaustive in its account of positive developments to bridge health care access gaps identified in the study. Unfortunately, the lack of recognition of the strategic partnerships, programs, and community investments undertaken by local providers and governments paints an incomplete picture of the state of health care in Kitsap County. Moreover, the absence of information regarding existing and upcoming programs has a bearing on the Delphi Study Participant Recommendations and Study Team Recommendations, both in terms of prioritization and strategic use of scarce healthcare dollars. Accordingly, the following information is intended to supplement the Positive Developments section of the report.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Behavioral Health

1. Increasing Behavioral Health Services for Youth

PCHS opened its first school-based health clinic (SBHC) in 2018 and has since grown its school-based health program to include 12 elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools across four school districts. Notably, approximately one-third of those visits are pediatric behavioral health visits. In order to supplement other agencies' healthcare services that are only available during the schools' calendar year, PCHS ensures year-round access for SBHCs patients through a mix of school-based clinics, complementary school-based sites within a child's school district, and other PCHS clinic sites.



2. Increasing Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment for System-Involved Individuals

PCHS has partnered with the Kitsap County Jail to connect incarcerated individuals with Medication-Assisted Treatment as they transition back into the community. This includes transporting individuals directly to PCHS clinics upon release to receive medication to treat substance use disorders.

Primary Care

3. Increasing Preventive and Emergency Dental Access

PCHS offers preventive and emergency dental services, including providing adult Medicaid dental services without access caps for new patients, and has opened one new dental clinic per year since 2017.

4. Increasing Access to Reproductive Healthcare

Even though PCHS does not currently have OB providers, PCHS provides extensive training to its entire suite of primary care providers who can work with pregnant patients to review their medications, engage in counseling around when to seek higher levels of care, and ensure that patients are being referred and scheduled in community OB practices.

5. Offering Innovative Primary Care Delivery

PCHS employs the largest contingent of primary care providers across Kitsap County. To complement SMMC's primary care model, which hosts a large contingent of primary care providers through its residency program, PCHS has invested in a fleet of 12 mobile medical, dental, and behavioral health clinics, and over a dozen additional patient transport vehicles. Recognizing that transportation, language access, and housing stability can be barriers to care, PCHS developed a model of delivering primary care that serves the community where they are – from shelters and libraries to schools and community-based organizations across Kitsap County.

6. Screening For Sexually Transmitted Diseases

As part of routine primary care screenings, PCHS screens patients for sexually transmitted diseases.

7. Bridging Community Care Gaps When Independent Practices Close

Although a few independent practices have closed in Kitsap County, PCHS has proactively worked with multiple practices to fill what would have been care gaps to avoid disruption in patient care. For example, the week after Kitsap Children's Clinic closed its doors, PCHS opened the PCHS Children's Clinic at the exact same location, staffed by three formerly KCC providers who are now employed by PCHS. Similarly, when Lindquist Dental closed its Bremerton office, PCHS stepped in to serve the pediatric dental population by opening its Family Dental Clinic at the same location.



Health Equity

8. Mass Vaccination Campaign

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, PCHS gave over 50,000 COVID vaccines to any community member who needed one – including on ferries.

9. Addressing Social Determinants of Health

PCHS takes a broad view of health equity and screens all medical and dental patients at every visit for social determinants of health (SDOH). Patients who self-identify as needing help obtaining food, infant and toddler supplies, housing, and other enabling services are connected with internal and external resources.

10. Addressing Health-Harming Legal Needs

Building on its SDOH work, PCHS developed the first Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) on the Kitsap Peninsula, and the first MLP in the State of Washington to offer free in-house legal services when patients need assistance sealing juvenile records, applying for cash and food benefits, changing their legal identity markers, or obtaining an advance directive or power of attorney. PCHS also refers patients facing other legal issues, such as evictions or domestic violence, to its legal aid partner, Kitsap Legal Services.

11. Focusing on Successful Reentry and Continuity of Care

PCHS has partnered with Kitsap County on several projects to improve the health and wellness of Kitsap’s juvenile and adult incarcerated populations. PCHS provides mobile medical care to incarcerated youth and operates a jail transition clinic geared toward assisting individuals who have recently been released back into the community.

Housing

12. Offering Medical Respite to Reduce Emergency Room Utilization

PCHS is constructing a 22-bed medical respite facility in downtown Bremerton where people experiencing homelessness will have up to 30 days to recuperate from an injury or illness. PCHS is partnering with SMMC, KPHD, the City of Bremerton, and other community stakeholders to support this project, which will help reduce strain on SMMC’s Emergency Room. This medical respite facility will open in 2025 and also contains two staff housing units.

13. Building Kitsap’s Housing Continuum With Permanent Supportive Housing Units

In addition to building 29 affordable workforce housing units in Bremerton, PCHS launched a permanent supportive housing program in 2023 that supports low-income residents. PCHS has partnered with the Bremerton Housing Authority to create permanent supportive housing units that are attached to project-based vouchers. PCHS is currently



planning a complex that will add another 52 low-income units in downtown Bremerton that will enable its medical respite patients to discharge into housing.

Workforce Development

14. Growing Kitsap County's Healthcare Workforce

PCHS is steadily building Kitsap County's primary care workforce through a multi-pronged approach of cultivating licensed providers and critical allied staff. PCHS currently runs three residency programs to train dentists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, and pharmacists – and will start a nurse practitioner residency in 2024. As a dually licensed behavioral health agency (holding both outpatient mental health and outpatient substance use disorder licenses through the WA Department of Health), PCHS employs and trains licensed mental health counselor associates and substance use disorder professional trainees. With respect to allied staff, PCHS employs and trains medical assistant and dental assistant apprentices and behavioral health technicians. PCHS has also created a youth volunteer program in which high school students are able to learn about the variety of healthcare careers (both clinical and non-clinical) and volunteer in PCHS's clinics and administration.

15. Offering Second Chance Employment

PCHS is a proud second chance employer, hiring community members who have lived experience with homelessness and justice system contact.

