

LEGISLATIVE FACT SHEET:

Healthcare Access in Kitsap County

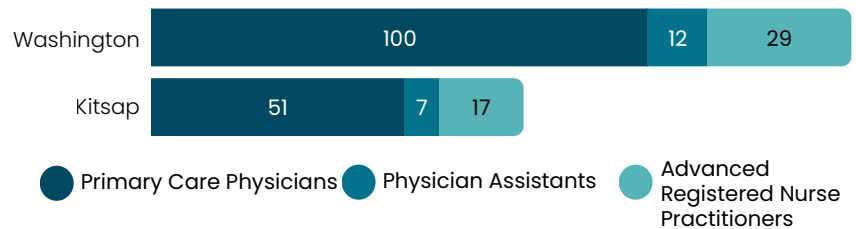
Key Points

- **All people in Kitsap County deserve access** to affordable, high quality healthcare services. However, many residents face challenges getting the coverage and care they need.
- **Healthcare access remains a top concern** for community leaders and residents:
 - The Kitsap Public Health Board declared high costs and insufficient access to healthcare services public health crises in 2023.¹
 - More than 70 Kitsap community organizational leaders agreed to make healthcare access a top community health priority based on data from a 2023 Community Health Assessment.²

Healthcare Provider Shortages

Kitsap County is underserved relative to the state and nearby counties in the number of providers working in primary care, with about half as many providers per 100,000 residents compared to Washington overall (Figure 1). Kitsap also has fewer providers working in obstetrical and maternal care (51% lower than Washington), mental health (10% lower), and specialist care (56% lower).³

Figure 1. 2023 primary care providers per 100,000 residents:³



Challenges Accessing Care

Prenatal Care

In 2024, only 55% (1,374) of Kitsap residents who gave birth received adequate prenatal care, compared with 69% of Washington residents. Access was worse for residents with lower income. Only 48% (290) of Medicaid recipients received adequate care.⁴

Care for Active Military Families and Veterans

An estimated 23,749 military personnel resided in Kitsap County during 2023, or about 8% of the total population. In addition, the Navy is the largest employer in the county.⁵ Downsizing of services at Naval Hospital Bremerton since 2013 has increased pressure on Kitsap's overburdened civilian medical sector, presenting healthcare access challenges for active-duty service members, their families, and military retirees who live or work in Kitsap.⁶

Mental Health Care

Among Kitsap residents with Medicaid coverage between 2023–2024, about 58% of those who needed mental health care received those services, and 41% who needed substance use disorder treatment received those services.⁷

Primary Care

In 2024, about 1 in 4 adults with Medicaid did not have a preventive or primary care visit, and about 1 in 2 children did not have a comprehensive Child or Adolescent Well-Care visit.⁷

High Costs

In 2024, 9.7% of Kitsap adults said they needed to see a doctor in the last year but could not afford to. This was similar to the 10.5% of adults statewide.⁸

Top healthcare access concerns in Kitsap County

Loss of Medicaid Coverage

Statewide, at least 26% of current adult Medicaid recipients are expected to lose coverage due to eligibility criteria changes.⁹ Assuming a similar impact in Kitsap, **nearly 8,400 Kitsap adults are expected to lose Medicaid coverage.**¹⁰

Increase in Uninsured Population

Statewide, the uninsured rate is expected to double due to rising costs of insurance premiums and the loss of Medicaid coverage. Assuming a similar impact in Kitsap, **the uninsured rate for working-aged adults could increase from 5.8% to nearly 12%.**^{9,11}

Worsening Health Due to Delayed or Skipped Care

Access to preventative healthcare services prevents disease and early death.¹² Delayed healthcare compromises access to routine and preventative services, resulting in missed diagnoses and increased financial burden of intensive care services (i.e., emergency department visits).

Recommended preventative services such as immunizations, screenings for STIs, chronic diseases, mental health and more, lower the risk of negative health outcomes.

MEDICAID IN KITSAP

- In October 2025, more than 32,000 adults and 21,000 children are covered by Medicaid in Kitsap.¹⁰
- Each year, about 750 (27%) births to Kitsap residents are covered by Medicaid (2020–2024).⁴

Funding & Operational Constraints on Local Healthcare System

Federal policy changes: Under federal health policy changes effective January 2028, state-directed payment and provider tax changes (Washington hospital safety net program) are expected to result in up to \$266 million loss of state savings per year and an approximately \$1.3 billion per year impact to hospitals.¹³ This policy could increase strain on an already understaffed healthcare system, including in Kitsap County.

Increase in uncompensated care: Medicaid accounts for about 15% of all healthcare spending in Kitsap.¹⁴ When individuals lose Medicaid coverage, local health systems will cover the cost of care for those who cannot afford to pay. This puts more strain on health systems as the cost of care has risen sharply across all types of care. All residents will be affected if health systems reduce services to cut costs.

Looking forward

While collective community efforts in Kitsap County prioritizing healthcare access and workforce are making encouraging progress, significant changes to federal and state policies are needed to ensure coverage and access to affordable, quality care.

Sources

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