



WHATCOM COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 6, 2023

Present: Steve Bennett (Chair), Teri Bryant, Sterling Chick, Christine Espina, Jeffery Hart, Lindsey Karas, Kathy Kershner, Chris Kobdich, Michael Massanari, Guy Occhiogrosso, Emily O'Connor, Adrienne Renz, Ashley Thomasson, Greg Thompson, Vesla Tonnessen, Shu-Ling Zhao

Absent: Shamika Brooks, Christopher Brown, Therese Horan, Edna Revey, Leah Wainman

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
Call to order	Steve Bennett presented a land acknowledgement. Roll call of Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Members.
Approve Minutes	Sterling Chick moved that the minutes from the March PHAB meeting and the special meeting on March 2 be approved as presented, Greg Thompson seconded the motion. The board voted and the motion passed. Ayes: 16, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0
Public Comment	The following people spoke: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Marshall • Natalie Chavez
Health Board/County Council Update	Councilmember Kathy Kershner shared the following updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There isn't much to report since there has not been a Health Board meeting since the last PHAB meeting and Council is currently on a three week break between Council meetings due to Easter and spring break. • The half hour briefings that PHAB has been getting from each division of Whatcom County Health and Community Services are being repeated for the County Council's Public Works and Health Committee. • Next week there will be a presentation by the PeaceHealth foundation on the anticipated expansion of our hospital. • Also, next week, the committee will be hearing a presentation on the Food System Plan, which County Council is being asked to adopt. • Councilmember Kershner invited PHAB members to let her know what they would like her to report out on from Council and the Health Board. Her goal is to connect the Council to PHAB in meaningful ways. She welcomed PHAB members to email her, Steve, or Erika with any thoughts on this.
Health Director/Health Officer Update	Erika Lautenbach, Director of Whatcom County Health and Community Services, shared the following updates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cindy Hollinsworth, former Communicable Disease and Epidemiology Manager, retired in February. We have hired her replacement, Shamika Brooks, one of our current PHAB members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new supervisor has been hired to oversee communications, emergency preparedness, policy, and equity staff. That position is the Partnerships and Strategy Supervisor. Heather McGuinness will fill that role and is coming to the department from North Sound ACH. • We are in the hiring process for the new Child and Family Supervisor and there is a really great pool of candidates. <p>Dr. Greg Thompson, Co-Health Officer, gave a presentation on recently released county health rankings. The slides are appended to these minutes. Discussion and questions centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this something that is used to drive metrics or more of just a measurement/assessment? Dr. Thompson responded that it is helpful to see how outside groups are assessing us, but we also do our own internal assessments and share those with the public. Those internal assessments are used to develop improvement plans for our community. Erika added that both at the state and national level, this report is used to look for trends that may drive grantmaking. Sterling added that the last Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan led directly to the Child and Family Well Being Task Force, which led directly to the ballot issue addressing the needs of young children and their families. • How often are these rankings released? Dr. Thompson responded that these are done every year. • Where is Whatcom County diverging most from other counties, either positively or negatively? Dr. Thompson responded that we do significantly better than other counties for longevity, but on some of our self-assessed measures of health (how many days we've felt sick in the last month, how many days we've had poor mental health) we score lower than other counties.
<p>Food Systems Plan Presentation</p>	<p>Riley Sweeney, Whatcom County Food System Committee Chair, and Ali Jensen, Whatcom County Health and Community Services Program Specialist, gave a presentation on the food system plan (slides were included in the agenda packet.)</p> <p>Discussion and questions centered on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councilmember Kershner noted that the Council recently got a request from the food banks for a million dollars a year to help buy food because the usage at food banks has increased so dramatically and asked for thoughts on how to meet that need. Riley responded that while meeting that need today is essential, strengthening the food system for the future helps us get to a place where that need eventually goes down. • Particularly in regards to the parts of this plan that have to do with the food economy/food sector businesses, was there any alignment between this plan and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)? Ali responded that CEDS was reviewed and that Jennifer Noveck was a key informant in this process. She sees lots of opportunity for collaboration here. Riley added that many other plans were considered like the solid waste plan and the climate change plan so that this work could dovetail with other county initiatives. • What is your overview analysis of the challenges that restaurants are experiencing in Whatcom County? Ali answered that one thing we would like to be able to do is help restaurants that are using local food amplify that to the public. Restaurants tend to have low profit margins, and the plan doesn't specifically address that problem. However, we learned a lot in focus groups with restaurant workers and owners about worker retention and how to build avenues for folks who work in restaurants to open their own restaurants. There was a lot of desire for that, even from

	<p>restaurant owners. One issue that the plan addresses is more commercial kitchen space for food businesses/processors. We also want to align with BTC programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the issues around food security that arose during COVID provided a look at where there are stress points or weaknesses in the system overall. We can use that to think about things like what happens if there is an earthquake and no road access. It will be important to have food processing locally that we can connect to. • This is an impressive plan. Great to see plans like this looking at a whole system and involving so many partners in the community. While COVID did highlight some issues around food, even before COVID the county was seeing food insecurity rates for kids of up to 25%, and self-reporting on food insecurity in some areas was beyond 50%.
Orientation for New Members	<p>Steve and Erika presented orientation materials for new members (which also serves to update more established members). Orientation materials will be shared to members via email. Steve and Erika are both available to give more information, answer questions, or just chat one on one with anyone interested in more information on any of these topics. Topics covered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Org chart and structure of Whatcom County Health and Community Services; • Whatcom County Health and Community Services Strategic Plan 2023-2027; • The upcoming data refresh of the previous Community Health Assessment; • The COVID Community Health Impact Assessment; • Roles of Whatcom County Health and Community Services, the Health Board, and PHAB, including the RCWs that define those roles; • Whatcom County Code defining PHAB's role; • PHAB bylaws; • Hub and spoke model with current membership; • Matrix of the key responsibilities of the Health Board, PHAB, and Health and Community Services; • Resolutions that PHAB has been involved with. <p>Councilmember Kershner asked that the group remember that PHAB is a select group with many members pulled from other advisory committees, which can be helpful, but can also be a little bit exclusionary to the wider population of Whatcom County. She asked that members be cognizant of those that may not feel represented as we bring in the Health Equity Framework. Steve agreed and brought up that PHAB has been talking about ways to increase community engagement, like community forums.</p>
Meeting evaluation	<p>Steve welcomed any board member to give a meeting evaluation and thanked everyone for their involvement. Councilmember Kershner invited everyone to email Council with any feedback on the Food System Plan.</p>
Adjourn	8:30 AM
Next Meeting	Next regular meeting – 4/6/2023

Director and Health Officer Update

Erika Lautenbach, Director
Greg Thompson, Co-health Officer

April 6, 2023



WHATCOM COUNTY
**HEALTH AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**



County Health Rankings



Annual Ranking of Health Outcomes and Health Factors

- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

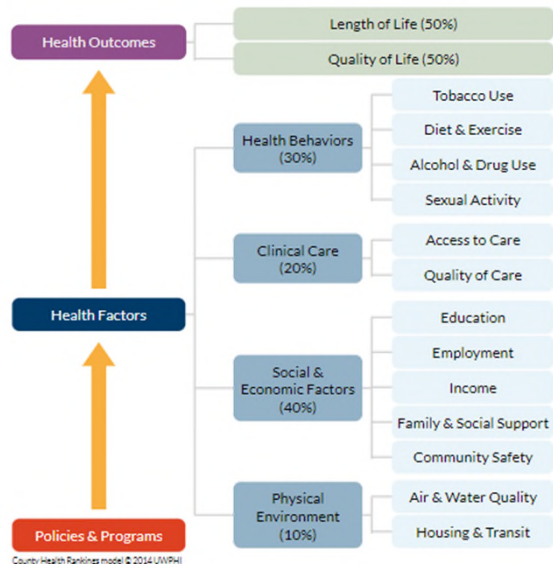
Compares health of counties within each state

Also explores common health factors across the US

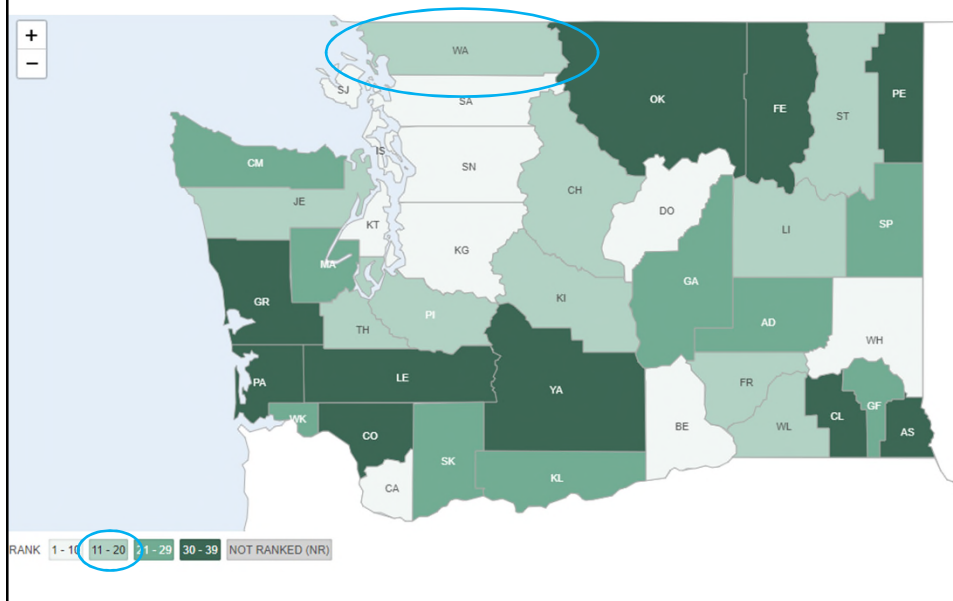
- E.g. Increased civic participation (public libraries, membership in community organizations, and voter turnout) is associated with better health outcomes

<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/washington/whatcom?year=2023>

County Health Rankings Model



Whatcom County #11 of 39



Whatcom County



Rank 11 out of 39 Washington Counties

Compared to 7th ranked in 2022

- Largely because several other counties improved relative to Whatcom
- Also note several year lag in most data

Two measures were worse than last year's Ranking

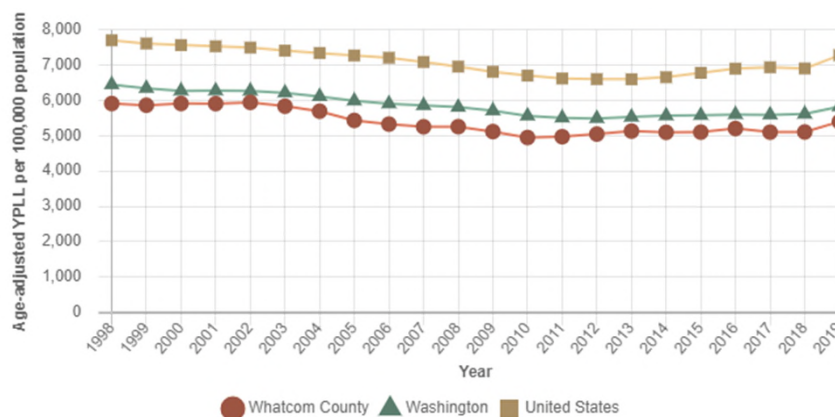
- Poor mental health days (2021 survey)
 - Increased from 4.4 to 5.5 days
- Excessive alcohol consumption (2020 survey)

Three measures improved

- Adult Obesity (2020)
- Unemployment (2021)
- Social Associations (2020)

Whatcom Areas of Strength

Premature death in Whatcom County, WA
Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL): county, state and national trends



Whatcom Challenges



Race-based disparities in outcome

Disaggregated by Race	Value	Error Margin
Years of Potential Life Lost Rate	5,400	5,100-5,700
American Indian & Alaska Native	18,500	14,600-22,500
Asian	3,200	2,300-4,400
Hispanic	4,800	3,800-5,800
White	5,100	4,700-5,500

Summary



Whatcom County remains one of the healthiest counties

- **Both in the US and in Washington State**

There is important work to be done to:

- **Move forward and not backward**
- **Ensure that the relatively good health in Whatcom County is shared by all**