



**Alliance for
Equitable Healthcare**

Bridging Healthcare Gaps in Kitsap

THE CHALLENGE

Kitsap County is underserved across multiple healthcare areas, leading to negative and inequitable health outcomes. Mental and behavioral health, including substance use disorder are identified as high-priority needs in recent assessments.

DATA SOURCES

- Listening Interviews
 - Provider Focus Group
 - Public Education Sessions
 - Countywide Survey
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MOST OFTEN CITED RESOURCE GAPS

Lack of Sustainable Funding

Interviewees and focus group participants reported they rely on short-term funding which negatively impacts program development and continuity of care.

Gaps in Collaboration & Communication

Interviewees and focus group participants expressed concerns about competing with other local providers for limited funding, stating they would prefer to establish collaborative, countywide solutions to existing challenges.

PUBLIC HOSPITAL DISTRICT

A community-created government entity similar to school districts and fire districts. Owned and governed by local citizens, PHDs are responsible for helping to meet the specific health care needs of their community.

HOW IT WOULD WORK

Healthcare Service Provision

PHDs aren't required to own or operate clinics or hospitals. We propose adoption of an existing successful model of contracting with healthcare providers to offer medical services throughout Kitsap County

Community Support

June 2024 countywide survey shows strong support for a PHD; 51% support it despite a property tax fee, increasing to 68% when property tax exemptions for seniors and disabled residents are mentioned.

An Investment In Kitsap

Public Hospital Districts are:

- **Community-driven**
 - **Focused on local needs**
 - **Financially stable**
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ALLIANCE FOR EQUITABLE HEALTHCARE

Launched in December 2021, our primary goal is to bring access to affordable, comprehensive, and equitable healthcare to our county.

<https://www.allianceforequitablehealthcare.org/>

The healthcare crisis in Kitsap County

“Data and community input indicate Kitsap is underserved across a wide range of healthcare fields, including primary, obstetric, pediatric, emergency, specialty, mental and behavioral health. Inadequate healthcare access has contributed to negative and inequitable health outcomes.” *Kitsap Public Health Department*

Recent community surveys/reports consistently identify **mental and behavioral health** including **substance use disorder (SUD)** as high priority areas of need. (2023 Community Health Assessment, KPHD. 2023 Community Health Needs Assessment, SMMC. 2024 Healthcare System Challenges and Opportunities in Kitsap County, Washington, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.)

Resource gaps are our greatest barriers to change.

Listening Interviews were conducted with 29 individuals representing 23 agencies. Participants consistently reported that **funding is unsustainable** for most of the organizations that render care for mental health, behavioral health, and SUD treatment. Organizations are frequently reliant on funding for short-term projects to pilot care strategies with no guarantee of ongoing dollars to support successful efforts. And, a majority stated that **countywide collaboration** is sometimes difficult due to competing funding needs/resource limitations.

During a *Provider Focus Group (15 participants representing 10 agencies)*, every breakout group reported **unsustainable funding** as one of the greatest challenges and barriers for organizations providing mental health, behavioral health, and SUD treatment. **Collaboration challenges among provider and community resource organizations** was also raised as one of the greatest barriers.

Making a course correction

A Public Hospital District (PHD) is a public governmental district with the primary responsibility of assuring the residents of the district have high-quality health care available in the local community (**Chapter 70.44 RCW**). A PHD is not required to own or operate a clinic or hospital, employ health care providers, or directly provide any medical services. Instead, the model we are proposing is to contract with healthcare providers to offer medical services throughout Kitsap County.

A countywide survey conducted in June 2024 by Kitsap Builders Assoc. demonstrates there is community support for forming a PHD.

1. Would you support or oppose the establishment of a Kitsap Public Hospital District that provided critical health care services not currently available to Kitsap residents by assessing a thirty-five cent fee on every one thousand dollars in property taxes? **51% strongly supported/supported**
2. Would you be more or less likely to support funding for a Public Hospital District knowing that seniors on fixed incomes, low-income homeowners and veterans in Kitsap would be exempt from these property tax fees, and that Public Hospital Districts are authorized by state law to deliver healthcare related services and are not required to build a hospital? **68% much more likely/somewhat more likely**

An investment in ourselves

Public Hospital Districts are:

- **Community-driven:** Overseen by an elected board which allows for local decision-making based on community needs.
- **Focused on local needs:** Enabling the board to prioritize services most relevant to our community.
- **Financially stable:** Offering a stable revenue stream to support services being provided.

Access to affordable, comprehensive healthcare impacts every resident of this county. Whether or not to form a countywide Public Hospital District is a decision your constituents need to make for themselves.

Your part in this effort

This is an opportunity for you to enable your constituents to make this critical decision regarding formation of a countywide Public Hospital District for themselves. Approving a resolution to put this proposition on the November 2025 ballot would allow us to decide for ourselves if we are ready to have a greater say in healthcare delivery in our county and prepared to assume the responsibility inherent in doing that.

Additional resource: Association of Washington Public Hospital Districts—<https://www.awphd.org/>