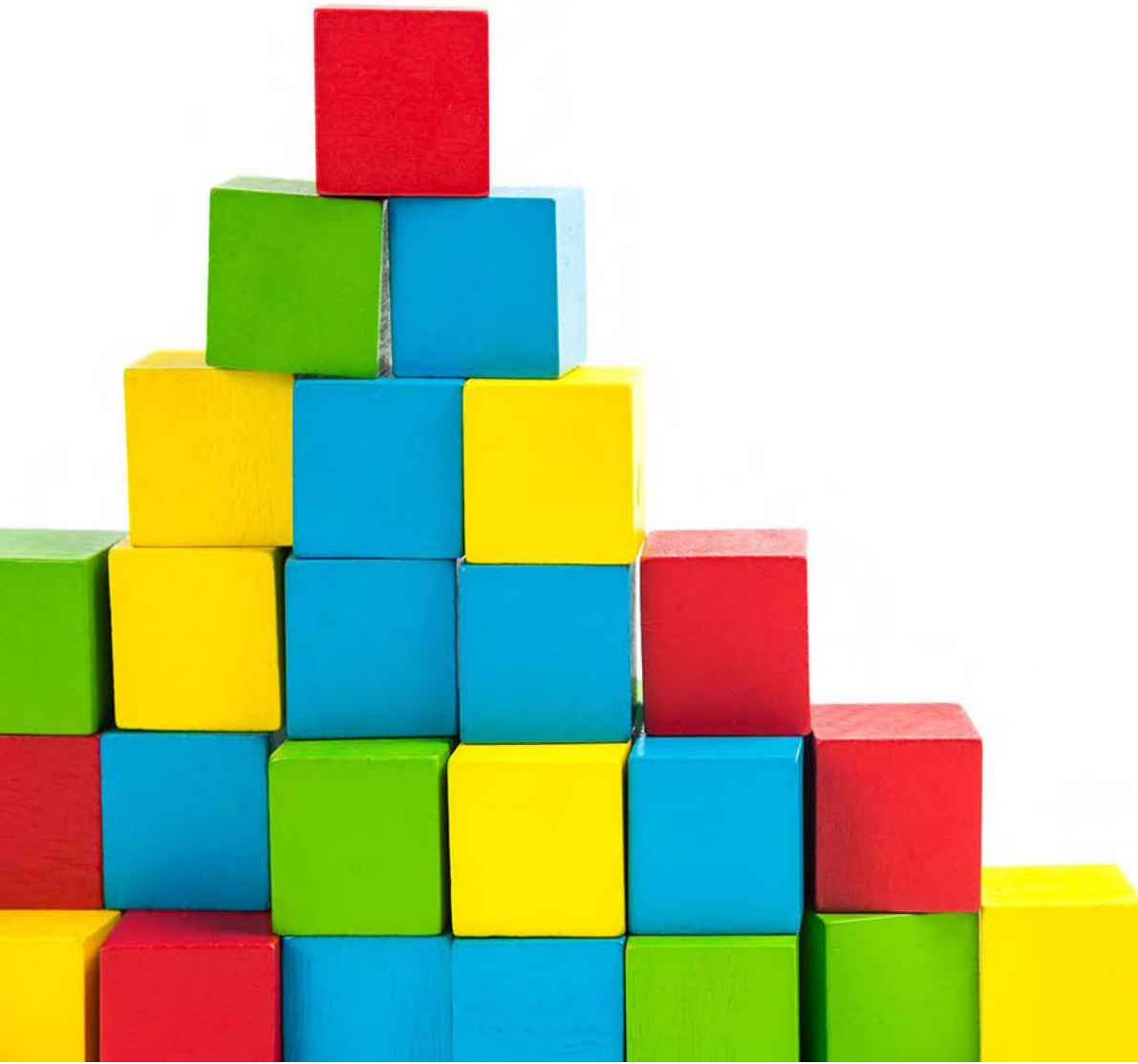




**Department of
Health and Human Services**
Behavioral Health Division

WASHINGTON COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH DIVISION

2021-2022 Strategic Plan



Introduction

The last five years have been a time of tremendous achievement and change for Washington County Behavioral Health (previously called Washington County Human Services). This included transitioning management of the Medicaid benefit for Health Share of Oregon from the County to Care Oregon. Additionally, two local Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) delegated Washington County to provide care coordination on their behalf. These changes impacted our role in the community, the individual responsibilities of many staff members, and our annual revenue.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all staff have transitioned to working remotely; the majority of our community behavioral health providers are delivering most of their services virtually as well. We have partnered with our provider network in creative ways to engage our most vulnerable community members in behavioral health supports. This includes launching our culturally responsive COVID-19 Community Counseling Program to support community members whose behavioral health has been impacted by the pandemic.



Jenny with LifeWorks NW helps an individual who is struggling with pandemic-related anxiety.

The community's true behavioral health needs as a result of the pandemic may not be known for months, if not years. Because of this, Behavioral Health leadership developed an abbreviated two-year strategic plan instead of committing to a five-year plan that could become obsolete. A shorter plan allows us to look at new data collected in response to the pandemic and identify and respond to the community's needs as it recovers.

What we do know today is that the pandemic is a traumatic event that is having a disproportionate impact on communities of color. This reality, paired with a heightened national focus on systemic racism and its impacts on both multigenerational trauma and health equity disparities, led the division to center this plan on race, equity and inclusion. Centering the plan on race, equity and inclusion also provides an opportunity to align this plan with the Department of Health and Human Services' strategic focus in this area.

Progress Toward Goals and Objectives from the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan

As part of the 2015-2020 strategic plan, Washington County Behavioral Health engaged key stakeholders and conducted a comprehensive system scan. From this, three priority areas were identified.

Priority #1: Develop crisis stabilization services, specifically a facility-based program that is complementary to existing crisis services.

Washington County Behavioral Health completed a comprehensive program development process, which led to the opening of the Hawthorn Walk-In Center in May 2017. Hawthorn is operated by LifeWorks NW as part of the county's behavioral health crisis program. Services are available every day of the year to all community members at no cost and are accessible via public transportation. The services offered at Hawthorn were in high demand immediately upon opening and have been consistently utilized by community members over the last three years. Several staff are bilingual in English and Spanish; other languages are available using an interpretation service.

Priority #2: Improve access to low-barrier and affordable housing for individuals in mental health and addictions treatment.

In collaboration with our Housing Department, Washington County Behavioral Health opened a six-bed home to provide supportive housing for individuals who have a mental illness. The home is available to clients receiving CHOICE services in Washington County. CHOICE is a care coordination program offered as part of our contracts with both the Oregon Health Authority and the local Coordinated Care Organizations. The program aims to support adults with high levels of behavioral health needs in the community.

Behavioral Health has developed a strong relationship with our county's Department of Housing and will continue to prioritize this area in the current strategic plan. Funding opportunities through the recently passed Metro Supportive Housing Measure will allow us to collaborate on additional permanent supportive housing for clients with behavioral health needs.

Priority #3: Improve timely access to treatment services.

Washington County Health and Human Services also identified behavioral health access as a priority area in their most recent Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). Many of the variables impacting behavioral health access, such as health insurance enrollment, are outside of the Behavioral Health Division's scope of influence. We determined it was appropriate to collaborate with Public Health and other divisions within Health and Human Services on this priority, rather than working on it alone.

2021-2022 Strategic Plan Priority Areas

At the beginning of our strategic planning process, we had intended to complete a meta-analysis of current community-wide plans to identify common areas of need that pertained to Behavioral Health, including the Washington County Community Health Improvement Plan, the Washington County Leading with Race Report, and the Healthy Columbia Willamette report amongst several others. This process was interrupted by the current pandemic, which highlighted the need for an abbreviated plan. The following priority areas for our 2021-2022 Strategic Plan were developed through early themes that were identified during the initial stage of our planned meta-analysis as well as carrying forward goals from the 2015-2020 plan.



- 1) Address the impacts of systemic racism and inequality on the community and our division and improve the division's ability to support the behavioral health needs of impacted community members.
- 2) Develop supportive housing resources for community members impacted by behavioral health needs.
- 3) Address the underdeveloped areas of Washington County's local system of care through infrastructure development, including progress toward the development of the Center for Addictions Treatment and Triage (CATT).

Throughout each of these priority areas, we will focus on developing and strengthening key partnerships that will inform direction and decision-making. These partnerships include, but are not limited to, the Behavioral Health Council, Washington County's Office of Equity and Inclusion and Community Engagement, Washington County's Department of Housing, and other divisions within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Priority Area 1: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Addressing the Impacts of Systemic Racism and Inequality

Our focus in this area will include engaging closely with our Office of Equity and Inclusion and Community Engagement to ensure that a racial equity lens is appropriately applied to our work. We will work to engage traditionally underserved communities in behavioral health treatment, increase the diversity of our division's workforce, and center organizational decision-making around equity. This will include looking at barriers to hiring employees of color, and the development of an equity tool to be applied to internal decisions and the development of major projects.

This priority area will focus on recognition of intergenerational trauma that disproportionately impacts communities of color, including our own staff. We acknowledge that the pandemic has been experienced worldwide as a traumatic event but that it has disproportionately affected communities of color. We will utilize a trauma-informed approach to support our staff and community members both during and after the pandemic. This includes partnering with our provider network to support our community members impacted by the pandemic and looking at ways to promote employee wellness while staff members are working remotely then transitioning back to the office.

Priority Area 2: Supportive Housing

This priority area will focus on strengthening our partnership with the Department of Housing and other relevant partners to develop supportive housing opportunities for community members impacted by their behavioral health needs. Part of this partnership will include collaborating with the Department of Housing on supportive housing developments related to the recently passed Metro measure.

Throughout 2021-2022, we will identify additional opportunities to develop supportive housing to meet our community's needs. This includes the development of a position that will be a liaison between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Housing to help identify community needs and support development of necessary housing resources. This will include partnering with community-based organizations to develop culturally specific resources in our community. Stable housing is one of the primary barriers to our community members maintaining treatment gains related to behavioral health, and we are committed to carrying this priority area forward in future strategic plans for as long as it is needed.

Priority Area 3: Infrastructure Development for Substance Use Treatment Services

Critical infrastructure to meet behavioral health needs has been historically underdeveloped in the county. We are completing a feasibility study in early 2021 to develop a Center for Addictions Triage and Treatment (CATT). This center will add capacity in areas where there is critical need in the substance use disorder treatment system of care. This includes but is not limited to residential treatment for substance use disorders, sobering, and withdrawal management.

We will be seeking support from the Board of Commissioners (BOC) on this project and will



CATT leadership is provided by the Behavioral Health Division in partnership with the Washington County Sheriff's Office. Together, we have facilitated a collaborative planning process that actively engages service providers, individuals in recovery, health systems and representatives of the criminal justice system.

present the feasibility study to the BOC in the spring of 2021. We are committed to dedicating resources to this project upon receiving support and approval to proceed from the BOC. These resources will include both staff time to develop and manage the project as well as financial resources to acquire property and develop the physical location.

We will continue to identify other areas where the system of care is underdeveloped in the county and look for opportunities to develop critical services locally. Several large capital projects to meet the community's behavioral health needs have been developed in other parts of the metro area, and we will continue to advocate for our community members and attempt to leverage opportunities for local development.

Plan for 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Development

In January 2022, Washington County Behavioral Health will begin a comprehensive assessment of the pandemic's impact on the community. This will include assessing impacts on the behavioral health system, including the financial situations of the contracted behavioral health provider network, impacts on client access to behavioral health services, and effects on the behavioral health workforce. This assessment will include a review of updated community assessments and available data following the pandemic and will determine whether adequate information has been compiled to resume a meta-analysis, or if a community-wide assessment driven by the Behavioral Health Division is needed. We will compile a list of recommendations for how to approach this planning process and present them to both the Department of Health and Human Services' leadership and the Behavioral Health Council for approval prior to developing the 2023-2027 plan's priority areas.

Contact Information

Nicholas Ocon, Division Manager
5240 NE Elam Young Parkway, Suite 150
Hillsboro, OR 97124
503-846-4528
www.co.washington.or.us/HHS

