# Kittitas County Public Health Department

# Community Health Improvement Plan

**KITTITAS COUNTY 2024-2029**

# Acknowledgments

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# A Letter to Kittitas County Residents

Welcome to Kittitas County's 2024-2029 Community Health Improvement Plan!

It has been over two years since the planning began for the Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process. What started with only a handful of people grew into a dedicated group of diverse Kittitas County community stakeholders. Six months of hard work from the Kittitas County Public Health Department (KCPHD) staff facilitators and community participants resulted in the CHA, the companion to this document. This was followed by another six months for the development of the CHIP.

Why do we spend so much time creating a CHIP? Because this is an important tool to address the community's health needs. A CHIP identifies big issues impacting community health and breaks them down into actionable and measurable activities that our community can work together to accomplish.
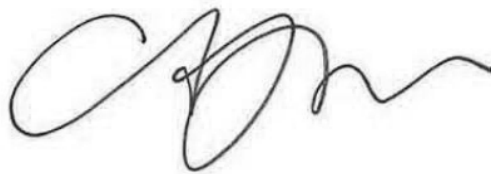
**As a local health department, KCPHD leads this project, but the CHA and CHIP do not belong to any one organization. They belong to our community.**

We hope that there are two main takeaways from the CHIP. First, that our Kittitas County community can learn about the three strategic health issues that are the highest priority address over the next five years. And second, an understanding of both how we as a community can accomplish these goals and what role local individuals, organizations, and systems can play. When combined, the CHA and the CHIP are a roadmap for community health improvements. For specific ways to engage with and use both the CHA and CHIP, please see page seven of this report.

We want to thank all our community partners who participated in this important work. Appendix A lists the participants, each of whom brought vital perspective and skills to this process. I also want to call out the hard work of KCPHD's Epidemiologist, Lianne Bradshaw, and Assessment Coordinator, MacKenzie Carter. Without their leadership and countless hours of work, this process would not have been possible. And finally, we want to thank the Kittitas County Health Network for their partnership and support in the creation of both the CHA and the CHIP, and for their commitment to the next five years of supporting our community to implement the CHIP strategies.

We hope that the possibilities and opportunities in the CHIP excite you as much as they excite us. Thank you for being a part of Kittitas County and taking these steps to improve the health of the community we love.

Sincerely,

**Chelsey Loeffers, MPH**
*Director, Kittitas County Public Health Department*

# Community Health Assessment Executive Summary

## Purpose:

The main goal of a Community Health Assessment (CHA) is to understand the current health of a community. It helps to figure out what health problems there are and the community's strengths and weaknesses. A CHA gathers and looks at data about various health topics. It also looks at demographics and social factors. This gives a clear picture of the community's health. Public health professionals, policymakers, and community members can use this information. A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is then created. The CHIP includes what health issues are most important and what resources are available. The plan explains what actions need to be taken to address those health problems. The ultimate goal is to make life better and healthier for everyone who lives in the community.

## Structure:

The Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework guided the CHA and CHIP process, aiming to develop strategies to improve community health and well-being. MAPP involves all stakeholders in the steps of assessment and planning. It identifies strategic issues that focus on key health concerns.

## Methods:

Using the MAPP framework, Kittitas County began the CHA-CHIP process in Winter 2022. The CHA-CHIP Stakeholder group formed after months of planning and organizing. It met for the first time in Summer 2022. This group then worked together to create a shared vision for the community's health. They also contributed to four health assessments. The assessments collected information from both community members and professionals working in a variety of fields in the community through the following:

- Multiple collaborative group exercises;
- Analysis of over 100 local health-related variables;
- A community-wide survey, and;
- Two focus groups of underrepresented groups in the community, including:
  - Residents from Upper County
  - Spanish-speaking persons

After combining and analyzing the data from the four assessments, eleven topics were shared with the CHA-CHIP Stakeholder group. This led to the identification of six strategic issues. Finally, the group prioritized the issues based on:

- *Social and financial feasibility*
  - Can this issue realistically be addressed?
- *Impact of not intervening*
  - What happens if nothing is done about this issue?
- *Geographic scope of the issue*
  - How much of the county does this issue impact?

## Results:

Three strategic issues rose to the top and were selected to focus on in the CHIP. These were **Access to Care**, **Behavioral Health**, and **Children, Youth, and Families**.

**Access to Care**

**Behavioral Health**

**Children, Youth, and Families**
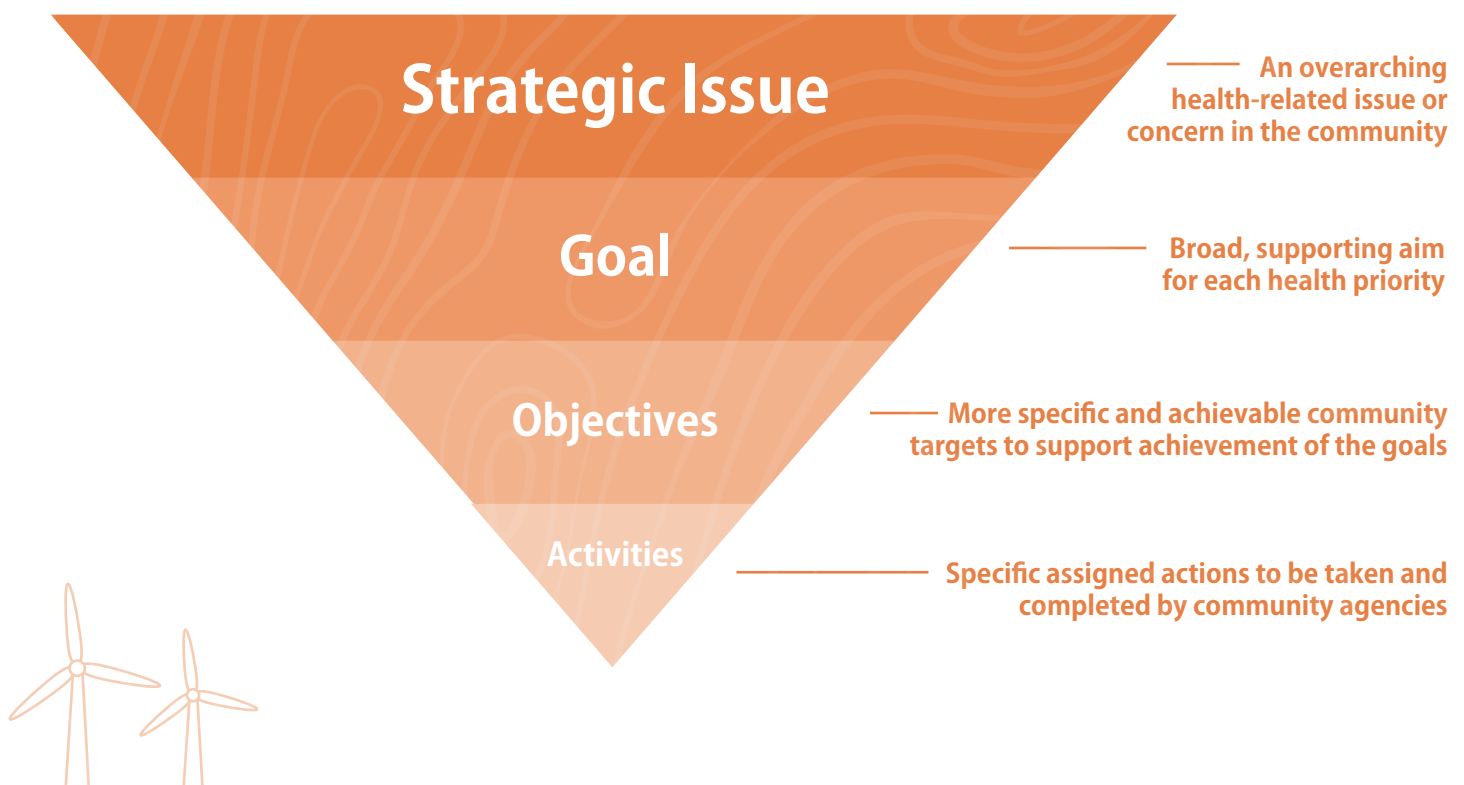
# Community Health Improvement Plan

## What is a CHIP?

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) addresses the health needs of a specific community. It serves as a roadmap for local health agencies, community organizations, stakeholders, and residents to work together to improve the health and well-being of the community.

The CHIP looks at a range of health issues using data and input. This includes preventive measures and health disparities. Finally, the CHIP outlines goals, strategies, and action plans. It is a guide for local health and social service organizations, decision-makers, and individuals. The CHIP is a tool for anyone who wants to improve community health.

## The CHIP is a Living Document

The health and well-being of our community is always changing. Because of this, improvement plans should be flexible. The CHIP reflects efforts to find the best ways to address community concerns over the next five years. During this time, the CHA-CHIP Stakeholder group will adjust it as monitoring and evaluation takes place on the impacts of the work. For more information on the monitoring and evaluation of the CHIP, please see page 13.

**Strategic Issue** — An overarching health-related issue or concern in the community

**Goal** — Broad, supporting aim for each health priority

**Objectives** — More specific and achievable community targets to support achievement of the goals

**Activities** — Specific assigned actions to be taken and completed by community agencies

# How to Use the CHA and CHIP

## How can a resident of Kittitas County use the CHA and CHIP?

1. **Understanding Health Issues:** Use the CHA to learn about important health concerns in your community. For example, diseases or environmental challenges.

2. **Awareness and Advocacy:** Use the knowledge from the CHA to advocate for resources or programs. Engage with local governments and authorities or community organizations.

3. **Participation:** Join CHIP-related events, workshops, or health-related programs to improve community health.

4. **Informed Decision-making:** Use the information from the CHA and CHIP to make informed choices about your health. This includes seeking preventive care or making lifestyle adjustments based on health priorities.

5. **Community Collaboration:** Work with neighbors, community groups, or local leaders to address health concerns together. Together, create a healthier neighborhood.

## How can an organization, business, or community partner in Kittitas County use the CHA and CHIP?

1. **Strategic Alignment:** Align organizational strategies, programs, and services with the priorities identified in the CHA.

2. **Resource Allocation:** Divide resources, funding, and efforts towards initiatives outlined in the CHIP. These initiatives target identified health priorities. Ensure effective use of resources.

3. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaborate with other organizations, community groups, or local authorities. Put in place initiatives outlined in the CHIP. Foster partnerships for collective impact.

4. **Program Development:** Create programs or interventions that address specific health issues highlighted in the CHA.

5. **Advocacy and Support:** Advocate for policies, programs, or funding that align with the priorities identified in the CHA and CHIP.

6. **Evaluation and Feedback:** Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions. Provide feedback for continuous improvement and evidence-based practices.

# Strategic Issue #1:
# Access to Care

## What is the issue?

When people do not have access to healthcare, it is hard for them to get the medical care they need. This means they might not get diagnosed with a condition as early, or they might not get treatment at all. And this can lead to big differences in health between different groups in a community. It also affects activities like getting vaccinations or screenings to catch diseases early.

Fixing the problem of healthcare access means making sure everyone can afford healthcare. It also means ensuring they can get the healthcare they need. This means improving healthcare facilities. This means improving healthcare facilities and making healthcare more accessible. It also means giving more resources to make communities healthier. By doing this, more people can reach their health goals.

## Why was this selected?

The topic of healthcare in the CHA had strong support from data in all four assessments. The Community Health Status Assessment showed that many people struggled to access routine care. This was especially true for children and those without insurance. The Forces of Change exercise and Local Public Health System Assessment  also highlighted a shortage of both general and specialty providers. In the focus groups and survey for the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment, community members shared similar frustrations and challenges.

The CHA assessments revealed that discrimination and a lack of trust in the healthcare system were significant barriers to accessing healthcare. Both the CHA Steering Committee members and community members themselves spoke about this experience.

## What is the plan to address the issue?

Objectives 1 and 3 aim to restore trust among those who struggle to access healthcare. This group may face complex health conditions. They may also face obstacles like language barriers or lack of transportation.

Objective 2 points out the lack of information on how to address issues with the healthcare workforce. It aims to gather data to gain a clearer understanding of this problem. Then, decision-makers at healthcare facilities and other organizations will be better able to put in place an evidence-based and long-lasting solution.

## Goal: There is readily accessible healthcare for all demographics in Kittitas County

**Objective 1: Support the efforts around coordinating services for individuals with complex health and social needs**

**Activity 1.1.1:** Expand Care Coordination services in Kittitas County by increasing bilingual workforce, expanding network of care coordination services, and improving community visibility

**Activity 1.1.2:** Increase staffing and quality of caregiving staff within the county by supporting caregiver organizations and incentivizing employment opportunities

**Objective 2: Conduct an assessment on healthcare workforce needs and improvement strategies**

**Activity 1.2.1:** Hold focus group or key informant interviews with local healthcare and behavioral health employers to gain insight into challenges and successes

**Activity 1.2.2:** Hold focus groups or key informant interviews with people in the behavioral health workforce with behavioral health lived-experience to gain insight into challenges and successes

**Activity 1.2.3:** Conduct a Mental Health Needs Assessment to determine areas of concern and opportunities for growth

**Objective 3: Addressing barriers to accessing healthcare services (language, location, literacy, stigma, insurance, cultural competency, transportation, technology, nontraditional healthcare needs)**

**Activity 1.3.1:** Enhance and expand harm reduction efforts and supportive services for people with substance use disorder

**Activity 1.3.2:** Establish and maintain a closed loop and warm handoff referral system county-wide

**Activity 1.3.3:** Expand mobile and free clinic presence

# Strategic Issue #2: Behavioral Health

## What is the issue?

Mental health, substance use disorder (SUD), and behavioral health issues do not just impact individuals. They also have consequences for families and society as a whole. Unaddressed behavioral health concerns can lead to increased healthcare expenses. They can also strain social services. This may lead to an increase in homelessness or justice system involvement. These issues also tend to go hand in hand with other health problems, such as chronic diseases. This leads to even more complicated health outcomes.

Many of these problems can be prevented if behavioral health is treated as a public health issue. This means fighting against the stigma and making mental health services more accessible. It means creating supportive systems and environments, and encouraging healthy behaviors.

## Why was this selected?

While identifying strategic issues, the CHA-CHIP Stakeholder group combined two topics. Substance Use and Mental Health became Behavioral Health. The data highlighted this issue as a significant concern in Kittitas County.

Mental Health and Substance Use came up in each of the four assessments, focusing on a variety of concerns. These concerns focused on a range of groups of people and services. Often mentioned was a lack of service providers and inpatient care facilities. Specific to children and adolescents were concerns over the state of mental health. Finally, people expressed optimism for the upcoming work of the 1/10 of 1% Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Tax Advisory Board.

## What is the plan to address the issue?

Objective 1 is about reducing Behavioral Health stigma by fostering better teamwork among partners.

Objective 2 focuses on prevention and education for youth in Kittitas County.

# Goal: Provide mental health and substance use services for all demographics in Kittitas County

## Objective 1: Sustained cross-sector collaboration for stigma reduction and resource awareness

**Activity 2.1.1:** Increase usage and awareness of the resource guide

**Activity 2.1.2:** Hold Community Conversations events to help reduce stigma within Kittitas County about substance use and behavioral health

**Activity 2.1.3:** Increase the number of people in Kittitas County workforce with behavioral health lived-experience

## Objective 2: Increase evidence-based prevention strategies to identified priority populations

**Activity 2.2.1:** Implement evidence-based mental health programming in schools

**Activity 2.2.2:** Increase capacity for and implementation of behavioral health screenings and evaluations in schools and early education settings

**Activity 2.2.3:** Implement a hub and spoke model youth mentoring program that supports youth in Kittitas County

# Strategic Issue #3:
# Children, Youth, and Families

## What is the issue?

The health of children, youth, and families plays a big part in shaping the well-being of our society. The well-being of children and youth affects the health and stability of our community. Their development remains vital, as it influences lifelong physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The health of parents and caregivers is also crucial in creating a safe environment for children to grow.

Tackling the health needs of children, youth, and families in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is important. Attention on these groups creates better environments for growth, learning, and well-being. This focus also strengthens family bonds and helps us be more resilient in the face of ongoing challenges. Investing in the health of children, youth, and families is an investment in a healthier future. This also builds a strong foundation for a more successful and thriving society.

## Why was this selected?

Most of the data showed similar trends for kids in Kittitas County. At the county and state level, children and youth are dealing with worse physical and mental health than in previous years. This information appeared in all four health assessments, as reported by both stakeholders and residents. The data included a variety of health concerns, such as fewer children staying up to date with routine vaccinations, and an increase in poor mental health among adolescents.

## What is the plan to address the issue?

Objectives 1, 2, and 3 all aim to promote protective factors for youth. The goal is to address several of the underlying causes of poor mental health and substance use faced by children and youth. This includes opportunities for youth to voice concerns and weigh in on solutions.

Objective 3 focuses on both prevention and promotion of treatment for behavioral health issues faced by the children and youth in our county. The use of age-appropriate providers and facilities would help to reach this goal.

# Goal: Children, youth, and families in Kittitas County are safe, healthy, and thriving with equitable access to services

**Objective 1: Foster community resilience by increasing the number of protective factors through policymakers and other community groups to improve access to recreation and activities, childcare facilities, mentoring, and other prevention resources**

**Activity 3.1.1:** Provide input into the recreation center planning process by connecting with the City of Ellensburg (Parks and Recreation Committee) and the City of Cle Elum to identify opportunities to influence the process to include equitable community based programs

**Activity 3.1.2:** Support and promote the Boys and Girls Club efforts in Kittitas County by engaging the leadership to present to and participate in the Kittitas County Health Network

**Activity 3.1.3:** CHA-CHIP stakeholder agencies complete trainings and give presentations on ACEs and Mental Health First Aid to community leaders and staff of partner organizations

**Objective 2: Increase communication between all community partners, parents, and families to address adolescent specific needs**

**Activity 3.2.1:** Hold Parent Networking events in English and Spanish as an opportunity for parents to learn and connect with each other; providing food, child care, parent facilitators, agency resources, and topic presentations and discussions

**Activity 3.2.2:** Hold peer-led listening sessions for youth in English and Spanish with participants from all school districts, targeting underrepresented youth

**Activity 3.2.3:** Hold Community Connect events for families with resources and services from across the county by collaborating with KittFam

**Objective 3: Increase age-specific mental health and substance use services and providers**

**Activity 3.3.1:** Increase available programs and activities for youth prosocial involvement through promotion and new funding

**Activity 3.3.2:** Increase available mental health services in schools through funding opportunities

**Activity 3.3.3:** Provide Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) trainings to local schools

# Monitoring & Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation plan is important for a CHIP because it tracks progress and measures success. It shows whether the strategies put in place are being done as intended and are actually making a difference in the community's health. By checking and evaluating how things are going, it helps us figure out what's working well and what might need adjustments.

When making a plan to check and measure how well a CHIP is working, it's crucial to have clear goals. The plan begins by setting SMART goals — ones that are specific, measurable, achievable, important, and have a time limit. These goals help decide which things to watch to see how well things are going and how to measure if the plan is achieving its aims.

The monitoring and evaluation plan emphasizes the need for solid data collection. It will use a mix of methods, like surveys, interviews, focus groups, and health outcome assessments. Baseline data will set a starting point and act as a comparison against targets. This allows for an accurate measurement of progress over time. Quarterly check-ins will allow for continuous improvement in our efforts. From those conversations and gathered evidence, strategies can shift based on real-time insights.

Progress-tracking and accountability are crucial to the important work in the CHIP. An annual evaluation report will allow community members and partners to stay involved.

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