

A Vital Bridge with the Community

PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center

2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment



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Message from leadership:

Caring • Resourceful • Committed. These words capture the spirit of how San Juan County community partners have risen to unprecedented challenges.

We both came to know and love the San Juan Island community in 2012, when we supported the opening of Peace Island Medical Center while serving in different professional positions. Now, as we prepare to celebrate PeaceHealth's 10th anniversary on San Juan Island, we both find ourselves humbled to be in new roles that allow us to be fully in service to the community.

The last several years have challenged us like never before. We have heard from our community partners that the pandemic has impacted so many of us, in many ways. Our youth and elders have suffered from months of isolation. Wait lists for community services are longer, and the public and private sectors are facing challenges to recruit and hire skilled workers. Collaboration has been our saving grace. Better communication and coordination has made a big difference in addressing our community challenges. We also know that by focusing on building solutions for the most underserved and historically marginalized neighbors, we can enhance health for us all.

Beyond the challenges, there have been many bright spots, like bundling up with colleagues in the winter to provide drive-thru flu vaccinations. Or seeing the new San Juan Head Start classroom take shape. Or receiving news our community won another large grant for our collaborative efforts. These bright spots renew our spirits and remind us of how much we can do when we come together.

As we look to the horizon, we reflect on a day we spent this past summer gathered with our Coast Salish neighbors on the Peace Island campus. The resilience of the Lummi, Swinomish, and Samish people serves as both teachings and inspiration for us on this journey. We have taken their words to heart and raised our hands to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation of their heritage and relationship to the land and people.

We profoundly appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with our partners in support of the growing numbers of individuals and families who call San Juan County home.



Jack Estrada
Chief Administrative Officer
PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center



Rachel Lucy
Director of Community Health
PeaceHealth Northwest Network

Our report to the community

The importance of a Community Health Needs Assessment

Every three years, each PeaceHealth location conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as required by the 2010 Patient Care and Affordable Care Act.

Tax-exempt hospitals like ours—as defined by IRS Section 501(r)—use the CHNA to report current community needs, statistics and activities. We are also expected to develop an implementation strategy outlining our plans to improve health and well-being of the communities we serve.

We see our CHNA report and implementation strategy as much more than a requirement or obligation. Through this narrative, we are presenting the story of our dedication and service to the community and people we serve. Beyond traditional medical services and care, we are committed to helping people in need.

Click to view previous editions of our [CHNA](#) and [implementation strategy](#).



WHAT IS OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

Our assessment builds on the strong work of many local partners who have been keeping a pulse on community health needs throughout the pandemic. References like the [Opportunity Council's Prosperity Project 2021 community needs assessment](#), [San Juan County Health & Community Services reports](#), and surveys conducted by the [Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center](#) provided helpful insights.

PeaceHealth leaders also met in October 2021 with local nonprofits and government to hear first-hand the needs they see in the community. The priorities we heard in these meetings are referenced throughout this assessment.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

San Juan County is an archipelago of more than 170 islands in the farthest northwest part of Washington state, located between the United States and Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. Four islands account for 95% of the population and can be reached by the

Washington State Ferry System. The county's total population is approximately 18,500. Of these residents, approximately 33% are over the age of 65, making the population of San Juan County one of the oldest in the state.

Each of the ferry-serviced islands—Lopez, Orcas, Shaw and San Juan—has its own unique culture and all island residents have a strong sense of independence. They cherish nature and many retired to San Juan County to enjoy the natural surroundings and slow pace of island living.



OUR KEY FINDINGS

- **Demand for services often outpaces availability.** In areas such as mental health and home-based care, we have a shortage of healthcare professionals and vital supports. The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched an already-thin workforce while increasing the demand for services. From youngest to oldest, our community members rely on programs that provide social and emotional support and behavioral health services for their well-being. Care coordination and case management services continue to be an ongoing need for our large population of older adults who want to age in place.
- **Access to vital supports for families are trending in a negative direction.** The community is facing a shortage in available childcare and early learning opportunities for children. Demand for adult and children's dental services is nearly double what can be met through the visiting dental van.
- **Addressing barriers to rural health is critical.** Finding adequate housing, transportation, and food is especially difficult for people who live on islands. Transportation services are needed for older adults and young adults with disabilities.
- **Inequities in health access and need for improved language access** in all services is well documented by local Latinx healthcare advisors. This same group is identifying community-led, community-based solutions that can improve health for all islanders.

About PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center

10 Total licensed beds

0.58 Average daily census

2.84 Average length of stay (days)

109 Employees

164 Active medical staff

75 Inpatient discharges

16,479 Outpatient clinic visits

459 Surgeries

3,886 Emergency Department visits

*Source: PeaceHealth FY 2021;
Active medical staff as of October 2021*

ISLANDERS BELIEVE IN LOOKING OUT FOR THEIR NEIGHBORS

As the population has grown and aged, San Juan County's health and social service delivery system has been negatively impacted by the loss of community-based long-term care services for the frail elderly with multiple chronic health conditions. This gap became an even bigger concern when the county's only skilled nursing facility closed in 2017.

There is a shortage of assisted living and adult family homes and no county-based home health or hospice care. There is no public transportation system in the county and limited affordable housing for those who need to downsize as they age. If care cannot be provided in San Juan County, some residents have no choice but to move away.

The San Juan County Public Hospital District #1 provides a tax subsidy for uncompensated care for residents. This helps the uninsured or underinsured get the care they need at Peace Island Medical Center—in its emergency department and primary care clinic—without having to leave the islands. The hospital district helps support the partnerships necessary to move ahead to plan for future healthcare services, secure grant funding, and provide emergency medical services to island residents who come to Peace Island Medical Center for their care.

Consistent with the Public Hospital District definition, the service area is defined as all of San Juan Island, as well as Stuart, Henry, John's, Spieden and Pearl islands. The remainder of the county is considered a secondary service area.



Cattle Point, San Juan Island

Supporting health justice for all

From our very beginning to the present day

PeaceHealth was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, who traveled west in 1890 to care for early settlers and people in need. Their legacy continues today as we recognize that achieving health and well-being is a lifelong journey.

We are committed to our Mission: We carry on the healing Mission of Jesus Christ by promoting personal and community health, relieving pain and suffering, and treating each person in a loving and caring way. We are driven by our belief that good health, prevention and community well-being are fundamental rights. We support health justice for all and are especially called to be in service to the most vulnerable members of our community. And we believe that every person should receive safe and compassionate care—every time, every touch.

BUILDING A NETWORK OF CARE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Inspired by a challenge from the [Catholic Health Association's "We Are Called" Pledge](#), we have embarked on a journey to "put our own house in order." We recognize that change starts from within, believing that our caregivers can best focus on others when we put our focus on caring for them. This has been an essential element in preserving our 130-year legacy of community service and care.

As one of the largest employers in San Juan County with more than 109 employees, PeaceHealth carries an added responsibility to learn and lead. This begins with hiring a diverse workforce and creating the conditions where all feel a sense of belonging.

But we need to do more—and we cannot do it alone. This is why community-based partnerships like the ones described in this assessment are crucial for improving equity. Partnerships enable us to address social determinants of health and address the roots of inequity—together.

PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE ACROSS THE COMMUNITY—AND BEYOND

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients, caregivers in our organizations and across the greater healthcare community. We also recognize the significant journey that lies ahead—with partners and with our community—to move the needle on health justice, equity and inclusion.

“We have a responsibility to shine a light on the profound effect inequities have on health and well-being, and to do something about it. We are called to promote the inherent dignity of each person, to further the common good and seek justice through solidarity, especially in service to the most vulnerable.”

– Liz Dunne, President and Chief Executive Officer, PeaceHealth



RECOGNIZING INEQUITIES AND ELEVATING PARTNERSHIPS

During these unprecedented times, it is clear that Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities bear greater hardship when it comes to health indicators, educational success and economic prosperity. These disparities cannot be explained by socio-economics, culture or behavior. We have seen this across the life cycle, from birth to death, evidenced by kindergarten readiness scores, immunization, access to health services, overall health outcomes, and much more. By acknowledging that racism is built into societal systems, we can begin the work of changing the very systems that are the root cause of inequities.

All of San Juan County is considered underserved for primary care. Each of the islands in the county are [Health Professional Shortage Areas](#), a federal designation for communities with a shortage of primary, dental and mental health providers. This makes it challenging for the available primary care clinics to fully support people who are aging and other vulnerable populations.

For the convenience of the residents of the county, PeaceHealth has contracted to bring specialty care to Peace Island Medical Center. Our residents can access visiting experts in cancer care; cardiology; obstetrics and gynecology; ear, nose and throat medicine; orthopedics; gastroenterology and general surgery. These monthly specialty clinics provide critical access to care and reduce travel costs.

In addition, a new collaboration with the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center and Sea Mar Community Health Centers will provide periodic mobile pop-up health fairs for Latinx residents on San Juan Island. Sea Mar is a community-based nonprofit

A growing community...

SAN JUAN COUNTY:

18,498

Population

FRIDAY HARBOR:

2,740

Population

17.20%

2010-20 population growth

26.73%

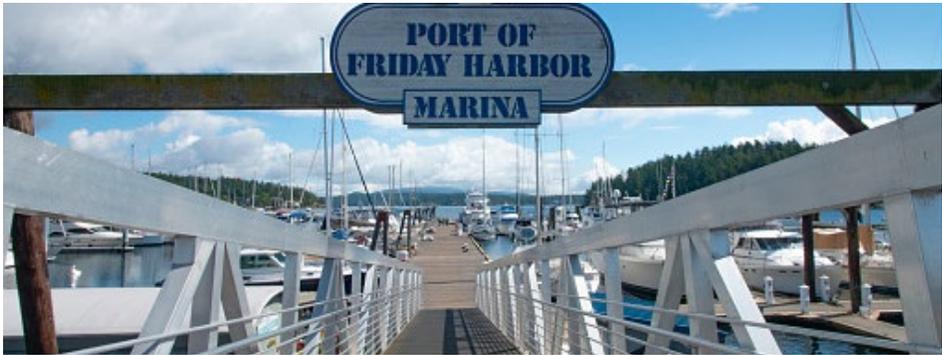
2010-20 population growth

Source: World Population Review

...is becoming an increasingly diverse one

% Race/Ethnicity Data of Population			
	San Juan County	Washington	United States
White	88	68	60
Latinx	7	13	19
Multi-Racial	3	5	3
Asian	2	10	6
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	2	1
Black/African American	<1	4	13
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1	<1	<1

Source: U.S. Census



committed to providing quality, comprehensive health, human, housing, educational and cultural services to diverse communities, specializing in service to the Latinx community.

Vulnerable Populations Workgroup partners include San Juan County Health & Community Services, San Juan Island School District, Joyce L Sobel Family Resource Center, San Juan Island Community Foundation, Interisland Healthcare Foundation, San Juan Island Public Library, Compass Health, the San Juan County Public Hospital District #1, and PeaceHealth. Together, these partners are united in their commitment to serve the community, especially those experiencing poverty made worse by access challenges.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Latinx community members are twice as likely to experience poverty than their white neighbors on San Juan Island; 1 in 10 white residents face poverty compared to 1 in 5 Latinx residents. The local Latinx community is also more likely to be uninsured—18% are uninsured compared to a 6% uninsured community rate, census data shows. Although the census data only captures a portion of the population participating, we recognize that the Latinx healthcare access survey conducted locally named lack of health insurance as the largest barrier to accessing medical care.

The [Opportunity Council’s 2021 Prosperity Project: Community Needs Assessment](#) also offers insight into where access needs are greatest. This assessment provides a detailed look at the experiences of low-income households in three counties, including San Juan County. In each household, people were asked questions about what services are important to them and how easy those services are to access.

For the following groups, these services were named as the **most important** and **hardest to access**:

	Dental	Housing	Jobs	Childcare	Mental Health	Utilities
Households with children age 5 and under	√	√	√	√	√	√
Seniors age 60+	√	√				
Spanish-speaking households	√	√	√			
People of Color	√	√	√			

Source: [Opportunity Council, Prosperity Project, 2021](#)

Poverty’s expansive grip

Poverty rate by race in San Juan County



Source: [U.S. Census](#)

*Other is an official U.S. Census category introduced in 1989 and can be used to self-identify as some race other than White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and Multiple Races. Some respondents also use it to self-identify as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish.

A year that inspired action

Answering the call of an unprecedented time in history

2020 saw the remarkable convergence of two critical challenges in the United States: the call for racial and social justice and the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has cast a light on how continuing inequities in income, education and access to health and social services inordinately affect Black, Indigenous and People of Color. As this public health emergency has progressed, it has become clear that vulnerable members of our community are more at risk for infection, hospitalization and death.

COVID-19 VACCINATION EFFORTS

COVID-19 vaccination efforts further demonstrate the importance of addressing systemic racism. Early in the effort, it became clear there were community-specific barriers to vaccination that required customized outreach. Peace Island Medical Center has partnered with San Juan County Health & Community Services, Friday Harbor Drug and private practice primary care providers since the beginning of the pandemic to provide community COVID vaccination clinics. As of November 2021, 73.1% of the San Juan County population is fully vaccinated.

Peace Island Medical Center continues to partner with San Juan County Health & Community Services to host ongoing booster clinics and a series of pediatric COVID vaccine clinics for children ages 5 to 11 with the goal of immunizing at least 400 children in the county.

It has never been more important for us to collaborate with our partners while expanding community-based care options to meet growing healthcare needs.

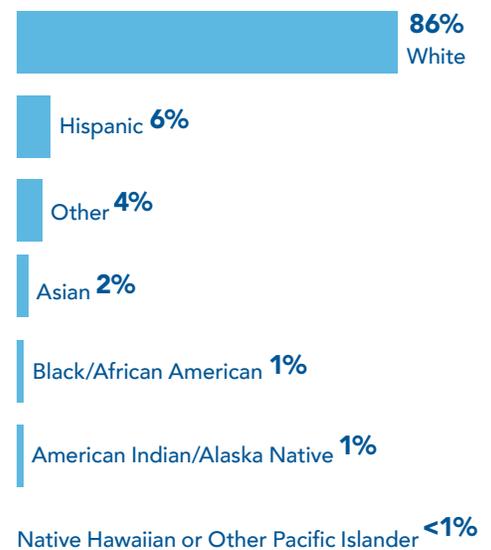
“As our population ages, there is a greater need for healthcare. But many of our current providers of the same age group are retiring, so we need to attract new generations of providers. In order to do so, we must address workforce disconnections around skills, benefits, consideration for health and childcare because they are dangerous sources of stress for our communities.”

– Meghan McCarthy, System Director of Community Health, PeaceHealth

Percent of fully vaccinated population, by race and ethnicity

73.1%

of San Juan County is fully vaccinated and of those



Source: [Washington State Department of Health COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#) (As of 11/10/2021)

COMMUNITY PHYSICIANS PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN OUTREACH

PeaceHealth clinic and hospital operations participated in weekly partner calls to discuss vaccine availability and storage and vaccination clinic schedules throughout the county. Information shared during these calls helped PeaceHealth effectively share vaccine education and provide COVID testing availability in the community. San Juan County Health & Community Services had limited staffing capacity to serve all four ferry-serviced islands, so they relied on PeaceHealth Medical Center to staff and host mandatory and frequently-changing COVID-related services.

At the start of the pandemic, Peace Island volunteers were sent home, but that didn't stop them from serving the community. Our nonprofit volunteers are dedicated to funding special needs in the community and supporting our caregivers.

In one ingenious project, volunteers sewed 613 mask covers out of surgical fabric—which can be sterilized—as a temporary solution to preserve the initial limited supply of N-95 masks. Volunteers then set to work sewing over 4,559 bright cotton masks for patients, adults and children for distribution at the medical center and in clinics, with 737 masks going to 35 community-based organizations including the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center, San Juan County Sheriff's Office, SAFE San Juans, San Juan Island EMS, the Friday Harbor Post Office and the Friday Harbor Food Bank. At the beginning of the pandemic, masks were in very short supply, and the Peace Island volunteers provided an important public health service to the community.

OUR FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

Our four pillars of community health ensure that we are partnering to create a healthy community beyond the walls of our medical center and clinics. Across these pillars is the awareness of our solemn responsibility to care for the most vulnerable and underserved people in our communities while promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do.

Enhancing health for all requires we focus on those that have been the most underserved and historically marginalized. In San Juan County, we will continue to seek out projects that improve community health and well-being for:

- Elders and youth
- All Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities
- Families and people experiencing poverty and housing and food insecurity



HOME

Improve access to service-enriched housing



HOPE

Increase education, access to treatment and prevention of dependence



CARE

Expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers



NOURISH

Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being





Increasing available housing

Giving caregivers a place to stay so they can serve the community

Safe and affordable housing is a vital condition for health. Unfortunately, the county’s affordable housing supply is very limited. Sharp increases in home prices, rents and land costs all contribute to a growing housing challenge. And according to a 2021 state legislative committee report, the gap between the median home price and household income is greater here than anywhere else in the state. There is also no permanent emergency shelter except for temporary cold winter options and no options for youth experiencing homelessness.

Without affordable housing, people with low, moderate and middle incomes will have difficulty staying in the community. This has a direct impact on our community’s ability to sustain essential services—education, emergency services, childcare, and more.

In January 2019, San Juan County’s annual Point-in-Time Count counted 149 individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk for it; 67 were identified as “literally homeless”—living in a car, tent or place not meant for human habitation. Another 82 were identified as “at risk of becoming homeless”—living with, or temporarily staying with family or friends. And an additional 48 were living in an RV or boat lacking one of five basic amenities: drinking water, heat, a toilet, the ability to cook hot food and to bathe.

“Availability and affordability are the County’s most pressing housing issues. The lack of affordable housing units in San Juan County combined with a significant percentage of housing stock made up of occasional or recreational use second homes makes estimating the future housing needs of San Juan County difficult.”

– [San Juan County Housing Needs Assessment](#)

THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

When we provide for housing in our communities, everyone is better off, and good health is more attainable. This is especially true for individuals with disabilities, our community elders, and medically fragile individuals. The community will need to pursue a blend of approaches to solve the complex housing needs on the islands.

Housing realities in San Juan County, 2021

\$890K

median home resale price;
highest in Washington state

62%

increase since 2018

57.6%

least affordable Housing
Affordability Index (HAI) statewide

103.2%

HAI score overall statewide

16%

renter-occupied houses;
50% less than remainder of state

Sources: Washington Center for Real Estate Research; U.S Census Bureau; Housing Advisory Committee’s Tiny Home Subcommittee Recommendations to San Juan County Council – 11/15/2021.

PEACE ISLAND’S HEPP HOUSE: A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The Hepp House helps PeaceHealth caregivers overcome housing challenges. With a generous gift from Judge Everett Hepp and Mrs. Dorothy Hepp to the San Juan Island Community Foundation, the Hepp House was purchased and renovated for use as a residence for visiting PeaceHealth medical personnel.



The locker room, living room and outside of the Hepp House, which also boasts six bedrooms, six bathrooms and a shared living space for caregivers.

The Hepps’ story is one of adventure, commitment, and professional service. This exceptional family lived in Alaska during its transition from territory to statehood and they later came to love San Juan Island. Their gift allows medical experts a place to stay while they care for people in our community, creating a legacy of health.

Workforce housing needs will continue to grow with efforts to proactively attract new residents to San Juan County. As part of that effort, PeaceHealth awarded \$13,500 in community benefit funds to the San Juan County Economic Development Council (EDC) Healthcare Career Pathways Project in 2021 and plans to award funds again in 2022.

These funds help attract more home health care providers by sponsoring full tuition for 20 students over two years to receive home health aide training and certification. Besides paying for the training, the EDC will also cover the state application and testing fees, and the associated travel costs for students. Many wouldn’t be able to serve as home health aides without these supports and benefits.

KEY BENEFITS

- Approximately 300 caregivers a year stay at the Hepp House.
- Savings of almost \$60,000 annually in hotel costs.
- Reduces demand on other island lodging and rentals during peak travel times.

“Housing is the bedrock issue. Doing what is best for PeaceHealth is doing what is best for the community when it comes to providing housing for caregivers.”

- Ryan Page, Housing Program Coordinator, San Juan County Health & Community Services



HOME - Community priorities: supporting affordable, secure housing

Addressing the urgent need for safe, affordable housing in San Juan County is the primary identified community housing need. Projects like those supported by the San Juan County Home Fund have the potential to create new rental units, preserve existing affordable units, and create new homes to own. These projects take time to develop. That’s why it’s important to simultaneously address short-term fixes that support individuals to age in place. Solutions like helping with home repairs can make a big, positive difference for people struggling to stay in their homes.





Resiliency in the face of hardship

Responding to—and preventing—trauma

In addition to the lack of affordable housing, there are gaps within the behavioral health continuum of care in San Juan County. On the upside, San Juan residents seeking services for mental health and substance use issues have new options available through partners and there is a notable reduction in stigma associated with seeking support.

Programs like PeaceHealth’s Integrated Behavioral Health in primary clinics helps patients in the short term with things like depression, anxiety, and substance use until they can connect with a mental health professional for ongoing care. The county also increased funding for the Community Wellness Program resulting in a 50% increase in the number of behavioral health sessions clients can receive (now 18/year).

With more than 44,000 deaths each year, death by suicide is the 10th leading cause of mortality in the U.S. according to the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#). The foundation also reports that for every death by suicide, there are 25 attempts, and Washington has over 1,000 deaths by suicide annually. (Source: <http://www.afsp.org/>)

Overall, behavioral health services in San Juan County lack the necessary recovery supports for individuals overcoming addiction, managing mental illness, exiting homelessness, or requiring multi-faceted or specialized medical and mental health services. (Five Year Homeless Plan – San Juan County, updated October 2019)

THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

COVID-19 especially disrupted delivery of mental health and substance use services. Providers like Compass Health had to switch to providing 100% of their services via telehealth. Group therapy had to be canceled. These initial impacts were followed by critical staffing shortages and extreme recruitment challenges. Professionals report that clients and staff have experienced significant declines in morale over time and report higher levels of health anxiety.

In the community, high levels of reported anxiety are also showing up in much younger children. San Juan early learning professionals and family support providers reported great mental health and social-emotional needs in children returning from remote learning environments. School counselors are overwhelmed by students who need help with depression and anxiety.

In addition to support services, treatment and behavioral health services

San Juan County behavioral health by the numbers

160%
growth in opioid related deaths over last 15 years

1,219
opioid deaths, Washington State, 2020

Source: [University of Washington: Addictions, Drug and Alcohol Institute](#)



are provided by PeaceHealth, Compass Health, Consejo Counseling, and Northwest Regional Center, and a limited number of private practice community providers. PeaceHealth is the only clinic on San Juan Island that offers Medication-Assisted Treatment, or MAT, an evidence-based model of care that uses medications, [counseling and behavioral therapies](#) to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use. Research shows that people who can access MAT services can successfully overcome their addiction—and for some—help sustain their recovery. MAT is also used to prevent or reduce opioid overdose.

COMMUNITY UNITES TO PROMOTE RESILIENCY

Increasing resiliency and preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) early in life can lessen the demands for these services later in life. Beginning in 2018, the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center and San Juan County Health & Community Services started taking steps to become an ACEs and Resilience Community of Practice, a research-based model for training and outreach for human service providers, government officials, law enforcement officers, first responders, educators, and parents. Many others joined on to lend leadership and build coordination. PeaceHealth contributed \$17,000 in community benefit funds toward the effort.



HOPE - Community priorities: creating behavioral health options

Demand for behavioral health and substance use services continues to outpace the availability in our region. In addition to finding ways to collaborate with partners and improve access, we see the importance of moving upstream, to reach young children, in order to prevent the need for services later in life.

Partners also asked for improved coordination and help for residents who struggle to navigate available resources. Additionally, the growing number of individuals who experience more severe and persistent behavioral health issues, compounded by conditions like homelessness, may need greater help. Programs like Compass Health’s outpatient behavioral health program could be of greater help if established across the San Juan Islands.

COVID-19 has dramatically shifted the way many health and social agencies provide services. Fear and anxiety in the community remain high. At the same time, acknowledging that online options are not desirable for all people, community partners are interested in resuming group meetings for health, wellness, and grief services.

KEY BENEFITS

- Secures a community-wide commitment to prevent ACEs and promote resilience.
- Gives partners education in protective factors that can prevent ACEs.
- Boosts youth resiliency.

“Mental health issues are often coupled with a complex array of interdependent social and financial factors that must also be addressed to achieve a successful treatment plan. Unfortunately, those patients are the least able to navigate our systems of service providers. The ideal would be a counseling system that provides multi-provider integrated scheduling and access so the patient can concentrate on healing.”

– Charles Anderson, Chair Emeritus of the San Juan Island Community Foundation



Improving inclusion across the islands

Helping those who struggle to access healthcare

The essence of community caregiving is engaging people in the context of their everyday lives and addressing the factors that impact their health. Since social and economic factors represent 40% of a person’s total health, community health workers and other roles that help people navigate support services can make a significant difference.

This is especially true when patients leave a medical center or healthcare facility and return home to manage their own care on the island. Some low-income community members who lack health insurance end up traveling off-island to obtain medical care—resulting in lost wages and inconsistent care.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS WORKGROUPS TAKE ACTION AND RAISE THE BAR

PeaceHealth founded and initiated the Vulnerable Populations workgroup in 2013 and facilitated it for several years, then funded a facilitator to keep this important work going. In 2021, the workgroup improved transportation access for disabled community members, and is also focused on finding ways to improve in-home and long-term care services.

The Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center moved into new offices in 2020 and added a new group of leaders to their thriving efforts. Their Latinx Healthcare Advisory Committee is an ambitious group of community members with lived experience and a big vision for how to improve health and healthcare access for our Latinx neighbors.

In their first year, the committee conducted a health needs assessment and hosted an inaugural free mobile preventative care health clinic to serve San Juan Islanders.

A total of 77 community members participated in the clinic held at the Mullis Senior Community Center. Sea Mar Promotores and clinical staff provided health screening stations, COVID and influenza vaccinations, and important preventative health education about cancer screening and diabetes.

Many families also brought children to the clinic, with some bravely getting their first COVID vaccination. Sea Mar’s multi-lingual care team conducted preventative screenings, provided immunizations, and offered the opportunity to discuss health issues with community health workers.



Community partners and PeaceHealth greet residents during the 2020 drive-thru flu vaccine clinic

San Juan Island healthcare navigation needs, 2021

1 in 5

people had regular access to a doctor or healthcare provider on San Juan Island

3 out of 4

people unable to access regular medical screening or wellness exams

1 in 2

Latinx families say it is very challenging to make appointments, fill out forms and understand bills due to language and literacy barriers

Source: Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center’s Latinx Healthcare Access Advisory Committee

OUTREACH TO THE HOMEBOUND

San Juan Island EMS Community Paramedicine partnered with PeaceHealth on an important effort to reach homebound people in need of COVID-19 vaccines. PeaceHealth Medical Group helped identify people in need and then worked with members of the San Juan Island EMS's Community Paramedicine program to create a map of the island and an efficient workflow in order to roll out the home services. A PeaceHealth clinic nurse rode along to administer the vaccine with a trained EMT to provide patient observation. By working together and going out into the community, workers were able to meet the strict guidelines for COVID vaccine cold storage.

Building on the strength of existing collaborations, the San Juan County Public Hospital District #1 received two important grants in 2020 from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

The first grant for \$750,000, paid over three years, supports care coordination planning in the area. The second \$100,000 grant supports the work of the San Juan Community Based Long Term Care Network. PeaceHealth is a participating partner in both grants.



KEY BENEFITS

- Increases healthcare education and services for vulnerable communities.
- Brings care to home or close to home, reducing need for travel on or off the island.
- Reduces calls for EMS and visits to emergency care for non-urgent reasons.

“Our healthcare access workgroups—developed by and for local community members—have made enormous progress this past year in identifying the overlooked health needs of marginalized islanders and creating timely solutions. Collaborative action is empowering our community to create compassionate, responsive healthcare solutions where they are most needed.”

– Jennifer Armstrong, Executive Director,
Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center



CARE – Community priorities: expanding dental, childcare access

Building on the strong foundation of community health worker programs, our future work needs to expand to reach underserved communities. A combination of new roles and approaches, like mobile pop-up clinics and outreach fairs, will be needed. The Latinx Healthcare Advisory Committee is leading these efforts and we are learning from them.

It will be vitally important for the Community Paramedicine program run by San Juan Island EMS to continue.

Additional community partnership is needed in the face of limited access to vital basic services like dental care and affordable quality childcare.



Expanding food networks

Ensuring access for underserved communities

Access to healthy affordable food is a critical issue affecting children and families in our communities. We believe everyone should have access to nutritious food, and we're also called to nourish their health because food insecurity can lead to a lifetime of negative health consequences. There is a clear connection between food insecurity and high levels of stress, poor nutrition and chronic diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes.

The COVID-19 pandemic erased decades of progress in reducing food insecurity. In 2018, an estimated 1 in 9 Americans was food insecure. That translates to more than 37 million people, including more than 11 million children, who don't have consistent access to nutritious food. That number peaked to new heights in 2020 and still has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

Community partners voiced a clear need to increase equitable access to nutritious food. They also highlighted vital supports that nourish families. Access to early learning, childcare, developmental assessment and dental services for young children were all named as resources families need to thrive, but which are also hard to come by on the islands.

Food insecurity is part of a complex web of issues related to not having enough resources to meet basic needs. Households that experience even periodic food insecurity often struggle with multiple challenges, including lack of affordable housing, healthcare, steady employment and a living wage. The result, for many households, is often a series of difficult choices.

Should I pay for food, or rent, or healthcare? In San Juan County, all food banks across the county saw an exponential rise in people needing services during the pandemic.

San Juan County food access by the numbers

1 in 4

households reporting member was hungry because they did not have enough food

37%

low-income respondents likely to have gone hungry in past 12 months

Source: [Opportunity Council, Prosperity Project Community Needs Assessment 2021](#)

39%

children qualifying for free or reduced lunches at school

Sources: *Nourish to Flourish Coalition, 2021; Meals on Wheels and More, San Juan County 2021.*



NOURISH TO FLOURISH COALITION WORKS TO END HUNGER ON SAN JUAN ISLAND

PeaceHealth invested in a number of projects focused on healthy foods and relieving hunger. In 2019, Meals on Wheels and More served and delivered 8,760 meals to San Juan County seniors. This number sharply increased with the COVID-19 pandemic with 22,675 delivered in 2020 and 25,200 projected by the end of 2021.

The team at Meals on Wheels and More rallied with the help of volunteers and grew the home-delivered meal program by 250% in 2020. Demand remains high on all three islands. PeaceHealth contributed \$12,000 in community benefit to support the growth and real-time adjustments Meals on Wheels and More had to make to distribute a huge new number of meals in many different locations.

PeaceHealth joined with other partners participating in the Nourish to Flourish Coalition, which is focused on ending hunger on San Juan Island. The coalition has created a community guide that lists resources, services and local contacts for food support. This important guide, available in both English and Spanish, helps residents know where to get food. Building on this partnership, the coalition is hopeful to strengthen food access in the coming years through tools like debit cards for use in grocery stores and at farmer's markets.

“Low-income families and individuals have been especially hard hit during the COVID pandemic in San Juan County, experiencing job losses, wage reductions, and challenges accessing childcare and other resources. Our food banks have seen their numbers rise dramatically this past year and a half. Almost a quarter of our population in San Juan as of the last SNAP needs assessment meets eligibility criteria for food stamps.”

– Kristen Rezabek, PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center Nutritionist and Health and Nutrition Coordinator, San Juan County Health & Community Services

Demand grows for Meals on Wheels and More

8,760

home-delivered meals, 2019

25,200

projected home delivered meals, 2021

Sources: Nourish to Flourish Coalition, 2021;
Meals on Wheels and More, San Juan County 2021.



Nourish to Flourish
End Hunger on San Juan Island



Alimentando a nuestra comunidad

Con comida sana y accesible para ayudar a familias y personas mayores



Una guía de recursos, servicios y contactos en la isla de San Juan

Community food resources are included in this brochure available throughout the community.

ADDRESSING GAPS IN CHILDCARE AND DENTAL SERVICES

Families rely on other vital resources like childcare to flourish. Unfortunately, a 2021 San Juan Island Childcare Needs Assessment confirmed concerning declines in childcare access for families.

By 2023, up to an additional 10 childcare professionals will be needed on San Juan Island to meet demand. But it is unlikely the workforce will grow if the professional wages for childcare providers continue to fall below a living county wage.

A thriving, well-resourced early learning community means that children are screened early by professionals for developmental delays and can begin therapy if needed. Without early screening and intervention, developmental disabilities can worsen and overwhelm available public and private school supports. Our community is fortunate to have the professional expertise of the Toddler Learning Center in conducting assessments. However, ongoing COVID-19 impacts has led to a decline in referrals for developmental screening.

Families also struggle to find dental care. Research shows that poor oral health is a key predictor of poor health later in life. Limited access to dental care means that some islanders must depend on the county’s mobile dental van for care.

San Juan County Health & Community Services reports that over 320 patients have visited the dental van in 2021, amounting to \$170,000 in dental treatments. This shows the growing need for islander dental care.



**NOURISH – Community priorities:
collaborating for food access**

The Nourish to Flourish Coalition is a leader in expanding access to affordable, nutritious food in our region. PeaceHealth will look to the coalition for guidance on ways we can partner to improve local food access.

Community collaboration will also be needed to address concerning trends in childcare and dental access. These needs will require us to work across sectors to find solutions.

**Childcare challenges
on San Juan Island**

45%

decrease in professional childcare capacity since 2018

0

licensed infant care providers

**newborn to
6 months**

working parents have greatest need for full-time childcare for youngest children

KEY BENEFITS

- Delivers meals and groceries to those who cannot venture out.
- Makes finding food resources easier through publication of community-wide resource guide.



Final thoughts

For times ahead

Our Community Health Needs Assessment process holds us accountable to listening and learning from our communities. PeaceHealth recognizes that our work is far from over. The needs are forever evolving—and so are we.

We are humbled and honored to serve and learn from our communities. We pledge to continue our collaborative work, standing beside our partners during these challenging times. We invite you to join us in our pursuit of health justice for all.

TOGETHER WE WILL BUILD THE FUTURE.