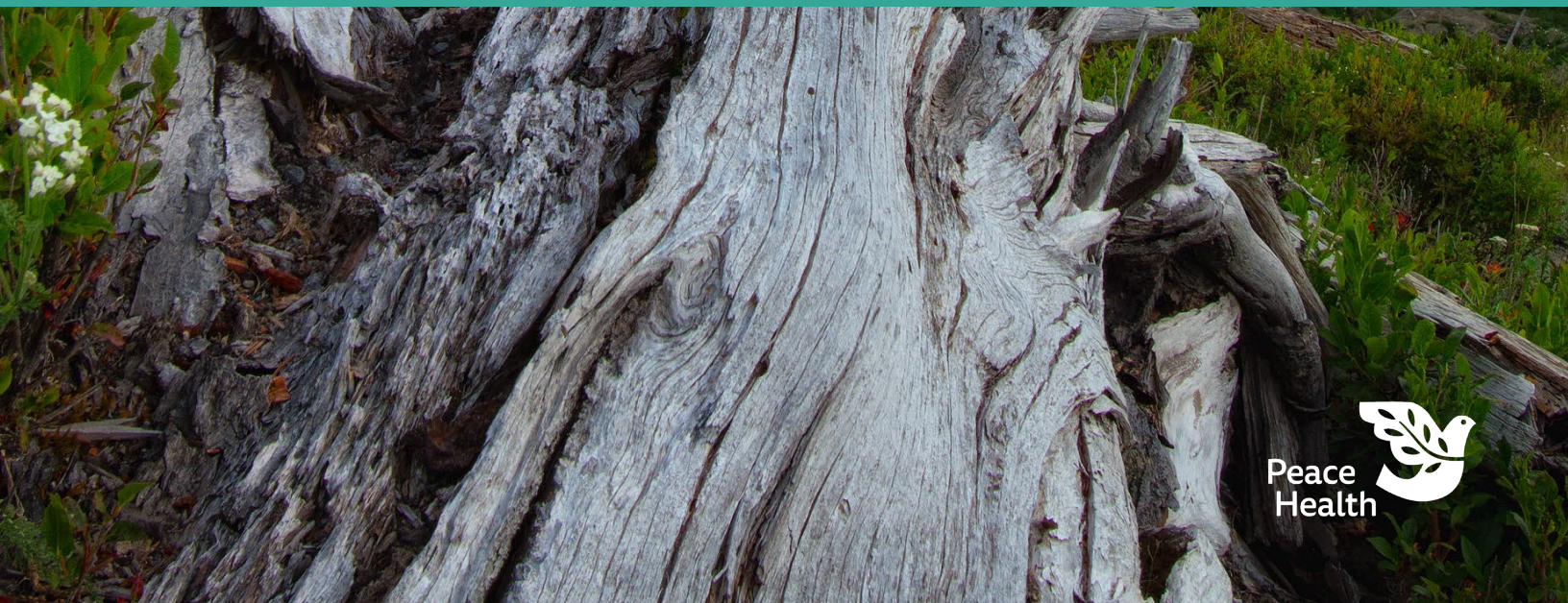




# A Vital Bridge with the Community

PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center

2025 Community Health Needs Assessment





# 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 the 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?

We conducted a thorough review of publicly reported data from national, state, and local sources to assess our community's needs. We convened community stakeholders from multiple sectors to review the data and provide feedback on community-wide needs. Our data collection and analysis were completed in the fall of 2024.

## Our key findings

There is a significant need for all types of housing in Clark County, specifically affordable housing, shelter options and medical respite care for unhoused individuals. The lack of affordable housing options and availability is a concern for the entire community.

Access to resources for food-insecure households continues to be an issue for Clark County residents. Historically marginalized community members ask for improved access to enough healthy, culturally-specific foods to feed their families.

The need for support navigating social service resources for low-income community members persists. Expanding community health worker, peer support, and community health advocate programs are critical to improving social drivers of health in Clark County.

Substance use disorder treatment and lack of access to co-occurring mental health services have become more apparent as the rate of fentanyl use has skyrocketed. The mental health needs of our community, especially children, continues to be higher each year.

Resources to address the needs of households living in poverty, specifically Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members who experience poverty at a higher rate than other community members, are needed.

Community members are experiencing social isolation due to decreased levels of community connection, volunteer workforce shortages and other issues. Seniors, unhoused community members, and individuals who lack reliable transportation or the ability to leave their homes are the most impacted.

## Who we are and what we believe in

Located in Vancouver, Washington, near I-5, I-205 and the Washington/Oregon border, PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center and its associated PeaceHealth Medical Group clinics serve the community as a Level II trauma center, a trusted provider of emergency and urgent care, cardiothoracic surgery, neonatal intensive care services, primary and specialty care, home health and hospice services, and cancer care with strong connections to other regional providers of medical care. We provide vital services to Clark County and adjacent communities, reaching north to our sister hospital in Longview and east to Skamania County in the Columbia River Gorge. We partner with other local healthcare providers to ensure equal access for all members of our community.

We work closely with federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), such as [Sea Mar Community Health Centers](#), and other primary, specialty, and acute care providers in our region. We strive to provide seamless transitions from our services to the community-based organizations that serve the clinical and non-clinical needs of our community members.

*“At PeaceHealth Southwest, our Mission extends beyond health care to serve the needs of our community. The outcomes of our Community Health Needs Assessment provide us with invaluable insights into the most pressing challenges facing our community. By aligning our resources with the needs of community members, we can better address these disparities, improve access to services, and work collaboratively with local organizations to create a healthier future for Clark County residents.”*

*— Cherelle Montanye, Chief Hospital Executive, PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center*

As Clark County’s largest employer, our impact is multi-dimensional. We provide living-wage jobs and care for community members’ health through our regional network of care and nearby System Services Center, PeaceHealth’s centralized corporate office, also located in Clark County. With a focus on serving the needs of each patient — from hospital care to recovery — we are committed to patient safety, transparency, and continuous improvement.



### About PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center

**287.1**  
Average daily census

**450**  
Total licensed beds

**5.14**  
Average length of stay (days)

**20,458**  
Inpatient discharges

**316,683**  
Outpatient clinic visits

**12,344**  
Surgeries

**78,931**  
ED visits

**4,158**  
Caregivers

**1,182**  
Physicians and clinicians

Source: PeaceHealth FY 2024



Access to behavioral health services, adequate healthy food and affordable housing continue to challenge many of our community members. These needs are directly related to the number of households living in or near poverty. The increased cost of housing and food over the past few years has significantly impacted community members' ability to navigate basic needs successfully. PeaceHealth Southwest has formed strong partnerships with community organizations to address these interrelated needs, ensure access, and provide the additional social support needed to help fill these gaps. The [Community Health Hub](#) at PeaceHealth Southwest will make strides to address resource navigation for community members when they seek hospital services.

## **Building a network of care from the inside out**

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients and 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.

# Supporting health justice for all

## Our Mission

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.

## Poverty and the connection to health and well-being

Poverty and health are deeply interconnected and impact individuals and communities. According to the World Health Organization, people living in poverty have a decreased life expectancy and increased child mortality rates.

Poverty profoundly impacts the social drivers of health (SDOH) — the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These factors are responsible for a significant portion of health inequities within and between societies. Poverty shapes these drivers in ways that worsen health outcomes and increase vulnerability to disease.

## Poverty's expansive grip

ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) aims to broaden the picture of poverty to include those just above the federal poverty level. These are individuals and families experiencing financial hardship who do not qualify for financial assistance. These are households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level but less than the basic cost of living for the county. Many ALICE individuals and families continue to struggle, especially with the rising cost of household essentials (housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare and technology). Households below the ALICE Threshold, ALICE households, and those in poverty struggle to afford everyday essentials.

The data on households below the ALICE threshold in Clark County reveals some interesting trends. In Clark County, the percentage of households below the ALICE threshold fluctuated between 37% and 41% from 2010 to 2024. The impact of these figures on the community underscores the ongoing struggle for financial stability faced by a significant portion of the population. The 2024 ALICE report highlights the struggle of ALICE households due to the recent increase in inflation. While costs have increased, wages earned by ALICE households have not increased at the same rate. Households who live month-to-month often forgo essential items like broadband services, reducing their spending on childcare, food, gas and other resources. These

## A growing community... Clark County, Washington

**521,150** population

**3%** 2020-23 population growth

**10%** 2010-20 population growth

## Clark County's poverty rate by race and ethnicity

**19.6%** Native Hawaiian/  
Pacific Islander

**15.7%** Other

**15.5%** Hispanic/Latino

**14.4%** Black/African American

**12.8%** Multiple Races

**10%** Asian

**9.2%** American Indian/  
Alaska Native

**8.2%** White

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022) American Community Survey

numbers highlight the need for targeted support and intervention to address the economic challenges faced by these households.

	Clark County	State of Washington
At or below the Federal Poverty Rate	8.52%	9.98%
At or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Rate	20.9%	22.34%
Below ALICE threshold (ALICE + Poverty)	41.41%	35%

## PeaceHealth's commitment to health equity

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients, caregivers, and the greater healthcare community. With the goal of eliminating healthcare disparities, PeaceHealth aims to ensure that all communities receiving care at PeaceHealth are treated justly and respectfully, with equitable access to opportunities and resources, and by transforming structures that perpetuate injustice. All funded PeaceHealth Community Health partner organizations agree to uphold health equity standards outlined by PeaceHealth as a part of our effort to serve the needs of our community with our partners.

## Our commitment to the environment

The natural and built environment of a community is a significant social driver of health. PeaceHealth has always sought to do its part to maintain the health of the environment in the communities we serve.

PeaceHealth's Columbia network is committed to building a comprehensive environmental sustainability program to address the significant impact healthcare has on the environment. The healthcare sector generates a large amount of waste and pollution, which contributes to environmental degradation and, indirectly, to health issues within the community. At PeaceHealth, we recognize the vital connection between caring for the environment and caring for the health of our patients and communities. As part of our sustainability initiatives, we are taking proactive steps to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and engage our staff in environmental stewardship.

A significant part of our environmental efforts focuses on waste reduction. We have expanded recycling programs to capture materials such as blue-wrap, glass, cardboard, plastics and wood, with a particular emphasis on our operating rooms, which generate 30-40% of our organization's total waste. By improving our recycling infrastructure, we have been able to divert a large portion of waste from landfills, contributing to a more sustainable healthcare environment while ensuring that our high standards of care remain uncompromised.





In addition to waste reduction, we have made significant strides in lowering our carbon footprint by eliminating some of the most harmful inhaled anesthetics traditionally used in our surgeries. These anesthetics are known to have a substantial environmental impact due to their high global warming potential. By removing these from our operations without affecting the quality of care, we are reducing harmful emissions and showing that sustainability goes together with exceptional patient care.

Our commitment to sustainability extends beyond waste management to the conservation of energy and water resources. We have implemented energy-efficient technologies and practices across our facilities, such as upgrading to LED lighting, optimizing HVAC systems and improving building insulation to reduce energy consumption. Additionally, we have introduced water conservation measures, including low-flow fixtures and water-efficient landscaping, to minimize water use while maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for patients and staff. These efforts are helping to reduce our overall environmental impact, lower operational costs and contribute to the long-term sustainability of our healthcare services.

Engaging our staff has been a cornerstone of our sustainability program. Through internal initiatives, we have worked to highlight the critical link between environmental stewardship and patient care. By empowering staff to become active participants in our sustainability journey, we are fostering a culture that values environmental responsibility and recognizes its importance to the overall health and well-being of our community.

Our environmental initiatives have earned us recognition from respected organizations. For the past four years, [Practice Greenhealth](#) has honored PeaceHealth's Columbia network for its commitment to greening its hospital operations. We have also been named Clark County Green Business of the Year for Large Green Business and recognized as the Washington State Recycling Association's Non-Profit Recycler of the Year. These accolades reflect our dedication to reducing our environmental impact and our ongoing efforts to make sustainability a core part of our Mission.



# Our community health pillars

We are determined to help create a healthy community beyond the walls of our medical centers and clinics. Our four pillars inform the purpose of community health. Across these pillars is the awareness of our solemn responsibility to protect the most vulnerable and underserved people in our communities while promoting equity in everything we do. These four pillars include:

- **HOME:** Improve access to service-enriched housing,
- **HOPE:** Increase education and access to treatment and prevention of dependence,
- **CARE:** Expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers, and
- **NOURISH:** Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being.

## Bridging the gap in our community

Our priority is to provide the overall best care possible to our entire community. To do this, we need to provide an equitable system of support that recognizes needs, focuses on overcoming barriers and builds resiliency for key segments in our community, including:

- Low-income households and children living in poverty,
- People experiencing homelessness, specifically Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community members,
- People experiencing food insecurity and lack of access to healthy, culturally specific foods,
- Individuals with substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions,
- Seniors and those experiencing social isolation.

*“The Community Health Needs Assessment process serves as a conversation starter that leads to an understanding of our communities that statistics cannot create alone. At PeaceHealth, we find value and joy in building the relationships that make those conversations never-ending.”*  
– Liz Dunne, PeaceHealth President and CEO





## Recognizing inequities and elevating partnerships

BIPOC communities are at higher risk for chronic medical conditions. With less access to healthcare, immigration concerns, language barriers, higher poverty rates and systemic issues that have led to inequitable access to needed services, we recognize our need to prioritize equity of access in our work to address the needs of our community. PeaceHealth aims to do this alongside our partner organizations. We support programs that seek to understand the needs of different cultural communities and provide culturally specific services to ensure all community members feel heard, understood and supported in their efforts to achieve health.

PeaceHealth and the [Southwest Washington Equity Coalition \(SWEC\)](#) have partnered with Puget Sound Sage to bring Sage's Community Leadership Institute to southwest Washington. [Vancouver Community Leadership Institute \(VCLI\)](#) is a six-month fellowship program that supports, trains and prepares emerging leaders from low-income communities and communities of color to sit on boards and commissions. Fellows are trained in issues like housing, land use, transit, climate and economic development. They learn the nuts and bolts of government processes, such as municipal budgeting, parliamentary procedures, and lawmaking, as well as advocacy and communication skills.

Now in its third cohort in southwest Washington, VCLI has served over 30 participants from Clark and Cowlitz Counties. Fellows and graduates have served on boards for the following organizations: Vancouver Housing Authority, Clark County Community Action Advisory Board, Clark County Developmental Disability Advisory Board, Washington Realtors DEI Committee, Clark County Justice Group and the Washington Coalition for Police Accountability.





## Community priority: Affordable housing

### Community need

Over the past decade, the vacancy rate of rental properties has fallen in Clark County. For many years, the rental vacancy rate was 1% or lower, with available rental housing in the spring of 2021 at just 0.8%, the fourth lowest in the state of Washington, as reported in our last CHNA. Vacancy has improved to 4.6% by the end of 2023; at the same time, the average cost of rent decreased in Clark County by about 2%. Although vacancy rates have improved, there is a significantly greater need for low-income housing than housing available.

Improvements have been made over the past three years due to increased access to emergency shelters, transitional housing and shelter for unhoused seniors. However, the number of unsheltered families in Clark County increased by 44% in 2024 when compared to the prior year.

Of all renters in Clark County, 31.5% are cost-burdened, meaning more than 30% of their income goes to housing costs. Nearly 13% are severely cost-burdened, meaning more than half of their monthly income is spent on housing. In the 2024 Point-in-Time Count by the Washington State Department of Commerce, there were 1,366 homeless individuals in Clark County, an increase of nearly 400 individuals since 2020. Of those, 669 were unsheltered, according to the Council for the Homeless. In 2024, they reported that 93 individuals were under the age of 25 and 39% identified as BIPOC. BIPOC individuals are significantly more likely to experience poverty and homelessness in Clark County.

### Meeting and serving people where they are

[Thrive 2 Survive](#) has been serving the needs of unhoused individuals in Clark County since 2018. Early in 2024, Thrive 2 Survive was set to serve the unhoused community as the host organization for one of the City of Vancouver's Safe Park locations. In addition to this much-needed service, they desired to provide more outreach and engagement to individuals who were not residing in a safe park location but needed support to access stable housing.

PeaceHealth funded Thrive 2 Survive to provide meaningful outreach, engagement, and support services to unhoused individuals in Clark County who needed help. Their peer-led workforce, composed of individuals with lived experience, has made a significant difference in a short time. Since receiving PeaceHealth funding in July 2024, they have managed a caseload of 32 individuals and outreached over 300 individuals in encampments around the county. They have provided hundreds of

### Housing realities of Clark County

- 10.1%** Housing insecure households
- 12.6%** Severely cost-burdened households
- 31.5%** Cost-burdened households
- 4.6%** Rental vacancy rate

Source: WA State Apartment Market Report 2023,  
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



**THRIVE2SURVIVE**

### Clark County homelessness by the numbers

- 1,366** Homeless individuals during point-in-time count
- 669** Unsheltered individuals during point-in-time count
- 146** Unhoused households with children
- 39%** Unhoused who identify as BIPOC community members

Source: 2024 Point-in-Time Count, Washington State  
Commerce Dept. & Council for the Homeless

services, with the majority resulting in positive outcomes, such as resources gained, barriers removed, housing accessed and enrollment in essential services like Social Security, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Long Term Care and other basic needs.



*"I'm not an easy man to get along with, but Kyle and Sammy have helped me more than I believed they would or should. They show up weekly to check on me now that I am inside and get me to my state mandated treatment program, so I can reduce my supervision. I consider them my friends."*  
— Thrive 2 Survive Client

## PeaceHealth investment

PeaceHealth has partnered with multiple organizations to support the homeless crisis response system, emergency shelters, and access to housing support for individuals in transition, and it has increased the number of low-income housing opportunities in Clark County over the past three years. PeaceHealth's investment of \$387,000 in support of [The Foundation WA](#), [Thrive 2 Survive](#), [Council for the Homeless](#), and [Share Vancouver](#) has helped these organizations address the housing needs of our community members in impactful ways.

### Key benefits

- Connection to permanent housing.
- Support for essential services.
- Access to hygiene items and ability to attend to personal needs with dignity.





## Community priority: Increase access for all

### Community need

Clark County residents have struggled with substance use just like other communities in the state and the nation. In 2023, reports showed that 13% of adults and 13% of 10th graders in the county reported using tobacco products (vape, smokeless or cigarette) in the past 30 days compared to 11% and 13%, respectively, across the state of Washington. Clark County reported 86 drug overdose deaths, 16 per 100,000 residents, compared to 25 deaths per 100,000 residents in the rest of Washington State, according to 2022 Washington State Department of Health reports.

Behavioral health needs have continued to increase over the past three years. Drug overdoses rose in Washington State by 30% in both 2020 and 2021 and continued to grow by 17% in 2022. This trend includes a significant increase in the number of deaths related to synthetic non-pharmaceutical fentanyl, far more than any other substance, according to the University of Washington Drug and Alcohol Institute in 2022.

In March of 2023, the Washington State Department of Health Healthy Youth Survey assessed the health behaviors and mental health and resiliency of more than 217,000 youth in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12.

Although still concerning, the results of the survey showed improvements in the mental health of youth compared to the past surveys completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Feelings of depression or contemplation of suicide among 10th graders declined from 30% in 2021 to 15% in 2023. Students also reported an increase in support from trusted adults and schools and academic success for the same period. Transgender and LGBTQ+ students continue to report higher incidences of depression and self-harm. These statistics reflect the positive work that has occurred to support youth since the pandemic and continue to highlight the need for more mental health support for youth.

### Creating access with mobile health

[Columbia River Mental Health](#) has served the Clark County community with behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment for more than 20 years. As identified in our last Community Health Needs Assessment, the team at Columbia River Mental Health observed the significant needs of unhoused community members who also struggled to access mental health, substance use, and physical health resources. The unhoused community struggles uniquely to access care due to stigma, lack of transportation, fear, a lack of trust caused by prior poor experiences and the fact that going to an appointment means leaving their belongings and pets behind — and

### The opioid crisis in our community and state

- 86** Opioid drug overdose deaths in Clark County (WA DOH 2022 Opioid and Drug Use Data Dashboard)
- 17%** increase in the number of overdose deaths in Washington State (University of Washington Drug and Alcohol Institute Washington State, 2022)
- 42%** of all Washington State injury deaths are drug overdoses (WA DOH Opioid Overdose Dashboard 2022)
- 13%** of all Clark County adults smoke (Robert Wood Johnson 2021 County Health Rankings)
- 13%** of all Clark County 10th graders use tobacco products (WA DOH 2023 Healthy Youth Survey)
- 18%** of all Washington State 12th graders have used alcohol in the past 30 days (WA DOH 2023 Healthy Youth Survey)



they may not be there when they get back. With knowledge of these challenges, Columbia River developed a mobile health program to go to the unhoused community, meet them, build respect and trust and offer services. Services provided by the mobile health team include basic physical health care, such as wound care, vaccines, medical assessments and medication education, substance use disorder treatment and assessments, case management services and other outreach services to connect community members with resources.

Since the program began in November 2021, the Mobile Health Team has provided 4,791 documented services to approximately 750 individuals. Of those services, over 1,200 were for medical needs, 224 were mental health assessments, and 75 were substance use disorder assessments, with 217 total substance use disorder services provided. Case Management was provided over 575 times, and outreach was completed more than 1,600 times. Columbia River proudly partners with PeaceHealth and other providers of services to ensure the individuals they work with can access the resources they need to meet their individual goals related to housing and health. PeaceHealth is proud to have provided \$250,000 in funding to Columbia River Mental Health to support the start-up of the mobile health program. The work of the mobile health team has made a significant difference for members of the unhoused community, created direct connections to care, helped to reduce stigma and built trust among unhoused community members for the systems of care that seek to support them.

## Clark County behavioral health by the numbers

- 10<sup>th</sup>** leading cause of death in Washington State is death by suicide (*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2023*)
- 15%** age-adjusted suicide rate per 100,000 individuals (*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2023*)
- 83%** of Washington State communities without enough mental health providers (*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2023*)
- 37%** of Washington State 12<sup>th</sup> graders are unable to stop worrying (*WA DOH 2023 Healthy Youth Survey*)



*"One of our mobile health clients had been living in her car, which was exacerbating her mental health and medical issues. The team provided support for both mental health and basic medical care and assisted with connections to needed medical services. The client is now housed with the assistance of the team and reports that it would not have been possible without the support of mobile health."*

*– Columbia River Mental Health Mobile Health team member*

## PeaceHealth investment

Over the past three years, PeaceHealth has contributed \$790,000 to partner organizations that work directly with individuals of all ages in our community to address and prevent mental health and substance use disorders. Our partnerships with [Columbia River Mental Health](#), [4D Recovery](#), [Recovery Cafe](#) and community health worker organizations have helped to build resilience among community members who have struggled to access resources to address their mental health needs due to stigma and the limited resources available in our communities.

### Key benefits

- Serving individuals in the community increased engagement.
- Increase in access to substance use and mental health services.
- Ability to provide care for minor medical needs without transport to clinics or hospitals.







## Community priority: Supporting the whole person

### Community need

Demand for whole-person care — addressing both the medical and social needs of individuals in our community — is high. Our partnerships with community organizations aim to reach deep into our communities to engage individuals and families in their everyday lives, addressing social, economic and behavioral needs that impact their health. This is especially important when patients leave our direct care and return home to manage their health. Our goal is to create supportive environments where patients can develop the skills and community relationships needed to manage their health. According to the 2024 ALICE data, 41% of individuals in Clark County are employed but living on the edge of poverty. This contributes significantly to the social stresses they experience daily, impacting all areas of their lives. This stress and lack of resources often lead to unstable housing and access to food, as well as mental health challenges. To truly serve our community, we need to support the efforts of organizations that can help holistically address these needs to help community members maintain or improve their health and prevent chronic diseases.

Supports navigating access to safe housing, nutrition and emotional well-being can significantly improve individual health today and increase the likelihood of maintaining or improving health as patients age. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, 8.52% of individuals in Clark County live in poverty, and 8.8% are disabled, according to the 2020 US Census. Notably, 8% of Clark County adults have diabetes, the same as the state average of 8%. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation also shared that 32% of Clark residents are overweight or obese. All are indications of inadequate social support, leading to health consequences for the community.

### Culturally specific care for uninsured

[The Free Clinic of Southwest Washington](#) (Free Clinic) has been a long-time partner of PeaceHealth, serving the healthcare needs of individuals who do not have health insurance. Over time, the Free Clinic has seen a shift in the demographics of individuals who seek their services. As the community has become more diverse, the Free Clinic has served as a safe space for community members to seek care, many of whom are Hispanic. Often, the individuals being served have a need for education and medication related to their chronic conditions, as well as help managing their disease in a culturally specific way.





*"The compassion I receive at the Free Clinic is wonderful. You can tell the people legitimately care about you, and their sole purpose is to help you. This is felt when you come in the front door all the way until you are leaving your appointment. You always see a smile on a friendly face."*

*– Free Clinic of Southwest Washington patient*

Since 2019, PeaceHealth has funded the Free Clinic to support the cost of a bilingual Community Health Worker who provides outreach and support to members of our community who seek care at the Free Clinic. Since the inception of the program, the Free Clinic's Community Health Worker has provided support for not just health needs but help with translation services during 748 patient appointments, assistance with insurance navigation for 55 individuals, and support for over 1,200 individuals who are navigating the confusing process of applying for financial aid from healthcare organizations who provide the care the Free Clinic cannot. Nine eye clinics have also been coordinated for Free Clinic diabetic patients. The trust and relationship the Community Health Worker and the team at the free clinic have with their patients is second to none. Their open approach to welcoming and supporting those in need in a way that is best for their unique culture has made a difference in the health of our community members.

PeaceHealth is also a partner with providers of specialty services to serve Free Clinic clients that need specialty care- at no cost. Project Access distributes referrals amongst providers of care to ensure access, through shared responsibility. In calendar year 2024 project access received 660 referrals, enrolled 463 patients and coordinated 710 appointments for free clinic patients. On average, PeaceHealth received 42 referrals each month from Project Access, ensuring patients could receive the care they need.

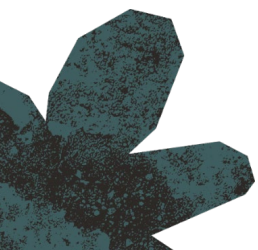
## PeaceHealth investment

Over the past three years, PeaceHealth has contributed \$391,845 to partner organizations who work directly with individuals of all ages in our community to offer peer support and community health workers with [YWCA of Clark County](#), [Clark Cowlitz Fire and Rescue](#), [The Free Clinic of SW Washington](#), [SW Washington Accountable Community of Health \(SWACH\)](#) and [Share Vancouver](#) to provide outreach and support to help community members gain access to services that will improve

## Key benefits

- Improved access to health care for on-going medical needs.
- Better communication and understanding of care needs through shared language and cultural competence.
- Decreased financial strain due to support for navigating financial assistance programs.

their health. These services range from housing and food assistance to help with navigating health insurance, education services and transportation. With the valuable resources provided by community health workers and peer support, community members can have their basic needs met.





# Community Health Hub

## Enhancing community wellness: Connecting care beyond clinical walls

The Community Health Hub is a new, innovative program at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center that integrates social services into our emergency care through the support of local social service organizations. The trauma-informed space was completed with thoughtful input from community partner organizations to serve our patients and community successfully. The Community Health Hub offers our community partners the opportunity to co-locate and collaborate onsite at PeaceHealth Southwest, providing our patients with direct access to non-clinical services. Along with increased behavioral health and substance use support in our emergency department, the Community Health Hub offers increased support for individuals experiencing homelessness, domestic and sexual violence, food insecurity, lack of primary care follow-up and transportation barriers.

The Community Health Hub leans on the skills, knowledge and lived experience of a community-based workforce. This workforce is invaluable, helping patients navigate many of the community's challenging systems and assisting during periods of care transition, a time when a little extra support is needed. The Community Health Hub promotes warm handoffs and direct connections with community health workers to help build trust, develop a post-hospital follow-up plan, and enhance our patients' engagement in social services.

With the shift in our approach to patient care, the Community Health Hub provides PeaceHealth Southwest patients with true whole-person care, prioritizing not only medical needs but also non-medical needs. Because no other healthcare system has a model like this, the Community Health Hub is a pilot program and will be met with continued process improvement and data analysis. PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center knows that the needs of our community will change, and we are committed to continuing to adapt and grow the Community Health Hub to ensure we provide equitable and accessible services and resources to our community's most vulnerable populations.

### Preliminary data for the Community Health Hub

- 92% of the patients referred to the Community Health Hub identified housing as their primary need.
- 47% of the patients referred to the Community Health Hub identified that they experience food insecurity.
- 84% of patients identified two or more non-medical needs with which they want additional support.





## Community priority: Getting food where it's needed

### Community need

In 2024, Feeding America reported that 56,930 individuals in Clark County were food insecure, approximately 11.3% of the total county population. In comparison, the rate of food insecurity for the state of Washington for the same period was 11.5%, and 13.5% nationally. USDA data indicated a national increase in food insecurity of 3.1% between 2021 and 2022. This is the most significant single-year increase in food insecurity since 2008 and the highest rate of food insecurity since 2014.

While food insecurity is related to poverty, not all people experiencing food insecurity live below the poverty line. Of the individuals in Clark County who are food insecure, only 56% qualify for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. The remaining 25,049 food-insecure individuals need to meet the income requirements to be eligible for assistance and must find food in other ways.

A food environment index indicates access to healthy foods by considering the distance someone lives from a grocery store or supermarket, locations for healthy food purchases in most communities and the inability to access healthy food because of cost barriers. The Food Environment index ranges from a scale of 0 (worst) to 10 (best) and equally weights two indicators of the food environment: 1) limited access to healthy foods and 2) food insecurity.<sup>1</sup>

### Providing access to food when a need is seen

The [Clark County Food Bank](#) and PeaceHealth have collaborated for many years to address the needs of food-insecure patients who access care at PeaceHealth clinics and PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center. Our shared missions call us to care for the needs of our community with full recognition of the impact of food insecurity on a person's ability to maintain or improve their health. Through this shared belief, PeaceHealth and Clark County Food Bank partner to provide food boxes to food-insecure patients in both the hospital setting and through the PeaceHealth Family Medicine residency clinic. The clinic reports that 21% of the patients they serve self-report food insecurity, and nearly 28% report that they are financially unstable.

At clinic visits, food boxes provided by the food bank containing quality, nutritious food were provided to patients by their physicians and their clinical teams. Each box contains 20-25 pounds of food and resources in English, Spanish and Russian to help food-insecure households further connect to food bank resources in Clark County. In

### Food access in Clark County

- 8.7/10** Clark County Food Environment Index vs. 8.4 in Washington State and 7.0 nationally
- 11.3%** are food insecure vs. 9% in Washington State and 12% nationally
- 4%** have limited access to healthy foods vs. 5% in Washington State and 6% nationally

*Source: Robert Wood Johnson 2023 County Health Rankings*



<sup>1</sup> Feeding America and Clark County, Washington County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

one year, the clinic shared 10,000 pounds of food and 300 written resource guides with patients, all provided by the food bank.



*"I have many patients that regularly get food boxes. Being able to give these to my patients is a fulfilling part of my day. Many of our patients are forced to choose between food, rent or medicines. This is a small way we can help show we care about the whole person."*

*– PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center Family Medicine Resident Physician*

## PeaceHealth investment

PeaceHealth has partnered with multiple organizations to support gardening and nutrition education, food production and distribution over the past three years. Investments of \$487,930 in support of the [League of United Latin American Citizens \(LULAC\)](#), [Vancouver Farmers Market](#), [WSU Extension](#), [Heritage Farm](#) and [Meals on Wheels People](#) have helped grow the network of accessible nutritious food for residents of Clark County who are food insecure.

## Key benefits

- Immediate access to food resources with follow-up for ongoing needs available.
- Access to high-quality foods intended to support health.

## Final thoughts

At PeaceHealth, we recognize that the journey to health and well-being is constant. Driven by our belief that good health, prevention, and community wellbeing is a fundamental right, we are humbled and honored to serve and learn from our communities. Our Community Health Needs Assessment process holds us accountable to listening and learning from our communities and informs the development of our Community Health Improvement Plan. The needs are forever evolving — and so are we. We pledge to continue our collaborative work in the community and invite you to join us in our pursuit of health justice for all.