

# Community Health Improvement **FOCUS PHASE**

## Focus is the third phase in the community health improvement process

and marks the transition from assessment to action. The goal of the Focus Phase is to prioritize a few select issues that the community will collectively work to improve.

Priorities are chosen by community stakeholders, using data from the *2018 Community Health Assessment (CHA)*. Healthy Whatcom, a team of community representatives, selected data from the CHA to use in a facilitated decision-making process, called a data carousel. Over 90 stakeholders present at the data carousel held on April 24, 2019 participated in the day-long event to identify top health priorities.



## Data-Driven Decisions

During the community health assessment, several hundred population health measures (i.e. quantitative indicators) and qualitative data points are gathered and analyzed. In order to have a focused set of data to review with a large community stakeholder group, the Healthy Whatcom team developed a set of criteria to apply to these indicators and data points. If an indicator or data point met one or more of the criteria below, it was considered for presentation at the data carousel:

- Shows a negative Whatcom County trend.
- If confidence intervals were not available for data, a difference of 10% or more was used to identify a significant difference.
- Demonstrates health disparities exist by gender, income, race, ethnicity, age, or geography.
- Qualitative data collected at more than one data-gathering session suggested the indicator is an issue of community concern.

After applying these criteria, the Healthy Whatcom team identified 46 indicators that met one or more criteria. The data was organized into nine health topic areas that represented areas for potential community health improvement: economic security, education and school readiness, food and nutrition, health care, housing and homelessness, personal safety and violence, substance use and addiction, transportation and mobility, and youth mental health.

# Data Carousel

A data carousel is a rigorous community process intentionally designed so that the wisdom and experience of every person in the room is an important part of the selection process. Participants go through five protocols to more deeply understand how health and well-being are experienced and to identify a few relevant, actionable priorities that align with community needs.

The Healthy Whatcom Team, with support from the Whatcom County Health Department and PeaceHealth, hosted a data carousel on April 24, 2019 for over 90 community stakeholders.

## Data Carousel Protocols

1. DATA WALK	2. WHY, WHY, WHY?	3. SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTROL	4. ROOT CAUSE	5. PRIORITIZATION
Teams of participants interact with the data by visiting data stations. At each station, they make observations about the data and organize their observations into "strengths and concerns." They then use the top concern to develop a focusing question.	Teams explore possible causes and reasons that answer the focusing question.	Teams explore the significance (as a cause of the underlying problem) and control (degree of control the community has over each cause) for each cause or reason.	Teams analyze the interactions between the cause/reason identified as having a high degree of significance and a high degree of control. The cause/reason with the highest impact and interactions is identified as a root cause.	Once a root cause is identified, the team selects a few relevant, actionable, priorities that align with community needs and require the work of multiple agencies. These priorities will be the basis for the community health improvement plan.

## Results: Selected Priorities

During the data carousel, participants were organized into groups according to their expertise. Each group focused on one topic, and in the first four protocols, determined the most important thing to focus on in that topic area.

Once a root cause was identified, all participants reviewed information presented by each group before selecting their top three recommendations for priority topics. Participants were asked to consider the following factors:

- Impact on equity in the community.
- Community energy to address the health topic.
- Relevance and timeliness of addressing the health topic.
- Ability to implement or improve within 3-5 years.

The topics at right were voted as the top selections.

### HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

#1 Concern

**Child homelessness is high and increasing**

Focusing Question

**Why is child homelessness so high and increasing?**

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

#1 Concern

**Childcare availability, affordability, & staff compensation**

Focusing Question

**Why doesn't our childcare model work for anyone involved?**

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

#1 Concern

**Reported rates of anxiety, depression, & suicide ideation are high and trending poorly, especially among female, LGBTQ, and American Indian/Alaska Native youth**

Focusing Question

**Why are more youth reporting mental health concerns?**



## Partner & Community Engagement

### Healthy Whatcom Team

During the Focus Phase, the Healthy Whatcom team designs and implements a prioritization process for Whatcom County using countywide and community-level data from the community health assessment. The team is a collaborative workgroup comprised of community partners from several agencies within Whatcom County, and convened by the Whatcom County Health Department. Sectors represented include Public Health, Education, Community-based Organizations, Government, Business, and Health Care. Utilizing the community health improvement process, the group is deciding upon and implementing:

- Best practices for using data to drive community action.
- The plan and process to use data from the countywide community health assessment and *Community Snapshots* in a prioritization process to identify health priorities for Whatcom County that will serve as the basis for a community health improvement plan.

*During the Focus Phase, Healthy Whatcom members included:*

**Amy Rydel**, Whatcom County Health Department  
**April McMurry**, Western Washington University  
**Australia Cosby**, WAHA  
**Heather Flaherty**, Chuckanut Health Foundation  
**Janet Malley**, WTA  
**Javier Flores**, Opportunity Council  
**Jessica Sankey**, Bellingham Public Schools  
**John Korsmo**, Western Washington University  
**Kate Bartholomew**, City of Bellingham  
**Kate Robertson**, ReUse Works  
**Katie Sly**, Opportunity Council  
**Katie Stanford**, Whatcom County Health Department  
**Sam Martinez**, Whatcom Community Foundation  
**Sarah Bear**, Western Washington University  
**Stephen Gockley**, WAHA Board  
**Tracy Dahlstedt-Rienstra**, Western Washington University



# Next Steps

As the Focus Phase concludes, the Healthy Whatcom team will transition to the Choose Phase. The goal of the Choose Phase is to determine how priorities will be addressed in Whatcom County's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

## *Community Health Improvement Plan Blueprint*

A primary goal of community health improvement is to coordinate and align actions and resources, rather than duplicate existing efforts. To that end, the Healthy Whatcom team will be completing a CHIP Blueprint for the priorities identified in the Focus Phase:

- Housing and homelessness as experienced by children
- Childcare as it relates to economic security
- Youth mental health

Upon completion of the CHIP Blueprint, the Healthy Whatcom team will be designing the process for community partners to determine how the priorities will be addressed in the CHIP, which will be drafted in the Act Phase.

The CHIP Blueprint consists of:

- 1. What we know:** available data and documentation from the 4/24/19 Community Health Improvement Data Carousel.
- 2. What we need to know:** additional data needed to better understand the priority.
- 3. Available assets:** resources and people (existing collaborations, individuals, or communities focusing on each priority).
- 4. Evidence-based to innovative strategies to address the priority:** research strategies that could be used to address the priority and a community scan of which of these strategies are currently being done within Whatcom County.
- 5. Equity considerations:** recommendations for strategies that will have the greatest opportunity to advance equity and eliminate health disparities in Whatcom County.
- 6. Recommendations for Whatcom County's Community Health Improvement Process:** developed by Healthy Whatcom during the Choose Phase, this section will include the recommendations for how priorities will be addressed in the Community Health Improvement Plan.

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