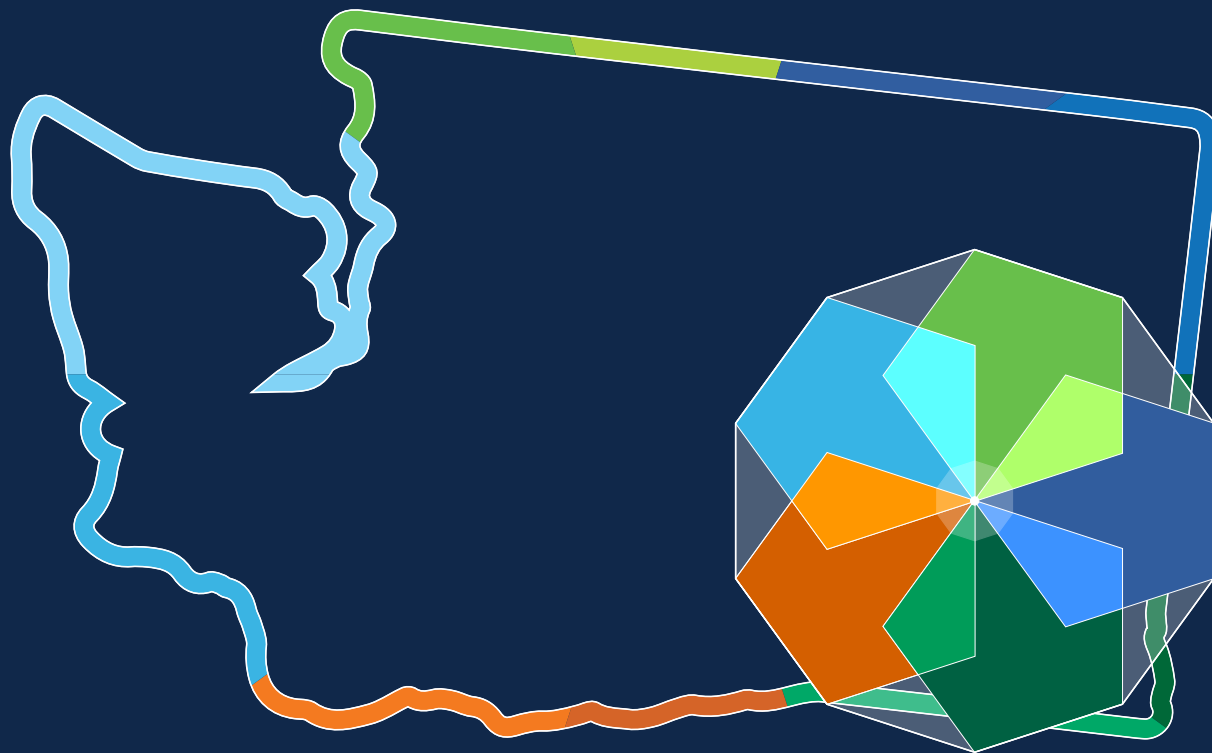


WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S
TRANSFORMATIONAL PLAN



**A Two Year Retrospective
on Transformations in
Action to Shape the Future**



Introduction

The Washington State Department of Health (WA-DOH) is one of the nation's leading health agencies serving more than 8 million people across the Evergreen State. With a team of more than 3,000 dedicated professionals and a bi-annual budget of \$3.1 billion, WA-DOH works to ensure the health and well-being of communities throughout the state in partnership with 35 local health jurisdictions, 29 federally recognized Tribes, sister agencies, public health and health care system leaders, academia, and countless public, private, and community partners.

WA-DOH is a vibrant agency that is ready not just for today but for the challenges of tomorrow. The last few years have undoubtedly proven to be some of the most tumultuous we have ever seen. Whether from viruses, violence, or a myriad of health and social issues—heat, wildfires, supply chain disruptions, opioids, and others—there is no doubt that the visibility necessary to do public health's work requires it to be valued and thereby invested in. We have shown that we can rise to the occasion to protect Washingtonians from challenges, yet we should not just respond to the matter at hand, we must have a capable, trained workforce with tools available to ensure their success.

Under the leadership of Dr. Umair A. Shah, Washington's Secretary of Health, and his team led by Kristin Peterson, Chief of Policy, WA-DOH released its nationally acclaimed [*Transformational Plan*](#) in fall of 2022, with the goal of creating a forward thinking framework and North Star for advancing health across communities throughout Washington. Building on agency strengths, current and emerging public health priorities, and internal and external input, WA-DOH committed to charting a new and bold course in health, leveraging its cornerstone values of **Equity**, **Innovation**, and **Engagement (EIE)**.

Since its release and in two short years, WA-DOH has made exciting transformations both in its internal structure as well as the functional operations of its teams. This included new or refreshed areas of innovation and technology; strategic partnerships; science; prevention; emergency response and resilience; equity; global and One Health; Tribal health & relations; rural and regional health; communications and community engagement; and health care strategy, to name a few. The agency was able to do this all while continuing to advance its core public health services, including public safety; chronic disease and injury prevention; health care oversight; access to care; health policy and planning; environmental health; emergency response; disease surveillance and infection control; and statewide laboratory services.

This report highlights illustrative examples of key actions and activities WA-DOH has taken internally and with cross-sector partners, agencies, and governments to implement the *Transformational Plan's* key priorities and the *Vision of Equity and Optimal Health for All*.

Transformational Plan in Action

WA-DOH's *Transformational Plan* is the agency roadmap to health leveraging its past with a renewed hope for the horizon of the future. The plan highlights five priority areas:

- 1) Health & Wellness;
- 2) Health Systems & Workforce Transformation;
- 3) Environmental Health;
- 4) Emergency Response & Resilience; and
- 5) Global & One Health.

Each priority has six strategies aligned toward the WA-DOH vision of ensuring that all Washingtonians have the opportunity to live their healthiest lives no matter where they live, learn, work, worship, or play. Organizationally, this plan has helped shape the agency legislative and budget priorities at the state and federal levels, forged new partnerships and strengthened existing ones, and resulted in strategic organizational alignment.

The WA-DOH cornerstone values of *Equity, Innovation, and Engagement (EIE)* frame this plan and guide ongoing work. As a result, agency team members are forming new partnerships, pursuing innovations that better serve the public and promote health, and are prioritizing the voice of community into planning, programming, and information-sharing alongside leveraging internal staff support and development opportunities including related to diversity and belonging to advance inclusiveness across a broad range of agency efforts across Washington.

Equity. WA-DOH established the Community Collaborative during the COVID-19 response efforts to convene more than 700 community leaders and members. The work of the Collaborative has advanced the agency's work to ensure WA-DOH practices, programs, and policies reduce health inequities and improve health outcomes for Black, Indigenous, communities of color, and all those facing harm

due to systemic racism and oppression. This effort continues, and now has developed a vibrant group of *Community Thought Partners* leading this work and workgroups addressing Carceral Health Equity, Disability Access/Functional Needs, Environmental Justice, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, Pro Equity and Anti-Racism (PEAR) policy, workforce and resilience issues, and supporting State Health Improvement Planning.

Innovation. WA-DOH has sought innovative solutions to addressing health challenges. For example, continuing the impactful innovation stemming from the response to the pandemic, WA-DOH is working with partners to expand access to care using health services across Washington communities, including through its *Care-A-Van* and *Power of Providers* efforts. While innovation is occurring across programs and services, WA-DOH is also leveraging technology to better serve the public. Through a groundbreaking partnership, WA-DOH launched cutting-edge *Public Health AI* tools that are revolutionizing the way public health engages and serves communities. These tools include multilingual translation for health communications, enabling outreach to diverse populations, and AI-powered chatbots for real-time public engagement. Additionally, automated grant support tools are helping streamline funding applications, while AI-enhanced surveillance systems provide real-time insights to bolster public health responses. These innovations are driving more efficient, equitable, and data-driven public health practices.

Engagement. Public health's work is best accomplished through partnerships and engagement at the community, local, state, tribal, and federal levels. WA-DOH partners include community, governments, academia, and health care partners – working together to improve health and access to care. WA-DOH strengthened its relationships through regional

health coordinators and regional medical officers, creating a bridge amongst local, Tribal, and state health entities in tackling current and emerging health issues. Further examples of this engagement included WA-DOH hosting the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) senior leaders and congressional representation at WA-DOH's Medical Logistics Facility, as well as the U.S. Surgeon General for a conversation on the *Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation* at Red Eagle Soaring, a local non-profit center serving Tribal community members in Seattle. To view this conversation, check out the [Public Health Connects | Washington State Department of Health](#).

Health and Wellness – Priority One

The WA-DOH vision is that all Washingtonians have the opportunity to attain their full potential of physical, mental, social health and well-being. To achieve this vision, WA-DOH's commitment is that it will lead and support initiatives that strengthen and promote upstream prevention efforts to advance optimal physical health, mental and behavioral health, spiritual health, resilience, and overall well-being where individuals, families, and communities can thrive. Actions must recognize that social, structural, and economic determinants of health must be addressed to achieve true health equity and optimal health for all.

Be Well Washington (BWW). In the summer of 2024, WA-DOH launched a broad social awareness campaign to support pro-health

and wellness behaviors, as outlined in its first *Transformational Plan* priority. Health and well-being do not look the same for every person, and *BWW* is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is not about counting steps but rather about taking steps to improve personal wellness along the four *BWW* pillars, namely: (1) movement; (2) nourishment; (3) emotional well-being; and (4) social connection. It is clear that “lacking social connection can increase the risk for premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.”¹ *BWW* is an innovative collaboration with partners and communities to help empower people throughout Washington with information, resources, and opportunities to improve their individual health and well-being. *BWW* has already been mentioned in over thirty articles and reached millions of Washingtonians.

Native & Strong Lifeline. In partnership with Tribes, the American Indian Health Commission, Volunteers of America, and the Washington State Health Care Authority, WA-DOH supported the launch of the *Native and Strong Lifeline*, the nation's first suicide prevention line serving the needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives during times of crisis. The *Native & Strong Lifeline* is a subnetwork of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The *Native & Strong Lifeline* is staffed by Native Americans to create authentic connection. Native communities have the highest suicide rates out of all racial and ethnic groups in the United States.² Among Native youth between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death.³ Since November 2022, the *Native & Strong Lifeline* has answered over 9,000 calls. Legislation passed in 2024 gave WA-DOH funding to

¹ [Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation \(hhs.gov\); Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7137a1.htm>

³ <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-american-indiansalaska-natives>

implement text and chat services for the *Native & Strong Lifeline* as well.

Teen Health Hub. As efforts aimed at garnering truth and transparency continue to pose significant public health threats online with real world consequences, WA-DOH developed a *Teen Health Hub*, where teens and young adults can find credible health information. The hub was formed and monitored by both public health education experts at the agency and a Youth Advisory Council comprised of young people in communities across the state. Topic areas include dating, relationships, and safety; healthcare rights and access; mental and behavioral health; sexual and reproductive health; and whole-body health.

Office of Tribal Public Health and Relations (OTPHR). In 2023, WA-DOH created the first time in its history, OTPHR, a new office to lead, coordinate, and advance work with Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and professionals on public health issues. In the past two years,

WA-DOH has participated in the state and national Tribal-led opioid and fentanyl response summits to co-develop solutions for tackling the opioid crisis. WA-DOH has hosted countless Tribal consultations, collaborations, and listening sessions advancing work on Tribal data sovereignty, [Foundational Public Health Services](#), and the first of its kind 10% budget set aside to Tribes for public health and emergency response planning.

Health Education & Promotion. Health promotion campaigns have garnered nationwide accolades – WA-DOH has won hundreds of national and local awards in social marketing, innovation, excellence, and digital transformation, including Emmys, EXCEL Awards, AIM Bull’s Eyes, and more. In fact, WA-DOH COVID-19 and respiratory illness campaigns won 118 awards between 2021 and 2023.

A red barn and rolling hills set in rural farmland. Palouse, Washington.





WA-DOH is continuing to promote access to care in partnership with local health jurisdictions, Tribes and community-based organizations through the deployment of mobile health services – its Care-A-Van activities has provided vaccines and other services to nearly 4,000 communities since June 2021.

WA-DOH is raising the visibility and value of public health through communication and partnerships. The WA-DOH Public Health Connects series has showcased state and national leaders discussing public health strategy. The agency has pursued new partnerships to elevate its public health actions, including with the Seattle Storm through the Shots in Arms Campaign.

Health Systems and Workforce Transformation – Priority Two

The WA-DOH vision is that all Washingtonians are well served by a health ecosystem that is robust and responsive, while promoting transparency, equity, and trust. To achieve this vision, the agency is aligning skills, resources, and partnerships to ensure health systems and infrastructure capabilities are scalable, responsive, and modernized to promote data driven and innovative approaches to improving health. WA-DOH is building and transforming systems to be accessible and responsive to Washingtonians regardless of who they are or where they live.

The Executive Office of Health Care Innovation and Strategy (OHCIS). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in remarkable collaboration between public health and health care institutions. But without intentional efforts, the end of the public health emergency has seen a return to an era when these relationships were more limited and their population health improvement efforts less integrated. The newly created OHCIS is aligning six priorities to strengthen

the health system throughout Washington: (1) enhancing whole person care; (2) primary care and rural health safety net resources; (3) health workforce intelligence and development; (4) population health intelligence; (5) innovation and learning; and (6) health system resilience. This office also leads initiatives integrating public health and health care, such as: 1) the *Power of Providers* initiative, a 70,000 strong consortium of health care providers who help shape and promote health across Washington; and 2) the *Care Connects* initiative, which integrates public health and health care to address the social drivers of health.

Electronic Case Reporting (eCR). WA-DOH strengthened the collection, analysis, linkage, and dissemination of timely, accessible, and actionable disease data through its *eCR system* (the secure creation and transmission of case reports from an electronic health record to public health agencies for disease tracking, case management, and contact tracing. *eCR* captures critical patient and clinical data regarding demographics, comorbidities, immunizations, medications, and other treatments). During 2024, nearly 200,000 case reports were received by WA-DOH through *eCR*. WA-DOH is moving beyond COVID-19

case reports to the following conditions: acute flaccid myelitis (AFM), tetanus, seafood poisoning, tick paralysis, and suspected human rabies. Evidence suggests expanding eCR for additional notifiable conditions has a strong return on investment.⁴

Health System Workforce Quality

Improvement. It is well-established that Washington needs more licensed health care workers. In partnership with *Results Washington*, WA-DOH embarked on a health care credentialing improvement project to support its health system workforce. WA-DOH credentials over 365,000 professionals across 81 professions, with 400 new applications received every day. Through an incredible array of agency efforts, WA-DOH has significantly reduced the number of days to review applications and launched the first phase of the *Healthcare Enforcement and Licensing Management System (HELMS)* to support a modernized and transparent health care licensing and enforcement IT system.

Data Modernization. WA-DOH has invested in and supported secure and innovative health information technologies and infrastructure, including pursuing cutting edge technology and practices in data modernization, cloud-based services, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Tribal data sovereignty, including being an early adopter of the national *Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement (TEFCA)* and holding its first-ever *Health AI Sciences Summit* in partnership with the University of Washington in September 2024. WA-DOH has been awarded numerous state and national awards for its innovative communications, IT, and health promotion efforts, including the

prestigious [HIMSS Davies Award](#). WA-DOH is clearly at the forefront of exploration into public health AI and its tools are revolutionizing the way work is being conducted.

Data Democratization. Access to data is key to informing public health actions that best protect communities. WA-DOH collaborated with Tribes and local public health agencies to publish key dashboards on [opioid overdoses](#) and [respiratory illness](#). It is also expanding the *WA Tracking Network* to include adolescent and behavioral health data. Additionally, agency support of the legislatively created *Health Equity Zones* is fostering deeper collaboration and data support in assisting communities with data-driven policy planning and decision-making.

Workforce. With support from the CDC's Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG), WA-DOH has invested in its workforce in finance, policy, evaluation, communications and health promotion activities. The agency has built capacity to embark on a State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) with broad community, Tribal, and partner, membership to help shape its actions to improve the health of all Washingtonians. WA-DOH has also diversified its workforce through the *Pathways Fellowship* project, bringing voices from the community to help shape work. Through legislative direction and funding, WA-DOH expanded its reach with the creation of *Regional Health Offices*, staffed by medical officers and coordinators, which help foster cross sector collaboration at the state and local levels. This effort is the first of its kind in the history of the agency.

⁴ Joel Hartsell, Fernando A Wilson, Kimberley Shoaf, Angela Dunn, Matthew H Samore, Catherine Janes Staes, An economic evaluation of the expansion of electronic case reporting in an academic healthcare setting, *JAMIA Open*, Volume 7, Issue 1, April 2024, ooad102, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jamiaopen/ooad102>



WA-DOH launched Project Pathway - a robust quality improvement project to assess our credentialing process with the support of Results Washington to improve and modernize the agency's approach to getting qualified and safe providers into practice to serve patients as timely as possible.

The state's first ever Public Health Advisory Board, convened and supported by WA-DOH, expands agency capacity to evaluate and develop public health priorities through its legislatively created charge of advising the Secretary of Health and making public health recommendations.

Environmental Health – Priority Three

WA-DOH's vision is that all Washingtonians will thrive in a broad range of healthy environments--natural, built and social. To accomplish this, the agency is leading broad efforts that address external factors impacting health, safety, and well-being, recognizing the important intersection of people, animals, and environment (One Health), and incorporating principles of environmental justice and shared responsibility for community health.

Environmental Justice. The [Healthy Environment for All \(HEAL\) Act](#) marks a historic step toward eliminating environmental and health disparities in Washington state. WA-DOH is integrating environmental justice into strategic plans, community engagement and Tribal consultation, and conducting environmental justice assessments for significant actions such as large spending requests and specific policies or requested legislation. WA-DOH is promoting equitable sharing of environmental benefits and investing in communities that experience the

greatest environmental burden, providing a voice for disproportionately affected communities.

Protecting Washingtonians from PFAS.

WA-DOH support systems and policies protect individual and community health from harmful PFAS, or so-called "forever" chemicals. The State Board of Health and WA-DOH took early action to address PFAS in drinking water. State regulations were passed that required over 2,400 public water systems in Washington to begin testing for PFAS and notify their consumers about PFAS. This enabled WA-DOH to identify problem areas and reduce exposure to PFAS in drinking water. A public facing [dashboard](#) makes for easy public access to testing results. WA-DOH is also addressing concerns of food safety and PFAS water contamination. To give people actionable and timely food safety advice, WA-DOH launched the [livestock testing project](#) in partnership with the US Department of Agriculture's lab to directly test eggs and meats for PFAS. Reductions in exposure to PFAS could result

in lower incidence of cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and birth-weight related deaths, therefore reducing illness and death.^{5,6}

Using Interactive Data and Purposeful Assessment. WA-DOH developed the [Washington Environmental Health \(EH\) Disparities Map](#) as an interactive tool to ensure equitable access to health opportunities through robust data systems and information sharing. The *EH Disparities Map* was designed to compare communities across the state for environmental health disparities. Data are available for download and exploration to inform communities, decision makers, and other state agencies, and has been well-received by stakeholders.

Lead Line Clean Up. WA-DOH has promoted optimal individual and community health by

investing in proactive efforts to replace nearly every lead pipe in the state to rid water systems of the potent neurotoxin. Over the last two years, WA-DOH has loaned nearly \$1.5 million to eight water systems to complete lead service line inventories. WA-DOH has nearly \$30 million available to water systems for loans for lead service line inventory and replacement projects each year for the next 3 years. Nearly 50% percent of the funding each year must be provided to disadvantaged communities as loan forgiveness. As planned, removing all lead pipes in Washington would lead to an estimated benefit of between \$1.8 billion and \$2.3 billion dollars in averted immediate and lifetime health costs and the benefits outweighing the costs by as much as 14 to 17 times.⁷



Swinomish Channel in Skagit County, Mount Vernon and Anacortes, Washington

⁵ EPA. Benefits and Costs of Reduction PFAS in Drinking Water. [FACT SHEET](#). Accessed November 18, 2024.

⁶ Washington State Board of Health. PFAS Update. [PowerPoint Presentation](#). Accessed November 18, 2024.

⁷ [NRDC: GETTING THE LEAD OUT - Removing Lead Pipes Would Yield Hundreds of Billions of Dollars in Health Benefits \(PDF\)](#). Accessed November 18, 2024.



The [Climate and Health Adaptation Initiative \(CHAI\)](#) is advancing climate justice in WA State through its aim to reduce health threats across the lifespan and build resilience, especially among those at the highest risk. CHAI is a partnership among state, federal and academic partners that works to address community-identified needs to support community health.

Emergency Response and Resilience – Priority Four

The agency vision is that all Washington communities have the information and resources they need to build resilience in the face of public health threats and be well-positioned to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and natural disasters. To achieve this vision, WA-DOH will lead response to health threats and emergencies in a proactive, effective, and equitable way that assures strength of response, supports health systems, leverages community solutions, promotes cross-sector collaboration, and advances health security. WA-DOH efforts will learn from previous emergencies and response activities within Washington and beyond to build resilient communities.

Medical Logistics Center (MLC). WA-DOH has developed a state-of-the-art MLC to minimize impact on people’s lives, sustain necessary response capabilities, and advance protections in advance of, during, and in the aftermath of a broad range of public health threats and emergencies. The MLC is ready to distribute strategic state and federal stockpiles of medical countermeasures – both rapidly and with scalability – to protect Washingtonians in the event of a major chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive incident severe enough to strain local or system resources. The economic cost of an outbreak’s devastation often far outweighs the cost it would have taken to prevent it.^{8,9} The MLC helped reduce time to move equipment and materials from 72 hours down to 48 hours out to partners and into the community. In collaboration with federal partners, WA-DOH is advancing public health emergency

⁸ Study found that it costs \$78 to prevent a measles case while the response to one measles case is over \$140,000. [Economic Analysis of the Current Universal 2-dose measles-mumps-rubella Vaccination Program in the United States | The Journal of Infectious Diseases | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

⁹ The Clark County Measles outbreak in 2019 cost approximately \$3.4 million dollars. Public health response was the top cost category (2.3 million) followed by productivity losses and medical costs. Findings from the study suggest that policy makers consider prevention efforts to avoid future vaccine preventable outbreaks. [Societal Costs of a Measles Outbreak - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

preparedness through a groundbreaking, first-of-its-kind Data Use Agreement to streamline the real-time sharing of medical logistics data.

Public Health Emergency Response

Framework: Since 2012, DOH has responded to the health impacts from approximately forty disasters and various urgent threats, including incidents like the Oso landslide, Ebola, Zika, Measles, and more recently COVID-19, MPOX, and Avian Influenza. DOH's Incident Management Team (IMT) has effectively led statewide responses and deployed to other states six times, including after the wildfires in Hawaii in 2023. Additionally, despite a time of incredible demand and workload constraints, the state-of-the-art *WA-DOH Public Health Laboratory* expanded its capacity to test for deadly pathogens, adopting several methods now used nationally, and the agency was at the forefront of deployment of wastewater surveillance for disease detection and monitoring. Work is also beginning on exploring the addition of *PHL* capacity in the eastern part of Washington to improve efficiencies and serve communities more effectively, including during winter weather challenges.

Washington State Emergency Reserve Medical Corps (SERMC). Through state legislative support, WA-DOH can now recruit, develop, and train SEMRC who are

professionals in public health, medicine, and mortuary affairs, under the authority provided in [RCW 70.410](#) to form teams that can be called upon to support medical systems within an impacted community during disasters or emergencies. This was a significant step forward for the state as it elevates complementary and key statewide Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) efforts (in support of MRC efforts in local communities across Washington). SEMRC has developed the administrative infrastructure to effectively onboard volunteers, obtained federal recognition as an MRC unit, began onboarding and training volunteers, and even deployed a team as part of a disaster exercise in August 2024.

Tribal Public Health Emergency

Preparedness Funding 10% Set-Aside. WA-DOH has prioritized resources to be equitably allocated to the 29 federally recognized Tribal nations within Washington geographic boundaries. In 2023, WA-DOH was asked to consider a new approach for passing federal CDC's *Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP)* Cooperative Agreement funding to Tribes. This led to a formal Tribal Consultation where WA-DOH, Tribal representatives, and organizations representing Tribes agreed to set aside the first-of-its-kind 10% of the funding WA-DOH receives to focus on Tribal Public Health Emergency Preparedness priorities.

Grape Vines Rows Winter Vineyards, Benton City, Washington





Statewide visibility on health care capacity is critical to preparing for and responding to emergencies and balancing patient volumes across the system to ensure access to care. This was a key component of the agency's COVID-19 response efforts that will continue through support of the WA-HEALTH bed tracking system and the WA Medical Coordination Center. The COVID-19 Pandemic stretched governments worldwide and exposed both challenges and resilience. With the COVID-19 After-Action Report (AAR), WA-DOH analyzed the state's extensive COVID-19 response from June 2021-October 2022 and identified successful initiatives and areas for enhancement to establish a foundation to integrate lessons learned and incorporate best practices in future events.

Global and One Health – Priority Five

WA-DOH's vision is that all Washingtonians live in ever-connected environments that recognize and leverage the intersection of both global and domestic health as well as the connections of humans, animals, and the environment. To achieve this vision, WA-DOH is leading the development and implementation of creative solutions to improve the health and well-being of Washingtonians by emphasizing the connectedness of a strong bidirectional global-domestic health ecosystem. The agency's work underscores the importance of One Health in recognizing the relationships of human health as they intertwine with that of animals and the environment.

Executive Office of Global and One Health.

WA-DOH established the Executive Office

of Global and One Health (OGO) to provide executive oversight for both Global to Local as well as One Health strategies. The creation of OGO was a significant step for the agency and the combined work marked a significant national milestone, as WA-DOH became the first state health agency in the nation to center Global & One Health as an agency priority. OGO's mission is to enhance the health security and well-being of all Washingtonians by implementing global to local practices and integrated environmental health strategies that center equity and collaboration. OGO supports coordinated public health efforts that strengthen foundational public health services, with a focus on health equity and innovation. The societal benefits of global and One Health work include better health, prevention of outbreaks, reducing barriers to accessing health care, and collaborative engagement.¹⁰

¹⁰ Washington State Department of Health. The Case for Global and One Health in a State Public Health Department. April 2023. Internal Report.

Avian Influenza (H5N1) Response Efforts. WA-DOH closely monitors the changing dynamics for H5N1 for effective response recognizing the complex connections of human, animal, and environmental health. With nearly five hundred dairies and several poultry producers in the state, closely tracking disease trends provides an essential early warning system. WA-DOH has supported multiagency coordination for hundreds of confirmed wildlife cases of H5N1 to prevent spread. WA-DOH advanced genomic molecular sequencing data, working with state agencies and the BC Centre for Disease Control in British Columbia. OGO is building on these strategies with plans to support data integration, supporting innovations in wastewater surveillance, and cross-sector coordination for rapid detection and response capabilities. Americans deal with zoonotic diseases often; six out of every 10 infectious diseases are of zoonotic origin.¹¹ Globally, each year there are millions of deaths related to zoonotic diseases.¹² Zoonotic diseases already exist in the state and have been well documented to have vast economic impacts.¹³ Without investments to include animals into the surveillance environment, by the time healthcare providers identify clinical signs in humans, it is far too late to control an outbreak.¹⁴

Mpox. WA-DOH is strengthening data systems, global partnerships, and infrastructure for rapid detection and response to Mpox. WA-DOH launched a range of strategies related to Mpox immunizations, disease surveillance, testing, and health education when the virus came to the state. To date, more than 35,000 doses of

Mpox vaccinations have been administered in Washington, supported by WA-DOH infrastructure and capacity building. WA-DOH rapidly mobilized medical supplies, including testing and vaccinations, to all at-risk communities in Washington, supporting testing capacity at regional labs and WA-DOH's PHL. OGO is working across state agencies, local health jurisdictions, and academia to strengthen multisector strategies and collaborative partnerships to prevent and respond to emerging zoonotic disease threats like mpox.

Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Health. OGO advances culturally and linguistically affirmative health information and initiatives, in close collaboration with public health partners and healthcare providers, to support the health and well-being of refugee, immigrant, and migrant communities across Washington. OGO is working with community leaders to ensure health messaging is accessible and respectful, helping bridge gaps in care for diverse populations, while developing innovative, community-based health promotion strategies. OGO supports provider engagement, resource sharing, and professional development to meet the unique needs of immigrant, migrant, and refugee communities.

Vector-Borne Diseases. WA-DOH is expanding its capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to vector-borne diseases that account for nearly 20% of all infectious diseases globally. Shifts in weather are changing the distribution of vector-borne diseases, requiring a One Health approach. WA-DOH actively monitors vector-

¹¹ [8 Zoonotic Diseases Shared Between Animals and People of Most Concern in the U.S. | CDC Online Newsroom | CDC](#)

¹² [Implementing One Health approaches to confront emerging and re-emerging zoonotic disease threats: lessons from PREDICT \(springer.com\)](#)

¹³ [People, Pathogens and Our Planet: The Economics of One Health \(worldbank.org\)](#) Figure 1.1 Estimated Costs of Emerging Zoonotic Diseases (1986-2006). Page 2.

¹⁴ [People, Pathogens and Our Planet: The Economics of One Health \(worldbank.org\)](#) Figure 8.1 Illustrative Relationship between Time of Detection of Emerging Zoonotic Disease and Total Cost of Outbreak. Page 27.

borne disease threats, such as West Nile virus, Zika virus, and tick-borne diseases. By collaborating with academic research centers; local, state, Tribal, federal, and international agencies; and the private sector, WA-DOH is leveraging the best available science and

technology to strengthen the health security of Washington state. OGO is actively working to bridge silos in data systems and surveillance to help Washington prepare for the next pandemic, integrating the lessons learned from COVID-19.



The One Health Combating Antimicrobial Resistance Collaborative (OHCAR) brings together expertise across academia and governmental sectors to develop and implement strategies that improve antimicrobial stewardship in healthcare, the agricultural sector, and veterinary medicine.

WA-DOH identifies, assesses, adapts, and applies leading global health practices to improve health outcomes and address disparities in WA state. For example, DOH recently entered into a strategic partnership agreement with PATH, a leading Seattle-based global health non-profit, to develop pilot projects.

Looking Ahead

While there is no doubt that WA-DOH – in just a short period of time – has accomplished so much, the agency's work is far from done. New and ongoing investments and leadership acumen to forecast what is on the horizon have allowed WA-DOH to be a leading-edge health agency that is celebrated for its *EIE values* and modeled by others across the nation (and even globally). While success is important to recognize, it is clear that new, emerging diseases and issues, health inequities, disparate impacts in rural and urban communities, an ever-polarized political landscape, and a beleaguered workforce that

is also dwindling in numbers are just some of the ongoing and future challenges that must be met by the demands of public health and health care alike.

Washington state clearly needs a health ecosystem that is prepared to respond to public health challenges from climate change to substance use, and well beyond. During the 21st century, the pandemic and *Deaths of Despair* (e.g., alcohol, suicide, opioids, etc.) have significantly eroded life expectancy. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, caused Black American life expectancy to *decrease by 2.9* years and Latino American life expectancy

to decrease by 3 years across the nation.¹⁵ Meanwhile death rates for white Americans also increased for those with no college degrees.¹⁶ The stark reality is that one's zip code can influence one's life expectancy by thirty years,^{17,18} stressing the importance of identifying and addressing the social drivers of health.¹⁹ Up to 80% of one's health (outside traditional medical care) can be attributed to social drivers of health. There is societal value in addressing and preventing disparities in access to health services, but also in access to education, infrastructure, social environments, food, physical environment, and community.

As we enter 2025, WA-DOH will embark on renewed strategic planning to assess whether its priorities and strategies need to be modified to ensure the highest priorities reflect the bold and necessary actions to improve health across the life course, address emergent issues, and promote access to care. The work of WA-DOH and its partner agencies is only possible with a robust and skilled workforce that is ready and supported to tackle these challenges.

Holding the agency accountable and showing the value and impact of this work is a priority for WA-DOH and critical to maintaining trust, improving health, and building awareness and confidence in public health actions for all of Washington's communities and stakeholders. In this regard, WA-DOH is launching a performance-based management system to showcase the impact of programs and services using the evaluation method, *Results Based Accountability™ (RBA)*. WA-DOH has conducted more than three dozen training courses on RBA already for teams across the agency and will showcase its impact with key measures and results in a new performance management dashboard.

Public health's work – and thereby the agency's work – are far from done. The health and well-being of communities across Washington are stronger together and WA-DOH looks forward to the synergy of partnerships to promote health, equity, and well-being for all. After all, that is what systems transformation to advance health is all about.



Colorful storm clouds above the Spokane River during Autumn, with fall colors on the leaves in Spokane, Washington

¹⁵ [Life Expectancy in the U.S. Declined a Year and Half in 2020 \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/lifeexpectancy/2020/02/2020-life-expectancy-declined-a-year-and-half-in-2020/)

¹⁶ Case and Deaton. 2017. [Mortality and morbidity in the 21st century. Mortality and morbidity in the 21st century - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5558478/)

¹⁷ [Life Expectancy by ZIP Code: Where You Live Affects How Long You Live - RWJF](https://www.rwjf.org/en/about-us/2017/07/life-expectancy-by-zip-code-where-you-live-affects-how-long-you-live.html)

¹⁸ <https://www.bluezones.com/2020/02/zip-code-effect-your-neighborhood-determines-your-lifespan/#>