

**Organizations Present:**

- Alliance for Equitable Healthcare
- Fil-Am Association of Kitsap
- Kitsap Accessible Communities Advisory Council
- Kitsap County Department of Human Services
- Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center (KIAC)
- Kitsap Public Health. District
- Kitsap Regional Library
- Kitsap Strong
- Living Life Leadership (LLL), LACH & New Life
- Surviving Change
- Guest presenter: Representative Tarra Simmons

**Welcome, Recognition, and Updates:**

- Maria posed ice breaker questions for people to pick from: 1.) What is your comfort food? 2.) What was the first meal you learned to cook?
- KPHD Update: Dr. Morrow provided an overview of his tenure at KPHD, thanked HEC members for ongoing partnership and shared data:
  - Infant mortality rate is almost two times higher in the US than in other comparable developed countries.
  - U.S. has the biggest wealth gap among its population than in European countries
  - Life expectancy and health among the wealthiest in the United States was better than the poorest in the United States, but comparable to the poorest in Europe.
  - The U.S. spends far more in healthcare than any other country, yet health outcomes are generally worse.
  - Question to Dr. Morrow: What are things the Kitsap community could continue to work on, what can be done better?
    - Need for opportunities for social connection
    - Reducing the amount of money going into healthcare services and redirecting those funds into sectors of the economy that don't have enough money going to them (e.g., childcare, housing, education, upstream responses)
- Erica introduced Representative Tarra Simmons to talk about HB1432 and HB1217:
  - **HB1432 improving access to appropriate and mental health services.** This was passed in the last session.
    - Ensures providers can determine what is medically necessary for their patients when it comes to mental health (MH) care and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment. Insurance companies were relying on for-profit criteria to deny treatment for various treatment needs of patients related to MH and SUD. Now insurance companies have to use a fair and transparent criteria determined by a group of physicians.
    - This law has passed in several states now. Connected with national organization called "Indivisible" to help pass the bill in WA.
    - Challenge throughout session to get it passed
      - Built a coalition of advocates from organizations that support people with behavioral health challenges (NAMI, recovery groups, doctors, nurses) to "overpower" the insurance lobby group
    - Made it through the House with bipartisan support – insurance lobbyists were interested in engaging in negotiations after this point.

- State office of insurance were helpful in moving things forward and will be enforcing the new law
  - An objection when the bill was going through the house was that it would increase cost that would result in increased premiums for members
    - The local bill sponsors, with Indivisible, talked about the stories of real experiences and the cost associated with someone not getting the treatment and support they need when they need it.
  - **When will the bill go into effect, how will it be implemented, what will accountability look like?** It will go into effect of January 1, 2027. The first step is to go through rule making with the Office of Insurance Commissioner to make sure insurance companies all have guidance on what they need to do.
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- **HB1217 improving housing stability for tenants...**
    - This bill was a priority for the community. Effort has been going on since before Tarra Simmons joined the legislature in different versions over the years.
    - This was a huge win! But Tarra is not completely happy with the outcome. This turned out to be more of an anti-rent gauging bill than a rent stabilization bill.
    - Started as a 5-7% increase cap on rent per year. What it looks like (what was passed) = 7% +cost of inflation for the max of 10% per year
      - Mobile Home parks will have flat 5% increase max (does not include inflation)
    - A lot of strong advocates for the bill within the community
    - In the last 5 years we've seen rents go up 100-200% and it's been especially tough in mobile home parks
    - Had an emergency clause attached, so it went into effect immediately (5/7/2025) when signed by Governor Ferguson
    - Enforcement is through the Attorney General's office
    - Community education and working with the groups you serve to make sure they know their rights is key with this law.

- **Advice for folks who are interested in getting connected to the political process to promote equity**
  - Rep. Simmons does a lot with health equity based on her background as a nurse and work on the healthcare committee
  - A for-profit company from Alabama provides medical care to WA jails and prisons
    - Historically, this company has not provided a warm handoff when folks are released and often change the medications folks are being provided
    - Cost for this care is going up too
    - There is no marketplace to get insurance coverage to provide medical care in the jails
      - Rep. Simmons is aiming to support making something like this happen so community medical providers can provide care in the jails.
      - She would like to build a local coalition around this idea and would appreciate community members speaking about the importance of this effort with County commissioners and showing up during the legislative process
  - If folks have an idea on a bill, they can email Tarra Simmons
  - Be open to sharing your ideas to other elected officials from your area
  - Re. Simmons offered open time to hear constituent feedback once each week during session (Mondays at 6pm) and plans to continue this next session.
- **How to hold elected accountable:**
  - Raise your voice, go to public meetings
  - Important to share your appreciation (to build a relationship) and concerns
    - These positions are public service and often don't pay well, it's hard to only hear people when they're upset. It's great when people share when they're happy too
  - Even more helpful if you share ideas on how to solve an issue that you raise
  - Email, write, speak during open comment with all elected spaces
  - There is a Birthing Center in Poulsbo that is available even despite the shortage in our county. True North Birthing Center: [TRUENORTHBIRTHCENTER.COM - Home](https://truenorthbirthcenter.com)

### **HEC Workgroup Updates and Community Share-Outs**

Maria invited the Mental Health Workgroup to provide an update.

- **Mental Health Workgroup – Teresa Jones shared on behalf of the workgroup**
  - Making sure that everyone knows what health resources are available in the community
  - Group is looking at ways to make this information accessible – want to compile a list within the group (first looking at other lists that have already been created)
    - Group has also started talking through the best place to put the list online
  - The group came up with questions for Rep. Simmons at their last meeting
  - The group discussed a couple events coming up that they wanted to highlight with the group.
    - [Mental Health First Aid training on August 4<sup>th</sup>](#)
    - [Doc Luvs the Kids social connections events](#) every second Saturday
  - Jessica Guidry with KPHD will continue facilitating workgroup meetings
  - Jessica Guidry shared about a webinar focused on community-centered mental health care (see information in Newsletter). Mental health workgroups will discuss next steps related to this webinar

- AKV shared that in the local African American community, a collective, collaborative community care effort was started several years back. In that time, she has noted a healthcare system disconnection with African American communities and that has led to a difficulty getting proper care. **It's important to get the information, not only to the person who needs the care, but the family and supporters around them so they can provide the best support to those they are caring for.** Our current systems were not created to serve the African American community, and information has not been shared in a way that can help African American community get the care they need. **Requested that the group get to action quicker using the resources we have available to us and what we've heard from the community already.** She has been working with the VA, but that only helps community members with a service background.
- DMJ shared that we need to build trust with the communities that we aren't reaching. We need to educate people that are part of various communities to provide education within their communities (there is trust in the community, there is limited to no trust in government etc.). People that are part of the communities know better how to reach their communities than these community-serving organizations.
- Representative Simmons shared information about a Black shaman in Portland that provides support to people with PTSD. She has found that there are times that "traditional" modalities of support don't work and that healing from "non-traditional modalities," like seeking help from a shaman, can be experienced more than any of the other modalities. She is looking to pursue legalization of psilocybin in WA for treatment of PTSD, since there is already data on efficacy in veterans, and studies are starting to look at impacts in people who were previously incarcerated since both groups experience similar trauma responses.
  - She has free scholarships for people who were formally incarcerated to get treatment with the shaman she talked about in Portland OR.
- MM shared about resources through the Parent Child Health program at KPHD for pregnant and parenting moms and the importance of support to provide wrap-around care for parents she works with in her program beyond just a cold-referral (providing the support and circle-back they need). She is concerned about pregnant immigrants losing medical coverage and not being able to get prenatal support with current National direction. KPHD is working with organizations across the county and the local hospital to figure out how we can fill this gap.
- JG shared that the Mental Health Workgroup looked at what actions they could take in their first meeting noting that this is where we look to community to give input on what action would be meaningful to pursue.
  - Can HEC members go to the MH First Aid training to see if it's something that is useful to bring into the community (and whether it would need to be tailored)? JG is planning to go to the Mental Health First Aide training on 8/4 and can report back at the Mental Health workgroup meeting.
- **Housing Workgroup – Gabriele Outlaw-Spencer shared on behalf of the group**
  - 4 people met and discussed: 1) what is going on in the community, and 2) should we join one of the groups that already exist.
  - The group decided energy would be served better to join the Housing and Homelessness Coalition already operating in the community and meet quarterly to report out.

## Health Equity Collaborative

### July 15, 2025 Notes

- Next steps str to send a poll to HEC members then reach out to Katie Sharp, chair of the Housing and Homelessness Coalition and working at Bremerton Housing Authority on a housing project.
- AKV was curious to see how this group could connect with mental health group(s) since both are inter-connected.
- Dr. Morrow shared housing first is the most effective mental health support “methodology.” He is excited to see affordable and mix-use housing arrangements popping up in Kitsap. Like St. Vincent DePaul’s units with SUD treatments and other services available on site.
- RA shared that she is grateful for how hard our community groups work in Kitsap. She has had personal experience with being pushed away from housing and other programs in the community that led to getting involved in the community and with public officials to learn how the processes work. Learned about 20-year planning that happens for the county and encouraged HEC members to join in on those meetings when they can. Encouraged people to pay attention to this year’s elections and noted it’s more important (locally) than presidential elections. Thanked AKV and MF for their support over the years. She is looking for training and support on how to pick good elected officials and people that will serve us well – we are looking to act, just need help knowing what to do.

Maria shared information on the resource table at the back of the room and sign-in table, such as flyers for upcoming events, fact sheets on how to take care of ourselves during “Wildfire Smoke” and in “Hot Days,” etc., and invited HEC members to share out what their organization is doing.

- Congratulations to Reverend Richmond Johnson for receiving the P.E.A.R STAR award for PYA (Partnering for Youth Achievement) by the Washington Office of Equity.
- Kudos to Marsha on the right to repair bill that she helped pass.
- Here and Now Network will be having a wheelchair repair meeting at Olympic pharmacy and healthcare services in Gig Harbor for minor wheelchair repairs: Jul 19, 2025 from 1:00 PM to 4PM
- Tyler with KRL shared about summer learning, the in-person tech help at the Bremerton Food Line from 10-1 next Thursday (7/24), and Brainfuse. Brainfuse is a database that is free to everyone with a library card (usually used for k-12 tutoring but also has ASL, citizenship tutoring, and resume critique that are available to adults too) Chat available every day from 1-10pm. Medicare events coming up at several branches of the library.
- DMJ shared about the Hope 360 Christmas giveaway. Taking applications on T/Th from 10-2. Applications end 8/31. Applications are limited to the first 300 children. Will have a booth at Doc Luvs the Kids backpack giveaway event.
- MM shared that KPHD’s Pregnant and Parenting Support Line (PPSL) has a new number attached so the brochure has been updated. MM would love to get invitations to community meetings to share about PCH offerings. Mama Moves is still ongoing and meets every Friday at 11 at Evergreen Park. This Friday the group will switch parks and meet at Lions Park. Group not only walks but practices mindfulness as well.
- AT shared about the rapid response training to learn to be a helpful bystander if we see ICE interacting with someone. There will be monthly trainings available through WA Immigrant Solidary Network (WAISN).
  - KIAC will have a [watch party](#) at KIAC 5:30 July 31<sup>st</sup> (TH)

## Health Equity Collaborative

### July 15, 2025 Notes

- Save WAISN number in your phones 1-844-724-3737 to have available if you see ICE interacting with someone. WAISN will work to have a local team that's been trained to respond to ICE activity. We can remind each other of our basic rights to remain silent, if you choose to film what is happening, announce to everyone that you will be filming and focus your filming on the ICE official not the person being detained.
  - If there is no WAISN answer when you call the WAISN line, text them
  - This number will also help someone who has an immigration appointment and is scared by providing advice, transportation support, and accompaniment support for appointments. Don't include details about what the appointment is in your text, they'll know.
- This year there are three back to school events hosted by Coffee oasis, Marvin Williams, and Doc luv the kids (flyers attached to the newsletter).

For other events, you can access the [Equity Events Calendar](#) on KPHD's website and peruse the attached flyers. To add an event to the Equity Calendar, email [equity@kitsappublichealth.org](mailto:equity@kitsappublichealth.org).