

Health Equity Collaborative
May 20, 2025 Notes

Organizations Present:

- Kitsap Accessible Communities Advisory Council
- Kitsap Black Student Union
- Alliance for Equitable Healthcare
- Kitsap Mental Health Services
- We Are Better Together Foundation
- Kitsap Regional Library
- Surviving Change
- Hope 360
- City of Bremerton
- OESD
- Kitsap Public Health. District
- Born Rooted
- Kitsap Strong
- Partnering for Youth Achievement
- Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
- Kitsap County Department of Human Services
- Olympic College
- Peninsula Community Health Services

Welcome, Recognition, and Updates:

- Maria shared the agenda, HEC Vision and Mission, and Group Agreements with the group
- Workgroup share-outs:
 - Erica shared about the Accessible Mental Health Services workgroup activities last month
 - Liv shared updates from the Accessible Medical Care workgroup last month
 - Meeting cadence: the workgroup will meet monthly. In even months, the meeting will focus on decision-making and progress. In odd months, the meetings will center on teach-ins to deepen shared knowledge and strengthen strategy.
 - Meetings will be on the 4th Wednesday of every month at noon, virtually
 - For the advocacy focus areas, we're currently digging into:
 - Concerns about upcoming shifts in **Medicaid/Medicare** and what protective measures or safety nets already exist.
 - **Care navigation resources**, especially the intersection with Medicaid access—PCHS is a promising model.
 - **Transportation justice**, with particular focus on the lack of cross-county public transit and gaps in rural/semi-rural access. In-home care delivery came up as a related thread.
 - We're also preparing for this year's **Medicaid/Medicare RFP cycle**, which is a key opportunity to voice our needs to Managed Care Organizations. We are hoping to have a Medicaid 101 Teach-In next week.
 - **Data needs** we identified (and are hoping KPHD can help with):

- % of folks coming into Kitsap for care vs. leaving the county
 - Number of mobile medical units in our region (including surrounding counties)
- Finally, for **sustainability**, we're exploring student partnerships and internship support:
 - Reaching out to Olympic College to explore involving nursing students.
 - KPHD may be able to provide summer interns to support workgroup efforts
- The Affordable Housing (AH) workgroup is working to determine whether the group will focus on resource sharing or pause on the workgroup for now since there is a lot of other work happening in our community
 - Erica asked the group whether they had a preference (given the above information) –
 - Cristina Roark “voted” to keep the space to share resources etc. “Please keep a placeholder for AH workgroup. If partners like BHA and HSC need to develop a community led process this would be a critical and logical space.”
- If anyone is interested in getting involved in the workgroups, just let the Equity Team at KPHD know and we will forward the calendar invites to you.
 - Richmond Johnson expressed interest in being part of the mental health and housing workgroups, Marsha Cutting is interested in the accessible medical care group. Erica will reach out to them.
- Adrienne provided a legislative session update:
 - A question was asked, for SB5480: Does this help cover the cost of medical bills?
 - Adrienne shared, that is not included in this bill, but this bill seeks to address medical debt showing up on credit reports in the state of Washington.
 - Marsha noted SB5680 passed which gives wheelchair and other mobility device users the rights to buy parts, tools, and documentation needed to repair equipment so they don't have to wait for national companies to repair their devices
 - **SB 5680: Establishing a Right to Repair for Mobility Equipment**
SB 5680 grants individuals with physical disabilities the right to repair their mobility equipment, such as wheelchairs and scooters. The legislation requires manufacturers to provide access to necessary parts, tools, and documentation on fair and reasonable terms, facilitating timely and cost-effective repairs. This measure aims to reduce downtime for essential mobility devices, promoting greater independence and quality of life for users. By empowering users and third-party repair services, SB 5680 addresses the challenges faced by individuals who rely on mobility equipment, ensuring they are not unduly burdened by manufacturer-imposed repair restrictions.

- Dr. Gib Morrow noted 2/3 bankruptcies in the US are due to healthcare costs which is a huge issue. Noted not-for-profit hospital systems are required to provide “charity care” for folks in their communities at or below a specific income level, but many people don’t know about that requirement and go into debt or try to find ways to pay the medical bills on limited means.
- Liv Counsel shared in the chat:
 - Another win...**HB 1296: Promoting a Safe and Supportive Public Education System.** HB 1296 establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure a safe, inclusive, and equitable educational environment for all students in Washington State. It delineates specific student rights, including access to a discrimination-free education, protection from harassment, and the right to accurate and inclusive instructional materials. The bill mandates that school districts and charter schools adopt or amend policies to support transgender and gender-expansive students, aligning with guidelines from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Additionally, it prohibits adverse employment actions against school staff who support students in exercising their legal rights or who provide instruction consistent with state standards. Furthermore, HB 1296 introduces a complaint process allowing students, parents, and community members to report noncompliance with state education laws. The OSPI is authorized to investigate these complaints and, in cases of willful noncompliance, may withhold up to 20% of a district's state funding to enforce compliance. The bill also emphasizes the protection of student privacy, particularly concerning the nondisclosure of medical or mental health records during active investigations of child abuse or neglect involving a parent.
- Richmond Johnson asked, how will you make insurance companies comply with HB 1432 related to access to appropriate mental health and SUD services?
- Dr. Morrow shared about meeting with the new insurance commissioner who is tasked with overseeing this compliance
- Related to HB1217 related to housing/rent stabilization, things have been hard since COVID for landlords and tenants.
- There was a statement noted: *Related to SSHB 1696, there was a housing program through Key Bank in the past that was not user friendly and then folks haven't heard anything since. Also aware of other programs through Bremerton Housing Authority that was difficult for people regrouping themselves after a tough financial situations. Noted that Tacoma/Pierce County programs have been easier to navigate. Feels like there are a lot of road blocks for POC in Kitsap programs.*
 - Jewel with KBSU noted that when it comes to the situations noted above, Community-Based Organizations can be helpful, but we need to shift to more political thinking to make sure policies represent lived

experiences and to report programs that aren't operating as written via policy (this could be because they haven't read the policy all the way through, or because of racism – both require being called out). Having conversations with elected officials doesn't "properly represent us."

- Jeneise Briggs introduced herself and shared out to the group on...
 - Taking time to meet members of the community to learn about their experience and what they're doing.
 - Created an internal workgroup called the Bremerton Think Tank to bring a "broad-diverse lens" to topics they're exploring.
 - Created the Diversity and [CommUNITY Engagement](#) hub – approved for publication by the Mayor a couple weeks ago and will feature community groups and community folks interviewed
 - Provided an overview of all of the branching pages
 - More information on REAC coming soon
 - Working on a community engagement strategic implementation plan
 - Working on a crisis management toolkit that could be useful in emergent situations (e.g., hate crimes)
 - Working with Kitsap Strong and PCHS on 5/28 to have them speak with City of Bremerton staff about mental fitness and self care
 - Focused on collaborations to best serve and uplift our community especially in this time of fear -- focused on helping keep hope alive

Holding space for conversations among uncertainty:

- There's a need for more Narcan. An HEC member tried to get a couple cases to educate clients and their families but was only able to get a couple of kits.
 - Erica shared that some kits now have more than one dose per device so not that they are more potent but that you get more per device. Erica shared local "boxes" where folks can get Narcan for free. Erica will connect member with KPHD team about kits
- OC is also providing support and resources for students and community members in recovery
- Richmond Johnson shared the challenge right now is there is so much hate and we're not addressing it at the right level. Not opening up to help one another because there are too many people hating. Need to create more spaces for young people. We need to appreciate folks. They want to create some think tanks to help folks start to understand each other
- Marsha (on behalf of the disability community). One concerning thing is the assault on Medicare at the federal level that allows people with disabilities to get care in the community vs. a skilled nursing facility. Also notes that Medicare supports hospitals and they could go under with funding cuts. Medicaid is also likely to stay with a nursing home stay (Medicare will cover the first 3 months after a hospital stay but not after that).

- Cristina wanted to name the People's Institute for coming out for a workshop recently. The workshop talked about strategically organizing, in a collective way, to push on systems. If we had a culture of understanding to have hard conversations that left space for everyone including youth and elders, that would help us build a framework to move forward. Some of our solutions are intervention, some are prevention, we just need to understand what our capacity and assets are.
- Gabriela Ituarte: Latinos are a target and it's not getting thought about. When you think of the immigrant community, you think about Latinos. It's hard to think about others in that group so people have been targeting Latinos. Normalized behavior and hate crimes under this Administration. Psychological impact has been huge. Meeting on Sunday with Sheriffs and prosecutors about what will be done to address what's going on right now. When we don't look at what's going on with others we become disengaged. An issue right now is that kids can't get a passport (US citizens) because they don't have one of their parents present to complete the paperwork to get the paperwork. Kids are living in fear that their parents will be deported. Everyone's attention is on "raids" but what we're not seeing the emotional and psychological impact being felt by the Latino community. Not hearing the noise she expected to hear, based on what's going on right now. Right now, people feel entitled to say what they want and do what they want, now families are being asked for SSN and being denied services if they don't provide it. Call out: what are we doing as a collective to support the Latino community. This is a time where authorities need to create new pathways instead of leaning on non-profits to do your work. Calling on the health district specifically related to social security being requested for services to be provided here in Kitsap county.
- Liv Counsel (notes in chat). Community does not have education about the protective systems in the state and what the reality is (related to Marsha's comments about Medicaid). People in limbo about what is or isn't and what our state may or may not do. We have a lot of protections in our state legislation, but do people know about them (no). Can we hold town halls about these topics. Can we hold webinars that folks can join from home. How can we help people stop spinning by providing information so folks can focus on the issues that are real

Community Share-Outs

- Richmond Johnson shared about a Meeting on 6/3 at the Marvin Williams center to talk about how we can build community. Has funding through CDC to host a 6 week workshop about living with Diabetes. Focused on Black people 18+ .
- From Liv Counsel - I'm wondering if maybe there could be a page on the KPHD site, as well as the City of Bremerton's new Diversity and Community hub, etc. with ongoing updates regarding teach-ins offered by WA Office of Equity, Kitsap County, etc. so we can improve awareness and access to that information.
- Gabriela Ituarte – Saturday at Holy Trinity Church in Bremerton 1:30-3:30 – community translation clinic with immigration lawyer, translators, and notaries available to community members (in partnership with Holy Trinity and the library)

- Victoria with Kitsap Strong – folder in drop box with all of the flyers being shared with Kitsap Strong. Link is on their Facebook. They filter out flyers after events happen. Can download anything from there and can email KS to upload your flyer.
 - Parenting group opening soon. Future-focused (elementary to middle school) group starting this summer (spots limited).
- Can share the link to the drop box out and are working to share it out everywhere
- KBSU OC Chapter is being awarded tomorrow at Olympic College 430 pm to 6 pm.
- There is a flyer coming out soon for a Community Cafe with the DEI Committee for Kitsap County Democrats. 2 hour Community forum May 31st. Location and time will be on the flyer. Stay tuned!
- KBSU Annual Grad night Friday June 6th. Flyer is floating around on social media. Invite is only for students and their guests at this point due to the many participants. Hoping to find a location this week that can accommodate more space.
- KBSU Annual Rep Your Culture Multicultural Fair at Olympic College July 26th. Flyer coming
- 2 Juneteenth events this year. June 14th and June 19th in Bremerton. Flyers are floating on social media
- Ranae Beeker -- ACAC sponsoring a walks for all event this Saturday at the Illahee preserve (near the KMHS facility and Lowes) from 1-3. If no parking at the preserve, people can park at Lowes.
- Jason Doty – Aging and Long Term Care – May is “older Americans month” – caregiving overview tomorrow at PO library.
 - Kitsap County Division of Aging and Long-Term Care, 360-337-5700; <http://www.agingkitsap.com>

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.