



SWACH

**Southwest Washington
Accountable Community
of Health**

**A N N U A L
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A special thanks to SWACH staff for support in developing content for the annual report.

Message from SWACH Board of Trustees President

Dear friends and supporters,

Like many communities the world over, Southwest Washington has faced difficult challenges over the past two years. The combination of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, with other health and social issues, has put a significant strain on the very systems designed to support people in crisis. During these moments, we have seen countless organizations rise to the occasion and support their communities.



I am proud of the work being done by SWACH and our great community partners. They help ensure people have access to the care and services they need to stay safe and healthy. While addressing these significant challenges, we have found that historically underrepresented populations have faced some of the most significant barriers to getting proper support.

We have centered much of our work on sustaining a community-based workforce to help address these obstacles. This workforce includes individuals from a variety of diverse backgrounds found in our region. With a network that represents the communities we serve, we are able to build trust in culturally responsive ways, allowing individuals to get the care they need in the most meaningful ways possible. By building trust, we can begin to dismantle the barriers many of these populations face.

As we continue on this journey, I want to thank you for your support. This work takes all of us doing what we can to uplift our communities.

Dawn Tolotti

SWACH Board of Trustees President

Who We Are

Here at Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health, or SWACH, we bring partners together to create equitable, sustainable systems change that reduces cost and improves whole-person wellness for all.

We work with organizations across the Southwest region in Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties to better understand the challenges facing the region and work together to find solutions. We actively look for ways to improve the social determinants of health - which include the complex list of factors that affect someone's wellness—ranging from things like access to health care and health education to housing and food availability.



What is an Accountable Community of Health?

An Accountable Community of Health, or ACH, is an independent organization that addresses health care and social needs in their communities. These regional organizations are able to meet the specific needs of the areas they represent. Washington State is covered by nine ACH organizations, which often work in collaboration with one another.

SWACH works with community organizations in Southwest Washington to understand and meet the needs of individuals in Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties. Our projects include the development of the HealthConnect Hub—a system that connects different agencies to provide whole-person care—regional COVID-19 response, addressing the opioid epidemic, and more. We strive to apply an equity lens to this work, advocating for underrepresented and marginalized populations in these spheres.



Letter from the Executive Director

In 2021, the experience across our Southwest Washington region was highlighted by the extreme impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of access to critical resources and loss experienced in our communities. 2021 was a difficult year and Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health recognizes the tremendous challenges our communities faced, both in loss and in resiliency.

The mission of SWACH is to bring partners together to create equitable, sustainable systems change that reduces cost and improves whole-person wellness for all. We recognize though that bringing partners together is only part of the work. Much of SWACH's work this past year focused on centering and supporting a diverse, community-based workforce of Community Health Workers, Advocates and Peers to bring critical resources supporting COVID-19 quarantine and isolation efforts for families, building relationships with trusted community agencies, vaccination efforts, advancing partnerships across the region to address opioid overdose and creating an environment centered on racial and health equity. Our efforts also continued to focus on unique and important partnerships across sectors to examine longstanding challenges for communities, especially Black, Indigenous and Person of Color communities across Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties. SWACH continues to prioritize these critical efforts with funding, support, and new partner relationships.

SWACH holds an important responsibility to meaningfully contribute to advancing equity, health, and wellness for all across Southwest Washington. Using important lessons learned this past year, we reaffirm our commitment to our mission and values. We will strengthen meaningful opportunities for stakeholders and communities across the region to help us identify areas of growth and new project opportunities as well as listen to community. We value community voice and believe that we do the work of our Accountable Community of Health stronger in tandem with the community and partners.

As we continue this important work in 2022, we will continue to bring equity, community voice, and innovation to our projects to ensure we are meeting the needs of our community.



Nichole Peppers
SWACH Executive Director

The Future of SWACH

Innovation is essential to the programs and partnerships that SWACH develops. As we enter our sixth year as an organization, much of our work will be focused on supporting the vibrant culture in our region by addressing holistic care options. The uncertainty of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will be a large factor in our programs this year as we continue to look for ways to support systemically excluded populations through a community-based workforce.

We are expanding partnerships within the HealthConnect Hub, which allows us to connect community members with more of the essential services they need for their overall wellness. We are also launching the HealthConnect Advisory Council this year. Made up of community members and leaders from partner organizations, this group will bring community voice to the forefront of our work, ensuring alignment between what the region needs and the focus of our programs.

Community engagement is an essential aspect of this work. Our programs will continue to center our local community-based workforce to meet the needs of individuals in our region. This workforce plays an important role, ensuring our programming is culturally responsive and equitable. It also is crucial in aligning our work with the barriers our community is facing regarding their wellness. In 2022, we will host listening sessions for community partners and members. This will provide an opportunity for SWACH to

connect with the populations we serve.

We will also continue to address the opioid epidemic in our region. We are proud of the work being done by the Clark County Opioid Taskforce, as well as our work to make Naloxone more accessible in the community. These collaborative initiatives help educate the community about opioid use disorder, while working to reduce overdoses.

In 2021, we also secured funding for a new project that aims to increase access to, and accelerate licensure of, mental health professionals and substance use disorder professionals in underserved areas of Washington State. The project is funded by a two-year contract from the Health Care Authority and will focus on developing tele-supervision processes for trainees, tracking and reporting on their licensure progress, and funding a full-time supervisor.

Remaining flexible to meet the rising needs of our community will be central to what we do. The future of public health is full of uncertainties, but whatever challenges we are presented with, we'll be prepared to leverage our powerful community to meet the needs of those we serve.

The Power of Collaboration

Community impact is a primary focus of SWACH's efforts in Southwest Washington. Our organization is fortunate to work with partner agencies and care providers to ensure people can access to the care they need.

One of these innovative partnerships is the Community Assistance Referral and Education Services (CARES) program. CARES, a collaborative effort between Clark Cowlitz Fire and Rescue, Legacy Health, PeaceHealth and SWACH, works to reduce dependency on emergency services for non-emergency needs by connecting individuals to the proper services.

Individuals dealing with long-term or acute health concerns often rely on emergency medical services for ongoing care. This creates a strain on emergency resources in non-emergency situations, while also not providing the correct type of care for a patient.

By relying on trusted individuals, including First Responders (EMS) and Social Workers, the program helps community members access the right services to meet their needs.

Through CARES, Clark Cowlitz Fire and Rescue recently helped a woman who was struggling to manage opioid medications properly. While living with a friend, Emergency Medical Services were contacted several times after the medications weren't taken properly, creating a need for immediate medical attention.

CARES was able to help bridge the gap for the patient to the services and support they needed. CARES provided prescription management education and made referrals to other organizations to help manage her care, including behavioral health services. They also were successful in making the necessary connections to help her start the process of finding her own place to live. Through the proper support, this patient can receive the appropriate resources that align with her unique situation.

Collaboration across agencies and industries is often a powerful way to meet the needs of our community. Read more about how partnerships like these are improving lives in our region at southwestach.org/news.

COVID-19 Response

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the world has experienced unparalleled hardship and challenges. The virus has affected nearly every household, system and infrastructure across the globe in some way. It's a difficult reality that has been felt throughout Southwest Washington.

In these struggles, however, we have found ways to be resilient, ways to rise above the situation, and to take care of one another. We haven't always had all of the answers to this collective difficulty, but we've done what we can to address the situation. By working with other organizations throughout the area, we've been able to leverage a community-based workforce to help people during the pandemic.



The power of a culturally responsive community-based workforce

An important part of addressing COVID-19 is building trust and meeting people where they are. For systematically marginalized populations, this requires connecting them to professionals who understand their culture, language, and lived experiences.

Community-based workers are able to build a connection with clients in a way that no one else can. They serve a crucial role in providing trusted communication and resources to culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse communities across Southwest Washington. In many instances, this workforce includes many organizations that have established trust with community members throughout the region.

We are grateful to work with strong community partners on this work, including Skamania County Community Health, Share, YWCA Clark County, Lutheran Community Services, Washington Gorge Action Programs (WAGAP), Clark Cowlitz Fire and Rescue, Access to Health, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Southwest Washington Equity Coalition, and more. These organizations are essential in helping us address the pandemic on two levels - increasing vaccine access and education in systematically marginalized populations, and providing the necessary support to help families isolate themselves when they have a positive COVID-19 test in their household (through Care Connect Washington).

The community-based workforce is crucial in ensuring that the populations who often face the largest barrier to their wellness have the support they need. By providing culturally responsive assistance, this workforce can help their community members make informed decisions regarding their health and wellness. It can also establish a lasting trust that can lead to ongoing support through these systems.

Equity and Racial Justice

SWACH stands committed to centering equity and racial justice in our work. We recognize that we have work to do to further our commitment to being an anti-racist organization. In 2021, we concluded our Equity Collaborative - a series of surveys and evaluations to help inform future equity initiatives. Using that information, we have created a Racial Justice Plan to center community members' voices and experiences. Listening informs our actions.

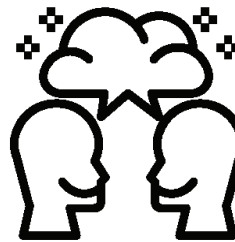
As we strive to center equity and justice in our work, we are focusing on “transforming elements”, unique emphases to help us reach our goal of challenging the status quo. The areas we are focusing on include:

- Transforming our policies and systems through organizational development work
- Transforming our outcomes through partnerships and programing
- Transforming together through collaborative growth
- And transforming from within through personal growth

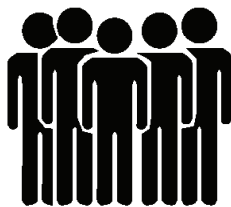
Examples of Our Equity Work



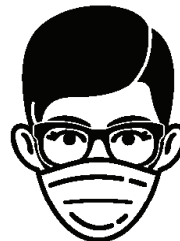
Regular board and staff trainings focused on equity



New partnerships in HealthConnect Hub to reflect community, diversity and equity concerns



Recruiting Board Members who reflect regional populations

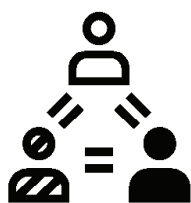


COVID-19 response centered on culturally appropriate needs

SWACH is committed to this meaningful work at every level, from our staff and directors to our Board of Trustees. We also invite community members and other organizations to join us in this process, and will center it in collaborative spaces.

Through our Racial Justice Plan, we hope to elevate our core organizational values for improving health equity, including innovating transformations that create positive change, fostering community engagement and voice, and building trust with compassion, integrity, transparency, and accountability. This plan will enable us to bring equity, wellness, respect, teamwork, and community to the forefront of what we do every day.

Meaningful work is constantly being done both internally and externally to ensure that our programs meet the needs of everyone in our region.



Development of our new Racial Justice Plan



Empowerment of the Community-Based Workforce



Braided funding and resources to center regional needs



Ongoing opioid epidemic response work

Evaluations

Evaluation and feedback are important to the work being done at SWACH. Without this information, it is impossible for us to center community voice and ensure we are meeting regional needs. To assist that process, the Center for Outcomes Research and Education (CORE) completed multiple evaluations for SWACH, including Understanding the Experiences of the Pathways Workforce in SW Washington, Understanding the Experiences of Direct Service Staff, and Understanding the Experiences of Pathways Participants in SW Washington.

Insights from the HealthConnect Hub

The HealthConnect Hub takes an evidence-based approach to care coordination by leveraging shared technology to provide connections, support, and infrastructure that historically have been siloed, or disconnected, from one another. This program regularly connects clients with a community-based workforce to help navigate these systems.

Benefits of a Care Coordination Ecosystem

HealthConnect Pathways creates a better-connected network of Coordinated Care Agencies (CCAs) and other organizations to better serve participants. Recent interviews with members of the HealthConnect Pathways workforce helped demonstrate what is going well in this hub approach, as well as found improvements that could be made. Among the benefits are:

- Providing more seamless care across traditionally siloed agencies and systems
- Leveraging expertise among community-based workforce
- Connecting others to preventative services
- Responding in times of crisis

Recommendations for Improvements

- Continue to emphasize organizational relationship building
- Improve the Hub technology platform and related trainings to fully utilize Community Health Record (CHR) resources.

HealthConnect Hub Client Interviews

CORE interviewed community members who had worked with community-based workers to navigate health and social services through the HealthConnect Hub. These interviews found that Community Health Workers were successful in building a trusted relationship with their clients. The HealthConnect Pathways program has improved the following aspects for clients:

- Health and health access
- Mental health
- Access to other social services
- Empowerment
- Understanding the impact of COVID-19

"In my opinion, as the one receiving the benefits at this point, I would say that this is a vital part of anybody's community. Working with these people has changed my life."

- HealthConnect Hub Client

Advancing Access & Equity Through the Hub

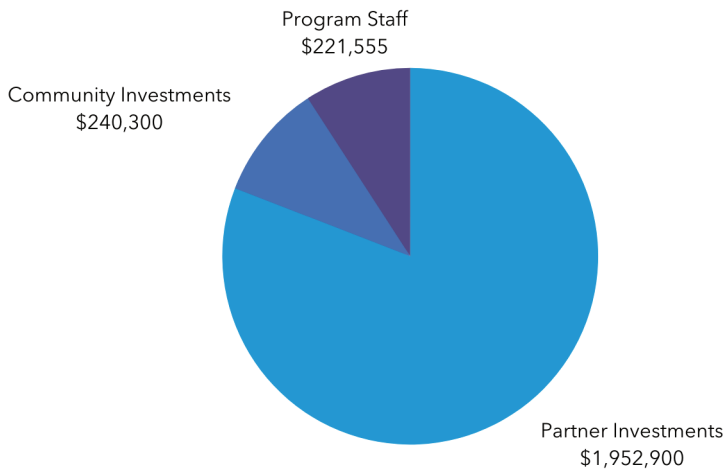
In 2021, the HealthConnect Hub was powered by 56 Community Based Workers (CBWs) and 15 supervisors from 15 unique agencies in Southwest Washington. The areas of expertise of these organizations cover valuable topics including housing and social services, family and community support, eliminating racism and empowering women, chronic disease and pain self-management programs, and more.

The community-based workforce is able to provide culturally responsive care to historically marginalized populations in our region. These community advocates break down barriers including languages and lived experience to ensure that community members from all backgrounds can access the care they need.

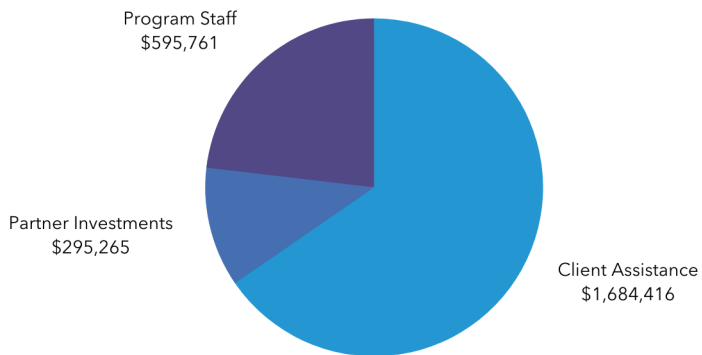
Financial Data

SWACH is a proud member of Southwest Washington. We strive to invest in our community to tackle meaningful projects and programs. Transparency in investment and capacity is essential to our resource accountability.

Collaborative Impact



HealthConnect Care Coordination



Focus Area 1

Expenditure	Expense	Percentage of Overall Expenses
Whole Person Care & Health Equity	\$1,199,299	15%
Transformation Plans	\$1,952,900	24%

Focus Area 2

Expenditure	Expense	Percentage of Overall Expenses
Community HealthConnect	\$3,660,367	45%
Care Coordination Agencies	\$295,265	4%

Other Expenditures

Expenditure	Expense	Percentage of Overall Expenses
HRSA COVID-19 Response*	\$63,646	1%
Operations	\$886,872	4%

*HRSA COVID-19 Response reflects funds specifically from SWACH's HRSA grant and does not include Care Connect WA funds.

Acknowledgements

SWACH Board of Trustees:

Dawn Tolotti, Board President

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Worku Negussie

Andrea Pruitt

Susan Stearns

Dr. Adriana Linares

SWACH's grant for COVID-19 education and outreach

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$1 million with 0 percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For

Connect with Us

At SWACH, collaboration is a fundamental element of the work we do. We strongly believe that coordination across agencies and sectors fuels systems change that allows communities to achieve “whole-person wellness”. Connect with us to learn more about how to partner with SWACH in this important work.

Meet Our Team

Our team is made up of dedicate, equity-focused staff who are committed to making a difference in Southwest Washington. Get to know our team, and how to contact us, at southwestach.org/our-team/.

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