



Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Behavioral Health Administration 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives



I often compare the basis for the work we do throughout the Department of Social and Health Services to that of the design that comes prior to the construction of a home.

We are building a house of social services, and we have been doing quite a bit of building lately within the Behavioral Health Administration. This house of social services we're building aligns DSHS' top priorities with Gov. Jay Inslee's top issues.

While modernizing our IT infrastructure is our foundation, as we work our way through the home, priorities such as staffing stabilization, sustainable infrastructure, transitioning people to community living and transforming our behavioral health system make up other key pieces of this home.

In this year's BHA annual report, you can read about how we continue to add bed capacity beyond the state hospitals to help treat those who come to us through the criminal court system. We opened a civil residential treatment facility on our Maple Lane campus, we added beds on two new wards at Western State Hospital, and we even purchased a previously unoccupied private hospital in the state's most populous county. These infrastructure additions are just as important as the work we're doing to build our house of social services, and they are a key piece of the puzzle as we work to cut wait times for Trueblood class members waiting in jail for competency services.

We continue to focus our efforts on serving those class members, as we extended forensic behavioral health services this year to five new counties throughout the state as part of the settlement agreement. We also took on the challenge of working to reshape the landscape of mental health services behind bars. Our Office of Forensic Mental Health Services Jail Technical Assistance Program took to the road, traversing Washington state's correctional facilities, embarking on a tireless journey to 60 different jails.

Working to change legislation to address surging demand for access to competency services is another avenue we are taking. Senate Bill 5440 expands pathways to meaningful treatment options, particularly for people with low-level misdemeanors. The bill also encourages alternatives such as outpatient competency restoration and civil commitment.

We are making great progress in tackling our staffing challenges, reducing wait times for those stuck in jail, and refurbishing and building modern facilities for 21st century care to meet the demand for bed capacity.

BHA team members have shown extraordinary resiliency this year while responding to ambitious timelines for construction projects, pressures from federal and local court decisions, and, most importantly, a devastating fire which threatened the lives of patients and staff at Eastern State Hospital and other DSHS facilities in eastern Washington.

Through it all, I'm extremely proud of all our BHA team members and the unwavering respect and dignity they show our patients and residents on a daily basis as we continue to treat those others are unwilling or unable to care for.

The transformation of our state's behavioral health system is a long and sometimes winding road, but I am proud of the progress we have made and our continued commitment to completing the task.

Fondly,

*Jilma Meneses, Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services*



Reflecting on the challenges, changes, and accomplishments BHA has experienced in 2023 is nothing short of remarkable. It leaves an indelible mark on behavioral health that I believe will result in profound changes to how we provide care as a state.

A landmark achievement of 2023 was the opening of the DSHS Behavioral Health & Treatment Center — Maple Lane Campus – Oak Unit in January. A 16-bed facility, swiftly staffed and occupied, it set the precedent for a year marked by a series of milestones, not only in expanding facilities and bed counts, but also in qualitative leaps.

In collaboration with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, Health Care Authority, and Disability Rights Washington, we expanded Trueblood services to Phase 3 regions (Thurston-Mason and Salish Regions), aligning with the Trueblood Contempt Settlement. This collaborative effort will also work to enhance existing services in Phase 1 and Phase 2 regions.

BHA embarked on a transformative journey this year, refining the metrics that measure and define the success of our organization. We improved our incident reporting procedures, launched the first-ever BHA Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion Community of Practice, and implemented regular collaboration among peers to share best practices and prioritize lessons learned as integral facets of our operational overhaul. As part of these efforts, a results map dashboard was launched, providing staff with a real-time overview of their contributions toward organizational goals, and ensuring we are a data-driven entity.

BHA's overall incredible work has not gone unnoticed. In August, an Inspection of Care team declared the Special Commitment Center's community programs to be a national model.

BHA achieved something significant during this year's legislative session. Notably, Senate Bill 5440 stands out as a historic bill impacting Trueblood class members, forensic navigators, and involuntary medication procedures. Other significant bills include SB 5236, addressing hospital staffing standards; SB 5300, ensuring continuity of coverage for prescription drugs treating behavioral health conditions; and House Bill 1580, creating a system to support children in crisis.

Moreover, the accompanying budget for the year's session marks a monumental investment of over \$182 million in behavioral health. This substantial allocation is set to expand the behavioral health workforce and facilitate the operation of future new facilities, including the Brockmann Campus in Clark County and the Maple Lane campus Baker/Chelan Unit, with a total of 112 new beds.

Another of the significant milestones reached this year was the opening of Western State Hospital's F9 and F10 wards in the spring, adding 58 forensic beds. However, the pinnacle of this year's milestones emerged in an unforeseen opportunity – the acquisition of a new behavioral health facility in Tukwila. The Olympic Heritage Behavioral Health facility, named after Washington's Olympic Peninsula, was opened in October, underscoring the tireless commitment of BHA to transforming the behavioral health system.

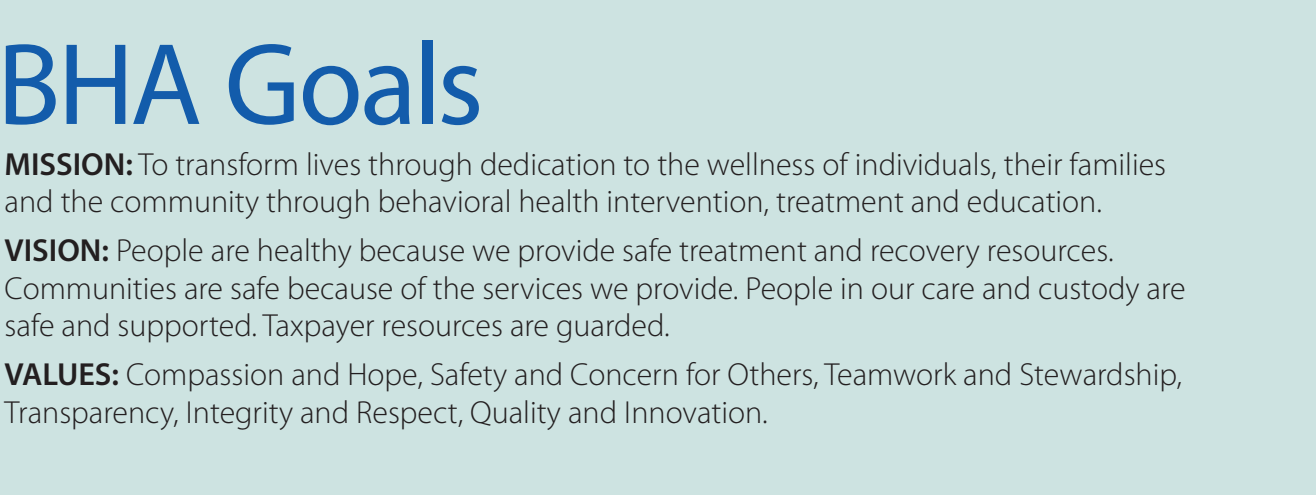
Looking ahead to the new milestones of 2024, the anticipation is palpable. With the utmost gratitude for the accomplishments of the past year, we eagerly embrace the challenges and triumphs that await us in 2024, fueled by the shared commitment to providing the best quality care possible to the people of Washington.

*Kevin Bovenkamp, Assistant Secretary
Behavioral Health Administration
Department of Social and Health Services*



DSHS Goals

- PUBLIC TRUST:** Strong management practices ensure quality and efficiency.
- HEALTH:** Each person and each community will be healthy.
- PROTECTION:** Each person who is vulnerable will be protected.
- QUALITY OF LIFE:** Each person in need will be supported to attain the highest possible quality of life.
- SAFETY:** Each person and each community will be safe.



BHA Goals

- MISSION:** To transform lives through dedication to the wellness of individuals, their families and the community through behavioral health intervention, treatment and education.
- VISION:** People are healthy because we provide safe treatment and recovery resources. Communities are safe because of the services we provide. People in our care and custody are safe and supported. Taxpayer resources are guarded.
- VALUES:** Compassion and Hope, Safety and Concern for Others, Teamwork and Stewardship, Transparency, Integrity and Respect, Quality and Innovation.

State turns unexpected private hospital closure into opportunity to address urgent behavioral health needs

As part of an urgent effort to serve the increasing numbers of people waiting for behavioral health services, including those in jail awaiting competency services, the Department of Social and Health Services finalized an agreement to lease and purchase the former Cascade Behavioral Health facility in Tukwila.

The purchase of the vacant behavioral health hospital for \$29.9 million adds about 100 beds. The department is taking a phased approach to making the beds available to patients. The facility operated as a privately owned psychiatric hospital until it was shuttered last July.

“The closure of this hospital was tough news, but it also presented us with a sudden and unexpected opportunity,” said Gov. Jay Inslee. “We have been working diligently to serve rapidly growing numbers of patients needing behavioral health care, but one of our biggest constraints is the amount of time it takes to build and staff new facilities. I appreciate the work of the department to act quickly so the state could prepare a competitive bid.”

“Although we currently have several projects to add bed capacity in various stages of construction and development, we believe this was a prime opportunity for us to add immediate capacity in a location that is easily accessible for staff, patients, and their families,” DSHS Secretary Jilma Meneses said. “The demand for behavioral health services remains high, and we will continue to examine a wide range of options to help us positively



impact the needs of people awaiting behavioral health treatment.”

The department officially took possession of the building Aug. 15, and has admitted more than 50 civilly committed patients from the state hospitals and plans to continue adding patients throughout 2024.

To learn more about the new hospital visit: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/bha/division-state-hospitals/olympic-heritage-behavioral-health>

Governor joins DSHS to celebrate opening of new civil residential treatment facility

The Department of Health and Social Services had help from Gov. Jay Inslee, community members, as well as honored guests and members of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation in dedicating its first-ever civil residential treatment facility during a ribbon-cutting ceremony Jan. 27 at the Civil Center for Behavioral Health at Maple Lane, in Thurston County.

The newly completed 16,000-square-foot facility securely and therapeutically houses 16 residents at a time who receive 24-hour care.

“I cannot be more excited in what this represents, which is one of our first steps in the transformation in how we provide mental health to our families and the communities,” Inslee said. “Every family in Washington state to some degree is touched by mental illness, and not only are we all touched by it, we have to realize that the work that’s done here actually works.”

Maple Lane’s Oak Unit received new patients from Western State Hospital, freeing up bed space at the hospital for forensic patients, those who come in through the criminal court system.

“This facility, which is going to have people who are on the civil side of our mental health system, is also going to help the problem that we have in the criminal side,” Inslee said. “Because as you know that we have people waiting too long in our jails while they are waiting for their competency to be restored... But this will help that problem because it will allow more beds to be available for those who need competency to be restored.”

The opening of the RTF is historic for the state because it is DSHS’ first facility created to treat patients in the community and in smaller facilities that better meet their needs.



“This is a perfect example of what we want to see in the development of the additional treatment available to people,” Inslee said.

Following Inslee’s comments, DSHS Secretary Jilma Meneses spoke about how this facility reinforces DSHS’ commitment to preserving the dignity and respect of patients.

“Our deeply held value is to provide person-centered care, recognizing the humanity in all of our patients, and we will use this approach in all aspects of patient care,” Meneses said.

New competency restoration beds come online at WSH

Two new wards opened in 2023 to patients in the Gage Forensic Center of Excellence on the campus of Western State Hospital. All 58 beds on wards F9 and F10 are now occupied by patients undergoing competency restoration.

The construction of the new 350-bed forensic hospital is in the early stages of development and the demolition phase is forecasted to begin Winter 2024, with completion slated to occur between 2027 and 2029.



DSHS Secretary Jilma Meneses, center, looks over the floorplan of the former Cascade Behavioral Health facility with Dr. Brian Waiblinger, chief medical officer for the Office of the Secretary, right; Kevin Bovenkamp, assistant secretary of the Behavioral Health Administration, center left; Bob Hubenthal, then Capital Programs director for the Facilities, Finance and Analytics Administration, second from left; and Rich Pannkuk, chief financial officer for FFA.

Types of treatment

Psychiatric care

Psychiatrists evaluate, diagnose and treat patients who experience mental health symptoms or conditions. Psychiatrists provide medication therapies to address illnesses such as psychosis, mood disorders and anxiety.

Medical care

Medical team members treat both chronic and acute complex medical illnesses.

Psychological care

Psychologists and psychology associates provide assessment, evaluation, treatment, and consultation.

Social work

Social workers act as liaisons between patients, legal representatives, families and community partners. Social workers also provide support and education to family and primary support people.

Rehabilitative counseling

Institutional counselors provide group and individual treatments to address behaviors and symptoms that are barriers to transitioning back into the community.

Recreational therapy

Recreation therapists provide leisure education, social interaction skills, creative and expressive activities, relaxation and stress management skills, cognitive and mental-focused activities, physical and exercise-based activities and community safety skills.

Occupational therapy

Occupational therapists assist with behavioral and physical health activities by teaching sensory modulation, work readiness, social skills, basic life skills, mindfulness, money management and coping skills.

Substance use disorder services

Substance use counselors provide disorder assessments, psychoeducation and motivational interviewing.

Physical therapy

Physical therapists provide treatment for orthopedic problems, balance and function.

Vocational programming

Treatment focused on developing the tools and skills to be successful in finding and keeping employment.

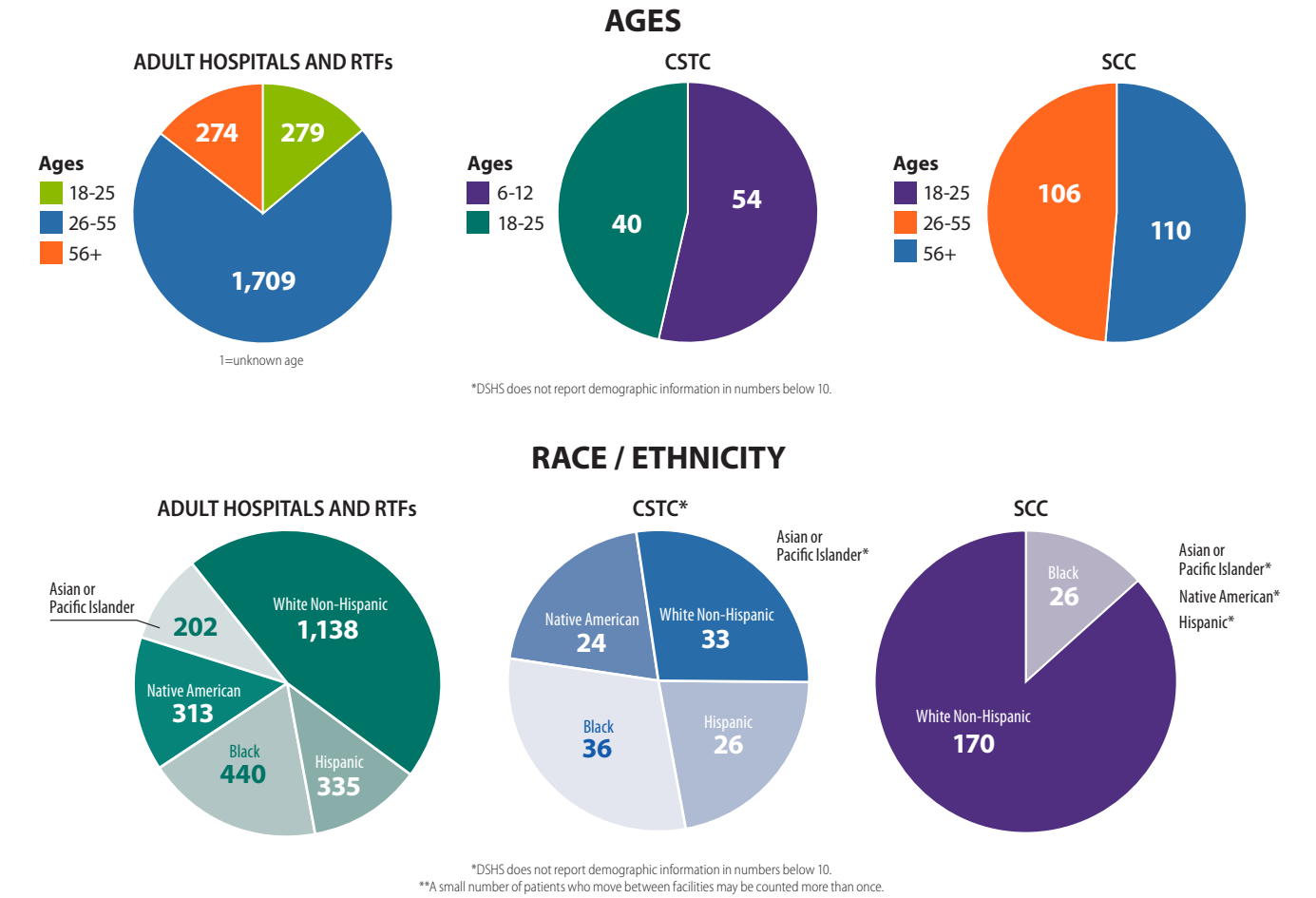


Treatments provided

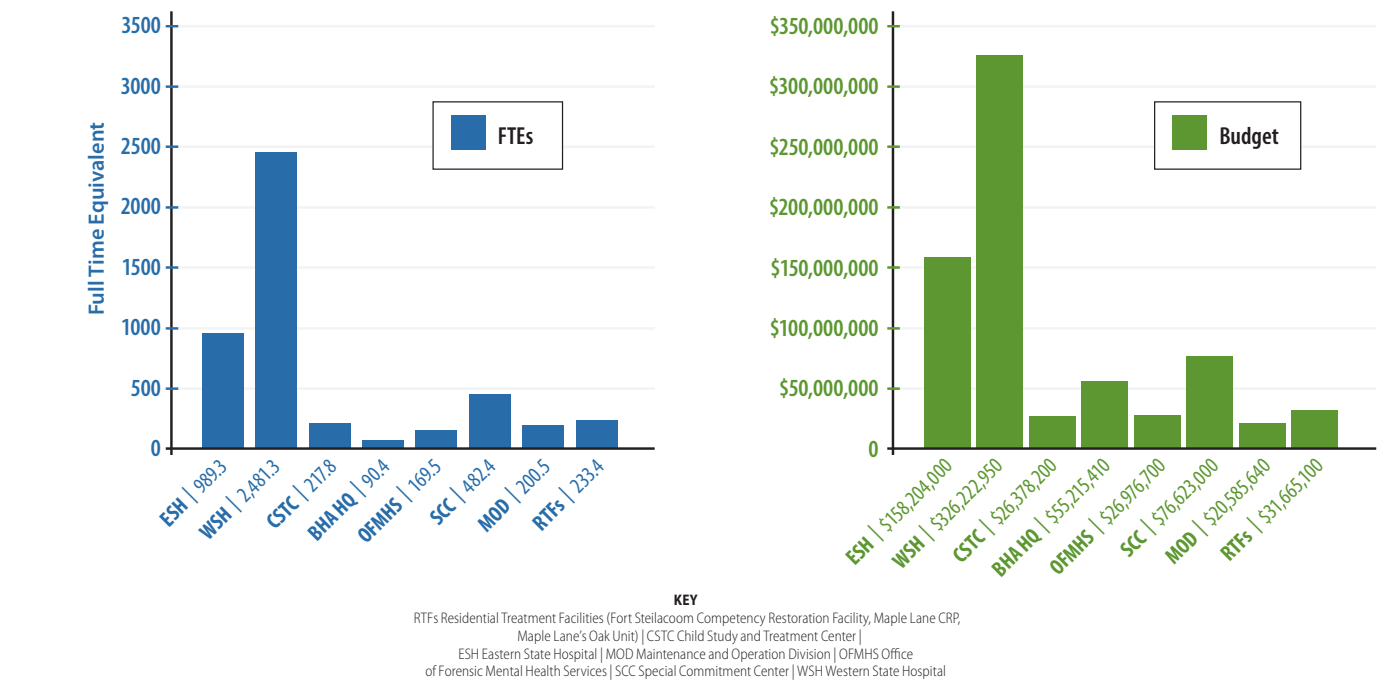
- Medication therapies, education and management
- Treatment of chronic and acute medical conditions
- Psychological assessments
- Group therapies and group education
- Individual therapy
- Family therapy
- Occupational, physical and recreational therapies, substance use disorder services, rehabilitative counseling and vocational programming

Who we serve

BHA strives to provide culturally aware and competent care to a diverse patient population that spans different ages, genders and races/ethnicities.



OPERATING BUDGETS | FY2023*



Behavioral Health Administration announces new leader for Maple Lane, Brockmann campuses

The Maple Lane Campus in Thurston County and the Brockmann Campus in Clark County now have an executive officer responsible for leading, developing, and managing operations.

Tony Bowie started this new role within the Behavioral Health Administration on July 16. These facilities will grow to serve more than 250 patients who will support treatment closer to their home communities, supporting Governor Jay Inslee’s vision of transforming behavioral health in Washington state.

Bowie has been with the Behavioral Health Administration since 2016, working in a variety of different leadership roles. Those roles included serving as the deputy CEO of the Special Commitment Center on McNeil Island and then transitioning to CEO at the Child Study and Treatment Center. Bowie also served as the interim CEO at Eastern State Hospital for several months.

He is excited to take on his next leadership challenge.

“The fact that we get to build this culture ... the fact we get to build what programming looks like and engage with our community members, so they understand the work we do, that is an exciting opportunity,” Bowie said.



Tony Bowie

Office of Forensic Mental Health Services announces new deputy director

Samantha Anderson’s passion for serving those impacted by the criminal court system is something that has fueled her throughout her professional career.

She’s thrilled to be able to share that same passion here at the Department of Social and Health Services’ Office of Forensic Mental Health Services as its new deputy director.

“My excitement stems from not just the challenging and impactful work within the forensic mental health space but I am also so excited to join such a highly regarded team,” said Anderson, who started June 1.

Anderson works closely with quality assurance, operations, infrastructure, human resources, budget, strategic planning, staff and workforce development and training, and jail technical assistance in her new role. Anderson comes to DSHS from United Healthcare, where she spent the last four and a half years working in its Medicaid department creating and growing the organization’s reentry program.



Samantha Anderson

Her years of experience – both academic and through employment – are a valuable addition to the department, said Dr. Thomas Kinlen, director of OFMHS.

DSHS names new executive officer for OHBH



Dan Davis

Dan Davis, former Western State Hospital Civil Center of Excellence deputy chief executive officer, was appointed as the new permanent executive officer at Olympic Heritage Behavioral Health in Tukwila, Wash.

Davis has served more than 20 years in state service. He joined DSHS in 2015, as a schedule manager for the nursing department, then moved into roles such as chief safety and security officer, director of security, and DCEO for the Civil Center. Prior to coming to DSHS, he served at the Department of Corrections in various roles since 2002.

Ever humble with a focus on doing what is needed, Dan is a leader who remains confident, measured, and uses his knowledge and expertise to support a team approach for success, said Charles Southerland, WSH CCE CEO.

“I knew from a young age, when I first wanted to be a pastor, that helping people was my passion,” said Davis. “It was the reason I wanted to go into the military early in my career. I never thought this type of position was a possibility. I am humbled and grateful.”

Southerland related some of the strengths Dan would bring in his new role.

“Dan is phenomenal at recognizing the human component in his work. He leads by developing relationships and inspiring others.”

As the EO, Davis shared he is most looking forward to the newness of the experience. He’s enthused by the opportunity to create something new from the ground up: bringing on new staff, establishing new policies, and formulating a new approach to operations at the newly acquired hospital.

BHA appoints permanent CEO at CSTC

Byron Eagle assumed the role of permanent chief executive officer at the Child Study and Treatment Center in June. His journey with CSTC began when he joined as deputy CEO in September 2021. Shortly thereafter, he was entrusted with the acting/interim CEO position. Having started his service with DSHS in 2001, Eagle climbed the ranks through various roles, including direct care, supervisory, and executive management at the Special Commitment Center. Here, he previously held the positions of chief of Security and Residential Operations before taking on the role of CSTC’s deputy CEO.

Before his tenure in state service, Eagle served in the United States Army as an explosive ordinance technician, reaching the rank of noncommissioned officer (sergeant). Following an honorable discharge, he pursued higher education at Central Washington University, earning a bachelor’s degree in law & justice with a specialization in criminal psychology. Currently, Eagle is actively pursuing a master’s degree from the University of Washington.



Byron Eagle

“Byron’s vision and commitment to serving our patients has helped guide CSTC over the past two years and I look forward to continued success under his leadership,” said Shannon Wallace, BHA deputy assistant secretary. “This is a well-deserved permanent appointment.”

BHA Tribal Affairs liaison earns national award

Marie Natrall-Ackles, the first full-time tribal affairs administrator at the Behavioral Health Administration, earned the National Indian Health Board’s Outstanding Service Award, notably for Policy BHA 10.22, which prioritizes protecting Native American patients’ cultural practices.

“It felt amazing, but it wasn’t so much the award, it was the awareness and the information sharing I wanted to share with other Native Americans,” said Natrall-Ackles, noting that the conference brought together Native American leaders from across the nation.

As a member of the Squamish First Nation and Selkirk First Nation with a doctorate in public policy and administration, Natrall-Ackles has been a lifelong advocate for Native Americans, spanning child welfare to the Department of Social and Health Services’ Office of Indian Policy.

Emphasizing the impact of historical trauma on Native American patients, she shared her grandparents’ limited education due to the boarding school process, highlighting the challenges faced by earlier generations.

“My grandparents were in boarding school, and they didn’t achieve a very high education,” Natrall-Ackles said. “With their boarding school process, they weren’t able to teach us our language, our culture.”

Growing up in Canada, Natrall-Ackles learned European languages before her own at age 12. She stressed the need to advocate for patients with trauma, acknowledging their reluctance to share or recognize it.

“I learned three European languages before I got to learn my own language when I was 12, and I’m not fluent in my language today. It’s important to be an advocate for our patients because I can speak about it and speak about a lot of our history, and I’ve done a lot of healing to advocate for those people who didn’t have a voice,” said Natrall-Ackles. “Patients with trauma may not be open about it, they may put a wall up and you may wonder why you can’t reach them, or they might just not be willing to share their trauma, or they may not know that they have trauma.

“What’s most important is having that strong sense of identity, especially when you look at the history, because it was almost taken from us,” she said.

Preserving the cultural identity of Native American patients involves supporting their participation in ceremonies, involving elders in treatment plans, and respecting sacred items. Natrall-Ackles emphasized the significance of respecting sacred items, suggesting visual inspection only if patients have them on their person.

Looking ahead, Natrall-Ackles aims to enhance Native American cultural services at BHA facilities and increase advocacy for these patients, underscoring the pivotal role of a strong sense of identity, especially for those grappling with mental health challenges.



Marie Natrall-Ackles

“It felt amazing, but it wasn’t so much the award, it was the awareness and the information sharing I wanted to share with other Native Americans,” said Marie Natrall-Ackles.

Building belonging through engagement

Engaging in the Say It Out Loud conference in May gave Behavioral Health Administration staff an opportunity to “walk our talk” and put an invested effort into the concept of building belonging at BHA, according to Lolo Arévalo, BHA’s Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion administrator.

He joined three other BHA staff members in learning about the behavioral health needs and disparities faced by LGBTQIA+ community members at the May 22 conference in Spokane, and networked and recruited for new BHA staff as well.

“It was vitally important we provided an opportunity to interact, become intimate with the issues, and learn the conditions that the LGBTQ+ community faces on a daily basis, particularly those who are part of the transgender community. The concerns were real and the severity was surprising to me,” said Arévalo, who attended the conference with Dr. Elena Lopez, Dr. Elizabeth Zinda and Cami Young.



More than 350 people attended the conference, which has been hosted for 22 years by the Washington Health Care Authority.

“Over the years, the content has expanded to include education, healthcare, criminal justice, shares from those with lived experience. Not only is the conference continually attended by behavioral health providers, but also social workers, advocates, teachers, law enforcement, government staff, and loved ones of all ages,” said a statement by HCA’s Say It Out Loud Committee. “With this growth, SIOL has become more than a conference, but rather a supportive community coming together to improve the health and well-being of all 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and communities.”

“HCA and SIOL’s missions continue to align: working hard toward improving access to treatment and care that is safe, affirming and does not cause further harm. A system of care that understands and values the intersectionality and individuality as well as recognizes the potential impacts of trauma one may experience just for being their authentic self.”

A commentary by Jo Sahlin: Embracing and safeguarding LGBTQIA2S+ wellbeing

At about 13, I saw my first drag show: The Kinsey Sicks, “America’s Favorite Dragapella Beautyshop Quartet,” at Spokane Pride. It was mesmerizing and enthralling, a truly electric experience that stuck with me through adolescence and into adulthood. My parents took me to the show and, more importantly, they entertained my endless questions afterward. What’s a Kinsey scale? How did drag start? Where could I get a costume like that?

Even more, questions remained unspoken as we watched the show and wandered around the Pride festival. The strangers around us were like me in a way I hadn’t identified yet, and it was exhilarating to be among them.

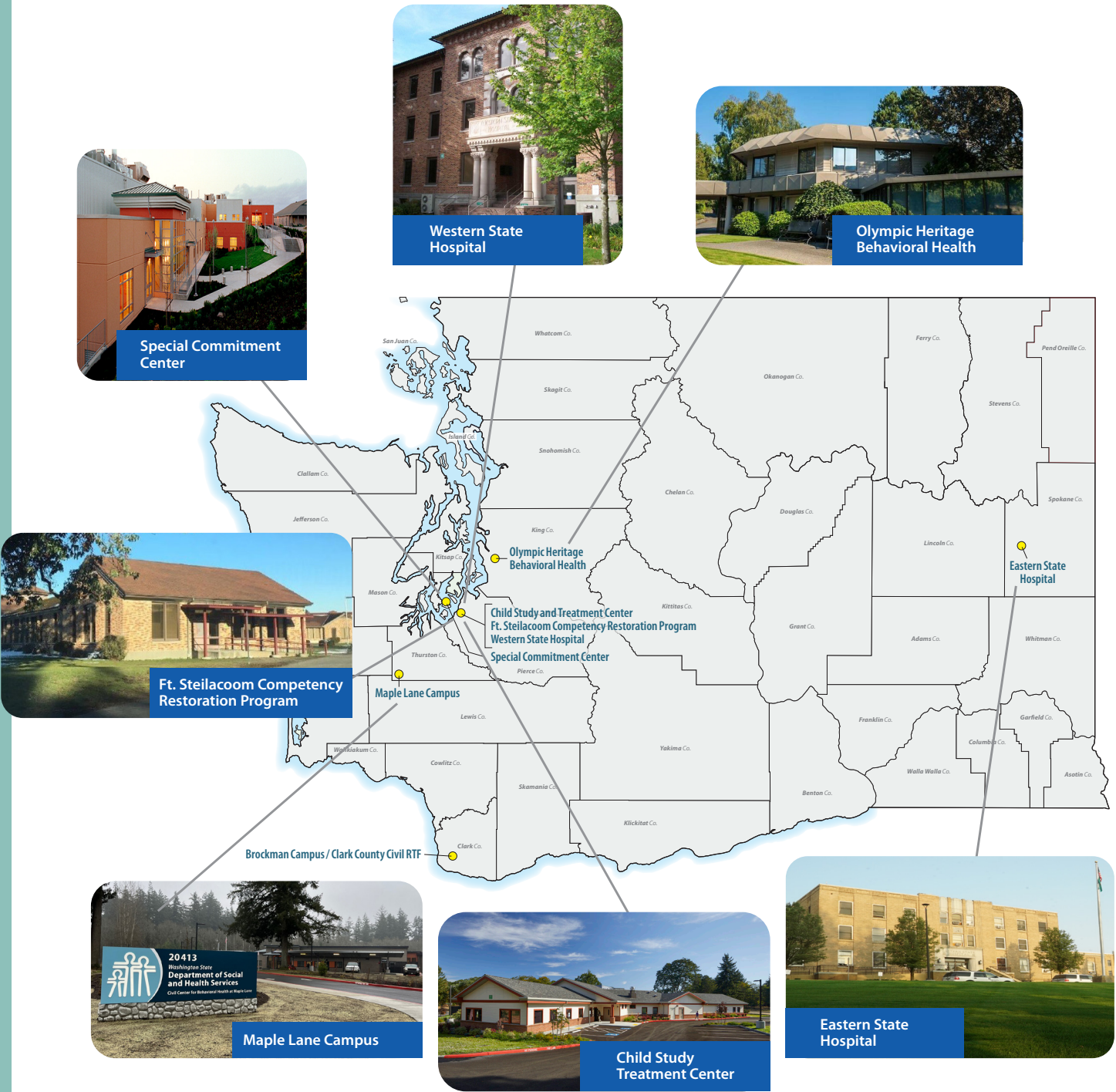
These experiences provoked some timely self-reflection, as well as dialogue with my loved ones. They were also humanizing in an essential way for that age, introducing me to people similar to and different from me at a time when my world might otherwise be condensed to an immediate, insular circle.

The immense privilege of enjoying the safety, vibrance, and love at Pride in Washington state throughout my life is not lost on me — especially since experiences like these are currently threatened or eliminated in many parts of the country. I and so many of my LGBTQIA2S+ peers feel immense fear in response to the violence and harm targeted at our community throughout the U.S., especially endangering transgender youth and transgender people who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color. Many people are fighting for the right simply to exist as their authentic selves; freely participating in a celebration of their identities seems impossibly remote.

Observing Pride month at BHA is an integral part of celebrating LGBTQ+ joy, love, health, and safety, and reaffirming these priorities as an organization and community.



Jo Sahlin



Planned and pending facilities

FACILITY	BED COUNT	OPERATED BY	CONSTRUCTION START	PATIENT ADMITS
Maple Lane Columbia Unit	30	NGRI DSHS/BHA	September 2022	Winter 2024
Brockmann Campus Civil RTF	48	DSHS/BHA	Spring 2023	Spring 2025
Forensic Hospital	350	DSHS/WSH	Spring 2024	2027-29
Maple Lane Baker Unit Civil RTF	32	DSHS	Winter 2024	Winter 2025
Maple Lane Chelan Unit Civil RTF	32	DSHS	Winter 2025	Fall 2025

BHA leadership to celebrate opening of OHBH

Governor Jay Inslee joined Department of Social and Health Services Secretary Jilma Meneses and other DSHS officials to cut a ceremonial ribbon Nov. 21 at the state’s newly acquired behavioral health facility, Olympic Heritage Behavioral Health, in Tukwila.

In response to the growing demand for behavioral health services, especially for people in jail awaiting competency services, DSHS acquired the former Cascade Behavioral Health facility late this summer for \$29.9 million.

Inslee, who announced the vision for transforming behavioral health in 2018, opened the event with remarks on the acquisition of the former privately owned hospital and the state’s continued effort to add more bed capacity for those in need of mental health services. Meneses and Olympic Heritage CEO Dan Davis also spoke.

“When we get people treatment, they get better. When we get people treatment, they go back to work. When we give people treatment, they go back to their families. When we give people treatment, they go back to their churches and their communities,” Inslee said. “Behavioral health works in the state of Washington.”

Meneses and Davis lauded Behavioral Health Administration Assistant Secretary Kevin Bovenkamp and BHA employees for their monumental efforts in swiftly staffing and operationalizing the facility in such a short time.

“I want to thank our dedicated BHA staff not only for choosing the name, but for continuing to care for our very complex patients with respect and dignity,” Meneses said.

“The staff serving at our state hospitals are special human beings; they return every day despite the challenges that come with caring and treating people who usually have severe disorders. Not just anyone can do their work, so we must recognize our employees for their extraordinary servant leadership.”

The opening of Olympic Heritage signifies a significant achievement for DSHS, marking one among several new facilities currently in development.



Flanked by City of Tukwila Council member Thomas McLeod and state Sen. Karen Keiser, from left, Gov. Jay Inslee cuts the ribbon to commemorate the opening of Olympic Heritage Behavioral Health in Tukwila. DSHS Secretary Jilma Meneses and Tukwila Council member Kate Krueller, from left, are also pictured. (Photo courtesy Jim Kopriva)

Lab supervisor by day, search and rescue by night



There is a strong chance you have lost your way and need help getting home if you run into Leslie Shimabukuro away from the Eastern State Hospital campus.

Shimabukuro, Eastern State Hospital's Clinical Laboratory Supervisor, and a 15-year employee at ESH, has been a certified volunteer for Spokane County's Search and Rescue team for eight years. The volunteer team she is affiliated with is Intermountain Search Dogs whose owners and dogs have been trained to find lost persons and in some instances human remains.

"It's more than just a hobby," according to Shimabukuro. "It's kind of a way of life."

Early this year, Shimabukuro's "way of life" involved helping train dogs find a "lost" person – herself – in a wooded location near Cheney. She hid under camouflage netting for three different dogs in training. Each dog got one hour to search a 40-acre area.

Shimabukuro's affinity for training dogs dates back to her childhood in Southern Idaho. Although initially aspiring to a medical career, the events of Sept. 11, 2001,

inspired her interest in search and rescue. "Watching those search and rescue dogs and their handlers was a moving experience," she said.

Volunteers seeking search and rescue certification must complete a 12-week academy training, operating under the Spokane County Sheriff's Office. Shimabukuro emphasizes the importance of understanding lost-person behavior, backed by years of research.

"You have to love what you do," she said. "Even though you are a volunteer, you should train like a professional. You need to be confident in your skills and your team's ability. Someone's life is on the line."



There is no such thing as giving enough, according to Dr. Jaime Basnillo

It might be hard to understand why Dr. Jaime Basnillo – an Eastern State Hospital psychiatrist in the Geropsychiatric Unit at the Westlake Campus – remains so dedicated to his native Philippines without understanding the culture and expectation in his home country.

Except for the last two years due to travel restrictions because of COVID-19, every year since moving to the U.S. in 1988, Dr. Basnillo returns to the Philippines to assist in medical missions to bring some of the most basic medical care to low-income families and individuals.

Currently he is the national president of the BISAYA Medical Association, Inc., an organization made up of U.S.-based physicians of Filipino descent who return home annually to

provide medical help.

In February 2023 he participated in a medical mission. Though a psychiatrist, he has the capability to complete general surgical procedures for medical missions.

"We go up to the mountains to do surgeries," he said. "The main purpose is to conduct a medical-



Dr. Jaime Basnillo

From fur coats for Soviet and academic elites to mending patient garments at ESH

Sergey Sinchenko, once a sewing specialist for Ukraine's elite, now applies his skills at Eastern State Hospital. At 60, he's been indispensable for over a decade, mending clothes for patients whose sizes fluctuate. Winter months keep him busy repairing coats for warmth.

His contributions extend beyond stitching, involving the design and crafting of patient bedroom curtains, shower curtains, and 10- to 20-foot-long curtains throughout the hospital.

Despite 11 years in solitude on the south side of the Forensic Services Unit, he reflects on his family and friends in war-torn Ukraine, mindful of the harsh treatment those who speak out against the Russian military may face.

Born in December 1963, in communist Ukraine under the U.S.S.R., Sinchenko witnessed the oppressive communist rule until the Soviet Union's economic collapse in 1991.

From 1982 to 1984, Sinchenko served in the Soviet military as required by the government of the U.S.S.R. He was sent to the country of Kazakhstan, another Soviet republic, after being trained as a radio operator. During that time, he wrote a letter to a fellow military friend that described his whereabouts and the poor conditions surrounding him, he said.

Unfortunately for Sinchenko, the letter was intercepted by his superiors. He was subsequently ordered before a military court, convicted, and sentenced to prison. Before prison, however, his superiors increased his workload by

more than double and reduced the number of hours he could sleep at night.

Unbeknownst to Sinchenko though, he found favor with a commanding officer who made arrangements to get him out of Kazakhstan though he didn't tell Sinchenko his plan.

"One night, two officers come in, wake me up and tell me to gather all that I had," he said. "I tell myself. . . 'bye, bye,' you know, because I didn't know what could be next."

With his destination unknown, Sinchenko was taken to a small airbase in the middle of the night, put on a plane and proceeded to fly for the next three hours.

It turned out he had been sent to an aging Soviet naval base somewhere on the Caspian Sea, he said.

Sinchenko concluded in his mind, "You're not gonna live long life here," he said.

But he was wrong, and thankfully he did. Upon leaving the military, he went back to Kyiv and went to college where he became certified in alterations. After the Soviet Union fell in 1991, he moved to Poland before eventually moving to Spokane in November 1995.

In the quiet of his sewing room, Sinchenko stitches together not just fabric but also the threads of his life, connecting his past in the Soviet Union to his present at ESH, all while keeping a watchful eye on the turmoil in his homeland.



Sergey Sinchenko

surgical mission in the Mindanao and Visayas regions of the Philippines to the indigent areas where the poorest of the poor struggle with health problems."

His commitment to medical missions dates to his youth as a Cub Scout and continued through medical school. Despite moving to the U.S. in 1988 and completing his psychiatry residency, Dr. Basnillo has returned every year to volunteer. Inspired by his father, who overcame much adversity to support his education, Dr. Basnillo fulfilled his father's dream for him to become a doctor.

"I just give back what my parents did," he said.

For his contribution to the medical missions, Dr. Basnillo has more recently centered his efforts on helping low-income Filipinos secure proper eyeglasses. Through a contact at Costco, the company generously donated 300 pairs of new glasses to the medical mission effort in February.

For his part, he purchased another 1,000 glasses with the caveat that he will be reimbursed by BMA later.

"I cannot just wait; waiting is not for me if people need help," he said.



Staff and patients of CSTC celebrate 20 years of poetry

For over two decades, the Pongo Poetry Project has collaborated with the Child Study and Treatment Center, fostering heartfelt poetry from CSTC youth. On June 5, CSTC marked the end of the year's program, celebrating its 20th anniversary.

The occasion featured a poetry reading by guest poet Ricardo Ruiz and showcased the creative works of CSTC youth. After the event, each participant received a composition notebook and a zine highlighting their year's work.

The Pongo Poetry Project aims to empower youth through poetic expression, recognizing the healing potential and growth inspired by creative endeavors. In collaboration with the South Seattle Emerald, Pongo encourages readers to witness the resilience and creative capacity of often marginalized youth by publishing their poems from CSTC.

To the right is one such poem, originally featured in the South Seattle Emerald in June.

My journey

Things weren't perfect for me at home
First, my mother is a sex and drug addict
Then my dad left me for dead
like the stab of a knife, I hoped for a better life
My brother the only light in my life
went down a road to emptiness
Like the witch from Stardust
his heart cut out
no more brightness

But now getting help
i find myself
having brighter days
i know it's not home
but my heart still knows
everything will be ok



Annual carnival unites youth for a day of joy

The Child Study and Treatment Center in Lakewood came alive on Aug. 18, as the center hosted its annual carnival event. Designed to create positive experiences for youth aged 5-17 with complex emotional and behavioral needs, the carnival brought smiles to CSTC youth and staff.

The CSTC grounds transformed into a vibrant carnival playground. A range of games and attractions, including a bucket dunk booth, soft archery, and the puck drop challenge, delighted attendees. The youth earned tickets by participating in these activities, which they later exchanged for exciting prizes.

Families, friends, and staff enjoyed the festivities, enjoying snow cones and BBQ treats. The event was not only about fun and games but also an opportunity for youth to bond with their loved ones and peers in a relaxed setting.

Organized by recreational therapy staff, in collaboration with nurses and therapists, the carnival showcased the CSTC's commitment to holistic care. It provided a moment of joy and connection, reaffirming the CSTC's mission of nurturing the well-being and treatment engagement of its young residents.



Guest speaker Ricardo Ruiz (left) smiles for photo with CSTC staff

Child Study and Treatment Center celebrate Juneteenth

Patients and staff at the Child Study and Treatment Center gathered for a meaningful Juneteenth celebration, emphasizing equity, diversity, access, and inclusion. The June 16 event featured an all-campus BBQ, drum circle, trivia, and a compelling presentation by Lolo Arévalo, administrator for Behavioral Health Administration EDAL.

In its second year, the CSTC Juneteenth event was a notable success, with children actively participating and expressing gratitude for the chance to engage with Juneteenth's significance. Arévalo, aiming to foster an

educational aspect, posed questions to staff, allowing the children to lead discussions on the historical meaning of Juneteenth.

Surprisingly, the children eagerly responded to Arévalo's questions, showcasing genuine and thoughtful understanding. One child articulated, "I think it was the end of slavery," prompting Arévalo to exclaim, "Bingo!" Their responses brought immense joy to Arévalo, who appreciated their sensitivity and conscientiousness.

The celebration aimed to deepen the children's comprehension of the historical struggle for freedom and the ongoing fight for justice and equality. Arévalo stressed the importance of understanding the lessons learned from Juneteenth's observance.

While Juneteenth holds particular significance for the African American and Black community as the end of slavery commemoration, Arévalo emphasized its inclusive nature. He underscored the ongoing need for justice, equality, and equal treatment for all, highlighting the importance of EDAL in this context.

The event concluded with a call for continued conversations about equity, diversity, access, and inclusion. Arévalo encouraged fostering understanding and awareness through ongoing dialogues, shared observations, and personal reflections. This, he emphasized, would keep the spirit of Juneteenth and the significance of EDAL alive in the minds and hearts of all.



The trailblazers of SCC: The stories behind SCC’s women in leadership

The senior female leaders at the Special Commitment Center started their trailblazing early – the first in their family to become a doctor, the first to move away from their hometown, and one of the first to jump through the ranks in a traditionally male field. Some found inspiration in role models, and others became their own.

“I typically haven’t had a lot of role models for the things that I’m doing; the tracks haven’t been there,” said Dr. Deborah Havens, the SCC’s medical director, who worked extensively in Malawi and India. “So I guess I’m a pretty firm believer in the notion of inner strength and resilience.”

Havens is one of five senior female leaders at the SCC, a program that provides oversight and treatment for civilly committed sex offenders. Each of these female leaders have broken familial and professional barriers, showcasing resilience and inner strength. Havens was the first in her family to attend medical school, emphasizing the importance of quality healthcare for all. Dr. Megan Reese, chief of clinical services, was the first in her family to go to college. Candice Yi, the SCC’s deputy CEO, draws inspiration from her parents who immigrated and became role models in their own right. Tabitha Yockey, chief of community operations, rose through the ranks starting as an on-call counselor. Their stories, empowered by strength and authenticity, foster a supportive atmosphere for gender-related discussions at SCC.

“I feel like that coming up the ranks the way that I did, I wanted to be able to empower others to do the same,” Yockey said.

Dr. Holly Coryell, chief of forensic services, and Yockey share the poet Maya Angelou as a common role model, especially finding inspiration in the poems “Phenomenal Woman” and “Still I Rise” – works that speak to being a woman, equality, and inequality. Coryell feels that her fellow female leaders help give her the strength to talk more often with leadership about issues of gender.

“With my women cohort here, I do feel that the fact that we’re here together and we have such good working relationships, it helps me feel like I’ve got this group for support. It makes me feel more empowered and bolder,” she said.



SCC named national leader in IOC visit

The Special Commitment Center’s community programs received national acclaim from an Inspection of Care team in August, recognizing their transformative efforts. Triggered by Senate Bill 5163 two years ago, the SCC community programs revamped their mission, now guiding residents from total confinement to less restrictive alternatives.

“I think about where we started, and the vision we had for this program, and the teamwork and the vision that everyone had, and the constant, positive can-do – it feels so validating. They’ve worked so hard,” said SCC Chief Executive Officer Keith Devos.

The program’s evolution witnessed a remarkable team expansion, with a shift from managing 60 to 80 residents, reflecting the team’s commitment to making the community a viable option for residents. The IOC acknowledged SCC’s improved treatment program,

emphasizing a more clinical focus. Notably, the team’s use of data, interdisciplinary collaboration, and emphasis on hiring capable individuals were recognized as best practices.

The SCC community program’s success is marked by the hope instilled in residents for a pathway beyond the Total Confinement Facility. Kellie Mulkey, an SCC social work manager, praised the installation of hope within residents by social workers. The IOC team also lauded the seamless collaboration between community residential rehabilitative counselors, social workers, and nurses.

“I’m most proud that we are being recognized for the outstanding work that’s being done ... and in a very short period of time, two years in the making. We have been able to accomplish so much... we had a lot of external challenges, and we overcame them not by working against one another but by working with one another; I’m just super proud of that

shared grit,” said Deputy CEO Candice Yi.

Looking forward, SCC plans to enhance community engagement, expand programming opportunities, and continue to improve the environment of care. Moreover, the program aims to refine contracts, become trauma-informed, and secure accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.



Special Commitment Center staff host group of lawmakers

A group of more than 20 lawmakers from districts all over the state toured the Special Commitment Center on McNeil Island at the beginning of September.

The tour was arranged by the Behavioral Health Administration Legislative Affairs office, which worked with SCC CEO Keith Devos and his staff.

After getting off the boat at the island, lawmakers boarded a bus that made stops at the former prison warden’s abandoned house, the dock where the island’s barge drops off supplies, the man-made lake, the abandoned former school for children of the Department of Corrections employees, the McNeil Island Fire Department and the island’s water treatment facility.

The morning segment of the tour also included a visit to the Pierce County Secure Community Transition Facility, where SCC staff explained how programs there provide residential life skills designed to assist each resident in attaining skills necessary for independent living.

After lunch, lawmakers got the opportunity to ask Devos and his staff a wide range of questions in an open forum, mainly centered around the discharge process for residents to less restrictive alternatives in the community and DSHS’ role in the legal proceedings, community notification processes, and what kind of sex offender treatment programs are offered at the facility.

SCC hosted additional tours for lawmakers in July and August.



WSPA awards WSH psychologist Public Steward Award

BHA extends its congratulations to Dr. Shamyka Sutton, the chief clinical officer for the Gage Center of Forensic Excellence at Western State Hospital, for receiving the Public Steward Award from the Washington State Psychological Association Oct. 14. This well-deserved recognition is a testament to Dr. Sutton's unwavering commitment to the psychological health and wellness of our community.

Every year, the Washington State Psychological Association recognizes individuals and organizations who have contributed meaningfully to the mission of WSPA, which is to support, promote, and advance the science, education, and practice of psychology in the public interest.

According to her nomination, "Dr. Sutton continuously goes above and beyond in her work for patients and the community."

Dr. Sutton balances a multitude of obligations constantly working to expand her knowledge. On top of her

meaningful work for WSH, she also manages a private practice, obtained a degree in psychopharmacology, earned certification for substance use counseling, and became a certified trainer on various risk assessment measures that help balance offenders' and the community's best interest upon release from confinement/hospitalization.

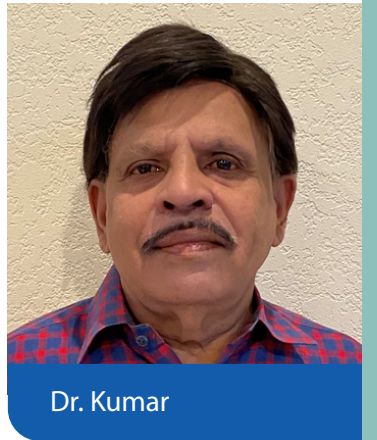
Dr. Sutton was praised for her commitment to the WSH community, including her mentorship for "students in the WSH practicum" and "consultation/training to newly licensed psychologists preparing for the Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology, provide didactic trainings on race and culture to help be better providers to minorities."

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Sutton and look forward to her continued contributions to our community and the world of psychology.



WSH bids farewell to distinguished psychology practitioner

Dr. Nandan Kumar, a psychiatrist at Western State Hospital serving C5 patients, has dedicated nearly 43 years to the field. After completing medical school in India, he moved to the United States, where he underwent four years of psychiatry residency split between Nassau County Medical Center in New York and Lafayette Clinic in Detroit, Michigan.



Dr. Kumar

Fascinated by the power of the mind in psychiatric care, Dr. Kumar's interest extended to research during his residency, participating in studies and contributing to papers published in Psychiatry magazines. His career began at the Veteran's Administration in Michigan for 13 years, followed by a decade at the American Lake VA in Washington. He then practiced in California for 11 years, retiring as the chief psychiatrist in the state prison system.

Returning to Washington post-retirement, Dr. Kumar worked at WSH for three years as a locum, spent a year at Wellfound hospital, and eventually returned to the Civil Center of Excellence at WSH. Grateful for the supportive environment and friendly staff, he emphasized his enjoyment of practicing at WSH.

"I enjoy practicing here more than other locations," Kumar said. "I have been really lucky in working with very nice people. We have a great crew on C5, very friendly staff. The whole place is really helpful!"

Dr. Kumar highlighted the significant impact medications can have on patients, especially in acute care situations. His commitment to research continued with nationwide clinical antipsychotic trials funded by the National Institute of Mental Health from 2006-2007.

Recognized for his work ethic, Dr. Kumar received awards such as the Outstanding Physician Award in Battle Creek, Mich. VA hospital and the Long-term Mental Health Award from the U.S. government during his tenure as director of long-term mental health at Battle Creek.

As Dr. Kumar enters retirement, the CCE expresses gratitude for his dedicated service to WSH patients and acknowledges the impact of his care over the years. A celebratory sendoff is extended to this remarkable psychiatrist whose contributions will be greatly missed.

'We are able to enjoy Dakota again' - one family finds support, healing at Western State Hospital

At Western State Hospital, the transformative efforts of dedicated staff have profound impacts on lives, as experienced by Ed and Myk, devoted parents to their son Dakota, a former patient at the hospital's Civil Center of Excellence. Dakota, diagnosed with schizophrenia at 18, faced a tumultuous journey marked by instability, homelessness, and challenges in mental health treatment. His parents, resilient and engaged, sought various interventions, including natural methods and medications, but Dakota struggled with medication side effects leading to medication compliance issues.

After years of instability, Dakota found stability during a three-year period on a farm. However, subsequent unpredictable and violent behavior led to a 90-day stay at a Skagit County hospital, followed by homelessness. Dakota's parents, fearing for his safety, pleaded for intervention, resulting in his admission to WSH. During his year-long stay, Dakota received vital support, including protection, stable medication, and counseling, leading to visible improvements in his well-being.

WSH not only benefited Dakota but also facilitated healing for Ed and Myk. Social worker Risa Salters played a crucial role in their journey, providing consistent support and addressing their needs. Dakota's discharge from the hospital marked a positive step toward community living, with ongoing support from Salters. Reflecting on their experience, Ed and Myk emphasized the invaluable assistance and resources provided by WSH, allowing them to enjoy their son again after two decades of challenges.

Ed says that the support and resources Western has provided have helped their son and family more than anything else over the last 20 years.

"We are now able to enjoy Dakota again," he said.



Jail Technical Assistance hits the road to improve mental health services for incarcerated

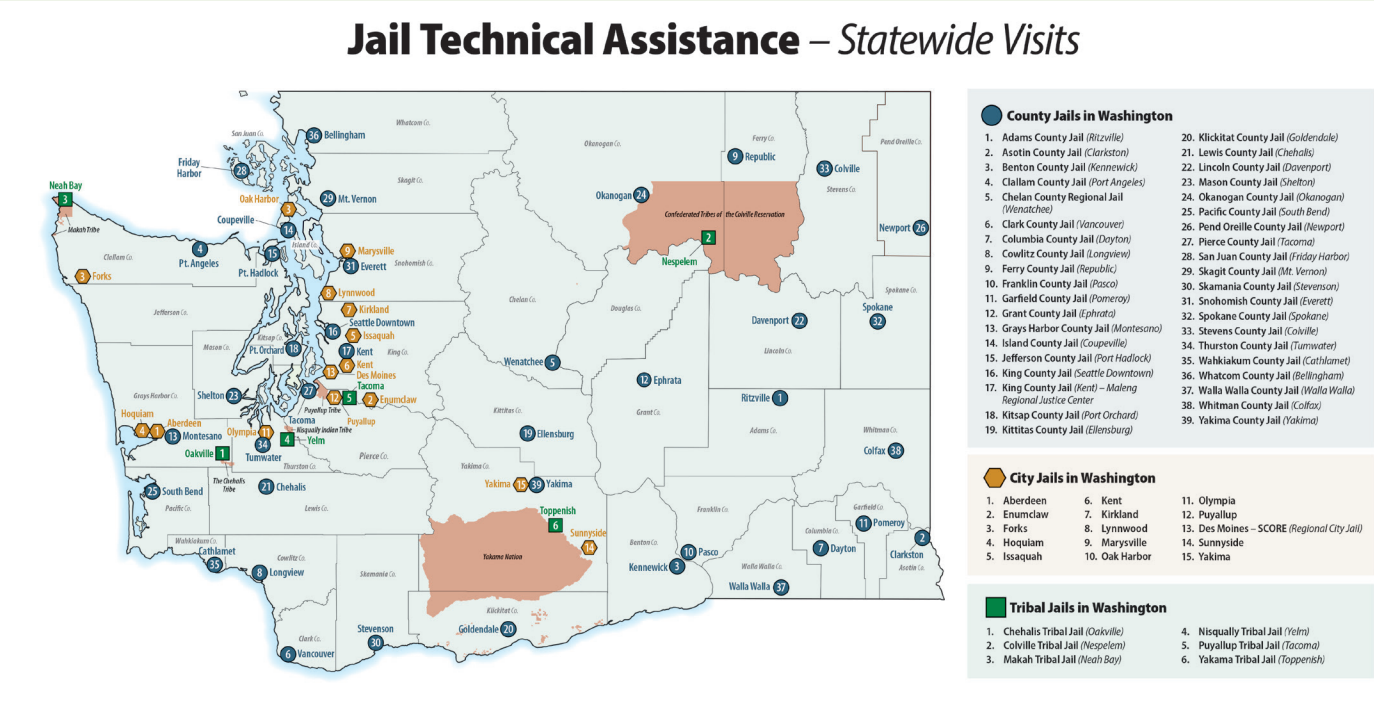
Working to reshape the landscape of mental health services behind bars, the Office of Forensic Mental Health Services Jail Technical Assistance program has taken to the road, traversing Washington state’s correctional facilities. Embarking on a tireless journey to all 60 jails, Tracy Grunenfelder, workforce development specialist for JTA, has been on a mission to forge a new path toward compassionate and comprehensive care.

JTA program, a key component of the Trueblood Contempt Settlement Agreement, offers informational and training support to Washington jails. In a bid to provide meaningful assistance, the JTA program launched a statewide jail visit initiative after the pandemic restrictions were lifted. Over the span of 11 months, Grunenfelder visited all Washington jails, including 39 county jails, 15 city jails, and six tribal jails.

Through these visits, the JTA helped build professional networks among correctional, mental health, and medical personnel; enhancing collaboration between jails; and gaining valuable insights into the challenges they face, Grunenfelder said.

“These interactions have proven instrumental in determining monthly training topics that address pressing issues in jail settings,” Grunenfelder said.

The JTA program received warm appreciation from jail leadership for taking the initiative to visit and understand their operations. Jail representatives were forthcoming and accommodating during the visits, leading to the establishment of valuable professional relationships, stated Grunenfelder. These collective efforts aim to improve mental health services for incarcerated people living with mental illness.



BHA announces program with SCORE Jail to provide treatment options for people waiting for competency services

The Behavioral Health Administration and South Correctional Entity, also known as SCORE Jail, are working together to offer enhanced behavioral health services to people incarcerated at the facility.

The new program, created after the passage of Senate Bill 5440 earlier this year, will use the services of DSHS clinical intervention specialists and DSHS clinicians working with SCORE’s contracted medical and behavioral health staff to assess and offer additional treatment options. Those options could include motivational interviewing to help with medication compliance, group and individualized therapy, and specialized programming to help stabilize this population.

These services will be offered to Trueblood class members – those charged with a crime, awaiting competency services, and who are currently incarcerated in a jail.

“Jail can be very disruptive, especially for people with mental and substance use disorders,” Schrum said. “Having additional resources to help manage and/or stabilize this fragile population not only benefits people receiving treatment but contributes overall to a safer jail and the communities receiving people upon release from jail.”

This pilot seeks to build a framework in which class members in confinement continue to receive appropriate treatment while incarcerated with the goal of diverting stabilized class members to the most appropriate pathways.

“This initiative represents a significant step forward in our commitment to providing appropriate care for people within the criminal justice system, ensuring their well-being, and upholding legal standards,” said Dr. Tom Kinlen, director of the Office of Forensic Mental Health Services.

Transforming the competency system: The impact of SB5440 on behavioral health in Washington State

In a historic legislative session, the state of Washington witnessed the emergence of SB5440, a bill that holds the hope of transforming the competency system within the Behavioral Health Administration. More than a mere formality, this bill went through a myriad of changes and debates before ultimately becoming law, reflecting lawmakers’ keen interest in reshaping the competency landscape.

“I think it would be an understatement to say there was a lot of interest on how to move the competency system forward,” Dr. Thomas Kinlen, director of the Office of Forensic Mental Health Services, said.

Kinlen expressed hope that these significant legislative changes would result in a reduction of competency referrals across the state.

The bill sets in motion numerous reforms aimed at enhancing access to care, diversifying service options beyond the court system, and optimizing overall efficiency.

The bill’s passing brings about a significant change in the establishment of a new position, a clinical intervention specialist who will collaborate and monitor the treatment

effectiveness of competency patients in jails. A major focus of this technical assistance is to ensure medication access so defendants may stabilize in jail and not destabilize outside of treatment.

Another milestone of the bill is the empowerment of forensic navigators with expanded roles, allowing them to assess misdemeanors and non-violent felonies for diversion suitability, and enabling them to coordinate assisted outpatient treatment as needed.

Among the bill’s key objectives was addressing the dilemma of those found not competent to stand trial and deemed not restorable due to intellectual or developmental disability, dementia, or traumatic brain injury. DSHS is developing a new process, connecting these people to vital wraparound services and community-based support.

“We have an incredibly talented and dedicated team across BHA working on these areas of the law,” Kinlen declared. “I am so thankful to have such an amazing crew tackling these projects.”





Contributors to this report: Joey Frost, Suzanne Ovel, Tyler Hemstreet, Lisa Copeland, Kevin Blocker, Hanna McCauley, Jo Sahlin, Lolo Arévalo, Kelly Walk, Cooper Dreon, Katie Bartell, Tracy Grunenfelder, Tom Kinlen, Tom Vásquez, and Jacob Jimenez. Graphic design by Holly Miranda.