COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK
SAN JUAN ISLANDS

PROGRESS SUMMARY OCTOBER 2026

What is the Community Health Network of the San Juans?

The Community Health Network is a countywide effort connecting hospital districts, health systems, resource centers, county government, and community organizations across Lopez, Orcas, and San Juan Islands. It works to close longstanding gaps in health care access, from transportation to insurance navigation to behavioral health support, that are hard to solve island by island. The Network is organized into workgroups, each focused on a specific area of need. A Steering Committee and Project Manager help keep the work connected across islands. Priorities are informed by San Juan County's Community Health Assessment.

Process Accomplishments

- Steering Committee lays groundwork for governance: On October 15th, the Steering Committee reviewed convening feedback, consultant options, proposals for the LGBTQ+ Health Access Workgroup, and a proposal to compensate community members for workgroup participation. In November, with Susan Kunz of the NRHA Rural Health Capacity Building Academy facilitating, the committee will decide which matters require its approval, how it votes, and who sits on it. Workgroup stipends and consultant funding follow in December.
- Convenings set for spring and fall: Partners said networking was a very valuable part of the September convening. The results of the poll that attendees completed dictates that the Network will hold two in-person convenings a year, rotating among islands, with a hybrid check-in in between. The next hybrid partner gathering is set for January 28th, and the next fully in-person convening is planned for mid-to-late March 2027 on Orcas Island.
- Sharing the work with County Council: The Network presented an update to San Juan County Council in late October, highlighting the colorectal screening collaboration and the Network's insurance marketplace advocacy.

Concrete Progress by Workgroup

Insurance & Coverage Access

- Colorectal screening pilot takes shape: PeaceHealth, Island Health, and Sea Mar chose colorectal cancer screening as a shared pilot to improve access to preventive care for uninsured residents. The pilot will test the full path, from community outreach and screening to cross-system coordination and follow-up care after a positive result. Clinical teams met in October to begin aligning on recommended tests and referral processes.
- Planning a March awareness campaign: Ahead of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in March, the workgroup brainstormed partners and channels for a countywide campaign, including a coordinated social media push, personal testimonials, outreach through churches, senior centers, and non-affiliated providers, and January presentations to the hospital districts and the County Board of Health. Recruitment of community members willing to share their screening stories is underway.
- Medicaid changes one-pager released: The one-pager is finalized in English and

Spanish. It is being distributed to Network partners across the county and region.
- Mapping preventive services countywide: A calendar of preventive and health services offered outside clinics, from mammogram clinics to community dental clinics, school sealant clinics, and Medicare advising, is taking shape. Next, the workgroup will add follow-up and referral pathways to help identify gaps.
- Marketplace advocacy continues: Island Health and Sea Mar are open to signing statements supporting a fix to the county's single-carrier insurance marketplace. The next step comes after the Washington State Association of Counties conference in late November, where County Council will meet with public health lobbyists.

Care Coordination

- Mobile Integrated Health meets the community: On October 22nd, Orcas Island's MIH team met with community members to share what to expect from the program as it rolls out over the next year. OCRC affirmed its role as a key partner walking alongside the program, a strong foundation for a program built on connecting people to resources.

Transportation

- Flight membership decision guide released: The guide to the three medevac flight membership programs is finalized in English and Spanish and ready for partners to share. First large-scale promotion campaign will begin in Spring 2027.
- Emergency stays and transport after ED discharge: A patient authorization form is being finalized. Next steps include a patient handout with a simple decision guide for getting home or connecting to resources after discharge. Peace Health Emergency Department Director is dedicated to embedding this resource into the knowledge-base of ED staff, so that Islanders in need of an emergency overnight stay can be connected appropriately at discharge.
- Medicaid Transportation Benefit: The workgroup met with Medicaid Transportation Benefit Manager at Northwest Regional Council in late October, in order to continue to clarify how the benefit is currently being used by SJC residents, and if there are barriers to access that we can reduce.

Behavioral Health Access

- Medication access emerges as significant gap: The workgroup's mapping found that prescribing and medication continuity are the largest blind spots, especially for people leaving jail or inpatient care without medications or a plan. In October the workgroup met with each island's clinic to hear what's working and what's hard about caring for patients on antipsychotic medications or medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for substance use recovery. Follow-up in November is scheduled with the MAT provider for Sea Mar, to learn about current trends and opportunities in psychiatric medication prescribing/managing for the most vulnerable.
- Strengthening substance use assessment: The workgroup discussed limited local capacity for substance use assessments and identified potential partners, including Sea Mar and Evergreen, to help expand access.
- Understanding reentry: The Network is beginning conversations with Skagit County Jail and STAR Jail to better understand how people return to the islands after incarceration, including how they keep access to medication.
- Exploring a third-party billing pilot: Early conversations with North Sound BH-ASO are exploring the feasibility of a pilot in which North Sound would handle insurance

billing for community behavioral health providers who opt in, widening access and freeing local funds for other needs.

LGBTQ+ Health Access

- Listening to local clinics: Conversations with Sea Mar, Island Health on Orcas, and PeaceHealth Peace Island found that access largely depends on reaching providers who focus on gender-affirming care. Sea Mar will bring in its internal gender-affirming care expertise in January. Orcas providers have offered to meet with the workgroup, and PeaceHealth suggested ways to ease waitlist barriers. The workgroup heard from Sea Mar and PeaceHealth that CHN could help them improve their services by partnering to provide providers across the islands with an up-to-date referral pathways map for gender affirming care nearer to the islands than Seattle.
- Shaping the work's future structure: The Steering Committee took a first look at a consulting proposal to bring in expert advising in this work area, and a workgroup leader has discussed a possible countywide community advisory board that would recommend priorities to existing workgroups. Conversations continue in early November, and no decisions have been made.

Get Involved

The Community Health Network is a community effort — your voices and knowledge are essential to the work. If you are interested in following along, attending a workgroup meeting, or getting more involved, reach out to:
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