

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Director's Message

Dear Stakeholders,

As we reflect on 2024, I am filled with gratitude and admiration for our incredible team and the work we have done together. The past year has continued to be challenging, as the ongoing pressures of the global health crisis, the growing demand for behavioral health services, and the deepening strain on public health systems have tested our resilience in many ways both anticipated and surprising.

Our employees—who are the heart and soul of our organization—have risen to meet these challenges with unwavering dedication and a deep sense of compassion. It has been another year of intense pressure, and while our teams have provided exceptional care and program development, it has not been without personal cost. Compassion fatigue, a consequence of the emotional toll this work takes, has been an ongoing reality for many of our staff. Yet, despite these challenges, our employees have continued to serve with kindness, professionalism, and tireless commitment to the well-being of those we serve.

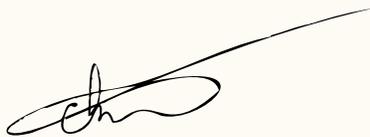
Reading through this report fills me with an almost overwhelming sense of the good this organization has done, is doing, and will continue to do for the citizens of Wahkiakum County. In my 7+ years, at Wahkiakum County HHS, I have witnessed incredible improvements across all of our programs. This could not have happened without community support and the hard work of our incredible employees.

In the realm of behavioral health, we have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of the pandemic on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of individuals across all communities. The need for behavioral health services has never been greater, and we are proud to have continued our efforts in supporting both the community and our employees. We remain committed to not only addressing immediate needs but also to promoting long-term behavioral health strategies that focus on prevention, resilience, and support for everyone, including our own staff.

As we look toward the future, we are more committed than ever to advancing public and behavioral health initiatives that strengthen our community, improve behavioral and physical health care, and support the well-being of all individuals in our community. Our work is far from easy, but with the dedication of our team and the support of our community, we will continue to overcome the challenges we face.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to our employees, who have shown remarkable strength in the face of adversity, and to all our partners and stakeholders for your continued trust and collaboration. Together, we will continue to build a healthier, more resilient Wahkiakum for all.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Bischoff', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Bischoff
WCHHS Director

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Highlights



Photo by Jamie VanBuhler

New Clinic Opened in West End

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services (WCHHS) opened a second clinic for the County, located at Johnson Park.

This addition has increased healthcare access for West End residents, who are able to make appointments and do some drop-in services every Thursday.

Joining the Elochoman Campus and the Hope Center, the West End Campus also serves as a third touchpoint for connecting to resources and social services.

Wahkiakum Mentoring Program Recognized as Silver Quality Partner

The Wahkiakum Mentoring Program facilitated 11 pairs of mentor/mentees during 2024, and gained a Silver Quality Partner status from Mentor Washington.

This acknowledgment demonstrates highly-skilled implementation of evidenced-based practices for youth mentoring.



New Program, Kid's Connection Launched

In response to the district's shift to a 4-day school week, Wahkiakum Community Network, supported by Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services and Washington State Health Care Authority, researched and implemented a social-emotional learning series for school-aged children. The evidence-based program was piloted with 7 to 9-year-olds that September, and received an abundance of positive feedback from both parents and students.



Wahkiakum On The Move Adds 4 Buses to the Fleet

In 2024 Wahkiakum On The Move (WOTM) was able to purchase 3 brand new buses through grants. Another lightly used bus was generously donated by CHOICE (Community Health Organization Improving Care and Equity).



Community Health Assessment Completed

Residents took part in the first interactive health assessment in Wahkiakum County. Conducting the Community Health Assessment (CHA) helps us better understand the community's health needs, guide program development, inform policymakers, and advocate for funding to improve public health.

We will use these findings to develop our Community Health Improvement Plan and continue collaborating with our dedicated community partners to improve health and health outcomes in Wahkiakum County.

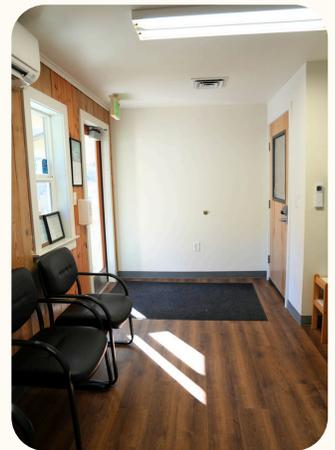


E-Cycling Brought to Wahkiakum County

In partnership with E-Cycle Washington, WCHHS hosted the County's first recycling event in October. The community brought out nearly 1,000 pounds of unused electronics, including televisions, laptops, computers, and monitors.

Healthcare Kiosk Installed

As part of a preventative medicine rollout, WCHHS secured a "Test and Go" healthcare kiosk from Washington State Department of Health. This no-cost, self-service kiosk was installed for use by the community and offers a local solution to some urgent healthcare needs, while offering the privacy of an ATM.



Elochoman Campus Building Received Vital Remodel

Building One on the Elochoman Campus completed a much-needed revamp in late 2024. The building, part of Department of Natural Resources premises built in the 1960s, had updates to improve client experience, including sound proofing of therapy offices, increasing ADA access to the building, and climate-controlled rooms.

Biosecurity Event Hosted in Response to H5N1

WCHHS, in partnership with Washington State Department of Agriculture, organized a biosecurity information session in response to growing concerns about the H5N1 virus. Farmers gathered at the Grays River Grange to ask questions of Dr. Zachary Turner, the Western Regional Field Veterinarian for the Washington State Department of Agriculture.



Service Stats

Community Outreach

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services (WCHHS) directs strong efforts towards keeping residents safe and healthy. Community outreach plays a vital role in strengthening the community by connecting individuals with essential resources, support, and opportunities for engagement.

Through outreach programs, WCHHS can address critical issues such as food insecurity, housing, and safe living, ensuring that residents receive the help they need.



Hope Center Usage

The Hope Center acts as WCHHS's second campus, as well as a hub for the community and partner agencies. The mixed-use space allows for the community to connect to new people and services, increasing quality of life.

Our visitors included:

1433 meals served during the Senior Lunch Program on Thursdays

792 sign-ins attending the Stay Independent and Active for Life (SAIL) program

1292 sign-ins attending an AA meeting

129 sign-ins attending a Wahkiakum Outdoor Event

273 sign-ins participating in a Wahkiakum Community Network event

Over **90** residents and **27** vendors who attended Living Well resource event

In 2024 Community Outreach staff:

Helped **81** residents with utility assistance through REAP (Residential Energy Assistance Program)

Helped pay **40** utility bills through Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) funding

Assisted **13** residents with emergency shelter services

Assisted **28** residents to prevent eviction

Assisted **18** residents in our rapid rehousing program





Youth Prevention

Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services focuses on proactive strategies to support the well-being and resilience of young people in the community. Through evidence-based programs, education, and community engagement, the department works to reduce risk factors associated with substance use, mental health challenges, and other behavioral concerns.

By addressing challenges before they escalate, the department plays a crucial role in shaping a safer, healthier future for the youth of Wahkiakum County.

2024 Prevention Stats

69 Safe Storage containers used to prevent cannabis from getting into the hands of youth were given out

36 prescription medication safe storage boxes were given out

6 Wahkiakum Youth participated in and graduated from the Kid's Connection program

11 youth/mentor pairs enrolled in the Wahkiakum Youth Mentoring program



1 high school students in reported **6** vaping in the past month

1 students reported drinking alcohol in the past month **6**

1 students reported using marijuana in the past month **7**

Employ Wahkiakum

Employ Wahkiakum helps residents connect with local, gainful employment by providing job listings, career resources, and personalized support. The program partners with businesses and organizations in and around Wahkiakum County to identify job opportunities that match the skills and interests of job seekers.

2024 Employ Wahkiakum Stats

Out of **23** people that were assisted:

12 exited directly to employment

16 were referred to Workforce programs such as NEXT or THRIVE

Nutrition Education

Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) are important for empowering communities with the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy food choices. By promoting lifelong healthy eating habits, nutrition education improves overall community well-being and reduces healthcare costs.

Wahkiakum On The Move

As the County's only public transportation system, Wahkiakum On The Move (WOTM) ensures rural residents reliable access to work, healthcare, education, and essential services.

2024 SNAP-Ed Stats

8 Recipe & Sample table events were held at West End Food Pantry

Recipe & Spice packets were given out to **125** people at the Wahkiakum Food Bank

90 bags with nutrition/health/dietary info and recipes were given out at the Wahkiakum High School Health Fair

100 Thanksgiving and Christmas cookbooks were given out to West End and Wahkiakum food pantries

In 2024, WOTM helped transport **50** totes of fresh produce from the Community Garden to food pantries in Cathlamet and Rosburg.



WAHAKIAKUM ON THE MOVE BY THE NUMBERS

9499 riders

928 medical rides



Behavioral Health

Behavioral health is essential to the overall well-being of the community, as it directly impacts public health, safety, and economic stability. Access to quality mental health and substance use services ensures that residents receive the support they need to lead productive and fulfilling lives. Addressing behavioral health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and addiction, reduces the strain on emergency services, healthcare systems, and the criminal justice system. Access to behavioral health services fosters resilience, reduces stigma, and promotes a healthier, more connected county.

In 2024 Behavioral Health staff:

Served **154** people in mental health services

Opened mental health service access and treatment to children beginning at **age 3**

Served **72** people with Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

Helped **7** clients complete SUD treatment

Helped **7** clients lower their care from intensive outpatient to outpatient 1-3 times per week

Served the County's incarcerated population with weekly behavioral health and reentry assistance

1
in
4 high school students
report depressive
feelings in the past year.

Wahkiakum County responds
to about **3** suspected
opioid overdoses each year.

Mental Health was the **#1 health priority** identified in our
Community Health Needs Assessment Survey.

Health Department

The Wahkiakum County Health Department promotes and protects the health of the community by providing a wide range of essential services. Through public health initiatives, preventative care, and health education, the department works to ensure residents have access to the resources they need to lead healthy lives.



From May to December, the Healthcare Kiosk dispensed **731** Covid and Covid/Flu Combo tests



In 2024 Health Department staff:
Gave **192** vaccine doses for Covid, Influenza, Hep A&B, TDAP/DTAP, IPV, MMR, Varicella, PVC, HIB, HPV, Meningococcal, and Rotavirus

Completed **40** food inspections

Issued **19** septic permits

Responded to presence of measles and rabies in the county

3 out of 4	adults 65+ are up to date on their flu vaccine	3 out of 4	adults 65+ have received their pneumonia vaccine	3 out of 4	kinder- garteners meet the school-entry vaccine requirements
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WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) BY THE NUMBERS

37 families served in 2024 - 16% increase over last year

2024 Events

Point-in-Time Count January 25

Johnson Park Open House March 7

River Street Resource Fair May 16

Brighter Futures Wahkiakum Well-Child Event August 3

Johnson Park Resource Fair August 15

Wahkiakum County Fair August 15-17

Biosecurity Info Session September 24

E-Cycling Event October 19

Wahkiakum High School Health Fair October 22

Living Well in Wahkiakum November 8



Community Partners



Child & Adolescent Clinic
SPECIALIST CARE FOR EVERY CHILD



E-CYCLE
washington



CFHC
COWLITZ FAMILY HEALTH CENTER



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

WAHAKIAKUM PD



Washington State
Health Care **Authority**



United Way of Cowlitz
& Wahkiakum Counties

Lower Columbia GAP



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington



AREA AGENCY ON
Aging & Disabilities
OF SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



workforce
SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON



And Wahkiakum District Court, Wahkiakum Superior Court, Wahkiakum County Jail and Corrections Staff, Mr. Gower Court Appointed Attorney, Wahkiakum Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Wahkiakum Food Pantry, Wahkiakum High School, Wahkiakum Master Gardeners (WSU) and Wahkiakum Community Garden volunteers.



Use your experience to improve our programs!

Join the Wahkiakum County Health & Human Services Advisory Board

Weigh in on crucial health and human services programs, like **transportation, the Community Health Improvement Plan, Behavioral Health, Resource Assistance**, and much more.

We are actively recruiting for community members who have a firm interest in public health. We strongly encourage those with **lived experience** in healthcare, in social and economically underserved communities, in communities that experience health inequities, tribal communities and government, in marginalized communities, and/or those who have lived experience or are close to those with development disabilities and mental illnesses to apply and **share their unique perspective**.

For more contact Chris Bischoff at: bischoffc@co.wahkiakum.wa.us



Join Today!

Let your experience
create change.

If you have had experience with homelessness or are passionate about housing in Wahkiakum County, come to the next

LOCAL HOMELESS HOUSING PLANNING MEETING

EVERY THIRD WEDNESDAY @ 3PM THE HOPE CENTER

For questions about the meeting or our work on the 2025-2030 Local Homeless Housing Plan, please contact us at **360-795-8630 ext. 260**

HEALTHY STARTS HERE



Because your family comes first, let us support you in their development with nutrition and expert guidance.

Give us a call at
(360)795-6207

 **WAHAKIAKUM**



Help make a difference in the

WAHAKIAKUM YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM

We are looking for adult mentors to work with K-12th grade students!

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Youth are matched with an adult mentor who will guide them through fun monthly activities and provide them with support. Youth meet with their mentors for around 4 hours each month. Mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians are invited to monthly group activities to have fun and build community!

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

Email mentoring@co.wahkiakum.wa.us for more information.