



MEMORANDUM

February 21, 2025

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Sheriff Donnell "Tank" Tanksley
Executive Satpal Sidhu

RE: Jail Health Services

Background:

Through RCW 70.48.130, the legislature requires that all jail inmates receive appropriate and cost-effective emergency and necessary medical care. The RCW also requires governing units, the health care authority, and medical care providers to cooperate to achieve the best rates consistent with adequate care.

Whatcom County Corrections follows a 'community standard medical, dental, and mental health care to inmates' simply defined as if an inmate can access care in a community such as preventative care then corrections will provide it. Whatcom County Corrections is an accredited facility through the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare standards (NCCHC).

Currently the Whatcom County Corrections Division contracts out to multiple providers for jail health services for main jail inmates, work center work release individuals, and youth detainees in Juvenile Detention. This involves 16 different contracts for services such as nursing, medical oversight, lab services, medication, faxing, medical record system, accounts payable/accounts receivable, and dental care.

Whatcom County currently budgets \$3,651,492 for jail health services.¹

Jail health services served an average of 275 inmates per day and total bookings of 3747 in 2024:

- Main Jail: 2024 average daily population of 180²
 - Operational capacity is 211
- Work Center: 2024 average daily population of 95
 - Operational capacity is 148
- Juvenile Detention: 2024 average daily population of 6, with 232 youth bookings.

¹ Of interest is an additional \$881,977 is spent through Whatcom County Health and Community services to provide behavioral health services that include re-entry services. Combined total budgets = \$4,533,469.

² This data reflects the population with booking restrictions. In February 2025, booking restrictions were removed and the average daily population will increase. Operational capacity in the main jail is 211.

Current situation:

Northwest Regional Council (NWRC) is terminating nursing services on June 30, 2025. NWRC leadership is committed to assist us in a smooth transition.

NWRC provides:

- 12.63 full time employee equivalents (FTE) to provide nursing care:
 - 1 RN Supervisor, 1 RN lead, 6.63 RN, 3 LPN, 1 Medical Assistant, 1 Care Coordinator
- Main Jail: 7 days a week between 7am and 9pm
- Work Center: Tuesday – Friday 4 to 6 hours a day
- Juvenile Detention: flex

Approach to a solution:

Our offices are meeting weekly and working collaboratively to analyze options and solutions leading up to a discussion before County Council for discussion on March 11, 2025.

The National Center for Correctional Healthcare Resources (NCCHC) provided a preliminary assessment on perspective models in January. Many jails in Washington State contract out for comprehensive health services to a 3rd party vendor, others contract with local healthcare systems, and some provide services through county government departments like public health or corrections.

Jill Boudreau, Senior Policy and Project Manager in the Executive's Office has been tasked with further analysis and facilitation of an internal leadership group that includes the Sheriffs Office, Executives Office, Superior Court administration and juvenile detention, Health and Community Services, Human Resources, and Finance.

We already know that we need to hire a Healthcare Authority FTE (Corrections Health Program Manager) regardless of chosen direction.

Questions to be answered by the leadership group include:

1. What is responsible to do given the circumstances, timeframe and budget
2. What gives Whatcom County the most flexibility to provide services based on Whatcom County values, accreditation, and need
3. What consideration of the new jail project needs to be incorporated as part of this decision
4. What best protects Whatcom County from liability
5. What structure can ensure collaboration between all County leaders and departments
6. Who is responsible for implementation, and what support do they need

Models we are researching:

In-house: Bring nursing staff employees in-house as Whatcom County employees

- Requires Sheriff, Executive **and** County Council concurrence/action
- Oversight: Sheriff's Department, Bureau of Corrections
- Requires civil service process
- Requires a Healthcare Authority FTE, Corrections Health Program Manager

- NWRC assists in transition and provides turnkey operational documents, retain program policies, schedule, medical protocol, and current contracts for other companion services such as physician oversight, lab services, medication services.

3rd party: Release a request for proposals (RFP) to 3rd party contractor to provide jail health services including medical, dental, and mental health care. A contract could include Juvenile Detention or a separate service unique to youth.

- Requires Sheriff, Executive and County Council concurrence/action
- Requires a Healthcare Authority FTE, Corrections Health Program Manager
- Decision on incorporating juvenile detention needs – or separate out
- RFP may not be successful to find willing contractor
- Further conversation is needed to define behavioral health services appropriate for a 3rd party contract and what makes sense to offer outside of a contractor. For example, re-entry services would not be combined with a medical services contract.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We have identified the need to work concurrently on both solutions. If the preferred structure is recommended to be a 3rd party contract, the need for a Request for Proposals (RFP) will take time, and there is no guarantee there will be an interested contractor, resulting in the need for Whatcom County to be ready to bring nursing services in-house.

Research as been completed on both models that include 5 other Washington State counties: Skagit, Snohomish, Chelan, Kitsap, and Clark. The table below displays information to compare.

Comparison:

	Whatcom	Snohomish	Chelan	Skagit	Kitsap	Clark
In house or 3rd party	In house	In house	In house	3rd party	3rd party	3rd party
Average daily population	268ish with restrictions, unknown if there is a cap due to capacity issues - about 180 main jail 71 work center 22 on electric home monitoring	550	276 - average currently is 170	274	325	*information based on proposal in 2023. ADP of 500 for adults and juveniles combined Main Jail ADP of 421 Juvenile ADP of 25 Work Center ADP of 74 Final contract amount of \$5,874,049 and unclear if it includes juvenile detention services
Average daily population JUVENILE DETENTION	6					25
2025 total health budget	\$3,651,492	\$6,939,061	\$1,429,900	\$3,293,978 + County employee \$164,710 (full cost) = \$3,458,688	\$5,756,798	2023 proposal Main Jail \$5,367,071 for 22.875 FTE Juvenile \$169,185 for 7.75 FTE Work Center \$762,908 for 4.20 FTE 2025 budget: \$6,851,491
Per inmate cost	\$13,662	\$12,616	\$8,411	\$12,622	\$17,538	\$13,702* based on actual 2025 budget not proposed
Staff Hours	Main Jail= 7 days/ 7am-9pm Work Center= Tues-Fri clinic/4-6 hours Juvenile Detention= flex	moving to 24/7 and 12 hours shifts - union is voting this month	24/7 and 12 hour shifts	24/7 and 12 hour shifts	24/7 and 12 hour shifts	24/7 and 12 hours shifts
Medical	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Dental	weekly clinic up to 266.5 hours per year	yes. 1x per week. No cleanings, just emergent needs.	no	weekly clinic + additional hours if needed	no	yes
Psychiatric services	.45 FTE	1.3 FTE		.4 FTE	.9 FTE	1.025 FTE
LCSW - mental health professional certified		5	1 FTE	1 FTE	2 FTE	2 FTE
Mental health director		1 FTE	1 FTE		1 FTE	1 FTE
Virtual support	no	no		24/7	24/7	24/7
MAT	yes	yes	yes	yes	no. Paid for and tied to outside grant. But can provide services	yes
Accredited	yes. National Center for Correctional Healthcare Resources (NCCHC)	yes. only through WASPC	no	yes. National Center for Correctional Healthcare Resources (NCCHC)	yes. National Center for Correctional Healthcare Resources (NCCHC)	yes. National Center for Correctional Healthcare Resources (NCCHC)
Specific clause for womens healthcare	sort of	no	no	no	yes	yes
Mgmt of withdrawal	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Medical diets	yes	yes			yes	yes
Health Care Authority position	NWRC for nursing staff only	Snohomish County employee	Chelan County employee	Skagit County employee	3rd party employee	unclear but one exists. County did RFP for 3rd party.
FTE Nursing	12.63	18. only have 9 current County FTE due to difficulty in hiring. Uses travelling nurse agency to fill gap	6	10.2	12.5	18.2
Total FTE			9	13.6	19.4	22.875
Wages RN	\$42.89-\$58.19 per hour	\$53.02-\$64.47 per hour	\$46.33-\$50.63 per hour	\$45-\$50 per hour	\$51-\$54. contractually tied to area CPI	Prevailing wage provision
Wages LPN	\$33.70-\$43.97 per hour	\$39.56-\$48.13 per hour	\$37.92 -\$41.43	\$40-\$45 per hour	contractually tied to area CPI	Prevailing wage provision
Civil Service	no	yes	no	no	no	no
Represented	no	yes - WSNA - reduction in force language in contract	yes	no	no	no

Summary:

Engaged leadership, strong collaboration & good management are mandatory components for success.

Decisionmakers:

Sheriff's Office:	Sheriff Tanksley, Undersheriff Harris
Executives office:	Executive Satpal Sidhu, Kayla Schott-Bresler
Juvenile Detention:	Superior Court Judge David Freeman, Stephanie Kraft
County Council:	Budget authority, position authority and/or contract approval

Consult:

Sheriff's Office:	Sheriff Tanksley, Undersheriff Harris, Chief Caleb Erickson
Executives office:	Executive Satpal Sidhu, Kayla Schott-Bresler
WC Health & Community Services:	Erika Lautenbach, Shamika Brooks, Hannah Fisk
Juvenile Detention:	Stephanie Kraft, Kristine Glasgow
Human Resources:	Melissa Keeley, Donnie LaPlante, Summit Law
Finance Department:	Randy Rydel
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC):	Ric Bishop, subject matter expert
National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC):	Becky Penney, Denise Hinkle
Skagit County:	Jennifer Johnson, Amie Tidrington, Chief Don Marlow
Snohomish County Jail:	Amanda Ray, Health Care Manager
Kitsap County Jail:	Chief Penny Sap
Chelan County Jail:	Billye Tollackson RN, Health Care Manager
Clark County Corrections:	Anna Lookingbill, David Shook

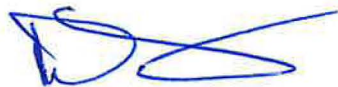
Inform:

Whatcom County cities: Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, Sumas
Washington State Patrol, Lummi & Nooksack Tribes, Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
/ Law and Justice Council

Regardless of the decision of organizational structure, we will continue to provide care as outlines in the RCW, and maintain care that aligns with the National Commission on Correctional Health Care accreditation standards.

We anticipate a briefing to County Council on Tuesday, March 11, 2025. Prior to that, we will reach out to councilmembers for individual discussion sessions.

Please contact us directly if you have any questions.



Sheriff Donnell "Tank" Tanksley



Satpal Sidhu, County Executive