



MEMORANDUM

September 23, 2025

TO: Whatcom County Council

FROM: Sheriff Donnell "Tank" Tanksley
Executive Satpal Sidhu

RE: Jail Health Services

Background:

This memo is a follow up to a memo and briefing from [March 11, 2025](#) (AB2025-205). Whatcom County Sheriff's Office, Executive's Office, and Juvenile Detention have been working collaboratively on a solution for jail healthcare services.

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 is an accredited facility through the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare standards (NCCHC).

Current service structure:

Currently Whatcom County contracts out to multiple providers for jail health services for main jail inmates, work center work release individuals, and youth 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, behavioral health services, and dental care. Services are provided 14 hours per day. Any medical issues outside of hours are generally handled by transport to the Emergency Room.

In 2025, Whatcom County budgeted \$4 million for jail health services that includes medical, dental, and some behavioral health services. Of interest is an additional \$882,000 is spent through Whatcom County Health and Community services to provide behavioral health services that include re-entry services.

Jail health services served an average of 275 inmates per day and total bookings of 3,747 in 2024:

- Main Jail: 2024 average daily population of 180¹

¹ 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.

- Work Center: 2024 average daily population of 95
- Juvenile Detention: 2024 average daily population of 6, with 232 youth bookings.

Request for Proposals:

On Tuesday, June 24, 2025, Whatcom County Request for Proposals #25-41 was issued for jail healthcare services. The request was to expand services to 24/7 coverage and provide a proposal for a comprehensive service.

The County received proposals from Correctional Healthcare Partners, Inc. (CHP) and Mediko Correctional Healthcare. After scoring the proposals, the County chose to move to an 'intent to award' to CHP.

Since August 1 the County has engaged in negotiations for comprehensive services that would include main jail, work center medical, behavioral healthcare, and nursing coverage for juvenile detention.

In order to improve quality assurance and contracting, the Sheriff's Office has reclassified an existing position to serve as a Correctional Healthcare manager. This individual will work in partnership with Sheriff's Office leadership to oversee the new contract with Correctional Healthcare Partners. The addition of an in-house quality assurance staff member is modeled in part after Skagit County's jail healthcare services and comes recommended by consultants from NCCHC.

Correctional Healthcare Partners Inc.:

CHP was founded in 2018 by Dr. Peter J. Freedland (CEO). As a physician-owned company since its inception, CHP maintains a unique focus on clinical excellence and patient outcomes rather than solely financial metrics. CHP provides a full complement of services to fulfill the unique medical needs within correctional facilities. CHP has demonstrated ability to navigate sophisticated correctional facilities, and has delivered meticulous care since 2018, in adult and juvenile detention facilities. CHP has extensive knowledge of West Coast detention facilities and has expertise in:

- Clinical efficiencies to help reduce offsite expenses
- Community partnerships with active vendors
- Comprehensive approach to care including the commitment to "Discharge begins at intake."
- Expertise in governmental initiatives such as Medicaid Transformation Project (MTP 2.0) to render appropriate discharge planning services.
- Expansion of clinical services to multidisciplinary rounds, evening, and triage coverage
- Creating a total care environment to reduce liabilities and improve health
- Adding extensive on-site management at every facility

Anticipated increased cost:

The proposed contract cost with Correctional Healthcare Partners, Inc is estimated at \$7,500,000 per year which includes all medical, dental, and behavioral health services combined. This is a net increase of approximately \$3,500,000 annually to the 2025-2026 biennial budget.

The cost differential reflects, among other things, an increase to the Average Daily Population (ADP) from 275 to 300, the addition of 24/7 nursing coverage, access to a comprehensive electronic medical records system, rapid response pharmaceutical services, and enhanced oversight. The contract maintains a higher level of behavioral health services than what is statutorily required.

The County anticipates cost savings in other areas affected by this increase in services. For example, with 24/7 care, costs for emergency room visits will decline and with in-house imaging services, costs associated with transport to offsite imaging will be reduced.

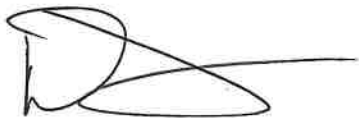
Jail health services are primarily funded by General Fund revenues transferred annually into the Jail Fund, with some costs covered by per diem (bed) rates charged to other jurisdictions, such as cities and tribal police agencies (about \$240,000 annually), and the behavioral health fund (projected at \$600,000 for 2026).

Summary:

We will be briefing the County Council on Tuesday, September 23 with Council action on a contract requested for Tuesday, October 7, 2025 for the contracted services to begin on January 1, 2026.

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