

Healthy Planning

PROPOSED BY: Barry Buchanan

INTRODUCED: \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION NO. 2015-038

**COMMITTING WHATCOM COUNTY TO ADOPT A "HEALTHY PLANNING" APPROACH**

**WHEREAS**, the health and well-being of the residents of Whatcom County are critical for a prosperous and sustainable Whatcom County; and

**WHEREAS**, health starts—long before illness—in our families, neighborhoods, schools, and jobs; and

**WHEREAS**, there is growing awareness that health is influenced by the interaction of many factors, and not simply by genetics, individual behavior, or access to medical care; and

**WHEREAS**, it is now widely accepted that health is also determined by social and economic factors and opportunities including the availability of resources and supports in homes, neighborhoods, and communities-at-large; and

**WHEREAS**, all people in Whatcom County should have the opportunities to make the choices that allow them to live long, healthy, and productive lives regardless of their income, education, or ethnic background; and

**WHEREAS**, data show that people living in poverty, or who have limited education, or who live in isolated areas in Whatcom County, or who experience racial or ethnic discrimination or other social stresses are more likely to report poor health status and have lower life expectancy; and

**WHEREAS**, data also show that people who have greater access to economic resources, social supports, and healthy community amenities such as quality affordable housing, safe places to walk, bike, play, and connect, and places to get affordable healthy foods for their families are more likely to experience good health status; and

**WHEREAS**, plans and policies implemented by Whatcom County outside of the traditional health sector significantly affect access to health opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, these plans and policies include those related to land use, food access, housing, transportation, public safety, education, parks and recreation, water and air quality, criminal justice, and economic development; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing health opportunities can lead to improved health, reduced health disparities, reduced health care costs, and reduced criminal justice costs; and

**WHEREAS**, a "Healthy Planning" approach involves inclusion of health criteria in the development and adoption of community plans and policies; and

**WHEREAS**, by adopting a "Healthy Planning" approach, Whatcom County demonstrates its commitment to address health as a community priority and increase health opportunities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board serves in an advisory capacity to the Health Board and to the Whatcom County Health Department; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that it shall be the policy of Whatcom County to apply a "Healthy Planning" approach to Whatcom County's community planning processes and decision-making, including but not limited to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board, working with the Whatcom County Health Department and other city and county departments, will identify and recommend tools, processes, and opportunities to integrate a health perspective in community planning processes and decision-making; and

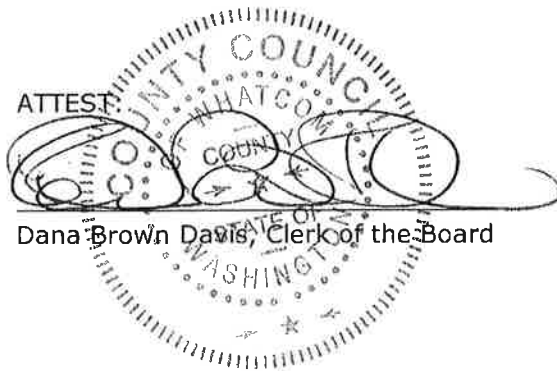
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that topics of consideration in community planning may include, but are not limited to, access to health care services; affordable, safe, and healthy housing; active living and transportation; access to healthy food; clean air, water, and soil; parks, recreation, and green spaces; economic opportunity; safety and violence prevention; and support for children, families, and other vulnerable populations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Public Health Advisory Board will make initial recommendations to the Health Board regarding a "Healthy Planning" approach on or before January 31, 2016; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Health Board will review this policy on an annual basis to evaluate progress.

**APPROVED** this 6th day of October 2015.

ATTEST:



Dana Brown Davis, Clerk of the Board

WHATCOM COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Carl Weimer, Health Board Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Karen Frakes, Civil Deputy Prosecutor



WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
**HEALTH BOARD PRESENTATION**

**Agenda Item No: 6**

DATE: November 1, 2016  
TOPIC: Strategies for Child and Family Health Policy  
PRESENTER(S): Astrid Newell

**BACKGROUND:**

Evidence is clear—the first years of a child’s life are critical for establishing a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being. During this time period, a child’s family and caregivers play essential roles in promoting healthy development. Prolonged and unmitigated stress (“toxic stress”) within the family and community is strongly associated with negative impacts on child development, while positive nurturing relationships and experiences buffer children from stress and promote optimal development of healthy brains and bodies. Growing evidence also demonstrates the importance of maternal health and well-being before, during and after pregnancy on long-term child outcomes.

Through the *Community Health Assessment (2011)* and other local efforts, there is growing recognition that a significant number of families with young children in Whatcom County are experiencing high levels of stress due to economic instability, housing challenges, mental health and substance use concerns, strained family relationships, and challenging social contexts. Manifestations of significant family stress can be seen in our child abuse and neglect rates, child development outcomes, readiness for school statistics, and increasing behavior challenges seen in pre-school and school-aged children. Our community understands these issues impact some populations more than others, leading to an “uneven start” for some children and families in Whatcom County. These issues are prioritized in the *Community Health Improvement Plan (2012-16)*. Many in our community also understand that there are real opportunities to reduce stressors, build on family and community strengths, and improve the health and developmental trajectories for large numbers of children through collaborative action.

In early 2016, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) identified early child and family well-being as a topic of interest for further exploration and potential policy focus. The full PHAB has received several packets of information and had discussion at three meetings (May, July, and September 2016). A workgroup of PHAB members and Health Department staff met twice to further discuss direction.

**IMPORTANCE:**

Strong consensus among national experts identifies investment in young children and families as one of the most impactful areas for community investment with long-term benefits across multiple domains including health, education, economics, and criminal justice. For this reason, the PHAB suggests that the Health Board dedicate focused attention to this topic over the next year (2017). The timing also aligns with current community interest and opportunity.

**ANALYSIS:**

The attached recommendations and menu of opportunities for Health Board action reflect deliberation of Health Department staff and PHAB workgroup, with initial input from Council’s policy analyst and selected community partners involved in local early child and family initiatives. Further exploration will

***Our mission is to lead the community in promoting health and preventing disease.***  
**2/14/13**



WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
**HEALTH BOARD PRESENTATION**

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be needed to identify costs, feasibility, and other considerations. The overarching goal of these recommendations is to improve the health and well-being of Whatcom County's youngest children and families.

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

- Health Board adopts a 2017 theme focused on "young children and families"
- Health Board reviews recommendations and potential Health Board/County Council actions and selects at least one action in each category for further exploration or initial action.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Menu of Opportunities
2. In Brief-The Foundations of Lifelong Health, Center on the Developing Child (pdf)
3. Build a Scaffolding of Support, Heckman (pdf)

Menu of Opportunities for Health Board/County Council Action (November 2016)

Improving the health and well-being of Whatcom County's youngest children and families

Recommendations	Potential actions	Explore Further?
<p>1) Enhance County focus and resources to meet the needs of young children and families in Whatcom County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider and prioritize early childhood policies and programs in County resource allocation (budgeting, contracting)</li> <li>• Encourage consideration of needs of young children and families across county departments and programs (examples: human resources, parks, planning, health, etc.)</li> <li>• Expand County support for home visiting (e.g., Nurse-Family Partnership), centralized access to services (e.g., Single Entry Access to Services), and other innovative and evidence-based early childhood and parenting support services</li> <li>• Participate in/or endorse a collective action initiative, bringing multiple groups, agencies, service providers and families together for action planning and coordination.</li> <li>• Provide County support for a child and family tax levy, such as King County's Best Starts for Kids</li> <li>• Advocate for additional state and federal resources for improving health service programs for low-income families, including Medicaid Maternity Support Services and WIC Nutrition Program.</li> <li>• Expand paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers after birth of a child (e.g., King County provides 12 weeks)</li> <li>• Expand flexible scheduling/part-time scheduling options for County staff</li> <li>• Implement bring-infant-to-work provisions, similar to WA State DOH and Clark County</li> <li>• Expand and promote breastfeeding-friendly workplace provisions, such as protected break time and dedicated lactation rooms for both staff and public</li> <li>• Consider development of on-site child care options</li> </ul>	
<p>2) Support County employees caring for young children and model family-friendly workplace policies for other local employers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene taskforce to address limited availability of high quality, affordable child care, particularly infant-toddler care in Whatcom County</li> <li>• Request explicit consideration of needs of young children and families in plans and proposals developed by County advisory groups and task forces, including those addressing:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Economic development</li> <li>○ Housing</li> <li>○ Behavioral health (parental mental health and substance use, child mental health)</li> <li>○ Incarceration prevention and criminal justice involvement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Prioritize community improvements in areas with high proportion of vulnerable families with young children (e.g., East Whatcom County, farmworker communities, tribal communities, low income housing)</li> </ul>	
<p>3) Seek solutions to reduce or mitigate key stressors for young children and families living in Whatcom County</p>		



**HEALTH BOARD**  
**Discussion Form**  
January 31, 2017

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**AGENDA ITEM #4: 2017 Focus on Young Children and Families**

**PRESENTERS:** Rachel Lucy, Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) Chair  
Astrid Newell, Community Health Manager

**BOARD ACTION:**             Action Item            Discussion            FYI - Only

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**SIGNIFICANT POINTS OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the November 2016 Health Board meeting, the Health Board adopted a 2017 theme focused on improving the health and well-being of Whatcom County's youngest children and families. The Public Health Advisory Board recommended that the Health Board take action in three primary areas:

- 1) Enhance County focus and resources to meet the needs of young children and families in Whatcom County,
- 2) Support County employees caring for young children and model family-friendly workplace policies for other local employers,
- 3) Seek solutions to reduce or mitigate key stressors for young children and families living in Whatcom County.

Since November, progress has occurred on several fronts.

- 1) Health Board/County Council recommended and approved funding for one additional Public Health Nurse for the Nurse-Family Partnership program, an evidence-based home visitation program for first time, low income mothers (pregnancy –child age 2).
- 2) Based on interest expressed by the Health Board, Health Department staff met with County Human Resources (HR) to discuss family-friendly workplace policies and programs. Over the next several months, HR will be working on making existing family-friendly policies more visible through an intranet webpage, and is open to the Health Department drafting and piloting an "Infant at Work" policy.
- 3) To explore possible avenues for addressing key stressors for families with young children, PHAB members were asked to conduct informational interviews with representatives from County Advisory Boards focused on Housing, Behavioral Health, Veterans, Developmental Disabilities, and Incarceration Prevention. The goal of the interviews was to learn more about how the needs of young children and families are currently being considered within advisory group process and identify potential opportunities to increase focus on this population. Key themes from interviews with Advisory Board representatives included:

- Needs of young children and families are not currently given high priority attention within advisory boards, much current work focused on crisis reduction for adults
- Concerns about lack of behavioral health services and supports for young children and families. Limited behavioral health supports for Spanish-speaking clients, immigrants, and certain geographic areas (e.g., North Bellingham). This concern is reinforced by other working groups.
- Basic needs, such as housing and food access are concerns for young families, and deserve attention and action. Certain geographic areas are more impacted than others.
- Advisory board representatives are interested in connecting with PHAB and other boards on these issues. PHAB is interested in connecting with schools and others working on this.

Given the feedback from advisory boards, as well as growing momentum and interest among child and family professionals, we are at a critical moment of opportunity to come together for collective action in Whatcom County. The Whatcom County Community Health Improvement Plan calls out child and family well-being as a priority focus for community action, and a small group is currently meeting to plan next steps, including a community convening later this Spring. The Health Department is working with partners to engage young families and hear directly about their needs, as well as working with community members in targeted geographic areas to support community improvements that benefit children and families. Working groups such as First Steps Coalition, Whatcom Early Learning Alliance, Whatcom Taking Action for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs, and ACEs/Resilience Workgroup are interested in aligning their work for more impact. Recently, representatives from these groups have come together to explore a proposal for the state's "First 1000 Days" project, a state-community collaboration to identify and support young families in the prenatal to age 3 period. The Health Board also has opportunities to review upcoming health and non-health policy decisions for their impact on young children and families.

#### **BOARD ROLE / ACTION REQUESTED**

- In partnership with community groups and advisory boards, endorse/ sponsor/attend community action summit to focus on needs of young children and families. (Spring 2017)
- Provide support letter for "First 1000 Days" project, if community invited to submit full proposal
- With support from Health Department staff, screen upcoming County policy decisions for impact on young children and families, particularly most vulnerable populations.

#### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

- ***Menu of opportunities from November 2016***





## HEALTH BOARD Discussion Form

April 25, 2017

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### **AGENDA ITEM #4: Update on Young Children and Families Focus**

**PRESENTER:** *Rachel Lucy, Public Health Advisory Board Chair  
Astrid Newell, Community Health Manager*

**BOARD ACTION:**                      Action Item                       Discussion                      FYI - Only

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### **SIGNIFICANT POINTS OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In November 2016, the Health Board adopted a 2017 focus on enhancing the well-being of young children and families. The purpose of adopting this focus was to bring greater attention to the needs of this population and to proactively identify policy and program strategies to address those needs. Over the last several months, the Health Board's interest and commitment to young children and families has leveraged a number of key opportunities.

#### **1) Opportunities to increase community resources and commitment to young children and families in Whatcom County**

- With the Health Board's support, the Health Department is now on track to expand the Nurse-Family Partnership program with plans to hire a new nurse in early July 2017.
- The Health Board's declared interest in young children and families has been a valuable tool to engage community partners. Health Department staff is now working with partners to plan and host a Future Search conference focused on young children and families later this summer. This conference is an intentional process to bring together diverse sectors and stakeholders over several days, resulting in collective agreements about priorities and an action-oriented plan to better meet the needs of young children and families. Government and elected officials are a key stakeholder group that will be included in this event.



Whatcom County  
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Department

**2) Opportunities to incorporate focus on young children and families into workplace policies**

- The Health Board has expressed significant interest in workplace policies that support employees with new babies or those caring for young children. This interest has resulted in concrete steps within County Human Resources (HR). HR is actively working to highlight family-friendly workplace policies on the County website and has launched a new “Infant at Work” policy that is now being piloted at the Health Department (as of April 1, 2017). Highlights of this work will be shared with Health Board in the Fall, 2017.

**3) Opportunities to address key stressors for young children and families through policy and program approaches**

- Health Department staff and Public Health Advisory Board members explored an opportunity to incorporate a new policy goal in a proposed revision of the Behavioral Health Sales Tax ordinance, which was introduced on April 4<sup>th</sup>, with public hearing scheduled on April 18<sup>th</sup>. The new policy goal would add focus on early intervention and behavioral health promotion for young children and families as a part of the Behavioral Health Program Fund.
- Health Department staff is working to reclassify an existing vacant position to focus on health equity and policy development. A portion of this staff’s time would be dedicated to advancing policy efforts focused on young children and families, as well as the Health Board’s healthy planning interests.

**In addition to the opportunities above, the following two issues have been identified as key concerns that are currently impacting the well-being of young children and families in Whatcom County:**

- Lack of quality affordable child care to meet the needs of working families, especially those with infants and toddlers.
- High levels of stress currently experienced by immigrant families with young children.

**BOARD ROLE / ACTION REQUESTED**

- Discuss board interest in having future presentations, discussion, and exploration of policy options related to child care and/or immigration concerns.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

- *None*

