

## State supplemental budget includes funding for pilot behavioral health program



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### Washington state has a behavioral health care challenge

Washington state is experiencing a severe behavioral health care crisis. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, about 650,000 Washingtonians were receiving treatment for behavioral health needs, while another 700,000 had mental health concerns but were not yet connected to care. Today, demand continues to grow due to pandemic-related stress.

Sadly, many patients who attempt to access care for depression, anxiety and other behavioral health needs encounter barriers. These include difficulty navigating the complex health care system, a shortage of behavioral health providers in their area, lack of insurance coverage, inability to afford care and lack of culturally-appropriate services.

### We asked to be a part of the solution

At Project Access Northwest, we improve community health by connecting the most vulnerable members of our community to vital health care services. As the only specialty care coordination program in King, Snohomish and Kitsap counties, we partner with more than 1,740 volunteer providers to offer care in more than 50 specialties, completely free of charge to our patients. Our care coordinators match patients in need to providers who will care for them, complete required screenings, and schedule appointments. Last year, we had a no-show rate of less than 4% for over 3,200 appointments made for individuals living at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

We knew we could be part of the solution for Behavioral Health Care access as well. So we proposed connecting patients to a new network of volunteer behavioral health care providers, building on our nearly two decades of similar care coordination experience.

Representative Nicole Macri and Senator Manka Dhingra provided unwavering support and sponsored our proviso request to the legislature to allocate \$500,000 of the fiscal budget to launch a one-year pilot behavioral health care coordination program in King, Kitsap and Snohomish counties. Other champions of our request include: Senators Christine Rolfes, June Robinson and David Frockt; House Speaker Laurie Jenkins; and Representatives Tarra Simmons, Lauren Davis and Eileen Cody.

We want to provide special thanks to Bevin McLeod, co-founder & board president, and Nicole Gomez, co-founder and board secretary, of Alliance For A Healthy Washington for their incredible thought-leadership and advocacy throughout this process.

### State legislators approved our pilot program funding

Here is how the program was described in the official supplemental budget sent to the Governor:

*(112) \$500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the authority to provide a one-time*

*continued on page 2*

## Thank you and best wishes to our departing leaders



Penny Edlund

### We extend our deepest thanks to our retiring board members

**Penny Edlund**, who stepped down in February, served on the board for many years and tirelessly championed our mission.

“Penny offered her very valuable gifts of time, talent and treasure,” says Gary Renville, executive director. “I’m grateful for the impact Penny has had on Project Access Northwest and also on me, especially in my early days as the incoming executive director.”

We also will be saying farewell to **Dan Howell**, who steps down from the board in April. Dan has served on the board since 2017 and brought many skills and insights to our work, especially helping to model the value of the care we provide at no cost to our patients.

We appreciate both of them for their leadership, wisdom and hard work in support of our mission!



Dan Howell

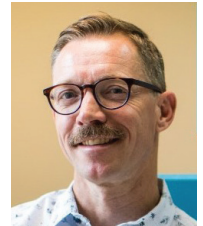
### Important staff changes to note

We bid farewell and best wishes to our Deputy Executive Director **Melissa Johnson**, who left her position earlier this year.

**Michael Welke** moved from his position as Care Coordinator to an interim development director role and, among other things, is already planning for this year’s **Strike Down Barriers to Health Care** event. If you are interested in supporting our work this year as a sponsor, please reach out to Michael at [MichaelW@projectaccessnw.org](mailto:MichaelW@projectaccessnw.org) or 206-858-4191.



Melissa Johnson



Michael Welke

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PILOT PROGRAM



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*grant to a nonprofit organization to establish a program to provide pro bono counseling and behavioral health services to uninsured individuals with incomes below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. The grantee must have experience in leveraging local and philanthropic funding to coordinate pro bono health care services within Washington. The authority must provide the funding pursuant to an appropriate agreement for documented capacity-building to begin providing pro bono counseling and behavioral health services no later than April 1, 2023. The agreement must require the grantee to seek, document, and report to the authority on*

*efforts to leverage local, federal, or philanthropic funding to provide sustained operational support for the program.*

### Governor Inslee signs budget into law

Now that the budget is approved, this funding will allow us to organize a one-year pilot program, invite a broader base of sustainable funding partners and provide the blueprint for expansion across the state over the next three years. The program will connect vulnerable patients to the behavioral health care they need through in-person appointments, as well as telehealth options for those who request it or lack access to local resources.

With additional funding, after three years, the expanded pilot is projected to generate a pipeline of up to 500 volunteer counselors, donating up to 10,000 hours of pro bono talk

### Meet the Outpatient Procedure Clinic Team

*Care Coordination is at the heart of what we do at Project Access Northwest. This month we're taking a closer look at the Outpatient Procedure Clinic — a vision turned reality that is a win-win for both patients and medical students.*

***"Where there is no vision, there is no hope."***  
—George Washington Carver

In early 2016, Dr. Nancy Foote and Dr. Chris Leininger recognized a need in their community: increased access to dermatology services for uninsured/underinsured patients.

At the time, Dr. Leininger was already working with the Swedish First Hill residency clinic, so he was familiar with the work of Project Access Northwest and its Care Coordination team.

He and Dr. Foote reached out to Project Access Northwest to explore ways to increase access to dermatology care — and the Outpatient Procedure Clinic was born!

Today the clinic operates out of the Swedish Family Medicine – First Hill site on a morning,

bi-weekly schedule. Patients can be referred by their primary care providers, and care coordinators at Project Access Northwest will get them scheduled for appointments

The Outpatient Procedure Clinic offers a wide variety of services, including lesion removal, skin checks, IUD removal and insertion, skin biopsies and lipoma removal. With oversight from Dr. Leininger and Dr. Foote, patients receive exquisite care from the Swedish residents, including follow-up appointments and much-needed referrals to other specialists.

"This clinic is a win-win all the way around," says Andrea Castell, RN, Project Access Northwest operations nurse. "The Swedish family practice residents benefit from the many experiences of Dr. Foote and Dr. Leininger, and the patients benefit from the kindness, skill and talents of all of the doctors and nurses involved. It is a joy to see this clinic in action."

Over 525 patients have been seen through this program, and we are proud to continue this collaboration to serve the ongoing needs of the community.



therapy services to address behavioral health needs such as depression, anxiety, grief and trauma.

This pro bono behavioral health care coordination approach has a track record of success in other states such as Maryland, where a non-profit organization recruited more than 800 providers to provide 16,000 hours per year of pro bono mental health services to low-income patients and families.

The pilot program in Washington state will go beyond striking down barriers for patients. It also will offer volunteer opportunities for behavioral health care providers who seek to donate care but lack a support system. Providers who participate in the program will receive thoroughly screened clients who show up for appointments on time, as well as ongoing case consultation and support.

As the program expands, it will also seek to offer free continuing education workshops to providers. Studies show that providers who volunteer are also better able to: combat depression; counteract the effects of stress, anger, and anxiety; increase self-confidence; and advance their career.

***We sincerely thank Representative Nicole Macri and Senator Manka Dhingra for their sponsorship of our proviso request and their commitment to expanding access to behavioral health care to those most in need in our communities. And we thank the entire legislature and Governor Inlee for supporting this program by passing and signing the supplemental budget.***

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SPECIAL EVENT: Save the date!

## STRIKE Down Barriers to Health Care 2022

Join us on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, 6–8:30 PM  
at Lucky Strike Bellevue in Lincoln Square

Project Access Northwest is holding another fantastic fundraising event! Please join us at Lucky Strike Bellevue to bowl, play pool, network, visit with friends and learn more about the important work we are doing to ensure every person has access to appropriate health care.

Our fifth annual **Strike Down Barriers to Health Care** event will be held Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at Lucky Strike Bellevue in Lincoln Square (700 Bellevue Way NE, Suite #250, Bellevue). Join us from 6:00–8:30 PM to enjoy appetizers, hosted beer and wine, and an opportunity to spend time with health care leaders in our community.

We'll also be presenting the Andrea Castell Health Care Leadership Award to an individual who works for improved health care access for all members of our community.

Mark your calendar now. You won't want to miss this fun evening!

Visit [panw.ejoinme.org](http://panw.ejoinme.org) for all the event details.



## FOCUS ON FUNDING: GiveBIG

### GiveBIG to help create a healthier community

No one should be denied quality health care

There's just no denying it! The health and well-being of each member of our community are key to our overall strength and resilience.

Yet hundreds of thousands of people in our state are denied access to the health care they need. They either don't qualify for insurance under the Affordable Care Act or they qualify but still can't afford the out-of-pocket expenses. You can make a difference! With your support, our neighbors in need can receive affordable care.

Please visit [projectaccessnw.org/give](http://projectaccessnw.org/give) to learn more. You can donate directly on our website or use the GiveBig site, available April 19 for

early giving and culminating in a 48-hour giving event on May 3–4.

**This year, GiveBIG for a healthier community for all.**

**All donations made through May 4 will count toward our spring appeal goal.**

**GIVE**   
**BIG**  
**2022**  
POWERED BY  
501 COMMONS

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#### OUR MISSION

*Project Access Northwest collaborates with the health care community to open doors to medical and dental care for low-income individuals with limited access.*

**We invite your comments and questions.**

*Visit [projectaccessnw.org](http://projectaccessnw.org) to learn more.*