

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL  
Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.  
COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038  
(360) 778-5010



COUNCILMEMBERS  
Timothy Ballew II  
Barbara Brenner  
Rud Browne  
Barry Buchanan  
Tyler Byrd  
Todd Donovan  
Satpal Sidhu

## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

March 12, 2018

MaryAnne Lindeblad  
Washington State Medicaid Director  
Health Care Authority  
Olympia, WA

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Ms. Lindeblad,

Whatcom County is poised to break ground on construction of an expanded behavioral health facility. This new facility will provide our community and the surrounding region with 16 beds for a Certified Voluntary Triage unit, and 16 beds for an Acute Detox unit. Capital funds for this project have been secured, and it is critical that full funding for operations is also in place.

The county established an Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (Task Force) via ordinance in 2015. In that ordinance, the expansion of our current Triage Facility was highlighted as a main priority for the community. The Task Force also established a special committee focused exclusively on the expansion of the current Triage Facility. Review of the data clearly showed most denials of admission to the facility were a result of inadequate bed capacity. This committee has worked diligently to design enhancements to programming and expansion from the current 13 beds total.

Like many counties, Whatcom acknowledged the importance of providing an alternative to incarceration, when appropriate, for individuals challenged with behavioral health disorders. Law enforcement agencies, EMS, the hospital, and our tribal nations have come together to support the new construction. Planning is underway to create pathways to divert individuals from arrest, incarceration, and emergency department visits into the two new units of the facility once built. Even with minimal bed capacity now, the facility is utilized for hospital psychiatric step-down placements, detox in preparation for inpatient Substance Abuse Disorder treatment, and diversion from more costly medical services.

The County Council asks that you work with the MCOs who will be administering publicly-funded health care in our county to ensure that Triage Facility and Acute

Detox unit operational costs are fully funded. This will require some creative thinking to coordinate all five MCOs. The county is able and willing to collaborate on development of an innovative mechanism to achieve full cost reimbursement.

Please don't hesitate to contact us about this project, which remains a very high priority of our community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Donovan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Todd Donovan  
Whatcom County Council Vice-Chair

c: Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council  
Correspondence file  
Jack Louws, Whatcom County Executive  
Anne Deacon, Whatcom County Health Department

TD/jkn



## Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

March 14, 2018

MaryAnne Lindeblad  
Washington State Medicaid Director  
Health Care Authority  
Olympia, WA

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Ms. Lindeblad,

Whatcom County is poised to break ground on construction of an expanded behavioral health facility. This new facility will provide our community and the surrounding region with 16 beds for a Certified Voluntary Triage unit, and 16 beds for an Acute Detox unit. Capital funds for this project have been secured, and it is critical that full funding for operations is also in place.

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The Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force asks that you work with the MCOs who will be administering publicly-funded health care in our county to ensure that Triage Facility and Acute Detox unit operational costs are fully funded. This will require some creative thinking to coordinate all five MCOs. The county is able and willing to collaborate on development of an innovative mechanism to achieve full cost reimbursement.

Please don't hesitate to contact us about this project, which remains a very high priority of our community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jill Bernstein".

for  
Jill Bernstein  
Task Force Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Hovenier".  
Jack Hovenier  
Task Force Co-Chair

c: Whatcom County Council  
Jack Louws, County Executive  
Anne Deacon, Health Department

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**  
County Courthouse  
311 Grand Ave. Suite #108  
Bellingham, WA 98225



**Jack Louws**  
County Executive

March 14, 2018

MaryAnne Lindeblad  
Washington State Medicaid Director  
Washington State Health Care Authority  
626 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Ms. Lindeblad,

Whatcom County is poised to break ground on construction of an expanded behavioral health facility. This new facility will provide our community and the surrounding region with 16 beds for a Certified Voluntary Triage unit, and 16 beds for an Acute Detox unit. Our county has been planning this expansion for many years, and now has the capital funding to launch the project.

Capital funding has been allocated from the state's Capital budget, and local funds have also been designated for this project. With construction imminent, our concern now focuses on the pledge to our public that the services provided in these facilities will be funded. Currently, our valued partner, the North Sound Behavioral Health Organization (BHO), provides the necessary financial support for operations. Our community needs assurance, upon implementation of Integrated Managed Care in 2019/2020, that the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) will continue full compensation of operations.

The county has worked closely with the hospital, EMS, law enforcement agencies, and tribal nations to set priorities for utilization of this facility. The expectation of all partners is that this expanded facility will allow first responders to divert individuals from jail bookings or emergency department visits to treatment at these two units. This need for diversion has been highlighted as a priority for Whatcom County.

As County Executive I ask that you work with the MCOs who will be administering publicly-funded health care in our county to ensure that Triage Facility and Acute Detox unit operational costs are fully funded. This will require some creative thinking to coordinate all five MCOs. The county is able and willing to collaborate on development of an innovative mechanism to achieve full cost reimbursement.

Please don't hesitate to contact us about this project, which remains a very high priority of our community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Jack Louws", is written over a large, stylized blue star or asterisk shape.

Jack Louws  
County Executive

cc: Rud Browne, County Council Chair



**STATE OF WASHINGTON  
HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY**

626 8th Avenue, SE • P.O. Box 45502 • Olympia, Washington 98504-5502

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Jack Louws  
County Executive  
Whatcom County Executive's Office  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 108  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear Executive Louws:

**SUBJECT: WHATCOM COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FACILITY**

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the Triage Facility and Acute Detox Unit planned for construction in Whatcom County. As you noted, triage and detox services are critical and needed behavioral health services; I am encouraged to know this project is underway and received capital funding in this year's budget.

As part of the Health Care Authority (HCA) oversight responsibility, there are certain network adequacy and contract compliance standards with which managed care plans must adhere. As part of those standards, managed care plans must include crisis stabilization, triage and withdrawal management (detox) services, in their plan's network. Federal regulation prohibits HCA from requiring a managed care plan to contract with a *particular* provider; however, HCA's network adequacy standards allow us to monitor provider networks. This ensures managed care clients have access to all Medicaid-covered behavioral health services within reasonable time and distance standards.

To date, in our experience with the integrated managed care program, all existing Behavioral Health Organization (BHO)-contracted providers have established and maintained contracts with the managed care plans and behavioral health administrative services organization (BH-ASO) in their region. In fact, the managed care plans in Southwest Washington and North Central Washington have expanded access to services, providing additional behavioral health services, or contracting with mental health providers who were previously not included in the network. Our expectation is that all managed care plans will work to establish contracts with as many behavioral health providers as possible, in order to provide their members with the strongest access to services available.

As we progress with the implementation of integrated managed care in the North Sound Region, we would like to continue working collaboratively with you, North Sound Behavioral Health

The Honorable Jack Louws

April 10, 2018

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Organization Administrator Joe Valentine, the local Accountable Community of Health, local providers, as well as the managed care plans, to ensure that this important resource is available.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention regarding the new facility in Whatcom County. Should you have any questions or additional concerns, please contact me, by telephone at 360-725-1863 or via email at [MaryAnne.Lindeblad@hca.wa.gov](mailto:MaryAnne.Lindeblad@hca.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Anne Lindeblad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

MaryAnne Lindeblad, BSN, MPH  
Medicaid Director

By mail

cc: Rud Browne, County Council Chair