WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH PLAN:
OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Health Plan (CHP) framework was developed in early 2007 by the Public Health Advisory Board and Whatcom County Health Department under direction from the Whatcom County Health Board. The Health Plan will:

- *Engage the public in identifying issues and setting health priorities for the county;*
- *Maximize countywide health planning by focusing the efforts of diverse partners on common issues and goals;*
- *Guide Whatcom County government decision making, program prioritization and resource allocation for public health and health-related issues and programs, as well as guide local health-related organizations, community groups, and jurisdictions as they engage in their own health planning and resource allocation processes; and*
- *Attract out-of-county resources for CHP priorities.*

LEADERSHIP

In September 2007, the Whatcom County Health Board created a 3-member standing Health Committee to guide the processes of developing the Comprehensive Health Plan. The Health Committee will meet frequently during the planning process and will seek regular input and involvement from the Public Health Advisory Board. A continuous feedback loop will frame the development of the Comprehensive Plan, with the County Council Health Committee providing feedback to the public, community partners, the Public Health Advisory Board, and Health Department staff. The County Council and the Public Health Advisory Board can be seen as key customers of Comprehensive Plan in that they will use the plan for guidance in the performance of their respective board duties.

SCOPE

The Comprehensive Plan will be organized under four major health topics, which are defined as follows:

TOPIC 1: COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

Impeding the occurrence of infectious disease in susceptible populations by: (1) providing guidelines to reduce susceptibility to communicable diseases; (2) maintaining surveillance systems to rapidly identify disease outbreaks; and (3) determining and eliminating causes in order to halt disease outbreaks.

TOPIC 2: HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Strengthening the current organization and methods by which health care (including substance abuse and mental health services, and oral health care) is delivered and fostering a comprehensive system that ensures access and quality while at reasonable cost.

TOPIC 3: HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Assuring clean air, water and soil, safe homes and food, freedom from contaminants, and building and community designs that maximize safety and encourage health and healthy lifestyles.

TOPIC 4: HEALTH PROMOTION

Identifying and fostering healthy lifestyles in the community in order to support a comprehensive chronic disease prevention plan—such as the promotion of sound nutrition and physical activity as the building blocks of a healthy lifestyle.

These four topics will be supported and informed by *health assessment*, i.e. the collection, tracking, analysis and dissemination of data to help identify health issues and guide planning.

IMPLEMENTATION

Utilizing the four health topics for purposes of organization, and supported by health assessment data, the WCCHP process will follow these three steps:

Step 1: Identification of strategic issues of community health significance

Step 2: Prioritization of issues

Step 3: Creation of goals, policies, and action plans

STEP 1: Identify "laundry list" of health issues

Methods:
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Community Focus Groups
- Public Forums

STEP 2: Organize each issue under 4 topic areas and then prioritize issues under each topic

Methods:
- Community Survey
- Choose and apply prioritization criteria

STEP 3: [For each priority issue]

Task1: Define/refine issue & gather assessment data to inform planning

Task 2: Establish GOALS

Task 3: Create POLICIES

Task 4: Formulate ACTION PLANS

Methods:
- Convene workgroups using facilitation methods informed by types of issues:
  A: Issues informed by WCHD expertise
  B: Issues informed by "expert" coalition
  C: Issues informed by multiple partner expertise

The entire process from start to finish is expected to take approximately three years. After Step 3 is completed for each issue, the County and the healthcare community will use the document for the purposes first described.