

Quarterly Community Update

RECENT HAPPENINGS

The Board met in January and March.

In [January](#), ([watch the recording](#)) highlights included welcoming a new Board Member, [Paj Nandi](#), and a new staff member, [Ashley Bell](#).

The Board also:

- Heard a [legislative session preview](#) from the [Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials](#), Washington State [Department of Health](#), and the [American Indian Health Commission](#).
- Held an informational panel on [Indoor Air Quality](#) (IAQ) to learn more about IAQ and its impact on those who reside in and visit Washington. The panel consisted of [five experts](#); Eric Vander Mey, Delta E Consulting ([Presentation](#)); Brandon Kemperman, Public Health – Seattle and King County ([Presentation](#)); Nancy Bernard, Department ([Presentation](#)); Ben Omura, State Building Code Council ([Presentation](#)); and Erin McTigue, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10 ([Presentation](#)).

- Heard updates on various rulemaking work including [water recreation](#), [on-site sewage systems](#) and a petition for [visual screening standards](#).

In [March](#), ([watch the recording](#)) among other things, the Board:

- Heard from the Swinomish Tribe on their impressive health programs.
- Received an [annual update](#) from the [Newborn Screening](#) team at the Department of Health.
- Held a [community panel](#) focused on topics in the upcoming 2024 State Health Report. This is a two-part panel. The panelists were:
 - Amanda Shi, Manager of Research and Evaluation, [Tubman Center for Health and Freedom](#)
 - Dominique Horn, Community Mobilization Coordinator, [Southwest Washington Accountable Community of Health](#)
 - Molly Parker, Family Health Providers and Chief Medical Officer for Population Health, [Jefferson Healthcare](#)
 - Nyka Osteen, Director of Innovation, [North Sound Accountable Community of Health](#)

The panelists shared their experiences and expertise on four topics: Maternal and Pregnant Person Health, Health Justice and Culturally Appropriate Care, Substance Use, and Data Equity. Board members and panelists discussed connections between these topics and the work of the Board.

At the April 10 hybrid meeting, the Board will hold a second community panel with a focus on the eastern side of the state. If you're interested in this panel, please check our [meeting information](#) to listen in!



SWINOMISH TRIBE HOSTS THE BOARD

The [Swinomish Tribe](#) graciously hosted the Board for our March meeting. The Tribe also welcomed Board members and staff to tour the Tribe's [Dental Program](#) and [dəxw̓xayəbus Dental Therapy Program](#) at Skagit Valley College. Board members and staff also toured the [didgwálic Wellness Center](#).

We are very grateful for the Swinomish Tribe's warm welcome for the Board. It was a true honor to see the groundbreaking work the Swinomish Tribe is doing toward health.

If you would like to learn more about the Board or be involved in our work, contact [Hannah Haag](#), Board Community Outreach Coordinator.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Board:

April 10 and June 12

**Health Promotion
Subcommittee:** May 2

**Environmental Health
Subcommittee:** May 9

The Board held virtual meetings of its two **standing policy subcommittees:**

- The Environmental Health Subcommittee met on [February 8](#) and heard updates on legislative session. They also heard updates on shellfish rulemaking, which will have a public hearing in April. Members discussed possible next steps from the Indoor Air Quality panel.
- The Health Promotion Subcommittee met on [February 1](#). There have been no new rule filings or major updates to Health Promotion related rules since the last meeting. Members discussed a possible briefing on kratom and [tianeptine](#).



OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED

Upcoming Meetings: Our next Board meeting is scheduled for April 10 in Spokane. The meeting will have virtual and in-person options and include American Sign Language and Spanish interpretation services.

Physical meeting location: Spokane Public Library, 906 W. Main Ave, Spokane, WA, 99201, Rooms: Central Events A & B

Zoom information is posted on our [website](#) two weeks before the meeting.

PRO-EQUITY ANTI-RACISM PLAN

The Board is working on completing a Pro-Equity Anti-Racism Plan (PEAR Plan).

The PEAR plan looks to benefit all. Removing barriers and changing the ways we do our work will help us center equity. Currently, we have identified members of the Board's PEAR Plan team.

As first steps, we will be looking at the scope of our plan and completing an equity centered assessment.

That assessment, with feedback from the community, will inform the PEAR plan for the Board.

- **Participation in Our Work:** The Board must submit a report to the Governor's Office every two years with suggestions for public health priorities and policy recommendations. The Board meets this requirement through its [State Health Report](#). To help inform this year's report, we are inviting community representatives to share their knowledge, experience, and stories about how these topic(s) impact your community: Maternal and Pregnant Person Health, Health Justice and Culturally Appropriate Care, Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Response and Data Equity.

If you would like to meet with staff to share your experiences with how these topics impact the health of your community, please contact [Hannah](#).

- The Board will consider initiating a rulemaking to update its [handling of human remains](#) rules, [WAC 246-500](#), at the April Board meeting. This would align with changes in state law reducing the holding period for unclaimed remains from 90 to 45 days. This possible change is at the recommendation of the Washington Association of County Officials. To comment on this change, please [email the Board](#).
- [Email the Board](#) anytime with public comment on any of our work or issues that matter to you.

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

The [Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities](#) (Council) is responsible for creating a state policy action plan with recommendations to end health inequities in Washington. Fourteen state agencies serve on the Council, including the State Board of Health.

In January 2024, the Council [released a report](#) on its recent [redesign project](#). This project proposed changes to the Council's name, structure, and responsibilities. The Council asked community and government partners to share their ideas on this project. These partners shared how to better engage communities and align priorities to advance health justice. Recommendations in the report include:

- Updating the Council's name, purpose, membership, and responsibilities in the state law that directs the Council's work (RCW 43.20.270 – 43.20.280); and
- Providing adequate funding through the state's operating budget to support the Council's operation.



To make these changes, state lawmakers and the Governor must approve them during legislative session. The bill to update the Council's statute failed to advance further. The Council did receive more funding for its operations. This allows for hiring community engagement and policy development staff, and other needs. This is the first time the Council has received increased funding since its creation in 2006.



WELCOME!

The Board welcomes our new Health Policy Advisor, [Shay Bauman](#).

Shay's portfolio of work includes environmental public health and the natural environment. Before joining the Board, Shay worked for the Washington State Office of the Attorney General, where she served as a Regulatory Analyst for the Public Counsel Unit.

Shay received her Master of Public Administration through the University of Washington with emphasis in public financial management and policy analysis.

Health Impact Reviews

The Board conducts [Health Impact Reviews](#) (HIRs) in collaboration with the [Council](#). An HIR is an objective, non-partisan, evidence-based report. It provides the Governor and state Legislators with information about how policy or budgetary proposals may impact health and equity. Only the Governor or a state legislator can request an HIR. State agencies and community organizations have used information from HIRs in their own work.

Since July 2023, Board staff have written 8 HIRs on topics like residential rent increases, regulation of commercially harvested crab for biotoxins, birth doula certification, and the purchase of zero-emission school buses. All HIRs are available on the Board's [website](#).