

ALIGNING UP CLOSE

A Community's Response to a Pandemic

Pierce County, Washington

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WHO THEY ARE

Elevate Health innovates and collaborates across sectors to create purposeful health care reform in Washington state. Its mission is to build and drive community coalitions that transform health systems and advance whole-person health for all. Elevate Health believes that every person in every community deserves to live a full, healthy and vibrant life. Achieving this vision—and the transformation of health systems to create and provide health equity—is its primary goal. As the Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) organization for Pierce County, it carries out this critical work by addressing the core challenges of inequitable health systems and practices at the community, region and state levels. As an ACH organization, Elevate Health brings together and aligns leaders from multiple sectors and fields with a common interest in improving health and working toward equitable standards of care.

WHAT THEY DID

Positioned at the intersection of public health, community care, and health delivery systems, Elevate Health quickly responded to the COVID-19 public health crisis. It adapted its comprehensive care coordination approach and gave providers new tools to ease the delivery of care for patients while protecting their own safety. Its unique investment arm, OnePierce Community Resiliency Fund (OnePierce), also facilitated the administration and distribution of funds from the Congressional Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, on top of Elevate Health's own philanthropic and emergency funding.

Upon the pandemic's onset, Elevate Health introduced a COVID-19 screening tool that community health workers and care coordinators could use as they worked in the community. Each patient visit required frontline workers to perform a screen to make sure it was safe to visit and conduct necessary follow-up visits with their clients. This screening tool continues to ensure safety and sound public health practices for both clients and care coordinators in the community. Partners who are using the screening tool include MultiCare, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, CHI Franciscan (now CommonSpirit), Community Health Care, KWA (formerly Korean Women's Association), HopeSparks, and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.



Next, Elevate Health collaborated with health care and public health partners to support care coordination services for patients in isolation due to quarantine and at-risk populations, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Elevate Health's Care Continuum Network (CCN) is one of Elevate Health's core services, and it supports not only the community members in the region—often with multiple health challenges and other needs—but also the region's comprehensive ecosystem of care, which includes clinics, hospitals, shelters, social services, community programs, food banks and other resources. By leveraging the CCN, Elevate Health was able to scale its approach to ensure that the community had the tools and resources to support the most vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

Underpinned by its partnership with Innovaccer Inc., a health care technology company, and backed by CARES Act funding from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Elevate Health built a comprehensive COVID-19 assessment tool that allowed care coordinators to guide education and interventions with positive, exposed, and/or at-risk populations. Once clients were assigned to aligned community partners for services through Elevate Health's CCN, care coordinators used the assessment tool to assess risk and social determinant of health needs. In connecting vulnerable and affected populations to care coordination services, people were provided resources to address immediate medical and social service needs to assist them in maintaining isolation or quarantine. Partners engaged in this pandemic response work using the screening tool include Sea Mar Community Health Centers, CHI Franciscan (now CommonSpirit), KWA (formerly Korean Women's Association) and Integrity Nurse. In addition to its screening and assessment tools, Elevate Health deployed funding to support the community's healthcare, emergency medical services, and social services organizations.

Early on, Elevate Health and OnePierce identified that assessing needs and providing care to individuals, coupled with the growing restrictions and closures of businesses, placed significant stress and pressure on both health and social service systems. To address this, Elevate Health invested more than \$2 million of emergency response resources in health care, fire and rescue services, and community-based organizations in the Pierce County region to help support residents during the COVID-19 crisis. This enabled the regional network of clinical, social, and community-based organizations to continue serving a wide range of patients remotely during the crisis, including:

- ▶ Treatment for people in need of behavioral health support and services,
- ▶ Substance use disorder treatment, and
- ▶ Quality, integrated social and housing services for vulnerable populations.

This rapid response funding and results-driven work helped meet the community's most urgent needs and limit the disruption of critical services for Pierce County's vulnerable populations during the public health emergency.

While Elevate Health was a recipient of CARES Act funding for the development of its assessment tool, OnePierce managed local applications for federal CARES Act stimulus funding, collaborating with Pierce County on final selections. In total, 21 behavioral health providers were awarded \$1.5 million in funding. The most common funding requests were for personal protective equipment (PPE), telehealth equipment, modifications required to enable social distancing, additional cleaning costs, and staff time to enable uninterrupted support to patients. In support of ongoing calls for PPE, Elevate Health also secured and distributed 610,000 pieces of PPE in August of 2020.

BACKGROUND

As Pierce County considers how to reopen and stay open under the standards set forth in Governor Jay Inslee’s Safe Start plan, its top priorities are the health and safety of residents alongside the prevention or mitigation of a resurgence of COVID-19. Safe Start, announced by Gov. Inslee in May 2020, is a county-based phased approach for reopening businesses in Washington state with the goal of controlling COVID-19 activity. As part of its case investigation and contact-tracing guidelines, Safe Start states that upon receiving a positive lab test, 90 percent of infected people must be contacted by phone or in-person within 24 hours, and the person’s contacts must be notified within 48 hours.

THE POPULATION SERVED

Elevate Health has integrated blended and braided resources to support the implementation of its innovations and transformational solutions, each with the ability to scale and spread in order to meet the needs of the broader Pierce County community in the context of COVID-19.

Breakdown of Client Racial/Ethnic Demographics

CLIENT REPORTED RACE	NUMBER OF CLIENTS	PERCENTAGE
Asian or Pacific Islander	180	16%
Black	128	11%
Caucasian	784	65%
Hispanic	73	6%
TOTAL	1,210	

HOW THEY DID IT

To formulate and execute upon its COVID-19 strategy, Elevate Health had several key components in place. First, Elevate Health’s workflows and models are designed to streamline a care system that connects public health agencies to community care coordination services, embodied by the CCN. The CCN is the organization’s holistic care coordination strategy and serves as the region’s care traffic control to further whole-person and population health management initiatives.

Creating an equitable, integrated ecosystem of care for Pierce County residents—especially during a pandemic—requires weaving together the provision of health care, behavioral health care, vital services, and funding streams offered by both community and state organizations. At its establishment, Elevate Health took stock of the health landscape and began to form partnerships with social services, health care, and community-based organizations. In its assessment, Elevate Health also amassed a great deal of health data and utilized its own knowledge of health systems and models to inform its strategy. Most importantly, it met with and secured feedback from community stakeholders throughout Pierce County.

Its partners—representing a broad swath of local health-related and social services—are an integral part of Elevate Health’s work. Its COVID-19 work would not have been possible without its existing cross-sector relationships and commitment to integrating the community voices who share its goal of health equity. By listening to the needs of the community, Elevate Health was able to deploy creative funding solutions to allow Pierce County providers to maintain continuity of care, build necessary infrastructure, and increase capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Elevate Health released pre-contracted Medicaid Transformation Act dollars early and loosened reporting and performance obligations for the first half of 2020. This provided immediate support for COVID-19 response efforts and allowed local EMS to continue its work. Already on the board of governance for the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (GTCF), Elevate Health was one of the first contributors to the Pierce County Connected Fund—the GTCF and United Way of Pierce County-led philanthropic response—in order to stabilize community-based organizations’ infrastructure and enhance their ability to respond. This contribution also enabled Elevate Health to further work in the philanthropic community through South Sound 2-1-1, which is administered by United Way of Pierce County. Supported by Elevate Health’s network of behavioral health care providers, South Sound 2-1-1 became a single-entry point for behavioral health resources and referrals in Pierce County.

As of October 2020, Elevate Health’s efforts have led to the following funding:

Pierce County Providers	\$ 180,000
Emergency Medical Services	\$ 120,250
Community Organizations	\$ 250,000
Administering CARES Act Funding for Behavioral Health Partners	\$ 1,500,000
TOTAL	\$ 2,050,250

OnePierce’s selection as the administrating body for CARES Act funding built upon Elevate Health’s relationships with the county and coordinating government agencies, who were already stretched thin by the pandemic. Using a competitive application process, OnePierce recommended CARES Act applicants to Pierce County and collaborated with the county to select 21 behavioral health providers.

Shared Data Platform

In order to create cohesive, integrated and up-to-date community health records, Elevate Health is collaborating with a software company called Innovaccer Inc. With an infrastructure which allows multiple organizations to work together on the same platform, Innovaccer Inc. has the ability to provide health care and social services professionals with a real-time, composite record of an individual’s physical and behavioral health while allowing them to collaborate on that individual’s care. In addition to providing equitable care for people, the data amassed and analyzed by Innovaccer Inc. helps inform a comprehensive view of community health, giving decision-makers the information they need to make responsive, community-centered policies that address gaps in care.

Care Coordination

Care coordination services provided support to community members who tested positive for COVID-19, were exposed, at-risk, or needed to remain in isolation or quarantine to protect themselves and others. Services included grocery delivery, telehealth appointments for behavioral health, and medication delivery.

Contact Tracing and Case Investigation

Example COVID-19 Case: A patient, John, was referred to Elevate Health by an emergency department physician at MultiCare after he was seen for symptoms of COVID-19 and tested positive. CCN program managers determined he was homeless and unemployed, and referred him to a contracted agency. John received support from a community health worker, who assisted with his housing and employment needs during his COVID-19 recovery.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Since its inception, Elevate Health's proactive approach to engage with health care systems and community-based organizations has driven its success in establishing positive relationships and fortifying trust. Results from community engagement at this level takes time. In other states health care delivery systems may be connected to one another and possibly to community-based organizations, but are not backed by an accountable care model. With an accountable care model in place, supported by many community members, and a shared data solution to utilize with partners, Elevate Health is redefining the standard of community care.

RESULTS

Elevate Health leveraged insights obtained from its integrated health data to address the clinical and social needs of patients. Elevate Health also automated its care coordination approach and empowered its partner care teams to facilitate the health status monitoring of their at-risk and acute patients. Through collaborative processes, care coordinators and community health workers were able to focus on providing better patient outcomes while continually improving the engagement rate of individuals in CCN programs. Since March 2020, Elevate Health increased its engagement rates from 25 percent to more than 33 percent.

As of November 1, 2020, Elevate Health and OnePierce had:

- ▶ Supported public health and safety through the deployment of a COVID-19 screening tool and COVID-19 assessment tool
- ▶ Supported fire and rescue services and frontline care
- ▶ Ensured streamlined and continued access to behavioral health providers
- ▶ Administered more than \$2 million in funding to critical Pierce County health care providers, social services, and philanthropic responses
- ▶ Made 610,000 pieces of personal protective equipment available to the community
- ▶ Served as the foundation for a COVID-19 needs assessment and support for 1,210 clients

SUSTAINABILITY

The relaxation of interoperability rules by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services due to the COVID-19 pandemic allowed Elevate Health and its technology partner to break barriers related to accessing data, especially from health care payers. Coupled with the data of partner organizations like the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, the door is open for longer-term platform applications to provide real-time, rapid-response for people in need of clinical, social, or community-based services.

In addition to the sustainability of Elevate Health's care coordination services, OnePierce blends revenue from Elevate Health with funding from investors, businesses, philanthropists, and public entities, then distributes that funding via grants and loans to community organizations that help people improve their whole-person health. Its goal is to create a long-term, sustainable source of funding for community organizations.