The Prevention and Public Health Fund supports efforts in Pierce County to make it easier for people in 10 low-income communities to make good choices that impact health.

High blood pressure, pre-diabetes, diabetes, obesity, and overweight can be managed with proper nutrition, physical activity, and access to preventive health care. For many people these are daily choices, but depending on where you live in Tacoma and Pierce County, you have fewer healthy choices. People in some parts of Pierce County:

- Can’t easily find or afford fresh produce and other healthy foods.
- Don’t feel safe walking in their neighborhoods.
- Are not familiar with the preventive health care services available under the Affordable Care Act. Preventive health screenings are a foreign concept to people who only seek medical help when they are very sick.

PPHF 1422 is supporting efforts to change this. A coalition of public, nonprofit, and private health care organizations are working to make it easier for people in Pierce County to make good health choices, with an emphasis on 10 low-income communities. They are working to:

Connect community organizations with health care providers to make sure that people with high blood pressure, diabetes, and pre-diabetes get appropriate care and education. PPHF 1422 funds are supporting a coordinated effort to strengthen the linkages between health care providers and community-based organizations to offer screening and education on how people can control their blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity.

Enlist food banks to make healthy foods more available. PPHF 1422 is supporting efforts to connect food banks with health care organizations, restaurants, and other food delivery systems to ensure that excess healthy foods are not thrown out but rather diverted to people in need. PPHF 1422 is also supporting training for community health workers and food bank volunteers in how to connect people with healthy food.

Train community health workers to offer blood pressure screening, education, and support for members of their communities. Community Health Workers in the 10 target communities play a key role by providing health and disease prevention information to medically underserved populations, assisting them in adopting healthy behaviors and connecting them to community and social support services.

Partner with employers to adopt food and beverage guidelines, and increase opportunities for employees to be physically active. Employers like Brown & Brown Insurance, McConkey Manufacturing, and Tacoma Rescue House are participating in worksite wellness programs. Part of an overall strategy to improve employee health and productivity, these business partners are assessing their cafeterias, vending machines, and work environments, convening wellness committees, and identifying policy, system, and environmental strategies to increase healthy foods and physical activity options at work.
Recruit health care providers and payers to cover the cost of community-based screening. In addition, community health workers are also being trained to offer screening and follow-up services to their peers, within their own communities.

Enhance information and referral to disease prevention programs and services. Enhancing the resource bank at South Sound 2-1-1 to include healthy living and chronic disease prevention education programs, accessible via phone, email and the web.

2016 HIGHLIGHTS

Diabetes, heart disease, and obesity are too often the result of poor habits, made worse by conditions in communities that make it harder for people to eat healthy, be physically active, and obtain preventive health care. PPHF 1422 is supporting efforts in Pierce County to change those conditions, and make 10 target neighborhoods healthier places to live, shop, and be active.

Walkability: Part of a thriving community

PPHF 1422 provided $10,000 grants to six community organizations this year to make it safer and easier to walk and be physically active.

In Tacoma’s Salishan community, the Pierce Conservation District is developing safer routes across busy streets so that children and families can take advantage of Swan Creek Park and Food Forest. Thanks to support from PPHF 1422, nearby residents will find it easier to get their exercise by walking to the park, while also taking advantage of the bounty at the park’s one-acre garden and orchard. In Tacoma’s Hilltop neighborhood, a nonprofit arts organization, Know Your Ropes, is putting artists with residents to paint pathways, start walking groups, and provide walking maps. The painted streets and paths will have a calming effect on traffic and make it safer and more enjoyable for residents to get around Hilltop on foot. (See photo on top left of the page.)

PPHF 1422 grant recipients and partners are also receiving expert training and advice on how to engage community members and work with decision makers to make practical changes to neighborhood environments that improve the quality of life. Other grant recipients include the Asia Pacific Cultural Center for work in South Tacoma, Foundation for Healthy Generations Community Health Advocates for work in Salishan, City of Tacoma/Healthy Homes, Healthy Neighborhoods program for work in the Hilltop and Lincoln neighborhoods, and Habitat for Humanity to start walking groups in Midland.

Better data for making good decisions about health

Electronic health records (EHRs) make it easier to identify, track, and treat patients with high blood pressure, diabetes, and pre-diabetes. This data can also provide a good picture of disease trends. A recent assessment of the seven healthcare systems in Pierce County revealed that EHR systems vary greatly between provider systems, making it difficult to compare data and identify treatment gaps. PPHF 1422 funds are supporting an effort across health care systems to identify common measures so they can evaluate disease prevention outcomes and get a more accurate picture of the health of the population. This will lead to better decisions about how to address high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity efforts in coming years.

Funded Partners
Emergency Food Network
Foundation for Healthy Generations
MultiCare Health System
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
YMCA
Diabetes Association of Pierce County
Emergency Food Network
City of Tacoma
Downtown On the Go
Pierce Conservation District
Asia Pacific Cultural Center
Habitat for Humanity
Tiva Aga
NW Physicians Network
Blue Zones
South Sound 2-1-1

Community Partners
CHI Franciscan Health
Group Health Cooperative
Community Health Care
Sea Mar Community Health Centers
Madigan Army Medical Center
Russell Family Foundation
Hunger Free Initiative of Pierce County
Korean Women’s Association