



# Whole-Person Care Collaborative

## The Whole-Person Care Collaborative Facilitated by Elevate Health

**Although behavioral health and physical health are deeply connected, seeking treatment often requires an individual to pursue two separate sets of experts.**

Psychiatrists and counselors usually maintain their own offices and clinics, distinct from their primary-care counterparts. For vulnerable populations, the additional barriers posed by pursuing behavioral health care – such as cost, time and need for transportation – may be so high that people neglect their mental well-being.

In contrast, whole-person care is a model of health care in which providers come together to understand and address all of an individual's health-related challenges. By facilitating the Whole-Person Care Collaborative, Elevate Health helps Medicaid-eligible clients in Pierce County connect with behavioral and physical health services in a single, trusted setting: their doctor's office.

## About Elevate Health and the Whole-Person Care Collaborative

At Elevate Health, we innovate and collaborate to create purposeful health care reform in Washington state.

Our mission is to build and drive community coalitions that transform health systems and advance whole-person health for all. As an Accountable Communities of Health (ACH) organization, we accomplish this work by addressing the core challenges of inequitable health systems and practices in our community, region and state.

The Whole-Person Care Collaborative, facilitated by Elevate Health, is one of our strategies, and its aim is to make health care, especially behavioral health care, more accessible and effective. This work, founded on the University of Washington's evidence-driven Collaborative Care program, is explained below.

## Collaborative Care is Whole-Person Care

The premise of Collaborative Care is simple and powerful: It's to embed a social worker, psychiatrist or another behavioral health expert in a doctor's office or clinic, so that the barriers to receiving care are significantly lowered. This is a service that is especially useful for vulnerable populations. At the same time, primary-care and behavioral health professionals can consult on clients' diagnoses, treatments and outcomes, thus providing whole-person care.



The University of Washington's AIMS Center developed the Collaborative Care model over the course of decades, and evidence-based research shows that it helps clients with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use and other behavioral health challenges, as well as co-morbid medical conditions such as heart disease and cancer.

## Meet the Team

With the help of our partners, the Whole-Person Care Collaborative is now aiding more than 52,100 residents of Pierce County. Our partners include:

### THE PROVIDERS: FRONTLINE CARE

We are fortunate to work with multiple health care and community organizations, listed below, in employing the Collaborative Care method. Providers hire behavioral health staff (licensed social workers, psychiatrists and/or therapists), ensure that the appropriate training takes place with the AIMS Center, assess and treat clients, and manage the information technology needed to track client care.

- **Bridge of Hope** (a partnership of HopeSparks and Pediatrics Northwest, P.S.)
- **CommonSpirit Health** (formerly CHI Franciscan: three clinic sites)
- **Community Health Care**
- **Comprehensive Life Resources**
- **Consejo Counseling and Referral Service**
- **MultiCare**
- **Northwest Physicians Network**
- **Sea Mar Community Health Centers**

### THE AIMS CENTER: TRAINING

The AIMS Center at the University of Washington is a group of faculty, staff and consultants dedicated to improving the health of populations by advancing the research and implementation of Collaborative Care. Through a series of trainings and check-ins, AIMS Center personnel guide behavioral health specialists and primary-care providers in working together. The behavioral health specialists learn how to work within a primary-care team, and the primary-care staff receive

## Finding Whole-Person Care

When a Medicaid client enters a primary-care setting that practices Collaborative Care, they will receive attentive, thorough care from a team of professionals.

### ASSESSMENT

The medical assistant greets the client. They are asked about their level of anxiety (via the GAD-7 assessment tool) and depression (the PHQ-9 assessment tool).

### CONVERSATION

If the client receives a positive score on the GAD-7 or answers two or more queries on the PHQ-9 with a "yes," the primary-care provider will talk with the client to learn more about their needs and circumstances.

### VERIFICATION

If the primary-care provider thinks the client would benefit from behavioral health care, the provider will ask the client if they're interested in being referred to the in-house social worker, psychiatrist or other behavioral health expert.

### REFERRAL

If the client says "yes," and if the behavioral health expert is available, the two will be introduced. (If the expert is not available, they will follow up with the client shortly thereafter.)

### THERAPY

The client and the behavioral health provider will then set a time to meet, and the appropriate level of care will begin.

Given COVID-19, some of this activity now takes place over video or telephone (telehealth), rather than in person.

training on organizational readiness, teamwork, patient engagement, caseload management, Medicaid billing and other topics.

#### **ELEVATE HEALTH: RESOURCES**

Elevate Health plays several roles in this work, including partnering with the AIMS Center to assess program needs, facilitate ongoing and specialized trainings and convene providers to share best practices. Elevate Health also serves as a resource for partners, consulting with them on staffing, training and caseload management. Importantly, through Medicaid Transformation Project funding, Elevate Health also extends financial resources to providers in the Whole-Person Care Collaborative. Providers use these resources to underwrite core Collaborative Care program functions, such as paying for the salaries of behavioral health specialists and IT integration.

## **For More Information**

If you would like to learn more about Elevate Health's Whole-Person Care Collaborative, we would enjoy hearing from you. Please contact Abby Njuguna, Improvement Advisor

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