

## MultiCare Health Equity Initiatives

MultiCare believes that all patients deserve access to care that is high quality, safe, equitable, compassionate and culturally sensitive, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, disability status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and other factors. Simply put, MultiCare has industry-leading health equity initiatives that we hope will become a model for other health systems.

To achieve impactful outcomes that are intentional, strategic and data-driven, MultiCare has committed to:

- Live out its core values of respect, integrity, stewardship, excellence, collaboration, kindness and joy
- Collectively learn and grow together by utilizing empathy, curiosity and courage
- Provide culturally informed education, core competencies and tangible tools for staff and boards
- Improve and strengthen community partnerships through collaboration and resource support
- Foster and sustain a genuine culture of belonging

In 2015, MultiCare formed its [Center for Health Equity and Wellness](#) (the “Health Equity Center”) that strives to promote health equity, eliminate health disparities and improve the well-being of the Pacific Northwest through ongoing, data-driven initiatives and partnerships. MultiCare understands that the communities it serves are diverse and that its patients face a variety of challenges that make living a healthy, thriving life difficult. The Health Equity Center has worked to improve health equity by:

- Embedding equity and belonging principles into MultiCare’s [policies and practices](#) systemwide
- Providing staff with culturally informed education and resources focused on self-awareness, implicit bias and steps to building a culture of belonging
- Ensuring access to interpreter services 24/7
- Conducting [community health needs assessments](#) to better identify and address patients’ and communities’ health and health-related social needs
- Exploring strategies to support and retain a diverse workforce in partnership with Human Potential

Additionally, the Health Equity Center works to:

- Develop and strengthen partnerships with underrepresented communities and organizations to achieve impactful outcomes
- Provide resources focused on wellness and health promotion
- Bring free and accessible health promotion programs and educational opportunities to community members
- Collaborate with community-based participatory research to advance equitable research

### **Equitable Quality, Access and Equity-Enhancing Services**

MultiCare understands that to provide inclusive, equitable high-quality care, it must better understand its patients and what drives their wellbeing. To that end, MultiCare strives to be culturally proficient through continuous staff education and steps towards inclusivity by collecting SOGI-P (sexual orientation, gender identity and pronouns) and REAL-D (race, ethnicity and language, and disability status). Please see MultiCare's website for more information regarding its [SOGI-P](#) and [REAL-D](#) data collection practices. MultiCare leverages this data to identify and address health disparities in the communities it serves. For example, MultiCare uses this data to create quality improvement initiatives and health equity action plans to reduce identified disparities in select quality metrics.

MultiCare is also committed to equitable care access by, among other things, furthering culturally informed care and LGBTQ+ affirming care:

- (a) **Culturally informed care.** Culturally informed care refers to the ability of health care professionals to work and communicate well with people of different cultures by being respectful of and responsive to health beliefs, practices and linguistic needs. The benefits of providing culturally informed care include increased patient trust, improved care outcomes and patient satisfaction. Culturally informed care allows MultiCare to equitably serve the needs of its patients by taking into account their diverse background.

MultiCare provides Culturally Informed Care 101 and 201 computer-based learning modules, mandatory for all staff systemwide. The computer-based learning training modules equips MultiCare's staff with the tools and techniques for culturally informed care. In-person trainings are also available to MultiCare departments systemwide. These trainings are tailored to fit the needs of the requesting department and include hands-on activities and case studies to more deeply explore concepts introduced in the computer-based learning modules. Training content includes:

- I. **Setting the stage/self-reflection.** Provide staff with the definition of cultural competency and diversity. Encourage staff to reflect on these ideas and the unique challenges faced by diverse patient groups.
- II. **Demographics.** Share information about the populations MultiCare serves within its hospital service areas/counties, including top spoken languages.
- III. **Exploring health disparities:** Explain health disparities and why they exist, including patient, provider and organizational system factors. Highlight disparities faced by minority groups. Define Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services ("CLAS") standards.
- IV. **Stereotypes, biases and assumptions.** Provide definition of stereotypes, biases and assumptions, explaining how they can impact patient care and

staff interactions. Offer activities and scenarios to raise self-awareness and provide tools to overcome stereotypes.

- V. **Cultural considerations.** Describe and identify cultural and generational competence. Provide examples of how cultural/generational and spiritual beliefs may impact a patient's health care experience, specifically for minority and religious groups. Explore the challenges and benefits of working with/providing care for diverse groups. Identify ways for health care providers and staff to build cultural awareness and sensitivity.
- VI. **Cross-cultural communication.** Define cross-cultural communication. Describe language assistance modalities and functions across MultiCare. Offer activities to show the benefits of providing culturally informed care.

**(b) LGBTQ+ affirming care.** LGBTQ+ affirming care means having access to care in safe environment free from discrimination and bias, which are key elements for positive health outcomes for patients. MultiCare is committed to providing quality, compassionate care to all of our patients and creating safe, caring spaces for everyone — including our LGBTQ+ communities. For example, MultiCare has

- Provided gender-neutral bathrooms
- Developed policies and procedures inclusive of LGBTQ+ patients and staff
- Implemented screening for all patients' sexual orientation, gender identity and pronoun use
- Updated our electronic medical records system to be transgender inclusive
- Opened [MultiCare Rockwood Internal Medicine & HIV Critical Clinic](#)
- Expanded access to equity-enhancing, gender-affirming surgery for adults at MultiCare Deaconess Hospital in Spokane.

In addition, MultiCare is engaged in the following work on an ongoing basis:

- Maintaining a [provider directory for LGBTQ+ patients](#) to find providers who have been screened to meet criteria such as additional medical training and endorse providing a level of specialty care for adult patients. Below are a few examples:
  - Gender Affirming Surgery
  - Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV
  - Hormone Therapy

It is important to feel understood by your provider, and MultiCare's goal is to connect each patient with a care team that does just that.

- Providing visual statements of MultiCare's commitment to diversity
- Giving trainings to all front office staff on LGBTQ+ care and ways to create a respectful environment for collecting SOGI-P patient information.
- Participating in the Healthcare Equality Index ("HEI"), and improving annually. HEI is an assessment developed by the Human Rights Campaign for hospitals

to ensure high-quality care for LGBTQ+ patients. MultiCare has participated in the HEI since 2019, and it continues to be recognized for LGBTQ+ care. The [Human Rights Campaign website](#) identifies six MultiCare facilities as “high performers.” MultiCare is committed to continuing to improve its services and systems for our LGBTQ+ communities.

MultiCare understands that various social determinants of health, such as lack of transportation, financial resources and busy schedules, can make accessing care difficult, disproportionately so for low-income communities. Thus, MultiCare strives to bring care to its patients through mobile clinics and other off-site opportunities thereby reducing barrier to care access. For example, MultiCare’s [Mary Bridge Children’s Immunization Clinic](#) serves children and their families in Pierce County by providing:

- Access to free vaccines to children under 19. MultiCare partners with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and local schools and pharmacies to offer comprehensive immunization services.
- A trusted source of information about vaccines & vaccine safety.
- Up-to-date advice about a child’s vaccination schedule from birth through age 18.

MultiCare also maintains a robust [Financial Assistance Program](#) that provides free or heavily-discounted services to eligible patients. Similarly, MultiCare maintains a separate [Medication Assistance Program](#) focused on making medications affordable for its patients through copay cards, financial assistance, grants and manufacturer-supplied free medications. In [2024](#), MultiCare provided \$87,861,000 in charity care services and \$105,000,000 in discounts to uninsured patients.

Please see MultiCare’s [2024 Annual Report](#) for more information regarding progress made in the areas of [Quality & Excellence](#), [Belonging & Growth](#), [Care & Access](#), building [Healthy Communities](#), and [Community Investment](#).

### **Community Engagement**

MultiCare is the pillar of the community it serves because of its industry leading community engagement. MultiCare is committed to addressing social determinants of health, educating the youth about health and nutrition, and improving the health of its patient community through equitable access to nutrition and physical wellness support. From developing healthy habits at a young age with MultiCare’s pediatric wellness programs, to partnering with community leaders in physical activity, MultiCare is focused on growing positive relationships with food and the body that will last a lifetime. For example, MultiCare leads or participates in the following programs:

- (a) **Food Access:** MultiCare works with community organizations to provide food assistance to its patient and their families and/or connect patients to community organizations/programs that support food insecure families. For example:
- **Women, Infants and Children (“WIC”) nutrition services:** As a special supplemental program, MultiCare Mary Bridge Children’s Hospital in Tacoma works with WIC sites across Pierce County to provide nutritious food, breastfeeding support, and tips to keep patients and their families healthy. These services are free of charge to eligible families. [Learn more about Mary Bridge Children’s WIC nutrition services.](#)
  - **Summer meals program:** Every summer, millions of children face food insecurity or lack of access to adequate food when they’re released from school. MultiCare partners with the [USDA Summer Food Service program](#) to provide free meals to children over the summer while they are away from school.
- (b) **M.A.S.H Camp:** High school students receive firsthand, behind-the-scenes health care experience through the MultiCare Academy for Students in Healthcare (M.A.S.H.) Camp. This free, five-day camp is a window into the range of clinical and nonclinical career options available in the hospital setting.
- (c) **ACT! [Actively Changing Together](#):** This 12-week program, provided by Yakima Memorial Hospital, helps children ages 8-14 develop healthy eating habits and become more active while getting parents/caregivers involved in improving their family’s lifestyle, too.
- (d) **Bilingual Kids [Zumba](#)/Zumba Bilingüe para niños:** This program encourages children to stay active through the power and health benefits of dance, provided via Yakima Memorial Hospital.
- (e) **Blue [Zones](#):** In partnership with [Blue Zones](#), Virginia Mason Franciscan Health and Pierce County leaders, MultiCare is tackling the phenomenon of the “[ZIP code effect](#)” to improve neighborhood well-being and boost economic vitality.
- (f) **Diabetes Prevention [Program](#):** The National Diabetes Prevention Program (“DPP”) is an evidence-based program for those at high risk for developing Type 2 diabetes. It includes guidance and group sessions and is offered by MultiCare Yakima Memorial Hospital.
- (g) **Pediatric Wellness [Program](#):** With an emphasis on overall health and well-being, MultiCare’s experts at Mary Bridge Children’s follow the “5 Keys to Feeding Well” and provide tools and resources to support caregivers in developing a positive feeding relationship with their children.
- (h) **Dental Outreach Program:** MultiCare’s Dental Outreach Program addresses persistent gaps in oral health access for underserved populations across Pierce County, particularly Medicaid and Medicare enrollees, the uninsured and underinsured, and individuals facing health-related social needs. Through monthly Dental Resource Days (DRDs), mobile clinics hosted in trusted community spaces, the program delivers emergency and preventive dental care, connects individuals to long-term dental homes via Dentist Link, and provides wraparound services including food access, benefit navigation, and care coordination. These efforts reduce reliance

on emergency departments, promote prevention, and improve overall health outcomes.

- (i) Sound to [Narrows](#): MultiCare hosts an annual running event in the Puget Sound region to raise funds for food security initiatives.
- (j) Bridge to Brunch: MultiCare hosts an annual running event in Inland Northwest that supports the expansion of M.A.S.H. Camp
- (k) YMCA [Partnership](#): MultiCare partners with the YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties for a direct referral program to provide evidence-based support for Type 2 diabetes prevention, childhood and family obesity intervention, Parkinson's, hypertension and arthritis management, fall risk reduction, pregnancy and postpartum support, and cancer survivorship.

As detailed in MultiCare's 2024 [Annual Report](#), MultiCare invests considerable amounts in community programs and services:



### **Supporting Diverse Communities**

MultiCare has a long history of supporting the diverse communities it serves to help them overcome health disparities and work toward healthier futures. For example, MultiCare's [Community Partnership Fund](#) makes grants to not-for-profit 501(c)(3) designated community organizations in the Puget Sound, Inland Northwest and Yakima Valley regions. To qualify, projects must serve Adams, Ferry, Grant, Grays Harbor, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Pierce, Spokane, Stevens, Thurston, Whitman or Yakima counties in Washington state, or Kootenai county in Idaho. Requests for funding are reviewed once a year. Preference is given to applications that:

- Support MultiCare's community health priorities as outlined in the [community health needs assessment](#)
- Address social determinants of health, which are the environmental conditions that contribute to health disparities and inequities



- Provide a significant, measurable community impact
- Align with MultiCare's mission, vision and values

Please see MultiCare's [website](#) for a list of 2024 Community Partnership Fund grant recipients.

### **Responding to Evolving Community Needs**

MultiCare also has a long history of partnering with health care agencies and other health care providers in the region to meet the needs of the community it serves. This deeply rooted spirit of collaboration will help MultiCare's affiliation with Samaritan thrive and meet the care needs of Oregonians for years to come. For example:

- (a) **Increasing Access to Trauma Services:** MultiCare founded the "Trauma Trust" in partnership with Virginia Mason Franciscan Health ("VMFH"), Madigan Army Medical Center, and Pierce County Medical Society to provide trauma care for Pierce County residents. Specifically, after identifying the need for continuous trauma care in Pierce County, Washington, the Trauma Trust was formed as a non-profit 501(c)(3) to support MultiCare and VMFH in providing 24/7 trauma care to Pierce County residents with life-threatening injuries by rotating services between VMFH St. Joseph Medical Center and MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital. Trauma Trust also provided trauma education for professionals and injury prevention education for the public. The organization evolved over time, starting with professional services and management and expanding to include education, prevention, community engagement, and strategic collaboration. Because of the Trauma Trust's collaborative approach to trauma care access in the region, in November 2024, MultiCare and VMGH [announced](#) the expansion of Level II trauma services in Pierce County, which are now offered at St. Joseph Medical Center and MultiCare Tacoma General Hospital, 365 days a year to ensure timely, specialized care for life-threatening injuries in the region. The opening of a Level II trauma center fulfilled the Trauma Trust's mission to ensure the availability of trauma care in Pierce County. As such, the Trauma Trust was closed at the end of 2024.
- (b) **Increasing Access to Behavioral Health Services:** Similarly, MultiCare and VFMH's collaboratively identified the desperate need for additional inpatient psychiatric care to meet the rising demand for behavioral health services in Pierce County and southern King County, Washington. MultiCare and VFMH [determined](#) that one in five adults will experience a mental health issue every year some of those serious enough to require inpatient care. But, with only 2.8 beds per 100,000 residents in our community compared to a national average of 26.1 beds, access to hospital beds dedicated to those with behavioral health needs has been sorely lacking in Pierce County and south King County. This led MultiCare and VFMH to jointly build and operate [the Wellfound Behavioral Health Hospital](#) ("Wellfound") in Tacoma, Washington. This freestanding, two-story hospital has 120 inpatient beds across six nursing units, with a mix of 24 private and 48 semi-private rooms. It

provides short-term voluntary and involuntary admissions for adults with a focus on general psychiatric care for individuals ages 18 and older with common psychiatric conditions such as:

- Anxiety
- Acute depression
- Suicidal tendencies
- Self-injury
- Mania
- Psychosis

Wellfound clinicians treat behavioral health as well as co-existing secondary medical or chemical dependency conditions. Supported by the Coalition for South Sound, a strong community network of elected officials and community leaders led by Congressman Derek Kilmer, Brad Cheney and Bill Weyerhaeuser, Wellfound Behavioral Health Hospital is bringing new hope to members of Pierce County and south King County, Washington, who desperately need this level of care and support.

- (c) **Community Health Needs Assessment (“CHNA”)**: As a nonprofit health system, MultiCare conducts a CHNA every three years to identify the most pressing health needs in its hospital service areas, then develops an implementation strategy for how it will work with the communities it serves to address those needs. This helps MultiCare make decisions on how to help the communities it serves to become (and remain) healthy. In 2024/2025, MultiCare collaborated with Public Health Seattle-King County, Spokane Regional Health District, Yakima Health District, Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to collect and review community health data. For this report, CHNA partners made a deliberate decision to speak with individuals with either direct lived experience or who work with those who do.

Based on this data, available resources, existing programs, and other needs identified by MultiCare, each county selected the top-priority needs for their service areas as the focus of the next three-year implementation period. Those needs are outlined in each county’s CHNA Report. Then, using the needs identified in the county-specific reports described above, MultiCare develops individual implementation strategies for each hospital service area. These strategies represent MultiCare’s commitment to providing the highest quality programs and services to promote health and healing in all the communities it serves.

Although MultiCare’s 2025 CHNAs have yet to be published, please see MultiCare’s [website](#) for its 2022 CHNA reports.