



Community Collaborative Meeting

June 11, 2025

Next meeting: ACH Overview
Wednesday July 9, 2025 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Agenda

- 3:32 Thought Partner Welcome, Land and Labor Acknowledgement
- 3:35 Conversation with Megan Matthews, Director, Office of Equity
- 4:00 DOH Leadership Updates – Jessica Todorovich, Interim Secretary of Health
- 4:30 Onboarding plan for the incoming Secretary of Health, Tawn Thompson and Mulki Mohamed
- 5:00 Meeting Close

[Meeting slides](#)

[Community Collaborative WaPortal Site](#)

Meeting Recap

Opening

The meeting opened with a rendition of “What the World Needs Now is Love” by Tank and the Bangas. Thought Partner Jo Anderson welcomed us to the space, asking people to share what brings them love and laughter. Participants shared personal reflections, including:

- Family time, particularly with children or grandchildren
- Celebrating graduations and life milestones
- Nature and pets
- Acts of advocacy and resilience in underserved communities

One participant stated, “the systems that tried to break me forgot they were building me instead.” Another stated, “love shows up when systems don’t- through presence, advocacy, and listening.”

Conversation with Megan Matthews, Director, Office of Equity

Megan shared her background as a lifelong Washingtonian and long-time public servant. She described the Office of Equity’s role in driving structural changes across multiple state systems, including housing, healthcare, education, and economic opportunity, and the efforts to reduce duplication in agency work. Megan also emphasized intersectionality and monthly coordination with people-focused commissions (LGBTQ+, Veterans, etc.). The office has grown significantly and is now building public-facing dashboards, with one on [homelessness](#) already launched.



Megan also highlighted the upcoming hard launch of [a statewide equity resource hub in July](#). The purpose of this hub is to provide a centralized space for people to discover resources, tools, and information across state agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations, local government, tribes, private sector, and philanthropy. The idea is not that the Office of Equity creates all the resources, but that we serve as a connector, a conduit, to resources and organizations across the state. The hub also includes a webpage for people to let WA State know how they are being impacted by state and/or federal policy action. She asked for input to the hub prior to its hard launch in July so we can ensure this hub is useful for Washingtonians.

Megan shared that she would be happy to attend a future meeting. “Our job is to make government more accessible. You should have access to me.” (See contact info at end of section.)

Participants asked questions related to how the Office of Equity (in partnership with DOH and other agencies):

- Works with the Governor’s office
Technically a Governor affiliate, and works with the Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff most closely but noted that they just finished legislative session and are working to build their team and processes for Washington’s continued success.
- Addresses intersectionality (disability, race, language)
 - Megan acknowledged that the Office of Equity must account for overlapping identities, particularly when systems fail people with disabilities, communities of color, and non-English speakers simultaneously. She affirmed that the Office was committed to facilitating systems change that serves every person in Washington, with a focus on those most impacted by inequity.
- Maintain, improve and fund community partnerships
 - Megan reinforced that the Office of Equity’s role is to build state infrastructure that embeds equity into agency processes. She noted that they’ve been meeting with agencies to make sure they are engaging meaningfully with communities, and that community voice is central to state decision-making. Megan noted that DOH is committed to this, and that they hope to connect with more of the state’s advisory groups and learn lessons from one another.
 - She also mentioned working with the Office of Financial Management to embed equity into agency decision package processes and will be working with them on how agencies can submit joint decision packages to improve efficiency and reduce duplication.
- Maintain clarity and accessibility in contact methods and delivery of info
 - As the Office is still navigating how to make the new website easier to explore, Megan invites individuals to provide feedback as tools are improved
- Help ensure equity in gender-affirming care and services for people with high support needs
 - Megan acknowledged several community-raised equity concerns and encouraged follow-up via email or phone, suggesting openness to continuing the conversation beyond the meeting



Resources

Megan Matthews can be reached at megan.matthews@equity.wa.gov

Dana van Ness (Executive Assistant) can be reached at dana.vanness@equity.wa.gov

General: info@equity.wa.gov

[The RCW that outlines the duties of the Office of Equity](#)

[Office of Equity's Guidance to Agencies: FAQ on Equity and a Washington for All](#)

[Community Engagement Toolkit | Office of Equity](#)

DOH Leadership Updates – Jessica Todorovich, Interim Sec. of Health

Jessica Todorovich, Interim Secretary of Health discussed the Department of Health's current new leader, budget realities and how DOH, our legislators, Governor and other state leaders are standing up for rights of Washingtonians. She started by sharing the background and previous equity leadership of DOH's new Secretary of Health, Dennis Worsham, who will start on July 7th. ([Read more in the letter to partners.](#))

Jessica acknowledged the challenge of significant state budget constraints and that DOH would be continuing to consider cuts through July, as well as anticipating federal updates in the fall. These cuts will impact DOH staff and programs/services as well as Medicaid, which we know have potential to negatively impact communities in Washington. Jessica emphasized the agency's commitment to protecting funding for direct services, as well as funding that goes out the door to Local Health Jurisdictions and Community-Based Organizations.

Jessica said the Governor is giving full support in keeping equity in the forefront, though DOH still wants to make sure that federal money is coming in. DOH has had a few small wins of having grants approved by the new administration. And the Governor is open to creatively ensuring services, working across agencies to streamline and minimize impact for the people of Washington.

Based on questions from Collaborative members, Jessica previewed new efforts to improve service delivery, including streamlining contracting and grant processes for our partners, improving communication with the community, and centering accessibility and equity in public health infrastructure. She also talked about the levers that we can use to ensure what we expect and need of health care including licensing, workforce and closer partnership with HCA and DSHS. She also addressed how we can put protections in place for Washingtonians, or anybody who seeks treatment in Washington. Jessica said she was encouraged by how leaders in the state are coming together and that we have systems in place to support and protect people.

Finally, Jessica affirmed a commitment to transparent, community-guided leadership and encouraged honest feedback from Community Collaborative members. Collaborative members shared their gratitude, including:



“Thank you Jessica for those words of comfort our community needs it. We will definitely pass along what you shared today. Thank you for all the support. Special thanks goes to Governor Ferguson for his unwavering commitment, courage and leadership.”

Onboarding Plan for the Incoming Secretary of Health

Two community Thought Partners, Mulki Mohamed and Tawn Thompson, presented key elements of the onboarding plan developed by Thought Partners for incoming Secretary of Health Dennis Worsham. The plan builds on months of community dialogue and reflects a collective vision for equitable public health leadership in Washington State. It emphasizes the need for Secretary Worsham to establish long-term, trust-based relationships with communities, not as a checkbox, but as a core operating principle.

The plan calls for community input at all levels of decision-making, and proposes the creation of a formal, ongoing advisory structure that facilitates regular engagement between DOH leadership and community representatives. To ensure the plan is not symbolic, one idea shared during the meeting was to develop a "report card" or public accountability tool to track the Secretary's progress on commitments outlined in the onboarding plan.

Participants expressed consensus that the new Secretary show up courageously in partnership with communities and must lead with:

- Equity, by “prioritizing efforts that truly advance racial equity and build trust in communities that have been historically underserved or harmed by health systems”;
- Accountability, through measurable, transparent commitments and follow-through;
- Accessibility, by ensuring DOH programs, systems, and communications are inclusive and community-informed, As one member said “I would like for the new Secretary to not only be like one of us as a leader, but also to mandate through policy making and example that all of DOH's services be accessible to everyone”;
- Science, by grounding decisions in evidence while being responsive to community context.

One Collaborative member said: “We need leadership that’s transparent, data-driven, and courageous enough to speak hard truths, even when it’s uncomfortable. Our health depends on it.”

The onboarding framework is intended not only as an orientation tool for the new Secretary, but as a community-informed guide for ongoing accountability and partnership between DOH and the communities it serves.

The Onboarding plan will be shared with Community Collaborative once it has been shared with the incoming Secretary.



Community Share-Outs

- Van Kuno invited everyone to attend the World Refugee Day event at the WSU - Everett Campus on June 13th, with remarks by the incoming secretary of Health.
- The [WA-CIEP](#) (Washington Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning) invites new attendees.
- Participants mentioned a [CHW Core Competency Course](#) that will be launched in July 2025. Registration closes on the 23rd of the month before the course starts.

The session ended with reminders about upcoming events, including Juneteenth (June 19th) and World Refugee Day (June 20th).

Closing Quote

Jo closed with this quote from Desmond Tutu

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

Note: We are working to find balance in the benefits and costs associated with translation. If you would like to share this or any part of our materials with an audience in another language, please email Community.Collaborative@doh.wa.gov and we will work with you to translate into the language(s) needed.

Estamos trabajando para encontrar un equilibrio entre los beneficios y costos asociados con la traducción. Si desea compartir esto o alguna parte de nuestros materiales con una audiencia en otro idioma, por favor envíe un correo electrónico a Community.Collaborative@doh.wa.gov y trabajaremos con juntos con usted para traducir al idioma o idiomas necesarios.