

Health Engagement Hubs

Overview

Health Engagement Hubs (HEH) are designed as an all-in-one location for low-barrier services, including medical, harm reduction, and social services, for people who use drugs. This model is informed by the expressed needs/interests of participants at Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) who are not well served by the current healthcare system and experience significant health disparities.

This recommendation derived from efforts to support the [State Opioid and Overdose Response Plan \(SOORP\)](#) and was further developed as a formal recommendation by the Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee (SURSAC). The Washington Health Care Authority (HCA) was directed by the legislature to implement two pilot sites by August 2024 and make recommendations for expansion by August 2026.

HEH programming

Supporting research and models

This program draws primarily from a State Opioid and Overdose Response Plan (SOORP) proposal authored by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). HEH builds upon existing models such as those developed in [New York State](#), the Seattle-based [HIV MAX Clinic](#) and [the SHE Clinic](#), as well as work coming from the Center for Community-Engaged Drug Education, Epidemiology, and Research (CEDEER) at the UW Addictions, Drug, & Alcohol Institute (ADAI) and ADAI's Meds First model.

Low-barrier treatment models that inform the development of HEH are endorsed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a pillar of harm reduction. These models are backed by evidence of improved health outcomes for people who use drugs and engage in low-barrier models such as SSPs.¹

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/harm-reduction-framework.pdf>
82-0494 (10/23)

Eligibility requirements

For the pilot program, HCA, in partnership with DOH, will award funding to two sites: one urban and one rural. Pilot sites must demonstrate the following:

- The ability to provide low-barrier physical and behavioral healthcare
- The ability to provide harm reduction supplies
- The ability to provide participant-centered care coordination

Authority

Second Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill (2E2SSB) 5536(26); Laws of 2023, codified as [RCW 71.24.112](#) establishes authority for HEH

The effort to implement, evaluate, and make recommendations for expansion is led by HCA and DOH.

Budget

\$4,000,000 from the opioid abatement settlement account for State Fiscal Years 2024-2025

People served

This program is intended to be a culturally responsive, low-barrier approach to improve the health of people who use drugs, informed by input from people who use drugs.

Each HEH location will serve people over 18 years of age with primary care, including specific attention to infectious diseases, wound care, reproductive health, overdose education and naloxone distribution, and access to medications for opioid use disorder. Additionally, care coordination and access to harm reduction supplies will be provided.

Key partners

Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and University of Washington ADAI are key partners.

Oversight

HCA's Adult SUD Section within in the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery oversees the development of the pilot Health Engagement Hub

program. This section will manage contracts for the two pilot sites.

For more information

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