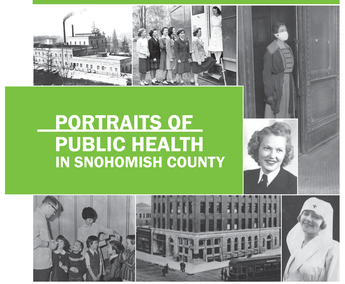
SNOHOMISH HEALTH DISTRICT
1959–2019



PORTRAITS OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

1889: A state Board of Health is established in the Washington State Constitution. They provide recommendations to the Governor and Legislature to improve health, as well as regulating many health activities.

1903: State law creates county health officers and boards of health. Larger cities, or "cities of first class" such as Everett, have their own health officers.

1907: State law requires that all cities and towns have a legally qualified physician serve as health officer. In Snohomish County, the list includes Dr. W.F. Oliver in Arlington, Dr. Harry Hall in Edmonds, Dr. Frank Chappell in Granite Falls, Dr. C.E. Munn in Marysville, Dr. I.J. Pond in Monroe, Dr. D. McEacheran in Stanwood, Dr. Thos. Musgrove in Sultan, and Dr. E.A. Stafford in Snohomish.

Dr. Frank Chappell, Granite Falls

1911: Yakima County in Washington is one of the first in the nation to have a county public health unit. The new unit has success in curbing typhoid fever through sanitation and inspires other counties to form their own public health agencies.

1913: Mrs. Lavinia Gordon becomes the first public health nurse for Snohomish County. Her focus is tuberculosis control. The county nurse service was established through joint efforts of the Snohomish County Commissioners and Snohomish County Anti-Tuberculosis League.

1918: The Spanish Influenza epidemic strikes the nation in the fall. Like many cities, Everett is hit hard. On Oct. 8, the Everett Health Board bans all public gatherings, including school and church. On Nov. 4, the state Board of Health issues a requirement that all people wear gauze masks in public.

Masked elevator attendant during flu pandemic 1918

1920: A second nurse, Miss Frances Harcus, joins Lavinia Gordon. She is assigned to Snohomish and Island counties, and funded partially by Snohomish County and the American Red Cross. The nurses split the county in half, north and south.

Miss Frances Harcus One of our first county nurses

1923: The Snohomish County Health Department is officially created.

1934: Both nurses are now employees of the County Health Department. They have a small office on the first floor of the old detention home facing Wall Street, adjacent to the courthouse. They will work together for decades, running the mobile x-ray clinic, doing skin tests and providing support at the Aldercrest Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Snohomish.

1938: The County Health Department expands to include a public health director, a sanitarian and four more nurses.

1940-50s: The city of Everett and Snohomish County health departments exchange some services. The county provides x-rays for tuberculosis control. The city has a milk sanitarian to inspect dairies and a part-time veterinarian to inspect slaughterhouses.

Milk sanitarians inspected dairies throughout the county

1946: The Everett City Jail and Providence Hospital are quarantined from April until late May due to a deadly smallpox outbreak. Vaccination stations are set up around Everett, with an isolation ward at Paine Field.

1949: An outbreak of polio hits Everett. Providence and Red Cross nurses care for several dozen patients, with support from the National Polio Foundation.

Nurses instructed on using respirator for polio patients

1955: A supervisor and one field sanitarian make up the environmental health team. There is no building code, plumbing code, septic tank regulations, solid waste regulations, or sanitary code.

1956: More sanitarians are added to the department and the sanitation division moves to a remodeled house at 2935 Rockefeller.

1957: The County Health Department adopts a sanitary code. It is the first of its kind in the state.

1958: The department consists of the health officer, 12 public health nurses, five sanitarians, five clerical staff, a clinic nurse, a public health social worker, a dental hygienist, a part-time tuberculosis consultant and a part-time pediatrician.

1958: The old detention home is to be demolished, so nurses and other staff relocate to an old apartment building off Rockefeller. The building will serve as the main office for nearly a decade.

1958: The Board of County Commissioners passes a resolution on Nov. 24 to form the Snohomish Health District, merging the Snohomish County and Everett health departments into a new entity.

Home for nurses and other staff for nearly a decade

OUR EARLY YEARS

1959: On the first day of the new year, the Snohomish Health District is officially formed. The first health officer for the new District is Dr. Roger Knipe.

Dr. Roger Knipe First health officer for new District

1959: A mobile x-ray unit is converted into a mobile dental hygiene unit to bring dental services to preschool children.

1959: District staff begin meeting with Snohomish County and the Emander Community Club to work on plans for turning the Emander Road landfill into a park (now McCollum Pioneer Park).

1960: The city of Everett participates in an air sampling program to measure dust and smoke particles. The Health District helps install and maintain an air sampling machine on the roof of the County's agriculture building.

1961: The District laboratory moves from Everett City Hall to the Everett sewage lagoon. The lab tests samples from the lagoon as well as other routine lab work.

1962: Dr. Knipe dies of complications following an open heart surgery. The District closes during memorial services.

1963: Dr. Clifford Anderson is hired as the new health officer, after months of interim officers.

1963: The District starts a program to license sewage disposal designers.

1964: Plans for a south county immunization clinic are finished. The clinic is housed in a portable building at Stevens Memorial Hospital (now Swedish Edmonds).

1966: The Snohomish Health District becomes the first local health agency in the state to form a city-county cooperative for funding. Eleven of 18 cities and towns agree to pay 50 cents per capita for public health services.

1966: The District moves to offices on the first floor of the newly finished addition to the county courthouse.

1968: With a state grant and in partnership with the University of Washington, the District establishes the first birth control clinic in the county in Mountlake Terrace.

1970: Dr. Claris Hyatt is hired as health officer.

Dr. Claris Hyatt health officer

1971: The District joins a national immunization campaign and vaccinates more than 33,000 children against Rubella. The goal is to decrease birth defects.

1972: The first Health District satellite office opens in Lynnwood, on Scriber Lake Road. It offers x-rays, immunizations and other services.

1974: A second satellite office opens, this one in Sultan.

1975: The District begins managing Snohomish County's detoxification facility at Paine Field.

Late 1970s: Lack of funding problems halt plans to open a satellite office in the northern part of the county.

1978: The last year Snohomish County allocates funds to the District on the basis of public health and tuberculosis millages. Without a dedicated millage – a portion of the county property tax levy – the District begins seeking additional support from the county and cities.

1980: Snohomish County's first major sanitary landfill opens in Cathcart. Dr. Hyatt presents the operating permit from the Health District.

1984: The Health District remains spread across multiple buildings. The vital statistics team works from the SnoCope Credit Union building on Rockefeller.

1985: Deputy Administrator David Stockton retires after nearly 30 years. He is the only remaining employee who had been with the agency since before the county and city health departments joined.

1986: Dr. Ward Hinds is chosen as the new health officer after Dr. Hyatt retires.

Dr. Ward Hinds health officer

1988: District officials begin looking at options to move all 125 employees into one building.

1991: The District settles into its new Everett headquarters at 3020 Rucker Ave. The District bought the building for $5.1 million and leases office space to multiple tenants, including the FBI and IRS.

New Everett headquarters purchased for $5.1 million

1997: The District charter is amended so that the Board of Health is composed of 15 members. The Board includes all five Snohomish County Council members and 10 representatives from cities, among them mayors and city council members. The Board of Health is the largest of any local health agency in the state.

Dr. Gary Goldbaum health officer

2007: Dr. Gary Goldbaum is hired as the new health officer. He replaces Dr. Hinds, the longest serving officer to date.

2009: More than 570 cases of Swine Flu (H1N1) are confirmed in Washington. Snohomish and King counties have the highest rates. The Health District helps distribute vaccines for those at highest risk, and nearly 26,000 people are vaccinated over the course of three days.

The Health District helps to distribute vaccines at a drive-thru clinic, Swine Flu 2009

2009: The District completes its first Community Health Assessment, looking closely at the top health-related issues in Snohomish County.

2013: The District completes its second Community Health Assessment, which looks at data on 80 health indicators. The top issues in Snohomish County are identified as youth physical abuse, suicide, and obesity.

2014: District staff help respond to the deadly SR 530 mudslide near Oso, which killed 43 people in a rural community in north Snohomish County. Public health work during the response includes supporting the medical examiner's office, assessing environmental health concerns such as water contamination, and ensuring responders' safety, hygiene and decontamination.

District staff help respond to the deadly Oso mudslide, 2014

2014: The District releases its Community Health Improvement Plan, featuring objectives and strategies for combating youth physical abuse, suicide, and obesity.

2015: Clarification of the statewide Smoking in Public Places law is added to the Snohomish Health District Code, stating that the law applies to cigarettes, marijuana and hookah. Snohomish County becomes the fifth county in the state to also prohibit vaping in public.

2016: Board of Health becomes second in the state and eighth in the nation to adopt a pharmaceutical stewardship ordinance, requiring manufacturers and distributors to pay for the safe and secure disposal of unwanted medicines.

2016: Staff respond to multiple cases of Zika in the County, as well as an E. coli outbreak involving a child care facility.

2016: The Health District approaches the cities and towns seeking to reinstate per capita contributions for public health. The County and 13 of 20 cities and towns agree to contribute $0.50 to $2.00 per resident to the District in 2017.

2017: Dr. Gary Goldbaum retires as health officer. District leadership is restructured to create an Administrator position, responsible for overseeing agency operations and separate from the Health Officer.

2017: The Health District conducts a first-of-its-kind survey during one week to capture the number of opioid overdoses. During the seven-day survey in July, 37 people overdosed. Three died.

2017: Jeff Ketchel is appointed as the agency's first Administrator.

Jeff Ketchel administrator

2017: Dr. Mark Beatty is hired as health officer, replacing Dr. Goldbaum.

Dr. Mark Beatty health officer

2017: The Snohomish Health District participates in a collaborative effort with the Snohomish County executive, council and sheriff's office to address the opioid epidemic. The partners form the Opioid Response Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group.

SNOHOMISH OVERDOSE PREVENTION
A COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER TO STOP SNOHOMISH COUNTY'S OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Snohomish Overdose Prevention website

2018: The District and MAC group conduct a second point-in-time count: 57 overdoses in seven days, two fatal. Dr. Beatty begins work on an innovative in-depth study to determine how many people in the county are misusing opioids or suffering from opioid use disorder.

2019: The Snohomish Health District has 135 employees, totaling 125.9 full-time positions. The headquarters remains at 3020 Rucker Avenue in Everett, and a Lynnwood office offers WIC and First Steps services.

Programs include communicable disease surveillance and response; tuberculosis and refugee health; healthy communities; vaccine preventable disease; HIV/STDs; safe environments; child care outreach; maternal child health; vital records; land use; food safety; emergency preparedness and response; and supporting capabilities like finance, human resources, communications, health policy, and customer service.