The issue and the opportunity

- Potentially preventable hospitalizations (PPH) occur when a hospital admits someone for a problem primary or urgent care could have resolved.
- PPH often stem from chronic conditions (like diabetes or heart disease) or communicable diseases (like flu or pneumonia).
- Regular healthcare visits and immunization can prevent many PPH. A 2017 Office of Financial Management report found Pierce County has the state’s highest PPH rates.
- The 27th, 28th, and 29th legislative districts have the highest rates of PPH in Pierce County.
- Each year, 400 heart failure hospitalizations of people 40–64 years old occur in 8 zip codes in the 27th, 28th, and 29th legislative districts. That’s 100 more hospitalizations than expected based on Pierce County rates.¹
- Each 2-day hospital stay in Pierce County for moderate heart failure costs $5,000, plus the cost for room, board, and ambulance transfers.²

See data notes on the back of this page.

We’re making a difference

- Collaborated with the PPH Improving Heart Failure (IHF) Committee to update and distribute a Heart Failure Referral Guide to streamline referrals within partner organizations.
- Created a customized Heart Failure Referral Guide for Community Health Workers to use with patients with diagnosed or suspected heart failure.
- Began to investigate the implications of common comorbidities in people with heart failure (like worse health outcomes, greater clinical complexity, and increased healthcare costs).
- Provided technical support to 8 local people completing Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist training.
- Convened the Tobacco Treatment Network, a team of tobacco cessation leads from the Health Department, Public Health - Seattle & King County, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, and Kaiser.
- Educated more than 100 healthcare and social service providers on respiratory viruses and vaccine recommendations.
- Worked with the Health Department’s Immunization program to support 21 vaccine clinics across 98404, 98408, and 98409.

What’s next

- Advocate to add 98499 into the PPH focus area.
- Launch nicotine cessation services with Tobacco Treatment Network.
- Review Ask, Advise, Refer provider intervention strategies.
- Expand workgroups to include congestive heart failure and diabetes.
- Explore the link between mental health conditions and PPH.
- Evaluate the potential costs of different types of PPH across various Pierce County neighborhoods to better understand the effects of preventing PPH.

What you can do

- Invest $168,750 to expand our focus area to include 98499.
- Support policies that change systems and bring resources into these communities and improve health outcomes.

To learn more, email Bonnie Corns at bcorns@tpchd.org or visit tpchd.org/pph
1. The number of excess heart failure hospitalizations in a calendar year is a conservative estimate of the minimum based on a comparison of the All Payers Claims Database (APCD) and Comprehensive Hospital Abstract Reporting System (CHARS) datasets. To calculate it, we took the countywide rate and applied it to the 8-zip code area. We then subtracted that expected value from the observed number. We did not adjust for age or comorbidities.

2. We assumed an average heart failure hospitalization would be 2 days for moderately severe illness. We reviewed charged costs from the APCD and the standard charges for Medicare. We assumed insurance or the client would likely pay 30% of the charged costs. This is a conservative estimate compared to 39% reported in *The Dramatic Difference: What A Hospital Charges Vs. What Medicare Pays*. We present the lowest value calculated.