

Additional Meeting

Materials

BOARD OF HEALTH

July 18, 2024



**King County**  
**King County Board of Health**  
**Director's Report**

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### **Regional action on gun violence**

On July 10 King County Executive Dow Constantine joined Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell and community leaders to launch 100 Days of Action against gun violence. This initiative, which comes as the U.S. surgeon general declared gun violence a national public health crisis, will expand community resources and promote safe gun storage.

King County is investing \$1.6 million over the next 100 days, including \$1 million to expand community-led violence intervention programs and \$250,000 to support victims and families impacted by gun violence through the Harborview Medical Center hospital-based intervention program.

The launch is bolstered by Mayor Harrell's recently announced investments in youth mental health and safety. This includes \$10 million in funding for a coordinated approach to youth mental health and safety resources for students and families, of which \$2.4 million will be allocated to expand access to telehealth services and \$2 million for violence prevention, intervention and interruption services. Included in the \$10 million is \$5.6 million to add full-time mental health counselors in all 29 school-based health centers beginning in January 2025 to expand in-person therapy access and explore scaling up solutions in partnership with Public Health – Seattle & King County.

Last month, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a landmark advisory declaring gun violence a national public health crisis. To face this emergency and build on the City of Seattle's investments, Public Health – Seattle & King County is allocating \$1.6 million for 100 Days of Action against gun violence.

In addition to expanding community programs and resources for victims, King County will:

- Increase the distribution of free gun lockboxes to safely store firearms.
- Expand the Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention's community resource guide and create a new online portal to help organizations access information.
- Launch a public awareness campaign on gun violence prevention.
- Work with the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform to study gun violence.
- Develop a list of policy and budget priorities that advance gun violence prevention work during the Washington State Legislature's 2025 Legislative Session.
- Outline next steps following the 100 Days of Action initiative.

In alignment with King County's 100 Days of Action, the City of Seattle will:

- Expand safe passage initiatives for young people.
- Provide immediate wrap-around services for young people at highest risk of being directly impacted by violence.

- Convene school personnel, city and county partners, violence interruption and intervention providers and other stakeholders to develop a plan to reduce gun violence for the 2024–2025 school year.
- Develop an aggressive state legislative agenda to reduce gun violence in partnership with King County and state legislators.

Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the U.S., surpassing car crashes, cancer and drug overdoses.

Gun violence disproportionately impacts Black and Brown communities. In King County, over half of firearm victims in 2023 were Black men and boys, despite the Black population making up only 7.2% of the county population.

During last month’s State of County Address, Executive Constantine called for a 100-day intensive effort against gun violence, directing the newly established Regional Office of Gun Violence Prevention to coordinate this work in collaboration with the City of Seattle, local community organizations and national experts.

100 Days of Action is modeled after similar short-term, intensive gun violence prevention efforts across the country that have had successful outcomes, including the City of Boston’s annual Summer Safety Plan.

Following 100 Days of Action, King County will review the initiative to evaluate its impacts and guide future gun violence prevention work.

Read the full media release online: [King County, City of Seattle and community leaders unite for 100 Days of Action against gun violence | by Dow Constantine | KingCounty | Jul, 2024 | Medium](#)

### **Public Health Strategic Plan Launch Event**

On July 16 nearly 100 people, including Board Chair Mosqueda and Boardmembers Gudgel, Archiopoli and de Castro, joined Public Health – Seattle & King County to celebrate the launch of our new 5-year [strategic plan](#) to deliver on Public Health’s vision for health, well-being, and racial equity for everyone in King County.

The plan was developed with participation from the Board of Health, nearly 100 community and public health system partners and hundreds of staff and informed by what we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, King County’s commitment to equity, and [declaration of racism as a public health crisis](#).

Building on a fundamental commitment to equity and anti-racism, the plan includes five priority areas:

- Climate and Health
- Emerging Threats to Community Health and Wellbeing
- Information, Impact, and Innovation
- Partnerships
- Workforce and Infrastructure

For accountability, each priority area includes goals, objectives, actions, and measures that will help community and staff track progress.

Several themes emerge from the plan, reflecting a shared community and Public Health commitment to protecting and improving everyone's health and well-being:

- **Health inequities:** While King County residents have some of the best health outcomes in the country, this is not shared equally. The new strategic plan is squarely focused on improving health outcomes for all through eliminating health inequities across King County communities. It will center equity and anti-racism in program planning and execution, incorporate community voices in program decision-making, and use data to prioritize efforts in communities with the largest health inequities, among other strategies.
- **Acute health threats:** The plan calls out specific priorities around acute threats to the community. These priorities include climate and health, gun violence prevention, overdose prevention, health for people experiencing homelessness, and community well-being and youth behavioral health.
- **Policy, community engagement, and partnerships:** The plan also addresses policy development; equitable communications; community, institutional and academic partnerships, particularly among organizations that serve Black, Indigenous and People of Color; and underscores the need to modernize data systems and community contracting, among other services and programs.
- **A stronger health department:** We also seek to become stronger as a public health department by supporting our current outstanding workforce and the workforce of the future; and preparing to respond to future public health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.

To learn more about Public Health's strategic plan visit the [Strategic Plan website](#).

### **New Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy**

Executive Dow Constantine and local partners will announce on July 18 a new countywide strategic strategy to prepare for and respond to the impacts of extreme heat across King County.

Development of the Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy began in earnest two years ago following the unprecedented heat wave in 2021 that killed over 30 people in King County, marking the deadliest climate-related disaster in the region's history.

The strategy includes 20 immediate and long-term actions that range from increasing urban tree canopy and expanding access to parks and green space, to creating community cooling locations, making schools more resilient to heat, updating building codes and more.

We will share with Board of Health members a link to more information when it's available.

### **Heat related illness, and advice from Public Health and the CDC**

Hot days can worsen health conditions and be difficult to endure. During periods of extreme heat, Public Health, and the County more widely, monitors the weather. Public Health's heat health and safety information with translations is available online: [Hot weather preparedness - King County, Washington](#)

For people who are experiencing homelessness, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority has activated its severe weather protocols. Information on available cooling centers and resources is available here: [Severe Weather Response - KCRHA](#)

When it's hot outside, it can be miserable inside if you don't have air conditioning or can't open your windows. The Public Health Insider blog offers cooling tips for when it feels like an oven in your home: [No AC? Can't open your windows? Here's how to stay cool. – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control offers a HeatRisk tracking map. Enter your ZIP code for local information and suggested actions to protect your health: [HeatRisk | Tracking | NCEH | CDC](#)

For emergency updates during hot weather, please visit: [KCEmergency.com](#)

### **Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality**

One key lesson we've learned over the last few years is the importance of healthy indoor air – not just during COVID, but all the time! Good indoor air quality supports healthy hearts, brains, and lungs and reduces the risk of spreading illness.

We can all help improve indoor air quality. If you own or operate a business, childcare, adult family home, faith-based organization, or other area where people gather inside, there's lots you can do to keep everyone safe. Public Health has a training video on healthy indoor air practices. It has helpful tips and tricks for improving indoor air in your facility: [Learn how to improve indoor air quality with new training video – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)

As wildfire season gets underway, find information online about current outdoor air quality, burn bans and asthma resources: [Air quality - King County, Washington](#)

### **COVID-19 cases**

As Dr. Eric Chow, Chief of Communicable Disease for Public Health, shares in the Public Health Insider, "Since May, we've seen a higher levels of COVID-19 across our metrics including wastewater, emergency department visits, and hospitalizations. This is coming after several months of decreased COVID-19 activity. While COVID-19 may not be on people's radar right now, it hasn't gone away. I am concerned about the increased COVID-19 activity we are seeing as people, especially those who are older or have chronic conditions, can get very sick. We also know we are at risk for long COVID and steps we can take in our lives can continue to reduce the chance of these complications developing."

I encourage you to read this excellent interview with Dr. Chow: [COVID-19 is rising locally: A Q&A with Dr. Chow on practical steps – PUBLIC HEALTH INSIDER](#)

As of July 17, COVID-19 diagnosed emergency department visits decreased in the last week. Public Health's respiratory virus data dashboards are updated on Wednesdays: [Respiratory virus data dashboards: COVID-19, Influenza, and RSV - King County, Washington](#)

### **H5N1 bird flu prevention**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control reports that H5N1 bird flu is widespread in wild birds around the world and is causing outbreaks in the United States in poultry and dairy cows. To date, there have been four human cases associated with U.S. dairy cows, and five human cases associated with U.S. poultry.

The CDC reports the current risk to public health is low, particularly because H5N1 hasn't shown the ability so far to transmit easily from person to person. They are monitoring people with animal exposures and are using influenza surveillance systems to monitor H5N1 activity in people.

Bird flu has been found in wild birds and other animals in King County but not in pets, dairy cows or people. Public Health recommends wearing personal protective equipment if you have direct or close (within six feet) contact with sick or dead wild and domesticated animals, their poop, or are in environments where there are sick or dead animals.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture is the lead on communicating with farms and their workers, whom they recommend should wear personal protective equipment when working with animals or in their environments.

More information from the CDC: [H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation | Bird Flu | CDC](#)