



YAKIMA
Neighborhood
Health



Northwest
Regional
Primary Care
Association

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services

The Opportunity Landscape

For half a century, [Yakima Neighborhood Health Services \(YNHS\)](#) has been a beacon of health and well-being in central Washington offering comprehensive, wraparound services to Yakima and its neighboring communities. Nestled in Yakima County, YNHS operates nine clinics across three cities, serving over 23,000 patients with more than 90,000 visits annually. Its unwavering commitment to shared stewardship and community engagement has fueled its mission to address both critical health needs and long-term health and well-being in the community.

YNHS provides a diverse array of services to cater to the unique needs of the community. These include primary medical care, dental care, behavioral health services, and three full-service pharmacies. The health center also offers specialized care for adults with chronic illnesses, pediatrics, reproductive health, and vision care. Additionally, YNHS supports the community through programs such as Medical Nutrition Therapy, Women, Infant, and Children's Support Services, and transportation and mobile clinic services.

The health center also prioritizes community engagement as a pillar of its stewardship. This is evident in [one of the health center's flagship programs](#), centered around supporting the health needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. The program was formed in 2004 after a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) revealed a significant proportion of unhoused individuals in Yakima County. YNHS immediately began to form efforts to reduce the health effects of homelessness.



YNHS Neighborhood Apartments – Washington State, Yakima County

Addressing Social Needs Through the Lens of Vital Conditions

The Vital Conditions for Health & Well-being framework names humane housing as a vital condition and underscores the necessity of safe, stable, and affordable housing for both individual and community well-being. Housing is a fundamental need that offers shelter and security, protecting people from environmental hazards and adverse weather. It also plays a crucial role in physical and mental health and well-being by providing a stable environment where individuals can rest, recover, and thrive. Quality housing supports economic stability, educational opportunities, and social connections, forming the foundation for a healthy life. Ensuring everyone has access to adequate housing is essential for building strong, resilient communities.

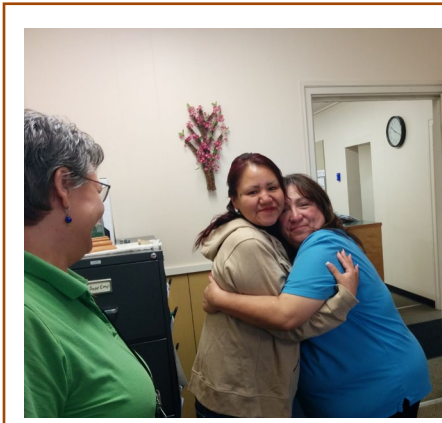


Vital Condition Highlight: Humane Housing

Since 2004, YNHS has made significant strides in addressing the findings of the Community Health Needs Assessment, recognizing housing as one of the county's most critical health needs. Through various programs and policies, the health center has emphasized that many health needs cannot be met without humane, permanent supportive housing.

Yakima Neighborhood Health is addressing homelessness through its first federally funded program, a comprehensive initiative designed to provide meaningful support. This includes permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness, the "Neighborhood Connections" program which offers vital case management, addresses acute needs, and medical respite care for individuals needing a safe space when hospitalization isn't required and returning outside isn't an option. The wraparound support model aims to address the complete health needs of Yakima residents. The team pays special attention to the coordination and connection points of various services because, as CEO Rhonda Hauff says, "the vulnerability is always in the hand-off."

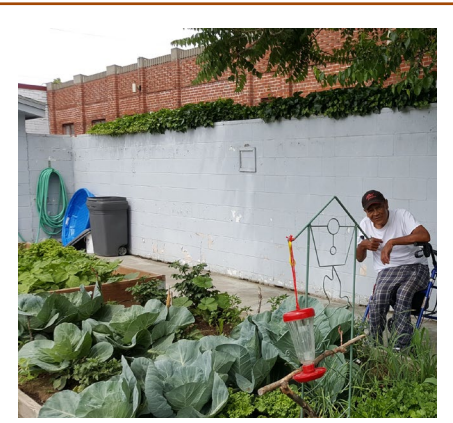
YNHS also places a strong emphasis on hearing directly from those with lived experiences of homelessness. The health center's board includes individuals who have experienced homelessness, and staff actively engage with the community through focus groups and other outreach several times a year. Additionally, as a Coordinated Entry Access Point in Yakima County, the team can refer unhoused individuals to the appropriate providers and services, regardless of their location.



Community health worker embracing patient in lobby of health center.



Members of "Neighborhood Connections" preparing for outdoor wellness hour.



Member of "Neighborhood Connections" program tending to the onsite community garden.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Through more comprehensive needs assessments, YNHS has collaborated with local organizations like United Way of Central Washington and Yakima County to gather valuable insights. However, the process of engaging with the community requires continuous effort and adaptation. Focus groups led by board members are typically conducted 2-3 times a year to ensure that the community's needs are accurately understood and met. This

Vital Condition Highlight: Humane Housing



iterative approach highlights the importance of ongoing community involvement and the need for flexibility in addressing evolving needs.

Reflecting on their 50-year journey, YNHS' team has learned valuable lessons from their early operations, which were marked by financial constraints and reliance on local support. For the first 30 years of its existence, YNHS operated without federal funding, mirroring the financial struggles of its patients. This period underscored the resilience and commitment of the organization to serve the community despite limited resources. Building relationships with unhoused individuals and supporting them to seek healthcare at clinics rather than emergency rooms was a crucial step in improving access to care. Lesson Learned: Perseverance, community collaboration, and innovative outreach strategies are essential in overcoming financial constraints and addressing complex health and housing challenges.

Sustainability Beyond Today and the Program's Vision for Tomorrow

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS) demonstrates its commitment to long-term community health and well-being through innovative and sustainable approaches. A key example is its strategic collaboration with the Yakima Housing Authority at [Chuck Austin Place](#). This onsite partnership integrates vital medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare services within a Permanent Supportive Housing program that serves 41 homeless Veterans and their families. The project's success is amplified by the collaborative financial support of numerous local, state, and federal entities, ensuring access to both stable housing and comprehensive support.

YNHS' commitment to combatting homelessness and providing long-term solutions for individuals experiencing homelessness is a prime example of investing in the vital conditions for health and well-being. The health center is a blueprint for other organizations that are dedicated to elevating health and well-being in their own communities, and it should be celebrated as a triumph in community care. YNHS has shown that addressing housing issues is both a social responsibility and a vital component of effective health care. The team's dedication to listening to and acting on the needs of their community members has enabled them to create a more holistic and impactful health care system.