

Tribal Housing and Wraparound Services Workgroup

July 22, 2025
Meeting Minutes

**Co-Chairs: Monika Tonasket, Secretary, Spokane Tribe of Indians;
Al Andy, Department of Commerce;
Lori Pfingst, Department of Social and Health Services**

Attendees: Lorraine Barnette, SUDP, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation; Neeka Somday, Policy Analyst, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Zekkethal Val Vargas-Thomas, Project Coordinator, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; Stephen Kutz, Councilmember, Cowlitz Indian Tribe; Cheryl Sanders, Secretary, Lummi Nation; Ashley Howard, Director of Tribal Wrap Around Department, Puyallup Tribe of Indians; Mona Miller, Director of Reentry and Community Family Services, Puyallup Tribe of Indians; Michelle Ruiz, Community Family Services, Puyallup Tribe of Indians; Jessica Williams, Program Coordinator for Community Family Services, Puyallup Tribe of Indians; Teri Nelson, Executive Director of Housing Services, Tulalip Tribes; Heather Spencer, Village of Hope Occupancy Specialist, Tulalip Tribes; Christa McAllister, Case Manager, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe; Laura Kluever, Enhanced Tribal Assister, American Indian Health Commission (AIHC); Lisa Rey Thomas, AIHC and Washington State University; Mystique Hurtado, Administrative/Communications Manager, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs; Al Andy, Interim Director of Office of Tribal Relations, Department of Commerce; Shannel Squally-Janzen, Tribal Prevention Service Specialist, Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF); Kathy Pierre, ESJ Strategist for Tribal Relations, Department of Health (DOH); Lisa Yanagida, Chief of Staff, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); Tim Collins, Senior Director, Office of Indian Policy (OIP), DSHS; Leah Muasau, Tribal Contracts Coordinator, OIP, DSHS; Sher Stecher, Tribal Relations Manager, OIP, DSHS; Brenda Francis-Thomas, Regional Manager, OIP, DSHS; Lori Pfingst, Senior Director, DSHS Economic Justice Alliance; Livey Beha, Senior Program Manager, DSHS Economic Justice Alliance; Lisa Pemberton, Tribal Liaison Administrator, DSHS Home and Community Living Administration; Theresa Slusher, Housing Stability Manager, DSHS Economic Services Administration; Marcy Jordan, Local Planning Areas Program Manager, DSHS Community Services Division; Raina Peone, Medical Assistance Program Specialist, Health Care Authority (HCA); Melissa Thoemke, Behavioral Health Communications Manager, HCA; Sarah Cook-Lalari, Program Specialist, HCA; Anne Paulsen, SOR Communications Consultant, HCA; Lonni Rickard, Communications Consultant, HCA; Elizabeth Kirk, Housing Connector; Jason Wilde, Housing Connector

Welcome, Introductions, Opening Blessing

Opening Remarks

Sher Stecher, DSHS Office of Indian Policy; Al Andy, Commerce; Lori Pfingst, DSHS Tribal Representatives

Sher said this monthly meeting serves as the legislative WA Opioid Task Force Tribal Housing and Wraparound Services Workgroup. It is one of five workgroups currently working on issues resulting from Tribal Opioid Summit Report program and services gaps/barriers that have been identified.

Al shared Commerce:

- has awarded more than \$200,000 for victims of crimes for sexual assault awareness and human trafficking programs.
- has a set aside of 10% for Tribes and needs to know how Tribes would like it to be distributed by November with funding being distributed in early 2026, and hopes to increase the amount for the next biennium.
- has the Tribal Resiliency Grant Program set aside and an emergency rapid response program award to Tribes. To date, \$6 million has been awarded.
- will hold the annual Tribal Commerce Committee on October 2 where divisional programs share what they have done, and future plans. The event will be held at the Spokane Tribe Resort.

Lori shared:

- the Economic Justice Alliance has been working to understand the impact of federal bill HR1.
- DSHS is also looking at policy, fiscal and operations impacts programmatically. Some fact sheets and quotes from folks will be released soon. Some effects will happen immediately and others will be over time.

Housing Connector and the Puyallup Tribe Wrap Around Program

Elizabeth Kirk, Housing Connector; Ashley Howard, Puyallup Tribe Wrap Around Department

Elizabeth shared Housing Connector (housingconnector.com):

- works across the country and with over 100 folks across Washington state including the Puyallup Tribe.
- helps people get housed and ensure they can stay stably housed.
- reduces screening criteria and pre-negotiates with properties.
- has a Community Hub portal with online, automated unit matching, centralized management, easy to track financial requests, support tickets and streamlined information sharing about potential residents. This allows folks to flip through options online quickly.
- can provide up to three months of emergency rental assistance; up to \$5000 damage mitigation; one-month vacancy loss; and two years of housing stability support.
- has a single point of contact for property support after move-in, and eviction, mitigation and diversion support.
- Partnered with the Puyallup Wrap Around Services team, which is its largest partner in Pierce County and in the top 10 statewide, currently has 45 households. Together, 190 cases of housing instability have been resolved with \$77,700 funds dispersed.
- If anyone is interested in utilizing Housing Connector, please reach out to ElizabethK@housingconnector.com or JasonW@housingconnector.com. There are only three steps required: meet with them, sign a Memorandum Of Understanding and attend a Housing Connector training.
- Leah asked what one month vacancy loss means and Jason said if someone vacates a unit early it is for the property owner.

Ashley said the Puyallup Tribe and Housing Connector working relationship has been successful. The Puyallup Tribe Wrap Around Service model:

- is a way of doing social work where traditional values and teaching are important.
- includes family voice and choice, is team-based, includes natural supports, collaboration, is community-based, culturally competent, individualized, strengths based, unconditional and outcome based.
- serves as the resource hub for the Puyallup Tribal Community
- fills in service gaps; Housing, Children's and Substance Use Departments are limited and clients are assisted with navigating those systems.
- recognizes that housing is the top goal that wrap around clients need help with. Prior to Housing Connector partnership, it relied heavily upon partnerships with particular landlords and rental companies. Housing Connector allows for and helps facilitate housing partnerships.
- has referred some property partners to Housing Connector.
- includes case management commitment for the duration of the lease of Housing Connector enrollment and can mitigate any issues quickly.

Ashley shared some complex and compelling case specific examples and outcomes. She also shared client survey responses, which were very positive.

- New Puyallup Tribe Wrap Around Services employees complete Housing Connector training.
- They obtain access to Community Hub and Zillow Housing Connector platform.
- The clients comes in to meet with the navigator, and received a Housing Connector letter of support and employee works within the platform to match them with property, including uploading pay information, the letter of support, and other pertinent items.
- Pending approval, Puyallup Tribe Wrap Around helps with application and holding fees, pending approval as well as helping them access any city/county assistance available.
- Wrap Around serves as the point of contact with the landlord.
- Once a client is housed, Wrap Around does monthly check ins with the client and responds to any property issues.

- Financial assistance isn't advertised, is a subsidy to provide when needed and is only available if a client chooses to meet with Wrap Around and complete a Housing Stability Plan.
- The Tribe has some subsidy rental assistance that Tribal members can access for housing and utility assistance. A part of being enrolled is that you agree to pay your portion of the rent. Wrap Around provides the information, and if they don't pay their share may be put on probationary resource.
- Lori asked about qualitative outcomes with clients, such as how long it took them to trust their situation once housed, was there an increased sense of belonging, did their stress level decrease?
- Jason said they have done some tenant surveying and could share anecdotal information after the meeting. He said Housing Connector has a Stability Team that could likely provide more details.

Meeting Wrap-Up/Next Agenda/Closing Blessing

Sher Stecher, DSHS Office of Indian Policy

- Governor's Office of Indian Affairs Director Reynon will provide an update on GOIA workgroups and an emerging need recently identified, at the August meeting
- Native Hub and Tribal Poverty Data Presentations scheduled for August meeting
- Housing Remediation Presentation scheduled for the September meeting

Adjourn