

October 22, 2021 Okanogan CHI Meeting Minutes

Candidate Forum on Community Health Issue

Part 1: State Representative Candidates

Hospitals:

Question 1: We'd like to hear about your position on critical access hospitals in Okanogan county. Do you feel they are of value to the residents of our county and do you support their efforts to provide health care to our rural communities? If so, in what ways would you advocate in the state legislature toward their ongoing financial viability?

Fire:

Smoke from wildfires is increasingly affecting the physical and economic health of our Okanogan county communities. This year, we saw our vulnerable medical population experience even higher risk because of the impact of both wildfire smoke and COVID-19. For the health of our future generations, and our economy, we need to reduce wildfires across our county and our state.

Question 1: What actions need to be taken at a state level to prevent wildfires from occurring in both forested and non-forested areas?

Question 2: The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation have developed innovative and effective forest management practices and climate change solutions. If elected, how would you engage their leadership and experience in your legislative decision-making?

Mental Health/Substance Use:

Okanogan County has struggled to employ enough mental health counselors and social workers to support our community. Community behavioral health clinics particularly struggle to attract new providers because they rely on Medicaid reimbursement, and reimbursement rates are not sufficient to compete with the wages these professionals can receive in other areas.

Question 1: Given the statewide challenges in recruitment and retention in the community mental health field, particularly for those working primarily with Medicaid clients in rural areas, how can State Representatives and Community Behavioral Health leaders partner to ensure Okanogan County has the mental health resources it needs?

Part 2: County Commissioner Candidates

Juvenile Detention:

Question 1: What is your understanding of the impact ACE's have on child development as it relates to involvement in their decision making and what impact do you feel as commissioner, you could make in decreasing ACE's as it related to the social determinants and the youths social, emotional, and physical health?

Question 2: as a County Commissioner how can you increase the outlets these youth have in increasing their Resiliency Factors?

Housing:

Question 1: What's your understanding of why Okanogan County has one of the highest rates of homeless and incarcerated youth in the State of Washington?

Question 2: As new COVID-related economic and social issues are rising across the county, how can we best prevent our current housing and homelessness crisis from worsening?

Public Health:

Question 1: COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of a robust, well-funded public health system. CARES funding for public health's COVID-19 response is projected to end December 31st, but the COVID-19 virus is not likely to end this year. How do you propose we ensure local public health systems are sufficiently funded moving forward, and how would you go about making these funding decisions?