



Network Statement
San Juan County Community-Based Long-Term Care Network
May 2021

With nearly 6,000 full-time residents over the age of 65 (33% of the total population), San Juan County is one of the oldest counties in Washington State. As the percentage of islanders in their 80s and 90s is expected to increase dramatically, the lack of affordable long-term home care, home health care, and residential care in San Juan County becomes a crisis. The high costs and limited availability of housing combined with geographic barriers make it difficult to develop and sustain the workforce needed to support elders as their needs intensify. As a result, aging safely at home is not possible for the majority of seniors. When combined with a lack of facility-based options, our most vulnerable residents are often forced to leave their community at the end of their lives.

Planning is underway to create the San Juan County Community-Based Long-Term Care Network (*the Network*). Entities involved in this endeavor come from health care, EMS and agencies providing social supports and services across the three major ferry served islands. Together, the group is working to establish a formal Network that will ensure there is the infrastructure needed to support and sustain a county-wide system of long-term care services and social supports. While a segment of critical components is established (e.g., medical clinics, emergency services, senior services), others lack resources, capacity and coordination. Most of the services beyond prevention, primary care and emergency services aren't provided by organizations based in the County, leaving islanders vulnerable to decisions and policies outside of local control. The Network seeks to establish and/or contract for the full continuum of services while balancing access, quality and cost in the interest of both care givers and clients.

Islanders are good at helping neighbors, but the need has outgrown what volunteers and informal coordination can consistently and effectively provide. Through a robust planning process, the Network will engage providers and other stakeholders in strong, formalized contracts assuring capacity and accountability. These formal alliances will leverage our collective purchasing power and help provide a more uniform standard of care throughout the County. They will also offer each island community the flexibility to respond to diverse local needs and maximize limited resources. The Network will serve as a vehicle to advocate for policy or legislative changes needed. Most importantly, the Network will ensure all islanders have access to the full spectrum of long-term care services and social supports needed to preserve a high quality of life and health while they age safely in place, as long as possible. Everyone will need long-term care someday. We hope you will join us on this important journey!