

# Nutrition Training Outreach to RDNs in Under-Resourced WA Counties



Kristina Tribley, UW Nutritional Sciences Program, MPH-Nutrition Student & Dietetic Intern

Site Supervisor: Mari Mazon, MS, RDN, CD, Pediatric Pulmonary Center Nutrition. Faculty Organization: UW Center on Human Development & Disability

## Children & Youth with Special Healthcare Needs Nutrition Network

- Improves access to evidence-based nutrition care for children with special healthcare needs
- Provides free specialized training and continuing education to RDNs
- Began in 1987, as a 3-day UW training
- Grown into a statewide, 250+ RDNs provider community
- Holds a yearly state-funded 2-to-3-day training opportunity for ~10 RDNs

## Why it Matters

- Nutrition is vital to support the optimum growth and development for every child
- Children with special healthcare needs are at an increased risk for nutrition-related problems
- Disparities in healthcare access for rural families
- Medical nutrition therapy (MNT) provides patients with resources and behavioral modifications tailored to their needs and circumstances

## Practicum Project Aims

- Identify WA counties with few RDNs trained to support children with special health care needs
- Find qualifying hospitals, make contact, and take call notes
- Provide list of interested RDNs
- Identify RDNs to take part in the WA-DOH-sponsored Nutrition Network training
- Provide report on perceived barriers to participation in the Nutrition Network training to inform future action
- Spoiler: No RDNs identified

## Targeted WA State Counties

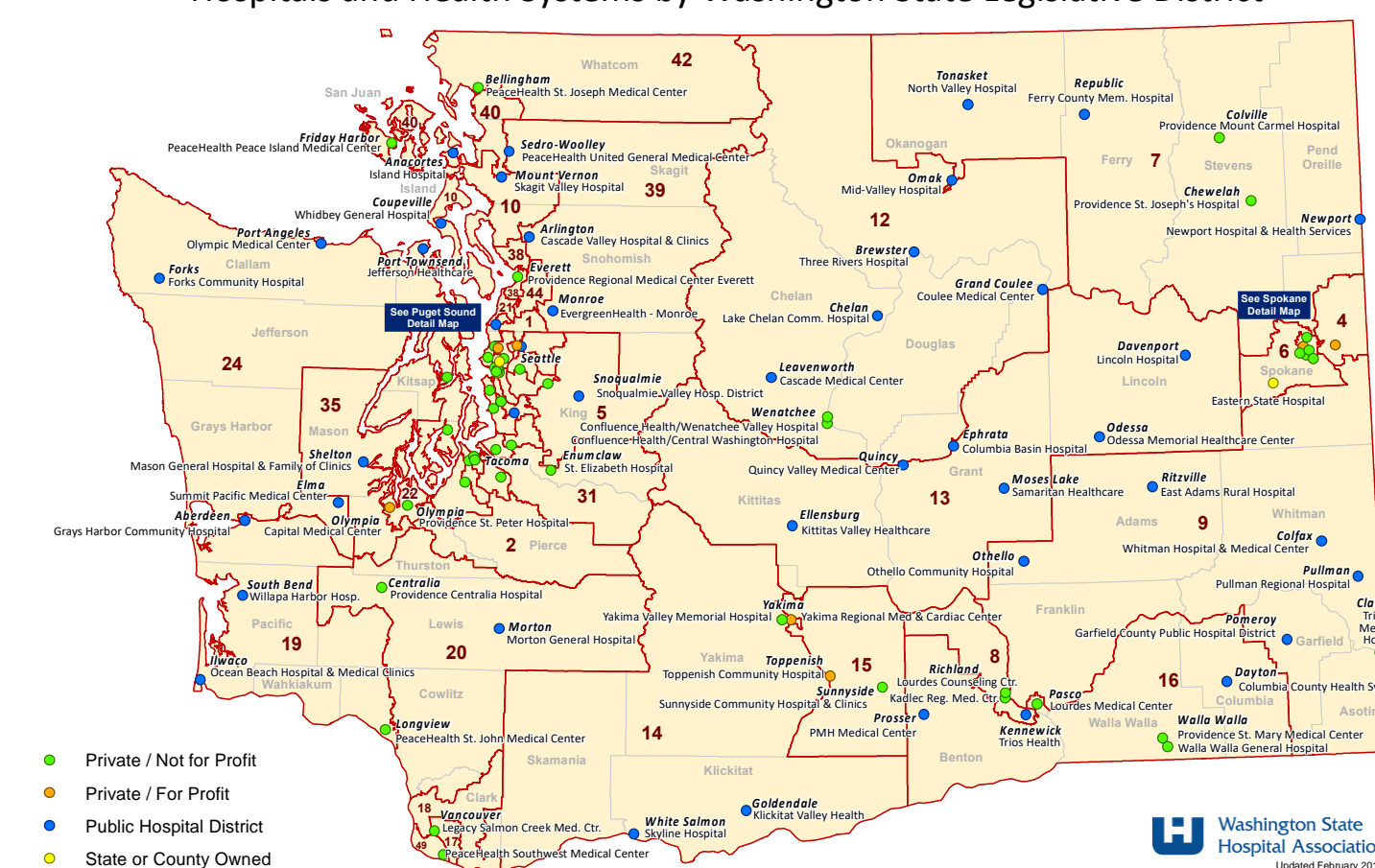
Data pulled from "Nutrition Services for Washington State Children & Youth with Special Health Care Needs" report written by Margaret Wilson, MS, CN, LMHC

County	Estimated Children with special healthcare needs per County	Nutrition Network Dietitians (excluding WIC & Home Infusion)	Children with special healthcare needs per Dietitian (excluding WIC & Home Infusion)
Clark	21144	0	No Dietitian
Cowlitz	4867	0	No Dietitian
Grays Harbor	2941	0	No Dietitian
Mason	2513	0	No Dietitian
Clallam	2492	0	No Dietitian
Douglas	2163	0	No Dietitian
Stevens	1871	0	No Dietitian
Kittitas	1554	0	No Dietitian
Jefferson	734	0	No Dietitian
Pacific	664	0	No Dietitian
Pend Oreille	506	0	No Dietitian
Skamania	427	0	No Dietitian
Ferry	241	0	No Dietitian
Wahkiakum	148	0	No Dietitian
Columbia	138	0	No Dietitian
Garfield	90	0	No Dietitian
Pierce	40696	6	6782
Snohomish	35540	6	5923
Grant	5527	1	5527
Benton	10493	2	5246
King	86957	23	3780
Spokane	22198	6	3699
Lewis	3318	1	3318
Island	2974	1	2974
Franklin	5881	2	2940
Yakima	14283	5	2856
Whatcom	8495	3	2831
Kitsap	10584	4	2645
Thurston	11888	5	2377
Skagit	5361	3	1787
Chelan	3457	2	1728
Whitman	1451	1	1451
Adams	1385	1	1384
Asotin	872	1	872
Klickitat	827	1	827
Walla Walla	2427	3	809
Okanogan	1900	3	633
Lincoln	458	1	458
San Juan	431	1	431

Nutrition Network – Nutrition for Children with Special Health Care Needs. Accessed March 9, 2023. <https://nutritionnetworkwa.org/>

## Hospitals and Health Systems

Hospitals and Health Systems by Washington State Legislative District



Hospital Association, W. S. (2016). State Legislative Districts - Washington State Hospital Association. Retrieved March 10, 2023, from [https://www.wsha.org/wp-content/uploads/Map\\_StateLegislativeDistricts.pdf](https://www.wsha.org/wp-content/uploads/Map_StateLegislativeDistricts.pdf)

## Perceived Barriers Report

### RDN Identified Perceived Barriers

- RDNs only present in outpatient diabetes care clinics
- Older populations (65y/+) being served by the hospital
- RDN not receiving MD referrals for pediatrics
- Unaware of any RDNs working with pediatric
- Neighboring county RDNs supporting the very few children in the targeted county

### Hospital Staff Identified Perceived Barriers

- No RDNs on staff/RDNs in consultant roles
- Short staffed/RDNs positions waiting to be filled
- Children are automatically sent to nearest large city (Spokane, Portland, Seattle)

## What Could This Mean?

The lack of Nutrition Network RDNs in rural counties may also be attributed to:

- An overall lack of RDNs within rural areas
- Rural-based RDNs being siloed into Medicare-specific reimbursable MNT
- A lack pediatric-focused RDNs, possibly due to low MNT reimbursement through Medicaid

## Proposed Next Steps

In under-resourced Washington state counties. . .

- Shift target audience upstream by contacting hospital and clinical management
- Contact the RDNs interested in sharing Nutrition Network training opportunities
- Assess the geographic catchment area by contacting RDNs in neighboring counties.
- Expand target audience by contacting private practice RDNs
- Develop a guide on how to become in network with health insurance agencies (Medicaid emphasis) for private practice RDNs

## Advocacy

Promote access to quality MNT services for children with special healthcare needs by advocating for policies that. . .

- Increase Medicaid MNT reimbursement
- Ensure insurance coverage for telehealth services
- Increase internet connectivity in rural areas

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