



Agency Recommendation Summary

Developing processes to ensure that healthcare assets are consistently and efficiently utilized is an ongoing challenge. This challenge worsens during times of a disaster or emergency. Funding supports key strategies that allow a more a coordinated, timely and unified approach to support access to and maintain the quality of care.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1	\$0	\$1	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$1	\$0	\$1	\$0	\$0	\$0

Decision Package Description

Problem Statement:

Washington State's healthcare system is decentralized and largely made up of private, not-for-profit organizations, which creates a complex network of care. This complexity makes it challenging to use healthcare resources efficiently, especially during shortages caused by disasters or emergencies. The state's system often struggles to respond effectively in these situations, affecting access to and the quality of care.

To address these challenges, there are several key strategies for coordinating healthcare resources during shortages:

1. **Intentional Patient Distribution:** This strategy involves placing patients in facilities based on their capabilities, not just their location, to balance the load among different hospitals. For example, moving patients from an overloaded hospital to one with available capacity can help manage demand and ensure that specialized care centers have space for patients needing specific treatments.
2. **Load Balancing:** This involves transferring patients from overburdened facilities to those with more available resources. For instance, if a burn center is overwhelmed, patients who don't need specialized burn care might be moved to a community hospital to free up space for burn patients.

A national model that supports these strategies is the Medical Operation Coordination Center (MOCC), recognized by the Health and Human Services Administration. The MOCC helps manage patient placement, load balancing, resource coordination, patient tracking, specialty care consultation, and overall situational awareness. This model aims to improve resource utilization and coordination across a region or state during emergencies

Proposed solution:

Sustain operations of the Washington Medical Coordination Center. In 2020, Washington State set up the Washington Medical Coordination Center (WMCC) at Harborview Medical Center to help manage patient demand across hospitals. WMCC matches patient needs with available resources statewide, ensuring that patients are sent to appropriate facilities. It operates 24/7 and supports rural and independent hospitals, handling everything from specialty care placements (like burn or trauma units) to long-term care.

National Recognition:

WMCC has been praised by national and regional leaders, including HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, for its role in maintaining high-quality care during times of hospital bed shortages.

- [The Statewide Patient Load Balancing Work of Washington State's Medical Operations Coordination Center | Journal of Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness](#)

- [Regional Transfer Coordination and Hospital Load Balancing During COVID-19 Surges | American Medical Association JAMA Network Health Policy](#)
- [Pediatric Critical Care Medicine Journal \(lww.com\)](#)
- [Medical Express News covid response western Washington](#)
- [Slammed by COVID, statewide system helps transfer rural Washington patients to available hospital beds | The Seattle Times](#)
- [Amid a COVID surge, WA hospital leaders wonder why fewer people seem to care | The Seattle Times](#)
- [WMCC's Pediatric Response to Tripledeemic Prepares Healthcare Leaders for Winter Surge of Respiratory Illness | Department of Emergency Medicine \(uw.edu\)](#)
- ["First Responders," with Dr. Steve Mitchell - SPU Stories](#)
- [Dr. Steven Mitchell Co-Founds Washington Medical Coordination Center \(WMCC\) | Department of Emergency Medicine \(uw.edu\)](#)
- [How would crisis standards of care be enacted in Washington — and at what point? - MyNorthwest.com](#)
- [Intersection of CSC and Load Balancing in Washington State | Disaster Medicine Section \(acep.org\)](#)
- [WSHA Budget Brief WMCC](#)
- [Washington Medical Coordination Center \(WMCC\) - NWHRN](#)
 - [WMCC-Operational-Framework_2020_11_12.pdf \(nwhrn.org\)](#)

More to be provided in final version

(\$1,000 placed in FY 2026 as a placeholder for the Agency Budget System to pull this Decision Package when downloaded. This is only intended as a placeholder.)

Expected Outcomes:

The proposed decision package is designed to ensure that the Washington Medical Coordination Center (WMCC) continues to operate 24/7, providing essential patient placement and load-balancing support to acute care hospitals across Washington state. This support is vital for the efficient and effective use of healthcare resources, ensuring patients receive the care they need when needed.

Sustained Operational Excellence

Outcome: The funding will enable WMCC to maintain its nationally recognized service, which is crucial for managing healthcare resources effectively across the state. By ensuring the continuity of 24/7 operations, the WMCC will help healthcare facilities manage patient loads more efficiently, reducing wait times, and improving patient outcomes.

Impact: Healthcare facilities will leverage a centralized resource to quickly identify optimal care locations, minimizing delays while enhancing the patient transfer process. This will directly impact patient outcomes by reducing the time to care, particularly during surges and emergency situations.

Enhanced Statewide Healthcare Collaboration

Outcome: Additional funding will facilitate deeper collaboration between the WMCC and the DOH in the ongoing development and enhancement of the WA HEALTH platform. This platform aims to be a robust resource for real-time bed capacity and availability across the state.

Impact: The integration of WMCC's operational capabilities with the WA HEALTH platform will enhance the platform's utility and accuracy, providing healthcare providers and emergency response teams with reliable data to make informed decisions. This collaboration will ensure that the platform not only meets but exceeds the needs of the state's healthcare system, promoting a higher level of preparedness and responsiveness.

Increased Healthcare System Efficiency

Outcome: Through the continued support of the WMCC, Washington state's healthcare system will see improved patient placement and resource allocation efficiencies. This streamlined process will reduce the operational strain on individual hospitals, particularly during peak

periods and public health emergencies.

Impact: The measurable impact includes reduced average hospital transfer times and increased patient intake capacity, with quantifiable metrics such as percentage reductions in patient wait times and the number of patients successfully placed daily.

Strategic Resource Allocation

Outcome: The decision package will ensure that resources are allocated strategically to areas of highest impact, enhancing the overall resilience of the healthcare infrastructure in Washington state.

Impact: By ensuring the efficient use of healthcare resources, the WMCC will contribute to a more balanced state healthcare system, where resource allocation is directly aligned with demand patterns and patient needs. Evaluation metrics could include resource utilization rates and cost savings from reduced resource wastage.

Alternatives:

To be provided in final version

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

To be provided in final version

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

To be provided in final version.

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Workforce Assumptions:

To be provided in final version

Historical Funding:

To be provided in final version

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

DOH Transformational Plan

Health Systems & Workforce Transformation

This program leverages previously developed strategies and tools from the COVID-19 pandemic including coordinated decision making to assist health systems maintain access to quality and safe healthcare.

Emergency Response & Resilience

This program allows Washington State to respond to periods of scarce resources with strength and decisiveness to minimize the impact of bed, staff, or supply shortages on the lives of Washington's communities. The WMCC supports preparedness, response, and recovery on a broad range of public health incidents that impact the healthcare system.

Agency activity funding: A014 Access to Quality Healthcare Services

This program supports access to competent and safe, quality healthcare by maximizing available healthcare resources. This maintains access to care, and quality of care in all parts of the State.

Performance Outcomes:

To be provided in final version.

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Washington State Medical Coordination Center works in partnership with NWHRN to coordinate and plan with all 93 acute care facilities in Washington. These facilities support all communities including historically underserved and excluded populations.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

In 2024, the primary users of the load balancing/patient placement services provided by the WMCC were acute care hospitals located in north central Washington. These facilities, both independent and part of a healthcare system, serve and support migrant agriculture worker communities, low-income communities, rural communities, and communities with limited choice in how healthcare is delivered. Having a centralized service that can support healthcare facilities in this region identify available care resources, largely in western Washington, is a significant asset in ensuring access to quality care for disproportionately impacted populations.

Target Communities and Populations:

The WMCC supports all 93 acute care hospitals and their respective patient catchment areas. The wholistic nature of this approach ensures that no communities seeking healthcare during a resource shortage are unable to seek guidance or information from the clinical support at the WMCC.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

WMCC manages user feedback and input including outreach to additional care providers beyond the 93 acute care hospitals in Washington. Any community input from the continuum of care including needs in behavioral health placement, long term care placement, etc. have been directed to the WMCC leadership

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not Applicable

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not Applicable

State Workforce Impacts:

Not Applicable

Intergovernmental:

To be provided in final version.

Stakeholder Impacts:

Washington State Hospital Association is a significant supporter of the WMCC. WMCC has also supported long term care facilities in coordination with DSHS.

State Facilities Impacts:

Currently WMCC is not supporting behavioral health inpatient bed placement. Thus, there should be limited to no impact on DSHS operated behavioral health facilities.

Changes from Current Law:

Not Applicable

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Not Applicable

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

Not Applicable

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. E	\$1	\$0	\$1	\$0	\$0	\$0

Agency Contact Information

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