



Public Statement: Access & Overall Clinic Care at Island Primary Care - Orcas

Over the last several months, community members have provided various forms of public feedback regarding the termination of Dr. Jennifer Simpson-Manske from employment at Island Primary Care – Orcas. As previously addressed in public statements from both the Orcas Island Health Care District (OIHCD) and Island Health, the District and Island will continue to listen, but will not comment any further on the personnel issue of Dr. Simpson-Manske's termination.

The District recognizes that physician relationships are deeply important to patients and families, especially on our island, and we understand the necessity for accountability and the desire to provide community feedback regarding this issue. Based on a thorough assessment of the situation, the District does not intend to pursue any further action, and we understand Island Health has no plans to reinstate Dr. Simpson-Manske.

We want to address the recent public conversations regarding the clinic, which have shifted from Dr. Simpson-Manske's personnel issue to criticism of clinic staff and access. Serving the community in such an intimate environment as a primary care clinic is a vulnerable task, even more so on our island. The clinic staff are foundationally Islanders. Of the 21 employees, the average Island residency of clinic staff is 23 years, with a median of 24 years. The average Island Health employment term is 3.48 years, with a median of 4.5 years. The only staff member not living on Orcas takes specimens to the Island Health Lab in Anacortes for processing on her daily return off island. They are all deeply committed and valuable community members.

Orcas Islander's access to clinic care is stronger today than it likely ever has been. In addition to dedicated same or next-day sick visit access and after-hours care, patients can currently get a new patient appointment in four days, compared with approximately 23.5 days nationally for family medicine. The large majority of patients are appreciative of their care, with 94% of patients willing to recommend the clinic.

We welcome continued community feedback about how we can strengthen primary care services in our rural island community. Island Health has a formal complaints/grievance process, available through the Island Health contact page - <https://islandhealth.org/contact/>. The District also appreciates public comment, in accordance with our policies, and welcomes community members to reach out to Board Members and the District Superintendent at any time. Contact information is available on our website - <https://www.orcashealth.org/contact-us>

As we all know, health care access is under significant pressure, with drastic changes to Medicaid and Medicare on the horizon. Rural Hospitals and clinics are closing, reducing services, or are required to find creative ways to continue serving their community. The District is appreciative and proud to have a committed partner in Island Health.

As detailed in our statements, it is important to understand our actual level of care. Island Health meets with the District every other month to review operations and meets quarterly to review their quality data. For more information and background, we highlight some of the clinic's impact, access and quality accomplishments below.

Clinic Impact:

- In 2025, Island Primary Care – Orcas served 3,960 unique patients who live on Orcas Island, more than 70% of the island’s estimated full-time population.
- Over 11,000 primary care visits, 2,600 lab services, and 1,300 x-ray appointments were completed in 2025. 531 of those lab services, and 242 of the x-ray services were for non-clinic patients, or outside provider referrals.
- The clinic has a daily, designated same-day provider and an after-hours designated provider. There are 140 calls/month to the after-hours line and patients can be seen in-person at the clinic after hours if deemed appropriate by the clinician on call.
- The clinic continues to expand access for visiting specialty services. Visiting specialists include an OB/Gyn NP, Interventional Pain, and General Surgery. During Island Health’s tenure, Tele-Cardiology was provided. Additional specialty services are being explored.
- Portal messaging is highly utilized on Orcas, with RN Nurse Triage roles who help to receive, triage, and respond to messages in partnership with providers. Self-scheduled appointments through the portal are higher on Orcas than any other Island Health Clinic.
- The clinic phone number can also receive text messages for multiple purposes, including scheduling - (360)376-2561. Responses are managed by Orcas clinic staff during work hours.
- The clinic continues to support workforce development for Islanders. Over the last few years, the team have trained 9 local islanders in their Medical Assistant – Registered (MA-R) program, an apprenticeship type on-the-job training program. Of those 9, many have gone on to pursue further healthcare clinical training.

Access Metrics:

- New patient appointments at the clinic: Next available = 4 days; national averages for next available = 23.5 days ([MGMA](#))
- Preventative focused appointments: Next available = 3 days (Orcas); 53% of patients nationally report waiting at least one week to see their provider ([PartnerMD](#))

Quality Metrics:

Island Health focuses on several quality metrics related to Medicare patients, and also tracks patient satisfaction scores. These measures reset at the beginning of each year, so continue to improve as the year goes on. These are reported quarterly to OIHCD at our board meetings.

- Overall Willingness to Recommend: 2025 = 94.34%, 2022 = 89.70%
- Diabetes Hemoglobin A1C Poor Control: Quarter 2, 2026 = 15%, Goal = 17% (lower is better)
- Controlled High Blood Pressure: Q2, 2026 = 68%, Goal = 60%; 2025 = 71%
- Breast Cancer Screening: Q2, 2026 = 60%, Goal = 70%; 2025 = 71%
- Colorectal Cancer Screening: Q2, 2026 = 56%, Goal = 60%
- Diabetes Eye Exam: 2025 = 73%, Goal = 57%

This information is just a portion of evidence that supports our claim that the clinic serves the District’s mission to ensure island-appropriate, quality primary, acute, and after-hours medical care. Since the District was formed in 2018, we are proud of the progress we have made in meeting our mission, in partnership with Island Health for 5+ of those years.