



Department of Commerce



Pierce County Community Connections Weatherization Plus Health Client Story

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Mr. Shaw is a senior citizen with a disability. He spent his life working very hard to support himself and now survives on Social Security and disability income. When we first met, he was gasping for breath just sitting and talking with me. Getting up and moving about the home to show me some of his concerns with his home was taxing on him, evident from the wheezing and his eventual excusing himself to go sit back down. His house was in very bad shape, and so was his respiratory health.

At the initial weatherization audit of his home, I found the interior ceiling was open, the roof was actively leaking, the home was very drafty, the furnace was not operational, the only form of heat was a failing wood stove that had a cracked glass face. The house had no ventilation fans, there were plumbing issues, and the under floor was torn up and lacked insulation.

Fortunately, Community Connections received a pilot grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce to provide Weatherization Plus Health services. Weatherization Plus Health is collaboration with the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department to provide weatherization services, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) education and care plans, and green cleaning information to improve the quality of affordable housing in Pierce County and reduce the number of doctors' visits due to asthma and COPD.

The initial impression was that this job was a big one and would require more than just weatherization services. The weatherization technician teamed up with Community Connections' Home Repair, Aging and Disability Resources (ADR) and the Pierce County Health Department to make repairs on the home, insulate and air seal, install a new heating unit, install newly available Healthy Homes measures and provide patient advocate resources.

Home Repair fixed the safety issues, including a new deck and railings, stairs, roof and floor repairs, interior ceiling work and some plumbing repair. Then the weatherization program followed up with air sealing to prevent drafts, insulate the attic, properly ventilate the home with an energy recovery ventilation unit, and install ductless heat pump with a cold plasma air purification unit, bath fans and a kitchen range hood.

Through Weatherization Plus Health we were also able to provide Mr. Shaw a "Green Clean Kit", walk-off mats, bed bug covers for his mattress and pillow and a hygrometer so he can keep track of his indoor humidity levels. We removed his failing wood stove and educated him extensively on his new systems. Also through Weatherization Plus Health, we were able to have a home visitor from the Health Department assess Mr. Shaw's asthma which was currently being "controlled" by a child's asthma rescue inhaler. An extensive and thorough evaluation of Mr. Shaw's asthma was completed and a plan was developed and sent to his doctor to improve his asthma control. While all this was taking place, I contacted Mr. Shaw's ADR (spell this out on first reference) case manager to assist with his long-term case management. This was truly a group effort.

The best part of this job was at my final home inspection where Mr. Shaw could not sit still. He was constantly on the move, no shortness of breath, no coughing or wheezing, just thankfulness and gratitude for the work that he says "changed his life." He stated that he now sleeps better, is sick much less, rarely sees his doctor and spends most of his free time helping others in his community.

This is why we do what we do.

