Q&A
with CEO, Rick Weaver

President and CEO, Rick Weaver, has successfully piloted his agency through changing currents in funding and health care law for the last 30 years.

Still, 2014 was a watershed year for change at Comprehensive – The Affordable Care Act, major new programs, and delivering services to new geographic areas, made 2014 “a year of growth unlike anything I’ve ever seen,” says Weaver.

Q. Put Comprehensive’s growth in the last 12 months in perspective. In your 32 years here, how does it compare?

A. Comprehensive has seen almost continuous growth in services, geographic area and numbers served throughout my entire time here except for some fall off as budgets were cut significantly during the 2008 – 2013 period. Over those 30 years, we’ve gone from seeing in the neighborhood of 4,000 patients per year to well over 16,000 patients per year. This year, however, we experienced growth unlike anything I’ve ever seen. Mental health and chemical dependency services suffered tremendous cuts over the last 5-7 years. The number of people we were able to serve declined significantly (as much as 15%). This year we erased that decline and saw more people than we ever have. That growth has been a huge challenge. We had to find, train and integrate a significant number of new staff, adjust work flows and work spaces to accommodate new patients and, by the way, add major new programs like Bridges inpatient unit and new geography like Walla Walla County. It’s been really tough work but I’ve been amazed at how well the staff at Comprehensive has rallied to make it happen.

Q. Can you translate that growth into numbers of people served and new geographic areas added?

A. We’ve seen significant growth in the number of people seen, the number of services delivered and a number of other metrics. Year over year, we saw over 30% more patients in 2014 than in 2013. The number of service encounters was up nearly 19%. The rate of growth continues to accelerate as more individuals obtain health coverage and as people become aware of the new parity provisions of their healthcare policies. December 2014 saw a nearly 60% increase in the number of people served over December 2013.

At mid-year we completed the transition of services from the Walla Walla County Department of Human Services to Comprehensive. This allowed us to serve many more people as an agency and to greatly increase the number of residents of that county being served over the past.

Comprehensive is a relatively new presence in the Tri-Cities area and we provide a more limited set of services there. This year we saw about 25% more people and added several new services including services in the jail and to persons with developmental disabilities and mental health problems.

We now cover a service area of 6 counties (and have small presences in 3-4 more). Those counties cover nearly 13,000 square miles and have a population of over 640,000 people. We serve through 16 major locations and numerous smaller sites.

Q. Quality and consistency of services have been Comprehensive trademarks. How have you managed to maintain high standards of service during this growth spurt?

A. This has been perhaps my greatest concern in this period of very rapid growth. We have placed a tremendous amount of emphasis on this effort. As an organization we have voluntarily chosen to be accredited by an external organization, the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO). JCAHO is the gold standard of quality in the health care world. We have chosen to build the quality improvement and management that JCAHO accreditation brings into our everyday work. We are constantly monitoring ourselves to find out what works and doesn’t work. We take concerns
We bring an economic impact of approximately $50 million annually to our communities.

Q. Is all this growth due to the Affordable Care Act, or is there more to it?

A. Our growth over the past year is driven by multiple factors. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is certainly a big part of that growth but it is no way the sole driver. The ACA has driven growth in three ways. First, it is what is called the Medicaid Expansion. Medicaid Expansion opened access to Medicaid to many low income persons who were previously without health care coverage. In addition, many other people gained access to health care coverage through the Insurance Exchange. Finally, parity for mental health and substance abuse treatment means that persons who may have had health coverage but may not have had behavioral health coverage could now access services. Parity also brought consistency in deductibles, co-pays and limits to behavioral health care and that also encouraged those whose needs weren’t met previously to seek services. New services also greatly influenced our growth. Additions of services like our new adult inpatient unit, Bridges, significantly increased the number of services provided. We added new intensive services for children called WISEs, throughout our service area. We began providing services in the Benton County Jail. These are just a few examples.

Geographic expansion was also a big factor. In late 2013 we began offering a very small service set in Walla Walla. After a period of transition, we assumed service delivery for the Walla Walla County Department of Human Services on July 1, 2014. We’ve placed emphasis on outreach and service provision in community locations. We saw a 25% increase in persons served in July 2014 over July 2013.

Q. Looking in your crystal ball ... do you see continued growth in 2015 for behavioral healthcare agencies like Comprehensive?

A. One thing for certain is that my crystal ball is a busy, active place. The behavioral health world is changing very rapidly just like the rest of health care. Some of that change is obvious and some is under the hood. There is still going to be growth. People continue to enroll in health coverage and to learn about their eligibility for services. But, while we have been more successful than many organizations, recruitment of top-notch staff is a big challenge. The behavioral health care field is not the first choice of many college students due to the relatively low pay. At Comprehensive, we have been finding really good folks but we still have 100 or more job openings. We are still catching up with demand and the rate of growth will be somewhat driven by how we do in recruiting the staff we need.

Payers, including commercial insurers and the state, are driving big changes in how health care services are purchased. There is great emphasis on “integration” meaning the delivery of physical, mental health and chemical dependency in a well-coordinated way. While the goal is to see integration in the way services are delivered, much of what is happening is about integrating the way services get paid for. These big system changes will impact all providers but it is most likely to impact smaller niche and rural providers. We are already seeing providers go out of business or leave communities. We have already been receiving inquiries about filling holes left by those providers. We are saying no more often than we are saying yes because of our emphasis on maintaining quality. I know, however, that we will need to help out and will see some growth as a result of that dynamic.

Comprehensive will be affected by these changes as well. We are well positioned, however, to weather and even thrive in this new environment. We have been about the work of integration for many years and I expect a number of new partnerships and initiatives in that area in the coming year.

We are also focusing on the less flashy parts of growth. When you add well over 200 people to the staff and thousands of patients there are many needs to be addressed. Things like training and the ever present need for office space. Programs are reaching capacity as well. We are likely to have to add capacity in a number of program areas including inpatient, residential and housing.

Our focus this year is going to continue to be on staying really good. It’s a never ending job and we can’t rest on our laurels. We can always get better. I hope that’s our biggest growth this year.
Forging partnerships has been at the center of Comprehensive’s strategy in the time I have been here. As a single agency, even though we are quite large, we cannot meet all the needs we are called upon to address in our community. Even if we could do so, it wouldn’t always make sense in terms of duplication of effort, cost efficiency or meeting the needs. By engaging in partnerships we multiply the impact of organizations and groups. We get a 1 + 1 = 3 equation.

Partnerships take time to grow, build and maintain. They are rarely easy. They do produce innovation, fill gaps in services that might otherwise go unfilled and help us integrate care so we are dealing with the whole person and not just one piece of the need in isolation. Partnerships such as those Comprehensive engages in have made services available that exist nowhere else in the state.

The integration of physical health, mental health and chemical dependency treatment are goals of all who receive and work in health care. There are great opportunities in this integration effort but they require a willingness to work together and to be less rigid and territorial than health care has perhaps been in the past. Collaboration is hard, but it is also fun and rewarding. I’m very eager to promote partnerships as a means to better serve our communities.”

— Rick Weaver, Comprehensive CEO

Pacific Northwest University 
Medical student rotations

Washington State University 
Nurse Practitioner & School of Pharmacy rotations

Yakima Neighborhood Health Services 
Providing integrated primary health care services at various Comprehensive locations

Harborview & UW 
Assistance with development and implementation of Evidenced-based practices

Yakima Valley Community College Nursing 
Nursing student rotations

Community Health of Central Washington 
Providing behavioral health services in primary care settings in Kittitas. Providing primary care services at Comprehensive locations.

Developmental Disability Administration 
Providing day treatment programs

Yakima, Benton County Jails 
Providing mental health services

ESD 105 
Joint sponsorship of community mental health first aid classes

National Alliance for Mental Illness 
Joint sponsorship of community education programs

Central Washington University 
Providing intern placement, and EMT student rotations

Yakima County Courts 
Drug Court, Mental Health Court providing treatment
Client Facts & Revenue

2014 Staff & Client Breakdown by County

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<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Clients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chelan County</td>
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<td>Kittitas County</td>
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<td>Walla Walla County</td>
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2014 Revenue Breakdown

- State & Federal: 67%
- Grants: 8%
- Contracts: 24%
- Donations: 0%
- Misc.: 1%
Comprehensive’s Board of Directors

2014 was a year of explosive growth for Comprehensive. Adjusting to growth of that magnitude took a great partnership between the Board of Directors and staff working hard to stay ahead of the challenges. We are fortunate to have a committed group of leaders who welcome the opportunity to serve more consumers and communities.

New Directors

Steve Burdick
Hospital Administrator
Walla Walla

Grace Danielson
Construction Project Coordinator
Yakima

Tom Kloster
Retired Businessman
Yakima

Dale Loveland
Bank Vice President/Branch Manager
Ellensburg

Hal Powell, Chair
Business Owner/CEO
Yakima

Ronda Ide, Vice Chair
Insurance Benefits Manager
Zillah

Leslie Paddock, Secretary/Treasurer
Registered Nurse
Yakima

Ann Allen
Healthcare Management
Yakima

Lorenzo Alvarado
High School Administrator
Wapato

Joe Batali, Jr.
Retired Businessman
Yakima

Bret Bohoskey
Financial Adviser
Yakima

Jim Gibbons
Insurance Company Owner/Agent
Yakima

Ken Inoyn
Retired Sheriff
Yakima

Howard Moore
Retired Construction Manager
Yakima

Sue Scott
Certified Public Accountant
Yakima

Donna Sorensen
Retired Depository Relationship Manager
Selah

Jeanette Stromme
Optometrist
Yakima

The Mission of Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health is to provide innovative behavioral healthcare, community education and services to individuals, families and organizations.

Telespsychiatry
Delivering psychiatric services through telecommunications. More care for more people.

Remodels
Updating and reconfiguring facilities to accommodate more staffing and improved access.

Additional Staff and Capacities
Expanded behavioral health services and expanded staffing delivering more care to more people.

Expanded Cle Elum Office
Making room for more.

Chemical Dependency in Kittitas
Filling another identified community need in the Comprehensive service area.

More…Coming soon!