Refugees and Immigrants

Between 2000 and 2010, the ethnic and racial diversity of Bellevue increased by 62%. In 1990, the U.S. Census reported 86.5% of Bellevue residents indicated as a single race, White. In the 2010 U.S. Census, this percentage dropped to 59.2%, a higher level of diversity than in King County. Many of these residents from diverse groups are immigrants and refugees.

What’s Working?

• English Language Learners Alliance (ELLA) was started in 2012 in Bellevue to help new residents from other countries have a place to practice their English language, meet new friends, and learn about their new culture. Some participants are here with family members or spouses who work at companies on the Eastside. Groups are free and open on a drop in basis. Talk Times are held weekly at Crossroads Shopping Center at lunch time and at Highland Community Center for parents with a play group for their children; at Crossroads Community Center, there is a more structured English as a Second Language Class weekly.

• Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition (ERIC), formed in 2002 to address gaps in service delivery for refugees and immigrants, launched a new effort in 2010 for non-profit agency leaders to explore how their organizations define cultural competency and how this shapes their client policies and practices. ERIC serves as a resource for providers and other community members who work with immigrant and refugee populations in East King County. ERIC fosters networking at meetings hosted each time by various partner organizations and organizes occasional free educational forums where people gather to gain knowledge about culturally competent practices, as well as share challenges and successes in responding to community needs.

• Bellevue’s Neighborhood Outreach Program sponsors a bi-monthly group for women at Crossroads Community Center called Cultural Conversations. This networking and discussion group began in response to requests from women from diverse cultural backgrounds who wanted to be more connected in their community. Some of the activities at Cultural Conversations this year included exploring probing questions about the American dream and identity, genealogy, rituals, and the danger of a single story.

Prevalence

Specific Race and Ethnicity Characteristics in Bellevue

The following analysis was provided by the City of Bellevue Department of Planning and Community Development using data from the 2010 Census and 2008-2010 ACS, the most recent data available:

• Since 1990, the proportion of Non-White people in Bellevue has more than quadrupled from about 14.7% of the population in 1990 to 28.3% in 2000, and finally, 40.8% in 2010. Bellevue’s Asians and Hispanics are the fastest growing racial and ethnic groups in the city. The population for both these groups more than doubled between 1990 and 2010.

• Bellevue’s Asian population is a substantial portion of the overall City population (27.5%), the highest percentage of any city in the State. While Chinese residents make up the largest portion of Bellevue’s Asian population (35%), Asian Indians have had the fastest rate of growth since 1990, increasing in population by over 1,400%.

• In 2010, Hispanics or Latinos comprised 7% of Bellevue’s population, up from 5.3% in 2000. Crossroads and West Lake Hills had the highest proportion of Hispanics with almost 15% each. The largest group of Hispanic/Latino residents is from Mexico (67%).

• The Black or African American community in Bellevue grew at a rate faster than that
of the City as a whole. While the Bellevue population grew more than 11% since 2000, the Black or African American community increased 28.6%. According to the 2010 Census, Black or African Americans still make up only 2.2% of the Bellevue population.

• According to the 2008-2010 ACS, nearly 37% of Bellevue residents spoke a language other than English at home. This is a higher percentage than King County (25%), Seattle (21%), and Washington State (18%). About half (49%) of Bellevue’s non-English speakers speak an Asian language; the next highest percentages speak either an Indo-European language (31%) or Spanish (15%).

• During 2008-2010, Bellevue had the second highest estimated number and 16th highest percentage (33%) of foreign-born residents out of Washington State’s 281 incorporated cities. Tukwila and SeaTac were the only cities in King County with higher percentages.

• In 2008-2010, about 16% of Bellevue’s households had no one over the age of 14 who spoke English “very well”. This is an increase from about 6% in 2000. These households are considered linguistically isolated. Crossroads and West Lake Hills have the highest percentages of linguistically isolated households.

Definition of Refugee

• Refugees are people who, based on a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, leave their native country and apply to another country for residency. A refugee is granted legal status and protection before entry into the U.S. In some cases when the President can allow some countries to process refugees in their country of origin. In 2012, nationals of Cuba, the republics of the former Soviet Union and Iraq were processed in this manner.3

World and National Refugee Trends

• According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of 2012 there were some 35.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. This total includes 10.5 million refugees, 935,274 asylum seekers, and 17.7 million people uprooted within their own countries. Afghan refugees accounted for by far and away the largest group of refugees at almost 2.5 million refugees in 2012.4

• At the beginning of each fiscal year, the President works with Congress to establish the number of refugees who may be admitted in the coming year, with a quota from each of the regions of the world. The graph below indicates the shortfall between how many refugees were authorized for admission compared to how many were actually admitted. As depicted in the table below, numbers of refugees being legally admitted in the U.S. have generally declined over the past fifteen years, reaching an all-time low of 27,029 in FY 2002, subsequent to the 9/11 attack. Between 2002 and 2007 refugee admissions ceilings were set at 70,000/year, yet much lower numbers were actually admitted. In federal fiscal year 2008, the refugee admissions ceiling was increased to 80,000, due to the expected resettlement of Iraqi, Bhutanese, and Iranian refugees in the Near East/South Asia region. The ceiling for 2012 was 76,000. The ceiling for the proposed federal fiscal year 2013 is 70,000.5

• The annual average number of refugee arrivals declined from approximately 100,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ceiling</th>
<th>Number of Refugees Admitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>27,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>28,422</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>52,868</td>
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<td>80,000</td>
<td>56,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>58,238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
during the 1990s to 50,000 during the 2000 to 2006 period. This decline is partly due to changes in security procedures after 9/11 and admission requirements resulting from the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and the Real ID Act of 2005. Following this decline, the total number of refugees admitted to the United States increased by 25% from 48,218 in 2007 to 60,104 in 2008, and 74,602 in 2009. In 2010, there was a decrease of 1.8% from 2009, to 73,293. In 2012 there was a further decrease of 20% to 58,238. In 2012, the leading countries of nationality for refugee admissions were Bhutan (26%), Burma (24%), and Iraq (21%). Approximately 71% of refugees were from these 3 countries. Other leading countries include Somalia (8%), Cuba (3%), Iran (3%), Democratic Republic of Congo (3%), and Eritrea (2%).

Definition of Immigrant, Asylee and Refugee

- Immigrants are people who have petitioned to enter the United States to become lawful permanent residents from countries that have not been designated by the U.S. as having refugee eligibility. Immigrants have chosen for a variety of reasons to leave their homes to go to another country. By comparison, refugees are those who feel forced to leave their homes due to persecution. Asylees are foreign nationals currently residing in the U.S. who have the same fear of persecution and death as refugees if they return to their country of origin. Different application processes and rules apply to those who are seeking asylum in the U.S.7

- The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigrant Services (BCIS), formerly the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, under the Department of Homeland Security, implements immigration policy passed by Congress, including establishing quotas by country for the number of new immigrants allowed to settle in the U.S. annually as well as rules regarding their treatment and benefits. Unlike refugees, immigrants are not entitled to medical and cash benefits for up to eight months after their arrival in the United States.8 In 2012, the U.S. admitted 1,031,631 immigrants obtaining legal permanent resident status, a 2% decrease compared to 2010.9

- The Personal Responsibility Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) passed by Congress in 1996 reformed the federal welfare system. It also drastically reduced or eliminated entitlements such as Social Security and food stamps for all immigrants who entered the country after August 22, 1996. The ongoing cuts of benefits on both the state and federal level has continued to deeply impact human services agencies as they struggle to find other sources of funding to serve immigrants.10

Washington State and King County Trends

- Exact figures on the total population of both immigrants and refugees are generally unavailable, since most sources do not account for the high levels of internal migration. The 2011 ACS estimates that 909,312 of Washington State residents are foreign-born, with 81.8% speaking a language other than English at home.11 Both refugee and

![King County Immigration Trends: Refugee Health Screening Reports 1993-2012](Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County)
immigrant numbers are probably higher as language barriers, cultural considerations, and other factors make both groups more difficult to quantify than U.S.-born citizens. In 2012, Washington ranked ninth in the U.S., resettling 2,165 refugee arrivals, representing about 3.7% of total new refugee arrivals to the U.S. in 2012. Between 2010 and 2012, Washington decreased refugee arrivals by 28%.12

- Between 2010-2012, Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS) in Washington State assisted an average of 2,000-3,000 new refugees with their physical, social, cultural and economic needs.13 Washington’s largest arrivals have shifted to more diverse groups from Southeast Asian, such as Burmese and Bhutanese. Refugees from the former Soviet Union and Somali are still a large portion of the total. Larger numbers of Iranians and Iraqis are also arriving.14 This growing demand for services puts a strain on existing community resources to meet basic needs including housing, employment, and health care.

- For those refugees arriving directly in King County, Public Health-Seattle & King County provides figures based on initial health screenings required of all refugees. As the chart on the previous page shows, data from 1995 through 2008 indicate a declining trend of arrivals, particularly during 2002 and 2003, when totals were barely over 1,000, less than half compared to the mid-1990s. In 2003, the largest group of refugees continued to be from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, with 795 arrivals. The next largest group came from Africa, primarily from Somalia. The last were arrivals from the Near East/South Asia, which includes Burma, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In 2004, the total number of refugees screened increased to 1,264. The most dramatic individual increase in 2004 is the number of refugees from African countries, with 510 arrivals, just slightly less than the traditional leaders, those from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe who had 619. Between 2003 and 2004, the number of refugees from Africa resettling in King County increased by 210%. In 2005, there were 1,538 people screened, with the largest number from the former Soviet Union, and in 2006, 1,383. In 2007 and 2008, there was a slight decrease overall, with 1,159 and 1,194, respectively. In 2007, the largest groups were from the former Soviet Union, Somalia, and Burma. In 2008, 196 Bhutanese refugees were resettled here coming from camps in Nepal. The other large groups were from the former Soviet Union, and Burma. In 2009, 1,526 refugees were screened, in 2010, 1,894, the largest increase since 1998, in King County. The largest group was from Iraq (452) followed by people from Burma. In 2012 the numbers went up again to 2,608, with the largest group of refugees coming from Bhutan and Burma.15

**Refugee and Immigrant Groups in Bellevue**

- In Bellevue, anecdotal information from providers’ surveys and key informant interviews indicate that the largest groups of refugees encountered for human services are from Africa and Asia. The largest group of immigrants in Bellevue using services tends to be Hispanic/Latino, primarily from Mexico, followed by Chinese, Koreans and people from East Indian countries.

- Jewish Family Service (JFS) reports that new refugees arriving to King County in the next year will be primarily from Burma, Iraq, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The largest groups resettling in East King County remain Iranians and Iraqis. The overall number of refugee arrivals is forecast to increase to 2,800 refugees for Washington State, with approximately 2,000 resettling in Western Washington. JFS plans to resettle 210 refugees in the next year, with most residing initially in South King County.16

**Service Trends**

**Need for English Language Learners (ELL) Classes for Children and Adults**

- As of October, 2013, 84 languages and dialects were spoken by Bellevue School District (BSD) students. The top languages are Spanish, Chinese-Mandarin, Korean,
Chinese-Cantonese, Russian, Japanese, Vietnamese, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, French, Farsi (Persian), and Arabic.\(^{17}\)

- Many children of refugees and immigrants are not enrolled in the schools’ English Language Learners programs because they are bilingual, so the number of children from families whose first language is not English is probably much higher than the ELL enrollment numbers indicate. 32.4% of Bellevue School District students speak a language other than English (either the “home” language or “first language.”) A student might be considered “bilingual” but still might be in ELL, depending on his/her level of English proficiency as determined by ELL screening assessments.\(^{18}\)

![Most common first languages other than English (October 2013)](chart)

Source: Bellevue School District

- Hopelink’s Family Development Program continues to provide case management and advocacy support to immigrant and refugee populations. To address the language barrier they have been able to refer immigrant/refugee clients in the Family Development Program to Hopelink’s English for Work (EFW) program. The EFW program teaches English language learners how to search for jobs and speak about their skills and experience. Students also receive individualized job coaching to reinforce what they learn in the class. Hopelink’s Adult Education ESL program is currently providing ESL in 3 levels in work-contextualized classes for job search. They provide a lot of one-on-one coaching and work closely with the Employment program. The primary first languages spoken in the time period July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 for ESL classes were Spanish (35%), Chinese (19%), Russian (10%), Farsi (7%), Korean (5%), and Vietnamese and Tigrigna (3% each).\(^{19}\)

- Jewish Family Service (JFS) also provides vocational ESL classes. JFS reports a significant increase in the number of clients seeking employment referral services. Social service programs such as employment counseling, and job placement programs are also in high demand.\(^{20}\)

- Refugee Women’s Alliance (ReWA) reports that language barriers are the biggest issue for newcomers trying to get a job in a down economy. ReWA provides ESL programs and employment support with career training.\(^{21}\)

- Jubilee REACH, a family center in the Lake Hills neighborhood, offers free ESL classes and Talk Time with child care provided, alleviating one barrier frequently mentioned by parents. 171 students attended the ESL classes in 2012, a 70% increase over the previous year. They also offer a number of programs that are welcoming to people new to this culture, such as International Luncheons, and the Golden Age Social Club for Chinese elders.\(^{22}\)

Other Language-Related Needs
- Beginning in 1998, Public Health-Seattle and King County noted a dramatic increase in the need for interpreters for its clinics. Although this may be partly attributed to newly arrived refugees and immigrants, Public Health cites internal (within the
U.S.) migration as the primary source of this increase. In 1998, county-wide, over 38,000 encounters with clients (not including the Women, Infants & Children - WIC Program) required interpreter services. By 2006, this number grew to over 71,000. In 2008, there were almost 77,000 interpreted visits. In 2009 and 2010, however, the number of interpreted visits declined (75,543 and 64,353, respectively) due to a number of factors, but largely due to budget cuts to Public Health programs, including immunization and Maternity Support Services. Another drop occurred, with 47,219 visits requiring interpretation, in King County in 2012.

- At the Eastgate Public Health Clinic, where many Bellevue residents go for services, 12,947 interpreted visits were provided in 2008, similar to 2006. In 2009, the visits dropped 8% to 11,913, and in 2010, the number fell another 10%, to 10,772. In 2012 the rate further dropped 18% to 8,854 interpreted visits. As the chart below indicates, the largest percentage of interpreted visits were in Spanish.

In 2011, there were 25.3 million US residents, or 9% of the total US population ages 5 and older, who were Limited English Proficient (LEP) — up from a 6% share in 1990. About 1/2 of the nation’s 40.2 million immigrants ages 5 and older were LEP. On the Eastside, 10% of the population and 1/3 of the 83,000 immigrants are LEP. Although most LEP individuals nationwide are foreign born, a large share (about 19%) of this population is native born. On the Eastside it is 12%.

**Need for Information about Resources**

- The City of Bellevue has been working on many ways to make access to information by English Language Learner residents easier. In 2003, a Spanish webpage was added to the City’s website with information for resources such as police, fire, and health and human services. In 2007, the City added Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian web pages to their website; recently, a Korean option was added. The City has a Language Line available that will provide interpreters who speak over 150 languages and dialects within minutes to assist employees in speaking with customers that do not speak English. The Bellevue Fire Department created and released multiple outreach videos and public service announcements (PSA) in Spanish, Russian, and English. The PSAs are not just for television; for example, videos in Spanish giving information about the City, are also used at public events. In the case of an emergency, general information about what to do during and immediately after is available in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Russian. Bellevue is also working with the

**2012 Interpreted Visits by Language at Eastgate Public Health**

- Spanish: 6811
- Vietnamese: 58
- Mandarin/Cantonese: 74
- Russian: 141

Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County
King County Joint Information Center to translate emergency communications into several languages in addition to English. Other City departments, such as Police, Utilities and Transportation are translating their materials into multiple languages, including Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Hindi, and Korean on topics such as recycling safety, and driving techniques when there is ice and snow. A number of Bellevue Police officers and Firefighters are multilingual.

25

• The City of Bellevue’s Cultural Diversity Program uses email alerts, television, and radio to dispense information on Bellevue cultural forums, business events, and local workshops. The purpose of the program is to communicate available services to meet the diverse needs of Bellevue’s population.

• The Eastside Cultural Navigator Program uses bilingual/bicultural staff stationed at several key sites around East King County, including Crossroads Mini-City Hall and the Together Center, formerly known as the Family Resource Center in Redmond, to be liaisons and advocates, helping refugee and immigrant populations to better navigate complex systems, such as healthcare and publicly funded social services, to better utilize existing resources. Chinese Information and Service Center is the lead agency for this program which began in December 2006, with staff available who speak Spanish, Mandarin and Cantonese, Russian and several East Indian dialects. They serve many low-income residents of the city who have difficulty accessing other services because of language and cultural barriers. Some of the ways Navigators assist include helping a new resident register their child for school, signing up for energy assistance, or finding housing resources.

• The Crisis Clinic Community Information Line 2-1-1 reports a significant increase in foreign language calls. In East King County in 2001, 273 calls were received from people needing assistance in a language other than English; 175 were handled by a Spanish Language Specialist, and 98 were helped by the Interpreter Service. In 2012, the number rose, to 378 calls; 266 were handled by a Spanish Language Specialist, and 112 were helped by the Tele-Interpreter Service.

27

Employment

• As the economy continued to be weak and job growth slow, refugee and immigrant communities were one of the hardest hit, according to feedback obtained from a number of Community Conversations and key informant interviews. People who do not speak English as their first language are competing with the native born unemployed workforce for fewer jobs at lower pay.

• The goal of the Washington State Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA), which began in 1975 to help refugees successfully resettle here, is to promote economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. It provides funds to non-profit agencies and community colleges for English Language Learner instruction, employment services and job placement. During the 2010 and 2011 State Legislative Sessions, due to budget cuts, levels of assistance were decreased. Also affected in the 2010-11 state budget was the Food Assistance Program, which was cut in half, and reductions in funding for medical interpreters for refugees and immigrants. In the 2013 budget, State Food Assistance rose from 50% of the federal amount to 75%. This amounts to about $40 extra per month for immigrant and refugee families.

28

• The Preparing for Work program at Bellevue College (BC) served almost 1,200 immigrant and refugee students in 2012. Staff helps English Language Learners (ELL) develop their language and networking skills to assist them in their job search. Students write resumes, practice interviewing and get small group coaching with business professionals. Staff comments that in this economic climate, finding jobs for ELL students is especially challenging.
• Cultural Navigators report that more of their clients are having a hard time finding work if English is their second language. The biggest needs initially are for English language skills, jobs, and job training to become employable in a new field.31
• In 2011, ReWA helped 630 families with job placement, with 321 clients placed successfully in jobs.32

Culturally Specific Nutrition
• Refugee Women’s Alliance provides outreach to English Language Learners who may be eligible for the Basic Food Plan, formerly known as food stamps. Staff provides information in Russian/Ukrainian, Somali and Spanish to people who did not know they could receive this State benefit.33 The Emergency Feeding Program offers several culturally-sensitive food bags designed specifically for Latino, Asian and East African families. In 2010, 24,103 of these bags were distributed. Staff reports an increase in the number of requests for these food bags.34
• In 2013, 44% of clients served at the food bank at the Bellevue Hopelink Center were born in the US. 35% of the clients served at the food bank have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and needed an interpreter/translator. They have seen an increase in clients with Limited English Proficiency who spoke Russian as their primary language. In 2013 this constituted 35% of the total LEP population, a 5% increase from 2011. The trend of LEP clients who spoke Spanish as a primary language were the opposite. In 2013, 35% of the total LEP population spoke Spanish as a primary language, a decrease from 2011 when it was 11%. In 2013 the food bank served clients from 81 countries who spoke 47 different languages.35

We work hard to make ends meet.
Community Conversation, Mamas Unitas

Culturally Specific Child Care and Family Friend and Neighbor Care
• In 2000, Child Care Resources (CCR) reported that there were 118 bilingual providers on the Eastside out of the 338 listed in their database. Due to increased support and training efforts, as of August 2013, the number has grown to 243 providers offering bilingual care, out of a total of 525. Among child care providers listing one language in addition to or other than English, the largest groups were: Spanish, Farsi/Persian, Chinese, Hindi, Russian, French, American Sign Language, Urdu, Japanese, Arabic and Other (a combination of East African Languages, Fijian, Romanian, Hebrew). CCR also has a Child Care Careers Program which helps refugee and immigrant women develop skills to work in the field of early childhood development. Even with this increase, there still seems to be a gap for such services for parents who want their children to be cared for by people from their own cultures.36
• Many families from diverse cultures prefer to have their children cared for by Families, Friends, or Neighbors. Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups, a program of Child Care Resources, are organized play groups for young children and the people who take care of them – grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, other family members, friends and parents. At Kaleidoscope Play & Learn, young children and their caregivers participate in fun, educational play activities and get to know other people in their neighborhood. In East King County, there are six Play and Learn groups, conducted in both English/Spanish and English/Mandarin.37
• An Early Childhood longitudinal study revealed that disparities based on factors such as race and income do have a measurable effect on child outcomes as early as nine months of age. Infants and toddlers from racial/ethnic minority groups, whose home language was not English, and/or who had mothers with low maternal education scored lower on cognitive and positive behavior ratings. One of the implications suggested from this study was to start early supporting and encouraging families, and to increase the quality of early care in both home based and center based settings.38
Issues for School-Aged Children and Youth from Diverse Communities

• In Community Conversations and interviews with leaders in diverse communities in Bellevue, it was frequently mentioned that young adults and teens from these communities are faced with identity problems, caught between two or more cultures. They may live in traditional homes, but do not always identify with their parents and cultural traditions. (Note: For more information, see the School-Aged Children and Youth section in this report.)

Legal Issues

• The need for free or low-cost legal assistance for immigration and family law issues provided in languages other than English continues to grow. Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) reports an increased demand for services in languages other than English. ELAP has two specialized clinics for this population—the immigration clinic that deals with immigration law issues and the multilingual clinic that provides assistance on any civil legal issue with bilingual interpreters in Spanish and Russian. Staff partners with the Cultural Navigator program to extend their outreach to diverse communities.

• Community Conversation participants, including Parent Child Home Program, Mamas Unitas, and Cultural Navigator program staff, reported the concerns of their clients about potential anti-immigration sentiments and discrimination. There were also reports of landlords taking advantage of immigrants with apartments that are in disrepair, higher deposits, and often not returning the deposits to those with limited English skills.

Human Trafficking

• Human Trafficking, which includes labor and sex trafficking, is a modern day form of slavery. Approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders and include women, men and children. Some victims are native born U.S. citizens, as well. Victims are coerced to prostitute or to work without pay and often subjected to physical and psychological dangers, such as severe beatings, rape, drug addiction and other forms of violence.

• In Washington State, which is one of the top human trafficking destinations in the U.S. due to the easily accessed public ports and proximity to Asia, the Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network (WARN) provides a 24-hour urgent response hotline, and access to safe housing and immigration advocacy and legal assistance.

• In January 2013 King County launched a campaign to raise awareness about human trafficking. The campaign included ads in six languages posted on Metro buses as well as forming partnerships with non-profits that provide resources such as legal services and safe housing. Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network (WARN) is a coalition of organizations in Washington State that provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking. In April 2013 WARN staff gave a presentation to human service providers and several police officers in East King County about definitions of human trafficking, that include sex and labor, victim identification and the existing response and service referral system.

Health and Mental Health Services

• Disparities exist and continue to broaden the divide between many minorities and Whites in King County. According to Communities Count, Social and Health Indicators across King County, in East King County there was a significant increase in the average stress score in 2011, as measured by asking people four questions on a survey about how often they have experienced certain symptoms of stress. In 2011, the stress score for native born residents was 8.5 on a scale of 5 (low) to 20 (high), while in for foreign born residents reported average stress levels of 9.2. The survey countywide showed that some of the groups who experienced higher stress levels overall include: people of color, people whose primary language is not English, people with incomes less than $50,000, people with less than a
college degree, and people age 18-24.

- During the 2013 State Legislative session, the final budget included funds to put the federal Medicaid expansion in place in 2014. One group of residents who are especially affected by this expansion in health care are documented immigrants, who will have wider access to health insurance. This wider coverage should reduce pressure on emergency health care providers as patients can access preventative care with coverage.

- HealthPoint reports an increasing number of clients who need uncompensated care, many of whom are English Language Learners. They also report a large decrease in funding from King County Public Health for Mental Health care.

- Mental health services are becoming less accessible to many consumers, but especially those in minority communities at a time when more people are reporting more stress and anxiety. The Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) reports a decrease in non-Medicaid funding for services. ACRS provides bilingual and bicultural mental health services for clients who would prefer them.

- International Community Health Services (ICHS) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that provides health services, including dental and behavioral health, to underserved populations in King County. Their services are open to all races and ethnicities, but they particularly serve the Asian, Native Hawaiian and the Pacific Islander communities. ICHS will open a clinic in the Crossroads neighborhood in Bellevue in 2014.

- Many group participants from Community Conversations discussed the difficulty and confusion of getting health insurance, and navigating through the health care system to determine if they were eligible. The payment system for health care was confusing to several of the attendees. Key informants interviewed who are members of diverse communities in Bellevue, such as Ethiopian, Hispanic, Chinese and East Indian, mentioned health care as the number one human services need.

### Parent Support

- CISC offer Cultural Navigator services to families in five languages to help with accessing appropriate services and navigating systems. CISC also has parent education classes to help parents raise bicultural children. Classes emphasize communication across the generations to promote understanding within the family.

- Local agencies and organizations are addressing the need for families who want additional assistance and support when parenting in this culture. CISC provides Play and Learn Groups. Kindering Center provides support groups and parenting classes for parents who speak Spanish. Kindering also has a home visiting program, the Parent Child/Home Program that is funded by the United Way of King County. The program provides services to primarily Latino families. Asia Pacific Language School Learning Center provides parenting education for its large percentage of Asian families. In addition, through collaborations with a number of local providers, the Healthy Start program offers home visiting, parent education and support to young, first-time parents with children prenatal through age three; because over half of the young parents in this program are Latino, a number of staff speaks Spanish.

> “Thank you to the US and Circle of Friends for helping us. It improves our lives here.”

**Community Conversation, Circle of Friends**

### Community Perceptions

- In the 2013 phone/online survey, Bellevue’s recent (immigrated within the last 10 years) immigrant population is significantly less likely than those who haven’t immigrated in the last ten years to rate community issues as major or moderate.

- In the phone/online survey, a question was added in 2001 asking if the respondent had experienced racial or ethnic discrimination. The percentage who rated this as a major or moderate problem fluctuated from 4% in 2001, to almost 7% in 2003, back to almost 5% in 2005 and 2007, 6.58% in 2009 than 5%
in 2011. In the 2013 phone/online survey the rate shot up, 16% rated it as such.

- Among respondents to the 2013 Consumer Survey, 43% cited not being able to speak, read or write in the English language as a major or moderate problem compared to 2011 when 39% rated it as such. Almost 84.6% of the respondents to this survey responded that they spoke a language other than English at home. Another high need, lack of money to pay for dental care, was expressed as a major or moderate problem by almost 49% of consumer respondents.

- Community Conversations with various multi-cultural community groups in 2013 revealed that there is a continued, high need for human service organizations, schools, and municipalities to provide interpretation for those who do not speak English. Another common concern was unemployment. There continues to be intense competition for many of the low-wage jobs that immigrants once were able to get easily; now, non-immigrants with higher education and training are getting these jobs.

- Affordable housing was a recurring theme among Community Conversations participants. Waiting lists are long and often difficult to get on.

- Another need expressed frequently in discussions with key informants and providers within the immigrant and refugee was services for survivors of domestic violence. Gaps included multilingual advocates, legal services and shelters that are culturally sensitive.

- Some immigrants and refugees report in Community Conversations that they believe they have experienced housing or job discrimination, such as receiving notice to leave without cause, or not getting wage increases. Due to fear of deportation, some immigrants will not report these incidents.

**Implications for Action**

- The need for more culturally and linguistically competent human services staff grows each year. Throughout the community, there is a need for information to be available in languages other than English, such as that provided through the Cultural Navigator program, and other culturally and linguistically specific non-profit organizations.

- There is a lack of culturally appropriate mental health counseling for recent immigrants or refugees. Use of mental health care can be unfamiliar and unacceptable. Providing culturally acceptable care which takes into account background is essential for this demographic.

- Requests for English-as-a-Second-Language and citizenship classes at all levels for adults are increasing significantly, a result of larger numbers of refugees and immigrants living in Bellevue as well as a greater demand for better language skills to secure jobs in this era of high unemployment. More opportunities for people to learn English, especially those that offer childcare, are needed.

- Non-English speaking parents need assistance helping their children in school. This can include having more bilingual staff, materials for parents translated in their native languages, and events to educate parents about the school system and culture in the U.S. Opportunities to practice English in social situations would help in developing language skills.

- Increased opportunities are needed for people to have cultural events and activities to increase awareness in the community about the richness of these cultures and engage new Americans in meaningful dialogue. There are more ways yet untapped to utilize the strengths and assets that the many immigrant and refugee groups have brought here with them, to enrich and strengthen the whole community.

**Endnotes**

As retrieved from: http://popstats.unhcr.org/PSQ_TMS.aspx
13. VOLAGS are national organization affiliates funded by the U.S. State Department responsible for providing initial resettlement services to new refugee arrivals.
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