

Overview

The Bellevue Human Services Needs Update for 2009-2010

The City of Bellevue publishes the Human Services Needs Update at the beginning of each two-year human services funding cycle. Since 1989, this report has offered a summary of trends within Bellevue, East King County, the Puget Sound region, Washington State and the nation. Through this report, we hope to provide a broad vision and context for understanding human services needs, and for inspiring actions that will ameliorate barriers to achieving a high quality of life for all Bellevue residents, especially during the current economic downturn.

Methods

Some of the multiple sources of information that support the conclusions of the Needs Update include:

- A phone survey of 441 Bellevue residents
- A written survey of over 100 consumers of human services in Bellevue
- Online surveys completed by 60 human services providers
- Key informant interviews with 16 administrators or community representatives
- Online surveys completed by 8 Bellevue-based employers
- Over 20 Community Conversations with Bellevue residents and providers of human services
- Thirteen surveys completed by representatives of faith communities
- Reports, studies and online databases covering a wide range of service areas and issues, as well as data from the United States 2000 Census, and data from the 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS)

Bellevue's Demographic Profile

- In 2009, Bellevue's population was estimated to be 120,600. This is compared to a popu-

lation of 109,569 in 2000, and 86,874 in 1990. Household size is decreasing, from 3.4 persons per household in 1970 to 2.4 in 1990, 2.37 in 2000 and remained at 2.37 for the 2006-2008 ACS estimate.

- The 2006-2008 ACS data shows that 23% of Bellevue residents were age 0-19, 35% were age 20-44, 27% age 45-64, and 14.4% age 65 and older.
- Since 1980, the proportion of Non-White residents in Bellevue has more than quadrupled from about seven percent of the population to 31% in 2006-2008 and 35% if Hispanic or Latino populations are included.
- Even though a larger proportion of Bellevue's households fell within the highest income categories in 2006-2008, overall median household income did not keep pace with inflation and the percentage of individuals living in poverty rose. The gap between rich and poor in Bellevue, therefore, appears to have widened.
- Bellevue saw significant increases in poverty levels since 2000. Families with incomes below the poverty level rose from 3.8% in 2000 to 5.0% in 2006-2008. However, some families, such as households headed by females with children age 5-17, individuals age 65-74, and individuals ages 18-24 are more likely to earn incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL).

Qualify of Life in Bellevue

Phone survey respondents were asked to rate each of 33 problem areas as a major, moderate, minor or not a problem in their community. The vast majority of respondents from the 2009 phone survey (85%) rated at least one of the 33 community problem issues asked about as a major or moderate problem in their community. Nine issues received a "major" or "moderate"

rating from at least three out of ten (30%) respondents:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of affordable medical insurance
- Unemployment
- Lack of affordable medical care
- People not knowing how to manage their personal finances
- Lack of affordable dental care
- People having jobs that do not pay enough for the basics of food, shelter and clothing
- Inadequate public transportation
- People not speaking or understanding English well enough to function in society

Perceptions of Problems in Households

Respondents also rated 29 potential problem areas in terms of whether they have been problems for anyone in their household over the past two years. Slightly more than half (51%) gave a “major” or “moderate” rating to at least one of the potential problems presented. Nine areas in the first tier received a combined “major/moderate problem” rating from at least 10% of respondents:

- Inadequate public transportation
- Having a lot of anxiety, stress, or depression that interferes with your daily life
- Not being able to get or pay for medical insurance
- Finding it difficult to budget the money that’s available
- Not being able to pay for the doctor, prescriptions, or dental bills
- Not being able to find work that supports yourself or your family
- Not having enough money to pay for housing
- Not being able to afford legal help

Barriers to Accessing Services

Responses from the provider surveys, key informant interviews and Community Conversations were used to identify five primary barriers to accessing human services in Bellevue. These are:

- **Cost of services:** Cost was often mentioned as a barrier to accessing human services

by community members, consumers and providers. Many cited an inability to pay for services and, more specifically, the cost of health insurance that would help them defray the full cost of care.

- **Ineligibility for services:** Both providers and consumers offered examples of this barrier, especially as increasing numbers of unemployed workers were not yet eligible for needed services, but were heading for a crisis as soon as their savings ran out. Areas mentioned were medical care, including mental health, utility assistance, childcare subsidies and housing.
- **Lack of information about available resources:** With the economic downturn affecting many people who never have had to ask for help before, this barrier was one of the largest mentioned. Phone survey respondents who said they did not find help for all or some of their problems most frequently mentioned that they didn’t know where to find help. This was also echoed in Community Conversations.
- **Language barriers:** Providers and consumers of human services report again this year that existing resources to serve those who have limited English language skills, including signage in other languages, translated materials and bilingual staff, are inadequate to meet the need.
- **Transportation:** Every year, providers consistently rate transportation as the largest barrier to clients accessing services. It was mentioned as a barrier for access to virtually every service area, from childcare to services for frail older adults and finding employment. In the phone survey, inadequate public transportation was ranked much higher than in previous surveys; in 2009 it was ranked as the top household problem.

Special Focus Area

The Economic Recession: Effects and Response

Key Trends

- Applications in Washington State for financial assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program rose 25% during 2008, leveled off in the first six months of 2009, and increased in the third quarter of 2009. Additionally, caseloads rose even more sharply than applications and continue to rise because people are staying in the program longer.
- Applications for Basic Food Assistance (formerly called food stamps) in Washington have increased steadily in late 2008 and early 2009. In the third quarter of 2009, the number of new applications leveled off. Requests for emergency financial assistance from Hopelink between September 2008 and January 2009, increased by 49% compared to the prior year.
- City of Bellevue Utilities Department reports a 13.5% increase in the number of delinquent utility bills between 2005 through May 2009 and a dramatic 62.8% increase in the number of utility shut-offs during the same period (59% occurred between 2008 and 2009).

Gaps Include

- A survey from the Foundation Center suggests that private foundation giving will decrease in the range of the high single digits to low double digits. Many of America's largest corporations plan to decrease their giving or keep it flat in 2009.
- Due to decreases in tax revenue, many local governments have not been able to commit additional funds to help citizens and human service organizations through the economic crisis. Long-term funding from King County government for essential regional human services continues to be in jeopardy. Funding for health and human services from the State also has been cut due to State budget shortfalls.

The Response

- Bellevue has received funding from the federal stimulus program for the CDBG program. The Human Services Commission has recommended the allocation of \$182,105 to capital/facility projects (Home Repair Program and two facilities serving older adults).
- The City of Bellevue has responded with the *Bellevue Cares* Initiative, a series of projects and trainings to improve city staffs' ability to serve citizens, communication with human service providers and resources for citizens to locate services.
- The United Way of King County responded with an emergency response to basic needs; an initiative to collect funds and invest these dollars in carefully-chosen community partners to ensure food security, help people avoid eviction or foreclosure and provide support to outreach organizations that help people learn about and qualify for public benefits.

Implications for action

- Sustained support for human services and community based efforts will likely need to continue in the short term; in the long term, there is a need to continue to explore creative solutions for stable, sustainable funding for local and regional human services, particularly to mitigate the fluctuations in public sector support.
- On a positive note, the economic crisis has presented opportunities for greater collaborations among non-profit human services programs to provide more coordinated and efficient access to their services. For example, programs providing emergency financial assistance have developed a common intake process so clients don't have to go to multiple agencies to receive sufficient funds to help prevent a utility shutoff. These delivery system improvements should be supported and encouraged to continue.

- Regional initiatives like the “Call to Caring” should be supported to seek ways to realize a vision designed to promote the creation of a society in which *everyone has equal access to adequate resources by the year 2020*. This may require a paradigm shift in the way that human services are organized and funded.
- The East King County Plan to End Homelessness was created in 2007, and identified the need for over 1,800 homeless housing units for youth, families, survivors of domestic violence, and single adults.

Community Goals and Specific Populations

Goal #1: Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead

Key Trends

- In November 2009 the United States Department of Agriculture released a report indicating that 14.6% of households in the U.S. were food insecure at least some time during the year, the highest recorded level of food insecurity since 1995. Food insecurity is defined as not having access to enough food at all times for an active and healthy life. In Washington State, the prevalence of household food insecurity was 11.1% (2006-2008 average). This is a decline of 2.1 percentage points from the 1996-98 average. Updated county and region level data are not yet available.
- In 2008, agencies served 4,649 Bellevue residents, primarily in the form of one-time rental or mortgage assistance to avoid eviction or foreclosure. Additional requests for emergency financial assistance continue to increase, for help with rent, utilities, gasoline, car repairs and medical needs.
- In Bellevue, 38% of renters and 30% of homeowners pay more than 30% of their income on housing. This indicates a cost of housing that is not in proportion with what people earn, significantly impacting people’s ability to maintain a stable housing situation.
- A total of 158 unsheltered individuals were counted in East Urban King County, including Bellevue, in the 2009 One Night Count. Hopelink turned away 898 requests for transitional housing in 2008 and 359 from January through April 2009.

Gaps Include

- Affordable housing, including workforce housing for those earning 80% or more of the median income.
- Emergency financial assistance for basic needs, such as rent, food, mortgage or utilities assistance.

Implications for Action

- Even as the housing crisis has had its impact in King County, Bellevue and the Eastside continue to offer few opportunities for affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing and increasing energy costs continue to put significant strain on household budgets – with no sign of improvement in the near future. A significant need for housing affordable for moderate-income households (also termed workforce housing) exists across the county and particularly on the Eastside.
- Human service agencies are pressed to the limit in providing not only emergency financial assistance, but also addressing homelessness, and bolstering food security. Budget crises have forced cuts to mental health, domestic violence, adult day health, and all other human service sectors.
- In addition to seeking a stable source of funding for human service providers, local governments should explore other avenues for promoting food security and rent supports. These may include providing expanded support for neighborhood associations, encouraging time-banking at the neighborhood level, and promoting informal care networks.

Goal #2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods and Communities

Key Trends

- In a survey conducted countywide in 2007

for *Communities Count: Social and Health Indicators Across King County*, people with incomes of \$50,000 or more reported higher levels of support than people with lower incomes, as did people who were white, and those who lived as a married or unmarried couple rather than as a single person. Single parents may have more needs for support. Whether mothers or fathers, they often have special needs because they may be the sole providers of their children's needs.

- Research has shown how important quality early learning is for young children to succeed in school and in life. Programs that support parents, such as Healthy Start, an evidenced based home visiting program, and groups for family, friends and neighbors who are watching young children in their homes while their parents work, are critical.
- Staff at Crisis Clinic, the designated Washington Information Network agency in King County for 2-1-1, noted in the provider survey that as a result of the recession, callers have multiple needs for assistance, not just a single need. More are recently "laid off" and have not ever used a social service and have no idea where to find help or even if any assistance is available. The top gaps identified, where requests exceeded availability, included rent and mortgage assistance, utilities and transportation.
- Statewide client demand for low-cost legal aid jumped 30% in 2008. That trend is reflected locally, with Eastside Legal Assistance Program receiving almost double the number of calls during the first half of 2009. There continues to be a high level of unmet need for low-income individuals seeking legal aid for civil issues, such as family law, housing and foreclosure assistance, domestic violence, and immigration issues.

Gaps Include

- Support for parents who want to assist in their children's learning, from birth through high school, particularly people new to this culture and language, including parenting workshops and home visiting programs.

- Funding for the 2-1-1 Community Information Line to maintain services especially in the face of increasing needs.
- Low-cost legal services.

Implications for Action

- Especially now during the economic downturn, Bellevue families will need social support for raising their children or caring for aging and or disabled loved ones, or a combination of the three. Family, friends and neighbors will be even more important components in the caregiving plan because funding has been cut for many formal services, such as chore services and adult day health centers.
- The need for information presented in languages other than English continues to grow as the excellent quality of life and beautiful environment attracts more and more refugees and immigrants to the Puget Sound Region and East King County. Human service providers, local government and the business community will need to work together to meet this need in the community.
- Many residents still do not have easy access to computers and rely on the phone or print media. Multi-modal forms of getting information out to the community is needed. The Crisis Clinic's 2-1-1 Community Information Line is one way to help fill this critical information gap. However, state funding for its operation must be continued. Another way is partnering with non-profit agencies, cities and faith communities to include information about resources through printed media, public TV access, and neighbors sharing information with neighbors.
- Low-cost or free civil legal services are a growing need for many residents especially during the economic downturn. A major gap for services exists for direct representation, especially for survivors of domestic violence, immigration issues, foreclosure and credit counseling.

Goal #3: A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence and Abuse

Key Trends

- Only a small percentage of survivors access formal services, according to national and local data. Survivors of family violence who do not speak English, who are elderly or who have a disability are even less likely or able to seek support services. Local providers continue to report an increase in the number of limited-English speaking clients. It is extremely difficult to determine how many people in King County are victims of domestic violence annually. Between January and June 2009, domestic violence reports to the Bellevue Police Department were on track to exceed the last two years. Some speculate that the additional stress during the economic downturn is a major factor in the increase of family violence.
- Sexual assault incidents show some decline nationally, and remain steady locally. Long term effects of sexual assault and rape include mental health issues, substance abuse and suicide. Early treatment is critical, and community education about creating a culture that does not condone abuse is needed.
- There are a limited number of shelter beds in all parts of the County, but Eastside Domestic Violence Program (EDVP) is the only agency in East King County offering a confidential shelter. EDVP has ten apartment units that serve as emergency shelter; transitional housing that serves up to ten families; and two to three confidential motel/hotel vouchers at any given time for up to two weeks. Overall, for every family they have the capacity to serve, 18 are turned away.
- In 2008, Child Protective Services accepted 289 referrals for suspected child abuse and neglect in Bellevue zip codes, remaining steady from previous years.
- Reports of abuse of vulnerable adults, such as the elderly and disabled, remains steady as Bellevue police received 100 reports

in 2008. Experts believe that this type of abuse is greatly under-reported. Financial exploitation is the most frequently reported category of adult abuse in Washington State.

Gaps Include

- Low-cost legal services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Transitional and low-cost permanent housing for survivors and their families.
- Community education on sexual assault and family violence.

Implications for Action

- The growing number of people who do not have medical insurance or are not eligible for Medicaid makes access to services more difficult for victims. Individual and group counseling services are especially limited for low-income adult survivors, and for children. Additional resources are needed.
- Survivors of sexual abuse often have multiple needs including treatment for substance abuse, parental support and childcare, legal aid, and transitional and permanent housing.
- Especially during times of funding cuts, it is critical to support community education about sexual assault, rape and child sexual abuse, as decreased staff levels at many agencies can make it harder to find and get help.
- Two ongoing areas of concern in this service area that should still be monitored include: Internet safety regarding sex offenders' access to vulnerable teens and adults and the potential needs of partners of returning veterans, or of women who are veterans.

Goal #4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible

Key Trends

- Seven percent of East King County residents, aged 18-65, lack health insurance, lower than other regions in King County. In the Bellevue Health Planning Area, 8.1%

of adults did not see a doctor in 2005 due to cost. More non-White racial and ethnic groups lack insurance and access to health care compared to White Bellevue residents. Each year, Eastside health care providers are serving increased numbers of patients with little or no insurance, and with the current economic downturn and high unemployment, this could grow even more.

- During the 2006 and 2007 State Legislative sessions, bills were passed that cover 48,000 more uninsured children, expanding the total to about 624,000 children served by the Children's Health Program. The overall goal is to cover all low-income children in the State by 2010. In 2009, the U.S. Congress reauthorized the Children's Health Insurance Program, continuing and expanding funding to states that provide health insurance to low-income children up to 200% FPL. This entitles Washington State to larger reimbursement from the federal level as the state expands coverage to low-income children.
- Though rates of substance abuse are lower for Bellevue students compared to statewide rates, the most recent Healthy Youth Survey reported that almost 35% of Bellevue 12th graders said that they recently drank alcohol.
- People of color are referred less often to mental health services and receive less follow-up care or services. So the higher rates of people of color receiving services are probably still underestimating the need for treatment. Non-Medicaid clients served through the King County Regional Support Network have increased by 12% from 2007 to 2008 due to increased funding for programs from MIDD funding. However, there are still more people who are not served due to lack of insurance.

Gaps Include

- Accessible and low-cost health care and treatment services for under-insured or uninsured, including dental care, eye care, and mental health services.

- Health services and resources provided in culturally appropriate and linguistically competent ways.

Implications for Action

- Statewide, uninsured rates will continue to climb as more people become unemployed. The percentage of King County residents without health insurance will grow. As layoffs continue and employers are looking for ways to stay in business, employer based health insurance rates will continue to decrease. This issue negatively impacts the health of the whole community, decreasing productivity, and bringing with it financial costs as well as emotional stress.
- Funding cuts made by the State, County and foundations have impacted the number of clients that community health and mental health services can serve. This situation can lead to longer waiting lists and fewer providers for clients. Service levels for Bellevue residents are likely to decline. Consequently, fewer low-income and uninsured people will be able to obtain necessary health and mental health care.
- The influx of immigrants and people who are English Language Learners requires that providers are able to offer culturally competent health care in order to meet the needs of their client base. Becoming a culturally competent service provider can involve staff training, the provision of interpreter services and translated materials, and restructuring programming to better serve a culturally diverse client population. These services are critical to help address the health disparities that exist in many communities.

Goal #5: Education and Job Skills to Lead an Independent Life

Key Trends

- King County and Bellevue residents are well educated for today's economy; 45% of King County and 59% of Bellevue residents hold a bachelors degree or higher and almost

92% of King County and 95% of Bellevue residents have graduated from high school. However, job seekers constantly need to acquire new job skills to stay competitive and many of the “new economy” jobs in the service and high tech sectors require higher levels of education and training which are not accessible to many workers. Despite high education levels of King County and Bellevue residents, the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) reports that Washington has experienced an increase in the unemployment rate over the past two years. King County’s rate in August 2009 was 8.8% compared to 3.7% two years ago. Bellevue’s unemployment rate in September 2009 was 7.2% compared to 3.3% two years ago.

- While Washington State’s minimum wage in 2009 at \$8.55/hour is the highest in the country, it is not a living wage. An adult making the minimum wage and supporting two children is under the federal poverty level (FPL), \$18,310 for a family of three. One estimate of a living wage for a family of three (one working adult and two children) is \$29.83 an hour (over \$62,000 annually).
- Childcare availability, affordability and quality are a concern, especially for lower-wage workers. Licensed childcare facilities are in short supply and the cost at these centers is high, costing between \$21,000 and \$26,300 a year. In addition to licensed childcare programs, an increasing number of families, many from immigrant and refugee communities, rely on family, friends and neighbors to care for their children. Affordable childcare options are critical for working parents to independently provide for their families. Studies have shown that higher quality childcare does make a difference in the development of greater cognitive, language and social skills in young children, critical for school readiness.
- Many employment training services are provided throughout Bellevue; access to such programs are critical to assist residents in

increasing their skills to find higher paying jobs. Local colleges, community-based agencies and government programs provide English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes, job skills and training courses and job placement to families.

- Bellevue residents who earn a wage below the poverty line are more reliant on public transportation than residents who earn more than the poverty line (24% vs. 9% respectively). Seventy-one percent of Bellevue residents who earn more than the FPL drive alone to work and eight percent who carpool compared to 48% of residents who earn less than the FPL and drive alone or the 14% who carpool.

Gaps Include

- Enough jobs that pay a living wage.
- Affordable, quality childcare for low-income families.
- Affordable and accessible job training opportunities teaching “new economy” job skills and ESL classes.

Implications for Action

- The current economic downturn shows that Bellevue workers are not immune to job cuts. It is becoming apparent that individuals receiving unemployment insurance are dependent upon the payments for a majority of their living expenses. Additional support may be needed as the length of unemployment for many workers spans beyond the period of benefit.
- The decrease in middle-income job opportunities makes it harder for people at lower incomes to access better job opportunities. There are more low-income job opportunities, but along with these come financial instability, dependence on public supports and less of a chance to obtain additional training to increase skills to find a better job. A living wage for a family living in Bellevue is higher than in other parts of King County.
- Bellevue residents have a high level of educational attainment, however, there

are few vacancies that pay a living wage. It should be a priority to attract business and industry that pay living wages.

- Barriers to employment such as lack of affordable childcare, availability of more slots to meet the need as more jobs are created, the absence of coordinated transportation and lack of training to secure higher wage jobs are key issues that must be addressed to help people improve their economic conditions and the quality of their lives.

Specific Populations

Older Adults

Key Trends

- People over the age of 65 represent 14.4% of Bellevue's population. People 65-74 years of age comprise the largest portion of this population (53.6%), followed by those 75-84 years of age (33.2%) and those 85 years of age and older (13.2%). This means a variety of programs and policies must be available to address their needs.
- People are living longer, and as a result, are more likely to need some type of long term care supports during their lifetimes. While many adults say they wish to retire and live at home, many will use an increasingly diverse range of services to maintain their independence, including adult day programs, home modifications and assistive technologies. Because nursing homes are the most expensive option, the overall number of beds, residents and occupancy rate have all remained static or declined in the last ten years. The result is increasing demand for in-home services, assisted living residences, and a strain on family caregivers.
- Medicare, a health insurance program for people 65 and older and for people under 65 with certain disabilities, does not cover dental or eye care. High costs of these services may prevent many older adults from accessing preventative care and treatment. An emerging concern is that low Medicare reimbursement rates are beginning to limit the number of older adults some doctors will serve.
- Fewer than half of today's workers have pension coverage on their jobs. With the onset of the recession in 2008, and growing unemployment rates, this percentage is now likely to be much higher. Fewer workers have defined benefit retirement plans, which pay out a specified amount at retirement and offer more security than defined contribution plans that are more sensitive to the volatile stock market. Additionally, the downturn in the housing market coupled with the higher cost of living means more older adults will face poverty, even if they delay retirement and try to remain in the workforce longer. Given the current economy, the number of people age 65 and older in the workforce is increasing.
- Older Bellevue residents, people 65 years and older, are less likely to have a vehicle (12.5%) than other Bellevue adults (5.7%). In response to the growing need for better transportation options for older adults on the Eastside, a group of government and non-profit agencies are working to improve access to public transportation.
- The need for affordable housing for the growing older adult population in King County is surpassing the supply. It is estimated that more than 9,000 additional units of affordable senior housing units are needed per year until 2025 when the percentage of people older than 65 years of age will be 23% of the population.

Gaps Include

- Low-cost dental and eye care for low-income older adults.
- Job training for those who need to or want to work after retirement.
- Access to accessible transportation options.
- Support for family caregivers, including grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Affordable and accessible housing with services, including long term care, for older adults.

Implications for Action

- The effects of the recession and economic downturn will be keenly felt by older adults. More older adults will likely delay their retirement and work beyond the traditional retirement age of 65, primarily because they can't afford to retire. More support for older adults to find employment may be needed, and training opportunities for new types of jobs that will help supplement their retirement incomes.
- The demand for services for older adults from other countries newly settled here will continue to increase. These services include English and citizenship classes, culturally sensitive healthcare, and activities that will utilize their many gifts and talents. This approach can help decrease the isolation and depression that many experience when adjusting to a new culture.
- Coordinated transportation for older adults in the community should become a major focus. Modes of transportation other than single-occupancy vehicles such as circulators and buses will be increasingly important. Many older adults will give up owning their own vehicles and will need ways to get around to their jobs, to medical appointments, and to other activities essential to daily life.
- Providing support for family caregivers is critical. This is a wise economic investment given the enormous cost-savings to the Medicare, Medicaid and long-term care systems in addition to the positive impact on the disabled and older adult's quality of life.
- A cooperative effort is needed to look at new housing options for older adults to address the huge shortfall of affordable housing that is evident now, and will peak by 2025.
- Dental and vision services, which are not covered by Medicare, will continue to be more in demand from older adults, and put increased pressure on community-based agencies to provide.

People with Disabilities

Key Trends

- Approximately 9% of Bellevue's population, about 10,680 people, report having at least one disability, including employment-related, mental, physical and sensory. Older adults are the age group most likely to have a disability.
- In Washington State, the majority of people with developmental disabilities (97%) live in the community, most with their families. For those who can't live independently, supported living services offer instruction and support to persons who live in their own homes in the community. For those who live on a fixed income, like Supplemental Security Income, finding affordable housing is a serious challenge.
- Services for children birth to three with developmental delays or disabilities are severely underfunded, at a time when more children are being identified with these needs. Over half of children who receive early intervention services do not need special education classes later in life.
- Transition services for youth with developmental disabilities leaving high school have been shown to increase their success in the community, including retaining employment. Efforts by local non-profits have provided a limited number of students such services, but State funding has been severely cut.
- The high unemployment rate in the State has made it even more challenging for people with disabilities to find jobs. In a competitive environment, job developers are forced to be more creative to find work for their clients.

Gaps Include

- Limited housing opportunities for people with disabilities who prefer to live independently.
- Support for aging parents whose adult children with disabilities still live at home.
- Services for caregivers of children with disabilities, including childcare and after-school programs.

- Coordinated transportation options for people with disabilities.
- Funds for early identification of children with disabilities, including outreach to families whose first language is not English.
- Lack of available paid and volunteer positions for people with developmental disabilities.

Implications for Action

- Funding for services to people with all types of disabilities is not keeping up with the growth of this population in the State, in King County, and in Bellevue. The result is that there are wait lists for certain services such as housing and family support from King County. And for those programs in which waiting lists are not allowed, agencies are strapped to find additional resources to fill the funding gap. This trend is predicted to continue over the next several years due in part to the higher life expectancy of the aging disabled population, the increase of referrals of children with disabilities, and the continued development of medical procedures that now save the lives of those who in the past may not have survived trauma or complications at birth.
- Lack of affordable housing is as much of a problem for people with disabilities as for the rest of the population, if not greater. The need is growing faster than housing stock is produced. It is especially critical for people with disabilities to find housing in familiar neighborhood settings, near support systems and convenient amenities, in order to maintain their independence to whatever extent they are able.
- Early intervention services for children birth to three with disabilities are under-funded. Research clearly shows that early intervention saves costs later; for some children whose special needs are identified when they are older, critical time is lost. All sectors of the community—medical, business, education, public and non-profit—need to increase their efforts to promote early screening and make

it easier for parents and caregivers to find help.

- Childcare for children with special needs is in very short supply in the community, as are programs appropriate for children age 12 and older. Community-based organizations already providing such services to typically developing children could, with training and support, help to fill this gap.
- Inclusion of people with all disabilities in all communities needs to be a priority. Research has shown that people with disabilities who experience inclusion early in their lives are more likely to live in and actively contribute to their community as adults.

Refugees and Immigrants

Key Trends

- Between 2006-2008, Voluntary Resettlement Agencies in Washington State assisted an estimated 2,200 new refugees with their physical, social, cultural and economic needs. In King County, 1,159 refugees were resettled with the largest groups from the former Soviet Union, Somalia, and Burma in 2007. In 2008, 1,194 refugees were placed in the county including 196 Bhutanese refugees who were resettled here from camps in Nepal. In Bellevue, some of the new groups arriving are from Bhutan, Burma, Iran and Iraq.
- As of October 2009, 81 languages and dialects were spoken by Bellevue School District students. Many local organizations and colleges offer courses for English Language Learners to help refugees and immigrants learn English. Refugee Women's Alliance reports that there is a need for specific ESL vocational training with an emphasis on passing State qualifications. Intermediate level classes to help English Language Learners increase their proficiency are not widely available.
- The City, in addition to local coalitions, has been working on ways to make information about resources more available to non-

English speaking residents. Resource guides and websites in multiple languages and bilingual staff answering phone information lines all aid non-English speakers in identifying and accessing much needed resources.

- Cultural Navigators from the Chinese Information and Service Center and Staff from Asian Counseling and Referral Service report that more of their clients are recently out of work and are asking for help for the first time. The biggest need initially is for jobs and job training to become employable in a new field. Meanwhile, the need for free or low-cost legal assistance for immigration and family law issues provided in languages other than English continues to grow.

Gaps Include

- ESL and job training programs for non-English speaking residents.
- Free and low-cost legal assistance for immigration and family law issues provided in languages other than English.
- Low-cost health care for immigrants who do not have health insurance.
- Information about resources in languages other than English.
- Support for refugee and immigrant parents with children of all ages.

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. Due to the economic downturn, increased needs for employment, health insurance, basic needs and legal assistance are emerging, amongst immigrants and refugees who have not previously needed to ask for help before.
- Requests for English-as-a-Second-Language 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.
- 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 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 community.

School-Aged Children and Youth Key Trends

- The student body in the Bellevue School District is becoming more diverse. Asian students comprised over a quarter of the district's student population. In the past ten years, the percentage of Hispanic students has increased by more than 50% and the rate of Asian students has increased 30%. African American student numbers have remained relatively stable in the past few years.
- During the 2009-2010 school year, over 20% of Bellevue students qualified for the free and reduced-price lunch program. Students of color are disproportionately represented in this program.
- With the economic downturn affecting many people who never had to ask for help before, there is increased stress on families, especially children. The mental health of school-aged children and youth is a major concern expressed by teachers and school

based mental health counselors. In King County, 14% of 6th graders and 14% of 12th graders said they had thought seriously about killing themselves. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among Washington youth. Bellevue mental health providers report challenges in meeting all of the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment. A growing issue is lack of health insurance for undocumented children and youth.

- Teen pregnancy rates increased slightly in King County, but the rate in Bellevue is one of the lowest in the county. Health and sexuality education is still needed, however, to curtail increasing rates of Sexually Transmitted Infections occurring throughout King County.
- Increasing numbers of children and youth in Washington State are overweight or obese. Factors contributing to the increasing rates of overweight in children include fewer opportunities for physical activities, media and marketing, and increased time in sedentary activities, such as watching television or using computers. Obesity contributes to a host of chronic diseases such as heart disease and causes a greater likelihood of premature death.

Gaps Include

- Detection and treatment of youth mental health problems, including depression.
- Supportive services and programs for diverse youth, include those with disabilities, from other cultures and ethnicities, and LGBTQ.
- Emergency shelter and transitional living programs for homeless youth, including older youth up to age 24.
- Mentor programs, quality after-school programs and other opportunities for positive interaction with adults in the community.

Implications for Action

- Access to programs for children and youth to ensure their health and well-being is even

more important in a weak economy. As more families face unemployment and loss of income, they struggle to provide the basics for their children. Lack of these resources can put children and youth at risk for poor outcomes, and eventually take an economic toll on the community.

- With the growing diversity in Bellevue, there is a need for more culturally sensitive programs and activities for school-aged children and youth and their families who may be coping with adjusting to a new country or to gender-based differences.
- As families experience more stress due to the economic downturn, many children are internalizing this stress, exhibiting problems in school, and depression. Prevention oriented services are needed to help minimize more serious problems, such as substance abuse and involvement in gangs, in the future.
- There is a gap in the “safety net” for homeless youth and young adults, up to age 24. More housing with services and outreach to this at-risk population is needed to help them move on to productive lives. Some have “aged out” of the foster care system; others are employed or going to school, but lack family or community support.

Veterans

Key Trends

- King County data estimates are that about 141,595 veterans live in the county, a 13.5% decline from 2000 Census figures. This is based on the large number of veterans aged 65 and older and less recruitment. About 28,359 veterans live in East King County, almost 20% of the total.
- Older veterans age 65-74 make up almost 49% of vets living in King County, and those 75 and older make up 69%. With this age demographic, more services such as long-term care and respite care for caregivers will likely be a need.
- While vets from all periods of service have experienced a range of mental health issues

from the trauma experienced in combat, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) have emerged as two signature injuries of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. PTSD is a severe reaction to war that includes hyper-alertness, nightmares and depression. It may be triggered by reminders of combat, such as fireworks or television scenes of violence. TBIs are head injuries from combustive explosions. The need for services for the veteran and their families, such as for counseling, childcare, employment counseling and domestic violence, are beginning to increase.

- The Crisis Clinic 2-1-1 Community Information Line saw a dramatic increase in veterans asking for financial assistance between 2007 and 2008. The King County Veterans Program provides a number of comprehensive services to low-income vets, with significant expansion including services centers located in local communities, as a result of funding from the Vets and Human Services Levy passed in 2006.
- Reports of sexual assault, ranging from unwanted sexual contact to rape, called Military Sexual Trauma, continue to surface as the number of women serving in the military grows. One study found that 42% of women who experienced MST also had PTSD.

Gaps Include

- Mental health services tailored to meet the needs of returning veterans with specific disorders, as well as support services for their spouses and children.
- Support services for woman veterans who have been sexually traumatized.
- Services for aging veterans.

Implications for Action

- It is still unclear exactly what the long-term impact of returning vets and their families will be on local human services agencies over the next 10-20 years, but more indicators of their particular needs are slowly emerging.

Through a concerted countywide effort over the past two years, agencies have begun to better track veterans usage of their services with improved intake processes. This should be continued and further refined so data is available to show the real needs of this group.

- Now more is known about some of the top needs of veterans, both active duty and not, and their families, from national studies and providers' feedback. Additional resources from public and private sources will be needed to meet this need.