



# Human Services

## VISION

Bellevue is an equitable and caring community where everyone can thrive and belong.

Bellevue is a community in which each and every member has equitable access and opportunity to meet their essential physical, behavioral health, economic, and social needs; to feel a sense of belonging; and to thrive. Bellevue invests in the basic building blocks of the community, including human services, to ensure the development of healthy individuals and families.

### HUMAN SERVICES SCOPE

The Human Services element encompasses a range of programs, services and investments provided by the City that foster stability and enhance the well-being of marginalized residents.

## INTRODUCTION

A well-developed and equitable human services infrastructure is a critical component of a healthy community where everyone can thrive. Human services include support for residents with low and moderate incomes most impacted by systemic inequities, who are disproportionately people of color, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. The City of Bellevue defines human services as those provided to residents of all demographics to meet essential human needs, have a sense of belonging and an opportunity to thrive, including services that support the following:

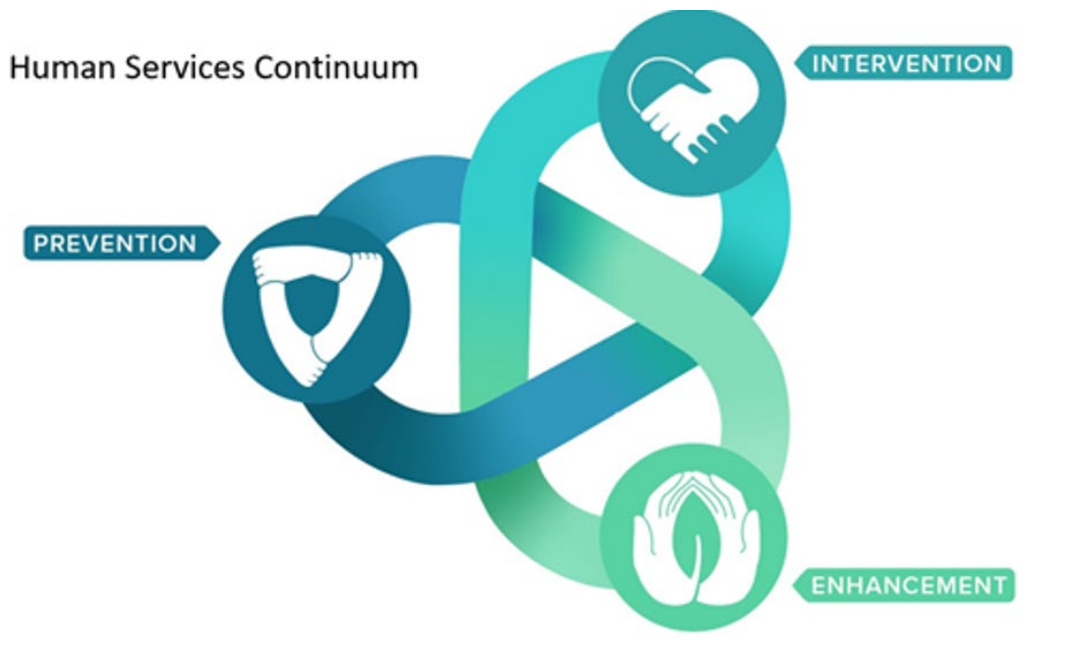
- Food to eat and a roof overhead
- Supportive relationships
- A safe haven from all forms of violence and abuse
- Health care
- Education and job skills

Human Services are provided throughout a continuum, including services that may prevent future needs, that intervene in times of crisis

and that enhance residents' opportunities and abilities to thrive. In order to support residents, needs throughout the continuum, it is necessary to recognize and address systemic inequities that contribute to the need for human services, particularly for marginalized residents. Residents may draw from multiple aspects of the continuum at the same time. In addition, varying types of human services meet resident needs in different ways: a service may be an intervention for some and a preventative measure or an enhancement for others. The continuum is interconnected and the city endorses the need to sustain it in its entirety. Prevention services may minimize residents' experiences of crisis, preventing further trauma and the need for intervention.

The City works in partnership at the local, regional, county, state and federal level to build and maintain the human services infrastructure. The City collaborates with residents, human services agencies, businesses, educational institutions, faith groups and other community organizations to develop and improve human services in response to changing community needs. The human services infrastructure is part of a larger system that works towards meeting the health and wellbeing needs of residents.

### HS-Figure 1





## TODAY'S CONDITIONS AND TOMORROW'S PROJECTIONS

### Human Services Today and Tomorrow

The City of Bellevue 2023-2024 Human Services Needs Assessment presents a picture of a human services infrastructure with significant need, with both strengths and challenges and significant opportunity. Bellevue works to ensure that each person has the resources and services to thrive, such that disparities are eliminated and outcomes improve for all. Bellevue continually works to become an equitable society, where a resident's identities (race, gender, disability, etc.) are not accurate predictors of their future outcomes. Human services agencies throughout the continuum are trusted partners of the City, and the City works with them to ensure they have the support they need to sustain their operations, including equitable pay for their staff and affordable space to operate and provide services to Bellevue residents. Bellevue is a leader and convener of human services agencies and other stakeholders in order to align efforts and increase the collective impact of services provided in Bellevue and across the region. Planning and provision of human services to Bellevue residents is interconnected with other city and regional planning and service provision efforts. The city strives to ensure that residents can access the services they need within close proximity of their place of residence and through culturally- and linguistically-specific means.

### HUMAN SERVICES NEEDS UPDATE

Since 1989 the City of Bellevue has published the Human Services Needs Update at the beginning of each two-year funding cycle. This report has offered a summary of human services trends, needs, disparities and gaps in Bellevue, East King County, King County and Washington. It helps the Human Services Commission develop focus areas for funding recommendations to the City Council, guides the City's Human Services division and provides information for other city departments, faith communities, concerned community groups and nonprofit health and human services providers in King County.

### ACCESS TO SERVICES

**49%** Survey respondents able to access a human services provider when needed.<sup>1</sup>

**43%** Survey respondents able to access services that supported language and culture needs.<sup>2</sup>



## Housing and Homelessness

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Bellevue and across the region is rapidly increasing. There are significant disparities about who is more likely to be experiencing homelessness. Individuals identifying as American Indian, Alaskan Native or Indigenous individuals; Black, African American, or African; Hispanic/Latino; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander as well as individuals identifying as more than one race are overrepresented in King County's population experiencing homelessness (i.e., larger percent of unhoused population than County population overall).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, individuals living with disabilities and those with a behavioral health condition are more likely to experience homelessness.<sup>4</sup> Supporting our residents who are experiencing homelessness is accomplished through sub-regional and regional collaboration.

### HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS BY THE NUMBERS

- 14 percent increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in King County from 11,751 in 2020 to 13,368 in 2022.<sup>5</sup>
- 40,871 individuals experienced homelessness during 2020.<sup>6</sup>
- 166 percent increase in the number of Bellevue School District students experiencing homelessness from 249 students in the 2021-2022 school year to 663 students in the 2022-23 school year.<sup>7</sup>



## Food Security and Financial Assistance Opportunities and Challenges

There is an increasing number of Bellevue residents experiencing food insecurity and in need of financial assistance to maintain stability and well-being for their household. There are significant racial disparities in resources and food security in Bellevue. Black and Hispanic/Latino residents are disproportionately represented amongst those who are rent-burdened. Non-Hispanic Black residents are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at a rate that is nearly five times greater than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts. Both Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian and Hispanic Latino residents also receive SNAP benefits at a higher rate than the population overall, indicating significant food needs.<sup>8</sup>

## FOOD SECURITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BY THE NUMBERS

- 23 percent increase in the number of severely cost burdened Bellevue residents, from 15.4 percent of residents in 2019 (representing 22,803 residents) to 18.2 percent in 2022 (representing 27,960 residents).<sup>9</sup>
- Bellevue residents accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits increased in 2021 (most recent data available), after a 5-year period of decline prior to the COVID pandemic.<sup>10</sup>
- Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, 15.5 percent of Bellevue School District students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch. In 2023, 19.9 percent of students qualified (not including students at three schools that provide lunch to all students).<sup>11</sup>



## Health and Well-being

Across the US, there are significant needs related to physical and behavioral health that have increased following the COVID-19 pandemic. While needs are rising across demographic groups, there is variability in access to appropriate behavioral health services by race/ethnicity and language. Both fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses have shown a significant upward trend in recent years, largely driven by the arrival of fentanyl.

## Violence Prevention and Survivor Support and Advocacy

Service data demonstrates the significant and ongoing need for support for domestic violence survivors in Bellevue. Service data also highlights the need for support for individuals experiencing other types of violence such as sexual assault, abuse or trauma. The Bellevue School District identified violence as a contributor to families facing eviction and experiencing homelessness.

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BY THE NUMBERS

- Nearly 20 percent of 6th graders reported having seriously contemplated suicide.
- Youth who are sexually and gender diverse and those with disabilities have increased risk of mental health challenges.<sup>12</sup>
- 78 confirmed overdose deaths in East King County in 2022.
- 56 percent of overdose deaths in King County in 2022 were Non-Hispanic White individuals. 16 percent were non-Hispanic Black individuals and 10 percent were Hispanic individuals. Only 7 percent of the County population is Non-Hispanic Black, indicating non-Hispanic Black individuals are disproportionately impacted by overdose death.
- King County EMS responded to 71 overdose events in East King County in August of 2023.<sup>13</sup>

## Education and Employment

Many Bellevue residents experience access to high quality education. However, there are disparities in the educational outcomes for some students of color, students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities and students of other marginalized demographics. Unemployment in Bellevue is relatively low overall. Black and Indigenous residents experience disproportionate rates of unemployment.<sup>14</sup> Factors such as access to affordable child care and accessible transportation can have a significant impact on employment. Community members identify both as challenges in Bellevue.

## Hate, Discrimination and Bias

A number of demographic groups report experiences of hate, discrimination or bias, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants and refugees, and LGBTQIA2S+ communities. Support to address discrimination or racism stands out as a significant service gap. Communities emphasize the need for representation at decision-making tables to reduce the prevalence of bias and misunderstanding of community needs.

## EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- Fewer than 20 percent of students experiencing homelessness and only approximately one quarter of students with disabilities in the Bellevue School District met benchmarks in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Students who are experiencing homelessness, those who are English Language Learners, and those with disabilities graduate at significantly lower rates than students overall in the Bellevue School District.
- When looking at graduation rates by race/ethnicity, students identifying as Hispanic/Latino graduate at lower rates than other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup>





### Services for Older Adults

Older adults identify significant challenges in accessing services, especially for those with lack of access to technology. There is a need for increased in-person services and printed materials. Older adults identify a need for increased access to transportation to support meeting their basic needs and to support ongoing involvement in their community. There is a need for affordable housing that meets the specific needs of older adults. Housing options should allow individuals to age with dignity and choice, which includes services to age in place and meet individual needs.

### Services for Individuals Living with a Disability

Providers note difficulties for individuals with a disability who do not speak English as a first language and highlight the need for additional capacity for community-specific outreach and engagement. There is a need to consider intersections between disability and other marginalized identities when designing and evaluating programs. Providers and community members highlight service needs for children and youth with disabilities. Families face challenges in navigating access to both Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers and school district services, particularly when facing language and cultural barriers.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND SERVICES

- **Suburban Cities Funders Collaborative.** Collaborate to identify regional human services needs and to support collective planning and support for providers. Provide a joint application and reporting system to agencies receiving funding to reduce barriers to accessing funds.
- **King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA).** Coordinate with regional homelessness authority to support equitable provision of services and funding.
- **Homelessness Outreach Program.** Provide direct outreach services to unhoused community members to address barriers and connect with housing, shelter and services.
- **Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT).** Improve outcomes for individuals interacting with the Bellevue Police Department by providing enhanced police/community member interactions and connecting them to community services. Identify alternatives to jail or the hospital, when appropriate, and facilitate access to resources that address the root cause of the situation.
- **Bellevue Fire CARES.** Work with individuals at the time of a 911 call, during their time of greatest need, providing immediate crisis intervention. Follow with ongoing case management to provide connection to resources and services to address root causes of the crisis.



## Challenges and Opportunities

As Bellevue, along with other communities throughout the region, grows and diversifies, stakeholders are presented with opportunities to adapt their approaches to address shifting needs, particularly the disparity in human services needs created by systemic inequities. As the human services system responds to increasing and changing needs, the well-being and breadth of the human services infrastructure directly impacts the well-being of communities.

### Changing Demographics and Meeting Needs in a Culturally Specific Way

Bellevue is growing and changing, with ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, disability, gender and sexual diversity.<sup>16</sup> The changing demographics of Bellevue also intersect with income disparities across racial groups. The human services infrastructure has struggled to adapt to the changing needs of the community. There is a significant need for increased access to culturally- and linguistically-specific services.

### Disproportionate Impact by Race and Language

Residents have different experiences based on their race and language spoken, which impacts well-being of residents in the City of Bellevue and their access to human services. There is increasing demand for human services and growing challenges, particularly for BIPOC communities. COVID-19 had a disproportionate impact on communities of color. While the impact of the pandemic lingers for all residents, particularly those of low- and moderate-incomes, disparities by race and ethnicity are significant across housing, health and well-being, food security and other human services needs.

### Knowledge of Available Resources

Within the increasing number of residents in need of support are those who have not previously needed human services. There is a lack of knowledge of available resources and the need for continuing and expanded efforts to help residents understand and connect to resources and support.

## CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

- Between 2000 and 2022, the percentage of Bellevue residents identifying as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) more than doubled and the percentage of foreign-born residents grew at a similar pace (growing from 25 percent to 43 percent over that same time period).
- Nearly 50 percent of Bellevue residents speak a language other than English at home and 15.6 percent have limited English proficiency.<sup>17</sup>
- Approximately 5.5 percent of the adult population in the Seattle/Tacoma Metropolitan area identifies as LGBTQIA2S+, which places it third in the nation for largest LGBTQIA2S+ population by metropolitan area.<sup>18</sup>
- Approximately 7.3 percent of Bellevue residents have a disability.<sup>19</sup>
- White and Asian American Pacific Islander residents of Bellevue have the highest proportion of residents with income over \$150K, while Black and Hispanic/Latino residents have the highest proportion of residents with incomes under \$50K.<sup>20</sup>

## Communication, Collaboration, and Convening

Bellevue plays a unique role in bringing diverse stakeholders together in the service of collaborative efforts to increase the well-being of Bellevue residents. The co-design of human services between residents and the City can create human services models that meet the needs of communities. Residents emphasize that representation at decision-making tables is necessary to ensure community voices are heard, including community members with diverse lived experience and consumers of human services.

## Growing Challenges for Human Services Providers

The community's human services needs are escalating, and agencies are struggling to sustainably meet the demand, due to the decline in COVID-19 related funding, workforce challenges, the need for physical space to provide services and other strains on their provision of services. Workforce challenges include difficulty hiring and retaining staff, particularly in a high-cost region like East King County. These challenges are being echoed throughout the state and country, along with the significant pay gap between human services/non-profit care fields and employees in other industries. These economics present significant short- and long-term challenges to the human services infrastructure in Bellevue and beyond.

### WAGE STUDY

A 2023 wage equity analysis by the University of Washington found that employees in the human services sector make approximately 30 percent less than employees in other fields with comparable skills and responsibilities.<sup>21</sup>

## Cost of Living, Availability of Housing and Availability of Services

Community members and providers identify service gaps across the human services continuum and related areas. Lack of affordable housing options and cost of living are cited as factors contributing to human services needs across community focus groups. Some community members note frustration about only being able to access services that meet their needs outside of the City of Bellevue. This feedback is particularly prevalent from LGBTQIA2S+ residents.

## Human Services Policy Summary

The City's role is to identify the most significant human services needs and disparities in the City of Bellevue, invest in the basic building blocks of the community, and advance equitable outcomes for all.

## Citywide

The policies in this subsection aim to make Bellevue a welcoming, safe and just community marked by fairness and equity and build public awareness and engage the community in planning for human services needs. Bellevue supports the human services system as a facilitator, funder, planner and educator in order to create a community with equitable opportunity for all.

### Facilitator and Educator

Human services is a collaborative effort between the City and many other organizations. One of the roles that the City plays in this effort is to bring many groups together to create dialogue, encourage partnerships, build support for actions and shape funding solutions. The City educates the broader public on the needs of the community, builds knowledge between organizations and shares information about resources with those who can benefit from them.

### Planner and Funder

Bellevue is a leader in coordinating and supporting local, regional and national efforts to address local human services needs. The City uses its regulatory powers to protect the rights of all community members and invests in culturally and linguistically-specific service delivery that honors the strength of Bellevue's diverse community. The City supports systems that help people participate in the life of the city, especially groups that have unique needs such as youth, seniors and people with visible or invisible disabilities. Recognizing that housing and health care are foundational to the ability of an individual or family to participate in the activities of the community, the City supports services that help people remain housed or quickly find housing and provide access to health care. Bellevue works with partners to support a network of service delivery points across the city to create a community where equitable outcomes exist for all.

# GOAL & POLICIES

## Goal

Create a community in which each and every member has equitable access and opportunity to meet their essential physical, behavioral health, economic and social needs; to feel a sense of belonging; and to thrive. Invest in the basic building blocks of the community, including human services, to ensure the development of healthy individuals and families.

## Policies

### Citywide

- HS-1.** Make Bellevue a welcoming, safe and just community marked by fairness and equity provided to those disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and oppression including people with disabilities, people of color, people of all ages, religions, genders, gender expressions and sexual orientations, and other historically marginalized community members.
- HS-2.** Support the human services system as a facilitator, funder, planner and educator in order to create a community with equitable opportunity for all.

### Facilitator and Educator

- HS-3.** Engage service providers and community organizations in dialogue regarding the functioning of the present service systems, emerging needs, identification of inequities and the building of a complete system of services.
- HS-4.** Develop a broad base of community support for human services, including equitable and timely investment by public and private institutions to ensure human services operations are sustainable, their employees receive a living wage that is equitable, and to address critical shortages in staff in multiple service areas, including childcare, behavioral health and services to those experiencing homelessness.
- HS-5.** Encourage partnerships among public and private institutions, schools, human services providers and others to collectively address needs of Bellevue's low- and moderate-income residents.
- HS-6.** Partner with other city stakeholders to develop community-serving facilities augmented to support residents and coordinate resource distribution and services before, during and after a hazard event.
- HS-7.** Provide leadership and work in partnership with community agencies to encourage and promote the development and expansion of the supply of affordable, accessible and quality child care which meets the diverse needs of the community in all areas of the city.

See also Land Use policy related to child care, LU-42.

- HS-8.** Facilitate the community response to human service needs. Involve the city in direct delivery of human service needs when delivery is consistent with a department's mission or as a last resort when the city is the most equitable and effective provider or there are no other qualified providers.
- HS-9.** Educate community members in a variety of formats of the critical human services available to ensure equitable access to information.
- HS-10.** Educate human services providers, community stakeholders and city leadership on the needs of the community and the City's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging to support the funding process.

## Planner and Convener

- HS-11.** Use City regulatory powers to protect the rights of all community members and advance health and human service objectives to ensure that Bellevue is an equitable community where anyone can thrive.
- HS-12.** Consider the human services impacts of proposed legislation prior to formal adoption.
- HS-13.** Assess community needs and make recommendations to inform the city's human services funding priorities and decisions.
- HS-14.** Identify opportunities and develop strategies that are preventative in their approach to human services needs and that address the underlying systemic inequities that contribute to the need for human services.
- HS-15.** Improve access to services throughout the community by removing physical and systemic barriers and empowering individuals to overcome other barriers that may exist.
- HS-16.** Support and actively coordinate with local, regional and national efforts that address local human services needs to ensure local programs complement programs provided at the regional, county, state and federal level.
- HS-17.** Support agencies locating human services facilities in Bellevue and, where appropriate, encourage efficiencies through agency collocation and collaboration.
- HS-18.** Support a network of service points that are easily accessible by Bellevue residents and workers, geographically distributed within the city and proximate to public transit.
- HS-19.** Allocate funds and other resources throughout the continuum of human service needs by soliciting proposals from community agencies providing human services benefiting low- and moderate-income residents.
- HS-20.** Create a community where equitable outcomes exist for all by investing in services that address or eliminate inequities which may be experienced disproportionately based on a resident's age, religion, race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexuality, and neighborhood.

- HS-21.** Encourage and invest in culturally and linguistically specific service delivery that respects the dignity and honors the strengths that Bellevue’s diverse individuals and families, offer to the community, while supporting them to achieve their self-identified goals.
- HS-22.** Encourage services that support Bellevue residents and those who work in Bellevue to maintain or advance their employment opportunities.
- HS-23.** In coordination with the region, support an intentional local community response to homelessness with housing, shelter and supportive services provided to all demographics.
- HS-24.** Address the crisis of housing instability and homelessness by providing for services that enable residents to remain housed or become re-housed.
- HS-25.** Support services and investments that strengthen the ability of children and youth to participate in their community.
- HS-26.** Support services and investments that provide access to healthy, culturally responsive and affordable food for all people.
- HS-27.** Support services and investments that allow older adults, including those who are low-income or experiencing homelessness, to access the services and supports necessary to be included in community life and to age in the location and manner they prefer.
- HS-28.** Support services and investments for children and youth that lead to equitable outcomes in health, wellness and education and meet essential needs, including shelter, housing, food, physical and behavioral health services, and safety from harm and violence.
- HS-29.** Recognize behavioral health conditions, including substance use disorder, as chronic and treatable diseases that are best managed through the behavioral health system, including walk-in crisis and inpatient treatment programs.
- HS-30.** Support services and investments in equitably available and proven behavioral health care services, including mobile integrated healthcare, co-responder programs, walk-in crisis and inpatient treatment programs, prevention and education programs, emergency overdose treatment and resource navigation for those seeking treatment.

See also Housing policies related to preventing homelessness, [HO-68](#) to [HO-77](#).

## Citations

- 1 City of Bellevue. 2023. Bellevue Performance Measures Survey.
- 2 City of Bellevue. 2023. Bellevue Performance Measures Survey.
- 3 King County Point in Time Count, 2022
- 4 American Community Survey, 2019
- 5 King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA). 2022. Point in Time (PIT) Count, Retrieved from <https://kcrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PIT-2022-Infograph-v7.pdf>
- 6 The King County Department of Community and Human Services Cross Systems Homelessness Analysis; King County Point in Time Count, 2022 Retrieved from <https://kcrha.org/data-overview/king-county-point-in-time-count/>
- 7 Email communication from Bellevue School District October 18, 2023
- 8 American Community Survey, 2017-2021 Average
- 9 American Community Survey, 2010-2022
- 10 American Community Survey, 2011-2021
- 11 Email Communication from Bellevue School District December 5, 2023
- 12 Healthy Youth Survey, 2021
- 13 King County Overdose Data Dashboard
- 14 U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, QWI Explorer, 2021
- 15 Washington State OSPI, 2022-2023
- 16 Washington State Office of Financial Management
- 17 American Community Survey, 2022
- 18 American Community Survey, 2017-2021
- 19 American Community Survey, 2022
- 20 American Community Survey, 2017-2021
- 21 <https://socialwork.uw.edu/wageequitystudy>