

Thematic Findings



Thematic Overview

The following section provides a deep dive into the key service areas identified through the 2025 Human Services Needs Assessment. Grounded in a combination of community survey data, focus groups, and subject matter expert (SME) interviews, the findings reflect the lived experiences, systemic barriers, and service gaps that shape residents' ability to access essential support. Each service area represents a critical dimension of the human services infrastructure, and the analysis aims to illustrate not just what services are lacking, but how needs manifest across different communities and how providers are grappling with capacity constraints in a rapidly growing and diversifying city.

In the areas of Shelter and Housing Stability, Financial Assistance, Food and Basic Needs, Case Management and Supportive Services, Safety from Violence and Abuse, Medical and Dental Services, Legal Services and Advocacy, Behavioral Health, Childcare and Early Learning (subject to change), we looked to identify what concerns people have and where improvements can be made. Areas of focus include the following:

- **Community-Identified Needs:** These include the most commonly expressed concerns from residents. Where possible, quantitative data from the survey is used to highlight prevalence.
- **Service Gaps and Limitations:** These are areas where services exist but are underfunded, overburdened, geographically limited, or not culturally or linguistically aligned with community needs. There are



- many services for Bellevue residents that may be constrained by too much demand or may not fulfill their maximum benefit due to community members being unsure of how to fully reap the benefits. These gaps are often compounded by demographic shifts and cost-of-living pressures.
- **Barriers to Access:** In each sector there are common obstacles such as language access, lack of transportation, long wait times, stigma, digital access limitations, and unaffordability.
- **Provider Capacity and System Challenges:** This includes findings from nonprofit service providers and city partners about operational challenges such as workforce shortages, funding constraints, burnout, and regulatory burdens.

These themes are not isolated as many community members described overlapping challenges, such as needing mental health services while also navigating housing instability or struggling with food insecurity while caring for young children. There were also unique and personalized challenges brought up by community members during our research. The report recognizes the interconnected nature of human service needs and underscores the importance of a holistic, cross-sectoral response.

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Barriers and Themes



Cross-Cutting Barriers and Systemic Themes

Human needs do not arise in isolation, and neither do the barriers that prevent people from meeting them. While the later sections of this report outline service-specific findings, such as those related to shelter, food access, behavioral health, and more—the community engagement process has surfaced a series of overarching themes and systemic barriers that cut across all human service domains. These cross-cutting insights provide crucial context for understanding why certain residents remain disconnected from support, even when programs exist, and where Bellevue’s service ecosystem might evolve to be more equitable, inclusive, and responsive.

This section synthesizes insights derived from survey responses, focus group conversations, and interviews with subject matter experts and providers. Together, they point to a constellation of persistent, interconnected issues that often operate behind the scenes, limiting access, reinforcing inequities, and shaping residents’ day-to-day experience of seeking help.

While individual services may excel in their areas of focus, the cumulative impact of these broader barriers can be significant, especially for those navigating multiple challenges at once. As such, addressing these themes is not simply a matter of improving service offerings, but of rethinking how services are delivered, coordinated, and accessed across Bellevue.



Across Bellevue's human services landscape, a consistent chorus of barriers emerged from subject matter experts, painting a picture of structural challenges that intersect across demographic lines, services, and provider types. These barriers are not isolated, they compound, especially for those navigating multiple marginalized identities.

The following categories were considered when presenting the cross-cutting barriers and structural challenges that have emerged:

- **Transportation Access:** Many residents face difficulty traveling to service locations, especially those with physical disabilities, behavioral health challenges, or limited access to reliable transit. Individuals who rely on caregivers, paratransit, or specialized supports often struggle to reach appointments consistently. Services are also concentrated in certain areas of Bellevue, creating access barriers for residents in neighborhoods with fewer transportation options or limited infrastructure.



- **Digital Access and Literacy:** As services and information increasingly move online, residents without reliable internet access, digital devices, or technological literacy can be excluded from key opportunities. This digital divide impacts job applications, benefit enrollment, telehealth appointments, and the ability to learn about or apply for services.
- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** For many of Bellevue's immigrant, refugee, and multilingual communities, navigating the human services landscape is complicated by language access issues and the lack of culturally competent care. Even when interpretation services are offered, trust, stigma, and unfamiliarity with the service system can still prevent engagement.
- **Awareness and Navigation Challenges:** There can be a lack of awareness about available services, or confusion about how to access them. Residents often do not know what help is available, where to go, or how to apply—particularly if they are facing crisis conditions or experiencing complex, overlapping needs.

Photo provided by CISC





- **Eligibility Constraints:** Even when services are technically available, they can be unaffordable to those who need them most or subject to eligibility requirements that exclude populations. Gaps between public benefit thresholds and the real-life cost of living make many working families and individuals ineligible for support.
- **Waitlists and Capacity Limitations:** Provider capacity continues to be a major constraint. Across sectors, long waitlists, staff shortages, and resource constraints limit the number of residents who can access timely support. These bottlenecks not only delay help, but can lead to worsening conditions for those in need.
- **Stigma, Trust, and Cultural Perceptions:** Stigma—especially around mental health, substance use, and domestic violence—remains a significant deterrent to help-seeking behavior. In some cases, historical or cultural mistrust of institutions further discourages residents from engaging with available resources.
- **Inadequate Coordination Between Services:** Many residents experience the human services system as fragmented or siloed.

Without strong coordination between sectors—such as healthcare, housing, and behavioral health—residents are often left to navigate disconnected services on their own, repeating paperwork, retelling traumatic stories, or falling through the cracks.

- **Disproportionate Impact on Historically Marginalized Populations:** These cross-cutting barriers rarely impact all residents equally. They are often compounded for low-income individuals, people of color, LGBTQIA2S+ residents, people with disabilities, older adults, youth aging out of systems, and others who face structural and interpersonal marginalization.
- **Disability Access and Inclusion Gaps:** Residents with physical, intellectual, sensory, or behavioral disabilities face persistent barriers to accessing services. These include a shortage of trained providers and services not designed with accessibility in mind. Even when accommodations exist, they are not always consistently offered or communicated, making many systems difficult to navigate. Greater focus on inclusive design and disability-informed care is needed across Bellevue’s human services landscape.

Recognizing these cross-cutting barriers presents a picture of a human services infrastructure with significant need, both strengths and challenges, and significant opportunity. Each of these themes is described in greater detail in the sections that follow. We hope that these efforts offer City leaders and community members a comprehensive picture of the human services needs that are faced by our most marginalized residents and drive investments that focus on addressing these needs.



Shelter



Shelter

Overview

Access to safe, stable shelter remains a critical need for vulnerable individuals and families in Bellevue. Rising housing costs and limited affordable rental options have made it difficult for many residents, particularly youth, seniors, immigrants, and families—to find reliable places to stay. Temporary and emergency shelters play a vital role in preventing homelessness, ensuring safety during crises, and connecting residents to long-term services.

Key Findings & General Trends

- **Regional Trends:**
- Homelessness is increasing across Washington State and the Puget Sound region:
 - Between 2023 and 2024, the total homeless population in Washington grew **12.5%** (from 28,036 to 31,554).
 - **Chronic homelessness increased 56%**, now making up nearly half of all people experiencing homelessness (Axios, 2025).
 - In **King County** over **16,800** individuals were counted in 2024 as living in shelters, vehicles, or outdoors. Overall homelessness has risen **26%**, and chronic homelessness has **increased 78% since 2022**.
- **Homelessness in Bellevue:**
 - A three day count in 2024 identified **123** individuals residing in



68 vehicles in Bellevue. Approximately **38%** were children.

- During the 2024–2025 school year, **651** Bellevue School District students experienced homelessness.

- **Unsheltered and Disparities:**

- In King County, approximately **58%** of the homeless population is unsheltered.
- Racial disparities persist, with **American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous residents** disproportionately impacted.

Community Voice and Lived Experiences

Survey participants across the region identified **rising rental costs, job loss**, and **eviction** as top contributors to housing instability.

Shelter intersects with nearly every social determinant of health. Without a safe, stable home, individuals and families face challenges in employment, education, physical health, and social connection. SMEs emphasized:

“A healthy community goes beyond checkbox needs — food, shelter, water, sense of belonging, intellectual and spiritual support.” – SME

This perspective encourages providers and policymakers to build shelter systems that foster belonging, safety, and hope, not just meet minimum requirements.



A consistent theme was the need for universally accessible shelter services.

“There’s many factors that come together to make a truly healthy community... one of the top priorities is accessibility for any resource or service, regardless of a person's gender identity, ethnicity, race, sexuality, employment status, or educational status.” – SME

“What makes a healthy community is a city government that recognizes the needs of its population and shows that it understands what the actual needs are and what the population is.” – SME

Policymaking grounded in both data and lived experience ensures shelter systems include critical supports such as trauma-informed care, legal aid, transportation, and referral pathways.

Ultimately, SMEs called for a shelter system that is a functional and foundational system of safety, inclusion, and dignity. Housing is just the beginning; long-term well-being requires integration with efforts to combat



isolation, remove stigma, and promote opportunity.

Despite Bellevue's resources, many described navigating a system that feels inaccessible, overcrowded, and insufficient. Chronic shortages of beds—especially for families, couples, and individuals with disabilities—remain a major challenge.

“They have to become homeless to get those services.”

– Focus Group Participant

Safe shelter is foundational to community health and individual stability. Without it, residents cannot fully access employment, mental health, education, or food security services. Focus group members tied this need to larger systemic forces—unaffordable housing, low wages, and a fragmented safety net.

Photo provided by Mary's Place



City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

A range of nonprofit agencies across Bellevue and the Eastside provide vital services along the housing continuum, from emergency shelter and transitional housing to permanent housing and supportive services. These programs target populations including youth, families, single adults, and seniors, and offer culturally responsive, trauma-informed care designed to meet immediate needs while fostering long-term housing stability.

City of Bellevue Coordinated Response Programs

Homelessness Outreach Program staff engage with a variety of individuals experiencing homelessness in our community. The Homelessness Outreach Program team offers a range of services to individuals experiencing homelessness in Bellevue, including help finding shelter, finding long-term housing, obtaining documentation of identity, finding employment, and connecting to other resources that will help eliminate barriers to stability.

City of Bellevue launched a **Safe Parking Pilot Program** in 2024 providing secure overnight parking, essential amenities, and case management for individuals and families living in vehicles. The program prioritized families with children and supported participants in transitioning to stable housing.

Emergency Shelters and Drop-In Services

Several agencies provide **24/7 emergency shelters, day centers, and wraparound support services** for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These programs typically include meals, case management,



behavioral health support, housing navigation, and access to employment and healthcare resources.

The **Sophia Way** serves women through *Helen's Place*, a low-barrier emergency shelter, and *Sophia's Place*, an extended-stay option.

PorchLight supports men with the *Enhanced Men's Shelter*, a comprehensive, low-barrier facility, and the *Rotating Shelter*, which offers overnight stays in partnership with local faith communities for individuals not actively using substances. **Snoqualmie Valley Shelter** assists both individuals and families with low-barrier shelter and access to onsite resources. **Friends of Youth** provides emergency shelter for youth and young adult people, including *Willows Youth Services Center* for ages 18–24 and Youth Haven for ages 7–17.

Photo provided by The Sophia Way



Families with children can access support through **New Bethlehem Shelter** and **Mary's Place**, both of which operate full-service shelters and day centers, while **Hopelink's Family Shelter** offers apartment-style housing with integrated case management and supportive services.

Transitional Housing Programs

Transitional housing offers a bridge to stability for individuals exiting homelessness. **Friends of Youth** runs *Transitional Living Programs* for young adults, providing safe housing and support as they work toward independence. **Hopelink** provides transitional housing for families with children, using a trauma-informed care model that supports the whole family. **MAPS - MCRC** offers *Transitional Housing for Single Women*, creating a supportive environment that addresses the unique needs of women in crisis.

Housing Navigation, Outreach, and Emergency Support

Several agencies enhance housing access and crisis response through targeted outreach and navigation services. **PorchLight** offers an outreach program that engages unsheltered men, women, and families to connect them with shelter, health, and housing resources. Meanwhile, **4 Tomorrow** offers a flexible and responsive *Emergency Temporary Housing & Homelessness Recovery Program*, which funds short-term hotel or motel stays and provides case management to help individuals and families access long-term housing solutions. **Mary's Place** offers *A Place to Call Home Program*, which provides outreach, connection to shelter resources, and direct client assistance to unsheltered families.



Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **394,423** shelter bed nights.
- **41,055** Day Center visits.
- **15,007** hours of street, shelter, and housing case management.
- **551** people accepted services from the COB outreach team.
- **109 unduplicated individuals secured housing** in the same period.
- **57** households have been served through the city's Safe Parking program.

This integrated overview highlights the depth and coordination of shelter and housing services available throughout Bellevue and the Eastside. Together, these programs form a safety net and launchpad, helping vulnerable community members move from crisis toward stability and self-sufficiency.



Housing Stability



Housing Stability

Overview

Housing stability is foundational to personal well-being and economic mobility. In Bellevue, increasing rental prices and the limited supply of affordable units have created significant challenges for low-income residents, particularly families with children, older adults, and disabled individuals. Service providers frequently assist clients with eviction prevention, tenant rights education, housing navigation, and access to housing subsidies. These efforts help people remain safely and securely housed, recognizing that stable housing is a critical step toward long-term stability and community integration.

Key Findings & General Trends

Housing stability in Bellevue exists within the context of a broader statewide housing shortage. Despite over **\$4 billion** invested in housing and homelessness programs since 2021, Washington State remains well below the production levels needed to meet demand. Experts estimate **55,000 new housing units** must be built each year to keep pace with population growth, replace aging stock, and stabilize the market; in 2023, production fell short by **18,000 units** due to rising construction costs, labor shortages, and regulatory delays (Washington State Standard, 2024).

The Washington Department of Commerce has outlined a five-year plan to build **1.1 million housing units** and **90,000 emergency shelter beds** by



2044, strengthen the homeless services workforce, and improve interagency coordination (Cascade Public Broadcasting, 2024).

Bellevue has similar affordability challenges

- **Housing Affordability & Cost Burden:**

- **31.8%** of Bellevue households are cost-burdened (spending over 30% of income on housing), with **12%** severely cost-burdened (over 50%).
- Cost burden is highest among lower-income households: **74%** of those earning 0–50% AMI and **63%** of those earning 51–80% AMI.
- Over **45% of renters** are cost-burdened.

- **Housing Supply Shortages:**

- Bellevue lacks approximately **5,000 affordable housing units**.
- King County estimates a need for **17,000 additional affordable homes** for extremely low-income households (King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force, 2023).
- Typical rent in Bellevue for a one-bedroom apartment is **\$2,442**. (Apartment.com, September 2025)

- **Racial & Economic Disparities:**

- Median household income: **\$149,551**.
- Black households: **\$83,309** median income; Hispanic/Latinx households: **\$90,897**.
- Homeownership: **52%** citywide vs. 21% for Black households and **26%** for Hispanic/Latinx households.

- **Evictions & Housing Instability:**

- Between Nov 2022–Oct 2023, there were **2.3 eviction filings per**



1,000 renter households (67 filings, 42 evictions).

These conditions illustrate a growing gap between housing costs and residents' ability to pay, disproportionately impacting renters, low-income households, and communities of color. They also underscore the urgency of Bellevue's housing stabilization programs, affordable housing investments, and partnerships aimed at preventing displacement and homelessness.

Community Voice & Lived Experiences

These voices highlight the interconnected nature of financial stressors: housing costs cannot be separated from other essentials like childcare. Providers and residents alike emphasized that housing instability leads to educational disruption, health decline, and community disengagement.

"We have everyday families call us about the housing, about the shelters." – SME

"The main thing here that we can see is that we don't have enough affordable housing." – SME



“Most people are needing affordable housing, childcare, preschool that is free.” – SME

“A community that has ample housing for all income levels, for example, where there’s not food insecurity—those are all part of what makes a community safe and healthy.” – SME

“We make too much money to get food stamps. But we don’t make enough money to qualify for housing.”
– Focus Group Participant

Community Survey Results on Access to Housing Support

- Only **44.9%** of those seeking affordable housing services were able to find them.
- **65.3%** could reach services in a reasonable time, leaving nearly one-third facing transportation barriers.
- Only **48.6%** received help without long waits.



- Only **53.6%** felt their language needs were met
- Only **43.2%** expressed satisfaction with housing support.
- Only **44.9%** said appropriate accommodations were provided for their disability.

Focus group participants, ranging from working families to seniors, disabled residents, and those on fixed incomes, identified affordable, accessible housing as one of Bellevue's most urgent unmet needs.

Recurring themes included:

- Affordable units are too few and often unsuitable (inaccessible, unsafe, or isolating).
- Older adults and disabled residents need housing with universal design and aging-in-place support.
- Eligibility thresholds often exclude working families just above income cutoffs.
- Motel renters remain locked out of permanent housing due to credit checks and strict criteria.



- Application processes are complex, with a lack of centralized information and trusted navigators.

Residents called for:

- **Expanding deeply affordable housing inventory**
- **Streamlining access** to rental and eviction prevention programs
- **Providing culturally responsive navigation support**
- **Improving follow-up services** for long-term stability
- **City-led coordination** with community-based organizations

The consensus from both experts and residents was clear: Housing stability is not a luxury—it is the foundation for all other forms of well-being, and our region must shift from reactive crisis response to proactive, inclusive investment.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Housing Stability is a key factor in allowing residents to both stabilize and reach their full potential. Bellevue continues to prioritize efforts to support housing stability through funding, policy changes, and supporting a range of nonprofit agencies across Bellevue and the Eastside provide vital services.

Bellevue's Affordable Housing Strategy

Bellevue is updating its existing 2017 Affordable Housing Strategy to implement new policy direction, reflect changing market conditions, and support the development and preservation of additional affordable



housing units. The strategy is a short-term action plan that identifies and sequences steps the city can take to continue to address the need for affordable housing in Bellevue. Updating the strategy will identify the next set of near- and mid- term actions to help the city achieve a new affordable housing target and meet other affordable housing priorities. Council launched the update to the Affordable Housing Strategy in November 2024. Planning and engagement will occur over the course of a year.

Housing Stability Program (HSP)

Funded by sales tax revenue under RCW 82.14.530 (HB 1590), the HSP invests funding into affordable and supportive housing developments in Bellevue that serve the city's most marginalized residents and funds services critical for stable living. Recent allocations include:

- \$6.5 million for the Bridge Housing Corporation Spring District 120th Station TOD project, providing 235 affordable units, including 40 units for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- \$1.6 million for Congolese Integration Network's Amani Home, for acquisition of a five-bedroom single family home complete with an onsite case manager who is well versed in providing culturally and linguistically specific services.
- \$13.5 million for the Low Income Housing Institute's Aventine Apartments, offering 66 units with services for veterans and individuals exiting homelessness, including the conversion of two units for onsite supportive services.
- \$221,579 for Catholic Housing's Maurice Elbert House, supporting an existing senior housing building by adding another affordable unit for



seniors.

- \$3.6 million for the Eastgate Men's Shelter, supporting a 100-bed year-round facility.
- \$600,000 for Plymouth Housing Group's Eastgate Permanent Supportive Housing project, creating 92 units.

Behavioral Health and Housing Related Services (BHHRs)

A portion of the HSP funds can be used for operation, delivery and evaluation of community-based services that provide behavioral health and housing related services. Permanent housing and long-term support are critical components of housing stability.

Hopelink offers permanent Housing units for families exiting homelessness, combined with wraparound services that promote long-term success. **PorchLight** also supports men transitioning from homelessness through its Permanent Housing program.

Imagine Housing provides Resident Services that help low-income families and seniors maintain stable housing through onsite support, eviction



prevention, and access to basic needs and community resources. **HERO House**, Bellevue's Supportive Housing program provides both supportive and transitional housing services that assist adults with mental illness to obtain and maintain affordable housing. **Community Home's** *Housing and Case Management for Individuals Experiencing Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Program* provides case management to those experiencing I/DD for the long term to obtain and maintain housing, benefits, and employment. **Housing Connector's** Housing Stability Support Services provide access to long-term housing and stability supports for families experiencing housing instability.

Eastside Housing Campus

In partnership with regional collaborators like ARCH and the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA), the City of Bellevue is advancing a comprehensive continuum of care to support residents facing housing instability and homelessness. The Eastgate Housing Campus is a cornerstone of this work, bringing together three key developments: *Plymouth Crossing*, the Eastside's first permanent supportive housing with 92 units; *PorchLight*, a 100-bed men's shelter and day center; and *Polaris at Eastgate*, a 353-unit affordable housing community. Collectively, these investments expand access to housing, reduce chronic homelessness, and foster long-term stability for vulnerable populations across the region.

Affordable Housing Incentives

Bellevue offers inspection and permit fee waivers for affordable housing developments with units priced at or below 80% of the area median



income. This initiative aims to reduce financial barriers and encourage the development of affordable housing.

Affordable Housing Projects on City-Owned Land

Bellevue is in the process of awarding two city-owned properties for affordable housing development. Following a competitive RFP process, the city has selected two developers to build approximately 300 affordable apartments on the identified parcels. This initiative represents a direct public-sector commitment to increase affordable housing supply by leveraging municipal assets, accelerating development timelines, and ensuring that new housing serves the community's most pressing needs.

Home Rehabilitation and Preservation

The City of Bellevue Home Repair Program serves low- and moderate-income Bellevue homeowners by providing critical health and safety repairs and rehabilitation to owner occupied homes in Bellevue. In partnership with **King County Housing Authority**, Bellevue provides zero interest deferred loans and grants to enable homeowners to remain safely in their homes. This program enables homeowners to age in place while maintaining integrity and preserving the home creating long term sustainability.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **3,545** hours of Case Management supporting household to maintain stable housing
- **39** households with safe and stable home repair



Financial Assistance



Financial Assistance

Overview

With Bellevue's high cost of living, many residents face financial hardship despite being employed. Unexpected expenses, medical bills, job loss, or reduced work hours can quickly overwhelm household budgets. Financial assistance services help bridge these gaps through emergency cash aid, utility support, rental assistance, and other short-term interventions. In Bellevue, this support is particularly critical for families on the brink of displacement, new immigrants navigating complex systems, and individuals working multiple jobs without benefits. Ensuring financial aid is accessible, equitable, and responsive can prevent deeper crises and support upward mobility.

Key Findings and General Trends

Rising living costs from 2020 to 2023 have outpaced benefit increases.

- **TANF benefits remain far below the cost of living**, especially in Bellevue (max \$795/month for a family of three).
- Low and moderate-income households comprise **23.8% of Bellevue's 59,800 households**.
- Bellevue responded by investing over **\$1 million** in emergency financial assistance programs through nonprofit partners in 2023, providing thousands of residents with critical support.
- Typical rent in Bellevue for a two-bedroom apartment is **\$3,079/month** (Apartment.com, September 2025).



- Sharp increases in rent, transportation, and childcare in Bellevue.
 - **8.3% of Bellevue residents** live below the Federal poverty level.
- Service use and needs:
 - Residents use services to maintain housing, cover utilities, and meet urgent needs.
 - Financial stress is especially notable among immigrant households, single-parent families, and those with limited English proficiency.
 - Providers report increasing demand for rental assistance, emergency aid, and support for paycheck-to-paycheck families.

Local governments, school districts, and community organizations will continue to bear the brunt of addressing persistent poverty and economic instability without shifts in policy and funding at the state level.

Community Voice & Lived Experiences

Many residents seeking help are not chronically unhoused or deeply disconnected from the labor force. Rather, they are often working individuals or families struggling to cover shortfalls in increasingly unaffordable essentials.

Rent, utility bills, car repairs, medical costs, and home maintenance were cited as urgent and ongoing financial pressures. Participants emphasized that support, when it exists, often comes with lengthy delays, partial payments, or administrative hurdles that deter people from even applying.



“Some just need financial assistance to make it through the month—help with utilities, food, or gas cards...” – SME

“There are supports, but knowing about them is hard. And then qualifying is even harder.” – Focus Group Participant

“There should be a quicker way to get [funds] into the hands of people who actually need help.” – Focus Group Participant



Ultimately, the community input points to a need for more responsive, flexible, and inclusive financial support systems—ones that recognize the real costs of living in Bellevue and ensure that resources reach those in crisis before the damage is done.

Community Survey Results on Financial Assistance

- Only **47.1%** received prompt help.
- Only **55.6%** said their language needs were met.
- Only **44.9%** reported adequate support for disability accommodations.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

To help Bellevue residents stay housed, meet basic needs, and avoid crisis, the City funds several financial assistance programs delivered through trusted community partners. These programs provide emergency supports such as rent, utilities, healthcare, and other critical resources, ensuring that families and individuals can maintain housing stability and prevent displacement.

Among these partners, **4 Tomorrow** offers rental, move-in, mortgage, and eviction prevention assistance designed to help families avoid homelessness. **Bellevue LifeSpring** provides emergency rental assistance for families with children living in the Bellevue school district at risk of eviction, while **Cancer Lifeline** supports low-income cancer patients by providing financial aid to cover basic needs during treatment. **Catholic Community Services** offers emergency help with rent and utility bills,



helping individuals remain stably housed.

Hopelink combines financial assistance with resource navigation so families can build long term stability while addressing urgent needs. For survivors of domestic violence, **LifeWire** provides flexible housing-related financial support tailored to their unique circumstances. **MAPS-MCRC** offers emergency rental assistance to families facing eviction, while **Mary's Place Seattle** provides direct financial assistance along with shelter services for families experiencing homelessness. Lastly, **Solid Ground WA** supports residents at risk of eviction by offering short-term rental assistance and comprehensive housing support services.

Utility Bill Assistance

Recognizing that utility costs can burden households disproportionately, Bellevue Utilities provides the four following assistance programs on water, sewer and stormwater services:

Utility Bill Assistance Discount and Rebate provides a 70 percent



discount on basic utility services to low-income seniors and low-income disabled residents. Qualified residents are automatically approved for a 70% discount on garbage expenses through republic Services. This program serves both single-family households and tenants in multifamily dwellings.

Bellevue Utility Assistance Program:

- Utility Tax Rebate provides an annual rebate for utility taxes on basic utility services to low-income households.
- Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) waives up to four months of basic utility bills for low-income customers experiencing a financial shock.
- *Neighbors Helping Neighbors* donation program offers support to residents with a past-due bill from Bellevue Utilities and meet specific low-income requirements.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **\$1,746,365** was distributed in rental assistance alone, helping prevent eviction and displacement for hundreds of households across the city.
- **826** financial aid awards provided to households.
- **~1000** residents served by the Utility bill and energy Assistance programs

Together, these programs form a vital safety net that allows Bellevue residents facing financial hardship to access the resources necessary to remain housed, maintain stability, and avoid displacement.



Food and Basic Needs



Food and Basic Needs

Overview

Beyond shelter and income, access to daily essentials, including nutritious food, hygiene supplies, diapers, and clothing—is crucial for stability and dignity. Programs addressing these needs focus on individuals and families facing food insecurity and economic vulnerability.

Key Findings & General Trends

Food insecurity continues to rise in Bellevue and the broader Washington region, reflecting both local and national economic strain.

- Approximately 3,354 of Bellevue’s 62,868 households are on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- 52.5% of households receiving SNAP have a family member with a disability
- Between May 2023 and May 2024, about **37% of households** in the greater Washington area, including Bellevue, experienced food insecurity. This represents a **5% increase** from the previous year.
- Nearly **1.5 million Washington residents** struggled to access enough food.
- In 2024, **Food Lifeline distributed over 18 million pounds of food**, underscoring growing regional need.
- King County data shows that **10.2% of households** face food insecurity overall, with rates rising to nearly **25% among households with children**. Black, Hispanic, and low-income renter households



are disproportionately affected, reflecting systemic racial and economic inequities.

- The Bellevue School District saw an increase in students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch from **19% in 2022** to **23.57% (around 4,785 students)** for the 2024–2025 school year. This number does not include families who were automatically enrolled in the program, which raises the number of children in the Bellevue School District who qualify for free and reduced priced lunch to approximately 1 in 4. (Nutrition Services).

Community Voices and Lived Experiences

“Food insecurity is real. Even in a wealthy city like Bellevue, folks are hungry.” – SME

Photo provided by AmPowering



Access to food, hygiene, and basic materials remains uncertain for many residents despite the city's affluence. Providers see rising demand for essentials such as meals, diapers, and personal care products. These basic supports are often the entry point for residents engaging with broader human services.

“A lot of people come to our center asking for food or hygiene supplies. Basic needs are where it starts.” – SME

“It’s hard to think about your mental health or job when you don’t have food in the fridge.” – SME

Shame and invisibility around food insecurity discourage some residents from seeking help. Others lack information or face language and digital barriers.

“A lot of people don’t want to go to food banks because they feel ashamed.” – Focus Group Participant



“The food pantry is never enough... one piece of meat is not going to last us a whole week.” – Focus Group Participant

Community Survey Results on Food and Basic Needs

- Only **33.7%** said food services were available in their community.
- Just **30.7%** could reach services within a reasonable travel time.
- Satisfaction with food support was low at **29.5%**.
- About **62.7%** of service users felt their cultural or linguistic needs were met, leaving over a third feeling underserved or unsure.
- Only **53.5%** reported that disability accommodations met their needs, pointing to gaps in accessibility.

Additional Basic Needs

Clothing, diapers, formula, hygiene products, and child safety supplies (e.g., car seats) were frequently cited as unmet needs. While appreciated, personal care items were often inadequate or not aligned with user preferences.

Food security and access to basic necessities are fundamental concerns across Bellevue’s communities. Meeting these needs with dignity is essential to stabilizing households and enabling participation in broader services and opportunities. Basic needs are not ancillary—they are the foundation upon which health, housing, employment, and civic engagement depend.



City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Addressing food insecurity and basic needs remains a top priority for the City of Bellevue. Through partnerships with community organizations, the City supports an array of programs that deliver nutritious food, essential supplies, and supportive services to families, seniors, youth, and individuals experiencing hardship.

Renewal Food Bank provides essential food assistance and hygiene items while working to ensure their customers have access to culturally relevant food. They partner with local grocers and retailers to procure high quality food and produce. **MAPS-Muslim Community Resource Center's** distribution of food and gas cards, while **Sewa International's** *Serve the Hungry Initiative*, partners with local groups to provide meals to underserved communities.

Hopelink's food programs assist households by providing broad access to nutritious food while **Eat Happy Now** rescues and delivers fresh surplus meals and produce directly to residents facing food insecurity. **Essentials First** supplements this support by distributing culturally meaningful food through its World Food Program.

To support food access for school aged youth, **Bellevue LifeSpring's** *Breaktime Mealtime* program offers grocery store food vouchers during school breaks. The **Backpack Brigade** supports food-insecure students by providing weekend food bags to ensure consistent access to meals outside of school.





Photo provided by AmPowering

For seniors and adults with disabilities, **Sound Generations' Meals on Wheels** program delivers nourishing meals directly to those unable to leave their homes. Additional support comes from **The Salvation Army's Eastside Corps** provides free, hot meals Monday through Friday, while **The YMCA of Greater Seattle** offers monthly produce boxes and weekly hot meals through Bellevue Food Trucks.



To meet basic needs, **KidVantage** supports families with young children by providing critical essentials such as diapers, formula, car seats, and clothing through its Strong Foundation for Kids program. **Babies of Homelessness**, through the *King County Diaper Bank*, distributed tens of thousands of bundles of diapers, wipes, and formula to families with young children. **Essentials First** supplements this support by distributing household hygiene supplies through its *Volume Distribution* initiatives.

Agencies have also extended their reach through mobile and alternative distribution services models. **Hopelink** provides both mobile markets and permanent food pantries in Bellevue, with culturally appropriate food and translation services. **Essentials First** offers hygiene kits through pop-ups and direct delivery programs.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **1,122,576** meals served
- **33,937** bundles of essential items distributed to babies and children
- **467** bundles of hygiene kits distributed to residents and 4,075 hygiene items delivered to food bank to distribute

These efforts form a vital safety net, aiming to ensure that Bellevue's most vulnerable residents receive the food, supplies, and services necessary to maintain their health and dignity.



Survivor Advocacy & Safety from Violence



Survivor Advocacy & Safety from Violence

Overview

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in Bellevue face significant barriers to accessing support. Stigma, language challenges, immigration status, and financial dependence often compound the trauma of violence. Survivor advocacy and safety services provide critical pathways to healing, housing, legal protection, and long-term safety. Bellevue organizations play a vital role by offering confidential counseling, legal navigation, culturally competent outreach, and emergency relocation support. Strengthening this network ensures that all residents—especially women, children, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals—have trusted resources during times of vulnerability.

Photo provided by Refugee Women's Alliance



Key Findings & General Trends

- **High Prevalence of Domestic Violence Statewide:**
 - In 2024, domestic violence offenses made up **49.5% of all crimes against persons** and **5.2% of all crimes against property** in Washington (Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Crime in Washington 2024 Annual Report).
 - King County, which includes Bellevue, consistently reports **high rates of gender-based violence**, with most cases involving women ages 25–35 (King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, 2025).
- **Bellevue-Specific Case Trends:**
 - From **January–May 2025**, Bellevue Police recorded **404 domestic violence cases, 9% above** the five-year average (369) for the same period.
 - DV-related cases accounted for **50% of all “persons crimes”** (e.g., assault, harassment) reported during this time.
 - In 2024, Bellevue reported **926 DV cases**.
- **Progress in Sexual Assault Response:**
 - Washington cleared its backlog of **over 10,000 untested sexual assault kits** after decades of delay, aided by reforms and federal investment (Washington State, Office of the Attorney General, 2023).
 - This effort has **reopened criminal investigations** and **improved survivor trust** in the justice system.
 - In 2024, the state launched the **“Seek Then Speak”** confidential reporting and resource website, offering a **trauma-informed**,



- **accessible** platform for survivors.
- **Ongoing Systemic Challenges:**
 - Survivor advocacy networks remain **strained by high caseloads** and **under-resourced investigative units**.
 - The King County Sheriff's Office's Special Assault Unit staffing dropped by **nearly 50%** since the pandemic, delaying case processing and follow-up (Publicola, 2022).
 - Federal VOCA victim services funding in Washington declined by **~38%** from its peak, threatening **legal advocacy, shelter services, and culturally specific outreach** (Washington State Standard, 2024; Washington State Women's Commission, WSWC Testimony, 2025).
- **Local Response Needs:**
 - Bellevue's investments in **legal advocacy, crisis counseling, and supportive housing for survivors** remain essential.
 - Gaps in funding and investigative capacity at the state level mean **cities must actively ensure services are accessible, culturally responsive, and adequately resourced**.
 - Providers emphasized the **need for culturally responsive advocacy and safety planning resources** to meet the needs of diverse survivors.

Community Voices & Lived Experiences

Survivors often face immediate safety crises combined with long-term emotional, legal, financial, and cultural challenges. Limited emergency housing and support systems leave families vulnerable in moments of



extreme crisis.

“We had a client who came in with her kids fleeing an abusive situation, and we had to scramble to find shelter.”

– SME

Complex and fragmented service systems increase survivor stress, especially during trauma.

“When someone is in crisis, they can’t be expected to figure out a dozen websites and phone numbers.”

– Focus Group Participant

“Safety from violence isn’t just physical—it’s emotional too. Survivors need trauma-informed services.” – SME

Fear of judgment, deportation, or custody loss deters many, especially immigrants, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and low-income households, from



seeking help. Confidential, culturally competent services are critical to breaking these barriers.

“There’s still a lot of stigma when people seek help for abuse. We need more safe, anonymous options.” – SME

Existing services are often perceived as underfunded and therefore insufficiently tailored to individual survivor needs.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Survivor advocacy and safety from violence are urgent and complex priorities in Bellevue’s human services landscape. The prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault demands robust, trauma-informed, culturally responsive systems that offer immediate safety and long-term healing. Investing in a continuum of care, from crisis intervention to legal and emotional support, is essential for creating a city where all survivors feel safe, supported, and empowered to rebuild their lives.

To meet the culturally and linguistically specific needs, **Consejo Counseling and Referral Service** provides domestic violence services including mental health counseling, substance use treatment, housing support, and advocacy tailored for Spanish-speaking survivors. Services include crisis intervention, safety planning, legal system navigation, financial assistance, relocation support, and empowerment-focused





support groups **Refugee Women's Alliance** supports Eastern European immigrant and refugee survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault with victim advocacy, support groups, outreach, and holistic case management services. **Project Be Free** support BIPOC survivors of domestic violence through Crisis Response, DV Advocacy, DV Family Support Groups, a Youth Mentorship Program, Monthly Family Resource Night and Survivor Wellness Symposium.

LifeWire offers survivor advocacy, resource referrals, legal navigation, and individual and group behavioral health counseling to meet a broad range of needs. **DAWN (Domestic Abuse Women's Network)** operates a confidential domestic violence shelter and offers mental health services, personalized case management, and community advocacy across King



County. DAWN and LifeWire also maintains a 24-hour crisis line providing safety planning and crisis intervention.

For survivors of sexual trauma, **Harborview Medical Center's Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress** provides outpatient medical care, therapeutic services, prevention, and education. **King County Sexual Assault Resource Center** offers a 24-hour resource line along with legal and general advocacy services in English and Spanish for survivors and their families.

In addition to advocacy services, the city has invested in housing stability at **LifeWire's Hope Start Here Apartments** for domestic violence survivors supporting 25 units of affordable, on-site supportive housing survivors earning less than 30% Area Median Income. Leveraging \$1.6 million in capital from Bellevue and Housing Stability Funding (HB 1590).

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **4,443** hours of domestic violence survivor advocacy support
- **912** hours of sexual assault survivor legal and general advocacy services
- **649** hours of domestic violence survivor counseling
- **342** hours of sexual assault survivor counseling
- **96** hours of domestic violence support groups

Together, these programs provide critical supports for survivors to help them heal and thrive.



Behavioral Health



Behavioral Health

Overview

Bellevue, like many communities, continues to face growing demand for behavioral health services, including mental health support, substance use disorder treatment, and trauma-informed care. Youth, working adults, and seniors alike report challenges related to stress, anxiety, depression, and isolation, often intensified by financial strain, discrimination, and family instability.

Local providers offer individual counseling, group therapy, substance use disorder recovery programs, and culturally responsive wellness services. This reflects an understanding that behavioral health is central to overall health and community safety, and that reducing stigma while expanding access is critical to improving long-term outcomes for Bellevue residents.

Key Findings & General Trends

Washington State is experiencing a troubling surge in behavioral health crises, particularly related to substance use and youth mental health. This crisis mirrors a broader statewide pattern, for Washington is one of only four states in the country where overdose deaths continue to rise despite national plateaus (Washington State DOH). The trend represents a delayed but sharp arrival of fentanyl in the Pacific Northwest, posing heightened



risks for local communities, including Bellevue.

Across Washington, suicide remains one of the leading causes of death for Washington State is experiencing a troubling surge in behavioral health crises, especially related to **substance use** and **youth mental health**.

- **Substance Use & Overdose Deaths** – In King County alone, there have were over **1,000 overdose deaths in 2024**, primarily driven by fentanyl (King County Overdose Dashboard). This reflects a delayed but sharp arrival of fentanyl in the Pacific Northwest and mirrors a statewide pattern in which Washington is one of only four states where overdose deaths continue to rise despite national plateaus (Washington State DOH).
- **Youth Suicide & Mental Health** – Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death for young people.
 - In 2023, youth aged **10–24 accounted for over 16% of all suicide deaths statewide** (Washington State Department of Health, 2024).
 - In the 2023 Healthy Youth Survey:
 - **30%** of students reported feeling so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing usual activities.
 - Nearly **15%** had seriously considered suicide
 - Anxiety is also widespread, with **60% of 10th graders** and **over 65% of 12th graders** reporting frequent nervousness or anxiety.
 - Nearly **70% of 10th graders** expressed hope for the future, suggesting fragile but notable resilience.



- **Barriers to Care** – Many students—especially those from marginalized communities—face significant barriers to care. School counselors often exceed recommended caseload ratios, and community-based mental health providers report **months-long waitlists** for youth therapy. Delays are particularly harmful for students with co-occurring trauma or housing instability.
- **System Strain & Capacity Gaps** – Demand for behavioral health services is rising faster than provider capacity. Between 2017 and 2022:
 - The share of Washingtonians with a mental health diagnosis on insurance claims rose from **11.8% to 17.4%**.
 - Treatment costs increased **69%**, driven mainly by outpatient care (Washington State OIC, Mental Health Trends Report).
 - Washington ranks in the **bottom five nationally** for inpatient psychiatric bed availability.
 - Jail-based competency evaluations now average **over 83 days** in wait time (WSHCA, 2023).

Photo provided by International Community Health Service



These trends reveal a behavioral health system under intense strain and show the urgent need to expand **crisis response, harm reduction, and youth-focused prevention programs**. For Bellevue, failure to act risks overwhelming local services while state-level infrastructure remains stretched thin.

Community Voice / Lived Experiences

Behavioral health emerged as one of Bellevue's most pressing human service needs. Experts and residents consistently pointed to a gap between need and accessible, culturally relevant services.

Service coordination gaps persist, especially for residents with both mental health and substance use challenges.

“Mental health is always one of the top needs we see... People don't know where to turn, or there's waitlists.” – SME

“Substance use and behavioral health services are needed but not well coordinated.” – SME



“Clients with dual diagnosis issues—mental health and substance use—fall through the cracks.” – SME

Cultural and linguistic accessibility is a recurring concern.

“We need more therapists that are culturally aware and speak multiple languages.” – SME

In a city where many residents speak a language other than English at

Photo provided by IKRON



home and come from immigrant or refugee backgrounds, culturally responsive care is essential. Without it, residents face alienation, lower trust, and poorer outcomes.

Residents also described:

- Long waitlists (sometimes six months or more)
- Stigma around mental illness and substance use
- Reliance on patchwork supports through schools, pediatricians, and case managers
- Confusion about when and how to seek help, especially in immigrant communities Behavioral health needs intersect with other challenges such as housing instability, isolation, and chronic illness—especially for seniors.
- Residents emphasized the importance of:
 - Trauma-informed care
 - Bereavement counseling
 - Mental health support around chronic illness and aging
 - Youth- and senior-focused therapy
 - Expanded culturally competent providers

Community Survey Results for Behavioral Health

- Among survey respondents who used or tried to access counseling services, **25.0%** were satisfied with the support they received.
- For emotional and mental health services overall:
 - **27.4%** of respondents said services were available in their community.



- **24.5%** said services met their cultural and language needs.
- According to King County data, **Black and Hispanic youth** were **overrepresented in emergency mental health responses** and **less likely to receive follow-up outpatient care**.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Behavioral health continues to be a top human service need in Bellevue, particularly for youth, families, and communities of color. The City supports a wide range of nonprofit partners that provide prevention, intervention, and treatment services—many of which are culturally and linguistically responsive to Bellevue’s diverse populations.

Bellevue’s Behavioral Health & Housing Stability funds (HB 1590) prioritizes funding a range of evidence-based Behavioral Health treatments, including same-day SUD and mental health assessments, medically assisted treatment, culturally specific services, and embedded behavioral health support in affordable housing sites.

Youth and Family Mental Health

Organizations such as **Youth Eastside Services (YES)** deliver comprehensive behavioral healthcare for children and youth. Services include early childhood interventions that promote healthy emotional and cognitive development, and culturally grounded Latine youth programs focused on leadership and mental health resilience. **Friends of Youth** addresses youth and family mental health needs through its Healthy Start Home Visiting Program, which supports families facing multiple stressors



with in-home visits by trained Family Support Specialists. The organization also provides mental health and substance use disorder counseling tailored to youth.

Integrated and Wraparound Behavioral Health Services

Providers such as **IKRON of Greater Seattle** and **Therapeutic Health Services** offer integrated models of care that combine mental health counseling, substance use treatment, and medication management. These wraparound services ensure holistic, coordinated care for clients navigating complex behavioral health challenges.

Peer-Led and Community-Based Approaches

NAMI Eastside contributes through peer-led models that center lived experience. Its Community Mental Health Education & Support Programs deliver workshops and peer support for families and individuals, while its Youth Mental Health Resilience Program strengthens coping skills and emotional well-being among youth. Similarly, **4 Tomorrow's** Mental Health Coordination & Gap Therapy Program plays a critical role in bridging access gaps, especially for individuals waiting for or unable to access longer-term, culturally responsive therapy.

Culturally and Linguistically Specific Behavioral Health

To meet the behavioral health needs of immigrant and refugee communities, **Indian American Community Services (IACS)** provides culturally attuned services to Asian Indian individuals and families.

International Community Health Services (ICHS) integrates behavioral



health into its medical care model, offering comprehensive support to underserved populations. **Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS)** supports Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander residents through multilingual, multicultural mental health services for low-income youth and families, as well as whole-person care for adults with chronic mental illness.

Crisis Response

Crisis Connections operates a 24-hour crisis line providing free and confidential telephone crisis intervention, safety planning, information, referrals and support services to individuals in emotional crisis.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **23,034** hours of counseling services completed
- **2,978** crisis phone calls answered
- **2,745** students received suicide prevention education
- **1,485** hours of behavioral health educational groups delivered
- **1,521** hours of behavioral health case management provided

These investments demonstrate Bellevue's commitment to addressing behavioral health through prevention, early intervention, and community-based care models, ensuring services are not only accessible but also culturally meaningful and responsive.



Childcare and Early Learning



Childcare and Early Learning

Overview

Accessible, affordable childcare and high-quality early learning opportunities are essential for working families in Bellevue. Yet many face long waitlists, high costs, or a lack of culturally responsive care options. Early childhood is a formative stage for development, and gaps in access can have long-term impacts on learning, equity, and parental workforce participation.

Service providers play a key role in supporting early learning through preschools, home-visiting programs, parenting workshops, and wraparound support for children with developmental needs. This category reflects the community's investment in the future and its effort to build strong, inclusive foundations for every child.

Photo provided by Kindering



Key Findings & General Trends

- **Severe shortage of childcare slots:** King County has ~69,700 licensed childcare slots for children under age 12, but demand exceeds 325,000—meeting only **21% of need** (King County estimate).
- **High costs exceed affordability benchmarks:** Full-time infant care in Bellevue averages **\$3,400/month** (~\$41,000/year), closely mirroring King County's "true cost of care" estimates (Care.com, 2025). This is well above the federal benchmark recommending families spend no more than 7% of income on childcare.
- **Affordability gap:** Only **46.7%** of respondents could find affordable childcare when needed; just **13.2%** reported affordable services were within reasonable travel time.
- **Waitlists and access delays:** Only **44.8%** accessed care without long waits; **50.7%** could reach services in a reasonable amount of time.
- **Cultural and language fit:** **60.0%** said services met cultural and language needs; **40%** either felt they did not or were unsure.
- **Quality satisfaction:** **62.1%** were satisfied with the quality of care; many remained neutral or dissatisfied.
- **Accessibility for children with disabilities:** **54.2%** of families needing disability accommodations received them.
- **Provider capacity barriers:** **14.5%** of providers want to expand childcare services but face staffing or resource limitations.
- **Workforce shortage:** The childcare workforce in King County remains **9.7% smaller** than pre-pandemic (DCHS, 2024); statewide turnover among early childhood educators is **~43%** (Seattle Chamber, 2023).





Photo provided by Kindering

- **State and local investments:** In 2024, the Washington State Department of Commerce awarded **\$30.4M** in capital grants, creating **2,400 new childcare slots** statewide. Enrollment in preschool programs such as ECEAP grew to **~16,000 children** in the 2022–2023 school year, with further funding for transitional kindergarten.
- **Persistent inequities:** About **63%** of Washington residents live in “childcare deserts” (MRSC, 2024). Bellevue families report long waitlists, rising tuition, and difficulty finding culturally aligned or flexible care options. Local programs like the Child Care Health Consultation initiative and expanded early learning subsidies are important steps, but affordability, home-based provider expansion, and culturally attuned care remain priorities.



Community Voice / Lived Experiences

Community members and subject matter experts consistently identified childcare and early learning as **among the most urgent yet inaccessible services** in Bellevue. For working parents—particularly those in low- and moderate-income households—the cost and scarcity of care create constant logistical and financial strain.

“Childcare is a huge barrier for families trying to work. They can’t afford it or find spots.” – SME

This tension between needing to work and being unable to secure safe, reliable care was a recurring theme. Families described making difficult choices—leaving jobs, taking overnight shifts, or relying on informal arrangements that lack developmental and safety supports—because licensed, affordable childcare is out of reach.

Early learning was described not as a luxury but a **foundational service** with lifelong impacts on academic readiness, social development, and opportunity. However, even families committed to early education struggle to find quality programs that provide language support or culturally responsive curricula, particularly immigrant families and families of color, who face compounded inequities from the earliest stages of a child’s life.

Parents in focus groups described impossible financial trade-offs:



“Our families often have to make hard choices—pay for rent or childcare?” – Focus Group Participant

Some praised early developmental support programs but noted a steep drop-off in services once children aged out or transitioned into public school, describing this shift as a step backward in quality or accessibility. Others reported that **inclusive childcare**, particularly for children with disabilities or those needing behavioral/therapeutic support, is extremely hard to find, with staff shortages further limiting options.

Access to information was also cited as a challenge. Many families learn about services only through schools, teachers, or word-of-mouth, leaving gaps for those with very young children or language barriers.

Participants called for **greater investment in childcare and early**

Photo provided by Kindering



learning infrastructure, expanded developmental assessments, inclusive programming, and parenting supports. They also stressed the importance of preserving long-standing services that provide trusted, accessible entry points for families.

Participants emphasized that accessible, affordable, and inclusive childcare is not a luxury, it's a foundation for family stability, economic opportunity, and community health.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare is essential for the healthy development of children and the economic stability of families. In Bellevue, the City supports a range of initiatives and partnerships that aim to increase school readiness, reduce childcare barriers, and provide targeted supports for low-income and underserved families.

Bellevue College's Early Learning Center supports early childhood development and school readiness. Bellevue College offers childcare for student parents, helping them stay enrolled while their children benefit from enriched learning environments. **Bellevue School District** provides culturally and linguistically responsive preschool instruction that supports academic and social-emotional growth, especially for dual-language learners.

Community-based programs also play a critical role. The **Boys & Girls**



Clubs of Bellevue provides affordable, structured childcare through its *Youth Program for Disadvantaged Youth* in the Lake Hills Corridor. The program offers a safe space during out-of-school hours, with culturally relevant activities that support youth development.

BrightSpark Early Learning Services connects families to trusted childcare providers, offers financial assistance, and provides targeted support for families experiencing housing instability. The agency also strengthens provider quality through training, consultation, and mental health services.

To further support the childcare workforce, the City partnered with the national network **Upwards** to launch the **BOOST Program** in April 2024. This initiative equips licensed providers with technology tools that automate administrative tasks like attendance tracking and marketing, saving providers up to 20 hours per week. BOOST also includes business coaching to improve operational efficiency, helping strengthen provider retention and expand available childcare slots across Bellevue.

Kinderling supports children with developmental delays and those experiencing homelessness through its *Families in Transition (FIT) program*. Services include trauma-informed care, caregiver education, and consultation for early learning providers.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **13,524** days of Head Start early learning services delivered
- **7,295** months of childcare vouchers distributed to families





Photo provided by Kindering

- **1,681** individuals assisted with finding childcare
- **948** hours of childcare consulting and training provided to childcare providers
- **22** home-based childcare businesses were provided technical assistance to develop and grow businesses

Together, these initiatives reflect the City's commitment to ensuring children, regardless of income, background, or housing status, have equitable access to high-quality early learning opportunities and that families have the resources they need to thrive.



Medical and Dental



Medical and Dental

Overview

Equitable access to medical and dental care is a cornerstone of health and quality of life. In Bellevue, uninsured or underinsured residents—including low-income families, undocumented immigrants, and older adults—often face barriers to preventative care, treatment, and oral health services. Local organizations help bridge these gaps through clinics, mobile services, interpretation assistance, and insurance navigation. By supporting health literacy, disease prevention, and regular screenings, this service area works to reduce disparities and promote community-wide wellness. Strengthening Bellevue's healthcare safety net is essential to ensuring that no resident is left behind due to cost, coverage, or access.

Photo provided by International Community Health Service



Key Findings & General Trends

- **Insurance Coverage and Access**

- Washington State's uninsured rate has remained relatively low (6–8%) in recent years, aided by Medicaid expansion and outreach (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2023).
- Insurance alone does not guarantee care—11% of adults in King County delayed needed medical care in 2022 due to cost; nearly 30% of low-income residents reported difficulties accessing timely appointments (King County Community Health Needs Assessment, 2022).
- In Bellevue, safety net providers like International Community Health Services (ICHS) and HealthPoint face long waitlists and high no-show rates, especially among uninsured and immigrant residents.
- Ongoing Medicaid eligibility redeterminations could increase the uninsured population, further straining access.

- **Dental Health Gaps**

- 32% of low-income children in Washington have untreated dental decay vs. 17% of all children (Washington State DOH, 2023).
- Emergency department visits for preventable dental conditions among adults in King County topped 7,000 in 2023 (Washington State DOH, ED Data Dashboard, 2024).

- **Primary and Preventive Care Access**

- 14% of King County residents reported having no regular doctor



or clinic in 2022—rates were higher among people of color and those earning under \$35,000/year (King County Community Health Needs Assessment, 2022).

- In Bellevue, transportation, limited clinic hours, and language barriers limit access to routine checkups.
- Over 20% of Bellevue residents on Apple Health did not have an annual primary care visit in 2023 (City of Bellevue, Health Services Report, 2024).

Community Voice & Lived Experience

Dental Care as a Lower Priority Due to Financial Constraints

Many residents and experts described dental care as frequently neglected—not by choice, but out of necessity. This reflects a broader reality that, despite its importance to overall health, dental care is often deprioritized in favor of urgent needs like housing, food, or acute medical issues. For families living paycheck to paycheck, preventive dental visits are a luxury, and dental problems are often only addressed once they reach crisis levels.

“We have clients who go without dental care for years—it’s seen as optional.” – SME

Insurance Gaps and Access Barriers

The challenges of obtaining medical care are similarly impacted by



insurance status and cost. Many people skip medications or avoid seeing a doctor because they lack insurance. Even among those enrolled in Medicaid, difficulties persist, underscoring the frustrating paradox that coverage does not always guarantee access to care. For part-time workers, families with mixed immigration status, and those facing language barriers, the healthcare system can feel nearly impenetrable.

“People skip medications or don’t see a doctor because they don’t have insurance.” – SME

“Even with Medicaid, some providers won’t take you. So where do you go?” – SME

Support for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Recognizing the unique needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities, Bellevue funds and partners with programs providing transportation to medical and dental appointments, home-based care, and specialized dental services for those with mobility challenges.

Cultural and Linguistic Accessibility

Language and cultural barriers compound these challenges. While some



Bellevue providers offer multilingual services or employ bilingual staff, these options remain limited. Patients often face long waits to receive care that respects their cultural and linguistic needs. Navigating unfamiliar healthcare systems in a second language further deepens access challenges for immigrant and refugee populations.

Cost Concerns and Health Management

Cost consistently emerged as a major concern. Participants described skipping appointments, avoiding emergency care, or resorting to home remedies because medical services felt out of reach. This illustrates the difficult balancing act many families face between covering basic needs and maintaining their health.

“We can’t afford healthcare. So we have to be really careful about what we do with ourselves now.”

– Focus Group Participant



Logistical and Scheduling Barriers

Logistical issues also create real obstacles. Limited clinic hours, transportation challenges, and inaccessible buildings prevent timely access.

“People can’t accept the medical appointment because it was going to be dark by the time they returned.”

– Focus Group Participant

System Navigation and Informal Supports

Even when residents manage to find providers, long wait times and communication challenges often delay urgent care. Dental care, in particular, was described as an especially neglected area. Many clients have gone years without seeing a dentist, as dental visits are perceived as “optional” when financial resources are tight. Prescription medications are sometimes skipped or rationed, not due to lack of need but because of cost or insurance gaps.

Community Survey Results for Medical Care

- Only **37.4%** satisfied with support received.
- Only **41.0%** said services were available in the community.
- Only **35.0%** said services met cultural/language needs.
- **40.3%** of providers reported offering medical care or insurance support.



- **77.2%** of SMEs able to find care or insurance; **73.5%** could travel to services in a reasonable time.
- Only **65.5%** accessed services without a long wait.
- Only **69.9%** felt cultural/language needs were met.
- Only **60.7%** of those needing disability accommodations received them.

Despite these challenges, many families rely on trusted intermediaries, such as pediatricians, school counselors, state case managers, or even informal sources like Google and word-of-mouth—to help navigate the complex healthcare system. These informal channels play a critical role in bridging information gaps created by a fragmented and complicated system.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

The City supports a network of agencies delivering essential medical and dental services to underserved residents, with a shared focus on accessibility, affordability, and culturally responsive care.

International Community Health Services (ICHS) and **HealthPoint** both provide comprehensive medical and dental care through established clinics that serve low-income and uninsured populations. ICHS offers integrated medical, dental, and accommodation services, such as interpretation for limited English proficient patients. With a sliding fee scale and a policy to never deny care based on the ability to pay, ICHS ensures equitable access to preventive and restorative dental care. Similarly,





HealthPoint delivers a wide range of services, including preventive, urgent, and chronic care management, guided by its mission to provide high-quality, affordable, and accessible care to all. Together, these providers form the backbone of community-based, culturally competent healthcare in Bellevue.

To expand access beyond traditional clinic walls, **Medical Teams International** operates mobile dental clinics under its *Care & Connect* initiative. These free clinics serve individuals living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) who are uninsured, underinsured, or otherwise disconnected from oral health resources. In addition to dental treatment, the program offers referrals to other necessary health services, creating a vital safety net for those facing multiple barriers to care.



For residents with mobility challenges or specific equipment needs, **Bridge Disability Ministries** fills a critical gap through its *Meyer Medical Equipment Center*. The program provides low- or no-cost medical and mobility equipment to individuals with disabilities or limited resources, promoting independence and dignity through access to essential supplies.

Together, these city-funded programs provide an equity-driven approach to health that lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive system. While not yet exhaustive, they help ensure that dental, medical, and supportive services are within reach for Bellevue's most vulnerable community members.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **2,717** dental appointments
- **2,488** medical appointments
- **979** units of durable medical equipment distributed



Navigation, Legal, Case Management & Other Supportive Services



Navigation, Legal, Case Management & Other Supportive Services

Overview

Navigating complex public systems can be overwhelming—especially for those with limited English proficiency, disabilities, or unfamiliarity with U.S. institutions. Bellevue residents rely heavily on supportive services that provide case management, legal advocacy, benefits enrollment, and general resource coordination. These services help people stabilize their lives, assert their rights, and connect to the broader web of care. Whether supporting an immigrant family applying for healthcare or an older adult navigating housing options, these services act as a lifelines. Trusted navigators and case managers are a vital part of delivering equitable, person-centered care in Bellevue.

General Trends & Key Findings

- **Demand and Funding Pressures:**
 - Washington State’s Office of Civil Legal Aid serves 50,000 low-income residents every biennium through housing defense, family law, and benefits advocacy (Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid).
 - Recent cuts, including a \$5 million biennial reduction for criminal record expungement assistance, have increased uncertainty and risked service reductions statewide.
 - Case management systems report increasing workload



- Administration aims to reduce care coordinator caseloads but has only partial funding to do so. Public defense reforms to lower attorney caseloads face attorney shortages and budget constraints.
- **Local Context in Bellevue:**
 - Immigrant and refugee communities, making up over 40% of Bellevue's population, create significant legal navigation needs (U.S. Census, 2023).
 - The Seattle-Bellevue metro area processed over 27,000 new lawful permanent residency and naturalization applications in 2023 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2024).
 - Case managers coordinating benefits and crisis intervention are stretched thin, risking service continuity gaps.

Community Voice & Lived Experience

The Importance of Case Management and Navigation

Accessing human services in Bellevue is as much about navigating a fragmented system as it is about program availability. Experts and residents repeatedly stressed the critical role of trusted navigators and case managers in helping people move through complex systems. Without this support, many clients become lost or overwhelmed.

“Case management is everything. Without someone to help navigate, clients get lost in the system.” – SME



Residents juggling multiple crises often face the challenge of visiting numerous agencies, completing repetitive paperwork, and understanding confusing eligibility and appointment systems. This disjointed process is especially difficult for those unfamiliar with local resources or who face language barriers, lack of time, or limited internet access.

“People Google stuff but end up frustrated. We need better ways to connect people to services.” – SME

Legal Aid Challenges

Legal services are a critical need but remain under-resourced in Bellevue. Legal issues related to immigration, family law, housing, and employment often underpin instability, yet low-cost and culturally competent legal support options are limited. Language and documentation barriers further restrict access, particularly for immigrant and refugee populations.

Transportation and Accessibility

Community members reported mixed experiences with transportation support. While many can find assistance, others face significant barriers to timely and culturally relevant transportation services—impairing access to vital programs.

Older Adult Services Access

Access to older adult services varies widely. Many respondents struggle to



find or reach appropriate services, with satisfaction regarding timeliness, quality, and cultural responsiveness remaining moderate to low.

System Complexity and Information Barriers

Many participants described Bellevue's human services landscape as fragmented and difficult to navigate. Information sources such as flyers, websites, and phone systems were often confusing, outdated, or inaccessible—especially for those requiring alternative formats like large print or audio.

"The systems are built assuming people already know how to use them." – Focus Group Participant

Resource-sharing depends heavily on informal networks like word of mouth or digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp), leaving many residents reliant on trial and error to find services that meet urgent needs.

Need for Trusted, Person-Centered Support

There was strong consensus around the need for dedicated navigators, case managers, or coordinators who can provide consistent, personalized support through the service system. Participants described a desire for someone who can “walk with people through the process,” assisting with application forms, understanding agency requirements, and identifying available services. Without this support, many people encounter dead ends



or endless referrals.

“Barriers get put up... we get pushed around from organization to organization without getting actual help.”
– Focus Group Participant

Case management was described not merely as helpful but as essential. Single advocates such as social workers or community liaisons can make a significant difference by connecting clients to housing, food, healthcare, and legal services. However, some noted that younger or less experienced staff sometimes lack the community knowledge or lived experience necessary for effective support.

Suggestions for Improvement

Focus group members suggested potential solutions to improve navigation and access, including centralized online resource hubs, multilingual directories, and physical “resource desks” embedded in community settings. These ideas reflect frustration with current reliance on informal and inconsistent methods for finding services.

Participants also expressed concern over a perceived disconnect between city government and local organizations, calling for a more active municipal role in curating and promoting accessible resources, including legal aid, financial support, counseling, and housing assistance.





Photo provided by IACS

Community and Provider Survey Results

- **22.9%** of respondents connected to services through organizational referrals; **19.0%** through schools.
- **81.0%** reported at least one barrier to access; top barriers were unavailable services (**7.1%**), long wait times (**6.9%**), and lack of provider specialization (**6.5%**).
- Among providers, **52.2%** cited long wait times as a referral barrier; **50.0%** noted a shortage of providers speaking clients' primary languages; **46.8%** cited a lack of culturally appropriate providers.
- Sustainable funding was identified as the top organizational challenge by **36.1%** of providers.



- **Transportation Support**

- **64.5%** of community respondents found transportation assistance when needed, but over one-third could not.
- Only **56.0%** could travel to transportation services within a reasonable time.
- **54.3%** accessed transportation without long wait times.
- **58.3%** felt their cultural and language needs were met by transportation providers.
- Satisfaction with transportation services was moderate (**59.7%**).
- Among those needing disability accommodations, **55.8%** reported needs were met.

- **Older Adult Services**

- **51.1%** of respondents could find older adult services locally; nearly half could not.
- **52.4%** could travel to these services in a reasonable time.
- **51.9%** reported receiving services without long wait times.
- **56.5%** said cultural and language needs were met.
- Satisfaction with service quality was mixed at **54.8%**.
- Among those needing disability accommodations, **54.8%** said their needs were met.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

To help Bellevue residents access critical supports and maintain stability, the City funds a range of mainstream and culturally relevant programs offering navigation, legal assistance, mentoring, case management, transportation, and housing stability services. These initiatives reduce



barriers and connect residents to essential resources across all ages and backgrounds.

Support for Families and Individuals with Disabilities

Open Doors for Multicultural Families, Bridge of Promise, and Washington Autism Alliance & Advocacy (WAA) support families of individuals with disabilities. Open Doors provides guidance on developmental disability services and special education, while WAA connects families to autism-related services and offers caregiver and professional training. Bridge of Promise runs the Bridge Academy, offering day programs for adults with developmental disabilities focused on life skills, community engagement, and therapeutic activities.



Youth Resilience and Mentoring

Youth Eastside Services (YES), Rainier Athletes, YES' Latine Programs, and Big Brothers Big Sisters promote youth resilience through mentoring and leadership development. YES offers mentoring for children at risk of behavioral challenges, outreach and drop-in counseling for youth at teen centers, and family case management. Its Latine Programs focus on identity, leadership, and college readiness. Rainier Athletes provides long-term mentorship and scholarships to reduce barriers for underserved youth. **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound** supports one-on-one mentoring to increase protective factors and unlock youth potential.

Senior Services and Aging Support

The **Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)** offers a Russian-speaking senior day program promoting healthy aging, peer engagement, and community resource access. **Sound Generations** helps seniors access essential healthcare through its Volunteer Transportation Program, providing free rides to medical appointments and reducing social isolation. **Old Friends Club** delivers dementia-friendly respite programs with social activities and caregiver support, alongside toolkits and technical assistance to help replicate programs regionally.

Education and Employment Support

Northwest Education Access (NWEA) supports opportunity youth with one-on-one education navigation to reengage in school and prepare for employment. **Indian American Community Services (IACS)** provides year-round programming for Asian Indian women, seniors, and youth





Photo provided by Rwandan Community Association of Washington State

focused on wellness, digital literacy, employment support, and leadership development.

IKRON of Greater Seattle, HERO House NW, AtWork!, and Bellevue College deliver employment services for individuals with disabilities and others facing job barriers. IKRON offers job readiness and behavioral health support; HERO House uses the Clubhouse model for vocational rehabilitation for adults with mental illness; AtWork! provides supported employment and community engagement to individuals with disabilities;



Bellevue College offers career navigation, workshops, and employment readiness and services focused on training needs of immigrant and refugee communities.

Refugee and Immigrant Stabilization

East African Community Services helps refugee and immigrant families stabilize through case management, financial support, and culturally appropriate food resources. **King County Library System Foundation's** Welcoming Centers offer wraparound case management and basic needs assistance for immigrants and refugees, using trauma-informed and harm-reduction approaches. **Indian American Community Services** provides Asian Indian women, senior, and youth navigation supports to connect them to numerous resources including early learning, youth leadership training, vocational and employment services, wellness programs , and inter-generational gatherings.

Legal Support and Advocacy

Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP), and **Family Law CASA** of King County, provide legal and crisis support. ELAP offers free legal clinics and referrals as well as a program focusing on assisting residents with legal resources to maintain housing stability before an eviction occurs. CASA advocates for children in high-conflict custody cases.

Volunteer and Community Support

Catholic Community Services connects volunteers with low-income older



adults and individuals with disabilities to assist with household tasks and errands.

City of Bellevue Programs

Bellevue Fire CARES (Community Advocates for Referral and Education Services) is a team of social workers and advocates that respond to the needs of some of Bellevue's most vulnerable residents, as identified by fire crews and police officers during a 911 response. CARES advocates meet with residents in their homes, identify their needs and connect them to community resources that will better meet those needs than a call to 911.

Bellevue Funded Program Outcomes for 2024

- **10,549** hours of employment services
- **6,391** hours of adult mentoring and drop-in services for children and youth
- **6,362** hours of adult day care services
- **3,086** hours of attorney services and civil legal aid presentations
- **2,858** culturally specific information and referral phone calls
- **2,201** hours of culturally specific youth development opportunities
- **1,943** visits (online or in person) to culturally specific senior programs
- **1,238** hours of volunteer chore services
- **510** hours of family case management

Together, these services help Bellevue residents, regardless of age, background, or ability, navigate complex systems, access essential supports, and maintain connection and stability in their communities.



Fostering Well-Being in the Face of Bias, Hate, and Discrimination



Fostering Well-Being in the Face of Racial, Ethnic, Bias

Emerging Critical Needs

Throughout the focus group conversations and SME interviews, there were numerous mentions of the severe impacts that federal immigration policy changes and funding cuts are having on immigrant, refugee, undocumented, and asylum-seeking community members. These changes have led to significant barriers for the people impacted to access school, jobs, public services, and medical care. Organizations are experiencing significant increases in requests for legal aid, basic needs support, and mental health services, but they are struggling with limited funding and staff capacity. Additionally, many small organizations have shifted the service delivery model to accommodate barriers for community members in accessing services, including home visits for case management and food delivery.

Due to the critical and extraordinary impact of these changes, Bellevue is recognizing the need to highlight and expand services to foster well-being.

Photo provided by Families of Color Seattle



Overview

Bellevue's increasingly diverse population includes many residents who face bias, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination. Whether it's a youth experiencing racial bullying, a Muslim woman harassed on public transit, or a trans person struggling to find affirming care, these experiences take a real toll on mental and physical health. Organizations working in this space foster community well-being by providing healing spaces, advocacy, civil rights education, and rapid response to hate incidents. **Addressing discrimination is not just a moral imperative, it is a public health and safety priority.**

General Trends & Key Findings

- Housing discrimination complaints fell from 787 in 2022 to 347 in 2023 statewide; however, 223 were related to disability discrimination, highlighting ongoing structural barriers (Washington State Standard, 2024).
- In King County, 112 hate crime incidents were reported in 2023, with Bellevue responsible for 15 cases disproportionately affecting Black, LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities (King County Human Rights Commission, 2024).
- Nearly 25% of marginalized Bellevue residents report feeling unsafe in public spaces, pointing to gaps in prevention and support services (City of Bellevue Community Survey, 2024).
- Bellevue has an opportunity to enhance rapid response to hate incidents and expand culturally responsive support services, advancing safety, inclusion, and community resilience.





Photo provided by Rwandan Community Association of Washington State

Community Voice / Lived Experience

Barriers Rooted in Bias and Discrimination

Life's obstacles in Bellevue are not equally distributed but reflect deep disparities rooted in systemic bias. Residents' experiences with human services are shaped not only by what is offered but also by how they are treated when seeking help. Bias and discrimination—whether overt or subtle—remain major barriers.



“Discrimination comes in subtle forms—people get overlooked for housing or care because of their background.”

– SME

Exclusion often manifests quietly through rental denials, lower quality medical care, or providers not taking clients seriously. Immigrants, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, people of color, and those with disabilities frequently face these barriers, not due to a lack of services, but due to how services are delivered.

“We see a lot of hate, especially toward immigrants and LGBTQ folks. It wears people down.” – SME

The cumulative trauma of microaggressions, harassment, and “othering” creates a protective distance between marginalized individuals and supportive services. When seeking help risks judgment or re-traumatization, many opt out, perpetuating isolation, poverty, and worsening health. Entire communities often navigate around systems rather than through them, driven by painful lived experience.

From Access to Belonging

Fostering true well-being requires more than access, it requires a sense of



Addressing bias, hate, and discrimination is central to whether services effectively reach and uplift Bellevue's diverse population.

Persistent Gaps in Support Services

Surveyed community members reported limited availability and accessibility of services to address discrimination. Many faced transportation and logistical challenges. Timeliness and cultural fit were often inadequate, resulting in low overall satisfaction.

The Human Impact

Participants emphasized that thriving communities actively confront systemic racism and exclusion. Well-being is tied deeply to being seen, heard, and treated with dignity across all systems, from justice to local services.

Many shared experiences of judgment, misunderstanding, and dismissal due to race, immigration status, disability, or language barriers, leading to withdrawal or disengagement from services.

Participants highlighted disparities in funding and resource allocation, noting that while some groups benefit from strong institutional support, others, especially Black, African, immigrant, and disabled communities, face significant gaps.

Language access remains a critical issue, with non-English speakers often overlooked or discouraged from engagement. Participants called for plain



language services, translation, and culturally informed approaches that foster welcome rather than intimidation.

Fear of deportation, “outing,” or judgment prevents many from accessing services. Broader social and donor pressures sometimes limit organizational capacity to serve marginalized groups safely.

Trust and Cultural Connection

Trust emerges as foundational for accessing support. Many found comfort in culturally connected networks such as grocery stores, churches, or peer groups—places where they felt seen and respected.

“I got to meet people that reflected my experiences... and I felt that they would understand me and not judge me.” –
Focus Group Participant



A Call for Inclusion

Building well-being in Bellevue means creating a culture of inclusion where every resident can access resources free of fear, stigma, and systemic hurdles.

Community Survey Results on Discrimination or Racism Support

- Only **13.8%** of survey respondents were aware of local services addressing discrimination or racism.
- Just **12.1%** were satisfied with the support they received for these issues.
- Among those for whom these services applied, **41.3%** found the services in their community; **45.2%** could travel to the service within reasonable time.
- Timely access is limited: only **39.5%** received services without long waits.
- Cultural and linguistic appropriateness met the needs of **46.5%** of respondents.
- Overall satisfaction with support was low, at **41.8%**.

City-Funded Initiatives & Impact

Fostering well-being is essential to ensuring that all Bellevue residents, particularly immigrant and refugee communities, feel safe, supported, and included. Many community members navigate complex challenges such as systemic inequities, cultural isolation, language barriers, and direct or indirect experiences of bias and discrimination. These challenges are often



compounded for individuals with intersecting identities and needs, including people with disabilities, limited English proficiency, or those living in single-parent or low-income households. In response, community-based organizations across Bellevue are providing culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and trust-based services that promote healing, connection, and access to opportunity.

A core component of these services is **case management and systems navigation**. Organizations like **4 Tomorrow's Life Services Program** offer trauma-informed, wraparound case management to help households in East King County achieve both short- and long-term goals as they navigate complex service systems. **Open Doors for Multicultural Families** works specifically with families of youth with disabilities, guiding them through the intricacies of developmental disability and special education services. Additionally, **The Circle, Africans on the Eastside (AOE)**, and the **Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)** provide multilingual case management and advocacy for families facing trauma and instability, helping them overcome systemic barriers and access public resources. The **Congolese Integration Network (CIN)** also delivers critical services, including utility and rental assistance, resource navigation, and group-based supports, that build stability and empower community growth.

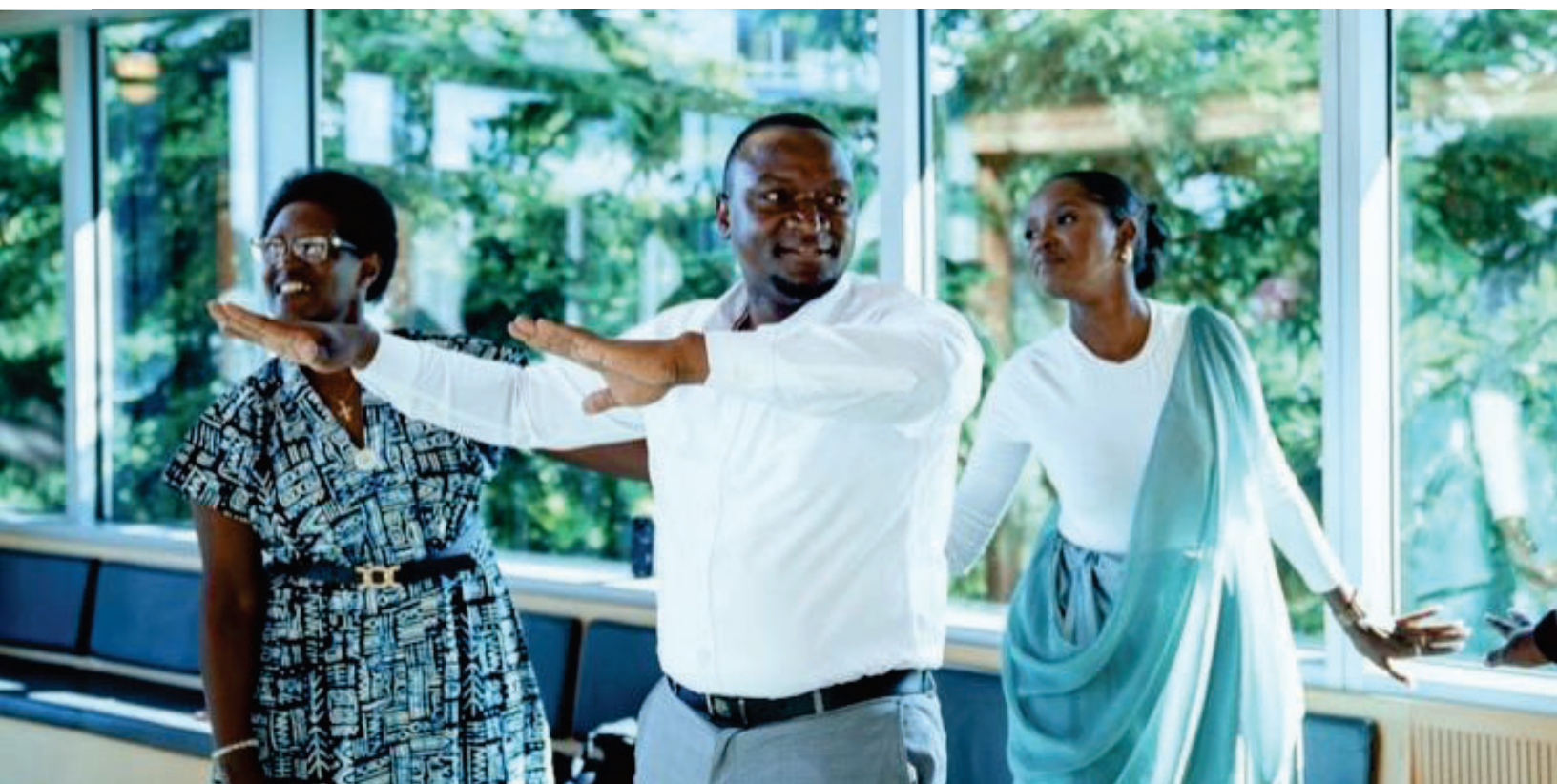
Beyond individualized support, many organizations strengthen community resilience through **peer-led programs, educational workshops, and cultural navigation services**. **The Circle, AOE, and CISC** facilitate



orientation sessions, informational classes, and community workshops that help immigrant and refugee families navigate life in a new country, fostering empowerment and social connection. **Families of Color Seattle (FOCS)** offers peer-led parent groups that create culturally affirming spaces for BIPOC families to develop parenting skills, build supportive networks, and openly discuss race, identity, and lived experience. **CIN** expands youth and family engagement through after-school enrichment activities, while the **Immigrant Women's Community Center** provides culturally grounded workshops, healing circles, and mediation services that uplift low-income immigrant and refugee women and families.

Recognizing that mental and emotional well-being is essential to overall health, organizations such as the **Ubumwe Women Association** lead **peer-led healing groups** for immigrant and refugee women, particularly single mothers, who are coping with trauma, grief, and systemic stress. These groups create safe spaces for emotional expression, mutual support, and practical problem-solving. Complementing this work, the

Photo provided by Rwandan Community Association of Washington State



Immigrant Women's Community Center offers one-on-one case management and navigation for women and families navigating conflict, emotional distress, or mental health challenges, delivering compassionate, culturally relevant support.

Finally, **youth and family programs** help build confidence, identity, and intergenerational connection. **Centro Cultural Mexicano** leads bilingual youth development programming that includes academic support, creative expression, leadership opportunities, and workshops for parents. These initiatives nurture safe and inclusive spaces where youth can thrive and families can grow stronger together.

Together, these city-funded services form a **model of care**, that centers on equity, dignity, and belonging. By addressing the impacts of bias, hate, and discrimination through culturally grounded services, Bellevue's nonprofit partners play a vital role in building a safer, more inclusive, and thriving community for all residents.

City of Bellevue Programs

Bellevue Police Safe Place Program designated certain businesses, schools, and community locations as safe havens for individuals who have experienced or are experiencing anti-LGBTQ harassment or crime. These sites display Safe Place signage to signal support and encourage victims to seek help and report incidents. The Bellevue Police Department also has a dedicated LGBTQ liaison officer who fosters partnerships with the LGBTQ community and serves as a key resource for support and information.

