

A Safe Haven From all Forms of Violence and Abuse



2017 Count Us In
284 counted in EKC

40%
history of domestic
violence (DV)

7%
currently DV

Life Wire
reported
turning away
26
households
for every
1
they serve in
emergency
housing



Number of reported
domestic violence offenses
in Washington increased
5.7% between
2014 & 2016

Bellevue Police
Department Violence
Victim Advocate
averaged a caseload of 18.

The biggest challenges:

- Lack of shelter
- Affordable housing
- Access to free/reduced full legal services
- Financial Resources
- Increase in non-English speaking clients



GOAL #3: A SAFE HAVEN FROM ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Why is this Goal Area Important?

All forms of personal violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse and neglect, are unacceptable in any of our communities.

During times of stress, people can be more vulnerable, and may need more support to handle situations without violence. Early intervention with individuals and families is critical to prevent additional physical and mental health issues. Counseling, legal, and financial assistance are just a few of the supports needed to help survivors of abuse heal. But equally important are efforts to educate the community on what strategies are effective to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

What's Working?

- The Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress (HCSATS) offers telephone consultations, crisis response, advocacy, therapy, and sexual abuse evaluations. Many services are free of charge or can be paid for by Medicaid or Crime Victim's Compensation. HCSATS also provides community education and workshops for providers to build skills and develop strategies to prevent sexual assault.
- LifeWire offers emergency shelter, transitional housing, rental assistance, and other types of housing assistance. They also offer advocacy-based counseling, the Help Line, support groups, legal advocacy, and a variety of children's services. Most clients who come into the program do so through the Crisis Line.¹

- King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) provides services for sexual assault victims and their families, including trauma-focused therapy, legal advocacy, parent support and 24 hour crisis intervention services. In 2013, KCSARC launched Project 360, in partnership with Youthcare and Friends of Youth, a unique approach to providing trauma-focused services to homeless youth who have been victims of sexual assault. The program includes specialized trauma work, case management, legal advocacy, prevention education, community response teams, and youth-led prevention activities. Project 360 has seen great results, including youth in the program having an 83% symptom reduction, 93% of youth increasing their ability to function successfully in daily life and having 82% achieving increased stability through case management.²

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence (DV), more broadly intimate partner violence³, profoundly affects the lives of survivors as well as the entire community. Domestic violence incidents involve family or household members; traditionally, the term has referred to altercations between spouses and former spouses, but legally, it includes roommates with or without a romantic relationship, and parents or children. Individuals may be of the same gender. The financial and human costs of domestic violence are staggering, and can negatively impact generations to come. For example, in a 2009 study of women enrolled at Group Health Cooperative (now Kaiser Permanente) in Seattle, healthcare costs were 42%

higher for those who reported ongoing domestic violence compared to women who did not report domestic violence. Among women who reported violence within the last 5 years but not ongoing violence, costs were 24% higher.⁴

Prevalence

- According to the Center for Disease Control, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a significant public health problem. The National Intimate Partner Violence Survey (NIPVS) indicates that over 7 million men and women in the U.S. experience physical violence each year by a current or former intimate partner.⁵
- The number of reported domestic violence offenses statewide increased 5.7% between 2014 and 2016, from 49,360 to 52,159. Domestic violence offenses made up 50% of all crimes against persons in 2016.⁶
- On just one day in Washington, 1,413 domestic violence survivors were in emergency shelter and transitional housing, and 732 requests from survivors were turned down because programs did not have the resources to provide services; 87% of unmet requests were related to housing.⁷
- It is extremely difficult to determine the exact annual number of domestic violence victims. Statewide, there were more than 52,000 domestic violence related incidents. In 2016, the Bellevue Police Department recorded 453 domestic violence offenses.⁸

- As Figure 1 indicates, the number of reports of domestic violence to the Bellevue Police Department has remained relatively flat since 2007 with the exception of a drop in assaults in 2013. These numbers reflect calls in which domestic violence was indicated, but were not necessarily assaults.⁹

“The Bellevue Police Department will be relentless in its effort to rid our community of those who would take advantage of others for personal profit. I commend the hard work of our investigators and Federal partners in this joint effort,”

— Bellevue Police Chief Steve Mylett
(on Human Trafficking Operation).

- The Bellevue Police Department (BPD) works closely with and relies heavily on LifeWire’s services. In all cases of domestic violence where the police are involved, an advocate works with the person identified as the victim, explaining the complicated justice system, providing them with information on No Contact and Protection Orders, and planning for safety. The advocate accompanies the victim to court, works closely with the city attorney’s office, and is in weekly contact with the prosecutor’s office. The BPD Domestic Violence Victim

Advocate averaged a caseload of 22 cases per month in 2014. The average caseload in 2016 was 18.

The biggest challenges are lack of shelter, affordable housing, access to free/reduced fee legal services, and financial resources, as well as an increase in non-English speaking clients.¹⁰

Bellevue Police Reports of Domestic Violence

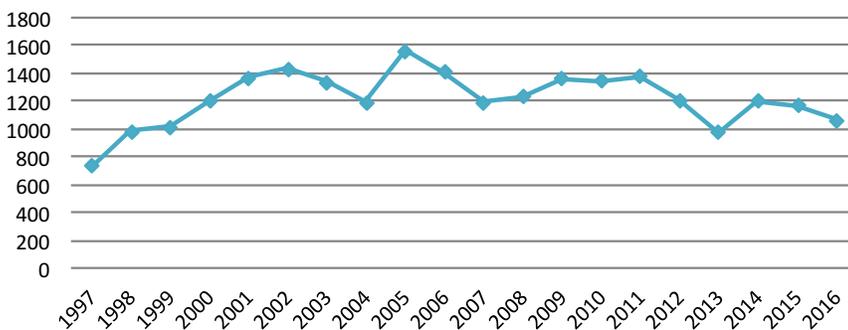


Figure 1 | Source: Bellevue Police Department

Service Trends

Accessing Services

- On the Eastside, LifeWire is the only provider of comprehensive services to survivors of domestic violence and their families. Several other agencies also assist survivors and may offer specialized services. These agencies include Eastside Legal Assistance Program, Refugee Women's Alliance, Jewish Family Service, Eastern European Counseling Center, CHAYA and Consejo. Additionally, Youth Eastside Services and Asian Counseling and Referral Service work with teens on dating violence.¹¹
- The King County Department of Community and Human Services Domestic Violence Program provides King County General Funds/Children and Family funding support to organizations that provide direct services to survivors of domestic violence and their children. Services include community advocacy, education, direct survivor services, shelter and outreach.¹²

Housing

- Housing is a major concern for survivors and their families. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, DV is the leading cause of homelessness for women. **In 2017, the Count Us In report (formerly One Night Count) found 11,643 people experiencing homelessness in King County; 284 were counted in East King County. Forty percent (40%) of respondents reported a history of domestic violence or partner abuse, with 7% reporting that they were currently experiencing domestic violence.**¹³

- LifeWire is the only non-church affiliated provider on the Eastside offering confidential shelters. Through its Homelessness Services, LifeWire offers emergency shelter for families in lethal domestic violence situations through ten apartment units. It also offers emergency motel/hotel vouchers when needed and available. In addition, LifeWire provides transitional housing, delivering lengthier housing for up to ten families healing from both domestic violence and chemical dependency. LifeWire's Housing Stability Services provide rental assistance to families. It also provides flexible financial assistance and support services focused on obtaining/maintaining housing and homelessness prevention efforts. Ninety percent of Housing Stability participants remained in permanent housing after six months. One hundred percent of the families in LifeWire's housing programs are homeless or experiencing housing instability due to domestic violence.¹⁴
- LifeWire reports that their service levels are reflective of their capacity, not client demand. **LifeWire has to turn away 26 households for every 1 they serve in emergency housing;** however, many of these families are served in their housing stability programs thereby reducing the turn away rate to 10-1. In 2016 337 families were served in their housing program, with over 50,000 bed nights, an additional 100 families received flexible funds at an average expenditure of \$770 per family to stabilize housing helping them to avoid homelessness.¹⁵

DV Crisis Line and Advocacy Services

LifeWire provides a 24-hour Helpline which is a gateway to all LifeWire services, including advocacy-based counseling, adult support groups and safety planning. There were 11,050 Helpline

calls in 2016, an increase from 9,781 in 2014. Other advocacy services include resource and referral and education for survivors, family and friends, legal advocacy counseling, and education and coordination with the criminal justice system. In 2016, 961 Advocacy clients were served.¹⁶

Legal Assistance and Mental Health Counseling

- Legal assistance remains a primary need for survivors of domestic violence. Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) provides pro bono legal services for low-income families and individuals residing in East/Northeast King County. Through its Domestic Violence Legal Fund Project (DVLFP), it also provides free emergency representation to low-income domestic violence victims residing anywhere in King County.¹⁷
- A 2013 economic study found that while shelter, hotlines, and counseling had no significant impact on the likelihood of abuse, the availability of legal services decreased the likelihood that women would be abused. Helping survivors legally pursue and obtain protection orders, custody, child support and other financial needs, gives them the physical safety and financial security that enable them to leave the abuser.¹⁸

- Included in the full range of services needed for survivors is mental health counseling. Providers report that many survivors are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicidal ideation as a result of their abuse. There is a lack of counselors who have worked specifically with this population, and inadequate funding to cover services. Due to funding from the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) sales tax that passed in King County in 2009, mental health counselors were hired for each of the three regional domestic violence service providers, including LifeWire. At LifeWire, this full-time counselor works with survivors and their children on-site, which increases access to early intervention, prevents more severe mental health issues later, and increases coordination between programs.¹⁹
- Another issue for many survivors is substance abuse, which often affects both the perpetrator and the survivor. Drugs and alcohol are often used as a control issue by the perpetrator. Therapeutic Health Services provides on-site chemical dependency treatment to LifeWire clients at their transitional shelter, “My Friend’s Place.”²⁰

Calendar Year	Total # of APS Intakes received	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Mental Abuse	Neglect	Self Neglect	Exploitation of Person	Financial Exploitation	Abandonment
2000	7391	1258	260	1274	1867	1803	557	1831	68
	(89%)							(91%)	
2005	13973	2168	383	2214	2975	3107	885	3512	49
	(8%)							(29%)	
2010	15059	1489	372	2769	3081	4397	867	4565	46
	(45%)							(66%)	
2013	21896	2076	501	4312	4428	6328	1515	7599	86

Figure 2 | Source: State of Washington, Adult Protective Services, ADSA Reporting System

Services for Children Who Witness or are Victims of Abuse

Nationally studies show that 3-4 million children ages 3-17 are at risk of exposure to domestic violence each year. Research indicates that children who witness domestic violence show more anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, anger and temperament problems than children who do not witness violence in the home. These disturbances, also referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences, can impede healthy development, cause school difficulties and physical health problems, and continue to be a problem into adulthood.²¹ LifeWire has ongoing support groups for children while their mothers are in their support groups; these groups address self-esteem, conflict resolution, and safety. A group called “Voices” was started for teens affected by domestic violence in their families. This group addresses dating/friend/family relationships and empowerment. They also have a full time youth advocate to work with teens who have experienced dating violence.²²

Older and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

- Although domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking affect victims in all age groups, older individuals who are survivors face additional challenges in accessing services needed to enhance their safety. Appropriate interventions may be compromised by misconceptions that older persons are not victims of these types of crimes, that domestic violence does not occur or lessens in later life, or that the abuse is an expression of stress associated with caring for an aging individual. Age or disability may increase the isolation of these victims and their dependence on abusers for care or housing. Also, these cases may go unnoticed because medical and other professionals may perceive a victim’s injuries as arising from aging,

illness, or disability instead of recognizing that the injuries may be attributed to violence in the home.²³

- No one knows exactly how many older Americans are being abused, but according to best estimates, the prevalence of abuse is approximately 10%. Only one in 25 cases of elder abuse is ever reported.²⁴
- In Washington State, Adult Protective Services (APS) reported a steady increase in allegations of overall intakes. As shown in Figure 2, there was an 89% increase in the number of APS intakes received over the five year period covering 2000-2005, an 8% increase between 2005 and 2010, and a 45% between 2010 and 2013. The most significant increase in reports for these time periods were in the area of financial exploitation.
- In King County, there were 4,344 reports of all types of abuse and neglect to APS in 2013, resulting in 3,568 investigations. This represents a 41% increase from the 3,076 reports received in 2009 and a 22% increase from the 2,909 investigations in 2009.²⁵ In King County, the Elder Abuse Council brings together members of the community from different jurisdictions and disciplines, such as law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys, DSHS Adult Protective Services, agencies such as KCSARC, and non-profits such as Disability Rights Washington and the Alzheimer’s Association. The Council’s mission is to improve the systemic response to elder and vulnerable adults in King County.²⁶
- The Bellevue Police Department is a member of the Elder Abuse Council. In Bellevue all cases of suspected elder abuse are assigned a detective to review and/or investigate as needed. Some are handled at the patrol level during normal calls for service and then referred to Adult Protective Services (APS). BPD works with APS to find resources for the older adult if no crime has occurred or

if the potential crime that is alleged will not be prosecuted due to the mental capacities of the participants. In 2015, there were 27 APS cases and in 2016, 35 cases in Bellevue. There is fluctuation in reports from year to year typical of cases of abuse. Some years, such as in 2012, there were 81 referrals. It is thought that a contributing factor in lower reporting is the reluctance of family members to report crimes committed by their older adult family members and of victims reluctant to press charges against family members who may be the perpetrators.²⁷

Refugees and Immigrants

In 2016, LifeWire staff reported that a majority of participants were racial minorities, reflecting the overall demographic of Bellevue.²⁸ Consejo, a Seattle-based Latino agency, began providing a DV advocate in 2004 on the Eastside to help address additional needs. In 2009, Refugee Women's Alliance began a survivors' support group in Bellevue to serve Eastern European immigrant and refugee women who speak Russian, Romanian and Ukrainian. Eastern European Counseling Services works with people from the Ukraine, former Soviet Union and other eastern European countries.²⁹

Need for Affordable Treatment Programs for Offenders

First-time domestic violence offenders are typically required to complete an intensive counseling program. These programs, all geared toward achieving victim safety, hold DV offenders accountable for abusive behavior while teaching healthy behavioral alternatives. Washington State certifies for-profit and non-profit substance abuse treatment agencies to provide court-ordered domestic violence perpetrator treatment programs for low to medium risk offenders. For all the programs noted above, Probation staff help offenders locate programs and resources. Many defendants face barriers in paying for these services. Neither Domestic Violence Batterers'

Treatment or Domestic Violence Moral Recognition Therapy is covered by insurance benefits whereas Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health may be. Some agencies offer sliding scales for low income clients. There is a need for scholarships for those who cannot afford the cost of the programs. Defendants may receive sanctions from the Court, such as incarceration if they fail to attend or comply with their orders.³⁰

Community Perceptions

- Over the past 18 years, phone/online survey results indicate that Bellevue residents feel domestic violence is not a significant community or household problem. The number of respondents rating it as a moderate or major community problem was at its highest in 1995 at 33%. In 2017, only 17% rated domestic violence as a moderate or major community problem.
- In conversations with several faith community representatives, they commented on the increase of members of their congregations seeking them out for resources and support related to domestic violence.

Implications for Action

- The high cost of housing in Bellevue creates a serious challenge for survivors who want to remain in the community to maintain their jobs and support systems. More shelter beds as well as more permanent housing options with services are needed for DV survivors.
- Next to housing, one of the largest gaps in services for survivors is for legal representation for child custody, protection orders, immigration, and financial issues. When these services are unavailable, it becomes much harder for survivors to maintain their safety, return to employment, and become self-sufficient.
- Service trends and demographic changes in Bellevue indicate that the need for culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate

services for survivors continues to grow. Appropriate services are needed to keep up with the demand.

- Children and youth who witness domestic violence are at risk of internalizing the abuse. Data suggests that child abuse occurs in approximately 70% of families experiencing domestic violence. Holistic programs including prevention and earlier interventions are needed to break the cycle of abuse for future generations. Also, for children and youth who have witnessed abuse, programs that include support groups and individual counseling need to be available to address the resulting trauma.
- Services for older adult survivors of family violence need to be available to target the particular issues experienced by this population which often include financial exploitation, neglect and sexual abuse.
- Community awareness and engagement efforts ensure that the issue of domestic violence gains public visibility. Coordinated strategies should not only include better programs and access to services, but also ideas to prevent neglect and create positive norms.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is the physical, psychological or sexual mistreatment, or physical neglect of children by their parents or guardians. Neglect is the most common form of child abuse, but rates are hard to establish because neglect is often unreported.

Prevalence

Nationally, an estimated 683,000 children were victims of child abuse or neglect in 2015, similar to the number in 2013. An estimated 1,585 children died due to child abuse or neglect in 2015 according to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Database, a very slight increase from 2011. In 2015, there were 85,096 reports of abuse or neglect in Washington State; of these, 37,501

received a response from Child Protective Services (CPS). This represents an 8% increase compared to 2011. In mid-2015, the State implemented an alternate intervention program, Family Assessment Response (FAR) that will offer an alternative investigation process in the case of less severe allegations of abuse and neglect.³¹ In 2016, CPS had 27,288 clients; 1,230 were from Bellevue.³²

Service Trends

Risk Factors

- Child maltreatment causes stress that can disrupt early brain development. Extreme stress can harm the development of the nervous and immune systems. As a result, children who are abused or neglected are at higher risk for health problems as adults, including alcoholism, depression, drug abuse, eating disorders, obesity, sexual promiscuity, smoking, suicide, and certain chronic diseases. It is estimated that the lifetime financial costs of just one year of confirmed cases of child maltreatment is approximately \$124 billion.³³
- A study of abused and neglected children found that they had lower grades, more suspensions and grade repetitions, and were more likely to drop out of school than their peers, independent of the effects of poverty.³⁴ Additionally, abused and neglected children are arrested 4.8 times more often for juvenile crimes and are twice as likely to be arrested as adults.³⁵
- Returning service members who are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and combat-related stress may also be at increased risk for abusing a child.³⁶

Best Practices

- Kindering Center provides parenting classes for families who are experiencing problems with childrearing, as well as services for children with disabilities, medically fragile or abused children up to age three. The CHERISH program provides support for foster or kinship caregivers who are caring

for children under age 3 involved in the child welfare system. Kindering Center also provides a Parent Child Home Program (PCHP) an evidence based home visiting program focused on supporting low-income immigrant and refugee families with children 2-4 years old.³⁷

- Healthy Start, using the evidence based Parents as Teachers model, provides home visiting and support groups to young families (under age 24) with children birth to three years old. High quality home visiting programs increase the odds that children from at risk families will enter kindergarten ready to learn, and prevent child abuse and neglect by increasing parenting skills, parent-child attachment, and knowledge of child development.³⁸
- KCSARC provides Parent Child Interaction Training (PCIT) in English and Spanish to parents whose child was sexually assaulted or referred by CPS. KCSARC developed a specialized Parenting Enhancement Program (PEP) to assist parents “parent” their sexually abused child. The program provides 10 modules, which can be tailored to fit the unique needs of the family. PEP is provided in English and Spanish.³⁹

Community Perceptions

Few of the participants in community outreach conducted in 2017 (Community Conversations, key informant interviews, or surveys) mentioned child abuse and neglect as a community or household concern. This is not unusual with the sensitive nature of the issue.

Implications for Action

- Poverty can be a contributing factor in child neglect. Parents and caregivers experiencing economic hardship have challenges in providing the basics for their children. The same can be true for child abuse, due to stress from lack of resources or war-related traumatic injuries.

With the challenges that many families are experiencing in day to day life, it is even more important to offer basic needs assistance to families with children, and provide outlets for stress and other issues to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

- Similar to children experiencing family violence, abused or neglected children also can bring those issues into the next generation when they act as they have been treated. These children need therapeutic care and opportunities to build trust and self-esteem to succeed in school and life.
- Programs that promote protective factors (like home visiting, which uses caring adults as role models and mentors to help nurture parenting skills), lessen the risk of child maltreatment. This program need to continue and expand

Sexual Assault, Rape and Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual assault and rape occurs in all communities and among all socio-economic groups. The majority of sexual assault victims are under age 30. With child sexual abuse (rape or assault), 66% of victims are between ages 12 and 17, and about 34% are under age 12.⁴⁰

Prevalence

- On average, there are 321,500 victims (age 12 and older) of rape and sexual assault every year in the United States.⁴¹ Most rapes and sexual assaults (2 out of 3) are not reported to police.⁴²
- In 2016, there were 2,223 rapes reported, resulting in 476 arrests in Washington State.⁴³ In the Office of Crime Victims study in Washington State, 85% of victims did not report their assault to law enforcement.⁴⁴
- Over the past 12 years, Bellevue Police Department’s annual rape reports have generally remained between 20 and 30. However, there have been some spikes:

there were 38 in 2004, 42 in 2006, and 33 in 2008. There was a 60% decrease in reported rapes from 2009 to 2010, dropping from 25 to 10. The number of reported rapes rose again in 2011 to 23, and has leveled off in 2015 and 2015 to 25 and 15 respectively.⁴⁵

- Over the past 7 years, there has been fluctuations in the number of accepted intakes for child sexual abuse in Bellevue zip codes. Accepted intakes include: 24 hour (emergent intake in which the child has to be seen within a 24 -hour timeframe by CPS) and 72-hour (a child has to be seen within a 3-day time frame). Both are intakes that are screened in for an investigation/response. In Bellevue zip codes in 2015, there were a total of 16 accepted intakes for child sexual abuse, and a similar number in 2016, with a total of 15. In prior years, there have been as many as 53 accepted intakes (2011).⁴⁶

Service Trends

Long-term effects

- Adults abused as children who receive no treatment experience psychological distress many years after the abuse. These traumatic childhood experiences, also called Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACES, become significant risk factors for serious dysfunction later in life (substance abuse, depression, suicide, parenting problems). Without intervention or help for the child, normal psychological development can be negatively affected.⁴⁷
- Additionally, adults who have been sexually assaulted or raped also suffer many negative health consequences. They are 3 times more likely to suffer from depression, 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, and 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol.⁴⁸

Needs for Services

- Many agencies are encountering increased service requests from refugees and immigrants. In 2017, KCSARC reports seeing an increase in Latina victims, now 21% of the agency's service population. KCSARC also reports that fear related to immigration status is a barrier to many individuals seeking services.⁴⁹ KCSARC, in partnership with Northwest Justice Project, provides advocacy, case management and civil legal assistance to low-income Latino sexual assault victims and their families, including helping with visas, child support and protection orders through the "Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors) program."⁵⁰ KCSARC's Dando Voz Program, where all services to victims and their families are provided in Spanish, provides comprehensive sexual assault program for Spanish speaking victims and their families in the area. The program includes legal, medical and general advocacy, trauma focused therapy and specialized psycho educational programming to help parents support their sexually abused child.⁵¹
- Harborview Children's Response Center (CRC), which is a program of Services for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress (HCSATS), had provided advocacy and counseling for child and youth victims of sexual assault as well as community-based prevention initiatives since 1985. They also provided services to children impacted by other forms of trauma and victimization (e.g. physical abuse, homicide domestic violence, internet crime).⁵² In late September 2013, CRC was integrated in HCSATS and KCSARC for an expanded partnership in East King County. As a result of this change, HCSATS began serving adults for the first time on the Eastside. In 2014, the program reported serving 15 unduplicated adult Bellevue residents with ongoing counseling services. For adults and children combined,

the program served 56 Bellevue residents, a number expected to increase as more adults seek services on the Eastside.⁵³

- Similar to 2015, people receiving services at KCSARC report the major barriers to accessing services in the community are transportation, language, and cost of services.⁵⁴
- Sexual assault can lead to significant mental health problems, and downstream consequences - such as substance abuse or involvement in the juvenile justice or criminal justice system - are more costly to address. In 2016, funding from the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency sales tax in King County continues to provide resources for community sexual assault programs to hire staff and fill this gap. In East King County, KCSARC and CRC each added counselors to increase on-site access for survivors. Using “best practice” interventions for children and adults, this coordinated effort is seen as a much needed systems-change approach.⁵⁵
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service staff facilitates a Teen Peer Advocate Program that offers a peer-to-peer support group of young women in order to discuss healthy relationships and the prevention of dating violence.⁵⁶

Emerging Issues

Women in the Military

Military Sexual Trauma (MST), sexual assault and harassment that occurs in military settings, is identified more frequently by the increasing number of women now serving in the military. Studies indicate that around 23% to 33% of female veterans report experiencing MST. 2-3% of male veterans are estimated to have experienced MST. Research shows that rates of MST are higher during war than peacetime. (Note: For more information about this issue, see the Veterans section in this report.)⁵⁷

Human Trafficking

- Human Trafficking is defined as the inducement of a personal sexual act, labor or service through force, fraud or coercion. To illustrate how vastly under-reported this crime is, in 2016, only 18 cases were reported by law enforcement agencies in the entire state.⁵⁸ The International Labour Organization estimates that there are nearly 21 million victims of human trafficking globally; 68% are trapped in forced labor, 26% are children, and 55% are women and children. Victims are coerced to prostitute or to work without pay and often subjected to physical and psychological dangers, such as severe beatings, rape, drug addiction and other forms of violence.⁵⁹ (Note: For more information about human trafficking, see the School-Aged Children and Youth and Refugees & Immigrant sections of this report).
- On June 6, 2017 a Cultural Conversation sponsored by the City of Bellevue focused on human trafficking, hearing stories from places as far as Nepal and as close as Bellevue about women and children who had been exploited. Resources were provided and tips on warning signs of this issue were discussed.
- In August 2017, the Bellevue Police Department in partnership with the FBI, King County Sheriff's Office, Renton, Redmond, Seattle and Tukwila Police Departments worked jointly to investigate a criminal ring making thousands of dollars through human sex trafficking. All those involved were charged with crimes related to prostitution.⁶⁰
- Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network, WARN, is a coalition of organizations that provide direct services to victims of human trafficking, such as legal assistance and immigration advocacy and intensive case management. They also convene a statewide advisory committee that hosts quarter session to inform the community on anti-trafficking efforts in Western Washington and how service

providers, law enforcement and other groups collaborate to improve response to human trafficking.⁶¹

- In October 2016, Escape Center, East King County's only anti-sex trafficking facility, opened its doors. The organization offers both trauma therapy as well as opportunities for survivors to develop work skills.⁶²

Community Perceptions

Neither the phone/online nor consumer surveys have questions related to sexual assault or rape, nor was the issue mentioned in any of the Community Conversations. This is not uncommon due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Implications for Action

- Survivors of sexual abuse often have multiple needs including treatment for substance abuse, parental support and childcare, legal aid, counseling and transitional and permanent housing. These services should not be created in a "silo" but rather developed so that they can assist survivors of domestic violence and child abuse seamlessly.
- Sexual assault continues to be a public safety issue; in order for the community offenders to hold accountable, services must exist for those victimized.
- It is critical to support community education about sexual assault, rape and child sexual abuse, as decreased staff levels at many agencies may complicate finding and getting help. This education can also be co-presented with topics related to other forms of family violence.
- Consent workshops for youth are rising in popularity among sexual assault prevention experts. Informing youth as to what sexual consent is, how to develop boundaries, and the legal definitions of assault can help them to make more informed choices as young adults.

- Several ongoing areas of concern in this service area that should still be monitored include Internet safety, on-line victimization of vulnerable youth, the potential needs of partners of returning veterans, women who are veterans, and exploited children and adults who are used for sex trafficking.
- There is a strong connection between early, untreated child sexual abuse and homelessness and trafficking. More than 40% of youth who are homeless experience sexual assault prior to becoming homeless. It is important that conversations about homelessness and trafficking include the issue of sexual assault.

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