

Facts & Findings

*A Guide to Inform Human Services
Budget Deliberations*

EASTSIDE
HUMAN
SERVICES
FORUM

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EHSF Mission Statement

The mission of the Eastside Human Services Forum is to foster strong public and private partnerships to assure a stable network of health and human services for the benefit of all East King County residents.

This will be accomplished through efforts to:

- ❖ create partnerships and efficiencies,
- ❖ advocate to protect Eastside interests, and
- ❖ help inform decision makers (including funders, policy makers and the public) about issues of importance,
- ❖ strengthen the funding base for human services.

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A Guide to Inform Human Services Budget Deliberations

The Eastside Human Services Forum (EHSF) has developed this guide to provide elected officials on the Eastside with information to help their decision making about human services in the 2003 budget process. We recognize that this will be a particularly difficult year for all cities, and we hope that the attached information will be of value to your efforts.

What We Know

- ❖ Based on recent survey of Eastside residents, it is clear that Eastside residents place an extremely high value on human services, and they believe government has a primary responsibility to pay for them when families cannot.
- ❖ Non-Profit human service agencies are producing measurable, positive results for their clients, but many have reached the breaking point from being asked to serve an increasing number of people with substantially less money.
- ❖ Cities save money and time through their contractual relationships with many human service agencies.
- ❖ Society as a whole benefits from a strong human service system in ways that many people don't understand or acknowledge.
- ❖ The absence of a strong human services system has a costly impact on schools, hospitals and businesses.
- ❖ A volatile human services funding environment has been created by the dramatic cutback of public dollars from the county, state and federal government, a weak economy, a high local unemployment rate, and shifts in charitable giving trends. At the same time, the level of need continues to rise.
- ❖ The Human Services funding crisis will require both short and long term solutions, and a commitment from every level of government to address the needs. Inaction will compromise the human services infrastructure to such a degree that it will be too costly, if not impossible, to rebuild.

TOUGH DECISIONS AHEAD

All decision makers will have a difficult time in the current budget season, balancing competing needs with limited revenue. Community values and priorities should influence and carry significant weight in that process. So, to learn how conditions related to human services fare against competing budget priorities, such as police, utilities, education, traffic, parks, etc., EHSF hired Hebert Research to conduct a statistically representative phone survey of 400 Eastside residents. Respondents were asked to rate specific living conditions in terms of their importance to the quality of life on the Eastside. In addition, they were asked to identify who they thought responsible to pay for services when a family could not afford to pay.

We embarked on this survey knowing the risks. What if people didn't value human services, and what if they didn't see government as having an important role in funding them? We decided the risk was worth taking so that we would know for certain how people weighed in on the subject. The results were quite surprising.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Human Services are valued at an extremely high level, in fact most social conditions were rated as more important than having smooth and reliable flows of traffic, and access to parks and recreational facilities and activities.

Conditions were rated on a 1-10 rating scale, with 10 being "extremely important," and 1 being "not at all important." The highest ratings (9 and above) related to public safety, quality education, and integrity of public officials.

Rated above 8.5 were conditions that rely on a network of human services:

- ❖ Adequate, nutritious food;
- ❖ Emotional, educational, and social support for kids;
- ❖ The ability to live independently for as long as possible;
- ❖ Access to medical and dental care; and
- ❖ The opportunity to earn a livable wage.

Rated between 8.0 and 8.5 were:

- ❖ The availability of sufficient emergency shelter;
- ❖ A trustworthy person with whom to speak;
- ❖ Accessible mental health services;
- ❖ The opportunity for adults to acquire the skills needed to secure gainful employment; and
- ❖ Traffic moving smoothly and reliably through the Eastside.

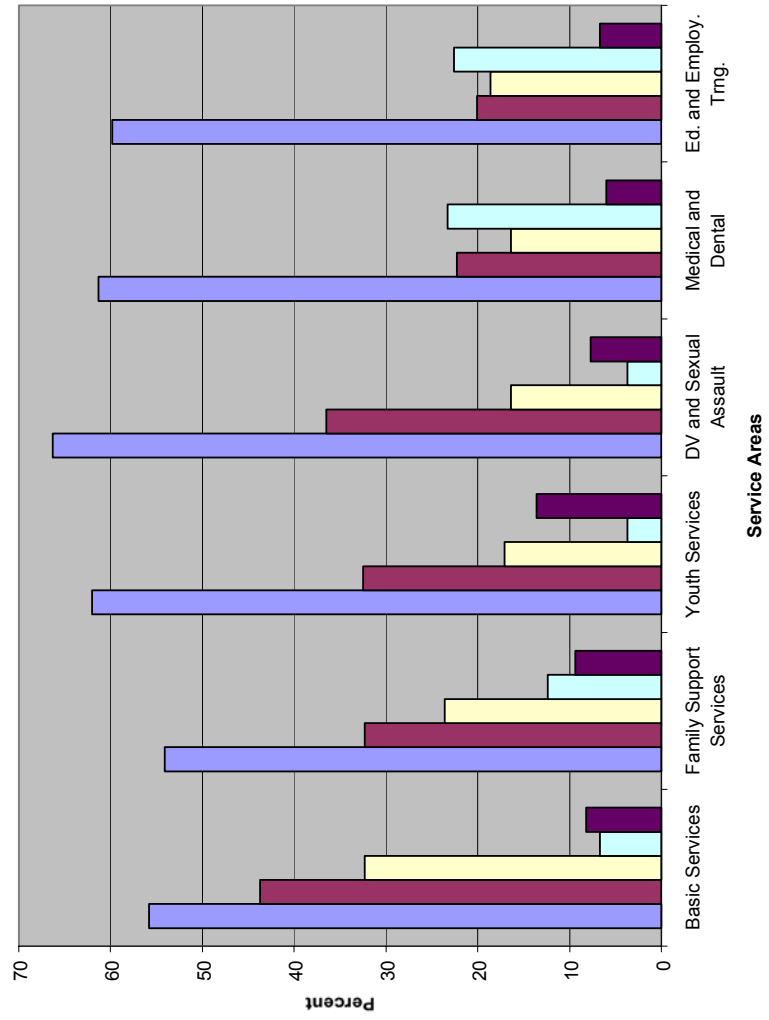
Rated between 6 and 8 were:

- ❖ Access to recreational programs and facilities
- ❖ Affordable housing; and
- ❖ Access to the arts and cultural activities

The community assigns government a primary role in funding human services.

This survey also asked Eastsiders who they believe should be responsible for paying for services when a family cannot afford to pay for them. The choices included government, charities, extended family or friends, employers, “other” or “nobody.” Responses could also include “I don’t know” or “I don’t want to answer,” but few made those choices (1% didn’t answer, and 3-6% didn’t know, depending on the question.)

Who Should Pay When Families Can Not



THE HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING ENVIRONMENT IS NOT STABLE AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR HUMAN SERVICES DELIVERY IS IN JEOPARDY.

A combination of factors has radically altered the human services funding landscape. Central to the crisis is the King County Executive's proposed elimination of the county's discretionary human service funds. **Including the cuts that took effect in 2002, plus the proposed cuts over the next two years, King County's Community Services Division alone will be eliminating over \$2,000,000 in funds that have directly supported Eastside agencies and programs.** County-wide, the total exceeds \$12 million. Additional cuts to public health ranging from 15% - 50% are anticipated, but specific dollar amounts have not been announced.

The Eastside agencies/programs most threatened (from all County funding sources) over the next two years include Youth Eastside Services (mostly violence prevention programs, and family support), Friends of Youth (Eastside Runaway & Homeless Youth Shelters; Youth and Family programs), Eastside Healthy Start, Eastside Domestic Violence, Young Adult Court Mentor Program, Senior Services in Snoqualmie Valley, Community Health Clinics, Child Care Resources, and Eastside Legal Assistance Program.

Any relief from Washington State is unlikely. A projected state budget shortfall of \$1.5 billion to \$2.3 billion will put pressure on lawmakers to reduce spending.

The current recession is now expected to be deeper and longer in Washington than in most other states. Washington currently has the highest unemployment rate in the country. This economic slowdown generates new and increased demand for services,

causing the gap between need and funding to grow even more. The recession has also hindered agencies' ability to raise funds from traditional approaches, such as auctions or direct mail appeals.

Shifts in charitable giving and funding trends are further straining the Eastside's ability to cope with demand for services. The disproportionate number of low income people residing in South King County has understandably prompted a redirection of many funds to that sub-region. That trend, however, has added an additional, fundraising burden for the Eastside. Agencies serving our residents are experiencing growth in demand, cutbacks in public funds, and are not recovering ground from new funds raised by United Way or from many charitable foundations. Hunger is hunger, whether in Kirkland or in Renton. All people deserve to be fed.

We are on a collision course between people in need and resources available to serve them.

Need is up dramatically, while resources are increasingly scarce. Virtually every avenue of revenue that supports the non-profit service community is shrinking. For the first time, individual programs aren't the only ones in jeopardy. Entire agencies are at risk of disappearing. Every effort must be made to prevent erosion of the infrastructure that has taken years to develop. Once they are gone, these interconnected systems will be almost impossible to rebuild.

OUR CURRENT HUMAN SERVICES INVESTMENTS ARE PAYING OFF, IN HUMAN AND FINANCIAL TERMS.

All Eastside cities hold non-profits accountable for delivering on their performance measures. Based on their reported outcomes, we know the programs are working. A good example of a successful program is Eastside Healthy Start (EHS). EHS is a program operated by a consortium of agencies to help children grow up emotionally and physically supported and free from abuse. In the first six months of 2002, only 2% of mothers (age 22 and younger) had second pregnancies, compared with a national range of 17%-30% for second teen pregnancies. (According to the Centers for Disease Control, public costs from teenage childbearing totaled \$120 billion from 1985-1990; 48 billion could have been saved if each birth had been postponed until the mother was at least 20 years old.) Of all the women referred to EHS, 72% chose to participate, 94% of the families had no referrals to CPS for abuse or neglect, and 99% of the children were current on their immunizations (compared to 86% of the general public). In short, high-risk, young mothers are opting for help, and faring better than the general population in several critical areas. Outcomes like these are the rule, not the exception. If programs can't prove that they are effective, they don't receive funding.

Thanks to preventive programs and interventions, savings to cities are significant.

Many services offered through human services agencies literally reduce workload and costs for cities. For example, when a youth runs away, a detective is assigned to the case, and follows it through to resolution. A runaway is treated no differently than any

other missing person case. When a program actually prevents runaways, both detectives and records specialists save time from spared assignments, and the police department saves money.

Services to victims of domestic violence can literally save a city thousands of hours. It is typical for a city to refer all calls from victims to domestic violence agencies for follow-up, totaling hundreds of calls per year. When the agency is able to help the victim, the number of subsequent calls to police decreases, eliminating the multiple hours of response time and paperwork required for each call.

Schools, businesses and hospitals are impacted when human services are not available.

When children are hungry, homeless, living in the midst of family violence, or with substance abusing parents, they cannot help but bring their emotional burdens to school. Teachers do not have a choice about whether or not to deal with the impact this brings to the classroom.

Business pays a price when employees miss work due to the unavailability of child care, or stress related to unresolved family issues. On a national level, domestic violence costs employers from \$3-\$5 billion annually due to worker absenteeism, increased health care costs, higher turnover, sick leave, and lower productivity. Costs associated with unmitigated substance abuse are also significant. Almost 73% of the nation's current drug users (ages 18-49) are employed full or part-time. Alcoholism alone accounts for 500 million lost workdays each year. Between 20-40% of all general hospital patients are admitted for complications related to alcoholism and other forms of substance abuse.

Hospital emergency rooms often become the last resort for people who are unable to access affordable health care options, resulting in higher than necessary costs for medical care – costs that could be avoided by preventive human services efforts.

Human services programs save money and benefit society in ways that are not readily apparent.

Programs often produce multiple benefits, with some savings measurable, and others not. For example, we know that a \$1 investment in youth and children's programs today will save \$7 in future costs, such as incarceration, counseling and law enforcement. But how do we measure the value to society of things that didn't happen because of interventions that occurred? Using the example of a person with cocaine addiction, successful treatment stops not only the person's use of cocaine, but also can interrupt the cycle of theft to obtain money to purchase the drug, and time spent in jail associated with those crimes. Who knows how many homeowners and businesses were spared the trauma and loss associated with the theft that didn't occur because of effective drug treatment?

The average annual earnings in 1997 for those 18 and older without a high school diploma was \$14,131; for those with a high school diploma, only \$21,680; and for those with a Bachelor's degree, \$40,695. Accumulated over time, these differences have huge impacts on lives and regional economies. Of course, the tangible value of education accrues not only to individuals but to society as well, in the form of tax receipts. The lifetime costs to our society of each high school dropout, in terms of lost earnings and foregone taxes alone, have been conservatively estimated at \$300,000. High school graduation rates in East King County have remained at about 80% from 1997-1999.

A LONG TERM PLAN IS NEEDED FOR FUNDING HUMAN SERVICES, BUT WE MUST PRESERVE INFRASTRUCTURE NOW.

The Regional Policy Committee (RPC) of the Metropolitan King County Council plans to embark on a process to explore long term funding solutions for regional human services. Hopefully, that process will be successful, and cities will actively participate. In the short term, cities can play the critical role of helping to assure that the human services infrastructure remains intact. It has taken years to build the effective human services system that serves thousands of Eastside residents. It will be exceedingly costly, if not impossible to rebuild the system if we allow it to erode while a long-term stabilization plan is developed.

Eastside residents will support decision makers who advocate for human services funding. We know that the services work, and we know that we are preventing future problems by ensuring a stable infrastructure for service delivery. With a strong human services system, people's lives are better, cities save money, and society benefits in the short and long term.

The Eastside Human Services Forum believes that we must do everything in our power to preserve human services funding in the short term while we all work together to develop long term solutions to support the systems that are so vital to the quality of our community.

Survey Specifics:

- ❖ The EHSF survey differed from others in that it did not ask about *need or gaps in service* but about the living conditions that are most valued and those that make the Eastside community a good place to live.
- ❖ Survey questions were reviewed and pre-tested by Hebert Research, and the firm conducted the telephone survey asking questions about valued conditions randomly so that placement was not affected by order of presentation.
- ❖ The survey did not focus only on human services. It asked the importance of conditions related to police, human services, utilities, education, traffic, parks, drugs, culture, the environment, leadership in the community, and so on.
- ❖ Hebert Research surveyed a random sample of 403 Eastsiders by telephone between August 25th and August 29th of this year. Respondents were screened to ensure that they were at least 18 years of age and lived in East King County in the area north of Newcastle and south of Snohomish County, and from Mercer Island east to King County's eastern boundary line. Each interview took an average of twelve minutes.
- ❖ Translation services were available for Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese speakers, who represent the largest groups of non-English speaking Eastsiders.
- ❖ Some segments of the population are likely under-represented in this survey since all the initial recruitment for the survey was conducted in English and only three alternative languages were available. Under-represented segments of the population likely include persons who speak other languages, those who are especially disadvantaged and those who have disabilities that limit their ability to communicate by telephone.
- ❖ Those responding to the survey were a representative sample of Eastside residents, large enough to yield reliable information. In general, a random sample of this size has a maximum margin of error of slightly less than $\pm 5.0\%$ at a 95% confidence level.
- ❖ All conditions were valued above 6 on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was "not at all important" and 10 was "extremely important."

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