

Facts & Findings

2nd Edition | October 2004

Eastside
Human
Services
Forum

EHSF Mission & Functions

Strengthen Our Funding Base

- Pool resources
- Seek new sources of support for human services
- Work to stabilize current funding while advocating for long-term solutions

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.

Create Partnerships and Efficiencies

- Support and mentor small communities and new leaders
- Coordinate efforts and planning to ensure a strong human services system
- Add value to and leverage other work in the sub-region

Inform Decisions Makers

- Educate Funders (public and private) and policy makers
- Develop knowledge and reach agreement about shared priorities
- Educate the general public about the importance and impact of human services

Advocate for Eastside Interests

- Develop and promote common positions
- Raise human services on the political radar screen
- Track and respond quickly to local, regional and state level initiatives

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of Facts and Findings. The Eastside Human Services Forum has developed this guide to assist Eastside elected officials in the 2004 budget process.

The Forum is often asked, “What do you want us to do?” So this year, in addition to providing current data and trends, we offer a number of specific suggestions for utilizing this information as you make your budget decisions. Surely this will be another challenging year for all cities, and we hope that our perspective will be of value to your efforts.

Much Is Working Well

Although it's tempting to focus solely on unmet needs and all the money lost or diverted, we should not lose sight of our many successes. There is no doubt that our investments in human services are paying off. Even as we face tough challenges ahead, it's important to remember that the services we provide are cost effective, beneficial to our community, and changing lives for the better. Here are a few recent Eastside examples:

- 91% of the homeless families served at Family Village in the last half of 2003 transitioned to permanent housing. (Agency report to King County's Report Card Database system)
- 96% of the frail elderly served by Sno-Valley Adult Day Care in 2003 maintained their independence and avoided premature institutionalization. (Agency report to King County's Report Card Database system)
- 81% of young offenders with the Court Mentor Program were in successful compliance at the end of 2003. This means that they incurred no new violations of the law, complied with the conditions of the court, and kept clean and sober. (2003 Final Report/Evaluation for Project Smart Turn and the Court Mentor Program)
- 100% of the students enrolled in Eastside Literacy's GED program in 2003 passed the GED test. (Agency statistic)

Converging Forces And New Dynamics

Human services are being impacted by multiple forces, all converging at once. The need has never been greater, resources are diminishing, and the cost of doing business is increasing dramatically. This results in:

- more competition among agencies for fewer dollars
- program reductions and, in many cases, program elimination
- the challenge of attracting and retaining qualified people to work harder for less money
- the potential for compromised quality and service levels

The dynamics at play pose a great risk to our human services infrastructure and to the agencies within it. If we want our successes to endure, we all need to understand these needs and trends, take them seriously, and work together to offset their effects. *It's not too late. The time is now.*

Eastside Need Is Growing

Myths prevail about the Eastside's lack of need for human services, despite evidence to the contrary. One of our greatest challenges continues to be debunking such myths and addressing the widely held belief that the Eastside is the land of plenty with no human service needs. In reality, our need is growing.

Growth in Poverty:

- According to the 2000 census, poverty is growing at the same rate in East King County as it is in South King County.

More Hungry People:

- In 2002, Food Lifeline supplied 1.3 million pounds of food to its member agencies in East King County, an increase of almost 21% over the previous year. (2004 United Way Community Assessment)
- One-month snapshots of the number of Eastside food stamp recipients grew from 2,664 in February 2001 to 7,204 in September 2003. (2004 United Way Community Assessment)

More Reports of Abuse:

- Referrals for investigation of sexual, physical and emotional child abuse to the Eastside office of the Division of Children and Family Services increased by 33.8% between 2001 and 2002, from 747 to 1,000. (DSHS Division of Children and Family Services, presentation to the United Way East Community Council, 2003)

More Calls for Help:

- Health-care related calls from Eastside residents to the Crisis Clinic rose from 8,793 in 2002 to 11,660 in 2003, and represented the highest volume of all issues. The second highest volume was for food/housing issues, where calls increased from 2,629 in 2002 to 3,128 calls in 2003. (2004 United Way Community Assessment)

Influx of Immigrants and Refugees:

- The percent of Eastside residents over age 5 that speak a language at home other than English rose from 14% in 1990 to 27% in 2000. (Bellevue Census 2000 Report)

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Acknowledge that the need is increasing. Don't expect agencies to continue to provide more service with the same or less money.**
- **Take time to understand the specific needs and changes in your community. Try to align funding decisions with need as closely as possible.**

Fewer Resources

At the same time that the Eastside's need for services is growing, several factors are threatening our funding resources:

- Initiatives related to property taxes. It is likely that initiatives aimed at reducing property taxes will continue to pose a threat to our cities' ability to maintain funding levels for many services, including human services.
- **Shifting regional responsibility.** As available funds decrease throughout the region, larger municipalities are paying closer attention to the proportion of their investments that serve people and areas outside of their jurisdiction. Eastside residents have relied upon these investments, and funding shifts will leave a gap in services for Eastside clients that will need to be filled.
- A variation of this trend is the shifting of public and private funds away from the Eastside to areas of the county with higher levels of need. As an example, funds for the Emergency Shelter Assistance Program, Families with Children, are being shifted away from the Eastside due to a new funding formula.
- In 2003, the East and North Region received \$202,505, or 40% of the funds available for the King County region. Under the new formula, the Eastside's share will drop to 16%. The reduction will be phased in over the next few years, however the impact will be felt immediately. Eastside Domestic Violence's share of these funds will drop from \$78,400 (2003-2004) to \$9,931 by 2008.
- **The effects of a sluggish economy.** Non-profit provider agencies are experiencing the compounding effects of our slow economic recovery. Their own fundraising efforts are yielding less money, and most are receiving less public and private support. At the same time, the economic environment is pushing more people into the system. The result is record numbers of people needing help with fewer resources available to serve them.

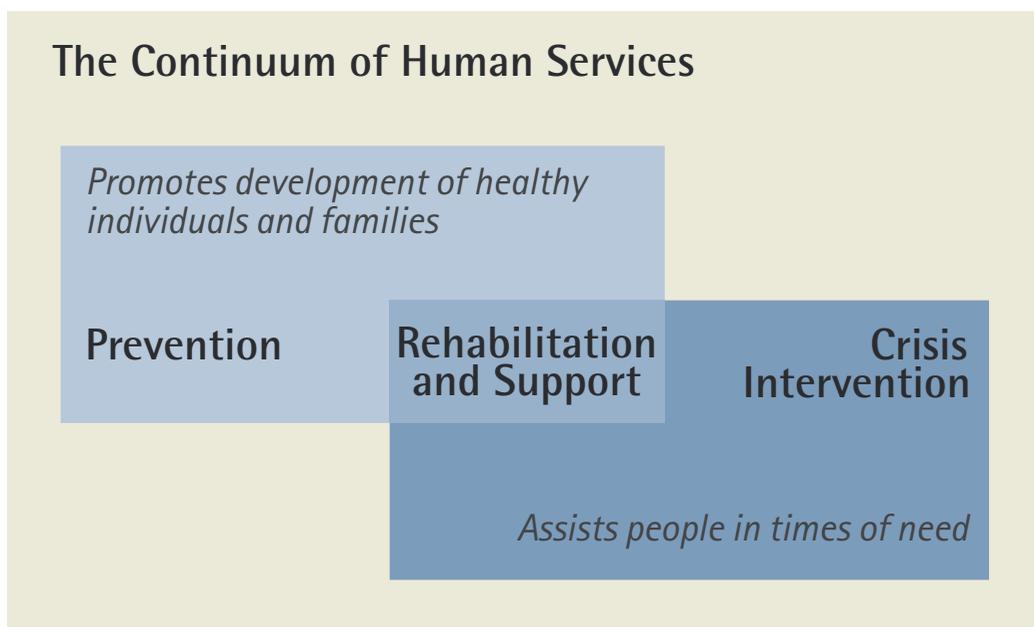
WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **At a minimum, preserve your current level of funding to prevent further erosion of our funding base.**
- **Be an advocate with your peers to encourage continued investment in the Eastside.**

Prevention Programs Are Being Sacrificed

Especially in tough economic times, there is a tendency to sacrifice prevention programs in favor of crisis intervention. This occurs for obvious reasons. When prevention programs are successful, the results are never seen because people simply do not enter the human service system. On the other hand, crises are apparent, requiring urgent attention and intervention to achieve stability. The irony is that prevention programs actually prevent crises, which is why we advocate for funding across the human services continuum.

The graphic below illustrates the continuum of human services, ranging from prevention programs to crisis intervention.



In the example of housing, a prevention program would help someone to pay the rent, thus preventing eviction. Absent this help, the person might be evicted and need emergency shelter, which would be a service at the other end of the continuum. A healthy human services system makes available a range of programs across the continuum.

Current countywide funding trends favor crisis management over prevention, targeting specific populations, at the expense of others. As a result, we are losing impressive, successful preven-

tion programs on the Eastside, particularly in the areas of youth and family support. King County's focus in the Youth and Family Support Network (YFSN) is shifting from an open mix of programs (including prevention) to a singular focus on juvenile justice intervention for court-involved youth. This has affected at least two Eastside agencies (YES and Friends of Youth).

The County has also placed a funding emphasis on the fact that African American youth are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system. Program funding is now being narrowed to target that specific population. This has a particular effect on the Eastside because even though the percentage of youth referred to courts is proportionate to our population, they are not African American. As a result, we have lost funding that once was available to Eastside vulnerable youth.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Fund across the continuum of human services needs**
- **Despite the tough economy, don't give in to the tendency to sacrifice prevention programs in favor of crisis intervention. The short-term fix is not worth the higher long-term cost. Prevention *does* pay.**

Costs Are Rising

Across all sectors of the economy, the basic cost of doing business is going up and provider agencies are not immune. In fact, in addition to the common increases in rent and supply costs, some have seen increases in liability insurance at a rate of 300% in one year (even in agencies that have no loss history), and most agencies are seeing health insurance costs rise by 20% or more per year. Unlike for-profit agencies, providers cannot simply raise their fees to offset the impact. They must find additional sources of revenue. However, most funders prefer to fund specific programs and services over administrative costs. The cumulative impact of greater need, reduced or level funding amounts, more restrictive requirements on how funds can be spent, greater expectations for technology-based record keeping, and rising administrative costs are disabling agencies as never before. Are we willing to run the risk of program and service cutbacks or elimination? Can we expect employees to sacrifice training in order to save their agencies money? Should staff pay a greater share of benefits from their already low wages? Sadly, these are becoming the choices.

There is a breaking point which many valuable non-profit employees have reached, and they are reluctantly choosing to leave the field of human services. Attracting and retaining competent replacements will be no small feat.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Offer more discretionary funding to agencies
- Acknowledge the real, increasing costs of doing business, and be willing to help underwrite those costs

We're All In This Together

Two real stories about Eastside citizens illustrate the importance of a human services system and the fact that any of us might need help at some time in our life. People enter into the human services system for a variety of reasons. Some have made poor choices, life has dealt others unexpected challenges, and some are victims, paying a high personal price for the actions of others. Regardless of the reason, the need for help is real if there is any hope of moving people out of the cycle of disadvantage and toward productive independence. Ann and Jack, both Hopelink clients, are good examples:

- Ann came to the Family Development program after divorcing her emotionally abusive husband. She had little work experience, suffered from depression and anxiety, and did not know how she would support her family. With help and encouragement from her Family Development Specialist, she was able to find childcare and start a job internship at a local community college, where she also took advantage of education opportunities. Her Family Development Specialist continued to help Ann with financial assistance, counseling, and links to resources. Ann made the Dean's List and because of her outstanding performance at work, was hired by the college after her internship. Ann is currently working and studying to be a teacher.
- Jack had a great job as a roofer earning a good income when a motorcycle accident left him physically impaired and brain damaged. Although he was told he would never walk, he was able to overcome his physical injuries in time. However, he could no longer work due to his brain injury. As Jack's health improved, he began to appear in comedy clubs, talking about his accident and recovery with humor and optimism. He began speaking to schools and community groups about his disability, and he started a non-profit called "Winners Don't Quit." Jack now resides in subsidized housing and uses the food bank and other Hopelink services, only when absolutely necessary. He has traveled around the country sharing his experience and his message.

Ann, Jack, and many others like them are the best spokespeople for the value of a strong system of human services on the Eastside.

As leaders whose decisions will impact the quality and capacity of the network of human services, we ask that you remember the following:

- **What we're doing now is working. Let's move forward, not backwards.**
- **Acknowledge that needs are changing. We're not the same Eastside. Know your community's real needs.**
- **Be prepared to tell our story. Go into the budget process armed to dispel the myths about human services.**
- **Fight to preserve what we have and need now as we work with our regional partners to craft long-term funding solutions.**
- **Help agencies by providing more discretionary funding that acknowledges the dilemmas they face.**
- **Recognize that the people using human services are just like you. Any of us could need these services at any time.**

Invest in the Eastside. The needs are real.

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Also available through EHSF:

What Works (Three Key Ingredients for Human Services Success), June 2003

The Real Eastside (published by the Eastside Human Services Alliance), December 2003

Eastside Myths and Facts, June 2004

Human Services 101 (a 25-minute video based on EHSF's event), June 2004

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