



# What Works

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*Three Key Ingredients for Human Services Success*

*June, 2003*

**E**astside  
**H**uman  
**S**ervices  
**F**orum

## **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 is accomplished through efforts to:

- create partnerships and efficiencies
- advocate to protect Eastside interests
- 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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## Introduction

Everyone has a vested interest in making sure that our human services system works. When it does, it helps strengthen and support our citizens, develop and enrich our society, and create jobs and careers around people serving people. It also relieves pressure felt by schools, businesses, and hospitals. When the human services system works, those institutions are able to focus on their core missions, rather than the inevitable impacts that result from basic human needs not being met.

One apparent goal of human services is to help people in times of need, but at a deeper level, the human services system strives to prevent problems and to intervene appropriately to break the cycle of disadvantage. At its core, the human services system is designed to help people achieve or return to productive independence. This fact is often overlooked – at an enormous human, social, and economic cost to our society.

Throughout the course of EHSF's work, one theme continues to emerge. Given the current scarcity of resources, decision makers want greater assurance that investments in human services are worthwhile, and that the programs they contribute to actually *work*. In our first publication (*Facts and Findings – A Guide to Inform Human Services Budget Deliberations*), EHSF made a strong case for the value and need for a stable human services delivery system. *What Works* is intended to help decision makers better understand what makes human services systems and programs succeed.

Three necessary "ingredients" create a climate that allows the human services system to successfully meet the needs of the community. They are:

- 1. an understanding of the value of human services**
- 2. accountable service providers delivering quality services**
- 3. a broad-based commitment of adequate resources**

**The lifetime costs to our society of each high school dropout, in terms of lost earnings and foregone taxes alone, are conservatively estimated at \$300,000. About 20% of students in East King County do not graduate.<sup>1</sup>**

## **INGREDIENT #1**

### **Understanding the Value of Human Services**

The Eastside *does* understand the value of human services, as demonstrated by several recent key events.

During the 2003 budget deliberations, the three largest Eastside cities increased their human services budget allocations during a budget cycle wrought with deficits and reductions. Each city had a strong human services advocate on its council, who introduced and pressed for additional human services funding. Other cities were able to maintain their 2002 levels of funding, which in itself was a victory when so many budgets were severely cut or eliminated.

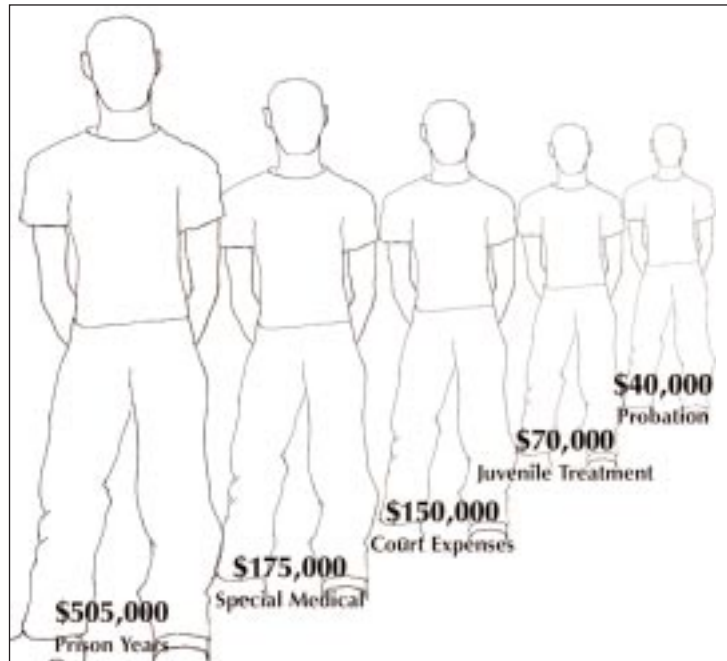
Residents in East King County registered their strong support for human services via a survey commissioned by EHSF in August 2002. The 400-resident phone survey conducted by Hebert Research revealed that human services are valued at an extremely high level. In fact, most social conditions were rated as more important than having smooth and reliable flows of traffic, or access to parks and recreational facilities and activities. Another recent poll commissioned by the Metropolitan Parks District Task Force revealed that residents throughout King County rank human services as the second highest priority for King County, right behind public safety.

In addition, the support the Eastside Human Services Forum has received in its early stages demonstrates the collective commitment to human services on the Eastside. Local governments, school districts, hospitals, United Way, and non-profit organizations have contributed money, energy, time, and talent to assure a stable network of health and human services on the Eastside.

While the Eastside enjoys a high level of support, not all are convinced that our investment in human services is paying off. For them, we would like to introduce "John," the Million Dollar Washingtonian, whose story illustrates the "pay now or pay later" reality in very tangible terms.

## THE MILLION DOLLAR WASHINGTONIAN<sup>2</sup>

At age 48, John has become a Million Dollar Washingtonian. He did not win the lottery or become a millionaire. Rather, he has now cost Washington taxpayers more than \$1 million for his care and for society's protection. John spent 25 years of his adult life in correctional institutions (most for burglary and robbery but also for violent actions) and more than three years of his adolescent life in training schools and residential treatment programs. His prison time cost the state \$505,000 (25 years at \$20,200 per year). His juvenile treatment cost an additional \$70,000. Probation services during the time John was not locked up amounted to \$40,000. Court expenses for his prosecution and his appeals amounted to more than \$150,000.<sup>3</sup> Special medical bills for preventable neurological disorders cost another \$175,000, and he's still unemployed without job prospects or medical insurance.



**In 1997, Washington State spent 4.4 times more per prisoner than per public school pupil. This exceeds the national average of 3.0.<sup>4</sup>**

John's mother did not have a high school diploma and lived most of her life in poverty, sometimes on public assistance. When she gave birth, she had no prenatal care, and her son was born prematurely and at low birth weight. John lived in a chaotic home environment, his mother was unable to control him by the time he was seven, and John and his mother were both abused by her husband. They found themselves homeless on several occasions. John suffered from hyperactivity and was a discipline problem in school. He never completed 10th grade, although he finally received a GED in prison, with the help of some training programs in the prison school.

John estimates that he has also cost Northwestern residents approximately \$300,000 in stolen goods. During the times that John lived in society as an adult, he has fathered two children, one of whom has been in five foster homes and now displays the same behavior patterns as his father. John may have helped ensure that Washington has a new generation of million-dollar Washingtonians.

### **BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE**

Preventive investments (in the thousands, rather than the hundreds of thousands of dollars) in the early years of John's life could have helped him to become a contributing member of society, rather than a costly liability. Both John and his mother could have been independent of long-term reliance on the human services system.

Below are a few examples of ways that programs offered through Eastside human service agencies could have intervened in John's life.

If John's mother had been connected to Eastside Healthy Start, a program for at-risk young mothers, John would have had a much better chance of starting life at normal birth weight and of not being abused or neglected. His mother could have received parenting education, advocacy, and support services to help her be a better mother, deal with John's behavior problems, and provide a more economically secure home. John's health problems could have been addressed at an early age through the Eastside's community health clinic system. If he had been connected to a high quality early childhood

**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.<sup>5</sup>**

program through Children's Services of Sno Valley or the Lake Washington Technical College, John might have started school on par with his classmates, more ready to succeed.

As an adolescent, John could have been supported by a variety of programs through Youth Eastside Services, Friends of Youth, and Project Smart Turn. These programs could have helped keep John in school and connect him with caring adults through programs that develop academic, job, and social skills, all strong deterrents to criminal involvement.

John and his mother could have accessed an array of housing-related programs offered through Hopelink to stabilize their lives by helping them to avoid eviction or, when homeless, provide them with case management and counseling to get their lives back on track.

Once John found himself in trouble, access to affordable legal assistance through Eastside Legal Assistance Program could have influenced his future choices. He would have had access to an Information and Referral system with a database of thousands of helpful organizations.

Eastside Domestic Violence Program services could have helped interrupt the cycle of abuse and offered John's mother safety options.

## **INGREDIENT #2**

### **Accountable Service Providers Delivering Quality Services**

The Eastside has developed a strong human services infrastructure, made up of competent service providers that deliver quality services. A rigorous application and performance monitoring process has been adopted for public and private investments, which ensures that human services are accountable, efficient, and effective. Whether the source of money is public tax dollars or private charitable donations, donors want and deserve assurance that the recipients of their money are achieving results and delivering a quality service.

Indeed, there is a "business" side of human services, and a clear process by which agencies receive funds and are held accountable for measurable results.

## **HOLDING AGENCIES TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS**

Funders expect agencies to perform at a high level and to demonstrate results. For example, local jurisdictions use a Request for Proposal (RFP) process and contracts to ensure that agencies demonstrate accountability and efficiency before they receive funding. The RFP process reduces duplication of services and relies on updated community needs assessments as the basis for funding services.

Agency reports, routinely requested by local jurisdictions that fund human services, must demonstrate:

- **Organizational capacity:** Demonstrated management of the program through a history of service delivery, staff qualifications, certifications, accreditation, and contract compliance.
- **Structural integrity:** Submission of board membership lists, minutes, board policies and agency by-laws.
- **Rigorous record-keeping:** Maintenance of records, including financial information, client and service delivery files, personnel records, and data collection information.
- **Cost-effective approaches:** Demonstrated cost effectiveness through financial reports, substantiated and defined unit costs, and standard administrative costs. Funders use submitted financial information to assess budget appropriateness as related to the intended results of the program.
- **Follow-through on outcome measures:** Documentation of program's past results using outcome and performance measures reported to the funding agent in previous funding cycles.
- **Proof of financial health:** Submission of audits by outside, independent auditors.



**Children who have suffered abuse or neglect are arrested 4.8 times more often for juvenile crimes and are twice as likely to be arrested as adults.<sup>6</sup>**

## **BASING FUNDING DECISIONS ON OUTCOMES**

Once an agency receives Eastside municipal or United Way funding through the allocations process, a contract is drafted that specifies performance measures and reporting requirements. Progress reports are submitted throughout the year. Simply reporting the numbers of people served is not sufficient. Outcome measurements require proof that a *difference in lives* is actually being made. If a discrepancy between the contract terms and actual performance arises, money is often withheld until the issue is resolved. Eastside funders conduct annual performance evaluations to review outcome results and the methodology used to collect and analyze data. The findings from this analysis are used early in the following allocations cycle, and a negative track record almost certainly affects subsequent allocation decisions.

## **MEETING AND EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS**

Following are a few examples of outcomes that illustrate the significant success of Eastside programs.

***Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect:*** North/Eastside Healthy Start provides early intervention programs for at-risk infants. Ninety-four percent (94%) of the families served by this program had no referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) for abuse or neglect and 99% of the children were current on their immunizations (compared to 86% of the general public). In addition, only 2% of the mothers, age 22 and younger, had second pregnancies, compared with a national range of 17%-30% for second teen pregnancies.

***Providing Safety for Victims of Domestic Violence:*** King County's domestic violence service system is known nationally for its innovation and breadth. A regional service system has developed that attempts to make a basic level of services geographically and culturally accessible to domestic violence victims across the county. Over 90% of Eastside Domestic Violence Program's clients indicate an increase

**The annual cost of violence perpetrated by youth in Washington State totals \$3.75 billion in medical, lost work, decreased quality of life, and monetary costs.<sup>7</sup>**

in levels of personal safety, and 91% indicate an improvement in their overall situation as a result of services.

***Preventing Adolescents from Entering the Criminal Justice System:***

Of the youth with a criminal history upon entering Youth Eastside Services (YES) Violence Prevention Program, 95% have been successful at not re-offending.

***Helping Seniors Remain Independent:***

Catholic Community Services operates a Volunteer Chore Services program that provides seniors and people with disabilities with no-cost volunteers for chores such as housework, yard work, laundry, and shopping. Eighty-one percent (81%) of clients who responded to a 2002 survey said that these services helped them maintain their independence. Senior Services provides a Volunteer Transportation program that helps seniors remain in their homes by utilizing volunteers to escort frail elderly people to medical and other vital appointments. Ninety-four percent (94%) of seniors reported that this transportation program helps facilitate their independence.

***Connecting People With the Services They Need:*** Thousands of people are being connected to appropriate services and getting help, particularly for mental/emotional distress and services to meet basic needs. Of callers to the Crisis Clinic's 24-Hour Crisis Line, 47% demonstrated significant distress relief by the end of the call and 83% made remarks associated with caller appreciation. Ninety-two percent (92%) of callers to the Community Information Line said they planned on calling the agencies to which they had been referred.

There is no question that these vital human service agencies are making a difference in the lives of our citizens. In addition to the success of individual agencies, collaboration among human service providers is evident throughout East King County. Providers are sharing information and approaches that work, thereby continuing to strengthen the infrastructure of the Eastside's effective human services system.

## **INGREDIENT #3**

### **A Broad-based Commitment of Adequate Resources**

Understanding the value of human services and having competent service providers only make a difference if adequate resources are available to sustain the system.

The human services system relies on a mix of funds from federal, state, county, and city government, as well as private foundations and individual donors. Even though the system is dependent on each source, it has not been developed in a rational, cohesive fashion. In a best-case scenario, each piece of the funding pie supports a different part of an organization's budget. Together, these sources allow an organization to function. However, when one or more pieces of the funding pie are removed, the ability of the agency to deliver even its very core services is threatened. Unfortunately, this vulnerability is becoming the norm, rather than the exception to the rule.

In times of budget constraints, our challenges are to make the most of the resources we have by knowing where we get the best return on our investments and to recognize that the costs and consequences of not investing are far greater than the investment itself.

When decision makers choose where to invest limited funds, they must be mindful of the consequences of their choices. In financial terms, dollars not allocated to human services often must be spent later for criminal justice, social welfare, or emergency medical care. The human consequences are dramatic and deep, perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage and allowing needless, preventable suffering.

# Anticipating Financial Consequences

**PRESERVE:**

**OR ACCEPT THESE FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES:**

<p><b>Early Childhood Education/Child Care Program</b></p>	<p>Trade every dollar spent for an Eastside child to get a good early childhood education for \$7 that would be spent for jail, social welfare programs, and court-related costs.</p>
<p><b>Child Abuse and Neglect Programs</b></p>	<p>Trade the annual \$118 average cost per participant in the CPCAN* program for \$1,000 a month for an abused child to be in a foster home.</p> <p>* Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect</p>
<p><b>Vocational Training for People with Developmental Disabilities</b></p>	<p>Provide adults with developmental disabilities the training that allows them to work, or deny training and pay twice as much for their residential care.</p>
<p><b>Prevention Programs for Young People</b></p>	<p>Support programs that keep young people in school, or accept the conservatively estimated \$300,000 lifetime cost to our society for each high school dropout, in terms of lost earnings and foregone taxes alone.</p> <p>(High school graduation rates in East King County remain at about 80%.)</p>

# Recognizing Human Consequences

<b>PRESERVE:</b>	<b>OR ACCEPT THE INCREASED LIKELIHOOD OF PERPETUATING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE:</b>
<b>Domestic Violence Services</b>	In addition to physical harm, victims are at a significantly higher risk to develop medical problems, depression, psychological distress, eating disorders, and alcohol and substance abuse problems. They are more likely than other people to contemplate or attempt suicide. Children who witness domestic violence experience depression and psychological distress and are more likely than other children to be physically violent and to abuse their own children in later life.
<b>Support for Young, High Risk Mothers</b>	Young mothers are known to be at higher risk for child abuse and neglect. Infants born to mothers under age 18 have an increased risk of low birth-weight, which triggers additional health and developmental problems.
<b>Youth Development Programs</b>	Youth who lack social and family support are statistically more likely to engage in a wide range of at-risk behaviors, such as violence/anti-social activity, illicit drug use, sexual activity, problem alcohol use, and school failure. They are also more prone to depression and attempted suicide.
<b>Homeless Programs</b>	Homelessness creates or worsens health problems, mental health issues, and addiction.

If the measure of our success is moving people out of the cycle of disadvantage and toward productive independence, we must pay particular attention to decisions with unintended consequences. ***Making the human services system work requires a keen awareness that short-sighted decisions cost more than they save and set the stage for people to confront even more challenging obstacles.***

## **Working Together to Make a Difference**

Given the fragmented nature of human services funding and the impacts of federal, state and regional budget cuts, it is more important than ever for the Eastside to continue to be a leader and to demonstrate its commitment to our communities. It is clear that our human services agencies are working well – producing measurable results in a cost-effective way, making a difference in people's lives, and complementing the efforts of our schools, hospitals, businesses, governments, and the philanthropic community. We can keep our human services system working, if we collectively:

- Make informed, educated decisions about human services investments that carefully weigh financial and human consequences.
- Caution against sacrificing long term benefit for short term savings in our funding decisions.
- Keep the continuum of services intact by supporting the full range of human services.
- Work in concert with others, so that public and private funders make choices that complement each other and don't create vulnerabilities throughout the system.
- Continue to search for new revenue to stabilize the human services infrastructure.
- Support our non-profit agencies with the resources they need to continue to offer quality services.
- Use the information in this booklet to help educate other policy and decision makers.

The Eastside Human Services Forum commits its time, energy and resources to tackling these challenges, and we encourage others to join with us.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> See [www.financeproject.org](http://www.financeproject.org)
- <sup>2</sup> Adapted from *The Million Dollar Iowan*, Center for Child and Family Policy (1993) Investing in Families, Prevention and School Readiness. (Des Moines, Iowa)
- <sup>3</sup> Costs for Smith's involvement in the criminal justice system are extrapolated from cost estimates of marginal operating costs provided in various reports of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy regarding the criminal justice system in Washington.
- <sup>4</sup> *What You Need To Know And Do To Truly Leave No Child Behind*, Children's Defense Fund Action Council, 2003.
- <sup>5</sup> See [www.findthegood.org/workplace/publishinfo.htm](http://www.findthegood.org/workplace/publishinfo.htm)
- <sup>6</sup> Taken from *Prevention Pays* brochure, produced by the Children's Alliance.
- <sup>7</sup> See [www.csneirc.org/pubs/tables/youth-viol.htm](http://www.csneirc.org/pubs/tables/youth-viol.htm)

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