



# Eastside Human Services Forum

## 2011 Legislative Agenda

[www.eastsideforum.org](http://www.eastsideforum.org)

The effects of the recession are still being keenly felt by many East King County residents. Some have exhausted their unemployment benefits and are still left with few prospects for living wage jobs. The State and County continue to experience a high unemployment rate. Families who have been struggling to make ends meet may no longer be able to do so without outside help. Basic needs and services that support families who are able to find work, such as affordable child care, must be protected.

The Eastside Human Services Forum recognizes the state of the budget crisis throughout all jurisdictions and has prioritized the following legislative recommendations to ensure the well being of the most vulnerable populations in our community.

### Ensuring Access to Basic Needs

- Increase access to public benefits and services, such as basic food (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), the Earned Income Tax Credit, and mental health counseling.
- Allocate funding of \$3 million for the Washington Information Network (WIN) 2-1-1 from reserve funds in WTAP (Washington Telephone Assistance Program) to ensure accessibility to information about health and human services.

*In September 2007, 9,303 individuals were enrolled in the Basic Food Program in East King County zip codes. By September 2010, that number more than doubled to 22,560. (Source: State of WA, ESA, ACES Data Warehouse, October 26, 2010.)*

*There are 400,000 calls per year statewide to 2-1-1. In the first three quarters of 2010, there were 103,308 calls from King County residents; that's over 380 calls per day. The top needs documented for East King County callers are for financial assistance including rental/mortgage, move in assistance, and utility assistance, followed by basic needs services, shelter, food, transportation, clothing, etc. Utility assistance and rent assistance continue to be the biggest unmet needs.*

#### **For more information:**

United Way of King County: [www.uwkc.org](http://www.uwkc.org); Early Learning Action Alliance: [www.childrealliance.org/our-current-work/early-learning-now/early-learning-action-alliance](http://www.childrealliance.org/our-current-work/early-learning-now/early-learning-action-alliance); WIN 2-1-1: [www.win211.org](http://www.win211.org)

### Preventing and Ending Homelessness

- Maintain the State investment in the Housing Trust Fund.
- Maintain the Washington Families Fund, a public/private partnership which provides funds to support families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

*East King County continues to have the lowest proportion of affordable housing compared to other regions in King County, while the need is comparable to other areas. Among East King county cities, the average percent of rental housing that is affordable to low-income households earning 50% or less of median income is 4.5%, far below the King County average of 35.8%. (Source: King County website, 9/28/10)*

**For more information:**

The Committee to End Homelessness in King County (CEH): [www.cehkc.org](http://www.cehkc.org); Washington Low Income Housing Alliance: [www.waliha.org](http://www.waliha.org); United Way of King County: [www.uwkc.org](http://www.uwkc.org); Washington State Coalition for the Homeless: [www.endhomelessnesswa.org](http://www.endhomelessnesswa.org)

## Supporting Early Learning and School Readiness

- Maintain the current investment in home visiting funding and advocate for evidence-based home visiting programs such as Healthy Start by the federal government.
- Protect current investments in early learning for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the Working Connections Child Care Program which provides subsidies for low-income working families or families seeking work.

*Research has proven that healthy interactions, such as those fostered by voluntary home visiting programs, in the early years are linked to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and later prevent children's involvement in the criminal justice system. In 2009, 96% of participants in Healthy Start, one such home visiting program serving North and East King County, improved their parenting skills.*

*Child care for an East King County family with an infant and a pre-schooler can cost between \$21,788 and \$28,080 a year on average. This is 31-38% of the county's median household income. As of January 2010, 53% of the available child care providers accept families receiving child care subsidy. Sometimes families are eligible for subsidy but cannot find a provider who accepts it. Nearly half of centers and family homes do not accept any children on subsidy. (Source: Child Care Resources, Child Care Facilities and Rates in King County)*

**For more information:**

United Way of King County – [www.uwkc.org](http://www.uwkc.org); Parent Trust for Washington Children/Parents as Teachers State Office- Kathy Zeisel MEd: [kzeisel@parenttrust.org](mailto:kzeisel@parenttrust.org); Early Learning Action Alliance: [www.childrensalliance.org/our-current-work/early-learning-now/early-learning-action-alliance](http://www.childrensalliance.org/our-current-work/early-learning-now/early-learning-action-alliance)

## Supporting the Most Vulnerable Older Adults

- Sustain Senior Citizens Services Act funding. SCSA is a primary source of funding for the critical Senior Information and Assistance Program operated through Area Agencies on Aging.
- Implement the Pierce County model for Aging and Disability Resource Centers statewide to promote better information access for older adults and their families.
- Support follow-up actions recommended by the “Washington State Abuse/Neglect of Older Adults who are Vulnerable Study Group.”

*While the population of seniors in Washington has grown by about 24.5% between 1998 and 2007, SCSA funding has increased by only 2% during that period.*

*Aging and Disability Resource Centers aim to be “one stop shopping” sources for long-term care information and referral, benefits and options counseling services, and access to public and private resources for those in need of long-term supports. Preliminary research from Wisconsin indicates that well-run ADRCs can lower state Medicaid costs.*

**For more information:**

Washington Area Agencies on Aging: [www.agingwashington.org](http://www.agingwashington.org); WA Senior Lobby: [www.waseniorlobby.org](http://www.waseniorlobby.org); Bellevue Network on Aging: [www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/network\\_on\\_aging.htm](http://www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/network_on_aging.htm); Kirkland Senior Council: [www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/parks/Senior\\_Services/Senior\\_Council.htm](http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/parks/Senior_Services/Senior_Council.htm)

**Issues to Monitor**

- Maintain Disability Lifeline (formerly General Assistance Unemployable) which supports many people experiencing homelessness or in affordable housing.
- Ensure adequate funding for the Home Security Fund (HSF), generated by recording fees for real estate documents. The HSF is intended to fund programs and housing for mentally ill, single adults but faces a shortfall because the Legislature has used it to fund more programs without additional revenue.
- Restore cuts to funding to the Apple Health for Kids Program which provides low-income children comprehensive health care.
- Maintain Adult Day Health funding and affordable health services such as vision and dental care for vulnerable adults including older adults and individuals with disabilities.
- Support the recommendations of the Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families, including strategies for increasing the ability of families to care for their own children and reduce the number of children in foster care.

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