



# Community Needs Assessment

2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

King County is home to a vibrant, diverse, and growing population that contributes to a thriving, multicultural community. However, not all residents are afforded the same opportunities to thrive because of historical and present-day policies that discriminate based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Consequently, poverty is concentrated among people of color. Poverty impacts a person's ability to access shelter, high quality education, employment opportunities and health care. Restricted access to such crucial services sustains the cycle of poverty and exacerbates discriminatory policies and prejudiced social behaviors. Community service providers like Neighborhood House are one piece of a greater effort to disrupt generational poverty and provide high quality, direct services to in-need families and individuals in King County.

This analysis finds that while Neighborhood House programs target areas to improve the lives of its clients, there are still gaps in services that should be addressed. South King County continues to be a place of high need and would benefit from expansions of programs in areas like childcare, youth programs, and health care clinics that provide medical, vision and dental care. Expanding the reach of programming requires heavy investment in staff, which will demand high quality training, progressive benefits, and strong leadership.

### Purpose & Context

This community needs assessment outlines Neighborhood House's existing services against the backdrop of King County's everchanging context. Through this analysis and reflection, these findings will provide guidance for future programming to better meet the needs of both Neighborhood House clientele and staff.

### Recommendations

Program improvements must be made that directly address the needs of current and future Neighborhood House clients and internal service providers. While many existing programs respond to community needs, the duration of programming, extent of intervention, and depth of expertise held by providers should be enhanced to improve services for family and individuals. These include:

1. Expand early childhood and youth development programs to meet the needs of working caregivers, especially in South King County, and during after-school and weekend hours.
2. Improve existing services and systems to enable clients to access multiple Neighborhood House programs.
3. Strengthen and establish new relationships with community partners to better provide wrap around care services, decrease bureaucratic processes related to receiving services, and fostering "warm handoffs".

4. Offer high quality training to staff to prepare them for more technical service activities such as early intervention, addressing common behavioral health disorders, intervening in mental health crises, navigating legal and insurance issues.
5. Improve communication to community and current clients regarding service offerings and changes, case management updates, community engagement opportunities, and relevant policy issues.
6. Provide staff training, reduce stigma, strengthen the referral system, and build internal culturally appropriate clinical behavioral health expertise and services.

***Acknowledgements:***

Neighborhood House would like to acknowledge the individuals that made this report possible, especially the staff and clients that shared their feedback.

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## OVERVIEW OF SERVICE AREAS AND PROGRAMS

12,565

Unique individuals  
served



5,599

Unique households  
served



### Child Development

Neighborhood House offers several early learning programs to promote school readiness for young children and children with special needs. Since 1966, Neighborhood House has operated Head Start preschool classrooms and now also includes both Early Head Start toddler classrooms and two different home visiting programs for pregnant parents and families with infants and toddlers. In addition to early childhood education, programs provide comprehensive services for the whole family including resources and referrals, support for family goals and health needs, parenting education, opportunities for leadership, and more. Services are offered to children and families in central, west, and south Seattle, SeaTac, Tukwila, Burien, and White Center.

#### Preschool & Toddler Classrooms

Neighborhood House offers full-day toddler classes for children ages 1-3 years old and full-day preschool classes for children ages 3-5. Teachers provide developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate learning environments for children using evidence based curriculum and individualized learning goals developed in partnership with parents. Neighborhood House also utilizes over-arching learning goals for children that are aligned with expectations of local state kindergartens. All classrooms are licensed by the state of Washington and participate in the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System to ensure high quality services are maintained.

#### Home Visiting

Early Head Start enrolls pregnant parents and families of children under 3 years old offering home-based learning activities, individualized goals, an evidence based parenting curriculum, and ongoing support for family needs. Neighborhood House also offers home visiting through Parent Child +, a program that focuses on literacy and play-based learning for families with children ages 16-30 months old. This program provide variety of books and toys to families free of charge. Bilingual staff model reading and play so parents can continue to support their children after they exit the program.

## Youth and Family Services

Neighborhood House offers services that promote positive academic, physical, and social emotional outcomes for King County youth and their families. These no-cost services provide spaces for youth to spend time together after school, connect with peers, and receive academic tutoring at easily accessible locations. Services are designed to boost academic achievement, improve a sense of belonging, and provide youth with the skills to reach their full potential.

## Afterschool Programs

Neighborhood House operates three tutoring and resource centers at public housing communities in Auburn and White Center. Available to youth ages 6-18, afterschool programming includes academic support and innovative projects that boost social emotional learning and college and career readiness.

## Youth Advocacy Programs

Designed to serve youth who did not have their needs met in traditional classroom settings, Neighborhood House's youth advocacy programs provide one-on-one navigation for opportunity youth<sup>1</sup> to set and achieve educational and career goals. Youth develop plans to address obstacles to success, receive mentoring, and gain job readiness skills often while acquiring alternative credentials for competency (such as a GED).

## Reducing Underage Drinking and Drug Use

Through community coalitions and workshop series Guiding Good Choices conducted by facilitators with a language and cultural match for youth and families, Neighborhood House offers services to decrease substance abuse and reduce violence in communities. This also includes a mass media campaign focused on positive peer messaging.

“This workshop has benefited my family in many ways. My son was in jail using drugs and participated in gun violence in SE Seattle. He was a high school dropout because of substance abuse and violating school rules. If I had taken this parenting class earlier, I would have saved my son from jail. Using my skill from this workshop, I supported my two younger children at middle school to make a right and healthy choices in their life. Before attending this workshop, there was some misunderstandings and disagreements within my family. After attending GGC workshop, we are able to manage disagreements without getting angry. The fate of my children at middle school will not be like that of their older brother who is in jail. However, they will complete high school and go to college God willing.”

– Guiding Good Choices Oromo Class, participant – Mom

### Healthcare System Navigation for Immigrant Students

Patient navigators work with recently arrived immigrant youth attending the Seattle World School. Youth and families get access to health and dental services through a partnership with International Community Health Services (ICHS) in their preferred languages.

### Family Resource Center

The Neighborhood House Family Resource Center in the High Point neighborhood of West Seattle provides holistic supports for immigrant and refugee families. Services include parent skill-building, computer labs, printing, resource navigation, Ready to Work ESL and job search, and youth development activities for middle and high school students. The center also serves as a hub, hosting events and providing space for families to gather and build community like sewing classes, Somali women's group, etc.

### Housing and Economic Opportunity

Neighborhood House connects community members with meaningful employment and livable wage jobs. Career Specialists help connect people with citizenship classes, English language classes, training opportunities, college programs, and vocational programs to achieve economic mobility.

### Job Readiness Services

Neighborhood House develops comprehensive individualized plans with clients to build on their existing strengths and improve job readiness skills. Examples of services include ESL classes, computer literacy instruction, enrollment in vocational training, and support with credential attainment. Partnerships with local medical and manufacturing employers provide opportunities for clients who have interests in those careers.

### Job Placement Services

Neighborhood House assists clients in obtaining and retaining jobs. Through ongoing case management, staff ensure clients have support navigating workplace issues that arise and securing opportunities for career advancement. Financial education and coaching are available to ensure clients have tools to manage their finances.

### U.S. Citizenship Services

Clients who are seeking to apply for U.S. citizenship can get assistance from Neighborhood House staff with application forms, interview preparation, and general process navigation. Clients may also attend group citizenship classes offered in Kent and West Seattle.

### Housing Stability

Housing programs at Neighborhood House help people stay in their homes or quickly find a new place to call home. These programs provide emergency rental assistance, eviction



prevention assistance, financial counseling, and connection to other necessary services, such as employment navigation, to improve housing stability.

### Homelessness Prevention

Residents of the City of Seattle who are at risk of eviction or having their utilities shut off can receive emergency rental assistance and case management assistance. Homelessness prevention services are also available to students at the following colleges: Green River, Highline, South Seattle, Seattle Central, UW Bothell/Cascadia, Bellevue Community College, and Shoreline Community College.

### Rapid Re-Housing

Families experiencing homelessness can be placed into housing, receive short-term rental and utility assistance, and participate in case management to ensure long-term success.

### Student Family Stability Initiative

Available to families with students in the Seattle, Highline and Tukwila school districts, Neighborhood House helps homeless and at-risk families obtain and/or retain permanent housing. The goal is to keep children enrolled at their same schools, or within the same districts, to reduce disruption of academic progress and social ties.

### Community Health

Community Health connects people in the region who need it most to services that help them become and stay healthy. Resource Specialists, Care Coordinators, and Medicaid Case Managers offer a variety of support programs to individuals with disabilities, older adults, people that are unhoused, and families. Staff assist in planning for critical needs, identifying resources, connecting to services, and navigating the long-term care sector.

### Preventing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis

Neighborhood House provides free workshops, counseling, testing and referrals to reduce and prevent the transmission of HIV and Hepatitis.

### Community Outreach, Referral & Engagement (CORE)

Neighborhood House integrates and co-locates substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, HIV & hepatitis care, homelessness services, and prevention services in partnership with the Navos Mental Health and Wellness Center in Burien.

### Information & Resource Referral

Individuals can contact Neighborhood House for information and resource referrals related to aging and disability services in Seattle and South King County.

### Caregiver Supports

Neighborhood House staff meet family caregivers one-on-one to connect them to appropriate resources, as well as host caregiver support groups for social connection. Some financial services are available for non-parental caregivers of children (kinship care).

### Health Homes

Care coordinators meet with eligible Medicaid recipients in their homes to develop plans for meeting health goals and support with managing multiple service providers.

### Medicaid Case Management

Neighborhood House provides case management services for Medicaid recipients whose preferred languages are Arabic, Farsi, or Ukrainian.

## METHODS & DATA SOURCES

This assessment took place from February to October 2023. Secondary research was conducted by UW Medical Students enrolled in Advocacy and Community course, and Samatha Peyton, consultant, compiled all of the data sources into a cohesive report.

### Primary Data Sources

#### Client Interviews

Neighborhood House conducted one-on-one and group interviews with clients representing the diversity of the Neighborhood House communities. One-on-one interviews took place with young adults, individuals who are unhoused, families who are unhoused, and adults who were in employment programs. Group interviews were conducted with parents of children in early learning programs and with youth in different communities. Clients were asked about top issues they are concerned about in their community, what needs they have encountered that don't have a good resource, and what would make it easier for them to access multiple programs and services.

#### Staff Interviews

Neighborhood House hosted multiple individual and group staff listening sessions at different locations. Staff represented different programs, communities, languages, and cultures. Staff members gave input on what services and support have been hard to access or are not available, what needs they have encountered that don't have a good resource, and what would make it easier for clients to access multiple programs and services.

#### Neighborhood Program Data

Neighborhood House program data comes from both internal databases (NHC and ChildPlus) as well as self-reported numbers from programs where data is not recorded internally

### Secondary Data Sources

Data was pulled from a variety of sources to complete this community assessment. All sources are cited in footnotes. Main sources of data included:

- The US Census Bureau, including the American Communities Survey
- King County’s Communities Count data dashboards
- Washington State Office of Financial Management, County and City databases
- Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families dashboards
- Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction dashboards
- School’s Out Washington

## SERVICE POPULATION OVERVIEW

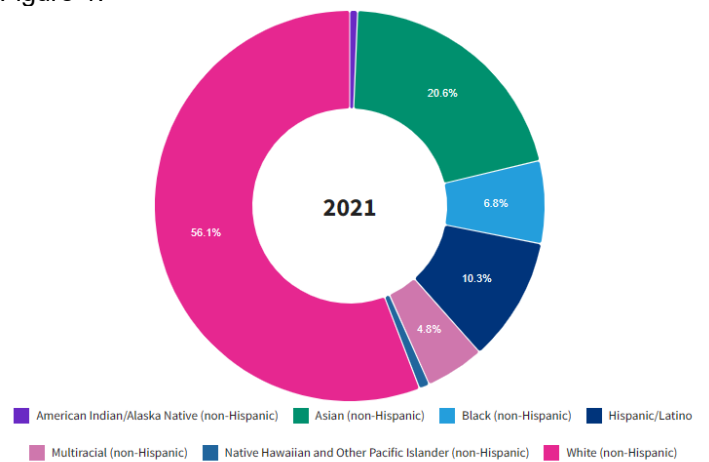
### Community Demographics

According to the most recent census data, King County has an estimated population of 2,266,789 individuals. The majority of the King County population identifies as white (56.1%), with the second highest population identifying as Asian (20.9%) (Figure 1).

### Foreign Born

24.2% of King County’s population were born outside of the United States. As shown in Figure 2, these individuals were more likely to identify as Asian and to have lower annual household incomes.

Figure 1:



## Speak language other than English at home

28.4% of individuals in King County speak a language besides English at home, with rates rising over the last decade (figure 3). The most common languages were Spanish (6.6%), Chinese (4.4%), Vietnamese (1.7%), Tagalog (1.3%) and Korean (1.1%).

Figure 2:

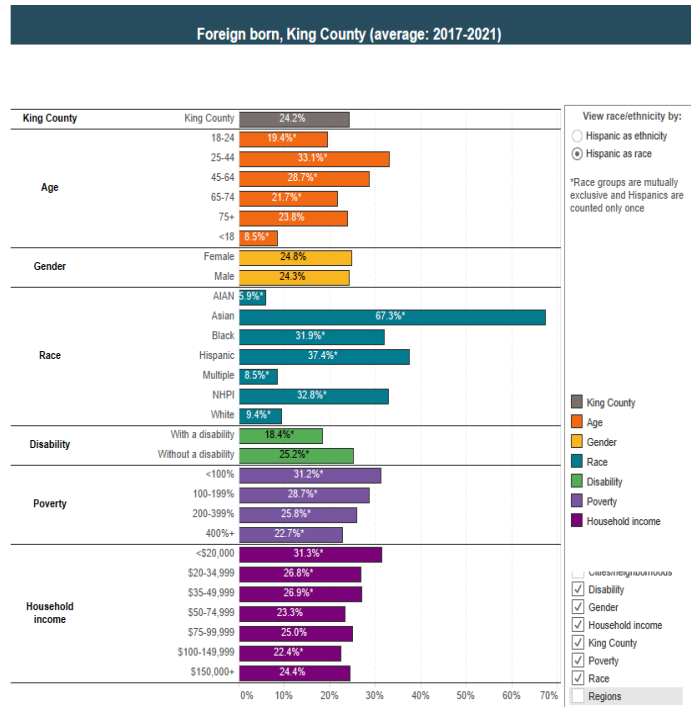
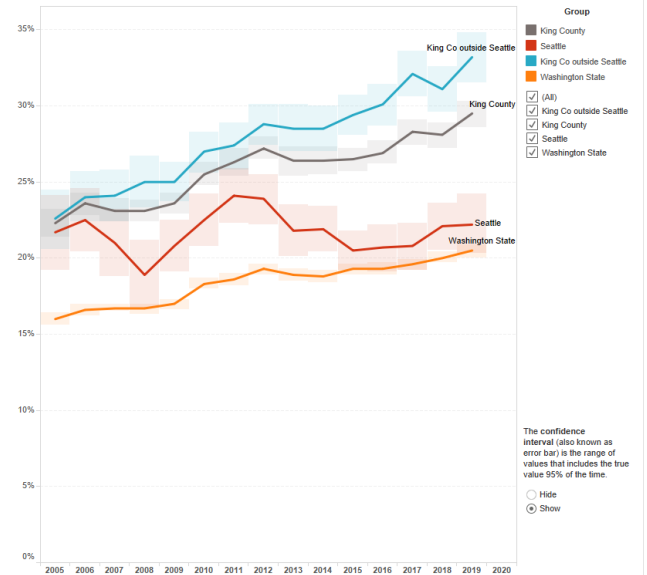


Figure 3:

Speak a language other than English at home (age 5+), King County (2005–2020)



### Limited English Proficiency

10.8% of individuals ages 5 and up living in King County have limited English proficiency. As shown in Figure 4, there were large disparities in terms of nativity, poverty and household income. Of individuals with limited English proficiency, 33.4% identified as foreign-born and 42.9% identified as non-citizens. From an income perspective, 21.7% of individuals were below the federal poverty line and 21.7% had annual incomes of <\$20,000.

### Poverty and Unemployment

#### Unemployment

At present, about 4.3% of King County's population is unemployed. As shown in Figure 5, there were large disparities in terms of race, disability and poverty. 10.0% of unemployed individuals identified as American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) in comparison to 4.4% whites. About 10.9% of unemployed individuals were living with a disability. 22.0% of unemployed individuals were below the federal poverty line. In addition, there were large disparities in terms of geography. Higher rates of unemployment were seen in Kent (11.0%). From Figure 6, unemployment was more prevalent in South King County in comparison to other regions.

Figure 4:

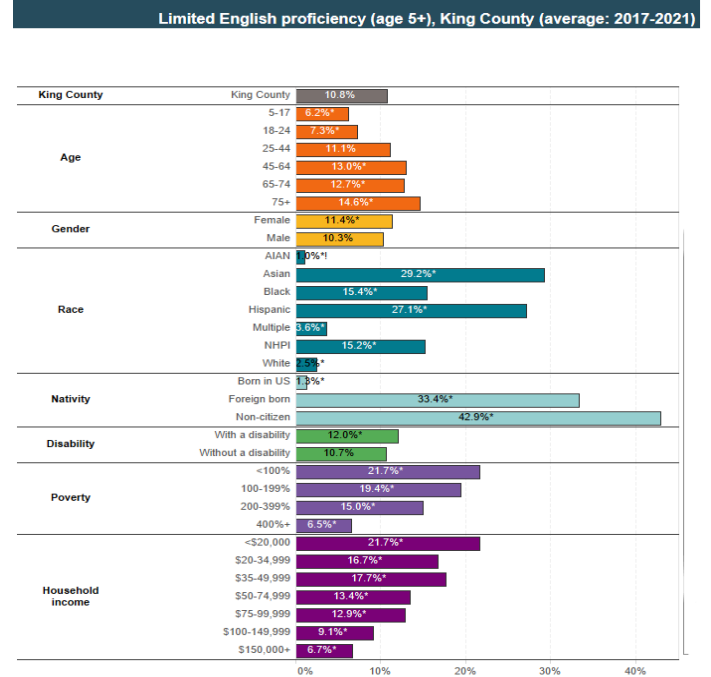
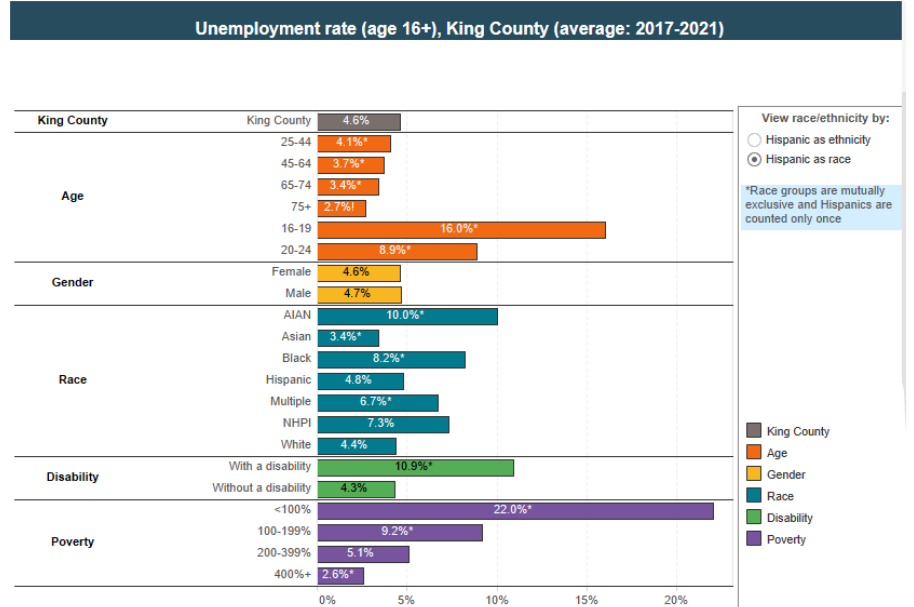


Figure 5:



## Below Federal Poverty Level

8.4% of the King County population is below the federal poverty line. As shown in Figure 7, there were large disparities in terms of age, race, disability and region. 18.7% of individuals below the federal poverty line were ages 18-24. This number is over twice the King County average. Of those in poverty, 20.2% identified as black in comparison to 6.1% identifying as white. Of note, 56.1% of the King County population identifies as white while only 6.8% identify as black. This shows that poverty disproportionately impacts people of color.

Geographically, the highest rates of poverty were seen in the University District with 38.9% of individuals being below the poverty line. While a decent number of the population in the University District are students, this is something of concern and something that should be further investigated. At present, many students are unable to hold jobs due to the high time burdens associated with school. Further, high tuition costs and housing costs in the university district further exacerbate financial strain in these individuals.

## Households Receiving Food Stamps

8.0% of households in King County are currently enrolled in SNAP benefits (food stamps). Higher rates of SNAP enrollment were seen in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) (30.0%) and AIAN (24.3%) individuals. Of individuals receiving food stamps, 36.0% had annual household incomes less than \$20,000. Geographically, higher rates were seen in South King County with the highest percentage of SNAP enrollment seen in Kent (25.8%).

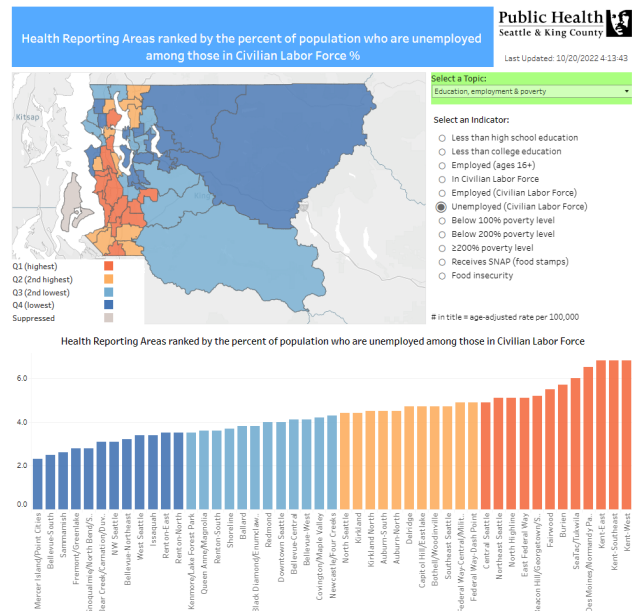
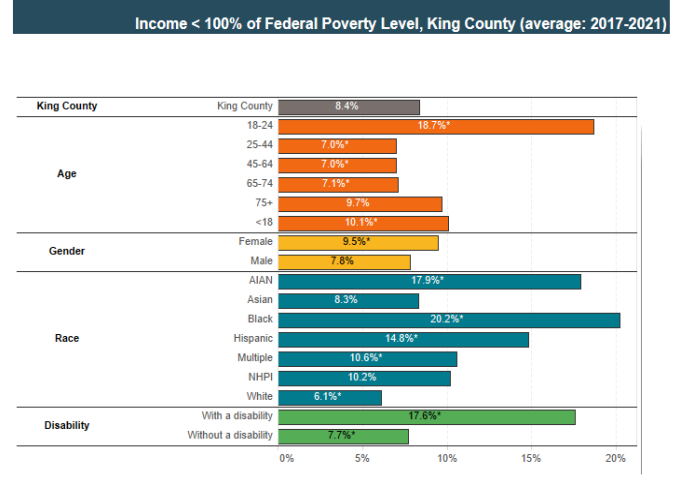


Figure 7:

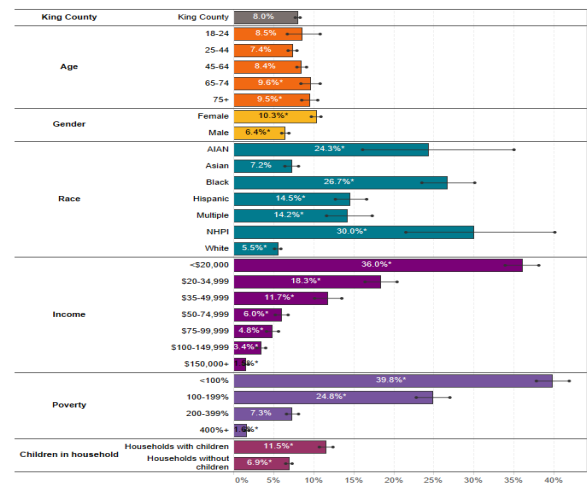


### Households Endorsing Food Insecurity

10.5% of adults in King County endorse food insecurity. Figure 8 shows large disparities in race, income and poverty status. Higher rates were seen in Black (32.4%) individuals and individuals with annual incomes <\$15,000 (43.5%). Geographically, higher rates of food insecurity were seen in South King County, with the highest rates seen in SeaTac/Tukwila (30.0%).

Figure 8:

Households receiving Basic Food (SNAP) benefits, King County



### Childhood Poverty

Based on the most recent data, King County’s childhood poverty rate stands at about 10%. The table below (Figure 9) highlights jurisdictions where Neighborhood House offers early learning programs. In five of the seven included cities, concentrated in South King County, the poverty rate is higher than the county average. Disrupting childhood poverty is crucial to ending familial cycles of poverty and broadening opportunities for all children.

Figure 9:

#### Estimated Number and Percent of Children Ages 0-4 Living in Poverty

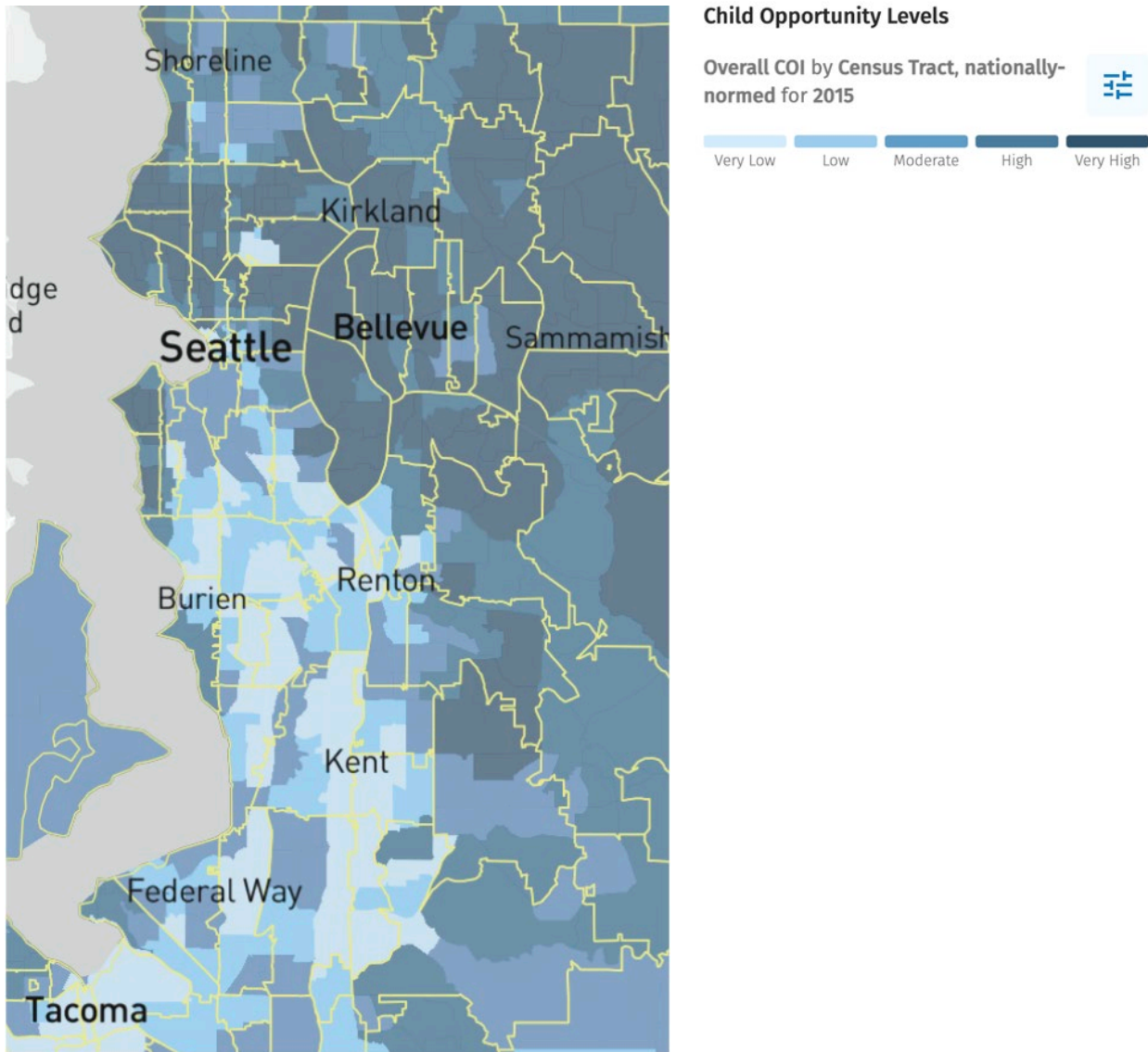
	Estimated Children ages 0-4, 2021 Based on ACS Ages 5yr 2021 and OFM 2022	Estimated % of Children ages 0-4 in Poverty Based on ACS 2021 5yr Age & Poverty	Estimated Children in Poverty, 2021 Based on ACS Age Breakdown 5 yr 2021, ACS Poverty 5yr 2021, and OFM 2022		
	Total children 0-4 years old	% 0-4 year olds living in poverty	Total	Under 3 years	3 and 4 years
<b>King County</b>	129,262	10%	12,647	7,327	5,320
<b>Jurisdictions of Interest</b> (all zip codes)					
Seattle	35,733	9%	3,392	2,089	1,304
Renton	7,014	8%	585	352	233
Burien	2,942	13%	392	251	141
Des Moines	2,230	12%	270	146	124
Tukwila	1,255	27%	339	179	159
SeaTac	1,885	13%	248	162	86
Highline School District	8,323	14%	1,133	687	446

ACS and OFM data

The Child Opportunity Index (COI) is a measure developed by the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy. It combines the various features of a child’s neighborhood to measure the

variables and conditions that influence healthy child development. COI includes 29 indicators that capture a child’s access to education, social and economic opportunities, and healthy features of their environment.<sup>1</sup> Using 2015 data, the below graphics illustrates the children and youth in South King County have lower COIs than their northern peers. Similarly, COI is unequally distributed by race/ethnicity. Black youth disproportionately represent the “Very Low” COI category at 40%, while White youth make up the smallest portion, just over 10%.

**Overall Childhood Opportunity (2015)**



<sup>1</sup> Noelke, C., McArdle, N., Baek, M., Huntington, N., Huber, R., Hardy, E., & Acevedo-Garcia, D. (2020). Child Opportunity Index 2.0 Technical Documentation. Retrieved from [diversitydatakids.org/researchlibrary/research-brief/how-we-built-it](https://diversitydatakids.org/researchlibrary/research-brief/how-we-built-it).



### Overall Child Opportunity by Race/Ethnicity

Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA Metro Area

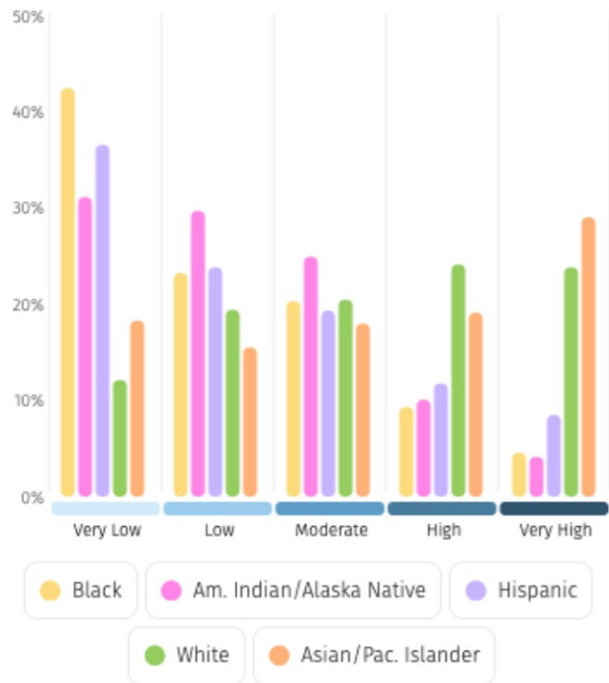


Figure 10 (left) and Figure 11: “Overall Child Opportunity by Census Tract, nationally-normed for 2015.” *Diversity Data Kids* online. 2023. <https://www.diversitydatakids.org/maps/#/explorer/tracts/53033031800/15/10,15//xc/n/1.0.14/47.483/-122.35/11.19/>.

### Kindergarten Readiness and Elementary School Outcomes

In addition to child care services for working parents and caregivers, child care and early learning programs provide opportunities for positive and enriching child development. One goal of Head Start and other early learning programs is to prepare children for behavioral and academic success in Kindergarten. However, King County has the fewest percentage of children meeting state benchmarks across Washington, and Kindergarten readiness is not equally achieved across racial or socioeconomic lines. In the graphic below (Figure 12), bolded school districts indicate where 50% or more of students are not meeting state benchmarks. These are mostly located in South King County where poverty rates are higher.

Figure 12:

**Count of Children Not Kindergarten Ready, by School District**

	Percent <b>not</b> meeting developmental benchmarks for age 5 at the start of Kindergarten	Percent meeting developmental benchmarks for age 5 at the start of Kindergarten	Total Students Assessed
<b>Auburn School District</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>	1,213
Bellevue School District	38%	62%	969
Enumclaw School District	46%	54%	358
<b>Federal Way School District</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>	1,493
<b>Highline School District</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	1,150
<b>Kent School District</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	1,847
Lake Washington School District	36%	64%	1,909
Northshore School District	27%	73%	1,456
<b>Renton School District</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>	1,078
Seattle Public Schools	31%	69%	3,607
Shoreline School District	42%	58%	609
Snoqualmie Valley School District	19%	81%	472
<b>Tukwila School District</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>37%</b>	168

OSPI data

Academic achievement outcomes can worsen in elementary years. The figures below depict King County school district percentage of students who are not proficient in math (left) and language arts (right) state test score standards across all grades. School districts where over 50% of students fail to meet these standards are concentrated in South King County.

Figure 13:

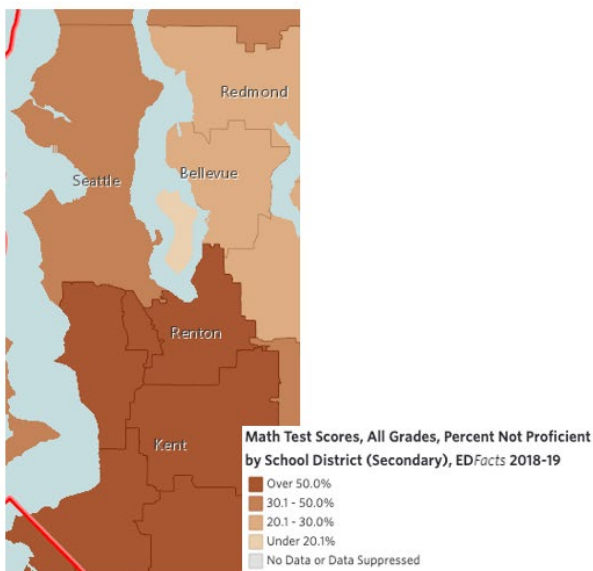
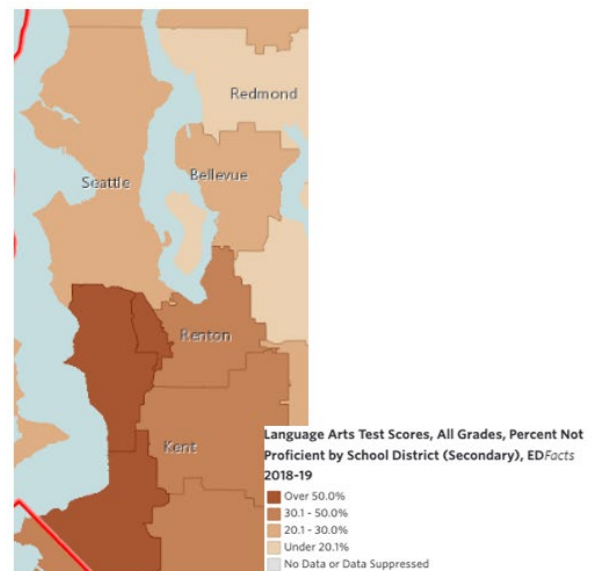
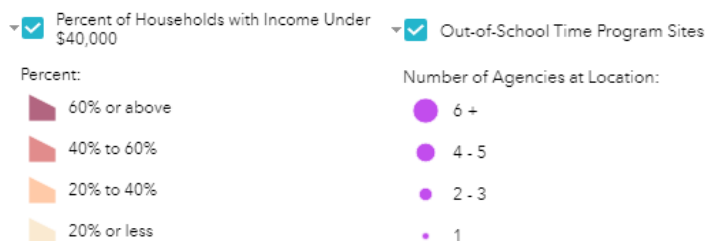
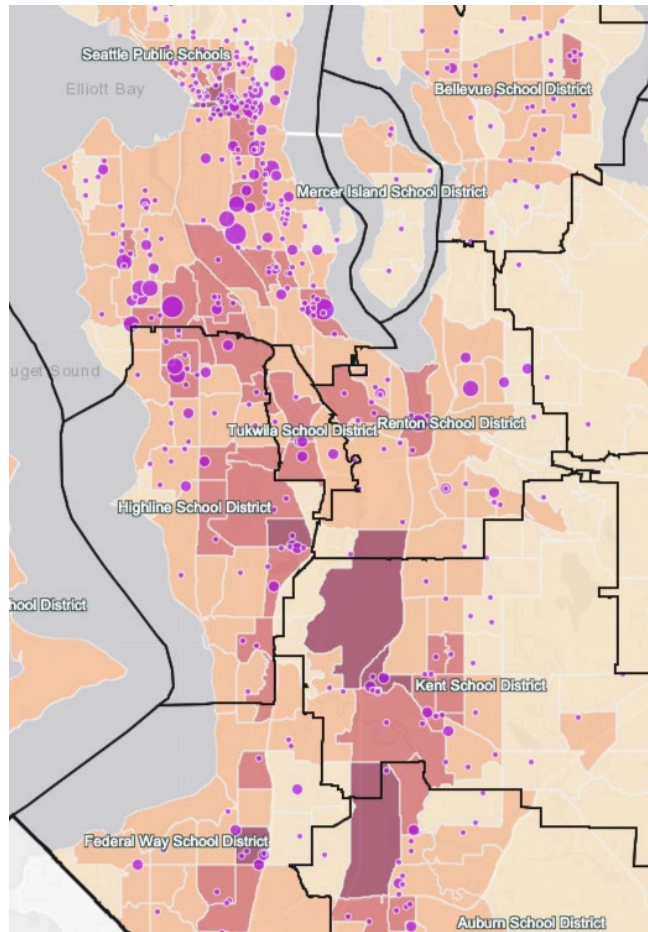


Figure 14:



### Out-of-School Opportunities

Like the availability of child care options for children under 5, there is great need for child care options for school-aged children. Out-of-school programs have dual benefits of supplying care for working parents and providing youth with enriching activities. High quality out-of-school programs can offer youth additional learning opportunities to develop skills needed to reach their full potential and provide a deeper sense of community.



While Figure 15 on the left demonstrates the ample out-of-school program sites across the county, the clusters taper off in South King County. Additionally, a closer look at the latest census data reveals that there are far more youth ages 5-24 in South King County, and thus the youth programming in these communities is stretched thinner.

The chart below (Figure 16) estimates the number of youth each out-of-school program in Neighborhood House service area zip codes must serve in order to meet the needs of that community. There is a clear need for additional programming in Auburn, Kent and Des Moines to provide those youth with equal access to high quality after-school programs.

Figure 15: “School’s Out Washington Opportunity and Demographic Viewer.” *School’s Out Washington* online. 2023.

<https://berk.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c3d5964e4c4141d19d6bc440145118c7>.

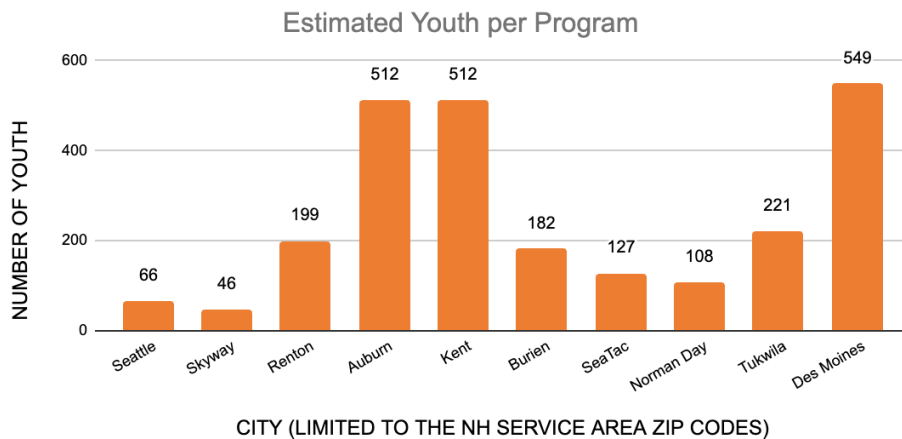


Figure 16:

C

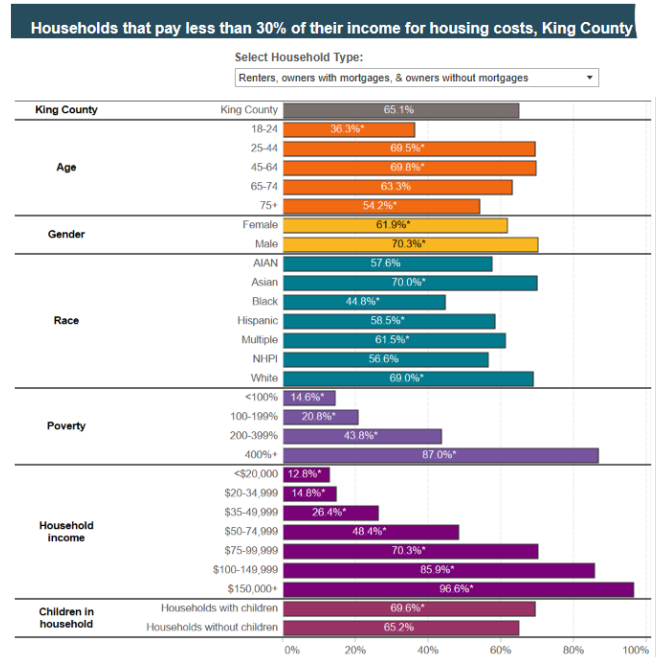
### Housing Cost Burden

At present, 65.1% of King County households spend less than 30% of their annual incomes on housing. Individuals who spend less than 30% of their annual income on housing were more likely to be Asian or White and to have higher household incomes (Figure 17), Those who spend higher percentages of their household income on housing have lower annual incomes and are more likely to identify as Black.

### Homelessness

Based on the most recent analysis by the King County Regional Housing Authority, an estimated 53,743 individuals experienced homelessness in 2020.<sup>2</sup> Individuals experiencing homelessness are more likely to be white or Black. Of note, because of the racial make-up of King County, homelessness disproportionately impacts BIPOC individuals. According to HMIS, Black individuals are more likely to exit homelessness, but are much more likely to face repeated homelessness once housed.

Figure 17:



<sup>2</sup> King County Regional Homelessness Authority. *Five-Year Plan (2023-2028)*. May 2023. 16.

### Access to Medical Care

#### Unmet Healthcare Needs Due to Cost

Currently in King County, about 10.0% of adult citizens have unmet healthcare needs caused by the high cost of care. As shown in Figure 18, disparities in terms of individuals deferring medical treatment due to cost concerns varies greatly by geographic location. Around 20.6% of individuals in Kent did not see a medical professional or seek healthcare because of cost concerns. Further, there were large racial disparities as well. Around 20% of Hispanic individuals stated they went without healthcare due to cost, in comparison to ~7% of Asian individuals. Overall, there are large geographic and racial disparities in terms of accessing medical care

Figure 18:

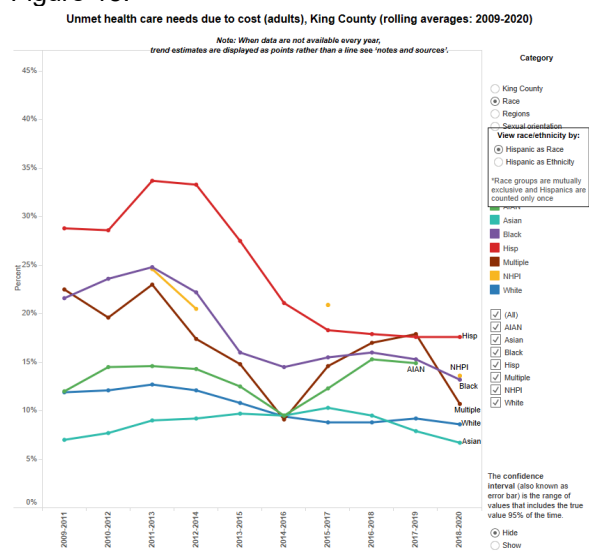
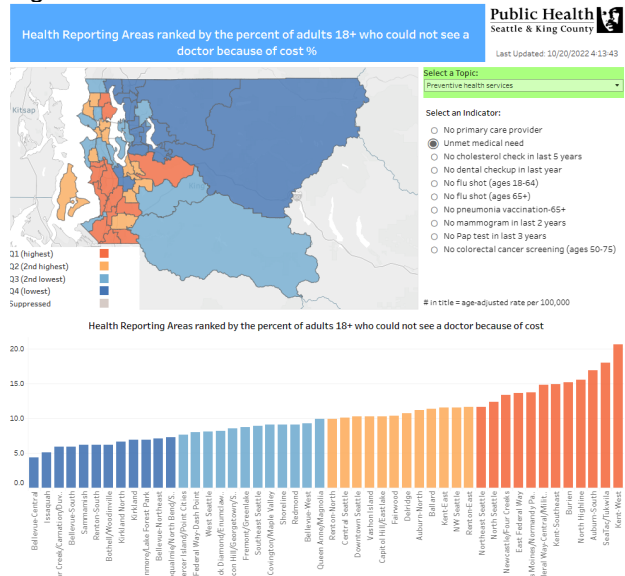


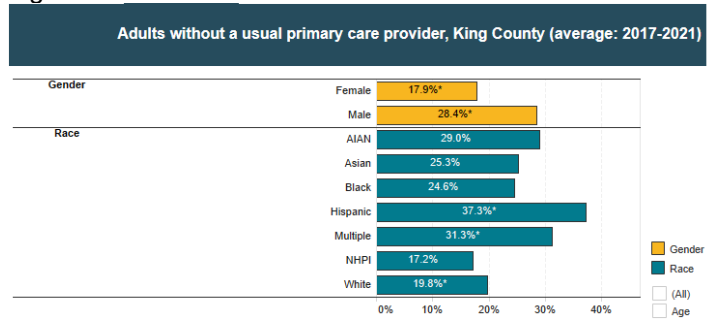
Figure 19:



when considering cost.

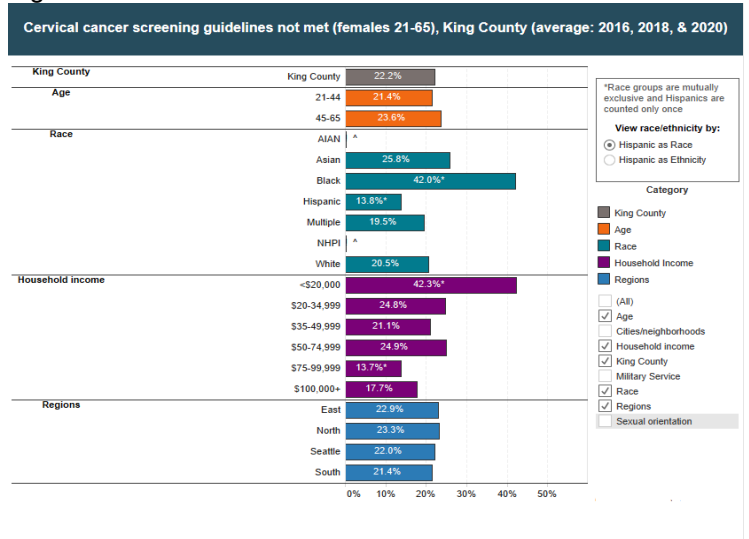
**Lack of Primary Care Physician (PCP)**  
 In King County, an average of 24.9% of individuals lack a usual Primary Care Provider. However, rates vary largely across the King County area, with Downtown Seattle having the highest percentage of adults without a usual PCP at 38.0%. BIPOC individuals were more likely to lack a primary care provider in comparison to their white counterparts, as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20:



**Cervical Cancer Screening (Pap Smears)**  
 Individuals with a cervix are recommended to receive pap smears in accordance with ACOG guidelines. Currently, 22.2% of individuals with cervixes in King County had not had a cervical cancer screen in the last 3 years. Geographically, the highest rates were seen in Shoreline with 30.4% of individuals not up to date on screening. As shown in Figure 21, individuals with lower annual incomes (<\$20,000) had higher rates of nonadherence with screening at 42.3%. Additionally, there were large racial disparities seen as well. 42.0% of Black individuals were not up to date on their pap smears whereas only 20% of their white counterparts were not up to date.

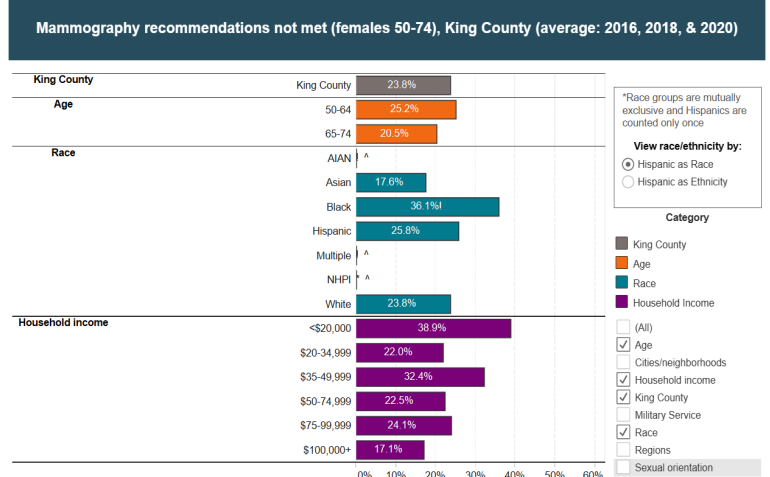
Figure 21:



### Breast Cancer Screening (Mammography)

Individuals assigned female at birth are recommended to receive mammograms every 1-2 years starting at age 45. Currently, 23.8% of individuals eligible for screening were not up to date on their mammograms. There were large variances based on geography, with the highest percentage of individuals not up to date on mammograms in Burien at 38.0%. Further, there were large racial and income disparities as shown in Figure 22. 38.9% of individuals with annual incomes <\$20,000 had not received their recommended breast cancer screening. In addition, there were large racial disparities, with 36.1% of black individuals not up to date on their mammograms in comparison to 23.8% of white individuals.

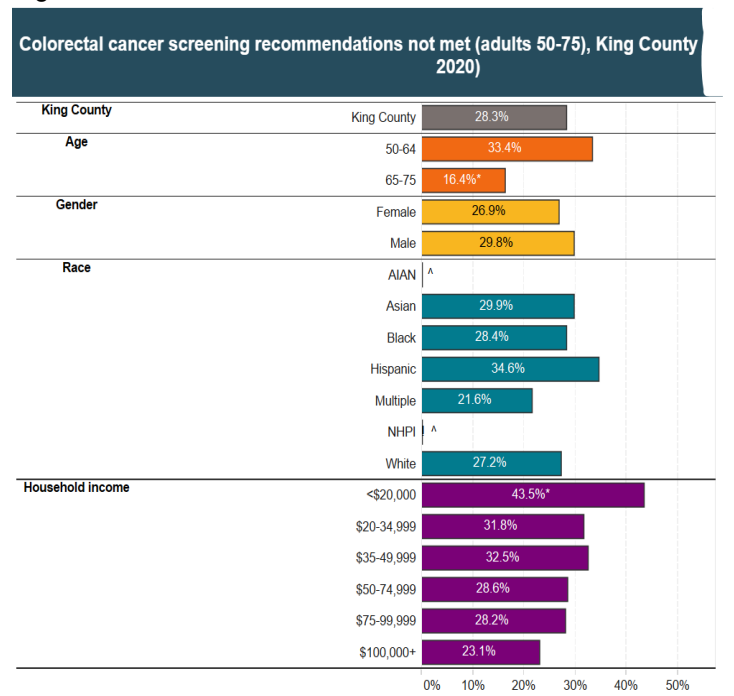
Figure 22:



### Colorectal Cancer Screening (CRC)

Adults aged 45 to 75 should receive colorectal cancer screening. This can be fulfilled through an annual Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), a sigmoidoscopy every 5 years or a colonoscopy every 10 years. Around 28.3% of adults eligible for colorectal cancer screening are not currently up to date. Geographical variances were seen, with higher rates of nonadherence to screening in Capitol Hill (43.6%) and Burien (42.8%). As shown in Figure 23, there were large racial and income disparities. 43.5% of individuals with annual incomes <\$20,000 were not up to date on CRC screening. Further, individuals of Hispanic origin had higher rates of not receiving CRC screening at 34.6%.

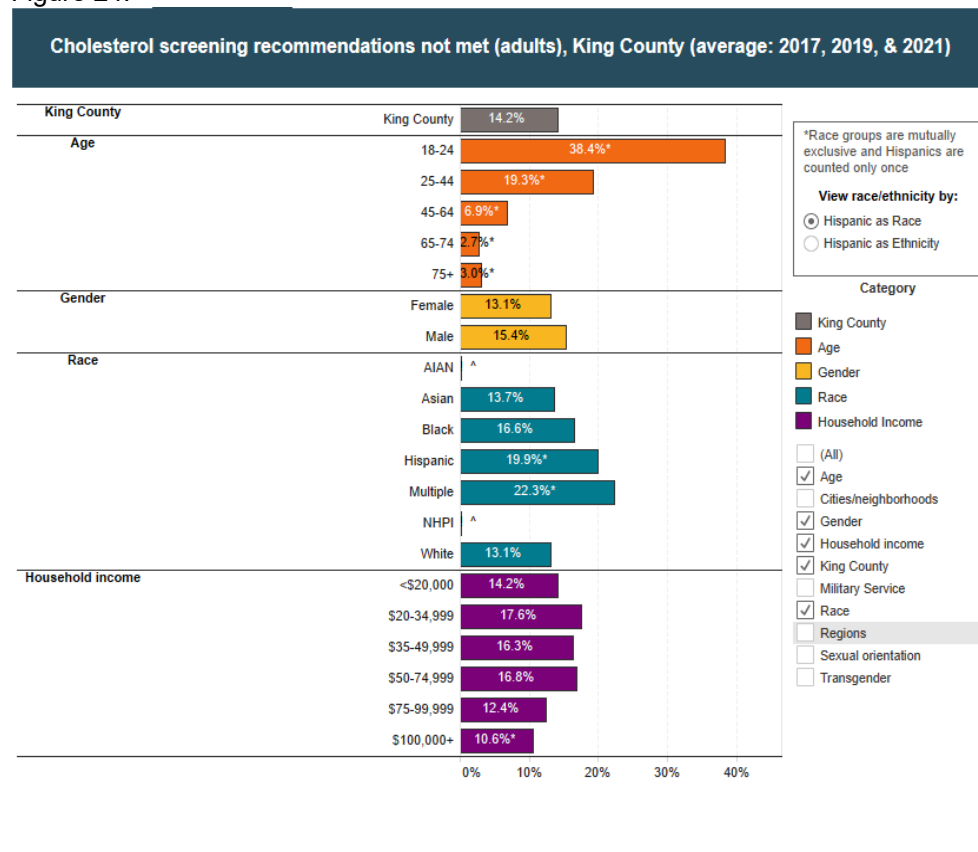
Figure 23:



### Cholesterol Screening

14.2% of adults in King County are not currently up to date on recommended cholesterol screening. Geographically, individuals in Federal Way had higher rates of screening nonadherence at 26.3%. From Figure 24, there were large disparities in terms of race and income of those receiving recommended screening. Individuals with lower incomes were less likely to be up to date on screening when compared to individuals with higher household incomes. In addition, Hispanic or multiracial individuals were less likely to be up to date on recommended screening.

Figure 24:

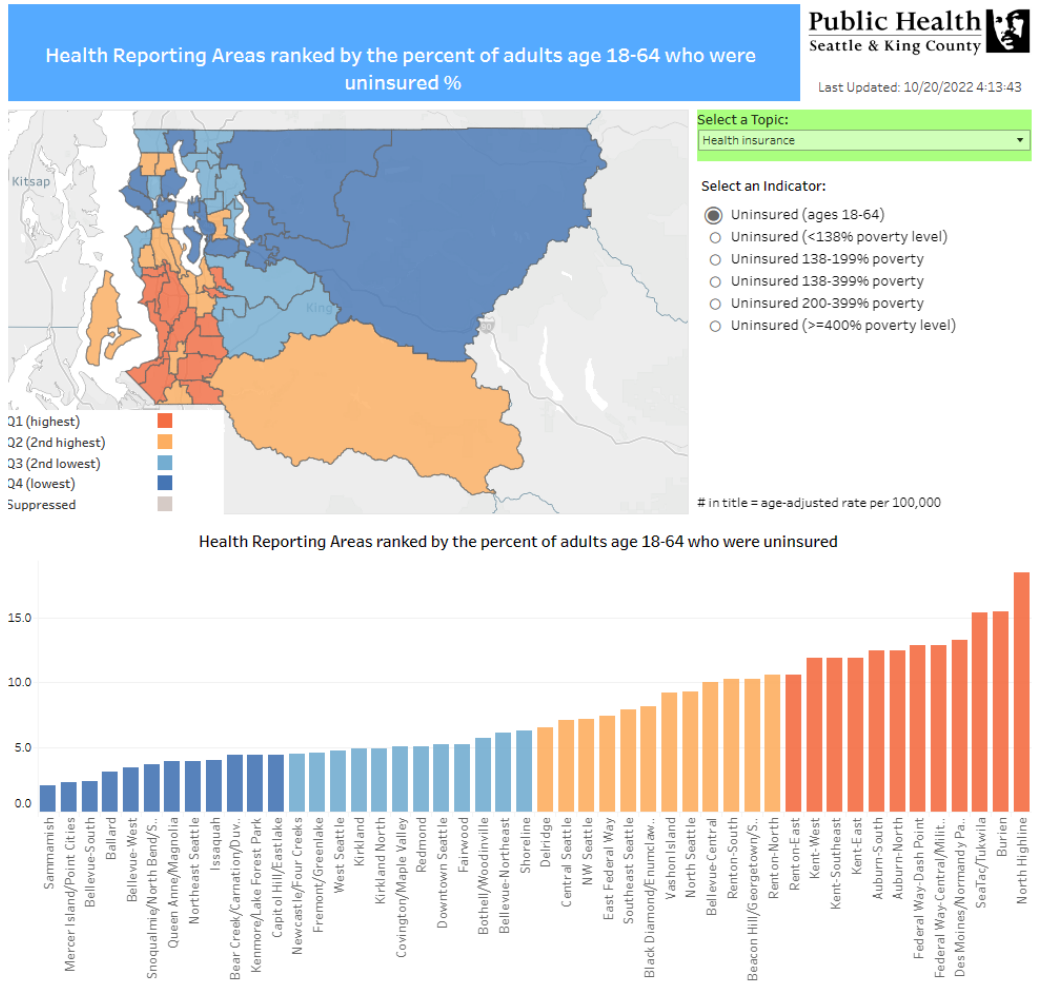




## Insurance Status

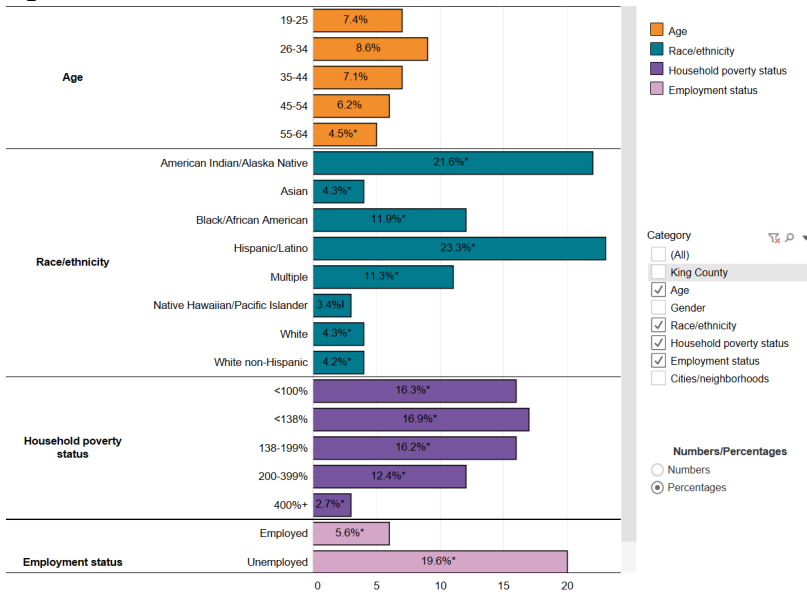
Presently, 6.9% of individuals 18+ in King County are not insured. Geographic variances were seen, with higher percentages of uninsured individuals living in South King County regions (Figure 25). 17.4% of individuals living in SeaTac/Tukwila lacked insurance coverage, which is over twice the King County average.

Figure 25:



As shown in Figure 26, there were large racial, income and employment disparities. 23.3% of Hispanic individuals and 21.6% of AIAN individuals lacked insurance coverage, in comparison to 4.3% of white individuals. Further, 16.3% of individuals below the federal poverty line lacked insurance coverage. 19.6% of unemployed individuals lacked insurance coverage, in comparison to only 5.6% of employed individuals.

Figure 26:



## Mental Health

### Youth Mental Health

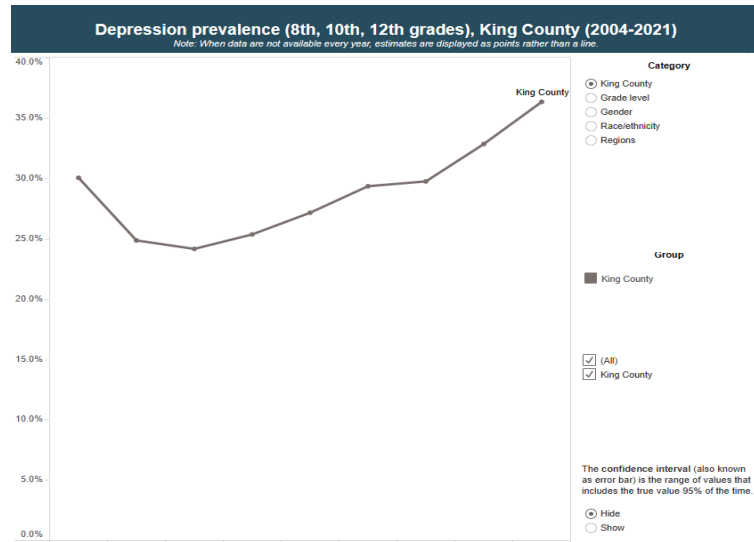


Figure 27:

the rise (Figure 27). Of note, the prevalence of depression is increasing in the youth population, allocation of resources is not. At present, Washington has four child psychiatric units with 94 available long-term inpatient beds. Children and adolescents in crisis may board in ERs awaiting psychiatric bed placement anywhere from days to months. Provider staffing troubles have further exacerbated this mental health service crisis. Between 2019 and 2021, mental health job vacancies doubled. Looking towards the future, the recent passage of the King County Crisis Levy will allow for construction of 5 crisis care centers throughout the King County region, with one specifically providing care to the adolescent population.

In the Youth Population (8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), depression prevalence is on the rise (Figure 27). Of note, the prevalence of depression is increasing in the youth population, allocation of resources is not. At present, Washington has four child psychiatric units with 94 available long-term inpatient beds. Children and adolescents in crisis may board in ERs awaiting psychiatric bed placement anywhere from days to months. Provider staffing troubles have further exacerbated this mental health service crisis. Between 2019 and 2021, mental health job vacancies doubled. Looking towards the future, the recent passage of the King County Crisis Levy will allow for construction of 5 crisis care centers throughout the King County region, with one specifically providing care to the adolescent population.

identifying as Transgender, as shown in Figure 28. Of note, about 23.0% of Washington teens have contemplated suicide with 10.0% having attempted suicide in the past.

While prevalence of depression and anxiety is increasing in the youth population, allocation of resources is not. At present, Washington has four child psychiatric units with 94 available long-term inpatient beds. Children and adolescents in crisis may board in ERs awaiting psychiatric bed placement anywhere from days to months. Provider staffing troubles have further exacerbated this mental health service crisis. Between 2019 and 2021, mental health job vacancies doubled. Looking towards the future, the recent passage of the King County Crisis Levy will allow for construction of 5 crisis care centers throughout the King County region, with one specifically providing care to the adolescent population.

Figure 28:

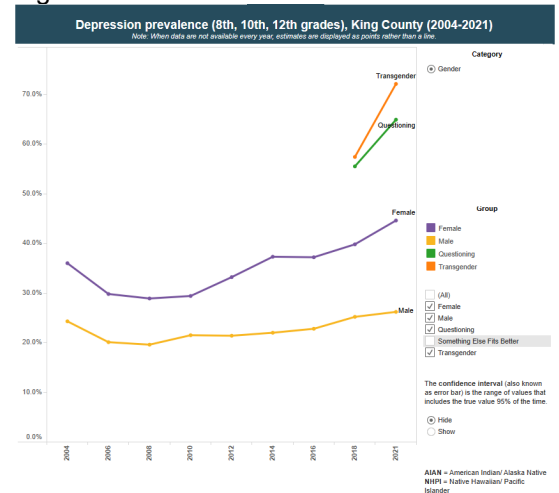
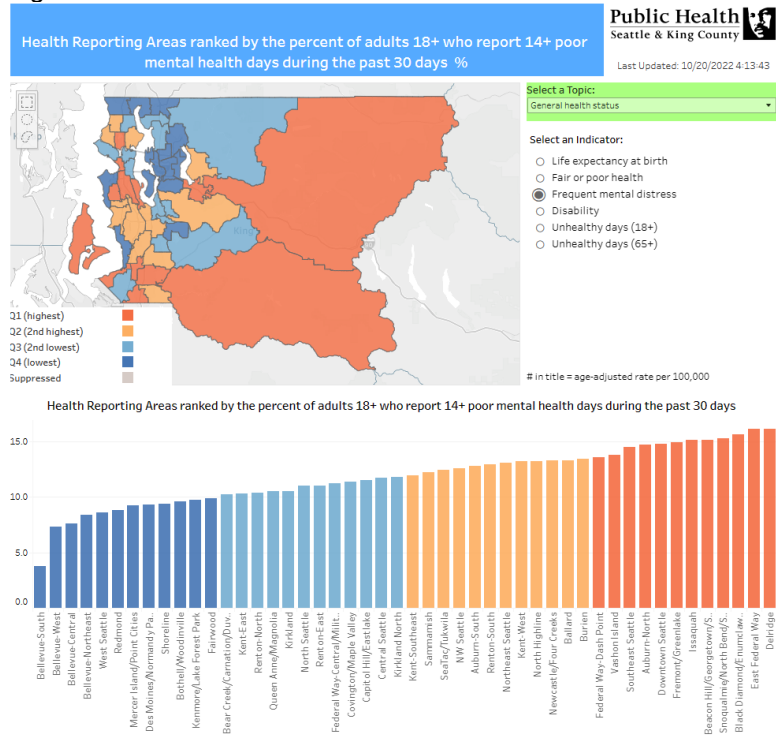


Figure 29:



### Depression/Anxiety and Frequent Mental Distress

In a recent survey of adults living in Seattle, Tacoma and Bellevue, about 20% have depression and 27% have anxiety. Of those individuals, 14% stated they were not receiving any form of counseling or therapy.

In a King County-wide survey assessment for frequent mental distress, an average of 11.9% of adults stated they had 14 or more poor mental health days each month. From a geographic perspective, higher rates were seen in South King County (Figure 29). In Federal Way, 16.1% of individuals endorsed frequent

mental distress.

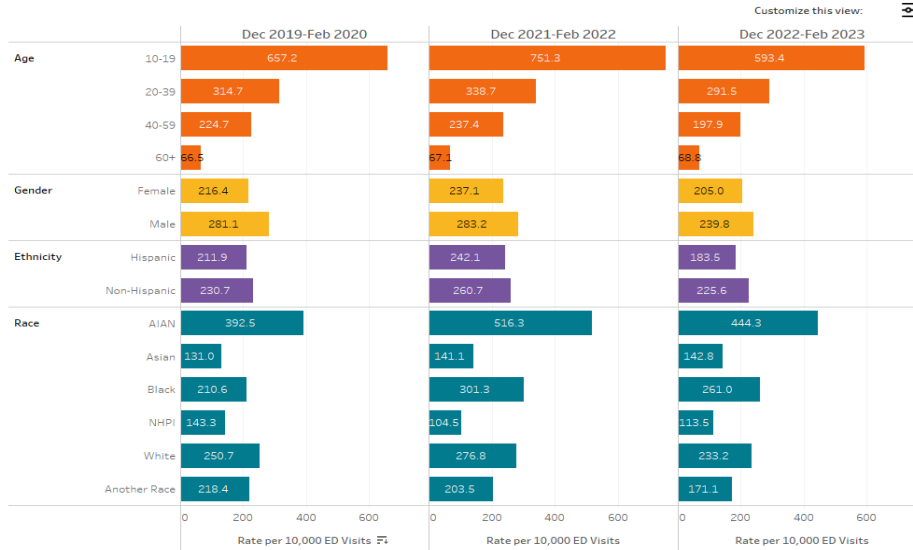
### Emergency Department (ED) Visits for Suicidal Ideation

ED visits for suicidal ideation showed large racial and age disparities, as shown in Figure 30. Higher numbers of adolescents who went to emergency departments with suicidal ideation in comparison to other age groupings, suggesting a high need for mental health intervention in this age population.

Further, higher numbers of American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) individuals who went to emergency departments in comparison to other racial groups. This is concerning because only 1.0% of King County's population identifies as AIAN.

Figure 30:

Rate of emergency department (ED) visits related to Suicidal Ideation among King County residents 10 years and older demographics



### Deaths by Suicide

Death by suicide has been on the rise in King County, with a current rate of 12.3 per 100,000 deaths (Figure 31). Figure 32 shows that there are large racial and economic disparities when investigating those who commit suicide. Rates were higher in individuals identifying as AIAN at 14.7 per 100,000 deaths. Given that AIAN individuals comprise about 1.0% of King County’s population and given that these individuals more frequently present to Emergency Departments (EDs) with suicidal ideation (Figure 32), this is of great concern, and suggests more needs to be done to support and promote the mental health of AIAN individuals. In addition, individuals experiencing higher levels of poverty had higher rates of suicide.

From a geographic perspective, higher rates were seen in South King County, especially in Kent where rates reached 15 per 100,000 deaths (Figure 33).

Figure 31:

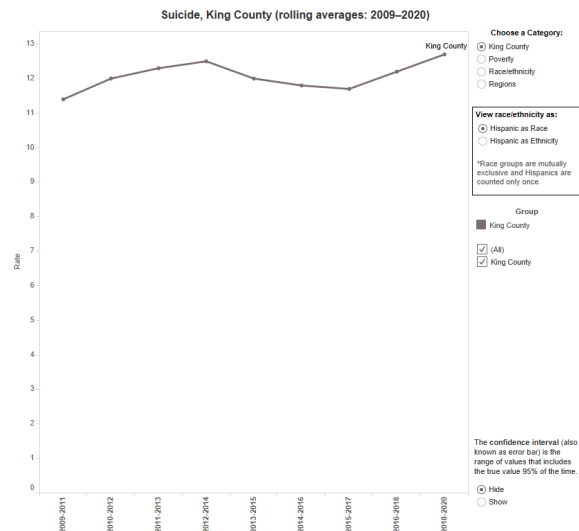


Figure 32:

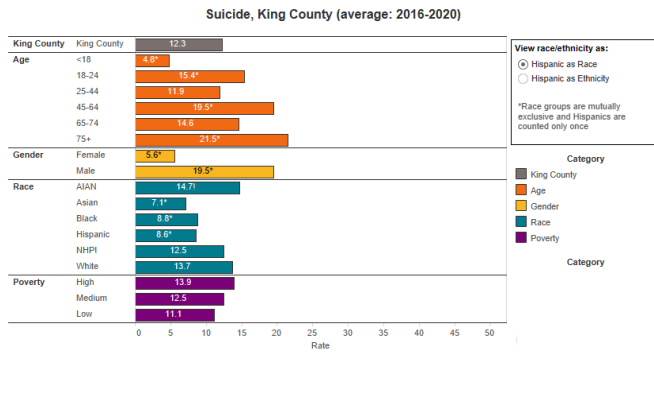
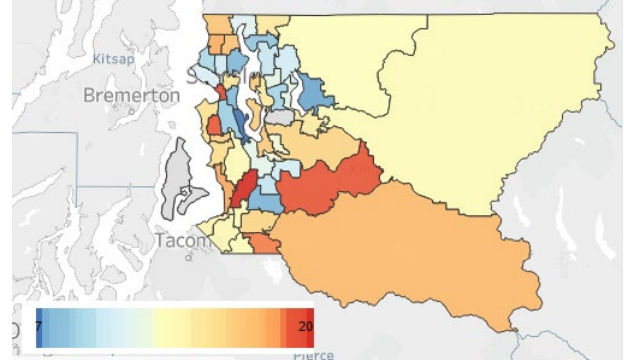


Figure 33:



## Community Engagement

### Access to Farmers Markets

As of 2021, there were 38 farmers markets in operation throughout the King County area. Per season, 1,665,119 shoppers visit a farmers market in the King County area. During the 2021 season, about 80,000 pounds of food were donated by farmers markets in King County, and \$591,947 of SNAP benefits were utilized at farmers markets.

### Voter Registration and Turnout

82% of eligible King County individuals are currently registered to vote. Redmond had the lowest voter registration rates with <50% of total eligible voters being registered. In the 2022 General Election, 65% of King County voters cast a ballot. South King County had the lowest voter turnout, averaging <50% voter turnout. When researched nationally, wealthy individuals were more likely to vote whereas nonvoters were more likely to be young, low-income, and Hispanic.

During the November 2020 Election, it was noted that there were higher rates of ballot rejection in Black, AIAN and Hispanic populations. These rejections occurred primarily due to missing or problematic signatures. An audit was conducted that suggested that the racial disparities seen in ballot rejection was likely due to voter inexperience and language barriers. This suggests that it would be a worthwhile endeavor to create language and culturally appropriate voter education programs in order to increase voter turnout and decrease likelihood of ballot rejection in these populations.

### Civic Muscle

There are large education, income and racial disparities seen in those choosing to pursue civic engagement in the community. According to Seattle City Club, Seattle residents with college degrees attend public meetings at nine times higher rates than those without high school diplomas. Residents with incomes >\$75,000 attended public meetings at three times the rate of

residents with incomes <\$35,000. Further, Black and Asian Seattle-area residents attend two times the number of public meetings in comparison to Hispanic residents. According to Greater Seattle’s 2010 Civic Health Index, residents of the Seattle area engage in non-electoral political acts at higher rates than the national average (33.5% v 21.6%). Higher rates of civic engagement were seen in urban dwellers (49.8%) in comparison to suburbanites (34.6%). Rates of engagement increased with household incomes.

### Community Sense of Belonging

According to Greater Seattle’s 2010 Civic Health Index, 12.8% of residents worked with their neighbors to solve problems in their communities. Of those, 26.8% of residents belonged to a religious, neighborhood, school or sport group. Those involved in one or more community groups had higher rates of civic engagement in comparison to those not participating in community groups (Figure 34).

Figure 34a:

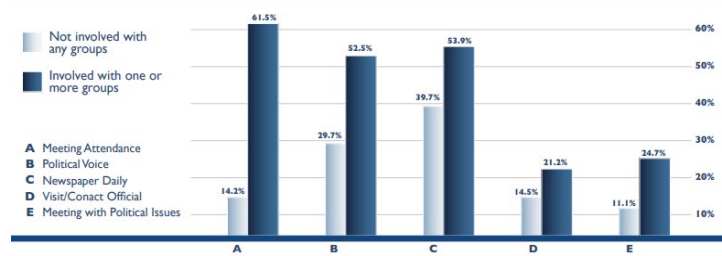


Figure 34b:

	Greater Seattle	U.S. National
Eat dinner with family at least a few times a week	88.3%	89.1%
Talk with family and friends via Internet	70.5%	53.6%
Talk with neighbors at least a few times a week	40.4%	45.8%
Do favors for neighbors at least a few times a week	13.8%	16.2%

At the time of the survey, 88.3% of individuals in the Seattle area had dinner with their family at least a few times per week while 70.5% spoke with their friends and family via the internet. It is important to note that this data was collected in 2010, and more recent data needs to be gathered to further assess feelings of community belonging and civic engagement. The pandemic and political polarization has likely caused significant changes in these numbers, and as such, recent data should be gathered.

## NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE SERVICE AREAS

Neighborhood House serves individuals and families across King County from Seattle to Auburn along the Puget Sound corridor in 23 service hubs, early learning facilities and community college campuses.

### Major Community Partners

Neighborhood house has numerous partners – below is a list of some of our key partners

#### Advocacy/Coalitions

- Seattle Human Services Coalition
  - Neighborhood House is co-leading the Wage Equity Leadership team, a project of SHSC
- Washington State Community Action Partnership

- Janice serves on the board as a member of WSCAP's Legislative Committee. WSCAP successfully secured CSBG state match in the 2021 and 2022 session
- Washington State Association of Head start and ECEAP
  - Advocates for state and federal issues, e.g., ECEAP, child care and Head Start funding and policy.
- National Community Action Partnership (NCAP)
  - Provides training and advocacy around poverty alleviation. NH was part of the Whole Family Approach Community of Practice for three years and received a 3 year mini grant from NCAP to support our efforts. There will be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary convention will be held in Seattle in August 2024.
- Refugee planning Council
  - Working on state advocacy to increase resources for citizenship, TANF 6 month disregard, and funding for newly arrived refugees
- Southeast Peace Coalition (housed in and staffed by NH)
  - Successfully advocated to decriminalize youth nicotine possession
- Latinx Dream Coalition (housed in and staffed by NH)
  - Educating families about drug use, designing public education campaigns.

### Service Partners

- Seattle, Tukwila, and Highline School Districts
  - Kindergarten transition and early intervention for children 3-5
  - Seattle Family Stability Initiative provides rental assistance and support for families that are at risk of becoming unhoused.
- Children's Therapy Center, Boyer Children's Clinic
  - Early intervention for children birth-3
- King County Housing Authority and Seattle Housing Authority
  - Funder, landlord, partner in connecting families to services
- Navos
  - Landlord and partner for our Community Outreach Resource and Engagement (CORE) program, providing substance use treatment and referrals. Navos also provides mental health consultation for our early learning programs.
- Chief Seattle Club
  - Neighborhood House provides resource navigation on site at two of their buildings that house Native elders. NH staff provide services at the Chief Seattle Club day center to Natives looking for jobs and other resources.
- Westside Baby
  - Neighborhood House is a distribution site for diapers and supplies. We work with WSCAP Diaper Distribution Demonstration Project (DDDRP) to expand diaper distribution.
- St Elizabeth Episcopal Church
  - Landlord and volunteers (during our fire watch needed while sprinklers were in the process of being installed).



- International Community Health Services (ICHS)
  - Provides the school-based health center at Seattle World School; they contract with NH to provide health navigation for students.

#### Volunteers/Internship opportunities

- University of Washington Medical School Advocacy and Community Partnerships students spent 50% of their time working on a mutually agreeable advocacy project for one month (2 students worked on this Community Needs Assessment).
- MSW student volunteers from the University of Washington conducted assessments, referring/following up with referrals, gain field work experience by going to do recruitment at homeless shelters, RV camps, as well as schools.
- Seattle University interns help our nurse conduct annual height, weight, vision and hearing screenings for our early learning students, do follow-up calls with parents for children who do not have current immunizations, they also work with our family advocates to schedule Dr appointments for children and put together health nights so our community better understand the risks for major health issues.

#### Private sector partnerships

- Seattle Seahawks sent volunteer groups to two Neighborhood House sites to do cleanups and build brand new bikes that were donated to 25 youth. The Seahawks confirmed a \$20,000 donation to Neighborhood House to improve tech at our youth engagement sites. They secured a \$20,000 match from their partner Lumen, which brings the total donation to \$40,000.
- Gates Foundation provided multi-year general operating support
- Wellpoint (FKA Amerigroup) has been a long-time supporter of our health fairs. In 2023, they donated \$40,000 so Neighborhood House could purchase a van for our Auburn-based youth programs.
- Bassetti Architects, Berger Partnership, Goldsmith Land Development Services, KPFF, Miller Hull Partnership, and PAE donated over \$450k in in kind architectural and engineering services for our four early learning renovation projects.

#### Volunteer data

Volunteer data is incomplete due to a transition from one volunteer database management system to a new system. However, the data do tell us that volunteer hours has dropped off significantly since COVID-19. Starting in 2020, Neighborhood House obtained an in-kind waiver, that did not require us to collect home learning hours from parents.

#### October 1, 2021-September 30, 2022

Unknown - total volunteer hours

247 total volunteers

October 1, 2020-September 30, 2021

5328 total volunteer hours  
728 total volunteers  
28.7 total volunteer hours by low-income people  
2 low-income volunteers

October 1, 2019-September 30, 2020

5122 total volunteer hours  
251 total volunteers  
14.5 total volunteer hours by low-income people  
15 low-income volunteers

October 1, 2018-September 30, 2019

21811 total volunteer hours  
322 total volunteers  
1561.5 total volunteer hours by low-income people  
34 low-income volunteers

**Demographics of Neighborhood House Clientele**

Of the 12,565 individuals served during FY2022, more identified as women (49%) than men (39%). Roughly 12% of individuals did not report their gender. Nearly 39% of clients served in the last year were under 18 years old, reflecting Neighborhood House's focus on child development and youth programs. However, the largest age group served is among individuals ages 25 to 44, accounting for (24%).

Indicative of Neighborhood House's focus in South King County, the racial and ethnicity backgrounds of FY2022 clientele reflect the greater community. Most clients identified as Black or African American, accounting for 47% of individuals served. The second and third largest racial groups identified as White and Asian, at 17.5% and 16% respectively. Ten percent of clients reported as having Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origins.

Figure 35:

**Gender Identity**

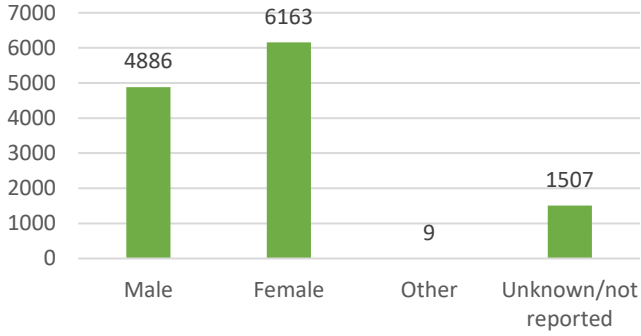


Figure 36:

**Age**

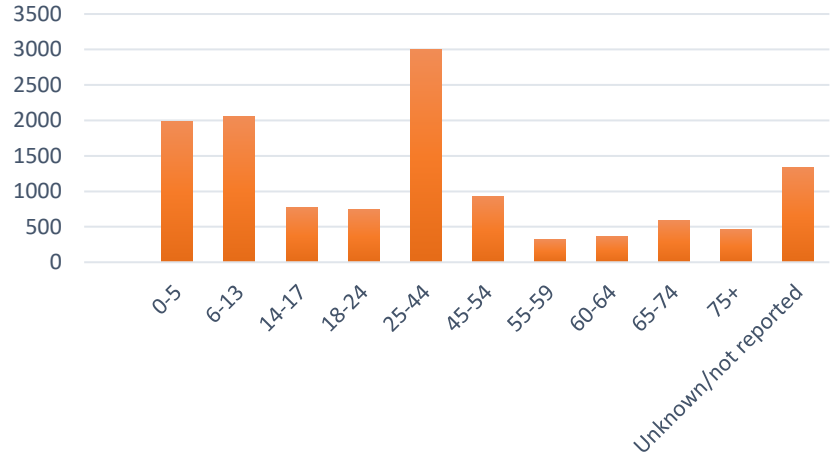
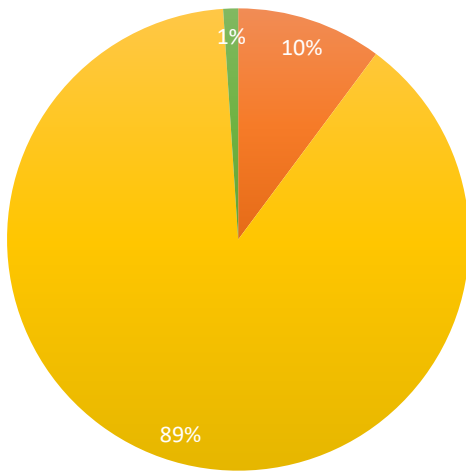


Figure 37:

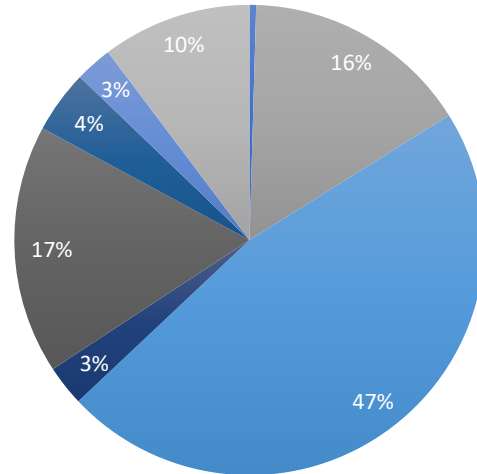
**Ethnic Identity**



- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins
- Not Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins
- Unknown/not reported

Figure 38:

**Racial Identity**



- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Asian
- White
- Multi-race
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Other
- Unknown/not reported

## COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED NEEDS & KEY FINDINGS

Informed by staff and client surveys and listening sessions, the following analysis reveals the impact of Neighborhood House’s various service areas. Findings also highlight areas for potential growth to best serve the community and support internal staff and direct service providers. Analysis is divided into the following subsections: Early learning and child care, youth development, health, adult education, housing and basic needs, and legal services.

### Early Learning & Child Care

Overall, in the zip codes where Neighborhood House has early learning programming, there are higher rates of childhood poverty. This affirms that Neighborhood House is targeting its services in areas with the highest need. The table below includes zip codes where Neighborhood House currently offers early childhood programming and the number of children under 5 living in poverty in each of these neighborhoods.

**Estimates of Age and Income-Eligible Children by Neighborhood House Service Area**

	Total children 0-4 years old	Total children 0-4 years old in poverty	% 0-4 year olds living in poverty
<b>Service Area Zip Codes in:</b>			
Seattle	13,887	2,106	15%
Des Moines	2,697	347	13%
Burien	2,559	334	13%
Tukwila	2,330	506	22%
Skyway	1,582	305	19%
SeaTac	1,423	191	13%
Normandy Park	1,105	11	1%

**Figure 39.** Children 0-4 years old in poverty in Neighborhood House service area zip codes. This chart shows the number and percent of 0-4-year-olds living in poverty in the zip codes that Neighborhood House serves in the listed communities. The percentages in purple and parentheses indicate the percent of children 0-4 living in poverty in those communities as a whole, not just limited to Neighborhood House’s zip codes.

### Availability of child care services

Access to high quality child care and early childhood education not only provides opportunities for healthy child development but provides safe and reliable child care for working caregivers. The chart below highlights the percent need met for child care services for families living at less than 200% of the federal poverty level in Neighborhood House service areas. Overall, 45% of

King County’s child care needs are met, but the gap widens for infant and toddler care. This is in part due to the higher costs of providing this type of care; lower staff ratios and smaller group sizes mean fewer family sources for tuition payments to cover the costs of operation.<sup>3</sup> Nationwide, providers working with infants and toddlers make on average \$2.00 per hour less than their peers working with 3–5-year-olds. Public assistance for programs for infants and toddlers is less robust than for pre-K children.

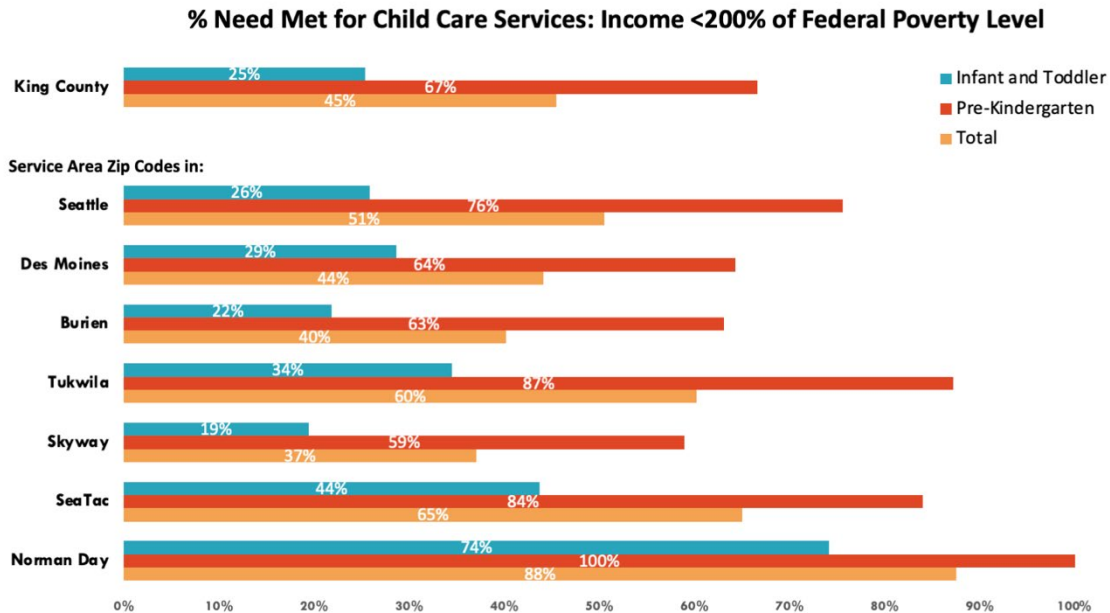


Figure 40: “Childcare Need & Supply (All)” *Department of Children, Youth and Families* online. July 28, 2023. <https://data.wa.gov/education/Childcare-Need-Supply-All-/hiqz-y2vv>.

Neighborhood House provides early learning services as a part of a network of public child care and preschool programs to serve low-income families. Neighborhood House exclusively offers Head Start and Early Head Start programs for eligible families. Seen on the Head Start locator map below, Neighborhood House administers all of the green EHS/HS sites except the Sandpoint location in Northeast Seattle. In 2023, 366 families were served in Neighborhood House Early Head Start programs, and 294 in Head Start.

<sup>3</sup> “Understanding Infant and Toddler Child Care Deserts.” *Center for American Progress* online. October 31, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/understanding-infant-toddler-child-care-deserts/>.

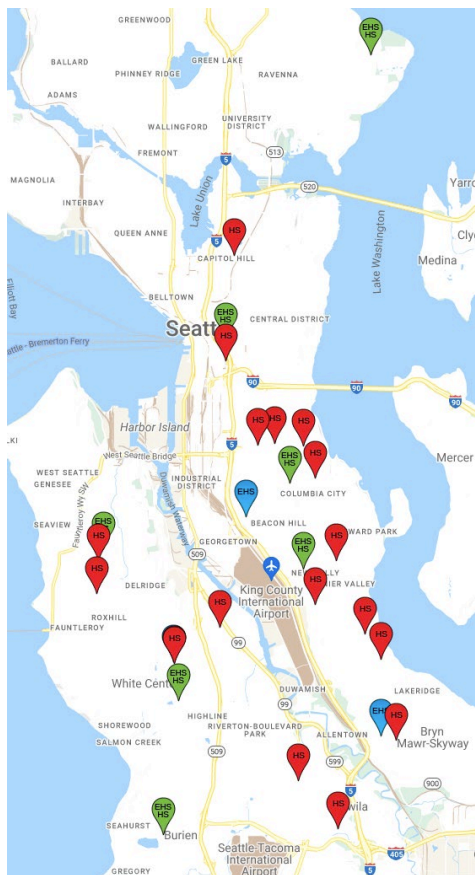


Figure 41: “Head Start Center Locator.” *Head Start ECLKC* online. 2023.  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator?latitude=47.548&longitude=-121.984&county=King%20County&state=WA>.

Washington’s state-funded preschool program, the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) is another option for low-income families with children ages 3 and 4. As of August 2023, there are 101 ECEAP programs offered in King County, 26 of which are in Seattle.<sup>4</sup> Since 2020, DCYF has piloted Early ECEAP programs modeled after Early Head Start standards to provide state-funded programs for infants and toddlers and their caregivers. In the coming years, these programs are planned to expand to meet current gaps in care for children ages 0 to 3.

A staff survey revealed ways Neighborhood House services and policies could be improved to better support child care and early learning staff. Findings included:

- **Childcare:** Affordable, culturally responsive childcare with language support is a priority area for many of Neighborhood House’s community members. Neighborhood House

<sup>4</sup> “ECEAP Site Locator.” *Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families* online. 2023.  
<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/ECEAP-Site-Locator.pdf>.

employment programs focus on finding employment and often are first primarily navigating childcare availabilities and resources. Some of families are not comfortable with bringing their children to home childcares run by community members that do not share the same languages and cultural backgrounds. Many refugee and immigrant families cannot access childcare subsidies from DSHS if they are attending ESL classes and not ready to engage in job search yet. In addition, there is a shortage of childcare and preschool in the region. If a slot is not available or a child ages out of their care facility, a parent might have to quit their job to care for their child. Services can drop off when a parent stays home, which creates a difficult situation for the family.

- **Full Day Preschool:** Full day (6.5 hours) is the preferred model for most families, because it provides greater flexibility to families, versus the part day (3.5 hours) model.
- **Slot Reduction:** Neighborhood House requested and was granted approval for a 30% slot reduction (from 676 to 472 children) due to high operating costs. Slot reductions are being requested across the country because Head Start funding has not kept pace with the cost of doing business, especially cost of salaries. Had this slot reduction not been approved, Neighborhood House would see a \$1 million or greater deficit. The reduction eliminated our part day classrooms and some home based slots.
- **Turning down expansion opportunities:** Neighborhood House has been approached multiple times this year to partner with housing developers to co locate early learning with low income housing. Due to inadequate funding from ECEAP and child care, we were unable to pursue these opportunities.
- **Navigating Early Interventions:** Access to information/resources for families who are or will be going through intervention with children is crucial. Neighborhood House seeks to increase navigation support for these families. There is also a need to conduct more awareness and education around disability, especially autism, and provide language-specific information to families. There are a lot of tremendously useful resources but gaining access and helping families to receive them is a challenge. Training for teachers would also better equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to support families. Expanding Neighborhood House partnerships with school districts and other partners may streamline referrals and connection to services. There is also a need to expand transportation and language interpretation services to ensure families can attend early intervention meetings and service appointments. Neighborhood House was out of compliance for serving 10% children with special needs, having served only 3.7%.
- **Access to Head Start:** A *Priority Point System* is used to determine who gets into Head Start programs first. Many enrolled toddlers are not finding slots in Neighborhood House preschool programs. Neighborhood House needs better and more timely information to communicate with families about how this works as families are not entirely aware of this system.

- **Staffing crisis:** In 2023, we have up to 7 classrooms that were ready to operate, but could not due to lack of staffing. By the fall of 2023, we had that number down to 6 classrooms – with the slot reduction, we are down to 1 classroom (Seola Gardens which has yet to be completed – due to construction).

Parents and caregivers from the Neighborhood House Policy Council reiterated the need for **expanded services** for both pre-school aged children and older youth during after school hours and on weekends. Participants also cited issues with information **dissemination** regarding available services and suggested child development centers print handouts or post flyers with information regarding future programs.

*“A resource newsletter would be better - monthly or every other week. A resource newsletter so we know what’s going on each month. And all of it’s [resources] being there. Print out and have it.” – Policy Council member*

### Youth Development

Youth development programs provide enriching activities for youth after school and on weekends while also serving as child care for working caregivers. These programs are especially important for families that work non-traditional hours and on weekends. As seen in the analysis above, child care needs for preschool-aged children are best met in King County, while infant and toddler care services continue to lag behind. However, child care needs for school-aged children, typically considered ages 5 to 12, are not adequately met in King County. The maps below depict the percent of child care needs met by age group for families living at less than 75% of the state median income. For school-aged children, program gaps are concentrated in South King County.



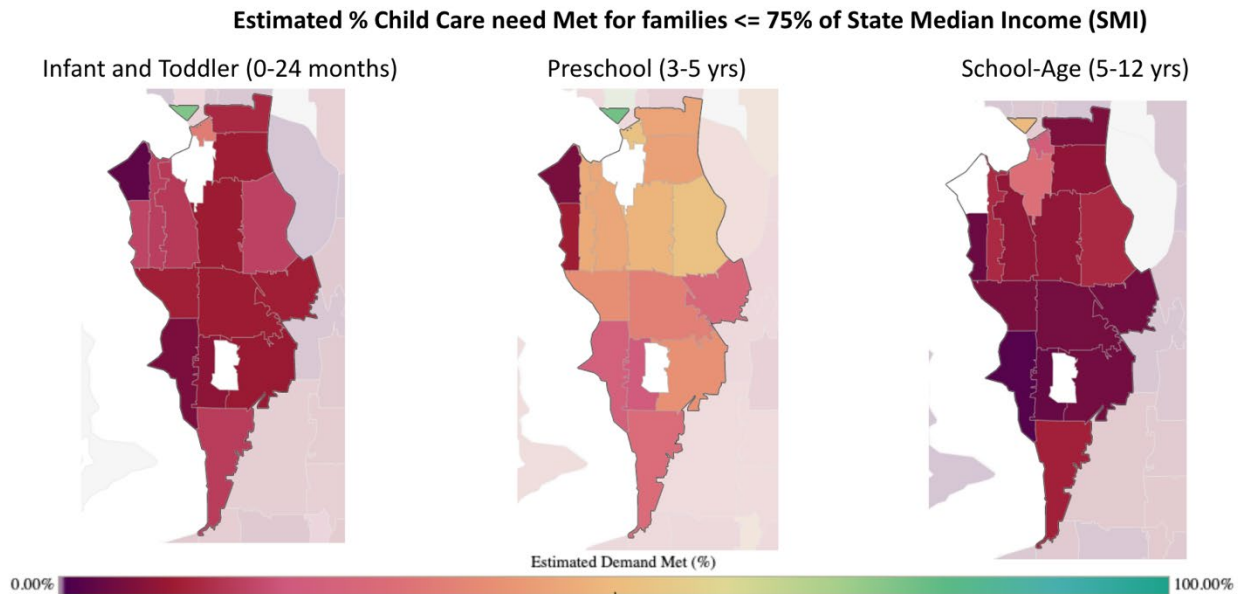


Figure 42: “Child Care and Early Learning Need and Supply Data.” *Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families* online. 2023. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards/child-care-need-supply-data>.

Focus groups and interviews with Neighborhood House staff identified specific areas and potential pathways to improve and expand youth development services:

- **Elementary After-School Programming:** Across King County, elementary tutoring and elementary out-of-school time programming is needed on weekdays and for early-release Wednesdays. Ideally, there would be concurrent programming for different ages groups. Extending services to before and after school hours would help address the lack of childcare available and accessible to families. There is also a need for more socializing opportunities for elementary school age kids. As an example for children who attended kindergarten during pandemic school closures, there is an observed gap in social skills.
- **Family Activities:** Neighborhood House received free tickets for off-site activities like the zoo or aquarium. However, supply is limited and are not available to all families. A first come/first serve system is not an equitable solution to provide all interested families with the opportunity to participate.
- **Supported Decision-Making:** Neighborhood House currently provides services to children with autism or development delays who are turning 18 and will need guardianship or supported decision-making. These programs are severely under supported and require additional staff and management to reach their potential. Additional or new protocols are necessary to better collaborate with the King County Bar Association (KCBA) for legal support and stronger training for internal staff to better navigate through this process.

In the youth focus groups, participants shared that they want more diversity in programming and options that give them skills to get a job or a program that pays them for their participation. They want to have a community where they can hang out in a safe place and meet others. Participants also voiced a desire to participate in fun events that are outside of their own community to explore new places. For some youth, they have limited opportunity to visit outside of their community because of family work schedules or financial restrictions that limit family vacations.

### Health

King County has many options for free medical, dental, vision and mental health care, but there remain gaps in service to reach all eligible residents. The map on the left indicates King County clinics that offer these services at no cost or on a sliding scale according to the Washington Healthcare Access Alliance. School-based health centers (SBHC), conveniently located on school campuses, are a key to connecting youth to free and high-quality health services. SBHCs have recently received additional funding from King County's Best Starts for Kids initiative and Seattle's Family, Education, Preschool, and Promise Levy.<sup>5</sup> The map on the right shows the current locations of SBHCs in King County.

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<sup>5</sup> "King County School Health (School Based Health Centers). *King County* online. 2023. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/dph/health-safety/health-centers-programs-services/childrens-health/school-health-resources>.

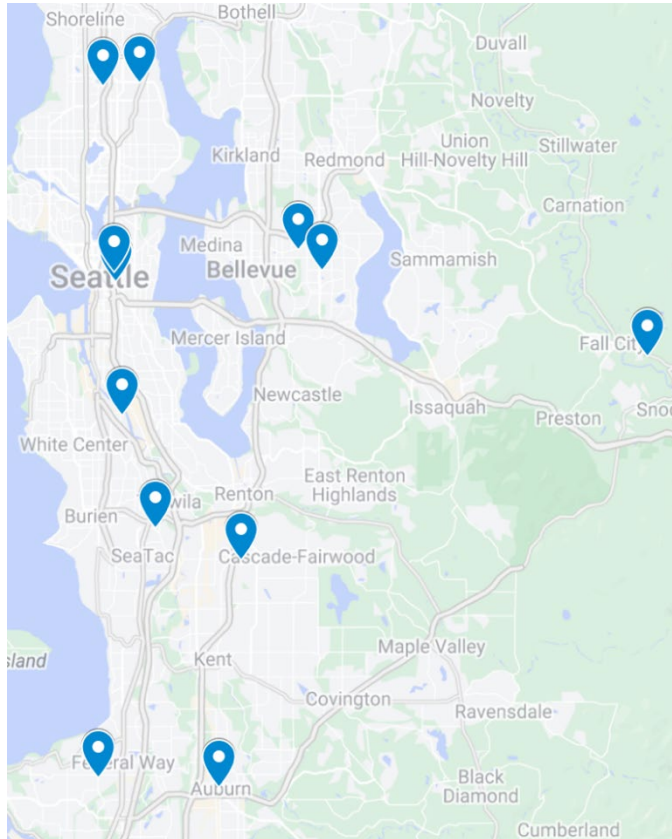


Figure 43: “Free and Charitable Clinics.” *Washington Healthcare Access Alliance* online. 2023. <https://www.wahealthcareaccessalliance.org/free-clinics>.

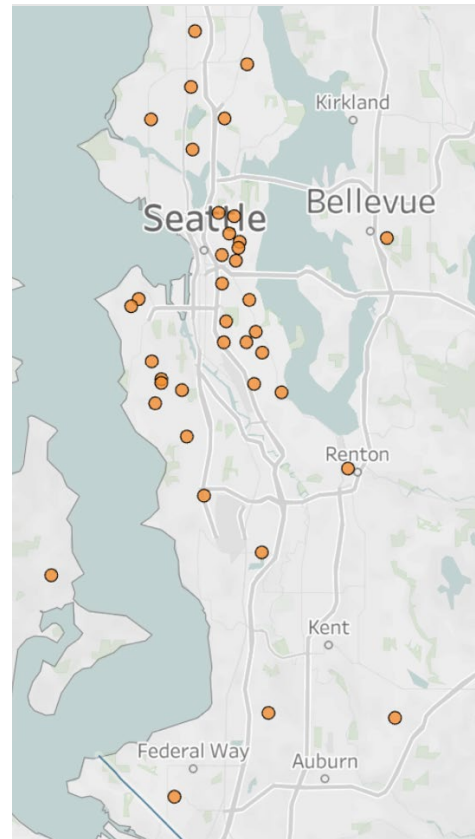


Figure 44: “Map of school-based health centers in King County.” *King County* online. 2023. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/health/communicable-diseases/immunization/child/school-based-health-centers/map.aspx>.

For general health care issues and health care for youth and children, staff indicated the following needs for future programming:

- **Mental Health Care Access:** Improving access to mental health care is especially important for families and children in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Neighborhood House could improve their services by hiring more multilingual and multicultural providers. Improved relationships with clinics and community providers would facilitate better “warm hand-offs.” Staff who provide these services also need support of their own. Staff with knowledge and skills in basic support would like to be able to offer this to their clients. For example, staff would like informational handouts in various languages with emergency phone numbers, mindfulness exercises and breathing. Finally, additional training is needed for caregivers about dementia and mental health.
- **Free Clinic:** To expand services to South King County, Neighborhood House should help coordinate and host a free clinic that offers medical, dental and vision care.

For adult behavioral health needs, Neighborhood House assists more than 13,000 clients each year by referring them to partnering mental health providers. Neighborhood House does not currently provide behavioral health services or employ behavioral health specialists.

Behavioral health is a high-need area of focus for Neighborhood House. Staff surveys and focus group findings revealed two major areas of concern: (1) the major behavioral health **service needs** of the communities we support and (2) the major **training and support needs** of Neighborhood House staff. The staff also offered recommendations for future planning.

#### Areas for growth:

- **Support for Common Mental Health Disorders (CMHD):** When asked to identify the top three most common mental and behavioral health symptoms experienced by their clients, Neighborhood House staff reported depression (73.3% of respondents), anxiety (60.5% of respondents), and difficulty handling stress (50% of respondents) most frequently. This aligns with feedback from focus groups, where staff affirmed that families quickly become overwhelmed and anxious, particularly under stressful circumstances, and often lack the tools to manage these symptoms independently.

A small percentage of clients (according to staff report) are experiencing behavioral health symptoms such as paranoia, mood swings, delusions, hallucinations, or suicidal ideation. This indicates that the vast majority of the clients that Neighborhood House works with are navigating what the National Institute of Health would term “common mental health disorders” such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, as opposed to “serious mental illnesses”, which includes diagnoses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. While common mental health disorders are considered less severe in the behavioral health treatment system, these conditions impact a much larger portion of society and have deep, negative impacts on quality of life. During our focus group discussions, staff reported that clients experiencing depressive and anxious symptoms might experience a number of additional barriers such as struggling to follow up on referrals for resources or increasing conflict with family members and support systems. This can lead to loss of income, loss of housing, failure to manage chronic health conditions, and a multitude of other negative outcomes. When families request referrals for counseling or ask about resources to help them manage stress, they are typically referred to a Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) for assessment.

- **Systemic barriers:** Many Neighborhood House clients are not being adequately supported by the current behavioral health system. Surveys show 45.2% of NH staff are confident that they can refer a client to the correct provider, and 33.3% are confident that the client will receive relevant help from their referral. Moreover, more than 26% of respondents are not confident in any aspect of the behavioral health referral process. Staff agree that the lack of available providers, long waitlists, and lack of bicultural and bilingual providers were the most frustrating aspects of the current system.

If a client successfully engages with a BHO, the frequent turnover of mental health specialists can negatively affect the client's experience. As one staff member noted,

*“Community Mental Health staff are poorly treated and poorly compensated, so they don't stay long, and clients experience a roller-coaster of providers coming in and out and don't receive the support they need.”*

- **Stigma associated with receiving mental health services:** Unfortunately, many clients are not willing to begin the process of connecting with a BHO because it can carry a strong stigma for many communities. Common reasons clients refuse a referral to a BHO includes: they do not think that they have a mental health disorder; they are not confident that the services will be helpful; or they have had a negative experience with a BHO.

The need for support for clients with common mental health disorders is not new, but the behavioral health system continues to fall short in addressing this need, particularly for BIPOC and bilingual communities. The current mental health service delivery system was not developed to support common mental health disorders, but instead serious mental illness, largely in response to the deinstitutionalization of individuals with serious mental illness in the 1970s. The experiences of our staff point to this conclusion: the current behavioral health system is the wrong mechanism to support our clients in managing anxiety, depression, and stress.

Service area suggestions:

- ***Create an internal Neighborhood House team of culturally and linguistically diverse staff who provide very low-barrier support for clients experiencing depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other stress-related challenges:*** staff requested a way of referring clients for internal support learning pragmatic techniques for managing anxiety, depression, PTSD, and stress. Referrals to the team should be extremely low barrier and focused on reducing stigma. A combination of group and individual support was also requested, so clients could engage in the way most accessible to them. Referrals to this team should not require a formal diagnosis or carry any of the labels associated with traditional mental health services.

Staff also envisioned this team including behavioral health experts so that if a client requires formal services, this team could facilitate a successful referral. Ideally, staff requested that this team could create stronger partnerships with the BHO system on behalf of the agency, establish a system to provide warm handoffs for clients who have higher acuity levels or need more specialized treatment.

- **Establish a clinical team that meets regularly and provides consultation to direct service staff regarding challenging or new situations:** Staff collectively identified the need for greater access to expertise and support in their direct service work. To improve and expand behavioral health services, Neighborhood House may consider hiring clinical staff like social workers, nurses, as well as specialized staff who are versed in navigating insurance systems. Ongoing training on Mental Health First Aide and other topics would provide staff with ample learning opportunities to stay abreast of the mental health challenges faced by Neighborhood House clients. Survey results indicated topics such as addressing mental health stigma are priority areas.
- **Establish greater staff health and wellness access.** Staff expressed a need for additional supports and services to prevent staff burnout and address mental health concerns of direct service providers. Offering ongoing trainings on staff wellbeing, compassion fatigue, stress management and boundaries were requested to empower staff with the tools and knowledge to best take care of themselves. Staff also suggest Neighborhood House maintain a robust staff benefits portfolio that considers the intense demand and high levels of stress most direct service staff experience.

### Adult Employment & Education

- **English as a Second Language:** We need more classes for levels 1 and 2 (this is especially a request at High Point). We need more in-language navigation support. Families also need more online ESL options. Green River College has a waitlist for ESL services and there is need for additional ESL services in Kent and South King County. Renton Technical College's ESL classes are all online.
- **Digital Literacy:** There is a need for more computers and smart phones. They are needed by older community members, ESL students and for community members with recent access to technology.
- **Partnerships with Employers:** We need to build relationships with IT businesses and departments to help our clients get work experience and jobs after finishing IT training programs.

### Housing & Basic Needs

- **Rental Assistance:** Rental assistance is a huge need. Rental assistance programs are zip code based and support is often one time only. Most current rental supports are limited to the City of Seattle, so more options for South King County and unincorporated areas would help expand this service. Additionally, sometimes families need help finding a larger unit or more affordable unit. Neighborhood House needs more resources to

better help families who need to move due to mold or maintenance issues with the Landlord. We also need a resource to connect families to house maintenance funding. There is limited understanding of the Coordinated Entry system. It is hard to get through to Multi-Service Center when making referrals.

- **Basic Needs and Gift Cards:** Visiting the food bank can be a barrier (either because of social stigma or transportation and time) so gas gift cards and food gift cards are always appreciated, although most programs do not have the funding to provide these. Cleaning supplies and portable air conditions for the summers are needed. Other needs include clothing, shoes, gas cards, home maintenance, car repair. Families also need additional baby supplies, specifically items that Westside Baby does not provide.

Focus group participants shared that during their journey to find housing or shelter, it was extremely difficult to find spaces that were **safe, clean, and drug free**. Some participants their temporary housing spaces did not positively reinforce a welcoming space to be drug free. Lack of staff and physical space exacerbated this challenge and made it hard for residents to prepare for going to work.

*“Challenges of being on the streets and in shelters is the amount of alcohol, drugs, and time on people’s hands with no jobs. So getting a job is a good place to start and fill the time but you also need to have a place to put your stuff. You cannot take your stuff with you to a job. You also need to have decent clothes for the interview and every day to go to work.”* – temporary housing tenant

- **Communications:** Regardless of the type of temporary, transitional, or long-term housing support, one common trend uncovered in interviews is a lack of communications about housing. People seeking housing services are forced to constantly call, leave voicemails, and visit offices. Many participants shared that one big obstacle is connecting with someone to help you is a big hurdle. It seems like many organizations do not answer the phone or call back.

*“You get these numbers for resources and in today’s society no one answers the phone. You leave a message, and they will say that they will call you back but they don’t.”* – temporary housing tenant

- **Moving costs:** When moving to transitional or longer-term housing, individuals shared that there is not enough funding for the moving costs. Some people are older or have disabilities and they cannot rent a truck on their own and physically move. There is

some help to acquire the furniture but there is not much help for the labor of moving it.

- **Career training:** Participants cited that employment training programs have a lack of opportunity for career growth. The programs do offer jobs, but they are low paying and don't have career options. For individuals with a temporary job, they are not confident in what job they will be able to have next. For some that have had better paying jobs, they lose public benefits and then they cannot afford to pay their bills without the benefits. There is not a long enough buffer zone where someone can get a better paying job, still access benefits, and can become self-sustainable.

### Legal Services

- **Immigration Legal Services:** More and more asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants are accessing family shelters (according to Neighborhood House partners at Mary's Place), and many need legal services for assistance with their immigration status.
- **General Legal Services:** Neighborhood House may need to improve legal services to specifically aide with minor infractions (especially traffic) in addition to marital, divorce, domestic violence, and child custody cases. Legal services are also needed to support families regarding issues with public assistance benefits. Staff shared cases where families did not speak English well and were unaware of how their social security income benefits worked. There is a Benefits Law Center in Seattle, but the organization has a heavy caseload and mostly specialize in individuals that have appeals or denials cases. Neighborhood House should consider hiring a benefits attorney to support clients with these legal issues.

## EMERGENT POLICY/OPPORTUNITIES

As Neighborhood House prepares to implement service changes, emergent state, county and city-level policy will impact the availability of political and financial resources for certain service areas. The following section highlights new and future policy initiatives that touch Neighborhood House programming and may support future planning.

### Whole Family Approach (WFA)

Neighborhood House participated in a WFA Community of Practice, where we identified our logic model, and are continuing to plan out a pilot to test some of our ideas. WFA has deepened our connection with the National Community Action Partnership and Wayne Metro Community Action Partnership in Detroit, MI.



### King County Community Collaborative - Voice for Change and Empowerment (KC3)

In 2009, the class action lawsuit *T.R. et al. v. Birch and Strange* found that Washington was out of compliance with Medicaid law requiring states to provide services and treatments to youth including mental healthcare services.<sup>6</sup> This ruling launched the Children’s Behavioral Health Governance Structure that requires the establishment of Regional Family Youth System Round Tables (FYSPRT) to inform regional and state policy. KC3 is the King County FYSPRT group that provides a space for community partners, families, and youth to discuss issues related to the current behavioral health system.<sup>7</sup> Neighborhood House may wish to join future meetings to share the needs and experiences of their clients and contribute to future policymaking efforts.

### King County Regional Homelessness Authority

As of June 2023, the King County Regional Homeless Authority’s (KCRHA) 5-Year Plan has been approved and begun implementation to coordinate and standardize the region’s approach to supporting unhoused individuals, youth and families.<sup>8</sup> Rollout of the plan will impact the number of available emergency beds and temporary and permanent housing units, the availability of real-time information regarding these resources, and the full coordination of the homeless response system. KCRHA-funded programs at Neighborhood House and programs that participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will experience changes to their reporting and coordination requirements, as well as have access to newly available strategies and resources to address homelessness as the plan is implemented. Other goals of KCRHA including unconditional cash transfer programs and stabilization of front-line workers may align with Neighborhood House values.

### Resolution 32094 – Human Services Workers Wage Equity

In June of 2023, the Seattle City Council adopted Resolution 32094 following the publication of the University of Washington (UW) Wage Equity Study for Human Service Workers.<sup>9</sup> The study found a substantial gap in wages between non-profit human service workers and workers in other industries. Both public and private non-profit human service organizations reported that low wages and the stressful nature of the work negatively impact their ability to recruit and retain staff, which in turn affects their ability to provide high quality human services. Resolution 32094 is an official recognition of the UW Wage Equity Study findings and a commitment to improving wage practices across the city. The Seattle City Council requested that the Human Services Department develop a plan for incorporating and evaluating wage equity plans in future Requests for Proposals received by the department and requested that all contracting city departments consider wage equity when renewing or renegotiating human services contracts.

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<sup>6</sup> Washington State Health Care Authority, *Wraparound with Intensive Services (WiSe)*, fact sheet. 2022.

<sup>7</sup> “King County Community Collaborative – Voice for Change and Empowerment (KC3).” *King County* online. 2023. <https://kingcounty.gov/en/legacy/depts/community-human-services/mental-health-substance-abuse/fyc.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup> King County Regional Homelessness Authority. *Five-Year Plan (2023-2028)*. May 2023. 1-102.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer LaBrecque and Karina Bull to Public Safety and Human Services Committee, memorandum, “Resolution 32094 – Human Services Workers Wage Equity,” June 6, 2023. Seattle City Council Central Staff. <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12074514&GUID=CDD0407B-46AC-40B9-AAD7-2AEB8A874C6B>.

Neighborhood House's executive director was an early leader in the *Raising Wages for Changing Lives* campaign that advocated for the pursual of the UW Wage Equity Study and commits to future advocacy for human services workers. In the wake of the passage of Resolution 32094, Neighborhood House may be well-positioned to be a community leader in wage equity practices and respond to concerns from staff regarding burnout and greater supports.

#### Youth Development Department –

The Youth Development Strategy Table has been advocating for Youth Development Department under the State Department of Children Youth and Families and a \$50 million allocation to fund youth development programs to meet the unmet demand described above. Unfortunately, budget proviso for a modest \$5 million investment did not move in the 2024 legislative session.

#### Child care/Early Learning initiatives –

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is a state program, that provides lower income, working families with a subsidy to pay for child care. Funded partially by the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), WCCC has suffered from consistently low reimbursement rates, collecting a parent co payment and re-eligibility requirements. Below are some past and future initiatives aimed to increase the quality and sustainability of early learning services.

- DCYF issued one time stipends to workers in licensed child care facilities.
- WCCC extended eligibility to 1 year. WCCC participation automatically qualifies parents for Head Start
- Advocates were successful in redefining participation in Early Head Start and Early ECEAP as a work activity for WCCC.
- WCCC rates have increase and is providing monthly bonus to providers that offer care to infants, and they are looking to extend this bonus to providers that serve toddlers
- WCCC is beginning implementation of WCCC subsidy to workers in child care for care of their own children.
- ECEAP funding has increase to equal or more than Head Start (per child), and now offers Early ECEAP for children 0-3.

## CONCLUSION

For over a century, Neighborhood House has prioritized needs families and communities to help shape the agency. Based on the current data analyzed, Neighborhood House has identified 5 key major takeaways that will help shape programmatic decisions and the upcoming planning for the 2025-2028 strategic plan.

### Key Takeaways –

1. Expand early childhood and youth development programs to meet the needs of working caregivers, especially in South King County, and during after-school and weekend hours.
2. Improve existing services and systems to enable clients to access multiple Neighborhood House programs.
3. Strengthen and establish new relationships with community partners to better provide wrap around care services, decrease bureaucratic processes related to receiving services, and fostering "warm handoffs".
4. Offer high quality training to staff to prepare them for more technical service activities such as early intervention, addressing common behavioral health disorders, intervening in mental health crises, navigating legal and insurance issues.
5. Improve communication to community and current clients regarding service offerings and changes, case management updates, community engagement opportunities, and relevant policy issues.
6. Provide staff training, reduce stigma, strengthen the referral system, and build internal culturally appropriate clinical behavioral health expertise and services.