

2024 State Legislative Priorities for Children with Developmental Delays and People with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities

*Services for people with developmental delays and intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) should be **sustainable** and **promote equity, inclusion, and belonging**. The 2024 priorities aim to achieve that vision and **reflect input** from impacted communities across the region, **centering people** with delays and disabilities, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).*



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PRIORITIES



PRIORITY 1

Help ensure that individuals and families have services provided by people who speak their language and are responsive to their cultural needs.



PRIORITY 2

Help ensure Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) agencies receive Special Education funding for the first month of services provided to families.



PRIORITY 3

Help people with I/DD get and keep jobs, and be included in their communities, by increasing the amount that the Employment and Community Inclusion service providers are paid.



PRIORITY 4

Help ensure affordable housing, and housing supports, are available for people with I/DD.



PRIORITY 5

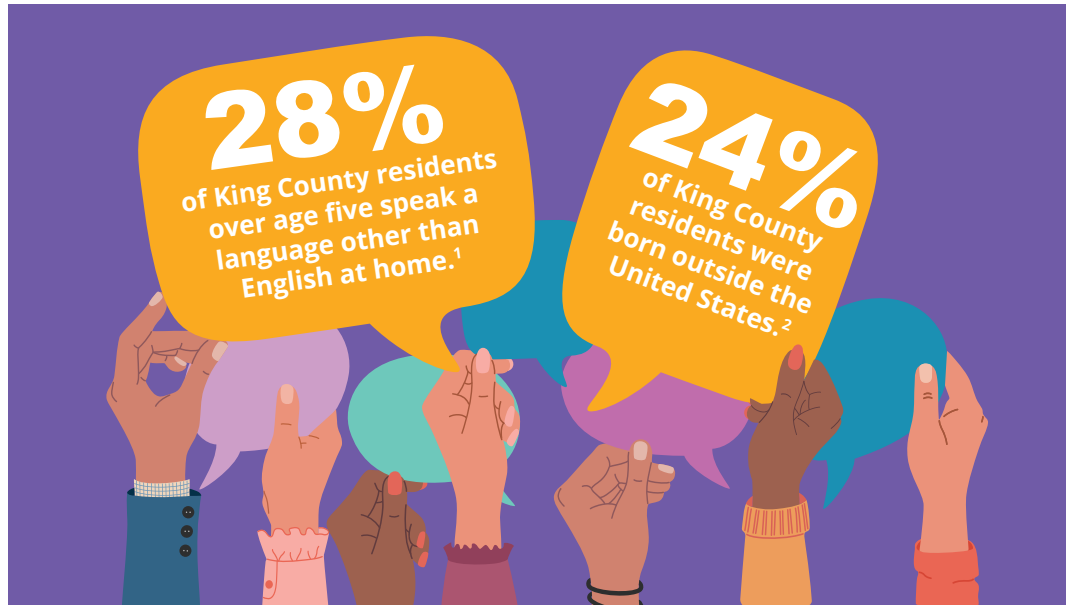
Recruit and train more behavioral health providers with the expertise to effectively serve people with I/DD.

PRIORITY 1 - Language Access

Help ensure that individuals and families have services provided by people who speak their language and are responsive to their cultural needs.



Language access is important in all systems and programs to make sure that everyone can access services no matter what language they speak. It's also important that services are a cultural match for individuals and families. People and families benefit from services received from providers whose traditions, histories, beliefs, and language, are like their own. This means the services they receive are relevant, relatable, supportive, and unbiased.



Translating different service documents in each individual's and family's preferred language is very important, but it is also expensive. This is also true for interpreters, which aren't always covered by insurance. The Legislature can promote the quality of services individuals and families deserve by funding language access for state agencies, including the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Department of Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Health Care Authority.



Residents with disabilities who are also Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have told King County that **they have trouble getting their needs met** from the developmental disabilities, healthcare, and K-12 education systems. Individuals and families report that **they experience racial, cultural, and language biases**.

¹ Immigrant, Refugee, and Language Access, King County

² Washington Office of Financial Management

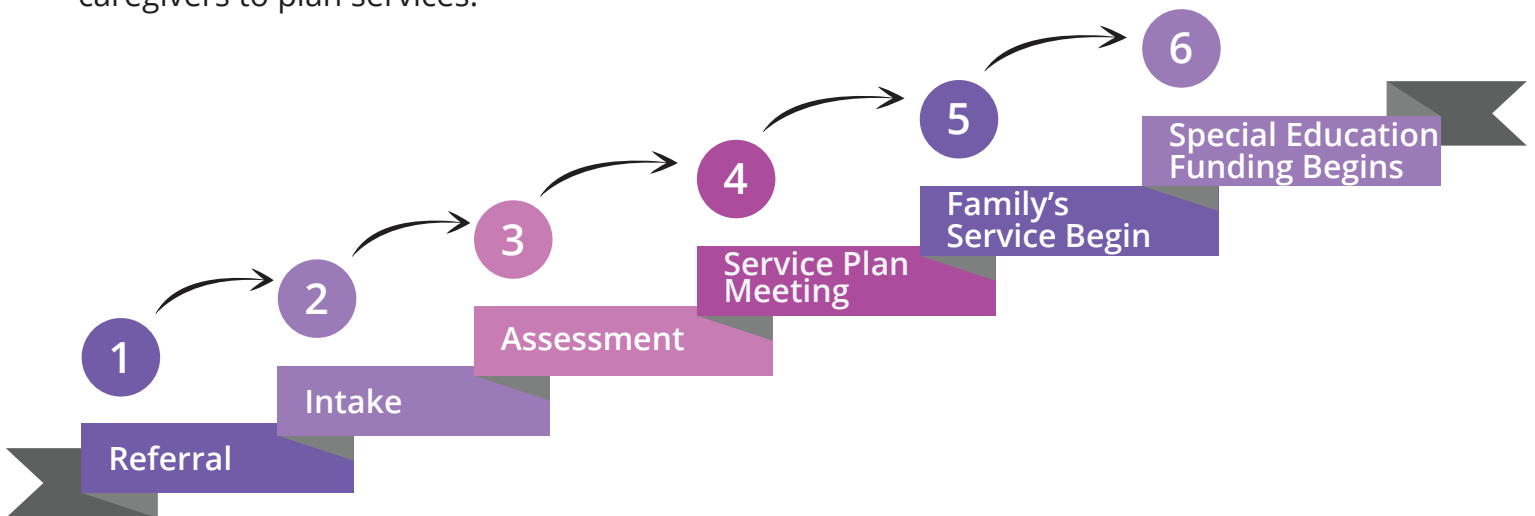
PRIORITY 2 - Early Supports

Help ensure Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) agencies receive Special Education funding for the first month of services provided to families.



The current language in ESIT's Special Education funding policy does not allow agencies to bill for the first month of services provided to eligible children. Children aren't counted for Special Education until the first day of the next month!

Early Supports agencies must complete several steps before a family can be enrolled and the agency can be paid by Special Education for services provided. Providers work to gather family information, to assess a child's development and eligibility, to write a report, and to meet with caregivers to plan services.



After all these important steps, services begin with children and families, but agencies still cannot bill for Special Education funds for one more month!

A small law change would increase funding for ESIT agencies by allowing them to bill for Special Education funds for the first month of services provided to eligible children. Only the legislature can make this change.³

³ Revised Code of Washington 43.216.580

PRIORITY 3 - Employment and Community Inclusion

Help people with I/DD get and keep jobs, and be included in their communities, by increasing the amount that the Employment and Community Inclusion service providers are paid.



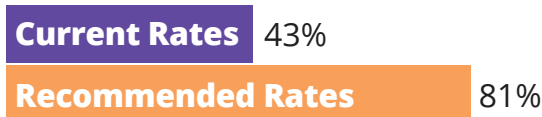
Employment and Community Inclusion services help individuals with I/DD get and keep jobs and access their community. People with jobs are also more financially stable, more independent, and contribute to the workforce and economy, which helps everyone. People with jobs and access to their community also benefit by making new friends and learning new skills.

Employment and Community Inclusion service providers who help people get and keep jobs and access in their communities are unable to fill vacant positions. The Department of Social and Health Services DDA gave the legislature a study in 2022 explaining how much funding service providers need to fill positions and cover costs for services. If the legislature provides the amount recommended in the study, then 81% of King County providers say that they could fully serve all their current participants, and 86% say they would be able to accept new participants seeking employment.

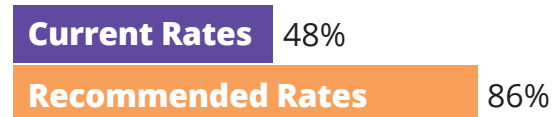
Each dollar invested in employment support equals a 60-cent return into the economy.⁴

Based on a recent provider survey, if rates were increased to recommended levels, more providers would be able to fully serve current participants and take on new participants interested in employment.⁵

Fully serve current participants



Take on new supported employment participants



According to a recent survey, only 43% of providers shared that the current rate allows them to fully serve participants.



⁴Employment and Day Rate Study Report, October 1, 2022

⁵ King County Employment and Community Inclusion Provider Survey, October 2023

PRIORITY 4 - Housing

Help ensure affordable housing, and housing supports, are available for people with I/DD.

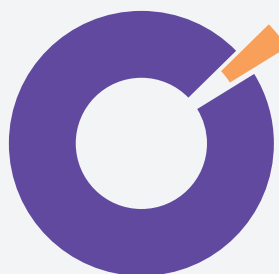


In Washington state, approximately 37,000 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are facing housing insecurity.⁶

People with I/DD need affordable housing with support services.

37,000

additional units needed to fill unmet housing needs



1,328

HTF units created for individuals with I/DD

Available housing for individuals with I/DD meets less than 4% of total need.

Estimated unmet housing need vs. HTF I/DD set-aside units, statewide portfolio



1 in every 10 (11%) people **experiencing homelessness** in King County **reported having I/DD**⁷

The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is an important source for funding affordable housing projects in King County. Permanent funding sources are needed for the HTF and other State and local housing options. By creating permanent funding sources and adding more funds to the HTF, the State can increase accessible and affordable housing. Local housing funding options are also needed. This includes housing maintenance and operations funds for non-profit housing providers to support long-term ownership.

When it comes to housing, accessibility is key for individuals with I/DD. Part of accessible housing is the support provided by the community residential services workforce. This workforce has been consistently underfunded. According to the Community Residential Services Association, nearly 50% of the experienced workforce leaves each year.⁸ Increased provider rates would help with this. Funding more housing support services workers at the DSHS DDA would help improve coordination between housing and support services.

COMMUNITY VOICE

Community members reported at King County hosted listening sessions that navigating housing is difficult. This is especially true for BIPOC individuals and families with a home-language other than English.



⁶ ECONorthwest, Washington State Department of Commerce, May 2022

⁷ DCHS Performance Measurement & Evaluation Unit analysis of HMIS enrollment data from October 2022 through September 2023, data pulled October 2023

⁸ Community Residential Services Association, *Supported Living Position Paper 2023*.

PRIORITY 5 - Behavioral Health

Recruit and train more behavioral health providers with the expertise to effectively serve people with I/DD.



Many behavioral health providers lack specialized training and experience in serving people with I/DD and behavioral health needs.⁹ Specialized training helps the behavioral health provider properly diagnose and support people's symptoms, which can look different for people with I/DD. Specialized training can also be useful in a crisis to reduce the number of people with I/DD who end up in emergency rooms for stabilization services.



COMMUNITY VOICE

Community members reported at King County hosted listening sessions that behavioral health services for people with I/DD are hard to find and are often not provided by people who speak their language and share their culture.

One way to increase the number of behavioral health therapists with specialized training is to fund student loan repayment and forgiveness programs for those who **specialize** in I/DD. Another way to increase therapists is to train current providers on how to recognize and treat people with I/DD and **behavioral** health needs.



Nearly 2 in every 5 (37%) people eligible for DDA services in Washington State also **have behavioral health treatment needs.**¹⁰

⁹Washington Healthcare Authority, Report to Legislature, *Continuum of Care for Youth and Adults with Developmental Disabilities*. July 2020.

¹⁰Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Best Practices for Co-Occurring Conditions: Serving People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions. Oct. 2022.