

Goal #2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities

Why is this Goal Area Important?

Social support helps to give people the emotional and practical resources they need to feel cared for, valued and secure. Especially in hard economic times, these human connections often are looked to when formal support agencies cannot assist. Studies show that social support is an important factor in predicting the health and wellbeing of young children through older adults. Service areas in this support network include social support for individuals, families and adults raising children, legal assistance, and information and referral.

What's Working?

- The Wrap-Around Services Pilot Project, a Bellevue School District, City of Bellevue, and United Way of King County collaboration, began in 2005 at Lake Hills Elementary School. The project is meeting objectives with great success: it has bolstered academic achievement and family involvement in schools and enhanced neighborhood vitality through community celebrations and local business collaboration. As of the 2009 City budget cycle, the project was elevated to program status and expanded to Odle Middle School. The program coordinator researched families, students, faculty and the Odle community to establish criteria for the Odle Middle School Wrap-Around Service Program launched in 2009-2010.
- Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) provided 133 Bellevue residents legal information in their clinics and self-help workshops during the first two quarters of 2011. Of those completing evaluations, 95% said they were comfortable with the legal system and 96% said they were more informed about their legal needs and options upon receiving ELAP's legal advice services.

Prevalence

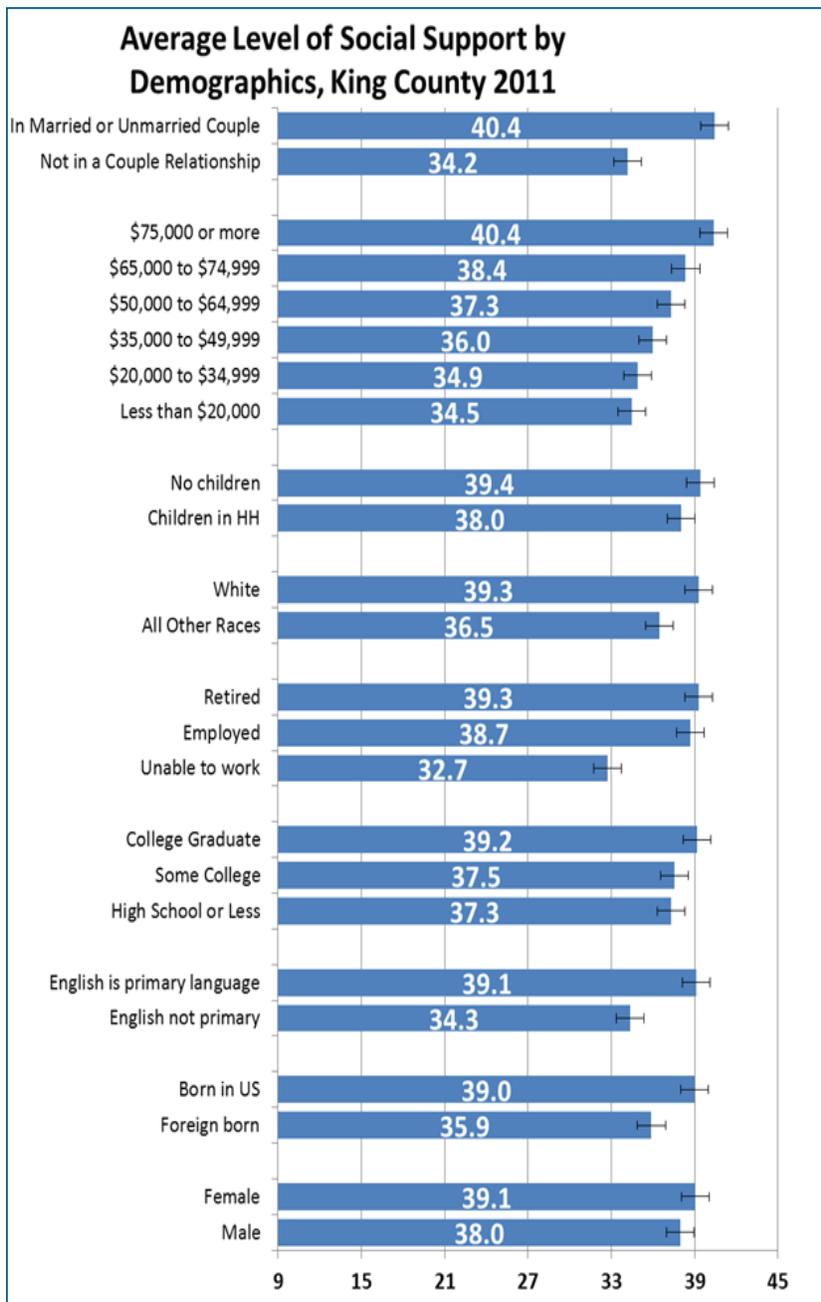
Social Support

- In a 2011 countywide survey, social support was measured by asking people about specific types of social support they believed they could rely on. The answers were used to create a social support scale with a possible score between 9 (low) and 45 (high). The average score in King County was 38.5 compared to 39.1 in 2007, and in East King County, the average score was 39.1 compared to 40.3 in 2007. The scores between the two survey years are significantly lower for King County and all the county's subregions. As the chart on the next page shows, some groups reported higher levels of social support than others. These include college graduates, married or unmarried couples, people earning \$75,000 or more, people who spoke English as their primary language and people who are White.¹

Service Trends

Support for Individuals, Families, and Adults Raising Children

- Support for older adults is critical as more of the population ages, and more families live long distances apart. Many older adults will be "aging in place" and will require in-home care, most likely from family, friends and neighbors, in addition to paid providers. Programs that keep older adults active in the community are important opportunities for decreasing isolation. Examples of Eastside programs that engage older adults include Hopelink's "Travel Ambassador" program, which helps people learn about travel options including the bus, or Bellevue School District's elementary school tutor and mentoring programs.
- In a 2007 survey, adults were asked about parenting challenges and how often they



Source: Communities County 2011 - Public Health Seattle & King County

received childrearing help and support. In East King County, 63% of respondents with children ages 0-5 and 64% with children 6-14 reported coping “very well.” This closely mirrors King County as a whole, which reported 64% and 58%, respectively. There were no significant differences between 2007 and the same survey done in 2011.²

- In the 2011 Bellevue phone/online survey, having a lot of stress, anxiety or depres-

sion that interferes with their daily life was rated as a major or moderate problem by 20% of respondents, a significant increase compared to 2009. Eight percent of respondents rated the need for parent or caregiver support as a household need, an increase of 2% from 2009. Additionally, qualitative feedback from providers and parents strongly suggests that both individual and community support is very much needed. In particular, some immigrant and refugee parents expressed a desire for additional help; these families face challenges such as not having translated materials to help them keep up with what is happening at school, and lack of understanding of academic expectations in this country. Although a number of organizations (e.g. Youth Eastside Services, Asia Pacific Language School, Kinderling Center, Hopelink, and Chinese Information and Service Center) provide parenting classes and support groups to help these parents bridge cultural gaps, more are needed.

- Jubilee REACH Center, a family support center sponsored by the First Presbyterian Church of Bellevue in the Lake Hills neighborhood, provides numerous programs that support individuals and families. These include before and after-school programs, mentoring, youth activities such as community service projects, and English-as-a-Second-Language classes with childcare. This center also provides community meal programs, some with an international focus, and a dental van for low-income children and adults. In fall 2009, Jubilee REACH opened the Heart and Home Value Centers providing employment opportunities for the community.³

- Located in five elementary schools in the Bellevue School District, Family Connections Centers facilitate improved access to human services between home, school, and community. Each location serves between 4-6 schools. Staff refer to local agencies for clothing and food, as well as counseling, housing, employment, emergency financial assistance and health care. Some schools have refugee and immigrant families, as well as many families eligible for the free and reduced price lunch program. Staff report that, as a result of the recession, they are seeing more formerly middle class families who have lost jobs and now need support, primarily with health insurance assistance, employment, and affordable housing. Funding for more sites and longer hours of service, including during school vacations, are critical.⁴
- Single parents may need more support. Whether mothers or fathers, they often have special needs because they may be the sole providers of their children's needs. Approximately 6% of all households in Bellevue are composed of single-parent households. Families with a female householder, no husband present, and related children age 5-17 had the highest family poverty rates of 10.4%.⁵

Support for Early Learning and Early Childhood Development

- In 2003, more than 120 agencies, organizations and individuals from across King County helped to develop *An Early Childhood and School Readiness Action Agenda*, which aims to improve school readiness for children birth to five years. Evidence indicates that children begin learning from birth, so the earlier a child has opportunities to develop socially, cognitively, and emotionally, the better he or she will do in school and life. Towards that end, four sub regional networking teams (called Families and Children Early Support - FACES), began implementing strategies to meet common school readiness goals. FACES on the Eastside has sponsored a number of projects, including parenting groups in multiple languages, free developmental screenings for children birth to three, and legislative forums on early childhood issues to raise visibility with East King County legislators.
- In spring 2011, a group of community leaders including those from the Bellevue School District and School Board, the City of Bellevue, Bellevue College, parent groups, social service agencies, funders and other community organizations, convened to launch a "cradle to career" effort to unite around common goals, measurements and strategies to maximize each child's opportunity for a productive, fulfilling life. Eastside Pathways mobilizes the entire community to ensure that every child in the Bellevue School District has the support to approach adulthood ready to thrive in college and in career. The effort was launched in October 2011.⁶
- The Bellevue School District began to use a kindergarten assessment, the Teaching Strategies Gold from the Creative Curriculum, to get a baseline of where the incoming students are when they enter school. (Results from last school year will be available in early 2012.)⁷
- Healthy Start is a voluntary home visiting program that supports healthy child development, enhances parenting skills, improves the quality of parent-child interactions and promotes school readiness activities for at-risk families. In addition, parents are assisted in developing social support networks and peer relationships to help them to succeed in becoming independent, and also have the option to work with a volunteer Mentor one-on-one. This program results in increased parenting skills, high rates of children and parents receiving routine medical care, and parents meeting goals of being more independent, by going to work or school. Healthy Start serves a number of non-Caucasians and non-English speakers: in 2010, of the 120 Bellevue individuals served, 87% were non-Caucasian. Due in part to the large number of Spanish-speaking case manag-

ers in the program, more than two-thirds (68%) of the participants are of Hispanic-Latino origin.⁸

- Eastside Baby Corner (EBC) supplies food banks, schools and other organizations with basic infant and child supplies like formula, cribs, diapers, and clothing. In 2010, they reported providing supplies to 3,678 Bellevue low-income residents.⁹ Due to the volume of requests, which continues to increase especially due to the poor economy and high unemployment rates, staff report that each week there are orders they are unable to fill, especially for big items like cribs and car seats. Staff now need to limit the number of items it gives each agency weekly, and has 35 agencies on the wait list to begin receiving items.¹⁰ Overall orders for 2011 are on pace to increase by 15% over 2010. Diapers, infant formula and clothing are most in demand.¹¹
- Family, friends and neighbors (FFNs) provide care for an estimated 60,000 children in King County. For 28,000 of those children, FFNs are the primary source of care when parents are working or attending school.¹² Child Care Resources sponsors the Family, Friend and Neighbor Project, whose goal is to provide a comprehensive, community-based network of supports and resources for family, friend and neighbor caregivers and the children in their care. One activity is an informal play group called Play and Learn where children birth to five and their caregivers can interact. There are 10 such groups in East King County and 3 in Bellevue, 1 of which is in a language other than English.¹³

Increased Resources for School-Aged Kids

- Research indicates that positive after-school and “out of school time” programs are critical for school-aged children and youth to build developmental assets and avoid at-risk behaviors. In 2005, SOAR convened a countywide workgroup that developed a King County Youth Action Agenda, similar to the one for birth to five-year olds. Completed in December 2006, this plan’s implementation is overseen by the School Age Implementation Team (SAIT), a group of professionals whose efforts address collaboration, professional development, training, and leadership for this age group. *(Note: See the School Aged Children and Youth section of this report for more information.)*

Work/Family Supports

- Work and family issues in the United States are increasing as more families work longer hours, and have more responsibilities for caring for their children, as well as frail, older family members; these caregivers are commonly called the “sandwich generation.”
- Another trend is that more fathers are taking the primary role in parenting which seems to be at least in part due to the poor economy. The most recent data indicates that unemployment rates have increased more rapidly for men than women over the past year or more,¹⁴ as men are more likely to be employed in industries like construction that have seen the most severe job cuts. Many men are also working

Percentage of Washington State firms offering paid leave to employees, by leave type								
	Firms offering paid leave to full-time employees				Firms offering paid leave to part-time employees			
	Undesignated	Sick	Vacation	Holiday	Undesignated	Sick	Vacation	Holiday
2006	23.4%	46.1%	74.2%	71.0%	9.1%	17.6%	26.4%	28.9%
2007	20.3%	44.0%	73.1%	68.3%	7.4%	14.1%	23.0%	25.8%
2008	20.5%	41.7%	69.6%	66.0%	8.1%	15.5%	24.4%	27.0%
2009	22.5%	41.2%	64.2%	62.3%	8.6%	14.3%	22.8%	24.8%
2010	21.5%	44.1%	67.9%	66.2%	8.2%	15.3%	22.2%	25.7%

Source: 2010 Employee Benefits Report

- more reduced hours and part-time jobs.¹⁵
- According to surveys conducted in Washington State in 2010, fewer employers offered paid leave to employees compared to 2006 as the chart on the previous page shows. The proportion of employers offering some paid vacation dropped from 74 % to 67 %, and only 44 % offered paid sick leave, down from 46 % in 2006.¹⁶ Without sick leave, many workers must choose between working when they or their children are ill, using vacation days (if available), or risk losing pay or their job. In May 2007, Washington State passed a family leave program designed to provide up to \$250 per week for up to five weeks beginning October 1, 2012. The implementation of this law, however, is temporarily suspended, due to the budget shortfall in state government. These benefits are critical to help employees balance work-life responsibilities, but in the current economic climate these benefits are decreasing.

Need for Low-Cost Legal Assistance

- Nationally, experts estimate that 80 % of low-income Americans who need help in civil legal cases don't receive it. This includes both people who "are turned away as well as those who don't try because it's so hopeless."¹⁷ There is a huge gap between the number of people in need of civil legal aid and the current resources available: Washington is only meeting the needs of one in five low-income people facing urgent civil legal problems.¹⁸
- Low-income residents' already limited access to legal aid has worsened due to the poor economy. The "Justice Gap" – the difference between service needs and available resources - is larger than ever. The Northwest Justice Project, which maintains the statewide legal hotline and offices throughout the state, saw client demand jump 30 % between 2005 and 2008. Statewide, the issues for which people most often received help were family safety (e.g. domestic violence), housing (e.g. foreclosure), and income maintenance (e.g. eligibility for disability benefits).¹⁹
- In keeping with statewide trends, Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) has seen a large increase in requests for legal services. As a result of the economic downturn, more people are seeking help with evictions, domestic violence, credit card, and debt issues. Crisis Clinic calls for legal assistance are screened and directed to ELAP, which has improved access to Eastside clients. There are waiting lists for clients needing help from the Domestic Violence Legal Fund Project and for the family law/Domestic Violence clinic in which there is high need. There is a shortage of attorneys to help beyond a half-hour free consultation with clients because taking cases often involves months of intensive legal work.²⁰
- ELAP has two specialized clinics for immigrants and refugees: an immigration clinic which deals with immigration law issues twice a month and a multilingual clinic which provides assistance on any civil legal issue with bilingual interpreters in Spanish, Ukrainian, and Russian. Similar to ELAP's other clinics, these clinics offer a free half-hour with a volunteer attorney for advice and consultation. However, the multilingual clinic also has a mailbox in the voicemail system to take voicemails in the above languages so that all screening and appointments are in the client's native language. ELAP also provides interpreters for those needing help in other languages as well as bilingual informational cards that other social services agencies use to inform potential clients of ELAP's services. ELAP works with Hopelink to assist with citizenship applications.²¹

Finding Help: Information and Referral

- During the first six months of 2011, staff at the City of Bellevue's Mini-City Hall at Crossroads Shopping Center received 15,646 contacts from consumers requesting resource information, with about

45.5% related to human services needs. This is on pace to meet or exceed 2010's 29,083 contacts. As a result of the recession, staff saw a steady increase in late 2008 and early 2009: between January and May, Mini-City Hall staff served 10,583 consumers, more than 50% of which were human services related. The most frequent requests are for financial assistance, foreclosure help, employment, counseling and volunteer networking opportunities.²² Volunteer interpreters offer help in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Russian, Tagalog, Hindi, Bengali and Urdu. Written materials about city activities and services in languages other than English have been developed in all departments, with a number of them still in process. City staff

have access to Teleinterpreter services which provides an over-the phone interpreter. The city also has Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Chinese web translations on its website. *(Note: See Refugees and Immigrants section in this report for more information.)*

- During the 2003 Washington State legislative session, lawmakers passed a bill making the three digit dialing code "2-1-1" the official state number for information about health and human services, including access after a natural or other disaster.

Washington Information Network (WIN 2-1-1) is a one-stop approach that streamlines access to social service agencies and resources. Statewide, WIN 2-1-1's call centers received 362,068 calls in 2010, averaging 30,172 calls per month. Requests exceeded service availability most often regarding rent and mortgage assistance and utilities assistance.²³ Despite the 2010 State Legislative Session's large deficit budget, lawmakers devoted \$500,000 in Washington Telephone Assistance Program dollars to WIN 2-1-1, an acknowledgement that this service fills a critical need.

- Crisis Clinic is the designated agency in King County for 2-1-1. It provides services five days a week during business hours, and half day on Saturdays. Between 2008

Requests from Bellevue Residents for Basic Needs Resources from the Community Information Line					
Year	Number of Calls Received for Basic Needs	Financial Assistance (includes Rent, Utilities, Checking/Savings Acct and Credit Counseling/Debt Mgmt.)	Total Calls Received for All Services	Percentage of Total Calls for Basic Needs	Percentage of Total Calls for Financial Assistance
1996	642	-	2390	26.8%	-
1997	613	-	2333	26.2%	-
1998	629	-	1998	31.4%	-
1999	581	-	2018	29.4%	-
2000	414	-	1899	24.04%	-
2001	308	-	2265	13.6%	-
2002	394	-	2119	18%	-
2003	511	-	2102	30%	-
2004	555	-	2587	21%	-
2005	543	-	2428	23%	-
2006	552	465	3156	18%	15%
2007	956	754	3306	29%	23%
2008	954	780	3390	28%	23%
2009	857	1089	3470	25%	31%
2010	893	1101	3360	27%	33%

Source: Crisis Clinic, Community Information Line 2-1-1, July 2011

and 2010, the number of calls for assistance increased by approximately 24,400. Staff noted that, as a result of the recession, callers often have multiple needs for assistance, meaning the calls are more complex and often require more education.²⁴ In 2010, 1,822 Bellevue 2-1-1 Community Information Line (CIL) callers who disclosed their income lived below the poverty level (96%). Among the 1,063 Bellevue callers to the Crisis Line (the line for emergency crisis assistance), about 91%, lived below the poverty level.²⁵

- As the chart on the previous page shows, the total number of calls to 2-1-1 CIL by Bellevue residents has varied over the past dozen years. Although the 2009 & 2010 calls pertaining to basic needs indicate slightly lower numbers and percentages, it is important to note the increasing need for financial assistance, since the primary sub-categories relate to rent and utilities.²⁶

Community Perceptions Social Support

- Thirty-three percent of the 2011 phone/online survey respondents identified *lack of parenting skills* as a major or moderate community problem, significantly more than 2009. In previous years (since 1995), this issue has been decreasingly identified as a community problem. However, in the same survey, only about 6% of respondents rated *lack of individual or community support for children's parents/caregivers* as a major or moderate household problem, a similar amount as 2007.
- In well over half of the Community Conversations held in Bellevue, participants of all ages, cultures and special interests identified the need for support for parents and family caregivers.
- Phone/online survey respondents who

"More parents are using the library to be around other adults. Parents need a network of other parents for support."
King County Library System, Bellevue Downtown Library Staff, Community Conversation

found help were asked to identify which organizations or persons provided assistance. Among the 70 respondents, help was most often attributed to a health care provider (39%), mental health therapist/counselor (38%), or to a family member, friend or neighbor (36%).

- Eighteen percent of phone/online survey respondents report that the community completely supports children between the ages of five and nine, the most of any category, followed by individuals of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds (17%).

Information and Referral

- In virtually all Community Conversations, participants frequently mentioned difficulties finding human services resources. These participants included human service clients, consumers, youth, older adults, and especially English Language Learners (ELL).
- In the 2011 phone/online survey, 12% of respondents said that people in Bellevue do not have enough access to human services. A related question asked why people who sought help could not get it. Of those who said they didn't find help for their problems, 26% said they were turned down for services, and 14% didn't know where to look.

Legal Services

- In the 2011 phone/online survey, *lack of affordable legal services* was rated as a major or moderate household problem by

"Often people need legal help. There is a volunteer who comes here regularly but is not enough."
King County Library System, Bellevue Downtown Library Staff, Community Conversation

almost 11% of respondents, similar to the 2009 rating. (This problem peaked in rating in the 2003 survey, when over 12% of respondents rated it a major or moderate problem.)

- In the 2011 consumer survey, over one-third of respondents (38.6%) rated *being able to pay for legal help* as a major or moderate problem.

Implications for Action

- Especially now during the economic downturn, Bellevue families need social support to raise their children, care for aging and or disabled loved ones, or a combination of the three. Family, friends and neighbors will be even more important to the care giving plan because funding has been cut for many formal services, such as chore services and adult day health centers.
- The need for information provided in languages other than English continues to grow as the Puget Sound Region and East King County becomes more diverse. Human service providers, local government and businesses will need to work together to meet this community need.
- Many residents still do not have easy access to computers and instead rely on the phone. Multi-modal forms of getting information out to the community are needed. The Crisis Clinic's 2-1-1 Community Information Line is one way to fill this critical information gap. However, funding for its operation needs to continue. Another way is partnering with non-profit agencies, cities and faith communities to include information about resources through printed media, public TV access, DVD's, and neighbors sharing information with neighbors.
- Low-cost or free civil legal services are a growing need for many residents particularly during the economic downturn. A major gap for services exists for direct representation, especially for survivors of domestic violence, immigration issues, foreclosure and credit counseling.

Endnotes

1. Public Health—Seattle & King County. (2011). *Communities Count 2011: Social and health indicators across King County*. Public Health-Seattle and King County (December 12, 2011).
2. Public Health—Seattle & King County. December 12, 2011.
3. Jubilee REACH Center, Website: Retrieved from <http://www.jubileereach.org>
4. B. Takahashi. (Bellevue School District Human Services Specialist Program), (May 10, 2011). Provider Survey.
5. G. Rousseau (City of Bellevue), personal communication, December 12, 2011.
6. Bell CCI. (2011). *Eastside education pathways: Every child a success—exploratory stage* [White paper]. Retrieved from Social Venture Partners: <http://www.svpseattle.org/news-resources/newsletter-may-2011/Eastside%20Pathways%20Launch.pdf>
7. D. Duitch (Bellevue School District), personal communication, November 1, 2011
8. Healthy Start, Community Conversation, March 30, 2011
9. City of Bellevue. *Human services division database* [Data file]
10. H. B. Routon (Eastside Baby Corner), Provider Survey May 10, 2011)
11. H. B. Routon (Eastside Baby Corner), personal communication, Oct. 24, 2011
12. Child Care Resources (n.d.). *Family, Friend and Neighbor Care*. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from <http://www.childcare.org/ffn-care/index.asp>
13. Child Care Resources (n.d.). *Find a Kaleidoscope Play and Learn Group*. Retrieved August 25, 2011, from http://www.childcare.org/ffn-care/play-and-learn-groups.asp#East_of_Seattle
14. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). *Employment status of the civilian population by sex and age*. Retrieved from Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm>
15. Galinsky, E., Aumann, K., & Bond, J. (2009). *Times are changing: Gender and generation at work and at home*. Retrieved from Families and Work Institute: http://www.familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf
16. Mills, J. & Phair, D. (2010). *Washington State Employee Benefits Survey*.

Retrieved from Washington State Employment Security Department. http://www.workforceexplorer.com/admin/uploadedPublications/10267_EB_2009_Report.pdf

17. Pugh, T. (2009, July 9). Growing numbers of poor people swamp legal aid offices. *McClatchy Newspapers*. Retrieved from <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2009/07/09/71580/growing-numbers-of-poor-people.html>
18. Northwest Justice Project (2011). *Advocacy report 2010*. Retrieved from <http://nwjustice.org/sites/default/files/2010NJPAAdvocacyReport.pdf>
19. Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid. (2009) *Civil legal aid: Delivering justice to those who need it most. Biennial report fiscal year 2007-2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.ocla.wa.gov>.
20. S. Kehl (Eastside Legal Assistance Program), Provider Survey, May 10, 2011
21. S. Kehl (Eastside Legal Assistance Program), Provider Survey, May 10, 2011
22. B. Tuininga (City of Bellevue), personal communication, July 27, 2011
23. Smith, M. (2010). Washington Information Network 2-1-1: Quarterly report and annual summary. Retrieved from <http://www.win211.org/docs/WIN%20Newsletters/WIN211QuarterlyNewsletter%204th%202010.pdf>
24. S. Gemmel, (Crisis Clinic), personal communication, July 27, 2011
25. S. Gemmel, (Crisis Clinic), personal communication, July 27, 2011
26. S. Gemmel, (Crisis Clinic), personal communication, July 27, 2011