

Goal #5: Education and Job Skills to Lead an Independent Life

Why is this Goal Area Important?

Education, job skills and childcare, in addition to the economic climate, contribute to a person's ability to find employment. Although Washington boasts the nation's highest minimum wage, Bellevue residents require strong earnings in order to be self-sufficient. In order to get living wage jobs, workers must possess significant education or job skills. The current economic downturn highlights the need for an advanced education as well as the limited number of positions available in King County offering living wages. Affordable, quality childcare is also important so that families can work and provide for themselves.

What's Working?

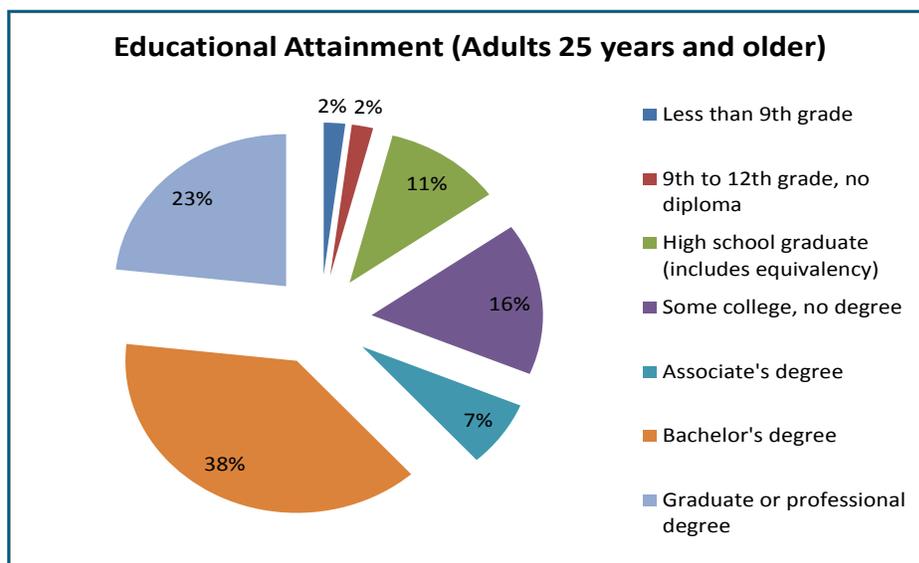
- East King County participants in the Washington State WorkFirst program surpassed state averages in job search placements, earnings progression, job retention and exits to employment.¹
- In 2008, 77% of adults enrolled in Bellevue College's ESL Preparation for Work Beginning Level classes improved their speaking and listening skills, and 81% improved their writing skills. Ninety-five percent of advanced level students improved their

speaking and listening skills, and 93% their writing skills.

Employment and Training Prevalence

Educational Attainment, Age and Gender Effects on Income

- King County is one of the most highly educated communities in the country: 44% of county residents hold a Bachelor's degree or higher and more than 90% graduated from high school.² In Bellevue, as the chart below shows, the percentage of adults age 25 and older who had earned a Bachelor's degree or above was 61%, an increase from 54% in 2000. Only 2% of Bellevue adults (over 25) have less than a high school diploma, the lowest percentage in the state.³
- The chart on the next page shows the pay benefits and lower unemployment rate that can result from higher levels of educational attainment on a national basis in 2010 before unemployment rates began to dramatically increase.⁴
- On average, women take an 18% cut in pay for taking two years off from work in



Source: 2008-2010 American Community Survey, "City of Bellevue, WA".

order to care for children or other family members; women in the business sector take a 28% cut.⁵ On average, women who are mothers earn 27% less than men, and

over time. This means that there will be a smaller number of workers in the pipeline to replace retiring workers.⁷

Unemployment Rate in 2010	Degree	Median Weekly Earnings in 2010
1.9%	Doctoral	\$1,550
2.4%	Professional	\$1,610
4.0%	Master's	\$1,272
5.4%	Bachelor's	\$1,038
7.0%	Associate	\$767
9.2%	Some College	\$712
10.3%	High School Diploma	\$626
14.9%	Less than High School Diploma	\$444
Average 8.2%		Average: \$782

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

- Washington has experienced an increase in the unemployment rate over the past two years; in November 2011, the unemployment rate was 8.3%, almost double the same month in 2007 (4.64%). Over the same time period, the Seattle-Bellevue-Everett Metropolitan Division increased from 3.9% to 8.3%. These changes mirror trends at the national, census region, and state level.⁸

- Between 2008 and 2009, over 48,000 more children became low income, for a total of almost 565,000 - one of every three - children statewide.⁹ Children living in poverty are more likely

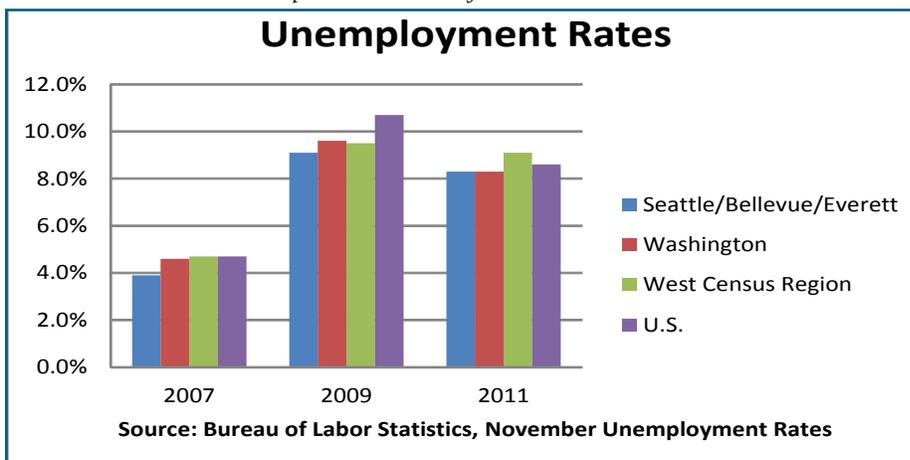
single mothers earn as much as 44% less.⁶

- The aging of the population has enormous implications for the workforce. As large numbers of employees retire within a relatively short timespan, they will be taking with them a great deal of knowledge and experience, possibly affecting firms' productivity. Workers between the ages of 45 and 54 made up nearly 14% of all job holders in 1990, but that portion jumped to nearly 22% in 2005. In 2007, workers older than 55 comprised 15% of the workforce. In King County, the two youngest age groups (14-24 and 25-34) are decreasing while the mid-aged job holders have retained a similar portion of all job holders

to lack health insurance, have poor health outcomes, and have less access to quality early learning experiences.¹⁰ Children who grow up in poverty cost the U.S. at least \$500 billion annually in the form of decreased economic output as adults, involvement with crime, and the costs associated with poor health outcomes. Washington's share of this loss is \$8.7 billion.¹¹

Unemployment Assistance Provides Support

- Unemployment insurance is calculated using a percentage of an individual's past year's earnings rather than financial need. Therefore, individuals who worked low-paying jobs before unemployment often fall deeper into financial hardship while unemployed. As of 2007, for 56% of claimants, unemployment insurance makes up the majority or entirety of their income, down 14% from 2005.¹²



- In King County, initial unemployment insurance claims hit a 5-year low (5450) in May 2011, before nearly doubling (9760) the next month.¹³ Statewide, between June 2006 and June 2011, initial unemployment claims increased by 47% (from 28,600 to 42,050).¹⁴
- Studies show that people on unemployment benefits spend their money on the basics, with nearly 70% going to food, housing and transportation.¹⁵ As a result of having unemployment insurance, the amount of money an unemployed household spends on food decreases 7%, but would decline a total of 22% without benefits. In 2007, unemployed Washington households spent two thirds of their income on food, housing and transportation.¹⁶

Recent and Future Job Market

- Washington State's job market seems to be slowly improving: in spring 2011, there were 60,087 job vacancies statewide, a 55.1% increase from spring 2010. This is the third consecutive increase in vacancies since the end of the recession in June 2009. However, most job vacancies are found in the Puget Sound region, especially King County (46% of all job vacancies). In King County, the number of job vacancies reported in spring 2010 was 27,735, up 42% from 10,637 in spring 2010.¹⁷
- Three industry groups accounted for more than 45% of all vacancies: healthcare/social assistance, retail, and accommodation and food services. The survey found that more than 90 percent of openings requiring a bachelor's degree also required previous experience. This finding indicates education alone may not be enough to land a job in the current market. Internships and work experiences are becoming increasingly important.¹⁸
- From 1970 to 2000, job growth in Bellevue exceeded population growth such that Bellevue went from having 1 job for every 3 residents in 1970 to having 1.2 jobs for every resident in 2000. However over the past decade, while population continued to grow, increasing by 11.6 percent, job growth declined by one percent. In 2010, citywide employment was estimated at about 130,900 and population at 122,363 resulting in a drop in Bellevue's jobs ratio to 1.07 jobs per resident. Shifts also occurred among the different employment sectors with over 25 percent declines in construction, manufacturing, and wholesale, transportation, and utilities (WTC) jobs and nearly a ten percent increase in service sector jobs.¹⁹

Minimum Wage vs. Living Wage

- Washington State's minimum wage in 2011 is \$8.67, the highest in the country.²⁰ However, an adult making the minimum wage and supporting two children is under the federal poverty level (FPL), \$18,530 for a family of three.²¹
- A "living wage" is often defined as the minimum income needed to purchase basic necessities without from public assistance. Living wage calculations often include the cost of housing, food, transportation, health care, taxes, childcare and household, clothing and personal items. Alliance for a Just Society (formerly called the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations) developed a living wage calculation for each county in the state.²² Another way to determine a living wage, developed by the Center for Women's Welfare at the University of Washington, calculates a Self-Sufficiency Wage, or the amount of money a certain family type would have to make in order to live without public supports or assistance.²³ The web-based King County Self-Sufficiency Calculator computes self-sufficiency wages for different family types anywhere in the county. This figure is for residents living in East King County and as such has adjusted higher housing and childcare rates.
- In Washington State, the lowest calculated living wage for a single adult is \$3.23 more than the current minimum wage and a living wage for a single adult with two

children is \$18.16 more than the State's current minimum wage of \$8.67/hour in 2011.²⁴

Living Wage Comparison		
Family Type	Alliance	Self Sufficiency Standard
Single Adult	\$16.72	11.90/hr
	\$35,312.64	\$25,126
Single Adult with a school aged child (6-8 years)	\$22.90	19.79/hr
	\$48,364.80	\$41,800
Single Adult with a school-aged child and a toddler (12-24 months)	\$32.01	26.83/hr
	\$67,605.12	\$56,675
Two Adults (both working) with a school-aged child and a toddler	\$30.18	\$14.40/hr
	\$63,740.16	\$60,838
Two Adults (one working) with a school-aged child and a toddler	\$41.24	NA
	\$87,098.88	NA

- Of those industries with the highest vacancies, a significant proportion of the jobs available are for permanent, full-time positions. However, many of those jobs also require special licensure and/or previous experience, potentially limiting the candidate pool.²⁵

Childcare Childcare Availability

- In 2010, there were 2,138 licensed childcare homes and centers in King County; 75% of them are center-based and 25% are family childcare. This represents a slight increase (12%) compared to 2007 when the total was 1,908. In King County, there were 55,074 slots in 2010.²⁶ In East King County, in 2010, there were 13,307 slots; 10,095 in child care centers and 3,212 in family child care homes. This total represents a small increase (4%) compared to 2008.²⁷
- Licensed childcare is not the choice of some families. Nearly 21% of children ages 0-5 are cared for by a family member, friend, or neighbor (FFN) as their primary care arrangement. In King County,

this would be about 60,000 children; for 28,000 of those children, they are the primary source of care while parents are working or attending school.²⁸

Families more likely to have FFN childcare arrangements include those who are low or moderate-income, Latino, African American, refugees and immigrants, and those with a child with special needs. Given the growing number of refugees and immigrants with young children settling in Bellevue, it is likely that many of these families use FFN care.

- Issues such as language and culture, location and transportation, hours of operation, quality concerns and cost all affect childcare availability for a family. Only 7% of providers in King

County offer childcare after 6:30 pm, 3% overnight and/or 4% during weekends. Parents working non-standard shifts have a very difficult time finding licensed childcare.

Childcare Affordability

- Childcare for an East King County family with an infant and pre-schooler in full-time care can cost between \$22,048 and \$29,172/year. Childcare costs in East King County are the highest in the County.²⁹ Currently, East King County childcare centers have a median cost of \$15,392/year for an infant, more than one-fifth of the county's median household income. Family childcare, although a less-expensive option, costs \$11,388, 17% of median household income.
- The State's childcare subsidy program Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) serves low-income families. For most of its history, WCCC has served families with earnings of up to 200% of the federal poverty level.³⁰ That eligibility level was changed briefly in 2006, cutting it back to 175% of the FPL as a cost-cutting mea-

sure, causing many families to lose their eligibility. Advocates opposed these cuts because they believed it could cause many people to return to welfare if they lost their subsidized childcare, and eventually the program was restored to the 200% FPL eligibility level.⁵¹ However, the income level was once again reduced to 175% in October 2010, resulting in a 15% decline in WCCC participants. About 24% of households receiving WCCC subsidies live in King County, and this is the only region whose WCCC caseloads remain higher than in 2005.⁵² Enrollment is still capped at 35,000 families, which has created a statewide waiting list of 3,455.⁵³

- Many childcare centers and homes accept only a few families using WCCC subsidies because the reimbursement rates are lower than market rate; this can present a financial hardship for providers. As of December 2010, of the 167 childcare centers and family childcare homes in Bellevue, 56% report accepting subsidies, slightly fewer than 2 years ago.⁵⁴

Childcare Quality

- Higher quality childcare influences the development of greater cognitive, language and social skills in young children, critical for school readiness. Many factors, such as accreditation, language and cultural competency and employee skill, determine childcare quality.⁵⁵ Only 10% of operating childcare centers in Bellevue are accredited, and only 2 of the 95 family childcare homes have accreditation.
- Quality is highly influenced by childcare staff. However, childcare staff receive fairly low wages for their work. In Washington, a teacher in a childcare center makes, on average, \$21,600/year, about \$24,000 less than kindergarten teachers.⁵⁶ The lack of competitive wages makes it difficult to recruit and retain educated childcare workers. Washington State Department of Social & Health Services found that, among childcare providers earning only \$7.00/hour, annual attrition is over 60%, where-

as those earning at least \$13.00/hour have an attrition rate of only 30%.⁵⁷

Specific Populations

- *Note: See People with Disabilities and Immigrants and Refugees sections for more information on education and job skills within these two populations.*

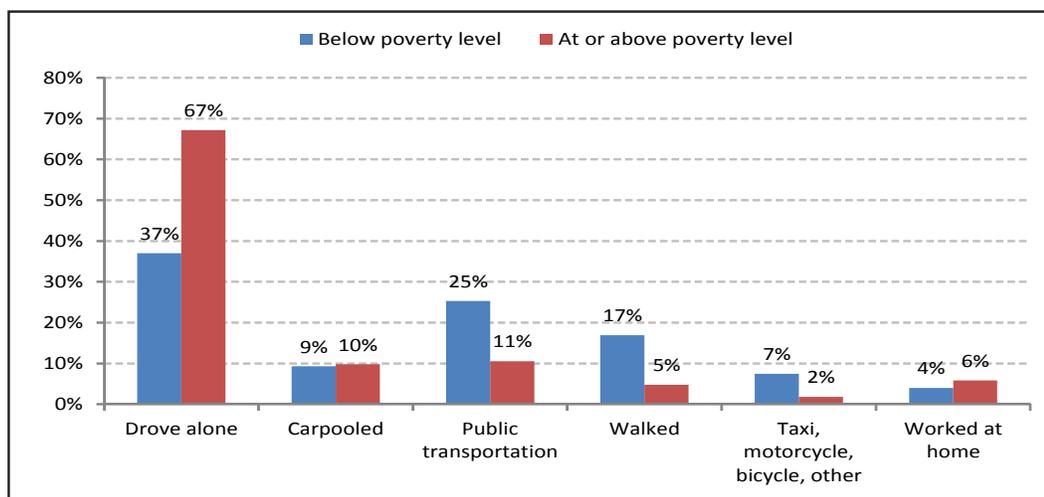
Transportation

- The percentage of Bellevue residents commuting to work by means other than driving alone has steadily increased going from 26% in 2000 to 33% in 2008-2010. An increasing percentage of residents took public transportation to get to work. In 2008-2010, about 11% of residents used public transportation to get to work, up from only 7% in 2000. In 2005-2009, Crossroads (19%), Factoria (15%) and Downtown (13%) were the three neighborhood areas with the highest percentages of residents commuting to work via public transit. In contrast, Somerset and Northwest Bellevue had around 4%.⁵⁸

Community Perceptions

- More than one-third of 2011 phone/online survey respondents rated *inadequate public transportation* as a moderate or major community problem, an increase over 2009 responses.
- In both 2009 and 2011, Bellevue residents cited *inadequate public transportation* as the most prevalent household problem. In 2005, only 11% of residents noted it as a major or moderate household problem, compared to 20% in 2011.
- Forty percent of the respondents to the consumer survey reported *having difficulty finding public transportation to get to work or other places*.
- In the 2011 provider survey, 64% of respondents reported that their clients needed, but could not find, help with transportation.

Means of Transportation to Work by Poverty Status



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey

Service Trends

WorkFirst Participation Among Bellevue-area Residents

- WorkFirst participants must be working or actively seeking a job and assistance is limited to 60 months in a person's lifetime. The program provides training and education for low-income parents working at least 20 hours per week. In March 2011, 2,528 low-income parents in Washington State are enrolled in job skills trainings, down nearly 39% from 2009.³⁹ In July 2011, 13,748 WorkFirst families in King County had their monthly support reduced by 15% due to the State budget deficit. Additionally, some families lost all this support due to time limits. The median wage earned by King Eastside WorkFirst clients is \$10.99/hour, higher than the statewide median wage of \$9.64.⁴⁰

Available Supports and Training for Employment

- The Women's Center for Career Connections at Bellevue College (BC) helps people enrolled in WorkFirst, immigrants, homemakers and others to find living-wage jobs and obtain job training through career transition courses, job placement and job-specific training. Staff report an increase in clients in this poor economy. There is also more competition for existing jobs,

but 74% of participants report they have jobs or are enrolled in further training.⁴¹

- BC also offers courses for English-as-a-Second-Language. In 2009, they provided Bellevue residents with more than 2000 hours of instruction and assistance in English reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Some courses specifically include job-seeking related content.⁴²
- Washington's Employment Security Department's WorkSource Centers around the state provide onsite resources for employers and workers. Unemployed workers can file for unemployment insurance, get information about education and training, and a number of other resources to assist in job search and skills development.⁴³ WorkSource provides information about program and service eligibility that participants may not know about. Participants in a Community Conversation stated that the needs of clients were much more "white collar" than in the past.⁴⁴ Some newly unemployed clients do not have the technical skills and knowledge to successfully execute a job search in this difficult job market.

"The long-term unemployed are the hardest to find jobs for. Employers do not want to hire people who have been out of work for a long time."
WorkSource, Community Conversation

Childcare Supports and Services

- Child Care Resources (CCR) provides assistance to Bellevue families in accessing quality childcare. They report that changes in subsidy eligibility means that fewer families can receive state funding and, as a result, request other locally funded scholarship programs. As of May 2011, there were 21 families on the waiting list for CCR's Bellevue residents scholarship program, and wait times have tripled since 2009.⁴⁵
- There is a growing need in King County for programs specifically providing childcare to homeless families. Child Care Resources case managers help families secure stable, quality childcare so they can find housing, look for work, and go to court or medical appointments. In 2011, the program averaged 32 family intakes per month, compared to 29 in 2010 and 25 in 2009.⁴⁶
- Child Care Resources also supports a network of Play and Learn groups, play groups specifically designed to provide culturally appropriate support for FFN caregivers and parents. More than 60 groups meet weekly around the county, holding sessions in multiple languages led by trained facilitators; participants receive information about child development and community resources. It also gives young children cared for by FFNs a chance to develop socialization and early literacy skills which will increase their readiness for school. Three Play and Learn groups are currently meeting in Bellevue, one in Chinese, and one in Spanish.
- Bellevue College (BC) provides a Headstart program for BC student families. They also provide an early learning center for children age 3 months to 6 years old as well. The bigger issue impacting low-income families is the severe decrease in DSHS childcare subsidies money. Student families have no other way to pay for childcare when they attend classes.⁴⁷
- Bellevue School District provides full day childcare and half day pre-school to children six weeks to 5th grade.⁴⁸ Bellevue funds provide scholarships to families who cannot afford the full cost of care.
- During the 2007 State Legislative session, lawmakers passed a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), a voluntary system offering providers help and rewards to increase the quality of care in centers, family childcare homes, and school-aged programs.⁴⁹ The program, to be piloted in five areas around the State, including one in King County beginning in 2008, was on hold because of the state's current budget situation.⁵⁰ However, a new federal grant "Race to the Top" recently awarded to Washington State will allow QRIS to move forward.
- United Way of King County launched an initiative to assist childcare centers in obtaining national accreditation. They helped the centers with this effort by partnering with Child Care Resources to provide technical assistance and funds for training. The program ended in June, 2011.⁵¹

Community Perceptions

- Forty percent of 2011 phone/online survey respondents rated *people having jobs that do not pay enough for the basics of food, shelter and clothing* as a major/moderate problem in their community. This is a significant increase from 2009, and the highest rating received in 10 years.
- Ratings of *Unemployment* as a community problem have continued to significantly increase every year since 2003, peaking this year at 55%. For example, in 2007, only 16.7% of respondents reported *unemployment* as a major/moderate community problem. *Unemployment* is now the second highest community concern, compared to

"Lack of access to infant and toddler child care for children with special health care needs is a problem. Finding quality, affordable care is difficult, and lack of subsidies is a barrier."

*King County Interagency Coordinating Council,
Community Conversation*

- 2007 when it was not even in the top 10.
- People’s perception of affordable and quality childcare as a problem increased significantly from 2009. This year, 20 % of phone survey respondents said that *lack of quality childcare* was a major/moderate community problem, and 39 % rated *lack of affordable childcare* at the same level, both significant increases.
- At the household level, 20 % ranked *not being able to find work that supports yourself or your family* as a major/moderate problem, a significant increase from 2009. Half of consumer survey respondents said that *not being able to find work that supports yourself or your family* was a major/moderate problem in their household, about the same as the 2007 survey. Twenty-nine percent of consumer survey households contain an adult who has difficulty with basic reading or filling out a job application.
- Twenty-three percent of phone/online survey respondents who reported major/moderate household problems said they had looked for help but didn’t find the help they needed. Twenty percent couldn’t find help with employment assistance, an increase from 2007, and 8 % couldn’t access childcare assistance in 2011, a decrease from 2009.
- Fewer phone/online survey respondents ranked *not being able to find affordable or quality childcare* as a household problem than as a community problem. The rankings for affordable and quality childcare were both only 7 %, although this represents an increase from 2009.
- Individuals participating in the Community Conversation at WorkSource mentioned that transportation and income eligibility were obstacles to their clients to receive the training and human services needed as they search for employment.⁵²
- In Child Care Resources’ provider survey, they specifically mentioned barriers to accessing child care for working parents, such as exhausted TANF limits and insufficient availability of providers.⁵³ In previ-

ous years, staff members mentioned that DSHS paid providers low reimbursement rates and many childcare centers would not accept the participants. As the unemployment rate increases, more parents, particularly fathers, are participating in Play and Learn groups. Additionally, some people are providing childcare from their home to make extra money although many are unaware of state licensing requirements.

Implications for Action

- The economic downturn shows that Bellevue workers are not immune to job cuts. Individuals receiving unemployment insurance typically are dependant upon the payments for a majority of their living expenses. Additional support is needed as the length of unemployment for many workers spans beyond the period of benefit and they deplete their savings.
- The decrease in middle-income job opportunities makes it harder for people at lower incomes to access better job opportunities. There are more low-income job opportunities, but along with these come financial instability, dependence on public supports that are dwindling due to budget cuts and less of a chance to obtain additional training to increase skills to find a better job. A living wage for a family living in Bellevue is higher than in other parts of King County.
- Bellevue residents have a high level of educational attainment, however, there are few vacancies that pay a living wage. It will be critical to attract business and industry that pay living wages.
- Barriers to employment such as lack of affordable childcare, limited English speaking skills, the absence of coordinated transportation and lack of training to secure higher wage jobs are key issues to be addressed to help people improve their economic conditions and the quality of their lives.

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