

Prepared in response to 6-10-15 PIC questions

- **Sheila Capestany**, Strategic Advisor for Children and Youth King County Department of Community & Human Services (206) 263-7823Sheila.Capestany@kingcounty.gov
 - **Adrienne Quinn**, Director Department of Community & Human Services
 - **Patty Hayes**, Director of Public Health Seattle & King County
-

#1—Outcomes and Strategies

Several members expressed concern that voters would not understand what the funds would be spent on because the initiative outcomes are not clear and there are no specific “projects or programs”.

Outcomes and strategies in which Best Starts for Kids would invest are included in the material accompanying the levy ordinance. Information on outcomes, as well as individual and community indicators, are summarized below and can be found on pages 2-3 in here. The strategies are also listed below and can be found here.

As we have had conversations in the community, people understand that King County is diverse in terms of geography; what local jurisdictions or school districts fund (e.g. Roadmap, Issaquah Schools trauma informed schools training); rural v. urban, race, culture and language. One size does not fill all in King County. Through the implementation planning process, we will work with local communities to ensure that BSK programs are complementary to existing programs. A levy that called out specific programs right now would either be too lengthy and complicated to describe or would not be flexible enough to meet the different approaches needed across the county. Citizens do seem to recognize the challenges and opportunities BSK is seeking to address.

We agree that it is important to have clear communications about the outcomes and strategies of the initiative and will continue to develop information for the public to describe the substance and strategies.

Best Starts for Kids Outcomes

Best Starts for Kids was developed based on outcomes that King County wants to achieve for our region:

1. Babies are born healthy and establish a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being.
2. King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities to progress through childhood safely and healthy, building academic and life skills to be thriving members of their community.
3. Communities offer safe, welcoming, and healthy environments that help improve outcomes for all of King County’s children and families, regardless of where they live.

It may be several decades for many of the outcomes to be realized. However, during the six-year life of the Levy, King County will show progress in reaching these outcomes by setting indicators and establishing goals. Indicators will be at both the individual and community levels. While many of the

indicators and their associated goals will be based on strategies with proven results, King County recognizes that not all practices are appropriate or have been tested on all cultural and ethnic groups. Best Starts for Kids will also fund promising practices and pay for evaluation of these practices so that promising practices can become proven practices. King County's progress towards the goals associated with these indicators will signal that we are on the path to achieving our overall outcomes. Examples of indicators and goals include:

Individual Indicators:*

- Increase the percent of pregnant women who receive early and adequate prenatal care to **78%**
- Increase technical assistance to child care providers by **25%**
- Reduce psychiatric hospitalizations for children and youth by **15%**
- Decrease the percent of youth using alcohol or drugs to **15%**
- Increase the percent of youth who feel they have an adult in their community that they can talk to about something important to **76%**
- Decrease the percent of school-age youth in South King County who are at an unhealthy weight to **23%**

**Goals are based on adherence to a proven model.*

Community Indicators (some are long-term indicators)

- Decrease in inequities in outcomes for children and youth in King County
- Decrease in disparities in health and well-being outcomes currently seen between different areas within King County
- Decrease in funds spent on crisis services, such as incarceration and involuntary commitment
- Decrease in domestic violence
- Increase in family and youth who are prevented from entering homelessness
- Decrease in suspensions and expulsions, from child care through high school
- Improve the quality of life index (health, housing and economic opportunity) in Communities of Opportunity

All of the outcomes and indicators will be refined as part of the Levy implementation phase. We will ensure alignment with other significant initiatives focused on children and youth in the community, such as the Youth Action Plan, Road Map Project (<http://www.roadmapproject.org/>) and the Seattle Pre-School Program (<http://www.seattle.gov/education/childcare-and-preschool/seattle-preschool-program>), so that the same outcomes are being measured and evaluated.

Best Starts for Kids Strategies

1. Strategies Aimed at Pregnancy and Early Childhood

➤ **Support for Parents, Families and Caregivers**

Raising a young child can be challenging, and the science is clear – the more support a community can provide for caregivers, the more likely it is for children in King County to be successful in school and life. This is particularly true for families that are isolated or facing multiple challenges. With each of these strategies, the strategy will address the disparate outcomes we have for children in King County and prove resources targeted to eliminate inequities in outcomes between children of different races or cultures. This strategy will focus on:

A. **Providing moms and families key information and support services during pregnancy and after the child arrives.** Assuring a woman has access to prenatal care in the first trimester; assuring a mom can successfully breastfeed during the first year of life; linking families to critical services when there are problems such as domestic violence or substance abuse; and access to general information on growth and development of babies are all best practices that should be available to all families.

B. **Support for parents and caregivers if babies and toddlers are facing a challenge.** Expanding parent-to-parent support groups and other options so parents and caregivers have in the moment support when they face challenges such as a baby who won't stop crying, a toddler having tantrums, or a preschooler with special needs, to ensure all families with young children are leading happy healthier lives.

C. **Home-based visiting for new moms and babies.** Sometimes what a family needs most is someone who will come to them. Home visiting programs are a proven technique delivering positive outcomes for children, families and society in both the short and long term, by supporting the development of parents and their children, and helping parents create healthy and safe environments for their families. This strategy will expand home visiting options in King County.

➤ **Cultivate Caregiver Knowledge**

Everyone who cares for an infant, toddler or preschooler – whether parents, family members, friends or neighbors – wants that child to reach their full potential. There is a broad array of scientific knowledge around a baby's brain development and services available in King County and parents and caregivers need help in knowing how to find the right resources for them. These resources need to be accessible to, and appropriate for, all county residents. This strategy will focus on:

A. **Outreach, resource and referral coordination.** There are excellent programs for children in King County, but parents and caregivers may not know how to find them. This strategy seeks to ensure that information is readily available and accessible to all parents and caregivers.

B. **Providing information on healthy child development in a variety of languages and formats, including information on what the latest neuroscience is telling us about child development.** All parents and caregivers should have the opportunity to benefit from the resources and knowledge in King County regardless of their language, culture or zip code.

➤ **Support High Quality Child Care (in home & in agencies & licensed & unlicensed)**

The science is very clear: high quality care, whether in a home or classroom environment, can enhance a child's development. This strategy seeks to leverage state and local efforts to expand the availability of quality options in several ways:

A. **Assist providers in creating positive, healthy and safe child care environments.** Work with and provide training for providers to incorporate best practices related to nutrition, physical activity, and safety. Training should be culturally and linguistically appropriate and offered at a time and place that enables child care workers to attend. This strategy will also assist child care providers in procuring products that meet federal nutrition standards.

B. **Training and tools for all child care providers.** By providing equitable training resources and coaching so that all child care providers—whether they are providers in a home, at a child care agency or school—are able to address the developmental needs of a wide range of children including those with delays, disabilities and exposure to trauma.

C. **Expanding consultation and technical assistance resources for child care providers.** By expanding the availability of child care consultants who can work with providers, children and families, issues and challenges around developmental, physical, social-emotional and mental health needs of young children can be addressed early.

➤ **Screen Children to Prevent Likely Problems, Intervene Early and Effectively Link to Treatment**

Some children experience bumps in the road in their development and growth for a wide variety of reasons. The sooner potential problems are identified, the more readily development can return to an optimal path and reduce demands on educational systems over time. Science is also telling us children who are exposed to 'toxic stress' (adverse childhood experiences such as child abuse, neglect, domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, or chronic poverty) are more likely to have costly health problems as adults (such as heart disease, high blood pressure, mental illness and obesity). To support optimal health, well-being and academic success, this strategy will focus on:

- A. **Expanding developmental screening to all young children.** Identifying issues early—along with prevention, early intervention, treatment or other resources and services—assures a child the best possible opportunity to thrive.
- B. **Identification and early intervention programs specifically for children who have experienced traumatic stress.** Whether the trauma is domestic violence, sexual assault, an incarcerated parent, homelessness or other trauma, early intervention can prevent re-victimization or long-term effects of trauma. This strategy will improve system partnerships that prevent children and families from accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate, trauma-informed developmental supports, services and care.
- C. **Prevent family homelessness via a client-centered flexible fund.** This would provide assistance to families such as paying for a few months of child care if mom would have to quit her job because she couldn't afford child care until her first paycheck arrived. This is based on a highly successful pilot program implemented by organizations serving domestic violence survivors and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

2. Strategies Aimed at School-Aged Children & Youth and their Families & Caregivers

- **Build resiliency of youth and reduce risky-behaviors.** When kids have the right information and have developed skills to navigate difficult situations, they can make healthy choices. Frequently, children receive help only if there is a behavioral issue or they are identified as “at-risk.” Best Starts for Kids proposes that prevention, early intervention and treatment (when needed), addressing depression, other mental illness, substance use, tobacco use, or trauma such as violence (including domestic violence) or bullying be available to all King County's young people so that we can prevent the problem before the youth is “at-risk.” We know that if many of these issues are treated early, a lifetime of problems can be avoided. Best Starts for Kids will also provide support for families if it turns out the child needs early intervention or treatment.
- **Helping youth stay connected to their families and communities.** Youth and families can sometimes benefit from assistance to build coping mechanisms and encouragement to reach out for support when personal or family problems arise. Best Starts for Kids will support services that help families and youth stay connected to each other and to their communities.
- **Creating healthy and safe environments for youth.** Focusing on where youth spend much of their time, assisting places such as schools, youth programs and community centers to implement prevention-focused practices and policies that help ensure children have access to nutritious food, high quality physical activity, and environments that limit exposure to potentially dangerous products and substances.

- **Meeting the health and behavior needs of youth.** Expanding convenient access to preventive health services in schools (such as help managing asthma, and testing for sexually transmitted disease) and working to ensure all children and youth are enrolled in healthcare is a proven way to have lasting positive health outcomes for children and youth.
- **Helping young adults who have had challenges successfully transition into adulthood.** Transitioning into adulthood is hard and even more challenging for young adults who do not have a stable family support system, such as young people aging out of foster care, those who have been involved in the juvenile justice system, or others who are disconnected from families. Best Starts for Kids will focus on helping these young people at this critical transition in their life to reconnect with education, employment and stable adult supports.
- **Flexible fund to prevent youth from becoming homeless.** Homeless youth are frequently victimized once on the streets. This fund will prevent youth from living on the streets; therefore preventing the trauma that would have lasting negative consequences for the young person.
- **Stopping the school to prison pipeline.** While research shows that the early prevention and intervention strategies in Best Starts for Kids will reduce incarceration, these strategies will be successful for those who are currently babies and young children. Best Starts for Kids will adopt proven strategies to divert youth from the juvenile justice system, prevent incarceration and address disproportionality.
- **Outreach, resource and referral.** Just as with young children, parents, caregivers and other caring adults need help in knowing how to find the right resources for them among the many great resources that exist throughout King County for raising youth and young adults. Outreach and resources need to be available and accessible to all parents, caregivers and kids throughout the County regardless of their language, culture or neighborhood. Peer navigation and inclusion of community leaders is an important part of this outreach strategy.

3. Strategies Aimed at the Community (Communities of Opportunity)

Children and families live within communities, and the communities within which we live, work, and play have an enormous influence health and well-being. It's been said recently that a person's zip code plays a bigger role in their future health and well-being than their genetic code.

For example, children are more likely to succeed and live more productive, longer, healthier lives if they live in communities that have strong social networks, are free from violence, provide convenient access to healthy, affordable food, support drug and tobacco free living, and offer opportunities for physical activity. When kids grow up in communities with these kinds of features, they are less likely to experience health problems like asthma, diabetes, and substance abuse disorders; less likely to end up in jail or unemployed; and less likely to experience or die from violence.

In order for King County’s children and youth to have Best Starts, there needs to be an investment in strategies that engage the whole community to create safe and healthy environments. Best Starts for Kids will support work done in close partnership with community institutions (such as schools, parks, housing agencies, city planners, child care facilities, retailers, hospitals, and community organizations) to create environments and places that foster health.

This approach to partnering with communities is currently being undertaken in King County through the “Communities of Opportunity” partnership with philanthropic organizations, enabling greater resources to flow into local communities.

Best Starts for Kids will expand the Communities of Opportunity partnership, creating opportunities for improvements to occur in even more communities and neighborhoods.

Best Starts for Kids will:

- Create opportunities for residents, including youth, to engage and participate in efforts to improve the physical and social conditions of their community.
- Support and enable work to happen collaboratively within and across sectors by focusing on a common agenda.
- Build community capacity to implement changes in policies, systems, and environments that lead to improved community conditions; and
- Collect, analyze, and use data for learning and accountability.

Best Starts for Kids will also support ways to connect all communities with information on best practices, proven strategies and resources through learning collaboratives or resource toolkits.

While strategies will differ from community to community, below are a few examples of the kinds of proven strategies that communities might decide to carry out:

- Working together to create more opportunities for physical activity in the community, such as street designs that support walking and biking; establishing safe routes to school; and creating better access to recreation facilities and programs, such as buses home for after-school sports and recreation programs.
- Working together on a comprehensive community approach to increasing access to healthy and affordable food, particularly in low income communities—through strategies such as increasing the amount of local fruits and vegetables available through local food banks or nutrition incentive programs through local farmers markets, farm stands, and retailers. Additionally, these activities can have the added benefit of promoting local jobs.
- Working together to assure that homes, schools, child care centers and out-of-school environments better promote the physical and mental health of residents

by assuring new places are designed to promote health, and by working to address substandard housing and facilities and hazards in these environments that can contribute to a wide range of problems for children and youth, such as asthma, injuries, and increased risk of cancer.

#2—Governance

Need to strengthen governance portion of the levy. What role will the advisory boards play? If cities have a seat, how many? At a minimum, Redmond believes that each geographic area should have a seat (North, East, South). With growing suburbanization of homelessness, need to have representation outside of the metro areas.

The Executive supports advisory boards, accountability, reporting and geographic representation on the advisory bodies. The proposal for the advisory body was modeled on the Youth Action Plan recommendation and allows the Council to determine what the composition of the advisory body for the children and youth programs would be.

The advisory body that oversees the Communities of Opportunity investment (COO Interim Governance Group) is a collective impact governance body jointly designed by King County and The Seattle Foundation. Membership currently includes Deanna Dawson. Collective impact refers to “the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.” In COO, this approach includes fostering community ownership of solutions to reduce health and social outcome disparities. Members of the communities most affected by these disparities are engaged before the specific nature of the solutions or programs are determined, and they help to design the solutions that will fit their community best.

#3—Reporting/Accountability

Reporting should include a required annual report to RPC. Include dollars and percentages for each community.

The Executive supports an amendment to the ordinance requiring annual reporting to the Council and RPC. The programs are intended to be universal, meaning that they are available to all children in King County.

Reporting components will be developed during the implementation phase in consultation with the advisory boards.

Accountability is critical –What assurances are there that community partners have a record of success to actually implement the levy. Concern about investing in programs that can’t make the goals/achieve the outcomes identified.

The large majority of Best Starts for Kids funding will be competitively bid in outcomes-focused contracts to community-based organizations. The investments will be determined as part of a comprehensive community planning process during which a detailed Implementation Plan will be

developed that identifies what programs, interventions and approaches will be funded and what the specific and quantifiable outcomes will be. See response to study/evaluation for more information on the intent to evaluate programs and their success.

#4—Public Health funding

Northshore public health clinic cuts – concerned that, while there is language about the services, the ordinance should have stronger language of the funding levels that would go to public health. Does proposed funding cover all of the operation in the clinic or only children and family services? Concern that this funding not be used to supplant WIC.

If Best Starts for Kids passes, funding would go to support, stabilize and expand the maternal child health services that have historically been provided through Public Health Centers. These services include maternity support services/WIC, Nurse Family Partnership and family planning. They would be stabilized at 2014 service levels.

The Executive would support amending the findings of fact in the levy ordinance to establish the clear intent to include this within BSK.

#5—Evaluation and information

Why is there so much money set aside for evaluation and information?

Key to the long-term success and accountability of Best Starts for Kids is ensuring that the outcomes are met and residents of King County experience a high return on their investment. To that end, the 6% spent on “evaluation, data collection and improving the delivery of services and programs for children, youth and their communities” will be dedicated to administering and evaluating the difference Best Starts for Kids is making in our community and for King County’s children and creating learning and feedback loops for continuous improvement. As outlined in the report to Council found [here](#), this includes activities such as:

- ensuring implementation of high-quality, culturally responsive strategies
- using innovation, data and science to inform investments;
- engaging neighborhoods, policymakers, schools and other partners in creating change; and
- aligning work with other efforts for an even greater impact.

In addition, Best Starts for Kids will have a specific focus on partnering with and supporting small culturally and ethnically specific agencies to generate and evaluate the data necessary to **move promising approaches to evidence based practices**. As with all strategies, there needs to be opportunities to take risks on new approaches. Not all approaches will be successful; however, the goal of Best Starts for Kids’ evaluation will be to figure out which approaches are most successful and how approaches that are not successful can be changed or if they should be discontinued.

