



# Comprehensive Plan Section 6 – Key Strategy Identification

## 6. Key Strategy Identification

### 6.1 Community Input Processes

Having set its focus areas, the Network revisited communities, coalitions and youth to seek their input on identifying strategies to pursue in addressing community problem behaviors and risk factors.

#### Community Meetings

Following the Network Board decisions on November 21, when problem behaviors and priority risk and protective factors were selected, a second round of community meetings was conducted.

These meetings had several purposes:

- Provide feedback to communities on results of the 1st series of community meetings;
- Advise communities of the Board's decisions on priority problems and risk/protective factors;
- Solicit input from the community on what strategies they wish the Board to pursue in addressing prioritized problem behaviors.

In addition, the meetings sought to:

- Identify vital gaps in the existing family support service system;
- Educate community members on strategies identified in research as effective in preventing or addressing the prioritized problem behaviors.

#### Participation

Total participation at the second round meetings increased only slightly over the first round to 111 persons. Those who attended these meetings were particularly energetic and resourceful in the discussions. Half of those present had not attended the earlier meeting but nevertheless effectively added to the discussions. A Board member attended all but one meeting (due to illness). A somewhat broader spectrum of participants attended, as more parents, law enforcement (local police and County Sheriff Departments) and youth program leaders participated than had been involved in the first round.

#### Identification of Gaps

The discussion of gaps in the community support system covered a broad range of issues. However, three major themes were expressed by meeting participants:

- Lack of Parent Involvement and Responsibility - Parents are not sufficiently involved in the lives of their children. They do not take advantage of opportunities (through schools, or participation in youth organizations) to be involved in their children's lives. We do not know effective ways to increase parent involvement. Involvement in school classrooms and organization has worked to make parents aware of the issues facing youth and the pressures they are facing. How to increase parent involvement in these areas remains a challenge.
- Parents Lack Skills to be Effective Parents - Parents lack training and skills development for their role. They are often unprepared to understand or cope with changes in the growth and

maturity of their child. Often they withdraw from decision-making or communicating expectations because they lack the skills and knowledge to effectively manage parent-child relationships.

- Lack of Mobile Services for Families in Need - Community members expressed frustration in not being able to engage parents needing training and support in using existing services. The current service system was seen as lacking the flexibility to meet the needs of a mobile population. Home visitation services to apartment residents and programs and training provided at rental complexes were identified as major needs. In addition, income eligibility constraints on programs were seen as barriers to in-home services.

While these three themes were the most prominent, several others received considerable attention in the meetings:

- Lack of Mobility for Persons Needing Service - Services are not always available near the family in need and (as noted above) are not typically provided on site. Decentralizing services, providing mobile/in home services, and/or increasing transportation options were all identified as possible solutions to this problem.
- Lack of Community Development/Organization in Problem-Solving - Youth and their families often need services for more than one problem, in more than one setting. Participants identified the need for multi-disciplinary, multi-sector teams in addressing the needs of youth and families. Parent-Service Provider-Teacher Teams within the schools, Student-Teacher Teams, Police-Community Teams were identified to deal more effectively with problems in the community. An increase in community involvement by law enforcement and increased use of schools as a resource were frequently identified as needs.
- Lack of Skill-building Available to Youth - Increased focus on teaching coping skills, refusal skills, conflict resolution skills and both the recognition and understanding of sexuality was identified as a priority, in order to give youth the tools and skills they need. Few curricula in schools provide for the social development skills and supports needed by youth.

In discussion of the gaps in service, there was a frequent contrast between expressed need for family responsibility and parent skill-building and the provision of youth services in schools and through community organizations. Some participants expressed frustration with their inability to reach those families and parents most in need of support and training - and so sought to provide supports directly to youth through school-based and community mobilization strategies.

### **Identification of Specific Programs and Activities Needed in the Support System -**

Participants also identified their priorities for specific programs and activities in three settings: schools, the community and families. These priorities were largely consistent across the school districts.

#### **Schools**

- There were few strong trends evident in school priorities.
- The area most frequently expressed was youth skill-building in school curricula, such as anger management, conflict resolution, dating skills/violence and social skill development for transition from elementary to secondary school.
- Other areas included activities to strengthen parent/teacher relationships, increase parent involvement, school dropout/re-entry strategies, mentoring programs and early childhood education programs such as Healthy Start and Head Start.

#### **Community**

- The most prevalent theme was Development of Comprehensive Community Strategies and Partnerships, involving several sectors of the community to build "community", such as community events, business involvement with youth, apartment dweller strategies involving landlords, social service providers, schools and police.
- Partnerships with schools, community and service providers, utilizing schools as a community resource.
- Parenting and pre-natal classes.

Family

- A very strong theme emerged in support of activities involving Parent Training and Support Groups.
- Early Childhood Education and Pre-Natal programs were also prominent.
- Again, strategies for serving the needs of mobile parents in apartment buildings, particularly home visitation and services provided at the apartment buildings were discussed as a priority activities.

**Selection of Promising Strategies -**

Participants identified their priorities for enhancement, expansion and creation of prevention strategies in their communities. While they were introduced to strategies proven effective in the research, they were not restricted to these in prioritizing the strategies they found most promising.

The two strategies which most clearly stood out as preferences were Community Mobilization and Early Childhood Education. A not-too-distant third was Parent Training, followed by Organizational Change in Schools and Prenatal and Infancy Programs.

A significant number of votes were cast for specific strategies which fell broadly under the categories of Changes in School Organization or Curricula or under Community Mobilization. Finally, three communities chose Community Mobilization as their highest priority, while two chose Early Childhood Education as their number one priority.

The results of the voting are shown below. The first column indicates the total number of weighted votes: 5 for first priority, 2 for second and 1 for third. The second column indicates the number of first place votes for each of the strategies.

**Summary Results:**

STRATEGY	Total Votes	First Place
1. Community Mobilization	140	21
2. Early Childhood Education	128	19
3. Parent Training	96	12
4. Organizational Change in Schools	72	8
5. Pre-Natal & Infancy Programs	61	6

6. Other (mainly school actions/community)	54	7
7. School Curricula	52	6
8. Marital & Family Therapy	47	5
9. Community Policing	38	3

### **Youth Meetings**

A second round of youth meetings was also held, with similar purposes. Meetings were arranged through teen night programs and with existing youth organizations in an effort to essentially duplicate the groups which had provided first round information. In addition, one Board member returned to High School classes in the Highline School District to hold open discussions and to administer a survey.

### **Purpose**

The primary goals of the youth meetings were to obtain comments and information on:

- The opinions of youth on underlying causes of the risks and;
- Obtain ideas on what actions, activities or programs would be effective in strengthening youth and their relationships with parents.

### **Outreach**

A total of 218 youth ages 11 to 18 participated, involving all School Districts. The meetings were held in Highline High School Classes, with the Auburn Youth Council, the Federal Friday Night Teen "Jam", at the Tahoma Lighthouse Program, Enumclaw Late Night Program, Tukwila Recreation Department Teen Night, Renton Lighthouse Program and with the Kent Students Against Violence Council.

### **Content of the Meetings**

The content varied somewhat with the structure of the group with whom we met, ranging from very formal, full discussions at the Auburn Youth Council to an open "rap" session followed by filling out a youth survey at the Federal Way "Jam" Night to simply administering the surveys at other Teen Nights. As a result, the information obtained was somewhat uneven in content and depth. Summary Results

The strongest trends in youth responses were the lack of effective communication in the home, the lack of activities for youth and the inattention/lack of involvement in youth activities by parents. Some specific observations:

- Youth consistently raise the lack of "anything fun to do" as a major problem.
- Generally, there are not enough positive youth activities.
- More programs that train parents on how to parent are needed.
- Classes or counseling on anger management, stress management, conflict resolution, refusal skills and respect for drugs & alcohol are often cited as needs.
- Parents are generally too busy and there is a need for more adults to be available to talk to kids (suggesting mentoring or role model activities).
- Family communication skills need to be improved for positive family relationships.
- More parent involvement in their children's activities.

- Improved security in schools is stressed by many teenagers.
- In a survey on specific activity interests, youth indicated a preference for field trips and late night teen programs.
- Responses in the youth survey most strongly emphasized youth employment and more recreational programs. Early childhood education and Headstart Programs were the preferred early skills development strategies.

In addition to youth meetings, youth surveys were conducted seeking input on what activities and discussion groups youth would find attractive. The desired activities results focused on increasing safe, social activities - especially non-sports activities. The focus for discussion/support groups were on skill-building areas: anger management, increasing communication skills, getting along socially, stress management, and drug/alcohol information and refusal skills.

### **Coalition Meetings**

Community based coalitions in South King County were again contacted to seek input on strategies for addressing problem behaviors and risk factors. Coalitions able to participate in these meetings, or provide input on strategies, included: the Federal Way Family Network, Auburn Youth 2000 and the Auburn Youth Council, and the Kent Community Council for At-Risk Children and Youth. The feedback from community coalitions was consistent with input of both the adult and youth meeting groups.

### **"CARE ABOUT KIDS" OPINION SURVEY**

The Network's outreach included a variety of methods, one of which was an opinion survey--10,000 copies were mailed, left in libraries, community centers, and otherwise distributed throughout South County. The 714 returned was light, although typical of this type of questionnaire.

The survey gave people a chance to express opinions the Board might not otherwise hear, and recommend strategies for their community. The survey also informed people about successful strategies, implementation methods, and prevention as a focus.

People who returned the survey (respondents) lived or worked in most areas of the Network. Nearly 80% were women; just over 82% were Caucasian. They represented a mix of occupations--13% students, 17% business people, 20% government. Ages ranged from 9 to 85, although most were 25 to 45 years old.

Most people thought problems had gotten worse in the last 5 years--rarely did anyone think things had improved. Teen violence and delinquency were seen as having increased by nearly 90% of survey respondents. Teen substance abuse was up, according to over 70%. Family violence--child abuse/neglect and domestic violence--was also perceived as having gotten worse, but not by quite as many people.

Where should solutions begin? Nearly one-quarter thought money should be spent first on adolescents and teens in school. Others felt efforts should go to neighborhoods most at-risk, on raising community awareness, and on parents.

How can prevention strategies be delivered most effectively? A third selected schools; another third selected homes. These opinions were echoed in comments about needed strategies--opportunities and challenges for youth, more parents involved and responsible for their children, more community ties to youth and families. Rules in school and the community should be enforced.

What should be taught to youth in schools? Responses focused primarily on providing the skills that will allow youth to build effective connection with each other, their families and other community members. Most frequently selected were ways to resolve conflicts, deal with anger and stress, and communicate.

A significant proportion of respondents also stressed the need for youth to understand the consequences of their behaviors and choices.

What activities in the community should be increased? There was support for all activities suggested, but strongest support was voiced for weekend and after-school recreation for youth. This was followed by support for increasing jobs for youth, for mentoring projects, and for increasing parent-child activities in the community.

Asked about jobs for youth in the community, respondents were not very optimistic--only 14% thought there was a good chance for youth to find work. Opportunities for recreation were seen in a little more positive light, but almost 60% thought opportunities were lacking to a considerable extent.

Over 40% of survey respondents said they thought families were not involved enough in the community, like attending church, school and civic events. Only 60% said they knew many of their neighbors at least well enough to say hello or wave.

Poor parenting skills contribute to problems for kids and families. People thought there were many opportunities to train parents, with not too much difference overall in order of selection. The highest first choice selection was to focus on training teen parents.

Existing barriers to service was another focus area in the questionnaire. Lack of parental support was a leading barrier selected. Following that, people felt services were not publicized enough and that they were too expensive for people to utilize.

The top two selections for strategies in the community, family and schools are shown on the following page. The first column is for the total survey, followed by results for each school district. The percentages show the ratio of people selecting that answer compared to other answers to the same question. The relatively low percentages indicate that support was spread among most of the strategies listed in the question.

"CARE ABOUT KIDS SURVEY" PREFERENCES IN STRATEGIES BY SCHOOL DISTRICT								
		SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SOUTH KING COUNTY COMMUNITY NETWORK						
STRATEGIES	TOTAL	Auburn	Enumclaw	Highline/SC	Fed Way	Kent	Renton	Tahoma
Activities in the Community*	1 - 24%	1 - 25%	1 - 31%	1 - 22%	1 - 24%	1 - 25%	1 - 25%	2 - 22%
Youth after-school weekend recreation	2 - 16%	2 - 15%	2 - 19%	2 - 17%	2 - 16%	2 - 22%	2 - 16%	1 - 24%
Organized parent-child activities								
Youth employment								
Mentoring program for youth								
Education for school								

dropouts								
Community Safety* Community policing Increased Block Watch Community campaign against drugs	1 - 25% 2 - 24%	1 - 27% 2 - 21%	1 - 25% 2 - 22%	1 - 26% 2 - 22%	1 - 36% 2 - 27%	2 - 21% 1 - 26%	1 - 25% 2 - 24%	1 - 34% 2 - 24%
Changes in School Clear rules, consistent enforcement More parents involved in classrooms	1 - 39% 2 - 31%	1 - 41% 2 - 31%	1 - 47% 2 - 24%	1 - 46% 2 - 25%	1 - 41% 2 - 37%	1 - 36% 2 - 35%	1 - 35% 2 - 31%	1 - 44% 2 - 28%
Include in School Curriculum* Conflict resolution skills Teach consequences of behavior Learning to communicate with others Anger and stress management	1 - 22% 2 - 20%	1 - 25% 2 - 22%	1 - 23% 2 - 22%	1 - 23% 2 - 22%	1 - 26% 2 - 22%	1 - 21% 2 - 20%	2 - 21% 1 - 22%	1 - 30% 2 - 20%
To Increase Parenting Skills* Classes for parents & kids Training for teen parents In-home training for new parents Marital and family therapy Community campaign on parenting	1 - 22% 2 - 20%	2 - 22% 1 - 24%	2 - 21% 2 - 21% 1 - 25%	2 - 20% 1 - 22%	2 - 20% 1 - 26%	1 - 25% 2 - 24%	1 - 24% 2 - 19%	2 - 22% 1 - 24%
Early Skills	1 - 45%	1 - 46%	2 - 34% 1 -	1 - 44% 2 -	1 -	1 -	1 - 42%	1 - 44%

Development Head Start (early education) Day care with early learning program	2 - 35%	2 - 39%	50%	31%	52%	48%	2 - 35%	2 - 28%
					2 - 28%	2 - 33%		

\* Questions asked for top 2 choices which are averaged in this table and ranked. Percentages are based on number selecting the option as first or second choice out of all those responding to the question.

One consistent response across school districts has to do with changes in schools. Several options were offered in addition to the two shown, including students and parents involved in policy decisions. The strongest leading response was that rules should be clear and enforced consistently. The second leading option--again across all districts--was that parents should be more involved in classrooms. Early skills development was likewise relatively consistent across districts--Head Start and expanded day care with an education component were selected most frequently.

There are similarities in responses in school districts in South King County. There are also some differences to note. In Auburn, 61 people returned surveys, including the highest percentage of seniors. There was more emphasis on training for new parents in their homes as a way of improving parenting skills. There was also stronger support for prevention services in homes--40% thought it would be most effective.

AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--61  Age 18 or under--8% Age 65 plus--15%	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Not enough support from parents  2 Services too expensive

People indicated that learning to communicate was an important priority as a topic in school. They were a little more optimistic about the availability of jobs for youth and about existing recreation opportunities. In most strategy areas, selections were similar to the whole.

About the same number of people answered the survey in the Enumclaw district. Just over a third lived in or around Black Diamond. There was a little stronger support for youth after-school and weekend recreation by respondents in this district, along with jobs for youth. Close to 70% thought that youth would have little or no chance of finding work.

ENUMCLAW SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--59  Age 18 or under--15% Age 65 plus--12%	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Services not publicized  2 Not enough support from parents

People from the Highline/South Central area selected a community campaign to promote parenting skills most frequently as a strategy in the family. There was also support for youth employment. Otherwise responses were similar to top selections elsewhere.

HIGHLINE/SOUTH CENTRAL SCHOOLS - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--127  Age 18 or under--7% Age 65 plus--13%	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Not enough support from parents  2 Services too expensive

Respondents in the Federal Way district also selected a community campaign to promote parenting skills as a preferred strategy. They selected youth after-school weekend recreation most frequently, as did the majority of the total. Almost two-thirds thought recreation activities were lacking and that many more were needed.

FEDERAL WAY SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--75  Age 18 or under--3% Age 65 plus--13%	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Not enough support from parents  2 Services not publicized

The Kent School District had the most returned surveys--173 people turned them in, many of whom were 18 or under. More people were new to Kent than in other areas.

KENT SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--173  Age 18 or under--13% Age 65 plus--1%	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Services too expensive  2 Not enough support from parents

One third had live there 2 years or less--15% under a year. Lots more respondents lived in apartments in Kent. About half lived in apartments--twice the rate for the whole. Answers about strategies were similar.

About a quarter of the people who filled out the survey in Renton were 18 or under. While responses in strategy areas agreed with other areas, respondents in Renton put more emphasis on anger and stress management as part of the school curriculum. On other questions, responses in Renton were very similar to the whole.

RENTON SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?  Number of people--100	Barriers to Prevention Services  1 Services not publicized

Age 18 or under--23% Age 65 plus--1%	2 Not enough support from parents
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Tahoma is one of the smallest districts, with a consistent number of returned surveys, all from Maple Valley residents. There were some differences in strategy selections. The most frequently selected among activities in the community was a mentoring program for youth, followed by recreation. Respondents thought strategies should be delivered through schools and homes, as did the whole, but more thought they should target adolescents and teens in school. Maple Valley respondents also most frequently chose a community-wide parenting campaign as a strategy to improve parenting skills.

TAHOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT - "CARE ABOUT KIDS" SURVEY	
Who Answered the Survey?	Barriers to Prevention Services
Number of people--25	1 Not enough support from parents
Age 18 or under--0% Age 65 plus--4%	2 Lack of transportation

### 6.2 Common Themes

The concerns expressed by the community in response to the priority problems and priority risk and protective factors were essentially consistent across all of the Network's community input measures.

#### Gaps and Barriers to Effective Service Delivery

- Difficulty in reaching mobile populations.
- Difficulty in engaging those families and/or youth most in need of services.
- Lack of parental involvement in the lives and activities of youth.
- Lack of coordination and communication between sectors in the community.

These gaps and barriers mirrored the input of community-based agencies contacted during the resource inventory interviews - especially their concerns related to the environmental issues that affect their work with children, youth and families.

#### Needed approaches Identified

- Home-based services.
- Parent training and support.
- Skill building for youth in effective communication, refusal skills (against drug/alcohol and violence), and anger/stress management.
- Team-building to support youth and families with wrap-around services and sense of community.

As the Network continues its focus on working collaboratively with community-based providers, other funders and coordinating bodies, and community-based coalitions, it will address its efforts to the core issues that communities across the Network area consistently identified as priorities.

### 6.3 The Network Toolbox

## **Tools and Collaboration**

As the Network met to consider community input on resources and needed strategies in the community, it received communication from the Family Policy Council outlining a promising strategy for developing specific work plans and increasing collaboration with the community. The Network adopted this framework, and has identified its preferred outcomes for the problem behaviors and risk factors it has prioritized. The Network will work in a collaborative process with qualified community-based providers to identify the specific strategies it will support in Network communities.

In building its specific work plan for the coming two years, the Network will rely on a variety of tools, including:

- Direct funding of services in targeted areas;
- Collaboration with local coalitions to develop joint efforts and to increase communication between funders, providers and community members;
- Policy and legislative advocacy to increase coordination of services, lower barriers to service, and recommend that state agencies increase collaboration and support to Networks and their identified priorities;
- Participation in community education and outreach to increase the awareness of and participation by families and youth in needed services.
- Participation in efforts to increase grassroots involvement in shaping locally defined prevention strategies and solutions to community-identified problems.

## **Decategorization**

The Network also remains aware of the Legislature's request for decategorization recommendations. As part of the planning process, the Network convened and supported the work of the King County Networks' Decategorization Workgroup. Ultimately, the King County Workgroup deferred development of a cooperative decategorization process. The Networks grasp how powerful a tool decategorization can be, and want to be responsible in using a tool with such great potential impact.

The South King County Network opted, therefore, to adopt the following approach to addressing decategorization issues:

- The Network will request that a budget analyst from the State Office of Financial Management be assigned for sufficient hours over the coming year to help the South King County Network members understand specific aspects (funding, impact, etc...) of the 14 state programs targeted.
- The Network will focus its efforts on those programs most germane to its prioritized problem behaviors and risk factors.
- The Network will seek to "Do No Harm", and so will be careful and deliberate in its discussion of decategorization issues.
- The Network will support and participate in existing local efforts to coordinate services, and where appropriate, will cooperate with other networks around shared priorities.
- Based on this process and consultation, the Network may make specific recommendations to the Family Policy Council and the Legislature on decategorization issues - including regulatory relief suggestions.