



Whatcom County

Developmental Disabilities Plan

2003-2007

Whatcom County Health Department
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This plan represents the culmination of months of work and dedication by professionals, community volunteers, and advocates.

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the comprehensive plan is to provide information regarding developmental disabilities in Whatcom County. The plan provides information on current needs and available resources and sets goals and strategies for services.

The Whatcom County Health Department Developmental Disabilities Program provides and monitors local services to people with developmental disabilities and their families who are eligible through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). Services are provided as outlined in state law RCW 71A and in accordance with guidelines provided by DDD.

County funded services include Early Intervention Services for children birth to three and adult employment and day program services for those 21 and older. The county also serves as an informational and referral agency within the community and prepares comprehensive plans for present and future development of services.

An advisory board made up of members chosen for their demonstrated concern for individuals with developmental disabilities serves in an advisory capacity to the Health Department. The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (DDAB) strives to maintain a minimum of 3 members with developmental disabilities.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the 2003-2007 Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Plan included:

Community Surveys

Input was gathered through surveys of families and individuals with developmental disabilities.

Community Forums

Five forums were held across the county to gather information from the community and were attended by parents, vendors, consumers, and other stakeholders.

Advisory Board Participation

The board, through its retreat and its committees, provided their invaluable input to the mission statement, guiding values, and development of the county plan.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission

It is the mission of the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program to ensure the quality of county funded services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families; support personal choice with regard to services; and promote dignity, respect, and understanding within the community for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Vision

All individuals with developmental disabilities and their families who receive county services deserve:

- Power and choice in making decisions and directing their lives;
- Meaningful relationships with people they love and care about, and who love and care about them;
- Opportunities for community involvement and recognition for community contributions;
- Resources and opportunities for support that meet individual needs;
- Healthy, safe, and productive lives.

WHATCOM COUNTY OVERVIEW

Whatcom County is the northern most county in western Washington. Canada borders it to the north and Skagit County borders it to the south. The Puget Sound marks its western boundary; to the east the Cascade Mountains provide the doorway into Okanogan County. The I-5 corridor bisects Whatcom County making it a hub of activity for Canadian travelers and other out of town visitors. Approximately 90 miles south is the major metropolitan city of Seattle and 50 miles north is Vancouver, British Columbia.

Whatcom County is a home rule county with an executive and seven council members. The county seat is Bellingham. As the largest incorporated city, Bellingham comprises 40% of the county's total population. In 2000, there were 163,500 residents in Whatcom County; in 2010, the projected population is 195,504. The average annual population growth rate is currently about 2%.

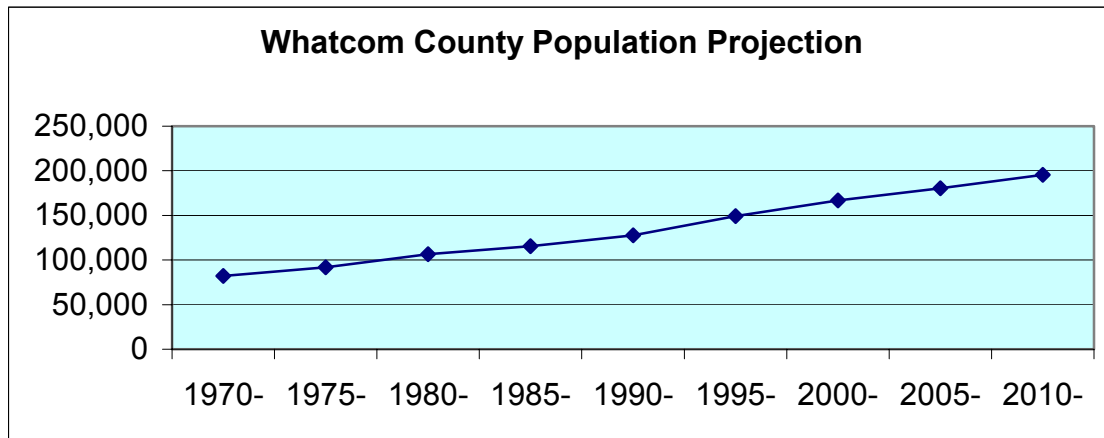


Chart #1

Population Profile

- Whatcom County has within its boundaries two Native American Tribal Governments. The Lummi Indian Reservation is to the west and the Nooksack Tribe resides to the east.
- There are an estimated 4,900 migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families who reside in Whatcom County during the year. An

estimated 20% of the migrant population consisted of children aged 1-19 in Washington State. (Larson Assistance Services, 2000)

- In over 9% of homes, a language other than English was spoken at home. (2000 U.S. Census)

2000 U.S. Census Data for Whatcom County		
Race	% Population	Total population
White/Non-Hispanic	86.2	147,485
Hispanic/Latino	5.2	8,687
Native American	2.8%	4,709
Asian	2.8%	4,637
2 or more races	2.7%	4,439
Black	.7%	1,150
Other	2.5%	4,159

Chart #2

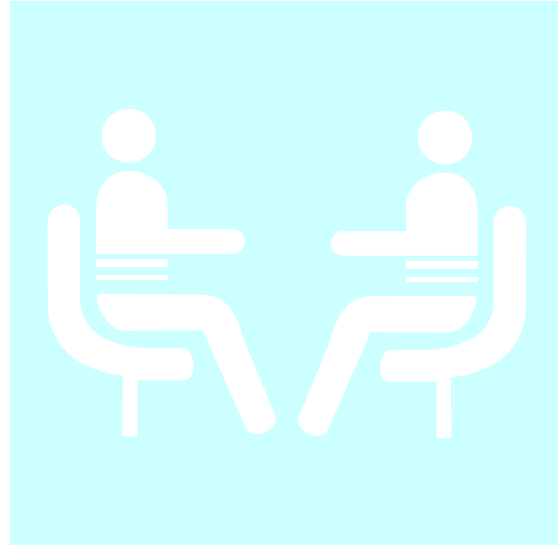
Economy

Whatcom County is home to Western Washington University and includes agriculture and light manufacturing in its economic base.

According to the Office of Financial Management (OFM)

- The percentage of joblessness in the county has historically averaged close to 1 percentage point more than the statewide average;
- 14. 2% of Whatcom County's population lives below the poverty line. (State average: 10.6%.);
- Wages and income are in the top third when ranked with the other 39 counties in Washington.

The Service System



Current Service System

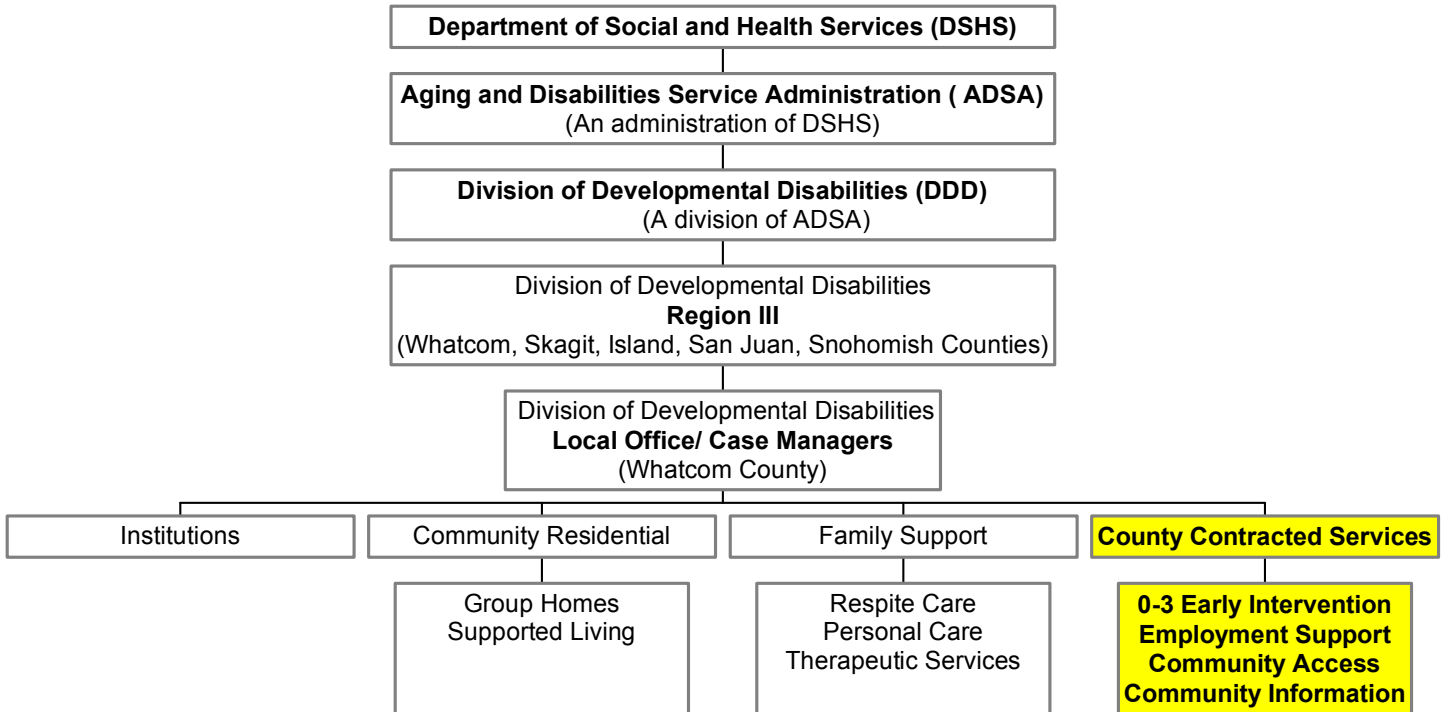
The Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to obtain services and supports based on individual preference, capabilities, needs, and which promote everyday activities, routines, and relationships common to most citizens.

DDD uses state and federal funds to provide or purchase supports and services for eligible persons and their families. Services are provided to the degree that funding is available through state legislative appropriations and local designated dollars.

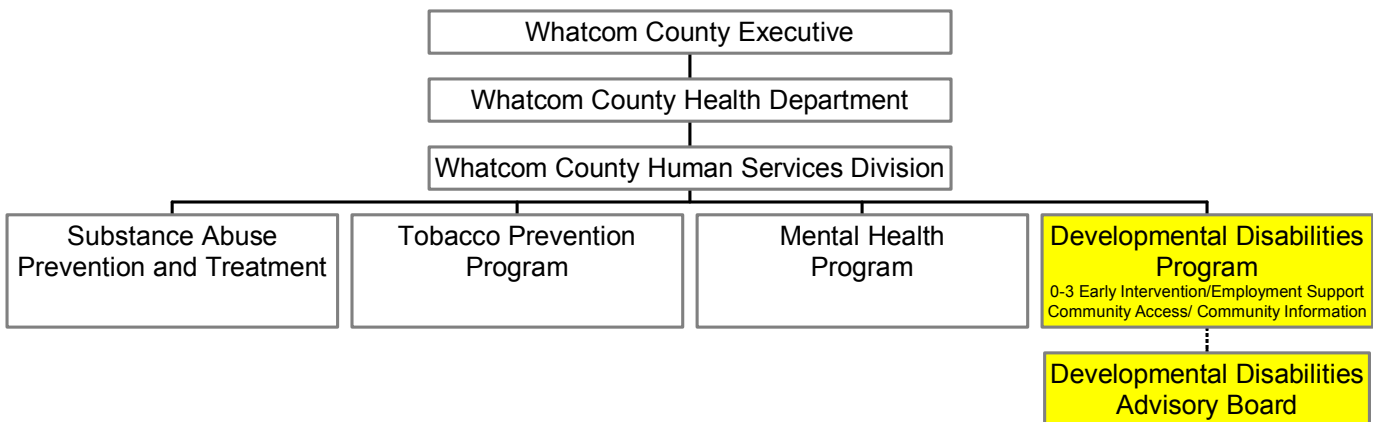
Through its regional offices, DDD determines eligibility for services, provides case coordination and resource management, as well as managing residential and family support services. Family Support Services, such as respite care and community based residential programs, are contracted from the state to local service providers.

All day program services, including early childhood intervention for children birth to three and employment and day program services for adults 21 and over, are provided through state contracts with each county.

Washington State System of Developmental Disabilities Services



Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program



Currently there are 757 individuals with a developmental disability identified as eligible through DDD in Whatcom County. Of the total, **314** or approximately 40% are currently receiving county funded services.

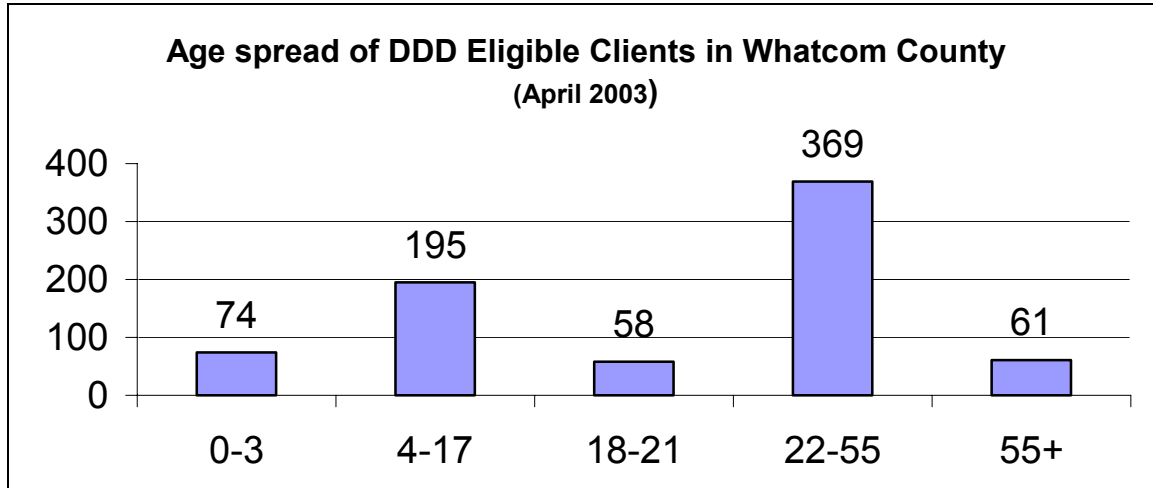


Chart #3

Population Served

In Washington State a developmental disability is defined in state law as a disability attributable to:

- Mental retardation
- Developmental delay (Ages birth to six)
- Cerebral palsy
- Autism
- Epilepsy
- Another neurological or other condition closely related to mental retardation

The disability must also:

- Originate before the age of eighteen
- Expect to continue indefinitely
- Constitute a substantial handicap to the individual

Definitions of Disabling Conditions

- **Mental Retardation**—IQ of 69 or lower and deficits in adaptive behavior.
- **Developmental Delay (0-6)**—A delay of at least 25% of the child's chronological age, in one or more of the following areas as measured by qualified personnel: physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, or adaptive.

0-2 years: a delay of at least 25% in **one** or more of the five areas

2-4 years: a delay of at least 25% in **two** or more of the five areas

4-6 years: a delay of at least 25% in **three** or more of the five areas

A child shall also be eligible if he or she has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay.

- **Cerebral Palsy**—Damage to the brain causes lack of muscle control.
- **Autism**—Impaired cognitive and perceptual functioning.
- **Epilepsy**—Abnormal electro-chemical brain discharges cause various seizures.
- **Another neurological or other condition**—Examples are spina bifida and spastic quadriplegia caused by brain damage before age 18.

Early Intervention Services



Early Intervention Services provide services to children ages birth to three with developmental disabilities and delays and their families. Services are designed to support and maximize development and to reduce the severity of developmental delay.

There are two sources of funding for early intervention services in Whatcom County.

- The first is the Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) through a contract with the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program.
- The second is the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) funded through the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA) Part C. ITEIP is run through the state Division of Social and Health Services (DSHS) with the Opportunity Council operating as the lead agency for the program locally.

The Opportunity Council, as lead agency, is responsible for the development, coordination, monitoring, and assurance of appropriate Early Intervention Services resources for eligible children and families in Whatcom County. This includes any of the following services, which may be listed on the child's Individual Family Service Plan. (IFSP)

- ◆ Assistive technology services
- ◆ Family training
- ◆ Nursing services
- ◆ Occupational therapy
- ◆ Psychological services
- ◆ Special instruction
- ◆ Medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- ◆ Audiology
- ◆ Counseling and home visits
- ◆ Nutrition services
- ◆ Physical therapy
- ◆ Social work services
- ◆ Speech-language therapy

- ◆ Transportation and vision services may be available when the child has no other means to fund these services.

Regardless of the referral source, families are linked with a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) through the Opportunity Council. The FRC assists the family and child to gain access to the Early Intervention Services and other resources identified in the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and to be aware of the rights and procedural safeguards of the program.

The Opportunity Council is also responsible for maintaining a county wide advisory committee—the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The ICC provides support to families with information regarding resources currently available in the community and promotes effective cross-agency planning for coordinated services to families with young children with disabilities.

School districts are not mandated to provide birth to three Early Intervention Services, but they are permitted to do so under IDEA Part C and have access to separate funding to provide services. Nooksack School District has operated a Birth to Three Program since 2001, and three more school districts in Whatcom County are in varying stages of developing services. School districts are, however, mandated to perform a Child Find activity each year to identify eligible children birth to three in their area.

Currently, Whatcom Center for Early Learning (WCEL) is the only county contracted provider of Early Intervention Services to families/children birth to three. Services are primarily provided at WCEL's center site in Bellingham or in home or community settings.

In 2002, **53** individuals received county funded Early Intervention Services.

Trends:

- The number of children receiving county funded services increased by over 35% between 1993 and 2002, slightly higher than the increase in total population in Whatcom County during that time. (Approximately 30%)

- The numbers of eligible children is expected to increase due to population growth, increase in public awareness, increased numbers of children diagnosed with Autism, and increased screening and child find activities.
- The success of child find activities has decreased the average age at which children begin services. Younger children starting services earlier is reflected in an increase in the number of months of service per child.

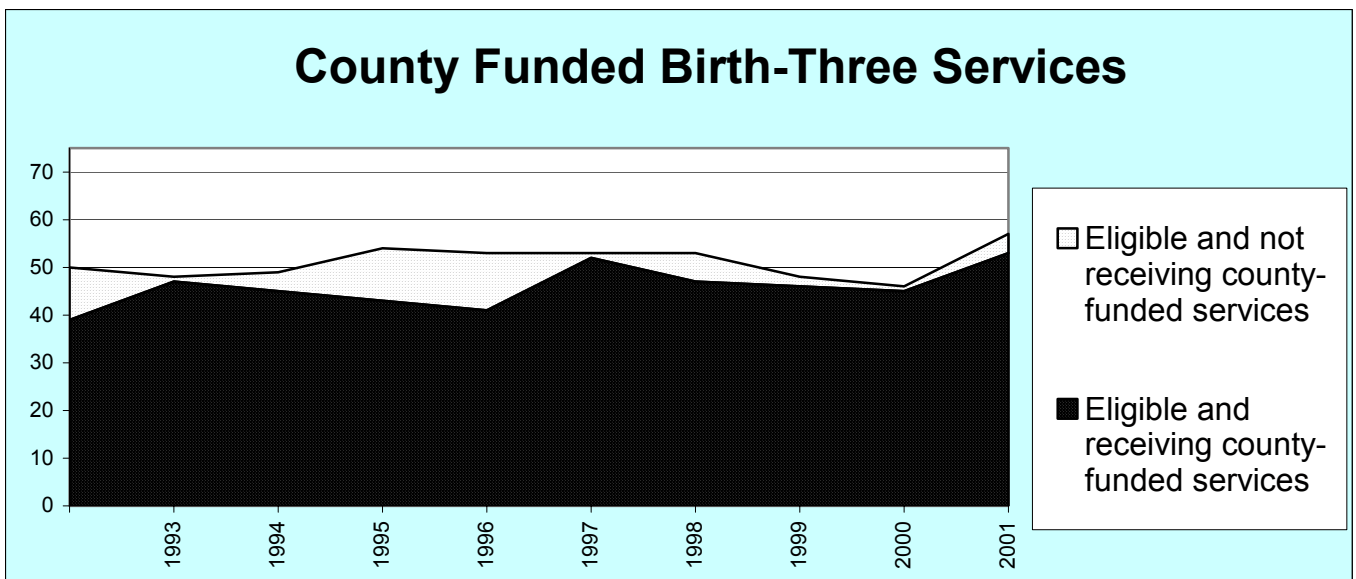


Chart #4

Note: Not all families with children determined eligible through DDD choose to access services or may receive services funded through other means as reflected above.

Early Intervention Services



Goals

- Ensure that all children with developmental disabilities and their families receive Early Intervention Services and that families' needs are addressed in the Individual Family Service Plan
- Ensure that children ages 0-3 in need of early childhood intervention are referred earlier to services with fewer delays
- Increase service capacity to meet increased demands for Early Intervention Services

Planned Activities and Outcomes

- Develop partnerships with school districts to improve capacity and access to Birth to Three services.
- Develop, in partnership with the ICC, a community information plan about disability issues and resources for children ages 0-3 targeted to reach the medical community
- Continue county participation in the Interagency Coordinating Council to ensure coordination of services
- Continue publication of the "Transitions" guide in partnership with the Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program

Transition



At the age of three, children and families receiving early childhood development services transition from services coordinated through the Opportunity Council or through the county to Special Education Services coordinated by the school system. Public Schools are mandated by federal law through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B to provide services for eligible children ages 3-21.

School staff coordinates with students, parents, and vocational and day program agencies to provide appropriate transition services and resources during the time the students are in school. Public school services are entitlements. Entitlements ensure that citizens receive services for which they are eligible.

Transition to School

A transition plan 90 days before a child services turns three. will assist the family in education or community-based services the child may need.



meeting must take place at least receiving early intervention The family resource coordinator planning and identifying special

The family resource coordinator, service provider, and local school district then meet to discuss eligibility and services. If the child is eligible for services, those services will be provided through an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Transition from High School



When students with disabilities exit school, they must rely on vocational and day program agencies to provide the needed supports for work or community activities. Services through adult agencies are not entitlements. These

agencies have various eligibility requirements and, because of limited funding, cannot always immediately offer services to eligible individuals.

Planning for ongoing support prior to exiting school is key to accessing services. Transition services are available for students starting at 14, and the law mandates that transition planning be incorporated into the IEP no later than age 16. Awareness of eligibility criteria, meeting vocational and day program staff, and learning about community resources provides valuable information to guide transition planning.

Trends:

- Adult Employment and Day Program Services for those students graduating or aging out at 21 has relied upon funding by the Washington State Legislature. No additional funding was provided by the legislature for 2003-2005 graduates. As a result, Whatcom County may resort to a waiting list for county supported services.

Transition



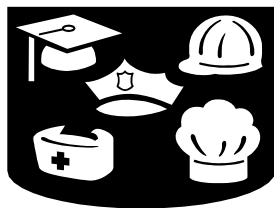
Goals

- Increase transition student preparedness for employment
- Increase awareness of postgraduate supports and opportunities by school professionals, families, and other community partners

Planned Actions and Outcomes

- Promote federal work incentives programs to maximize available resources
- Develop and coordinate a transition council to effectively plan for and promote awareness of transition issues

Employment



The focus of adult day program services is employment. Employment offers all individuals with or without disabilities the opportunity for contribution, economic self-sufficiency, and social connection.

There are three broad categories of employment services available to adults with developmental disabilities. These are: Competitive Employment, Supported Employment—comprised of Individual Employment (IE) and Group Supported Employment (GSE)—and Prevocational or Facility Based Employment.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is the first resource for accessing short-term vocational assessment, placement, and training. Once initial services have been provided through DVR, an individual must rely on their own skills to maintain themselves on the job. For those still needing assistance to maintain employment and long-term support, the county funds several alternatives.

COUNTY FUNDED LONG TERM EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Supported Employment

Defined as paid employment for persons with developmental disabilities for whom competitive employment at or above minimum wage is unlikely, and who, because of their disabilities, need ongoing support to perform their work. Support is provided to consumers, employers, and/or coworkers through activities such as training, supervision, and transportation.

Supported employment is conducted in the following county funded settings.

Individual Employment (IE)

Services necessary to help an individual obtain and continue employment in individual jobs in business or industry. These

services may include individual planning, placement, and training at the employment site working with the employer and other employees as well as the individual. In 2002, **98** individuals received IE services in Whatcom County.

Group Supported Employment (GSE)

Provides supervised paid training opportunities performed at business sites in groups of eight or fewer employees with disabilities. Group Supported Employment can be an enclave—groups of individuals placed in a business or industrial site—or a mobile crew. In 2002, **37** individuals received GSE services in Whatcom County.

Prevocational (Facility Based Employment Services)

Prevocational services are provided by businesses that were organized and designed primarily to provide training opportunities for adults with disabilities. Prevocational services differ from Group Supported Employment in that larger groups of people are employed in the same setting. This category of employment is utilized within the county to provide support and training for severely challenged individuals with significant barriers to employment in community settings. In 2002, **86** individuals received facility based employment services.

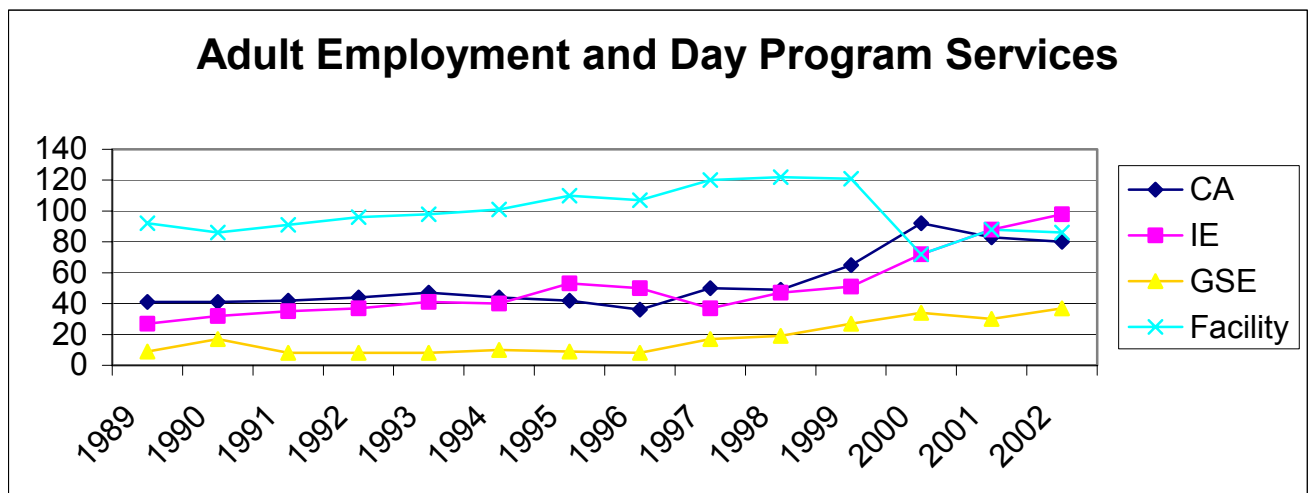


Chart #5

County Funded Adult Services, 2002

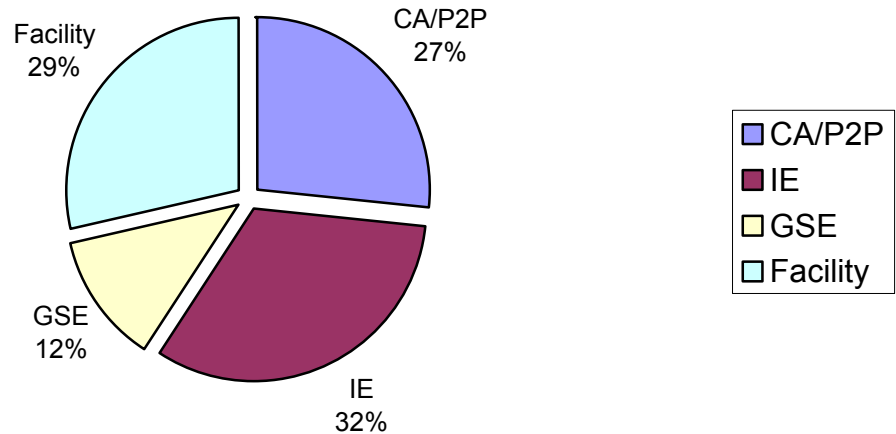


Chart #6

CA/P2P: Community Access/Person-to-Person

IE: Individual Employment

GSE: Group Supported Employment

Facility: Facility Based Employment

Trends:

- The current trend in employment and day program services in Whatcom County is the increase in supported employment services and a decrease in prevocational services.
- Increased employment in community settings, the closing of one of three prevocational facilities in 2000, and an economic downturn resulting in layoffs and reduction of work hours in 2003 have contributed to the decline in Prevocational Services.

Employment



Goals

- Ensure that all individuals who want to work have the supports and resources to meet their employment goals
- Increase individual choice with regard to vocational services

Planned Outcomes and Activities

- Provide technical assistance to support families and service providers in moving toward individualized choice and services
- Promote hiring in local city, county, and state offices

Community Access and Community Connection

Community Access

These services are limited to seniors 55 and older who are retired and younger adults who are medically fragile and not able to participate in employment programs. These services are developed with emphasis on each individual's need.

Services assist individuals to gain access to community activities of the person's choice in which people without disabilities also participate.

Person-to-Person

Person-to-Person services expand the idea of community access by focusing on individual person-centered planning and the development of community connections.

Person-to-Person services support people to develop natural networks and activities in the community, increase their self-reliance and relationships, and build toward employment goals. Person-to-Person services strive to reduce dependence and time spent with paid caregivers.

In 2002, **80** individuals received Community Access and Person-to-Person services.

Trends:

- Person-to-Person services first became available in Whatcom County in 2002. The use of these services as an alternative for those individuals not yet ready for employment and seeking to explore volunteer opportunities, build skills, and develop community connections is anticipated to increase.

Community Access and Community Connection



Goals

- Increase opportunities for individuals to participate in the community without paid support
- Increase individual access to generic community activities and events
- Provide access to formal person-centered planning services

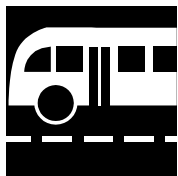
Planned Activities and Outcomes

- Seek a provider for person-centered planning services
- Develop volunteer resources to provide mentorship and to foster community connections for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Educate community partners regarding the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and barriers to accessing community events and activities

Transportation

Transportation is vital to individuals with developmental disabilities to access employment and community activities. Most individuals with developmental disabilities do not drive and must rely on public transportation to get to work, leisure activities, and shopping.

Transportation is a vital link that ensures that all individuals have options for inclusion in the community.



The Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) is the public entity that serves Whatcom County. Services include:

- **Fixed Route**

A typical city bus system is known as fixed route, where the bus comes on a predictable schedule to designated stops. Many individuals with developmental disabilities are able to successfully use the fixed route buses.

- **Van Programs**

WTA owns and manages a fleet of vans that are either leased out to commuter groups based on mileage or operated by community groups. Vanpools are commuter operated and require a minimum number of 5 passengers and a driver.

- **Specialized Transportation**

Specialized Transportation includes *comparable* transportation service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for people with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems.

Specialized provides door-to-door services for those individuals, elderly or disabled, who meet eligibility requirements and who live within designated service areas.

- **Dial-A-Ride** is a mini-bus service available to folks who live within certain areas of Whatcom County. (Currently Blaine and Birch Bay). Anyone who lives within these areas can ride a WTA mini-bus with a trip reservation. It comes right to your door where you live, or to a prearranged location, and connects you to the transit system. The time and frequency of service are determined by the location.

Ridership, Specialized Transportation (Jan-June 2003)

Riders	Eligible	Active	% Active	Rides	% of total rides	1-way trips per active rider
Riders w/developmental disabilities	198	133	67%	15,099	18%	114
Riders w/other disabilities	4,475	1,628	36%	53,275	63%	33
Total riders w/disabilities	4,673	1,761	38%	68,374	81%	39
General riders (Dial- a –ride etc.)	4,099	344	8%	16,524	19%	48
Total	8,772	2,105	24%	84,898	100%	40

Chart #7

Trends:

- Fixed route ridership increased by almost 6% from 2001 to 2002.
- Specialized transportation ridership remained flat after declining significantly between 1999 and 2000. (WTA staff attributes the decline in specialized ridership to the closing of sheltered workshop during that time.)
- Individuals with developmental disabilities made up only 6% of the total active ridership of specialized while accounting for 18% of the total rides made. (Jan. –June 2003)
- In September 2003, in response to community need, WTA expanded evening and weekend hours.

Transportation



Goal

- Expand community partnerships around transportation issues in Whatcom County

Planned Outcomes and Actions

- Participate in the WTA strategic planning process
- Provide opportunities for WTA participation on the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board

Residential Services and Supports



Residential services provide a variety of living alternatives for eligible persons who live with others or by themselves. Medicaid personal care (MPC) dollars are available to support income eligible individuals who have unmet personal care needs either in the family home or in other residential settings.

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) Case managers determine the level of need for personal care services through assessment in addition to being the referral source for all residential placements.

- Approximately **334** adults, 18 and over, in Whatcom County receive residential support services to assist them in living outside of the family home.
- The current number of individuals who are underserved and seeking other residential or Adult Family Home placement is **59**.

In Whatcom County residential options and supports include the following:

Supported Living (SL)

Instructions and supports offered by service providers contracted directly with DDD to clients who live in their own homes. Homes are owned, rented, or leased by the clients or their guardians.

Group Homes (GH)

Living with other people in a home run by an agency where you can receive 24-hour supervision and training. A group home is contracted directly through DDD to provide residential services.

Alternative Living (AL)

Short-term assistance to move individuals toward increased independence in their living situation.

Nursing Facility (NF)

Living in a skilled nursing home that provides 24-hour nursing services. Nursing Facilities are licensed by the Washington State Aging and Disability Services Administration (ADSA).

Adult Residential Centers (ARC)

Living in a larger, licensed facility serving 6 or more people that provides assistance, room, and board. ARC's are licensed by ADSA.

Adult Family Home (AFH)

Living in a home serving no more than 6 people that provides assistance, room, and board. AFH's are licensed by ADSA.

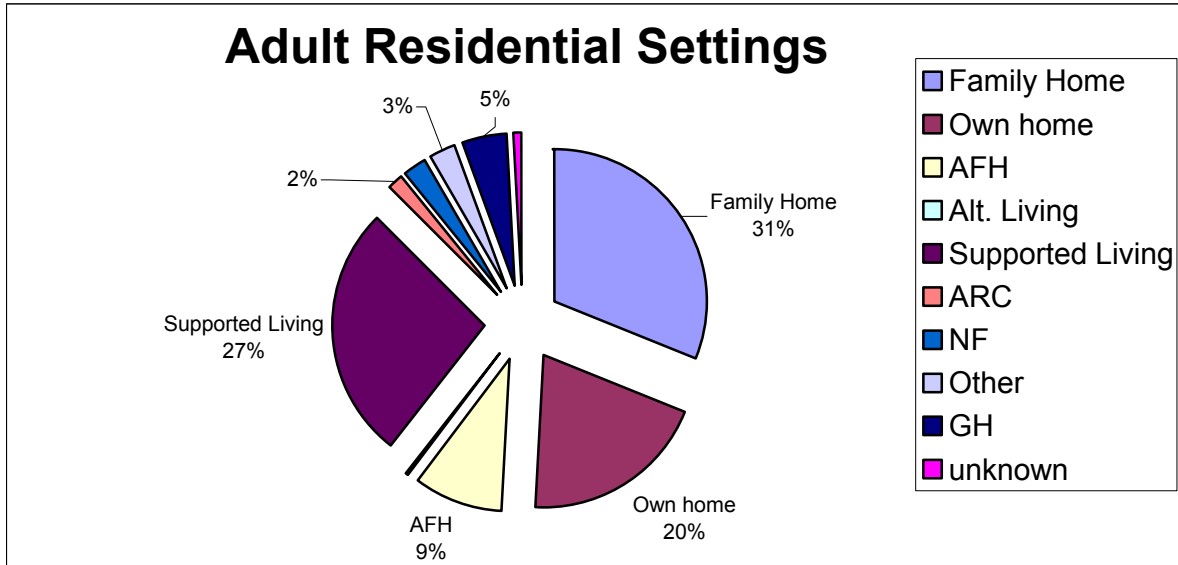


Chart #8

Living Situation	Persons	%	Living Situation	Persons	%
Family Home	151	31%	Adult Residential Center	8	<2%
Supported Living	131	27%	Nursing Facility	11	2%
Own Home	96	20%	Other	14	3%
Adult Family Home	46	9%	Unknown	4	< 1 %
Group Home	23	5%	Alternative Living	1	< 1 %

Trends:

There has been an increase in the % of Adults 18 and older living in:

- Their parent's/relative's home
- Their own home
- Adult Family Home (AFH)

There has been a decrease in the % of Adults 18 and older living in:

- Adult Residential Centers (ARC)
- Group Home (GH)
- Nursing Facilities (NF)

The percentage of adults being served in Supported Living has held steady at approximately 25% of the total adult population.

Residential



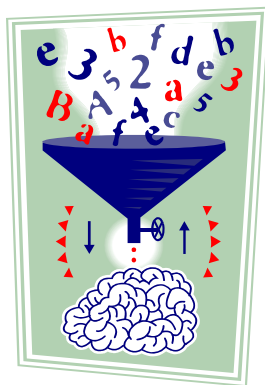
Goal

- Expand and support community partnerships to address residential issues in Whatcom County

Planned Actions and Outcomes

- Develop resources and information on housing and residential options for the developmental disabilities community
- Provide information to Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board on housing and residential issues
- Investigate additional funding/incentive sources

Information and Education



The county serves as an information and referral agency within the community for persons with developmental disabilities and their families.

Currently, local information and referral are available through:

The Arc of Whatcom County

The mission of the Arc is to improve the quality of life, increase the independence, and assure the full inclusion in the community of all persons with developmental disabilities. The Arc provides information and support around such topics as guardianships and long-term planning; special health care needs; special education services, including IEP's and transition planning; residential issues and concerns; advocacy; and self-determination. The Arc website: <http://www.arcwhatcom.org/>

The Parent Coalition

The purpose of the coalition is to develop and raise community awareness about the issues and needs of persons with developmental disabilities and their families, to serve as a resource for families, and increase the understanding of the developmental disability service system. The coalition produces a monthly newsletter and provides training opportunities for individuals and families throughout the year. The Parent Coalition is a program of the Arc.

Parent-to-Parent

This program provides emotional support and information to families of children with special needs and/or disabilities. Parent-to-Parent produces a newsletter, maintains a support group, and provides training for parents and siblings of children with developmental disabilities. Parent-to-Parent is a program of the Whatcom Center for Early Learning.

Transition Guide

Produced by the Whatcom County Health Department in conjunction with community partners, this guide is designed to assist parents as their child transitions from early childhood development programs to the school system to become adults participating in the community.

Whatcom Health Department Web Site

Provides general information on county funded services and answers to frequently asked questions.

http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/human/develop_disabilities

Community Works Project

The project developed educational materials and a media campaign to increase community awareness of the benefits and opportunities for employing individuals with developmental disabilities.

People First of Whatcom County

People First's goal is to promote self-determination so that people with disabilities learn and practice skills to live more quality and fulfilling lives directed by their own wants and needs.

Information on eligibility and state programs and supports are available through the local office of the Division of Developmental Disabilities.
1-800-239-8285 or 360-676-2000.

Information and Education



Goals

- Increase community awareness of developmental disabilities issues
- Ensure that community members have access to consistent and accessible information regarding developmental disabilities issues, services, and systems

Planned Activities and Outcomes

- Coordinate with community partners to ensure accurate and accessible information to the public is provided
- Support educational and training opportunities for community members through the Parent Coalition and Parent-to-Parent

GLOSSARY

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CA	Community Access
DDAB	Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board
DDD	Division of Developmental Disabilities
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY	A disability attributable to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, another neurological or other condition closely related to mental retardation. Originates before age 18. Is expected to continue indefinitely and constitutes a substantial handicap
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
FRC	Family Resource Coordinator
GSE	Group Supported Employment
ICC	Interagency Coordinating Council
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IE	Individual Employment
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IFSP	Individual Family Service Plan
ITEIP	Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program

RCW

Revised Code of Washington (State Law)

WTA

Whatcom Transportation Authority