

Whatcom County

Developmental Disabilities

5 Year Plan

2019-2024

Whatcom County Health Department
509 Girard St
Bellingham WA 98225

July 2019-June 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Governing Principles.....	4
County Plan.....	5
Service Overview	6
Community Profile.....	8
Children and Families.....	11
School Transition	13
Pathways to Employment.....	15
Community Inclusion Services	17
Information, Education and Advocacy	19
Community Infrastructure.....	20
Glossary	21

INDEX OF CHARTS AND GRAPHS

#1 Overview of Services	7
#2 Enrolled Individuals by Age, Whatcom	8
#3 Individuals Receiving DDA services, Whatcom	9
#4 Residential Setting, ages 18 +	9

Introduction

What is a developmental disability in Washington State?

[RCW 71A.10.020\(5\)](#) defines a developmental disability as attributable to:

- Intellectual disability
- Another neurological condition
- Cerebral palsy
- Other condition closely related to intellectual disability
- Autism
- Epilepsy

The disability must also:

- Originate before the age of eighteen
- Expect to continue indefinitely
- Result in substantial limitations to an individual's adaptive functioning

For more complete eligibility criteria please see: www.dshs.wa.gov/dda

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Guiding Values:

The Guiding Values were developed by DDA in partnership with a diverse group of self-advocates, families, residential providers, County staff, employment providers and DDA staff. The Mission of DDA is to transform lives by providing support and fostering partnerships that empower people to live the lives they want.

- **Inclusion:** Being present and participating in the community using common resources and doing activities with other citizens.
- **Status and Contribution:** Status is being valued and well regarded by others. Contribution is about recognizing and developing interests and skills, and having the opportunity to contribute these in the community.
- **Relationships:** Relationships offer a sense of belonging, continuity, and intimacy and give meaning to life. Connection to others provides support and opens doors to new opportunities and experiences.
- **Power and Choice:** Power is having the ability to direct or influence our own lives. Choice is the opportunity to make decisions that are right for ourselves and include the opportunity to succeed or fail.
- **Health and Safety:** Feeling safe and secure and being healthy. Having information, experience and skills, giving to others, being in relationships and a sense of belonging all enhance and are integral to our safety and well-being.
- **Competence:** Everyone should be given opportunities be as independent, self-reliant and self-directing as possible. We can show our competence in many ways. We recognize that our abilities can vary and changed based on the task, and that our capabilities change throughout the span of our lives.

Whatcom County Governing Principles

The Governing principles were developed in conjunction with the Citizen Advisory Board and serve as a guide to Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities in the development of public policy, supports and services.

Reviewed/affirmed by the Whatcom County Citizen Advisory Board (November 2013)

Individualized Supports

Design services which are responsive, flexible and tailored to meet the changing needs and goals through the individual's life.

Diversity

Promote culturally relevant supports and welcome all individuals to participate.

Inclusion and Contribution

Promote opportunities for meaningful participation in activities common to all citizens. Foster an understanding of the importance of reciprocity and contribution as a component of a meaningful life.

Choice and self-direction

Support individuals to make their own decisions, and respect the decisions they make. We create opportunities for individuals to learn new things and to make informed choices based on their own experiences.

Community

Promote and model integrated, community based solutions. Share responsibility for successful inclusion and participation with the community.

Dignity and respect

Promote respect, equality and dignity for everyone.

Access

Promote individual and community accessibility.

Partnership

Engage families, caregivers and others in the community who support and care about individuals with disabilities as critical partners. Build on common goals and shared values.

County Plan

The County plan is updated and reviewed by the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (DDAB) and members of the community to confirm underlying principles and define our vision of how individuals with developmental disabilities are an integral part of our families, neighborhoods and communities.

For more information on the DDAB see:

<http://www.whatcomcounty.us/670/Developmental-Disabilities-Program>

The following are the areas of focus for which Whatcom County has established goals and strategies and has committed state and local resources.

Community Plan Theme Areas:

- Children and Families
- School Transition
- Pathways to Employment
- Community Inclusion Services
- Information, Education and Advocacy
- Community Infrastructure

System Overview

The developmental disabilities service system represents a shared responsibility by both the State and the County.

The **Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/ DDA)** assists individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to obtain services and supports based on individual needs and preferences which promote everyday activities, routines, and relationships common to most citizens.



The state DSHS/DDA determines program eligibility and provides the following services based on client need and funding availability. Fact Sheets on DDA services may be found [here. https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/adsaapps/about/factsheets/DDAFactsheets.aspx](https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/adsaapps/about/factsheets/DDAFactsheets.aspx)

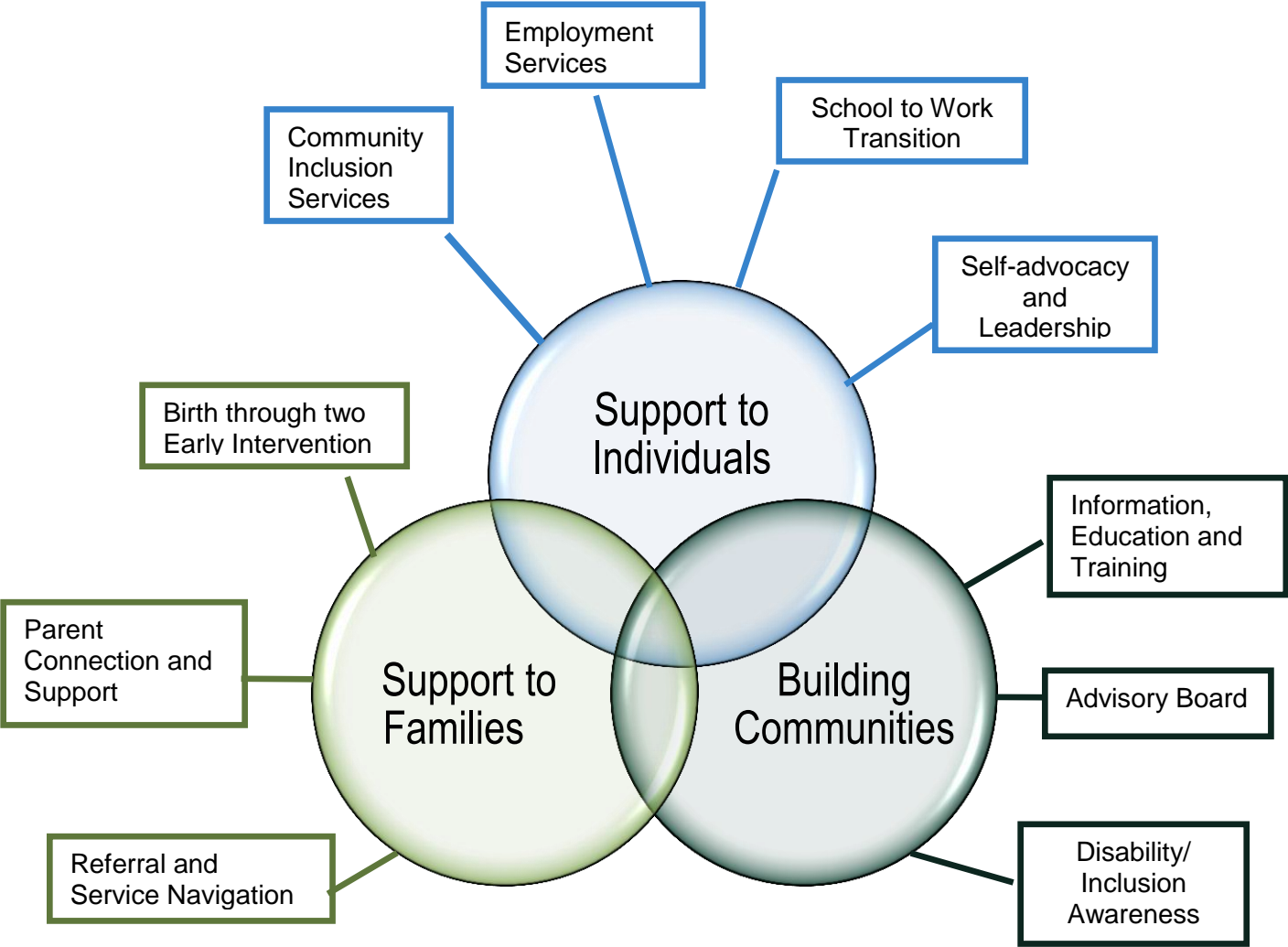
- Eligibility determination
- Case resource management
- Institutional Services
- Home and Community Based services
 - Residential services (support to live in your own home/apartment)
 - Respite (giving caregivers a break)
 - Specialized Therapies
 - Behavioral support and crisis services
 - Supported Employment , Community Inclusion, Early Intervention Services (See County)
- Personal Care services
- Individual and Family Support Services



The State contracts with **Whatcom County** to provide the following:

- Early Intervention Services for infants and toddlers ages 0-2
- Pathway to Employment services for adults 21 and older
- Community Inclusion for individuals who have retired or are no longer pursuing employment
- Information and education to the community
- Activities which promote partnerships with school districts and effective school to work transition

Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program Services Overview



Whatcom County Community Profile

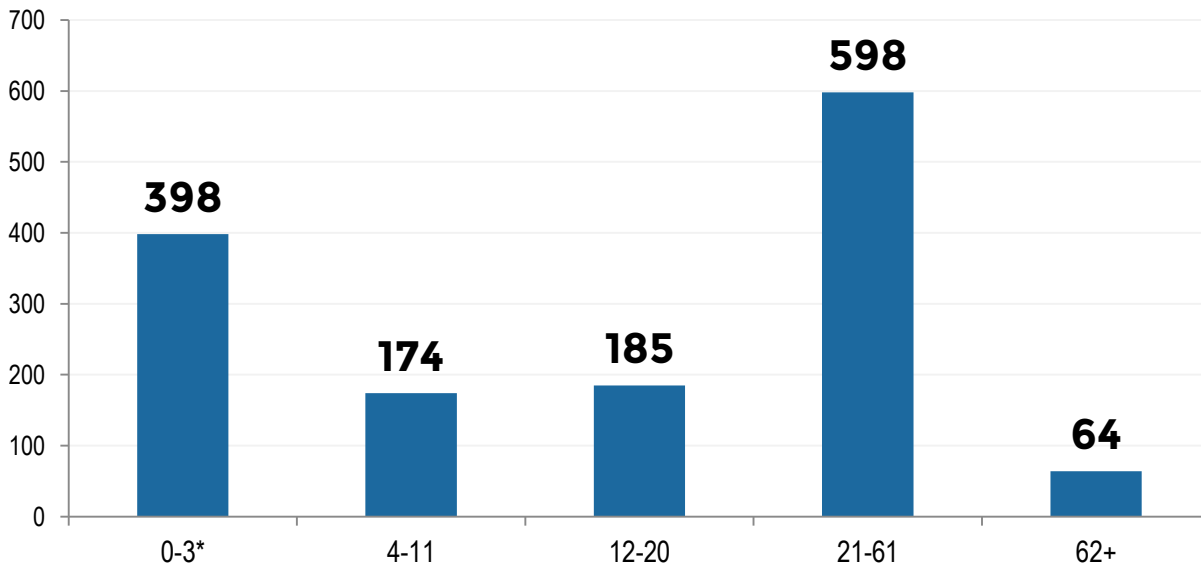
Whatcom County is the 9th most populous county in Washington State with an estimated population of 225,685 based on U.S. census estimates. (2018)

- An estimated **2,700*** residents may have a developmental disability.

(*Approximately 1.2% of the general population is estimated to have an intellectual and/or developmental disability. Prevalence rate is based on Washington State Auditor's office, Performance Audit July 31, 2013.)

- **1,419** individuals were enrolled with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) in Whatcom County.

Whatcom DSHS/DDA enrollment by Age

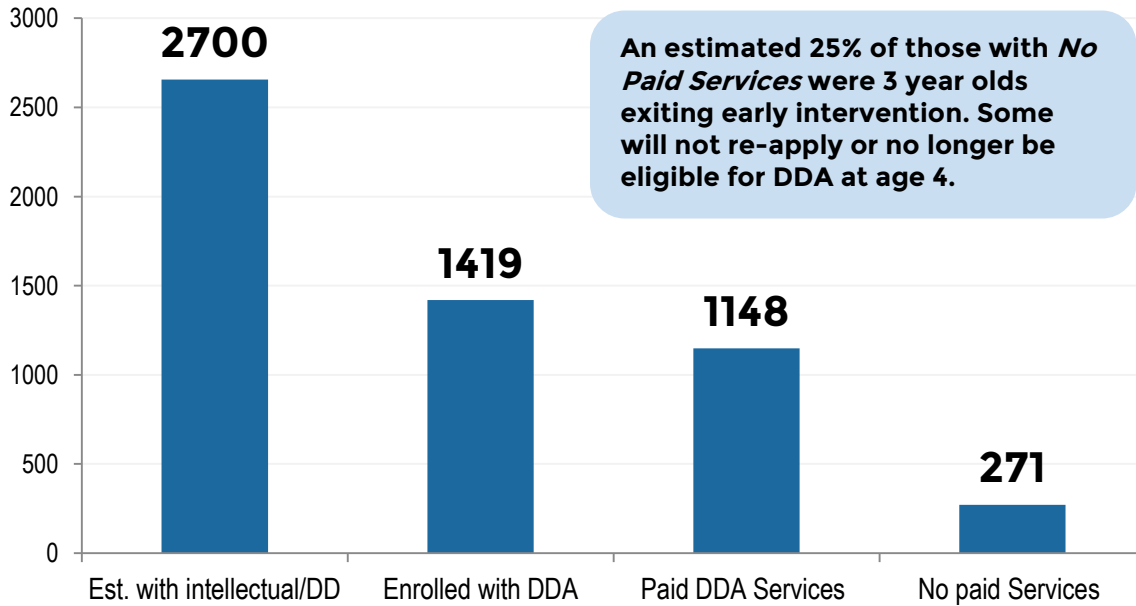


January 2019, DDA Client Management Information System

** DDA eligibility criteria is broadest for young children 0-3. Once early intervention services are complete at age 3 a % of children are no longer eligible for DDA services (or do not re-apply). Eligibility criteria changes at age 4 and age 10. Eligibility is reviewed at age 18 prior to entering adult services.*

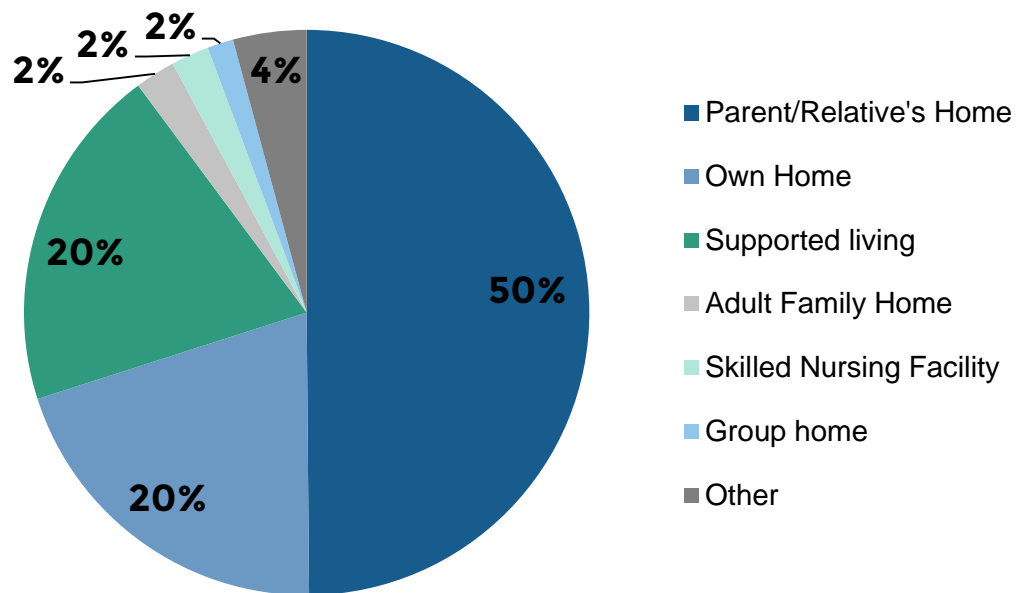
- 19% of DDA enrolled individuals received no paid services. (271 individuals)

Individuals Receiving DDA Services, Whatcom County*



- 50% of adults with developmental disabilities 18+ lived with their parent (s) or relatives.

Residential Settings, Adults 18+ Enrolled with DDA*



*January 2019, DDA Client Management Information System

Residential Definitions:

Supported Living

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

Group Homes

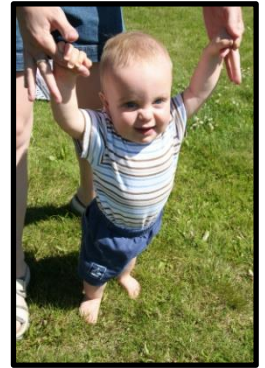
Living with other people in a home run by an agency where you can receive 24-hour supervision and training. A group home is contracted directly through DDA to provide residential services.

Skilled Nursing Facility

Living in a skilled nursing home that provides 24-hour nursing services. Nursing Facilities are licensed by the Washington State Aging and Long Term Support Administration (AL TSA).

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 the Washington State Aging and Long Term Support Administration (AL TSA)

Children and Families



Families are the primary support for both children and adults with developmental disabilities. Early investment in children and support to families helps maximize the child's ability to learn, grow and become independent within the community.

Goals

- Families and caregivers know where to turn for help when they need it.
- Families and caregivers have the information and support they need to help their child develop and learn.
- Children have opportunities to learn and grow during everyday activities and routines typical to all children.
- Families know their rights and are able to effectively advocate for their child.

Strategies

- **Support coordinated referral and access to services:** Families and professionals concerned with the development of a child can contact the “Single Entry Access to Services” (SEAS) phone line to get connected with local services. For more information please see: whatcomtakingaction.org/. The County is a funding partner with the Early Services for Infants and Toddler (ESIT) program for these services.
- **Build upon family strengths to enhance the development of children.** Early Intervention Services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C focus on enhancing the family's capacity to support their child's development. Services are provided in the home or other community settings and use early childhood specialists to help the family identify learning opportunities within typical routines and activities. The County is a funding partner with the Early Services for Infants and Toddlers program (ESIT), school districts, and public and private insurance. For more information see: www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/child-development-supports/esit
- **Provide opportunities for parent connection and support:** Personal support from another parent who has a child with similar needs can be helpful in coping with the grief and learning associated with a new diagnosis.
- **Provide culturally competent services which respect the diversity and beliefs of families.** The ability to understand, respond to and value individuals of all backgrounds helps ensure that all families have equal access to services and supports inclusion.

2018 Outcomes: Children and Families

- An average of 269 children ages 0-2 received early intervention services each month in their home or other community setting.
- 1058 families were referred through the “Single Entry Access to Services” (SEAS) referral line for developmental evaluation, specialized therapies and other services
- 464 parents and family members participated in peer-facilitated support groups. (42 on average monthly)
- 328 parents and family members attended social and networking events.
- 131 contacts were made with Latino families seeking peer parent support.
- 76 trained “helping parents” were available to provide mentorship and support to families of children with developmental disabilities and delays.

Key Partnerships

- Early Intervention Service Providers
- Early Services for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) Program
- Arc of Whatcom County
- Medical Providers
- Maternal /Child Health Program
- School districts
- Whatcom Infant and Children’s Council (WICC)
- Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA)
- Tribal early childhood programs

**Statewide, 2.99% of all children 0-3 were enrolled in early intervention services. ([2017-18 ESIT Report Card](#).) Whatcom County achieved 4.08% enrollment. Research suggests, however, that as many as 13% of birth to three year olds have delays that would make them eligible for early intervention using criteria commonly used by states (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center-NECTAC)*

School Transition

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) part B, districts must begin planning for the transition from school to adult services no later than age 16. Transition goals within the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) focus on what the student needs to continue their education, get a job, and increase their independence within the community after school has ended.



Students with developmental disabilities are typically eligible for district services until age 21.

Goals

- Students with developmental disabilities are provided opportunities for individualized employment and community based work experience before they leave school.
- Students enroll with adult services necessary to achieve their post graduate goals related to continuing education, independent living and employment before they leave school.
- Caregivers have the resources and information they need to help graduates build a meaningful life in the community after school has ended.

Strategies

- Partner with families, districts and adult service providers to coordinate the timely and effective transition from school to work and adult services.
- Increase opportunities for students to pursue employment and gain work experience before they leave school.
- Educate families about the social and financial benefits of employment.
- Provide information to students and their families about planning for life after high school.
- Provide training and support to educators related to best practices in transition.
- Increase awareness of financial tools such as [ABLE accounts](#), special needs trusts and benefits planning to ensure the resources necessary to build a meaningful life.

** ABLÉ accounts and special needs trusts allow families to set aside funds for future needs, without risking their son or daughter's public disability benefits. Benefits planning helps individuals understand how work will impact their cash and medical benefits.*

2018 Outcomes: School to Work Transition

- 77% of eligible students enrolled in the County “School to Work” Program during their last year of school. Support included person centered planning to establish job goals, development of individualized work experiences, and coordinated transition of support between the school district and the adult service system.
- 76% of grads who participated in School to Work got jobs within one year of exiting school, compared to 25% of young adults who did not participate.
- 90%* of DDA enrolled, transition aged youth were connected with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and pursuing employment by the time they exited school.
- 200 Students, families, educators and community partners participated in the annual Whatcom County transition fair.

Key Partnerships:

- School Districts
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation
- Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
- Housing Authority
- Department of Social and Health Services
- Employment Agencies
- Social Security Administration
- Families and Caregivers
- Arc of Whatcom County
- Whatcom Transportation Authority

** A percentage of transition aged youth enroll with DDA after the start of the “School to Work” project or drop out of school and are not eligible to participate. Many of these individuals continue to access services through DVR. A portion of eligible youth or their guardians decline to pursue employment.*

Pathways to Employment

Employment offers all people, with or without disabilities, a path out of poverty and an opportunity to contribute and develop relationships with peers. Employment is the focus of County services for adults 21 to 62 with developmental disabilities.



The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is the first resource accessed for short-term vocational assessment, job placement, and training. The County provides long term employment supports for eligible individuals still needing support to maintain their job or pursue employment after DVR services have ended.

Goals

Adults with developmental disabilities who want to work:

- Have a paid job.
- Increase their economic self-sufficiency
- Work in typical community jobs that fit their goals, skills and interests
- Have opportunities to develop relationships with co-workers and others on the job.

Strategies

- Educate families and individuals about the benefits of work.
- Partner with school districts to increase student preparedness for work.
- Provide individualized supports and ensure that workers with disabilities have opportunities to make choices about the work they do, and the individuals who support them.
- Educate local business and industry about the benefits of hiring individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Work with business and industry to customize job tasks which meet the employer's needs and fit the skills and interests of the worker with disabilities.
- Ensure that vocational providers have the skill and training to support individuals with more complex needs to work in the community.

2018 Outcomes: Pathways to Employment

- **85%** of adults enrolled in County employment programs earned wages within the year. The statewide average was 69%.*
- **352** Individuals received County funded employment services. This represented approximately 57 % of DDA eligible adults ages 21-62.
- **\$ 1.2 Million** in wages were earned.
- **192** businesses in Whatcom County employed individuals with DD.
- Progress toward each participant’s goal work hours is tracked.
 - Individuals with higher support needs and barriers to employment typically have lower goal work hours
 - Individuals who are more independent in the community typically have higher goal work hours.
 - Support needs are assessed annually by DSHS/DDA.
 - Progress toward goal work hours, summarized below.**

Support Needs	Goal Work Hours (per week)	% Progress Toward Goals (Whatcom)	% Progress Washington State
High	6	48%	48%
Medium	15	50%	67%
Low	20	84%	80%

Key Partnerships

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
- Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation
- Employers
- Vocational Agencies
- School Districts
- DSHS/ Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
- Individuals and Families

**DSHS/DDA Results Washington Report-Dec.2018*

***DSHS/DDA Preferred Work Hours Report-Feb. 2019*

Community Inclusion (Services)

Inclusion broadly refers to the right of all people, regardless of their disability, to participate in and access their community just like everyone else. Some people with disabilities may need some support or accommodation to fully participate in their community.

Community Inclusion services provide individuals with opportunities to engage in activities that support socialization, education, recreation and personal development. Services are individualized based on the participant's interests.



Community Inclusion is available to individuals 62 or older. It is also available to working aged individuals (21-62) who have tried employment services for at least 9 months and no longer wish to pursue employment. More information about the County's focus on employment may be found within [DDA Policy 4.11 -County Services for Working Age Adults](#).

Goals

Community Inclusion Participants:

- Develop/maintain relationships with individuals not paid to support them
- Contribute to their community
- Participate in typical, integrated activities of their choosing where their interests, culture, talents and gifts are shared with others with similar interest

Strategies

- Assist individuals to participate in activities, events and organizations in the local community in ways similar to others of similar age.
- Provide the support necessary to strengthen and maintain relationships with existing friends and family as well as build new relationships with members of the local community who are not paid to be with the individual.
- Find places where an individual's interests, culture, talents, and gifts can be contributed and shared with others with similar interests.
- Provide opportunities for people to do things they enjoy as well as new and interesting things.
- Support participation in clubs, associations, and organizations as members and in decision-making capacities.
- Provide training to community providers to effectively include people in the community and support the community to include and welcome people with DD.

2018 Outcomes: Community Inclusion*

- 47% of participants were of retirement age. (62+) The average age of Community Inclusion participants was 57.
- 100% of participants were supported to participate in integrated, inclusive community activities of their choice.
- 21 adults received community Inclusion (CI) services on average monthly. This number reflects the County focus on employment for individuals of working age.

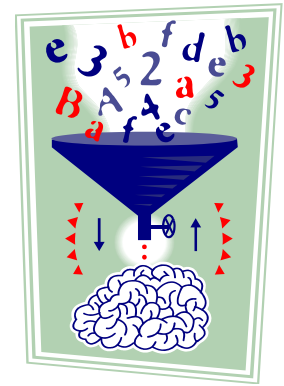
Key Partnerships

- Community Inclusion providers
- Families and Caregivers
- Senior Centers and other community programs
- Community resources (Libraries, Parks, etc.)
- Community members

**Outcomes related to quality of life and inclusion are often specific to the individual and can be challenging to define and measure at the program level. New outcome measures for these services, however, are being considered.. Example measures might include the number of relationships developed with individuals not paid to support the participant or the number of individuals volunteering in the community.*

Community Information, Education and Advocacy

Providing current, timely and accurate information to individuals with DD, their families and caregivers helps ensure effective access to needed resources.



Goals

- Caregivers effectively advocate for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Individuals with disabilities understand their rights and actively participate in and direct decisions that affect their lives.
- The community welcomes and includes individuals with disabilities.
- Community partners and professionals have accurate and timely information to support individuals with DD and their families.

Strategies

- Provide organization to parents and caregivers.
- Assist family members, caregivers and the community to advocate for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Assist family members and caregivers to understand and navigate the social service and educational systems.
- Build individual and family capacity to build a meaningful life in the community.
- Raise awareness of disability issues and needs.
- Promote leadership and self-advocacy of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in community life and activities.

2018 Outcomes: Community Information, Education and Advocacy

- 2505 Individuals received an electronic monthly newsletter providing information on disability resources and services.
- 396 Individuals received assistance to navigate the service system and/or advocate for their family member with a disability.
- 123 individuals participated in family/ caregiver training.
- 91% of respondents on average indicated that they were satisfied with the information/ training received.
- 1034 people participated in community inclusion/ disability awareness presentations.
- An average of 12 young adults with developmental disabilities participated in self-advocacy support meetings monthly.

Key Partnerships

- Arc of Whatcom County
- People First of Whatcom County
- Developmental Disabilities Administration
- Community members, businesses and organizations

Community Infrastructure



Community infrastructure refers to those public services available to all community members. The opportunity to live in an affordable home, move around the community using public transportation, have access to health care, be safe in the community, and participate in local recreational/ cultural activities are important for all individuals.

Goals

- Build the capacity of community services and infrastructure to effectively serve and accommodate individuals with developmental disabilities within housing, transportation, health, recreation, public safety and other services.

Strategies

- Raise awareness of disability issues, needs and resources
- Promote the participation and leadership of individuals with disabilities and their family members in community boards and planning processes.
- Advocate for and support the expansion of accessible, safe and affordable infrastructure to better address the needs of individuals with DD.

Planned Activities

- Provide outreach to health care providers regarding the Single Entry Access Services (SEAS) line.
- Support the increase of affordable and accessible housing inventory designated for individuals with DD by leveraging public housing investments.
- Ensure representation of DD issues and needs within training to law enforcement and other first responders as requested.
- Ensure representation from the DD community within public planning processes including [public transportation](#), [pedestrian infrastructure](#) and facilities.

Key Partnerships

- Housing Partners, [Housing Trust](#)
- City and County Government
- Public Safety Agencies
- Transportation Authority
- Health Care Providers
- Recreation providers

GLOSSARY

DDAB	Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (County)
DDA	Developmental Disabilities Administration (State)
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services (State)
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (State)
ESIT	Early Services for Infants and Toddlers (State)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Federal)
IEP	Individual Education Plan (Federal)
RCW	Revised Code of Washington (State Law)
WAC	Washington Administrative Code (State Rules)
WICC	Whatcom Infant and Children's Council (County)