
MENTAL ILLNESS AND DRUG DEPENDENCY ACTION PLAN

Brief Overview

Vision statement

King County will seek to improve and stabilize the lives of people with mental illness and chemical dependency.

Goals

1. A full continuum of prevention, intervention, treatment and other supports will be more readily available.
2. People with mental illness and chemical dependency will not end up in jail, hospitals or on the streets because of a lack of community treatment options.
3. Early identification and treatment for youth will significantly prevent or reduce more serious mental illness, chemical dependency and justice system involvement.
4. Changes will be made in the criminal justice system to create more treatment options for the courts to support rehabilitation and recovery.
5. The personal and public costs of mental illness and chemical dependency will be reduced.
6. A comprehensive evaluation component will be developed to identify, measure and report the impacts of these services on people's lives and the evaluation outcomes will be used to guide decision-making.
7. King County and its partners will track and respond to state and federal legislation that impacts, either positively or negatively, the funding and service systems that assist people with mental illness and chemical dependency to achieve recovery.

Background

King County experienced several consecutive years of state budget cuts to its mental health program, resulting in loss of services or extremely tight eligibility criteria for many low-income people in need. Inadequate state funding for substance abuse services over many years limited access to treatment for many needy county residents. It is no surprise, therefore, that a high number of individuals arrested, jailed or hospitalized are people with untreated mental health and substance abuse issues.

In 2005, the Washington State Legislature created an option for counties to raise the local sales tax by 0.1 percent to augment funding for mental health and chemical dependency services and therapeutic courts. Seven counties – Spokane, Jefferson, Skagit, Clallam, Clark, Okanogan and Island – have implemented the sales tax increase, with several others considering action. For King County, this sales tax increase would yield approximately \$48 million annually. An extensive exploration of the possibility of utilizing the tax option began with passage of Council Motion 12320, which yielded the three-part Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Action Plan, with the final phase completed in June 2007.

Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Action Plan

Recommendations for service improvements and enhancements described in the action plan are grouped into three core strategy areas:

1. Community based care
2. Prevention programs targeted for youth
3. Jail and hospital diversion