



United Way of King County

United Way of King County 2009-2010 Legislative Priorities

Fully fund the General Assistance Unemployable program. Over 16,000 of Washington's most vulnerable individuals depend on the General Assistance Unemployable (GAU) \$339 per month cash grants and medical benefits for survival. These individuals are unable to work as a result of physical or mental disabilities and are often entirely dependent on GAU benefits for housing, food, and medical care. One-quarter of those receiving General Assistance are homeless and two-thirds are without permanent housing. Not funding the program would result in more people with mental health and other disabilities being out on the streets countering current efforts to end chronic homelessness.

Fund Individual Development Accounts at the 2007-2009 level of \$2 million for the biennium. Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) match participant savings at a rate between 1:1 and 3:1 to purchase a home, business, or further education. A moderate contribution of state money leverages significant federal and philanthropic funds for low-income people; federal funding would be lost without the state contribution. Over a third of the nearly 1,000 participants to date (52 percent with an income below \$25,000/year) have completed the program and made asset purchases. IDAs are an important step in reducing homelessness, increasing financial stability, decreasing reliance on state systems, providing a boost out of poverty, and investing in economic prosperity.

Fund the Housing Trust Fund at the 2007-2009 level of \$200 million. Leveraging more than four times its funding from other sources, the Housing Trust Fund not only provides vital housing for Washington's most vulnerable, it also acts as a stimulus to the economy providing jobs, new housing starts, and an influx of money. The lack of decent, affordable housing is a major barrier to preventing homelessness or moving people from homelessness to permanent housing. At its current level, the Housing Trust Fund supports the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of over 4,500 units every two years through low-interest loans and grants, with approximately 70 percent of housing targeting the homeless.

Restore \$3.5 million for home visiting.

Few investments have more well-documented, substantial, and long-lasting returns than home visiting. Follow-up studies show dramatic reductions in child abuse and neglect as well as lower rates of high school drop-out, incarceration (for parents and children), unemployment, and health care costs later in life. Evidence based home visiting programs save money through prevention of expensive remedial and "deep end" services and help young children and families become more productive, contributing members of the community.

Support \$1 million included in the Governor's budget to continue a scaled back Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Fifty-four percent of all children under 6 live in households where parents work. Formal and informal child care is used by families to support their need to be out of the home. The QRIS, used successfully in a number of states, is a voluntary means of assessing, improving, and communicating child care quality. QRIS programs are a critical means of conveying to parents the quality of care and creating incentives for providers to improve their services.

Support \$3 million biennially to sustain Washington Information Network (WIN) 2-1-1 services statewide and support increased call volumes. For Washington's vulnerable and newly disenfranchised populations, finding the right services can feel like a maze of false starts and dead ends. WIN 2-1-1 is a seamless telephone and online information, assistance, and referral system operated by six regional call centers. It has played a major role in connecting people and agencies in need of services to appropriate service providers as well as messaging state program changes to the public. Over the past year, the WIN 2-1-1 system has seen a 24 percent increase in volume of calls largely due to both the economic downturn and natural disasters.