



Whatcom County

Developmental Disabilities Plan

2014-18

Whatcom County Health Department
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Introduction

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

- Intellectual disability
- Down Syndrome
- Another neurological condition
- Other condition closely related to intellectual disability
- Cerebral palsy
- 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: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/eligible.shtml>

State Developmental Disabilities Administration County Guidelines

The County guidelines were developed by stakeholders in the disability system including families, Counties and providers in order to bring consistency across the state and communicate a valued approach to services for individuals with DD. Counties are required to incorporate these guidelines in all Community Services.

The County guidelines recognize the need to offer services and resources that meet individual needs and promote activities and relationships consistent with most citizens. These include:

- **Power and Choice:** Being free to make our own choices and direct our own lives.
- **Relationships:** Having people in our lives whom we love and care about and who love and care about us.
- **Status and Contribution:** Feeling good about oneself and having others recognize us for what we contribute to others and our community.
- **Integration:** Being part of our community through active involvement. This means doing things we enjoy as well as new and interesting things in groups and activities common to those without developmental disabilities.
- **Competence:** Learning to do things on our own or be supported to do things for our self.
- **Health and Safety:** Feeling safe and secure and being healthy.

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
- High School Transition
- Pathways to Employment
- Community Access
- Community Information, Education and Advocacy

System Overview

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

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) 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.



The state determines program eligibility and provides the following services based on client need and funding availability.

- Eligibility determination
- Case resource management
- State institution services
- Home and Community Based “Waiver” services (the “Waiver” allows individuals to receive services in their home communities who might otherwise live in an institutional setting.)
- Residential services
- Medicaid Personal Care (MPC)
- Family support services

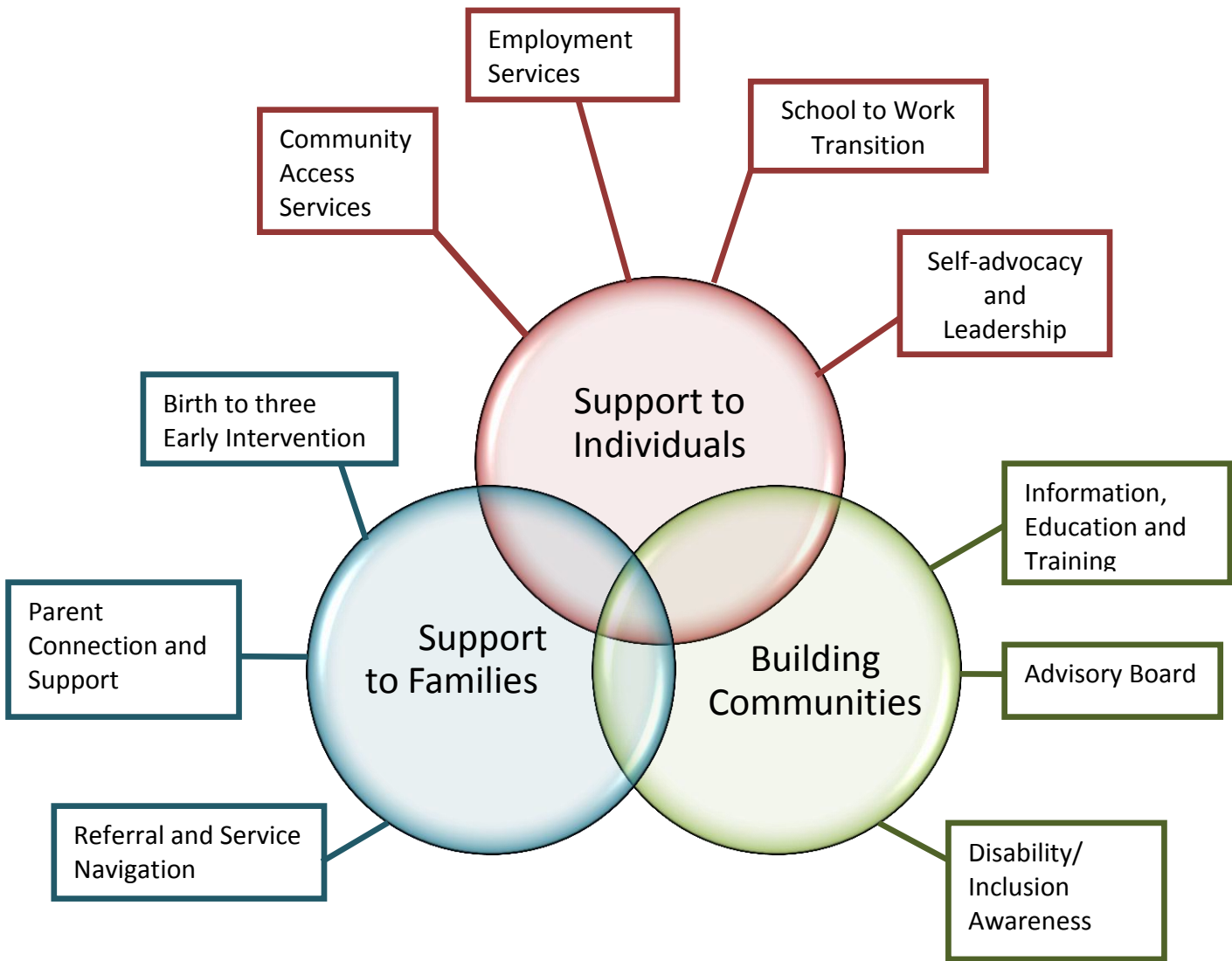


The State contracts with Whatcom County to provide the following:

- Early Intervention Services for children ages 0-3
- Pathway to employment services for adults 21 and older
- Community Access for individuals of retirement age or no longer pursuing employment
- Information and Education to the community
- Activities which promote partnerships with school districts and effective school to work transition

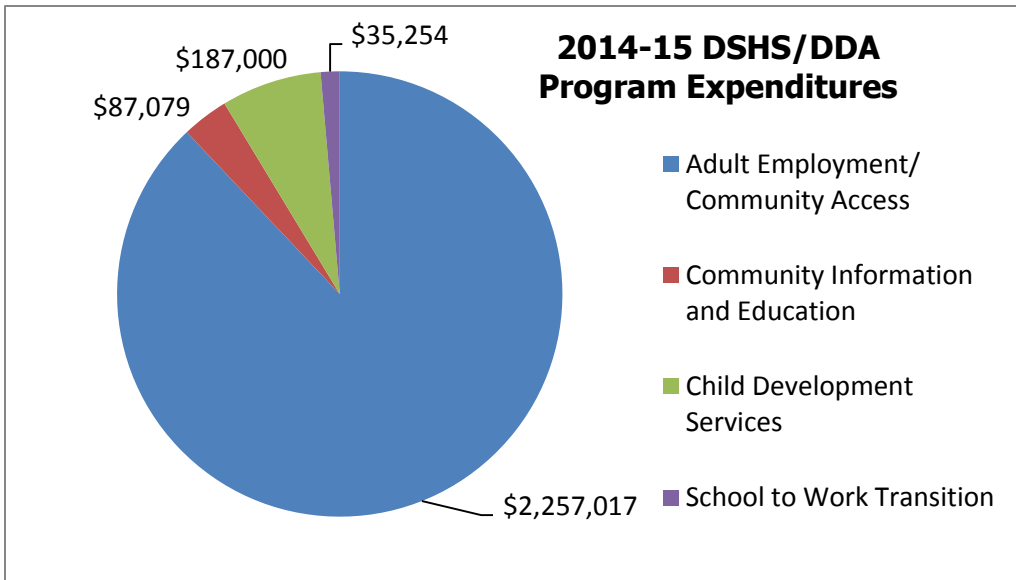
In addition, the Whatcom County DD program receives dedicated local County property tax or “millage” funds. These funds are prioritized by the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (DDAB)

**Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program
Services Overview**

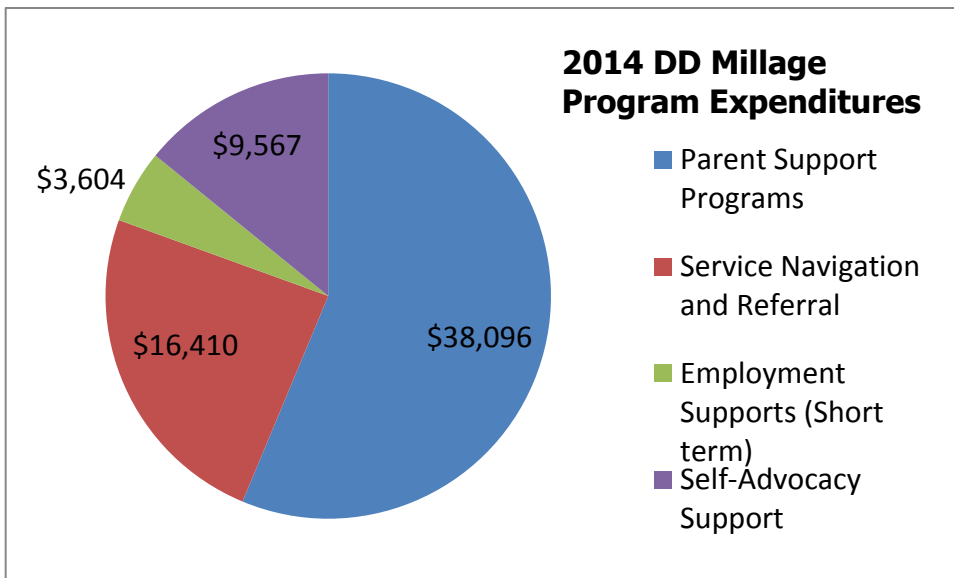


**Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program
Service Funding Overview**

Department of Social and Health Services (**DSHS**) Developmental Disabilities Administration (**DDA**): These funds represent Washington State general fund dollars along with federal Medicaid match for most categories. Funding is based on the number of clients served in the previous fiscal year. The fiscal year for these funds is July-June.



Local Whatcom County Property Tax Dollars, also referred to as **“Millage”** comprises the balance of funding for the Whatcom County DD program. Funds are collected in line with RCW 71.20.110. The fiscal year for these funds is January –December. The amount of funding available for program expenditures varies based on the amount collected, and County administrative costs.

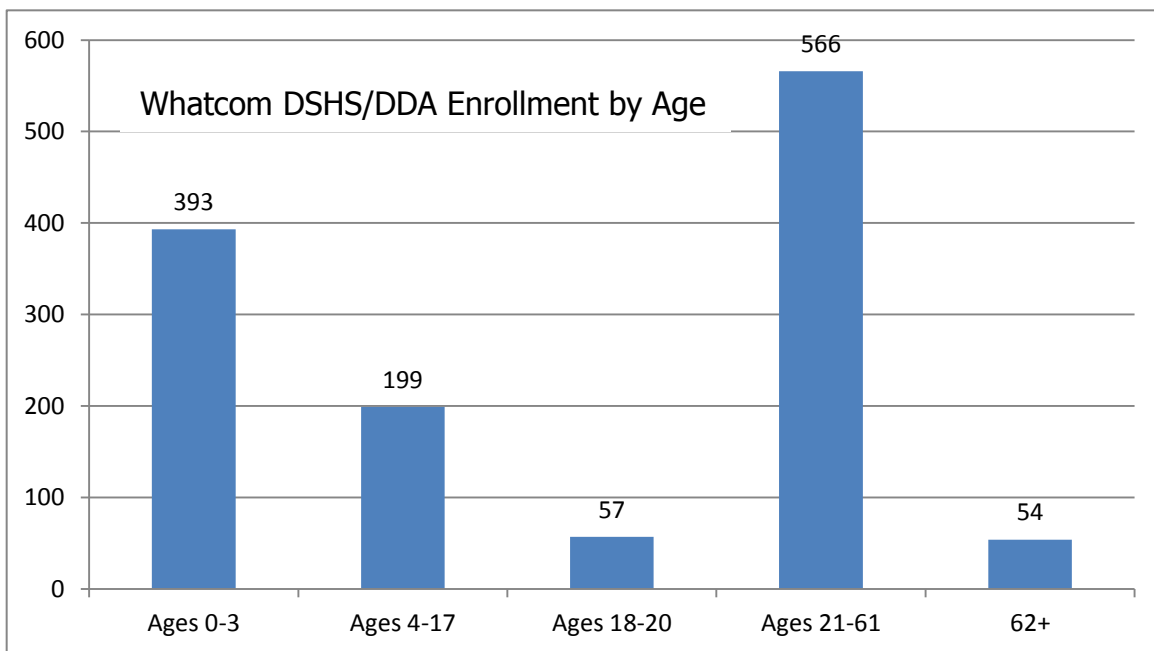


Whatcom County Community Profile

Whatcom County is the 9th most populous County in Washington State with an estimated population of 208,351 based on U.S. census estimates.

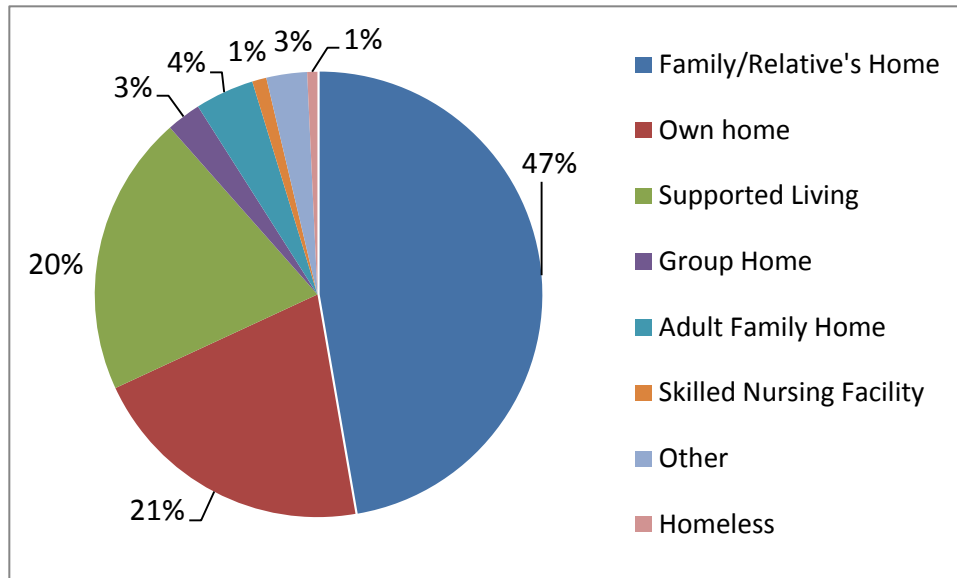
Department of Social and Health Services, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA) Statistics (January 2016)

- An estimated **2,500*** residents may have a developmental disability. (*1.2% is used by DSHS/DDA to estimate the prevalence of developmental disabilities in the general population.)
- **1,269** individuals were enrolled with the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) in Whatcom County.



- **921** individuals with developmental disabilities were enrolled with DDA in Whatcom County and had a **paid service**. The remaining **27%** met eligibility criteria for DSHS/DDA but either did not meet specific program eligibility or no funding is available.
- **47%** of adults with developmental disabilities 18 and older lived with their family/relatives.

Residential Settings, Adults 18+ Enrolled with DDA



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

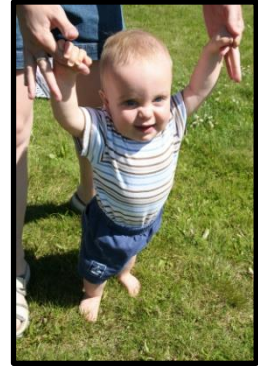
Living with other people in a home run by an agency where you can receive 24-hour supervision and training. A group home is contracted directly through DDA to provide residential services.

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.

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. For more information please see: <http://whatcomtakingaction.org/>. The County is a funding partner with the Early Services for Infants and Toddler (ESIT) program through the Opportunity Council for these services.
- **Support care coordination for children with complex needs.** A team approach to care reduces complications, increases effectiveness and promotes the health and welfare of the child. Children triaged and screened through the SEAS line are currently the priority recipients of these supports through the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) program.
- **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: <http://www.del.wa.gov/development/esit/Default.aspx>
- **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.

Key Partnerships

- Early Intervention Service Providers
- Early Services for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) Program – Opportunity Council
- Parent-to Parent Support Program
- Whatcom Center for Early learning
- Medical community
- Maternal /Child Health Program
- School districts
- Whatcom Infant and Children’s Council (WICC)
- Developmental Disabilities Administration (DSHS/DDA)
- Tribal early childhood programs

2015 Outcomes: Children and Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32% of toddlers exiting Early Intervention Services in Whatcom County did not qualify for Special Education at age 3. (2014) • An average of 175 children monthly receive early intervention services in their home or other community setting. * • 814 families were referred through the “Single Entry Access to Services” (SEAS) referral line. • 201 parents attended peer-facilitated support groups. • 316 parents and family members attended social and networking events. • 80 trained “helping parents” were available to provide mentorship and support to families of children with developmental disabilities and delays. • 11% of helping parents were trained through the Hispanic parent-to-parent program. The 2010 census estimated that 8.4% of Whatcom County’s population identified as Hispanic.

**The 2015 Washington State target for enrollment in early intervention was 2.5% of all children 0-3. Whatcom County achieved 2.67% enrollment. However, research indicates that as many as 13% of birth to three year olds have delays that would make them Part C eligible according to criteria commonly used by states (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center-NECTAC)*

High 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 they needed 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.
- 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.

2015 Outcomes: High School Transition

- 71%* of eligible students enrolled in the County “School to Work” Program during their last year of school. Support included person centered employment planning to establish job goals, development of individualized work experience, and coordinated transition of support between the school district and the adult service system.
- 67% * of DDA enrolled, transition aged youth were connected with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and pursuing employment by the time they exited school.
- 183 Students, educators and community members 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, Parent Coalition
- Whatcom Transportation Authority

* A % 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 have historically declined to pursue employment.

Pathways to Employment



Employment offers all people, with or without disabilities, a path out of poverty, independence from services systems and an opportunity to meet others. 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 may provide 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:

- 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.
- Coordinate 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 employers 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.

2015 Outcomes: Pathways to Employment

- **78 %** of adults enrolled in County employment programs earned wages at minimum wage or higher. *
- **302** adults received County funded employment services on average monthly. This represents approximately 53 % of DDA eligible adults ages 21-62.
- **\$ 922,236** Total wages were earned.
- **153** businesses in Whatcom County employed individuals with DD.

Key Partnerships

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

* In 2015, 65.6% of individuals statewide in County employment services earned wages, 56% of whom earned minimum wage or higher.

With limited exception, Whatcom County providers eliminated sub-minimum wage work in 2015.

Community Access



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

Community access 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. Exceptions to the 9 month participation rule must be approved by DDA. 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 Access 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 build and strengthen relationships between family members and 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.

2015 Outcomes: Community Access

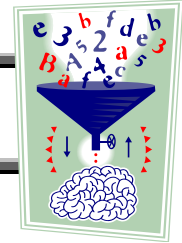
- 73% of participants were of retirement age. (62+)
- 100% of participants were supported to participate in integrated, inclusive community activities of their choice.
- 15* adults received community access (CA) services on average monthly. This number reflects the County focus on employment for individuals of working age.

Key Partnerships

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

*New referrals have kept pace with clients exiting from services, resulting in no net gain in CA clients since 2012.

Community Information, Education and Advocacy



Goals

- Caregivers effectively advocate for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Individuals with disabilities actively participate in and direct decisions that affect their lives.
- The community welcomes and includes individuals with disabilities.

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 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.

2015 Outcomes: Community Information, Education and Advocacy

- 94% of respondents on average indicated that they were satisfied with the information/ training received. (Parent Coalition –Arc of Whatcom County)
- 1549 Individuals received a monthly newsletter providing information on disability resources and services.
- 402 Individuals received information on guardianship and future planning.
- 379 Individuals received assistance to navigate the service system and/or advocate for their family member with a disability.
- 130 individuals participated in family/ caregiver training.
- 3247 people participated in community inclusion/ disability awareness presentations.

Key Partnerships

- The Parent Coalition of Whatcom County
- Arc of Whatcom County
- Parent to parent of Whatcom County
- People First of Whatcom County
- Developmental Disabilities Administration
- Community members, businesses and organizations

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)