

## SECTION 4: Strategic Plan for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health in King County

King County's landscape analysis represents a multiyear effort to listen, learn, and generate approaches that center children and families. Findings from this effort informed this strategic plan for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in King County, which was developed with input from community partners and the King County Strategic Planning Committee. The five priorities and strategies below are grounded in the vision and values described earlier and are directed toward deep sustained and systemic change. Let's take a closer look at each priority.

### King County Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Strategic Plan Overview



#### **PRIORITY 1: Promote social and emotional well-being for all children and families**

- 1.1:** Increase community awareness about the importance of social and emotional well-being, dispel common myths, and reduce stigma around Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
- 1.2:** Ensure that families and communities receive comprehensive, up-to-date information in their home languages about topics related to child and family well-being.
- 1.3:** Ensure children have access to social and emotional developmental screenings and referrals that are culturally and linguistically responsive.



#### **PRIORITY 2: Connect more families with services for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, including promotion, prevention, and treatment**

- 2.1:** Expand and enhance relationship-based approaches with trusted community-based partners.
- 2.2:** Ensure equitable access for families to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services, including supportive transitions and coordination among services.
- 2.3:** Identify and address systemic barriers to ensure that children and families farthest from opportunity can access services.



#### **PRIORITY 3: Provide high-quality, culturally relevant services that meet the needs of families**

- 3.1:** Create clear expectations and accountability for high-quality, culturally, and linguistically responsive Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services across all programs serving children and families.
- 3.2:** Strengthen the capacity of BIPOC-led community-based organizations to continue expanding high-quality, culturally, and linguistically relevant services for young children and families in their communities.
- 3.3:** Increase collaboration and communication among programs and agencies that deliver Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.



#### **PRIORITY 4: Support all direct service providers across the continuum of care**

- 4.1:** Support well-being, professional growth, and retention of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health providers.
- 4.2:** Improve and expand access to equity-centered Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health learning opportunities, skill building, and reflective practice.
- 4.3:** Create intentional and supported leadership pathways for BIPOC providers across all program types.



#### **PRIORITY 5: Build and strengthen a network of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services countywide**

- 5.1:** Strengthen collaboration across community-based partners and systems to integrate Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services into a broad range of settings.
- 5.2:** Increase data-driven decision-making, policies, and practices that promote Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and center racial equity.
- 5.3:** Ensure that resources are allocated for children, families, and communities with the least access to high-quality, culturally relevant Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.

## PRIORITY 1:

# Promote social and emotional well-being for all children and families



### Opportunity

To provide culturally and linguistically relevant messaging, resources, and supports that promote infant, early childhood, and family well-being and mental health across King County.

### Why is this important?

There is a need for culturally and linguistically relevant communication to reach diverse families, communities, and service providers with clear messaging about resources that promote social and emotional well-being for young children and their families.

### How can King County create change?

Information should be strengths-based, universally available, and offered in ways that are culturally, linguistically, and community tailored. Special attention will be required to build trusting relationships and promote Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and well-being within communities that are most affected by historical and persistent racial trauma.

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### Strategy 1.1: Increase community awareness of the importance of social and emotional well-being, dispel common myths, and reduce stigma around Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.

While the importance of social and emotional well-being for children's long-term success is widely understood, misconceptions about mental health for babies and young children persist. For King County, increasing awareness among families, communities, and providers is an important strategy toward reducing stigma and promoting positive social and emotional outcomes for young children and their families.

#### *Potential implementation steps:*

- Convene a workgroup to develop a public awareness and engagement strategy.
- Engage community listening sessions to gather stories and perspectives from families and communities on child-caregiver relationships and social and emotional well-being.
- Develop literature, audiovisuals, and other materials to reflect and share family stories and key messages that are relevant and accessible to communities.

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### Strategy 1.2: Ensure that families and communities receive comprehensive, up-to-date information in their home languages on topics related to child and family well-being.

Families play an important role in supporting their children's healthy growth and development. As such, most families are eager for helpful resources and information. Trusted community-based organizations, including neighborhood or faith-based groups, libraries, stores, community centers, and playgrounds are essential partners. These groups and community gathering places have the potential to increase the reach and relevance of vital information and to help meet the needs families have expressed for connection and peer support. In addition, these relationships provide important channels of communication with both families and community-based organizations to help assess the effectiveness of messaging and contribute to continuous improvement.

**Potential implementation steps:**

- Identify and mobilize community-based organizations as hubs to disseminate and promote information on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health topics such as relational health and mental health, family supports, and child development.
- Engage families and communities in ongoing feedback loops to assess the reach, effectiveness, and relevance of information and materials across languages and cultural identities.

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**Strategy 1.3: Ensure children access social and emotional screenings and referrals that are culturally and linguistically responsive.**

The importance of appropriate screening tools and practices for each child cannot be overstated. For families and providers to identify and meet the needs of a child, it is vital to see the full picture of the child’s development within the context of their culture, language, and age-appropriate expectations.

**Potential implementation steps:**

- Partner with the King County Best Starts for Kids developmental promotion strategy, grantees, and training opportunities to expand social, emotional, and behavioral screenings.
- Establish and support community-based service networks to increase awareness among providers about available services in the community, and to coordinate outreach, screening, and referrals.
- Partner with Help Me Grow King County to address providers’ need for coordinated access for referrals.
- Develop provider and family-facing materials offering culturally and linguistically relevant information on the screening processes, referrals, and eligibility for services.
- Identify and address administrative burden, time constraints, and other barriers that prevent trained providers from regularly implementing screenings, making appropriate referrals, and following up with families.
- Partner with institutions of higher education to conduct research and inform decision-making on culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate screening processes and assessment tools.

**Outcomes of promoting social and emotional well-being for all children and families will show an increase in:**

- Culturally and linguistically relevant information shared with families about Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and related topics.
- The number of diverse families, providers, and community members reached with key messages.
- Participation in culturally and linguistically relevant parenting and family supports.
- Public and private investments in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health “promotion-level” programs.



## PRIORITY 2:

# Connect more families with services for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, including promotion, prevention, and treatment



### Opportunity

To increase equitable access to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services for children and families who could benefit from focused social and emotional support countywide.

### Why is this important?

The types and amounts of available Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services do not meet current needs. Children and families often experience significant barriers in accessing existing programs and services. Children and families who are farthest from opportunity usually face even greater barriers to accessing services. We need to ensure availability and access to screenings, referrals, and services designed to meet child and family needs including promotion, prevention, and treatment.

### How can King County create change?

From the challenges and frustrations that families expressed, improving the rate at which children and families gain access to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services will require a multifaceted approach. Action steps will need to include improving access to culturally and linguistically responsive screening and warm referral practices, ensuring equitable access to services, and addressing obstacles that result in undue frustration and delays in services for families.

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### Strategy 2.1: Expand and enhance relationship-based approaches with trusted community-based partners.

Agencies and organizations that serve families are well-positioned to support healthy connections between parents and children. In addition to sharing information, the places where families and children routinely gather can be a natural context in which to provide “promotion-level” supports. These supports include parenting groups and resources that help to sustain the family. Supporting community-based organizations to expand their offerings could address the needs of families for accessible resources, reduce stress, and improve effectiveness.

#### *Potential implementation steps:*

- Invest in organizations that currently offer parenting and family supports to build on strengths, improve effectiveness, and expand reach.
- Conduct a countywide survey to identify additional community-based organizations seeking to promote Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health through programming. Determine what resources are needed for organizations to assume this role.
- Secure and allocate additional funding to expand parenting and family supports informed by survey findings, with an emphasis on building capacity in established and trusted organizations within communities.

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### Strategy 2.2: Ensure equitable access for families to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services, including supportive transitions and coordination between services.

King County families will benefit from improved referral practices that honor the realities and lived experiences of families, position families as key partners and experts in the care of their children, and emphasize the preparedness of providers to make and follow through on referrals. King County has an opportunity to build on existing efforts to streamline the processes for connecting families with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services and continually evaluate these efforts.

**Potential implementation steps:**

- Train, mobilize, and provide ongoing evaluation and support for community navigators to conduct peer-to-peer outreach linking families with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.
- Provide resources, messaging, and other supports to ensure that providers are aware of and address implicit biases in their family partnership practices.

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**Strategy 2.3: Identify and address systemic barriers to ensure that children and families farthest from opportunity can access services.**

Systemic barriers such as undersupply of programs, uneven program distribution, and cumbersome eligibility and enrollment practices have created significant challenges for families to engage in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services. Addressing these barriers will require immediate and informed action on the part of King County, as well as ongoing advocacy for more broad-based change. This will involve a commitment to continuously listening to, responding to, and elevating the voices of the families, community members, and providers most impacted.

**Potential implementation steps:**

- Host community-specific listening sessions to deepen awareness of barriers that families face in accessing and staying connected with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services. Through these sessions, generate potential solutions.
- Advocate for funding, resources, and service coordination to implement local solutions for engaging with and retaining families in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services (e.g., transportation, co-located services, more frequent follow-up, extended hours of operation).
- Elevate landscape analysis findings and ongoing family and community feedback to allow diverse voices to influence more broad-based solutions to access at the state level, including addressing eligibility requirements, reducing administrative and financial burdens, reducing lag times and service gaps, and increasing overall supply of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.

**Outcomes from connecting more families equitably with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services: promotion, prevention, and treatment. These actions will show an increase in:**

- Number and diversity of caregivers and providers trained to implement screenings.
- Number of screenings provided in the family's home language using culturally relevant tools.
- Assessments and appropriate placements resulting from referrals, especially among families farthest from opportunity.
- Meaningful family engagement with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.
- Timeliness of children moving through screening, referral, and assessment to beginning services.



## PRIORITY 3:

### Provide high-quality, culturally relevant services that meet families' needs



#### Opportunity

To ensure that Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services are guided by best practices—including family-centered, culturally, and linguistically responsive approaches—across a spectrum of programs and agencies that interact with children and families.

#### Why is this important?

There is a need for increased support to ensure that services meet high standards of quality, including a focus on evidence-based as well as emerging, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed healing-centered practices. Child and family outcomes are greatly influenced by the quality and consistency of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services, including meeting the true needs of children and families.

#### How can King County create change?

King County and our partners are committed to ensuring high-quality Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services and addressing the challenges raised by families and providers. Conceptions of quality and best practice will need to center racial equity and include foundational research and knowledge of effective practices. These conceptions must acknowledge that practices are evolving to more deeply reflect the needs of young children and families across cultures, languages, and communities. Multiple perspectives—including families, caregivers, providers, and community partners—are needed to inform quality improvements.

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#### **Strategy 3.1: Create clear expectations and accountability for high-quality, culturally, and linguistically responsive Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services across all programs serving children and families.**

Upholding high standards of quality will require engagement across all programs and roles. Programs will need to include practices that are evidence-based or emerging; culturally and linguistically relevant; and trauma-informed and healing-centered. In a multipronged and coordinated effort, services in all levels of the continuum of care (promotion, prevention, and treatment) adapt to equity-centered practices and approaches. There needs to be a shared language and understanding across multiple provider settings and sectors, along with clear expectations of how to meet families' cultural and linguistic needs.

#### **Potential implementation steps:**

- Deepen understandings among systems-level and program-level leaders of the impacts of language, culture, trauma, healing, and other factors on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health through available literature, professional learning, and ongoing mutual communication with families, providers, and communities.
- Establish and provide clear definitions and expectations to community-based organizations and service providers around culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based, trauma-informed, and healing-centered practices as they relate to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
- Engage families and providers in regular and ongoing evaluation of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services by integrating child and family outcomes data, family stories, and provider perspectives alongside emerging research in the evolving Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health focus area.

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### **Strategy 3.2: Strengthen the capacity of Black, Indigenous, and people of color-led community-based organizations to continue expanding and improving high-quality services that are culturally and linguistically relevant for young children and families.**

Capacity-building needs may be unique for each BIPOC-led organization. Some organizations that are already providing services with young children and their families might wish to strengthen their focus on integrating Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health principles across their programming. Some organizations might need additional resources, strategic planning, or financial supports to grow their programs.

#### ***Potential implementation steps:***

- Create opportunities for BIPOC-led organizations to identify their capacity-building needs related to expanding Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
- Create opportunities and platforms for providers from BIPOC-led organizations across multiple sectors to share lessons learned and effective strategies.
- Provide resources to support reflective capacity and reflective supervision within BIPOC-led organizations.
- Invest in evaluation of community-based approaches to ensure continued growth, sustainability, and equitable distribution of resources.

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### **Strategy 3.3: Increase collaboration and communication among programs and agencies that deliver Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.**

It is the role of service providers to offer a timely, family-centered experience in order to support children and families so that they can thrive. For individual service providers with time and budget constraints, though, cross-sector and cross-agency collaborations might not always surface as a priority. County leaders, therefore, can play an important role in creating infrastructure and offering concrete supports to increase collaboration and improve communication.

#### ***Potential implementation steps:***

- Share definitions of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and related topics to establish a common language as well as support partnerships and collaboration with community-based organizations, including those with earliest touch points (for example, prenatal classes, OB-GYN clinics).
- Partner with families, agencies, and the community to establish shared outcomes and indicators of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
- Support cross-agency partnerships that create efficiencies, reduce duplication of services, and enable service providers to focus on quality (such as shared services, co-location, etc.).
- Integrate existing convenings of child- and family-serving organizations to enable coordinated outreach, streamlined implementation of initiatives, as well as sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

### **Outcomes from providing high-quality services that are culturally and linguistically relevant and that meet the needs of families will show an increase in:**

- Families reporting a streamlined, supportive, and meaningful experience interacting with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health service providers.
- Number of individual programs and the number of sectors represented at local convenings of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health service providers.
- Shared learnings about culturally and linguistically relevant best practices in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
- BIPOC children and families accessing Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services across the continuum of care: promotion, prevention, treatment.

## PRIORITY 4:

# Support all direct service providers across the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health continuum of care



### Opportunity

To recruit, engage, support, and retain a well-prepared and thriving Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health workforce reflective of and responsive to our diverse communities in King County.

### Why is this important?

Systemic factors undermine the supply, diversity, preparedness, pay, and well-being of professionals who provide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services across the spectrum of programs. All providers who interact with children and families on a regular basis have opportunities to positively influence children's social and emotional development and outcomes. Caregivers and professionals do their best work when they are adequately supported with knowledge, tools, resources, and respect. Coordinated efforts at a systems level could increase the availability of cultural and linguistic matches, strengthen provider performance, address capacity challenges, increase provider well-being, and promote career longevity of people engaged in this human-centered work.

### How can King County create change?

Meeting the needs of children and families through supportive Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services will require a commitment from systems to support the workforce to increase knowledge, skills, and career longevity. The opportunity for King County to strengthen the workforce includes creating accessible entry points and career pathways, ongoing professional learning, fair compensation, and holistic support for the individuals who devote themselves to this important work.

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### Strategy 4.1: Support well-being, professional growth, and retention of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health providers.

For the workforce who engage in human-centered, relationship-based work with children and families, there are a variety of ways the same principles can be applied to supporting providers professionally and personally. Accessible reflective supervision, healthy organizational culture, and supportive agency policies that value the overall well-being of providers are essential for a thriving workforce.

#### *Potential implementation steps:*

- Build organizational capacity to embed reflective supervision and peer reflective groups in early childhood settings such as home visiting, ESIT, child care, early learning programs and early childhood mental health consultation.
- Implement proactive and responsive local/program-based supports for the well-being of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health providers, including opportunities to connect with other providers, learning communities, and other means of reducing the effect of secondary trauma and burnout.
- Elevate King County landscape analysis findings and local provider voices to influence more broad-based solutions to provider well-being at the state level (including, for example, policies and practices around caseloads, reimbursement, and paid time off).

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### **Strategy 4.2: Improve and expand access to equity-centered Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health learning opportunities, skill building, and reflective practice.**

For service providers across multiple settings to support families effectively, there must be a foundation of shared knowledge and expertise. All providers and agencies that offer Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services need access to continuing education and practices for supporting social and emotional well-being as well as focus on centering racial equity.

#### ***Potential implementation steps:***

- Continue prioritizing Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health trainings with the workforce development strategy within Best Starts for Kids in King County.
- Allocate resources to increase opportunities for reflective practice, cross-system training, and technical assistance.
- Strengthen collaborations with Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health organizations and institutions that provide learning opportunities for a broad range of providers.
- Provide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health learning opportunities in partnership with countywide child and family services and systems (such as Washington WIC Nutrition Program, Child Protective Services, housing, child care).

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### **Strategy 4.3: Create intentional and supported leadership pathways for BIPOC providers across all program types.**

When we have a well-prepared and supported workforce reflective of communities, King County is more able to ensure equitable access to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services, more effective services, and improved positive social and emotional outcomes for young children and their families. King County leadership needs to support pathways and address existing barriers to diverse and talented individuals entering and advancing in the field.

#### ***Potential implementation steps:***

- Partner with providers, agencies, and communities to design and implement local strategies to encourage diverse, talented individuals with entry, career pathways, advancement, and leadership opportunities in the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health field.
- Examine and address systemic barriers that prevent BIPOC and linguistically diverse people from entering, remaining in, and advancing along a leadership pathway in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health-related professions.
- Convene a work group to define, develop, and implement career pathways in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, including participation by providers, higher education, professional organizations, funders, as well as state and county agencies focused on workforce development issues.
- Influence more broad-based, cross-systems approaches to address issues such as compensation, caseload, and access to training and professional preparation.

### **Outcomes from supporting the well-being, professional growth, and retention of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health providers will show an increase in:**

- Racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity represented at all levels of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health workforce.
- Providers across settings and sectors benefiting from training, peer support, and technical assistance.
- Provider satisfaction and career longevity within their roles and organizations.
- New roles, promotions, and leadership opportunities across the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health workforce.

## PRIORITY 5:

# Build and strengthen a network of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services countywide



### Opportunity

To create a coordinated, well-resourced, and navigable network of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health programs and services.

### Why is this important?

The work of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health reaches across many systems, including early learning, health care, relational health, and all other family support systems. Therefore, there needs to be a robust cross-systems network to ensure that families have access to services and providers with integrated Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health capacities.

The network of programs and systems is currently fragmented, under-resourced, and poorly aligned, which most deeply impacts children and families farthest from opportunity. The accessibility, consistency, and overall success of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services can be greatly enhanced by intentional connections across agencies and programs to catalyze a more effective network.

### How can King County create change?

In order to build and sustain an effective network of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services within King County, Best Starts is uniquely positioned to equip key actors and advocates to move from intention to action. The effort to expand and enhance social and emotional well-being both across and within systems of care will require strong leadership, accessible and meaningful data, and adequate funding—along with a shared commitment to intentionally allocate resources to create a more equitable Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health system.

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### Strategy 5.1: Strengthen collaboration across community-based partners and systems to integrate Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services into a broad range of settings.

Building on prior efforts, there are clear opportunities to re-imagine systems in ways that promote cross-sector collaboration. To do so, King County leadership and key partners must provide the influence and support needed at multiple levels to streamline and create connections among Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health systems of care.

#### *Potential implementation steps:*

- Increase staff capacity among key partners to provide leadership and collaboration across agencies at the county level.
- Regularly convene systems leaders at the county level to enable streamlined implementation of county and state-led initiatives.
- Ensure that those who are “at the table” for collaboration and decision-making are racially and culturally diverse and include community partners who represent all parts of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health network, including families and providers.

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### Strategy 5.2: Increase data-driven decision-making, policies, and practices that promote Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and center racial equity.

Leaders need access to meaningful high-quality qualitative and quantitative data to make good decisions about where to channel resources and how to advance equitable policies and practices. Furthermore, the use of data to tell stories of impact and need is essential to securing ongoing funding and creating sustainability within programs and agencies.

### **Potential implementation steps:**

- Conduct an in-depth analysis of existing countywide data to identify opportunities for growth and to clarify additional information needed to make data-informed decisions about Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.
- Create a plan to address the county's unanswered questions related to availability of and access to Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.
- Build adequate capacity and the necessary infrastructure to collect, share, and use data to drive key countywide decision-making and to guide the process of continuous improvement.
- Disaggregate data and use geographic mapping to understand the extent to which disparities exist. Also, advance the use of data to inform decisions that lead to equitable outcomes for children and families.
- Increase opportunities to engage with local communities to inform data collection, contextualize data analysis, and develop responsive approaches to communicate findings from data analysis.
- Support local programs to strategically use data to inform messaging to key audiences. Messaging will spotlight successful strategies, meaningful stories from families and providers, and identified needs for additional resources.

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### **Strategy 5.3: Ensure that resources are allocated for children, families, and communities with the least access to high-quality, culturally relevant Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.**

The gaps in availability and accessibility discussed in this report suggest that there are not enough resources available now to create an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health network that meets the needs of all children and families. There might be opportunities to create efficiencies within existing funding streams as a first step toward alleviating resource scarcity. A viable strategy to realizing a well-funded, equitable Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health network requires King County to continuously expand its investment in social and emotional well-being supports, while increasing efficiencies wherever possible.

### **Potential implementation steps:**

- Conduct a cost study to better understand supply and demand and identify what it would take to fully fund an effective Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health network.
- Create mechanisms to consistently prioritize funding to communities and parts of the system that have the highest need and the least amount of access.
- Build administrative capacity and business acumen among the agencies that serve children and families. This capacity will help agencies to effectively manage funding streams and create efficiencies within and across programs.

### **Outcomes from building and strengthening a network of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services countywide will show an increase in:**

- Successful cross-sector initiatives guided by input from families, providers, and communities.
- Accessible data that meet the needs of providers, community partners, and leaders; data relates to supply and demand of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services, workforce characteristics, child and family outcomes, and availability of cultural and linguistic matches.
- The amount invested in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services and resources across public and private funding streams.
- Data-driven decisions that center racial equity in distribution of resources.

## Looking ahead

The first five years of life are especially important for building a strong social and emotional foundation within each child. Every adult who is a part of a young child's life has the potential to positively influence the child's social and emotional well-being. Families, communities, cultures, and traditions all provide opportunities for relationships supporting a young child's development.

As we continue to address the layers of systemic racism and heal from the negative effects of historical and persistent racial trauma in our communities, we must transform the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health landscape for young children, families, and providers in King County. We have a duty to strengthen and create a system that will meet the needs of young children and their families to receive equitable and culturally relevant Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health services.

There are many possibilities for transforming Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in King County. Babies, young children, families, and communities need our providers to build culturally responsive and trusting relationships, to draw on cultural strengths, and to explore vulnerabilities exacerbated by individual and collective trauma.

As the landscape analysis and strategic planning phase concludes, King County leaders and others entrusted with this work now turn their attention to implementing the activities described in this plan. But they cannot do this implementation without support. This plan represents a commitment to action for children and families as well as an invitation to all King County communities.

This strategic plan is intended as an important starting point that outlines priorities and activities to transform the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. Through these activities, we can strengthen the network of services available in King County. The strategic plan serves as a guide and a living document that will need to be revised and improved on as more is learned.

We are called on to envision and work toward a higher standard of well-being for King County's youngest and most vulnerable population. In doing so, we improve the well-being for all who call King County home. We all have a stake in this important work and we each have a role to play in advancing the well-being of children, families, our communities, and the county as a whole. Children and families are the building blocks of a vibrant and dynamic King County. Our collective work to implement the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Strategic Plan will be a significant step toward ensuring that all young children and their families are healthy, safe, happy, and thriving.

