



## Children's Services

### Objective:

Support the optimal growth and development of children and youth

### Strategy:

Provide or contract for behavioral health and human services designed to meet the unique developmental needs of children and youth

### Why is this strategy important?

Children and youth face a variety of challenges, especially those who have experienced multiple "adverse childhood events" like placement in the foster care system and/or sexual assault. Events such as these have been associated with poor behavioral and physical health and quality of life outcomes in adulthood. To fully support these young people, especially those already experiencing mental illness, substance abuse problems, or criminal justice involvement, it is necessary to provide them with age-appropriate behavioral health and other services that promote resiliency and positive development. With these supports, children and youth have a better chance of overcoming challenges that could hinder their life opportunities as they become adults.

### How is our performance?

King County manages the publicly-funded mental health and substance abuse service systems for children, youth and adults. Mental health services provided to children and youth include evidence-based individual and family counseling, group therapy, medication management, in-home crisis intervention, and wrap-around services that mobilize natural, as well as professional resources for youth. For youth with substance abuse disorders, outpatient treatment services are available.

In 2011, 11,652 youth received outpatient drug treatment and/or outpatient mental health treatment. This figure has steadily grown since 2008, where it stood at 9,062 persons. Much of this increase has been supported with the .001 percent sales tax dedicated to combating mental illness and drug dependency. To better inform youth about mental health and substance abuse problems and where they can get help, King County began providing mental health and substance abuse prevention services in schools countywide in late 2010. For 2011, 1,754 students received services through this program. Through presentations at schools on suicide prevention, King County also reached 5,041 youth and 1,054 teachers and parents in 2011.

King County Youth and Family Services Program contracts with community-based agencies to provide programs and services that seek to help young people develop healthier lives and futures. The program provides juvenile justice prevention and intervention resources as well as other services for at-risk youth. Examples of services supported through these programs include outreach and youth and family counseling. The goal of these programs is to increase protective factors, reduce risk

factors, and help young people develop healthy, positive behaviors. In 2011, 8,865 youth were served through these programs.

## **What can you do?**

Advocate for funding for youth mental health and substance abuse services:

The State of Washington is the primary funder for youth mental health and substance abuse services. Over the past several years, cutbacks have been made to the amount of funding for these programs. To ensure no future cuts are made and to increase funding levels, contact your State legislative representatives to advocate for these services.

Embrace the concept of recovery from mental illness and substance abuse:

A common perception is that persons with mental illness or substance abuse problems can't get better. Research and the experiences of countless individuals show that with the right supports, persons with mental illness and substance abuse problems can and do recover. People in recovery lead healthier lives, both physically and emotionally, and contribute in positive ways to their communities.

## **Moving forward**

King County has placed recovery at the center of its strategic plan for mental health and substance abuse services.

King County will continue its current array of behavioral health and human services designed to meet the unique developmental needs of children and youth. The County is developing a peer support initiative for parents designed to strengthen and empower families and youth where youth are experiencing mental illness. Also, King County's Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division will further embed the concept of recovery into its services through its adoption of an Integrated Behavioral Health Recovery and Resiliency Plan in the coming months.

## **Related Links**

[\*\*King County Mental Health Services\*\*](#)

[\*\*King County Substance Abuse Services\*\*](#)

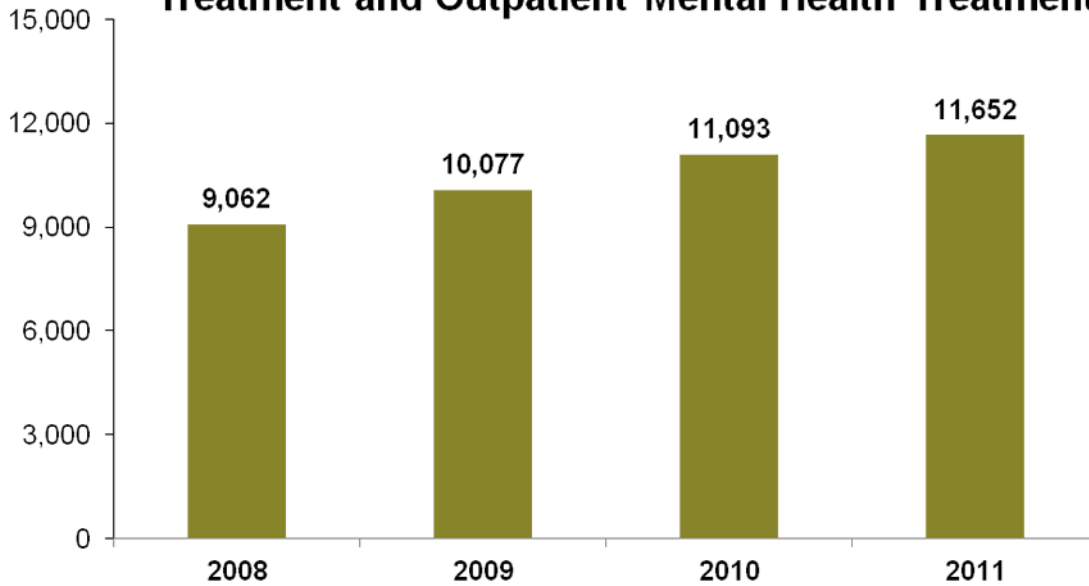
[\*\*King County Youth and Family Services Program\*\*](#)

[\*\*Learn more about recovery in King County\*\*](#)

[\*\*Additional information on recovery\*\*](#)

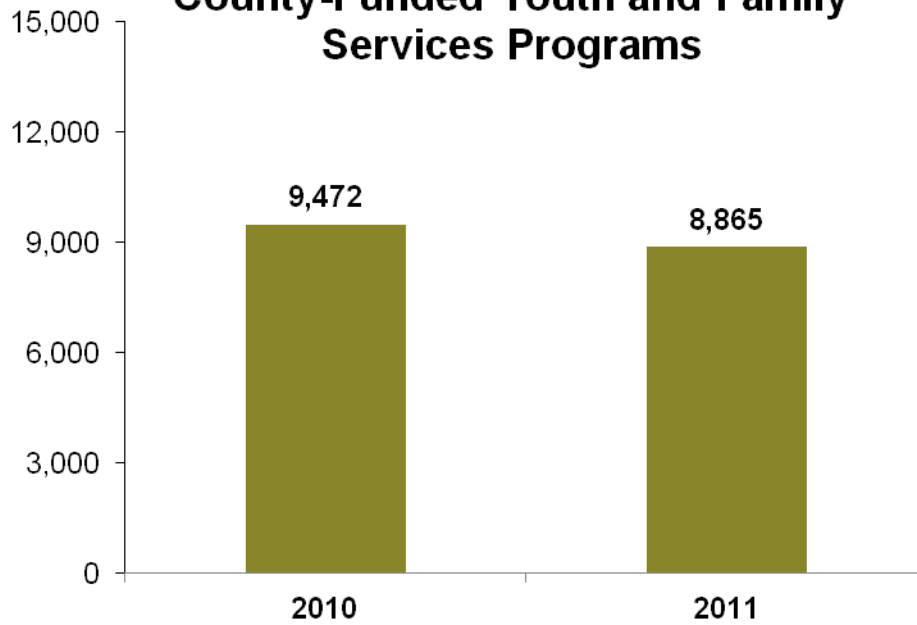
## Charts and Maps

### Number of Youth Receiving Outpatient Drug Treatment and Outpatient Mental Health Treatment



Data Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services

### Number of Youth Served through County-Funded Youth and Family Services Programs



Data Source: King County Department of Community and Human Services