

Executive Summary of Single Family Group

Awareness of Services

At first this group couldn't really describe what a human service was, but once prompted they were aware of such services as the Boys and Girls Club, the Recovery Center, ALIVE house, Helpline, Parent Child House, Headstart, and the Housing Resource Board. Some of the services these single parents had used included Section 8 Housing, Helpline, Bainbridge Island Child Care, Bainbridge Youth Services, WIC, and the Boys and Girls Club.

Although many of these single parents were aware of a variety of services, they were not aware of all of these services mentioned. They were able to learn from each other some valuable services available to them. And like the other two focus groups these single parents agreed that having human services available on the Island was important. These services allow for hard working people on the Island to survive.

Access to Services

Helpline was again mentioned as a place these single parents knew they could seek help if they needed it. Receiving services such as a Section 8 Housing and other income help had been difficult for many of these parents. The waiting lists are long and the requirements are hard to meet. Other services they could use include help with older kids with special needs, legal help, and more accessible health and dental care. Currently none of them knew of a dentist who would take patients using government assistance.

As for transportation, many of these parents felt the bus system is for commuters only. If you don't have access to a vehicle getting around the Island or access to off-Island medical/dental services can be very difficult. Since many were dependent on using vehicles it was suggested that having more and less expensive options for getting automotive repair would be really helpful.

Many agreed that at some time they did not use a service because of the stigma attached to doing so. One participant went all the way to Poulsbo to use her food stamps. Going to the Food Bank or Helpline was also hard for many of them. Many had felt the volunteers at these places sometimes looked down on them. Another sentiment felt by many in the group is that people advertise your situation by pointing you out or separating you. Even though people in the community are only trying to help it can be patronizing. One participant stated, "you feel like it is just you and your kids, where is the community?"

Unmet Needs

As mentioned by other groups, many in this group felt there needed to be better and more medical and dental options available on the Island. And like the other groups these parents agreed that finding affordable housing was very

difficult. Most of the housing is too expensive and it is hard to find a building that will accept government assistance. Emergency, homeless, and domestic violence shelters are also needed. Many of these parents also suggested that there needed to be more interim housing options available on the Island when your subsidized housing allowance runs out or is terminated.

Many felt the school system was also very limiting and needed to provide more options for special needs children. There also needs to be more vocational classes and less of a "college focus." The current alternative programs are very limiting.

Childcare is definitely an issue for many of these participants. Childcare is expensive, there is no infant care available, there is little flexibility in regards to hours available, and many of the places on the Island will not take DSHS funded parents. Many felt the care they got for their children was good, but it was hard dealing with these challenges in finding care.

As for employment most felt there was little to no job training assistance on the Island and that to make any sort of income you had to work off the Island. In order to stay on the Island many work more than one job (up to 3 for one person).

Overall many of these parents felt that to stay on the Island and be a single parent was a big challenge. There are many places to get help such as Helpline, but there are also challenges with finding employment, housing, and childcare, as well as having difficulties accessing services such as medical and dental care off the Island.