

A Year in Review

Highlights from the 2023 Best Starts for Kids Annual Report





Thank you!

Best Starts for Kids is grateful to our community partners for the compassion, wisdom, and expertise they share with King County communities. Thank you for supporting every baby born and child raised in King County to grow up happy, healthy, safe, and thriving.



Contents

INTRODUCTION

4 Best Starts for Kids & Our Approach

THEMES

5 2023 Key Themes

6 Meeting Families' Needs

8 Prioritizing Well-being and Mental Health

10 Cultivating Opportunities for Children and Young People

12 Strengthening the Workforce

14 Building Community Power and Capacity

EVALUATION

16 Where Best Starts Serves

INVESTMENTS

17 What Best Starts Funds



● ● Best Starts for Kids

Best Starts for Kids is King County’s community-driven initiative to support every baby born and child raised in King County to be happy, healthy, safe, and thriving.

This brief shows the impact of Best Starts funding through highlights drawn from the 2023 Best Starts for Kids Annual Report. In 2023, Best Starts partnered with 336 community-based organizations operating 591 programs to reach over 221,000 children, young people, families, and community members across King County.

View the full 2023 Best Starts for Kids Annual Report at bit.ly/3LpyVDx. Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/3S6N9wV to view the 2023 Data Dashboard.



Our Approach



Best Starts produces positive outcomes for children through the principles of promotion, prevention, early intervention, and policy and systems change. Promotion continues to be a cornerstone for Best Starts strategies, followed by prevention and early intervention. Best Starts also focuses on policy and systems change to work toward longer-term, multigenerational impacts. By providing comprehensive opportunities for children, young people, families, and caregivers, Best Starts catalyzes strong starts in early childhood and sustains those gains as children progress to adulthood and community life.

Founded in community, Best Starts commits to learning alongside partners, experimenting with new, innovative approaches, and growing with partners to expand reach and impact.

2023 Key Themes

Best Starts invests in eight areas, including Child Care, Investing Early, Sustain the Gain, Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Communities of Opportunity, Capital Projects, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, and Data and Evaluation. Across these investment areas, five key themes shaped Best Starts programming and results in 2023:



Meeting Families’ Needs

to support families in feeling safe and stable



Prioritizing Well-being and Mental Health

to support the family unit and the whole community



Cultivating Opportunities for Children and Young People

to support their goals in education and employment



Strengthening the Workforce

to support a sustainable, robust, skilled, and well-compensated workforce to meet the needs of babies, children, and families



Building Community Power and Capacity

to support equitable systems change and organizational infrastructure

Meeting Families' Needs

Best Starts strategies contribute to outcomes related to meeting families' needs by providing concrete supports, services, and resources across the age spectrum. Some of these direct services keep families and young people housed and some focus on connecting families to networks of resources.

In addressing basic needs, these investments set the foundation for overall well-being for families and children.



In 2023

98%

of parents and caretakers who received Child Care Subsidy reported less financial stress.

94%

of households who received support from Youth Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative stayed housed within one year of exit.

99%

of people served through Maternity Support Services and Infant Case Management had infants with a healthy birth weight.

Program Highlights

The Child Care Subsidy, which partnered with five community-based organizations, helped 1,334 families afford the cost of child care for 2,064 children. In 2023, **95 percent of primary caregivers who received the subsidy experienced a positive change in career or education** through their new capacity to pursue career goals or advancement.

Best Starts' Positive Family Connections strategy focuses on strengthening and building positive relationships between children and young people ages five to 24, their families, and their caregivers through services including intergenerational healing circles, kinship care support groups, and educational workshops for families about child and youth development. In 2023, the strategy enrolled **1,895 parents and caregivers and 1,055 young people. Ninety-nine percent of parents and caregivers and 97 percent of young people reported increased connection** to peers, family, culture, or community.



Best Starts strategies for Meeting Families' Needs

- Child Care Subsidy
- Community-Based Parenting Supports
- Help Me Grow
- Home-Based Services
- Parent Child Health Services
- Positive Family Connections
- Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative

Our team goes to great lengths to try to meet every single baby item request honoring the family's culture, wishes, and hopes for their baby. This looks like spending extra time sorting through donations to make sure we can pass them on to a family with confidence... or dropping diapers off at a family's door when they are in urgent need and they don't have access to transportation.

- Stacey Silver, Family Connector Lead, Open Arms Perinatal Services, Help Me Grow partner

Prioritizing Well-being and Mental Health

Best Starts strategies prioritize well-being and mental health while celebrating cultural roots and strengths by working to undo the tangible impacts of racism; meeting physical health, mental health, and developmental needs; and increasing understanding and awareness of physical and mental health.



57%

of youth leaders who participated in the Community Well-being Initiative reported increased leadership skills.

99%

of scholars served through the Liberation and Healing from Systemic Racism programs were in progress to meet or met their relationship goal.

Best Starts strategies for Prioritizing Well-being and Mental Health

- Community Well-being Initiative
- Child and Adolescent Immunizations
- Early Support for Infants and Toddlers
- Systems Building for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
- Liberation and Healing
- Parent Child Health Services
- School-Based Screening and Brief Intervention and for Referral to Treatment/Services (SB-SBIRT)
- School-Based Health Centers
- Universal Developmental Screening



Program Highlights

Best Starts' Liberation and Healing partners with communities most impacted by systemic racism to co-create opportunities for scholars to participate in a wide range of programs.

The activities, ranging from the arts to exposure to the natural world, are designed to create a culturally responsive education system that aids young people's healing and sparks new interests. In 2023, **94 percent of families who received a basic needs referral through Liberation and Healing's Timely Response to Adverse Community Events (TRACE) partners were able to meet a basic need** such as securing housing, accessing food, or accessing medical services which allowed families in crisis to move towards healing.



Best Starts' Universal Developmental Screening strategy provides information, training, tools, and connections among providers to ensure all King County children receive or have access to culturally appropriate, high quality developmental screening. In 2023, Best Starts partners **directly screened 1,801 children for developmental progress, making 2,095 connections to needed services.**

“

At my school, we utilized the universal screening. Through this process, I met a 7th grade student who screened in with a yellow flag. He was struggling with self-worth. With support from parents, we were able to connect him to individual counseling. This student has made gains emotionally and socially over the school year. This student is more involved in school, improved grades and appears much happier at school. SBIRT helped identify this student for support.

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- Renee Damerow, Middle School Counselor, Kent School District, SB-SBIRT partner

Cultivating Opportunities for Children and Young People

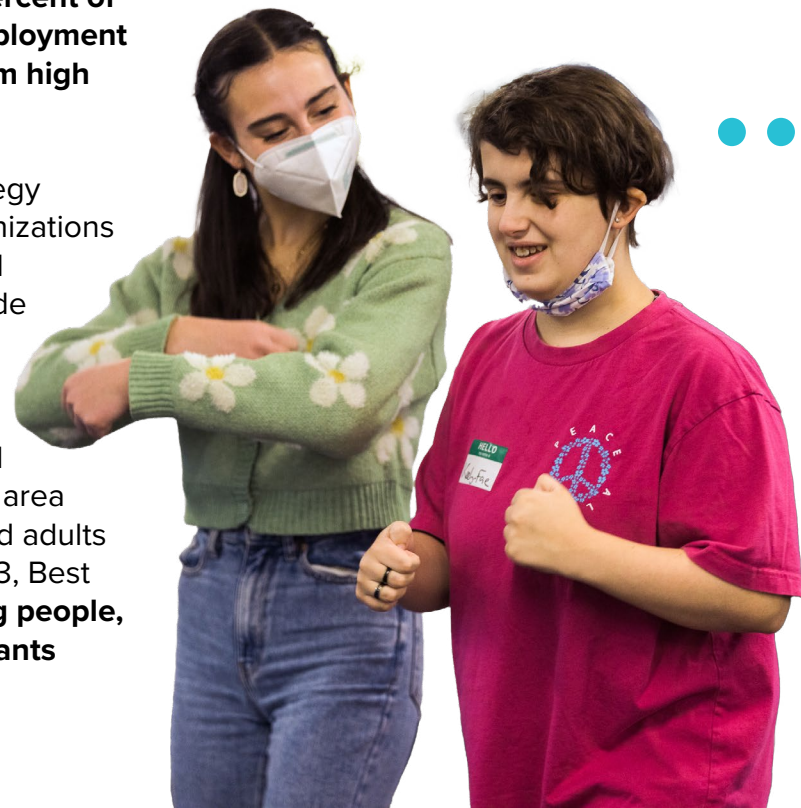
Best Starts strategies cultivate opportunities for children and young people by investing in programming that creates positive spaces for young people when they are not in school or work. These programs build young people’s strength and resilience to address stigma and racism and promote social and emotional well-being, interpersonal connections, and positive identity development.



Program Highlights

Best Starts’ School-to-Work program provides critical supportive employment services in partnership with an employment coach for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) so they can obtain and maintain employment prior to exiting high school. Individuals with I/DD face significant barriers participating in the workforce, on top of barriers like stigma and racism, experiencing employment rates of only 19 to 21 percent over the past decade. School-to-Work Program **served 330 students in 2023 and assisted 34 percent of students exiting school to reach employment within six months after their exit from high school.**

Best Starts’ Youth Development strategy partners with community-based organizations to support mentoring, leadership, and healthy relationships. Programs include activities that help youth overcome toxic stress caused by family dysfunction, hip hop classes to reach youth, and opportunities for trans and gender diverse youth to engage with area leaders and connect with mentors and adults with similar lived experiences. In 2023, Best Starts’ partners **enrolled 5,594 young people, and 95 percent of assessed participants developed a positive identity.**



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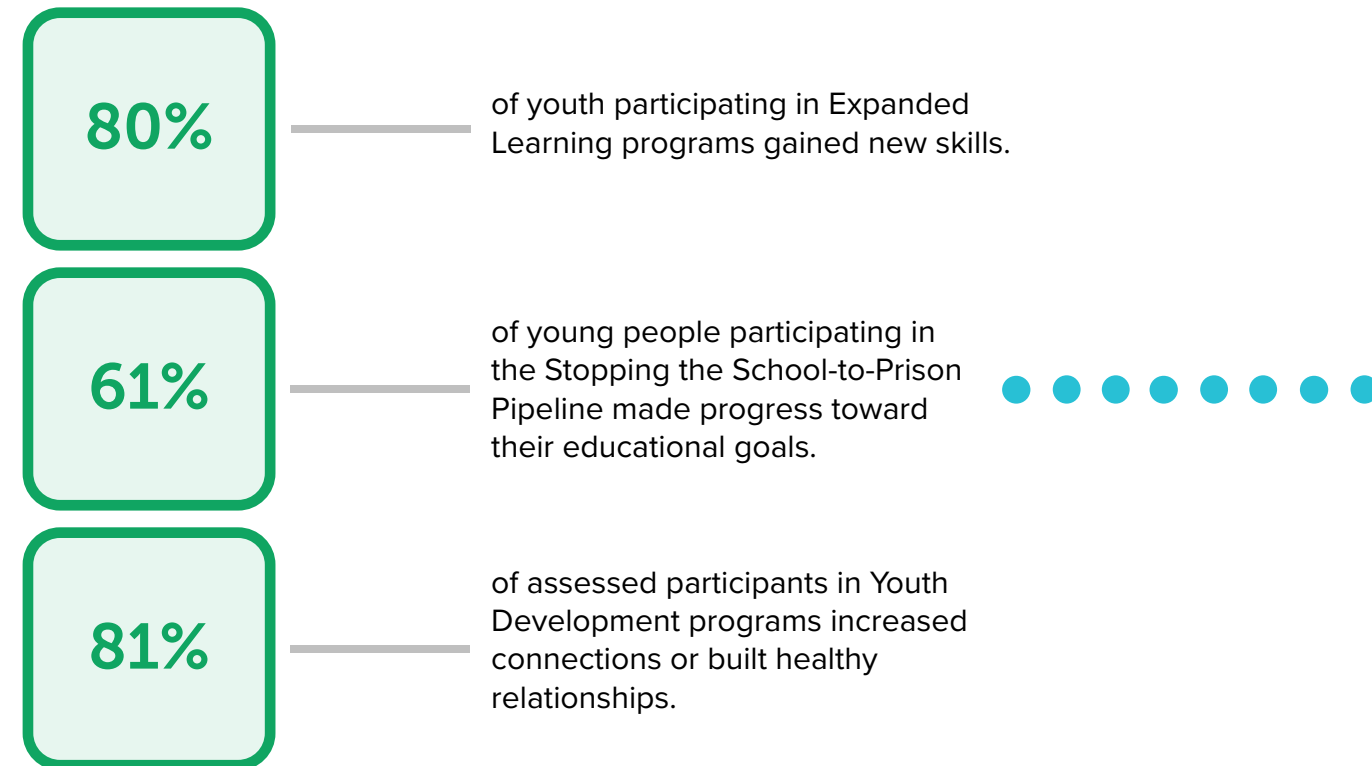
One client was struggling with multiple panic attacks a week due to social anxiety and family-related trauma. Their treatment goals for counseling sessions were to reduce panic attacks and build stronger communication with parents. The clinician was able to use talk therapy and evidenced-based treatment to support the client in processing their feelings and better understand their trauma response...Sessions were reduced to every other week upon improved parental relationship and diminished recurrence of panic attacks. The client is now able to better focus on their academics and is on track for graduation.

”

- Bonnie Wang, Director, Asian Counseling and Referral Service, Transitions to Adulthood partner

Best Starts strategies for Cultivating Opportunities for Children and Young People

- Expanded Learning
- School-to-Work
- Stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Transitions to Adulthood
- Youth Development



Strengthening the Workforce

Best Starts' work is accomplished through a strong network of community-based organizations and the dedicated people who work for them. Best Starts invests in strengthening the workforce, which includes funding organizations at levels that support livable wages, offering opportunities for workforce training, and paying for essential business tools.



“As Innovation Supports Team providers, we were able to connect very closely with the partner organizations that we served this year, and this was especially the case for newly developing organizations we worked with who were newer to the Best Starts funding landscape. For these organizations, we were able to share valuable insights throughout the IDEAS Impact Design Framework process that not only supported them to develop their program materials (contract deliverables), but also support them in feeling confident in how to best navigate the Best Starts system, to share their stories of their work and to feel prepared to launch their programs into implementation.”

— Colleen Alabi, Deputy Director, Mother Africa, Innovation Supports partner

Best Starts strategies for Strengthening the Workforce

- Child Care Health Consultation
- Child Care Wage Boost Pilot
- Innovation Supports
- Technical Assistance and Capacity Building
- Workforce Development

Program Highlights

Best Starts' Technical Assistance and Capacity Building offers culturally responsive technical assistance that is free to organizations interested in applying for funding. The strategy also assists funded Best Starts partners in building capacity and or strengthening their organizational infrastructure for long-term stability and sustainability. In 2023, Best Starts connected **104 community organizations to capacity building services, providing more than 8,800 hours of support. Eighty-five percent of capacity building recipients' staff, board, or volunteers were more effective in their work after receiving capacity building.**

In 2023, Child Care Health Consultation teams served **475 child care providers. Ninety-nine percent of providers reported increased ability to support growth and development of the children** in their care.



81% of participants in Workforce Development workshops reported they could apply something they learned to their work.

100% of providers served by Child Care Health Consultation teams reported increased knowledge of community resources or other consultation topics.

81% of Technical Assistance recipients' staff learned new skills.



Building Community Power

Vibrant, powerful communities are essential for the growth and success of young people and families, and leaning into community members' deep expertise informs and drives King County to healthier and equitable communities.



Communities of Opportunity Systems and Policy Change partners developed

1,006 resident leaders.

Healthy and Safe Environments partners changed or improved

17 environments

such as high schools, community centers and afterschool clubs.

In one program,

100% of staff

surveyed by Lead and Toxics partners reported increased knowledge on blood testing process and resources available to families.

Best Starts strategies for Building Community Power

- Capital Projects
- Communities of Opportunity
- Healthy and Safe Environments
- Lead and Toxics



Program Highlights

Communities of Opportunity's Systems and Policy Change strategy supports community-engaged and community-led efforts to transform systems and policies, increasing the readiness and ability of groups to inform, improve, and guide the implementation of systems and policies. For example, in 2023, **the Doulas For All Coalition partnership** made significant progress in a long-term and historic collaborative effort, **working with other community-based organizations, elected officials, government agencies, and others to change Washington state policy around securing Medicaid coverage for birth doula services for the first time in state history.**



Best Starts' Healthy and Safe Environments helps partners and organizations address community inequities by transforming systems, environments, and policies. In 2023, Healthy and Safe Environments **partners engaged over 1,900 young people in activities and impacted 39,899 people.** For example, a teen advisory council implemented new programs in community clubs to raise awareness about mental health and evaluated how to take those programs to scale. They impacted how a youth serving system talks about mental health to children, addressing stigma and breaking down barriers to treatment.

“

Multiple community members have appreciated the value add of the lead talks and testing events that were held in various locations and formats... These members have now become vocal ambassadors of the lead toxicity program and raise awareness amongst other community members by spreading the word and talking to them individually. There has been a cascading effect in the community, due to the education and awareness brought about by these events.

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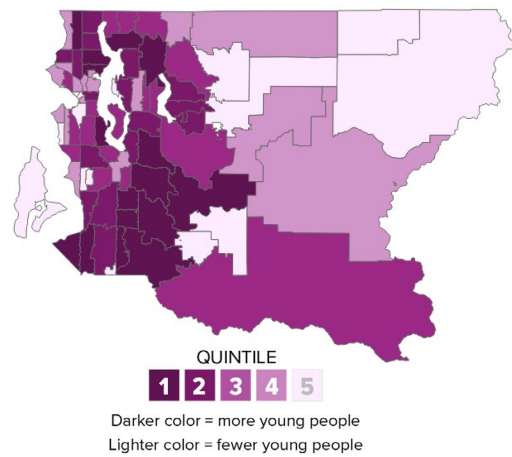
- Kavitha Ramakrishnan, Early Childhood Facilitator, Indian American Community Services, Lead and Toxics partner

Where Best Starts Serves

Best Starts works upstream to promote positive, healthy outcomes for young people and their families. In centering racial equity and justice, Best Starts' distribution of investments aligns with areas where the youth population is greatest and opportunities are lowest.

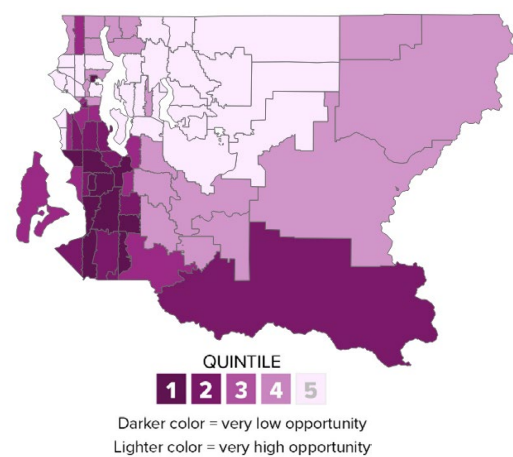
Population Density (ages 0 to 24 years)

ZIP Codes with many young people are spread throughout King County, but the most young people are in south King County.



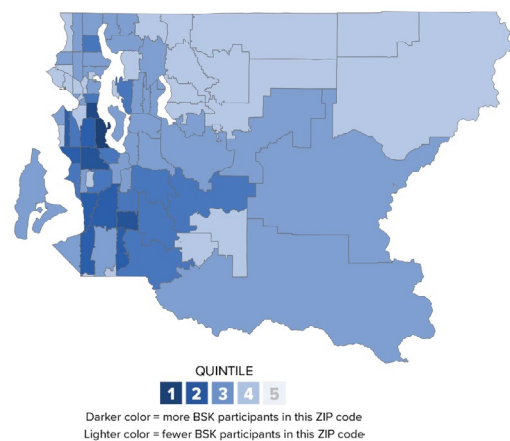
Child Opportunity Levels

ZIP Codes with lowest opportunity according to the Child Opportunity Index are mostly located in South Seattle and South King County.



Best Starts Participants

Best Starts reaches across King County. ZIP Codes with the most participants typically have more young people, lower opportunity, or both.



What Best Starts Funds

The renewal of the Best Starts for Kids Levy in 2021 means Best Starts will invest more than \$880 million throughout 2022–2027 to support children, young people, families, and communities across King County. In 2023, Best Starts expended more than \$129 million. A summary fiscal table at the investment area level is provided below.

2023 Best Starts for Kids Expenditures by Investment Area

Investment Area	2023 Budgeted	2023 Expenditures
Child Care	\$34,764,300	\$30,890,272
Youth and Family Homelessness Prevention Initiative	\$4,934,290	\$4,774,967
Technical Assistance and Capacity Building	\$2,424,120	\$2,197,463
Subtotal	\$42,122,710	\$37,862,703
Investing Early (Prenatal to 5)	\$47,552,860	\$45,855,095
Sustain the Gain (5 to 24)	\$35,427,922	\$34,044,586
Communities of Opportunity	\$7,737,003	\$6,736,765
Data and Evaluation	\$4,931,858	\$4,446,479
Capital Projects	\$9,885,000	\$204,803
Total 2023 Expenditures	\$147,657,352	\$129,150,430



Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/3S6N9wV to view more Best Starts data, including detailed expenditures by investment area and strategy, as well as maps detailing expenditures by ZIP Code.



