



STATE OF WASHINGTON

GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT

Employment Security Department ■ P.O. Box 9046 ■ MS: 6000 ■ Olympia, Washington ■ 98507-9046

Olympia (360) 890-3778 ■ Toll Free Fax 844-935-3531

March 22, 2023

Dear Meeting Participant:

Thank you for attending the Port Orchard/Kitsap County Disability Community Outreach meetings held in December 2022. These meetings were informative, productive, and insightful. We were impressed with the enthusiasm and positive spirit of the participants. We were also pleased to have Robert Gelder, Commissioner for Kitsap County, John Clauson, Executive Director of Kitsap County Transit and Jeff Daily, School board member participate in the discussions and be contributing partners for local solutions. We also appreciate the groundwork Marsha Cutting did in providing connections for the planning team with community stakeholders.

The Port Orchard/Kitsap County Outreach Summary and a contact list of the meeting participants are attached. The Outreach Summary includes participant comments, resources, and promising practices for the four major discussion items:

- 1) Employment for community members with disabilities
- 2) Transportation for community members with disabilities
- 3) Housing for community members with disabilities
- 4) Access to Services for community members with disabilities

Thank you for your comments and suggestions on the evaluation form. We assure you each response was given consideration so future outreach meetings will be even more successful.

If we can be of assistance in any way, or if you have questions, please reach out to Ryan Bondroff, Program Specialist, by phone at 206-677-8834 or by email Ryan.Bondroff@esd.wa.gov.

Again, thank you for being part of GCDE's outreach efforts.

Sincerely,

Community Outreach Subcommittee
Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment

Port Orchard Community Outreach Summary

Introduction

The Community Outreach Subcommittee of the [Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment \(GCDE\)](#) held two virtual meetings for the Port Orchard community on **December 8 and 9, 2022**.

The Committee would like to thank GCDE Member and Kitsap County resident, **Marsha Cutting** for her efforts in connecting the planning team to local community partners, and assisting in getting the word out to the community to participate in the events.

GCDE would also like to recognize **John Clauson – Port Orchard City Council Member and Kitsap Transit Executive Director; Jeff Daily, School Board member at South Kitsap Schools; and Michael Robinson – WorkSource Administrator** and thank them for their input and participation in the Port Orchard events.

The Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment's mission is to provide statewide advocacy and leadership to empower the disability community to obtain equality of opportunity and maximum independence.

The Committee is comprised of 25 volunteer members appointed by the Governor who reside in various parts of the state. The majority of members are persons with disabilities representing a wide range of physical, mental, or sensory disabilities.

Community Outreach is one of the 6 standing subcommittees and workgroups. The subcommittee's mission is to provide advocacy to the disability community by conducting outreach events. It develops and recommends policies and actions promoting equal access to services and provides information on available resources to individuals with disabilities.

The goals of an outreach are to identify and learn about the challenges and opportunities persons with disabilities experience in their local communities, and to offer focused discussions to explore solutions that impact the independence and integration of citizens with disabilities.

A Community Outreach event has two parts. The first part is a Town Hall meeting, an event open to the public to express their concerns and celebrate their successes related to disability issues in the community. The second part of an outreach is a Leadership Action Planning meeting, where community leaders are presented with the concerns of their constituents and committee members facilitate the creation of action plans to address those concerns.

The Community Outreach subcommittee will also provide information from outreach events to GCDE's Legislative Workgroup so they can incorporate local concerns and interests into their work.

Description

The purpose of this report is to summarize disability related issues and concerns raised by community members, professionals, providers, and elected officials in Port Orchard, with the goal to find solutions to provide services to Port Orchard residents with disabilities in areas such as employment and transportation.

County Demographics

According to the Census in 2020, the population in Port Orchard was 15,587, compared with 15,979 in 2021. In Kitsap County, the population was 275,611 and 251,133 according to Census data 2020 and 2010, respectively.

Port Orchard is the county seat in Kitsap County. It is located in the southern part of Kitsap County. According to the Census in 2021, Port Orchard is 13 miles due west of West Seattle. Port Orchard is accessible via the WA State Ferries at Southworth ferry station. Port Orchard is 72 feet above sea level. You can take a foot ferry from Port Orchard to Bremerton.

Other demographics include a makeup of 75.4 percent Caucasians, 12.9 percent Hispanics, 6.0 percent Asians, 2.4 percent African Americans and .5 percent Native Americans, among many smaller diverse populations. It is home to 9.9 percent of people with disabilities under the age of 65. The three top employment industries in Port Orchard are manufacturing, health care, and social services, along with a few largely male dominated employment industries, such as construction and mining.

Scouting/Outreach

The subcommittee researched and networked with key individuals in Port Orchard and Kitsap County. They collected information from Port Orchard, such as school vacation schedules and major city council events, to maximize attendance for Port Orchard residents. They sent out letters, along with the event flyer, to community organizations, professionals, elected officials, and Port Orchard School District employees, among others; and shared the event on the GCDE Facebook page. They also sent a news release to the print, TV, and local radio news stations in Port Orchard and elsewhere in Kitsap County. Committee members also shared this event via various media platforms.

Local Success Stories

We heard from various members of the community that there are several students who formerly participated in the school district's special education program who are now employed at locations such as Ace Hardware and Fred Meyer, and seem to be happy, productive, and hard-working. Many students have been able to find employment directly after high school, despite the pandemic. Some have even gone on to higher education, marriage, or to have families. It was shared that [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) has a strong relationship with [South Kitsap Schools](#) and are serving 90% of those who qualify for services. They can also help with benefits planning, to assist in weighing the options when receiving benefits and working. There are also positive relationships with the [Developmental Disabilities Administration](#), including positions to help liaise students who are in the transition program with employment opportunities. This effort is going well and is headed in the right direction. Strong relationships also exist with local employment vendors, who remain very client focused, despite the

current issue of workforce shortages that is facing and affecting many different areas in both the local community, as well as the nation. Community, collaboration, and connections are a cornerstone in the Port Orchard area, with the county, and various social services organizations as well.

Town Hall Meeting Summary

Meeting participants represented a **diverse cross section** of the community, including people with disabilities, family members, service providers, and elected officials.

The community had **numerous employment service agencies** represented at the meeting, as well as advocates and members of the disability community, with a total of nearly 40 participants.

Many issues were discussed, such as employment, transportation, housing, and access to services, summaries of which can be found below.

Employment

Participant comments

1: Participant comment: (Kimberly McCarty) [Developmental Disabilities](#) Administrator – clients and employment vendors struggle with **natural supports** in their jobs (the supporters move on). This makes it hard to keep and maintain employment. Also, the [Access bus](#) doesn't go everywhere. We may need drivers to go pick up and deliver clients to jobs. This strategy worked in [Vermont](#). It is a matter of finding the right job for the right person. Employment vendors do wonderful work, making connections with those who might have available jobs, and showcasing clients skills. One thing about our (the Intellectual and Developmental Disability) population: they can be the best workers you have. One man that has been in her office for 8 years is great – she can depend on him for everything. In the Tacoma office, they have someone who has worked there for 25 years. **Natural supports are needed – making a connection with a co-worker who can help guide, mentor, and assist.** Job coaches help make those relationships within the workplace.

2: Participant comment: (Michael Robinson) Local administrator for [WorkSource](#), oversees Employment Security Department (ESD) services for three counties. Sees a disconnect in the employment pipeline – a **lack of knowledge and understanding of the resources and services that WorkSource can provide for partner agencies that provide employment.** Has a good relationship with the Department of Social and Health Services, as their office is co-located with their [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) (DVR). Sees a need to bring together local agencies, to continue relationship-building. Says that we (ESD) work with businesses all day long, including the Navy (where [Schedule A hiring](#) is present) ...**others need to consider offering employment incentives as well.** There are, and could be, great **partnerships**. Lots of available partners in the area. They could bring clients in, so they're not going through the process alone. **Pitched a consortium idea – the pooling of resources in one place.**

3: Participant comment: (Ronnie Oswald) Working on base as supported employment vendors – accommodations (**security access**) to get on base is very hard to get, a lengthy process. Could use help with this, **getting an access badge at the same time as the client** would be good.

4: Participant comment: (Debbie Adamson) Special Education teacher with [South Kitsap High School](#). Works with 18-21-year-olds with disabilities. Issue: **Natural support** – very little inclusion with the high school. If inclusion takes place at high school or earlier, it's easier for natural support to occur in the

employment world. Inclusion is a value. This has been difficult over her 20+ years in the field. You can give classes on “how to do it,” but to be successful, employers have to see the value of including *all* people. It’s a difficult situation, others don’t understand the needs or value in this. It’s not a step-by-step educational thing...can’t say much more on the subject. The problem is that there’s only 1 school locally. That’s the elephant in the room regarding natural support (**if it’s not happening in the schools, then people who may need support don’t get to know people who may be able to provide it later on down the line in employment situations.**)

5: Participant comment: (Sandra) sees an issue of a **compartmentalized community – natural support training needs to start when in school or teens, not as an adult.** Feels as though the special needs community is a sub-community. Her son (a 30-year-old with autism) benefitted from early supports. There’s an old-fashioned tendency to “other” in the community – it’s a cultural bias. Inclusion not exclusion should be taught at a very young age. Include people where it’s possible, so they’re not “othered.” It trains other communities as well, such as those who could be natural supports. Her son is well-loved, once people get to know him. It could be true of so many others as well. Change is needed in [cultural bias](#). Her approach – need to change cultural bias early on. Response:

(Melia Hughes) for parents with kids with Developmental Disabilities. Universal Design for Learning – found on the [OSPI website](#) – is a **resource** on general classroom inclusion. Each school district decides to participate in this program.

6: Participant comment: (Heather Dodge) is a supervisor with working Department of Children, Youth, and Families ([DCYF](#)). Having us (**DCYF**) **be considered for resources, to support those in employment** is needed. All people need **access to opportunities, to remove barriers to enrichment.** (DCYF is bound by their pay rates, so some can’t afford that.)

7: (Glenn’s wife) – Natural Supports – for her son started integrated class in 5th grade, now in 8th grade. He’s got a friend, who is neurotypical, and got invited to a birthday party. **Early age inclusion** is needed, so that when kids reach maturity they have the right start, and fellow students know how to help. Her son was in Adaptive Academics, 6th grade Life Skills, and his social skills improved.

8: (Jeff Daily) [School Board member](#) – former special education teacher: sees **several former students working in the community**, at places like Ace Hardware and Fred Meyer, mainly entry level positions. They seem happy, productive and hard-working. **Most are capable of more than the work they’re doing.** There are **SSI v. paying job considerations - Some can make more on SSI.** Some students have gone on to higher education, to marry and have families – but not all who could. **Alternative High school programs could help.** Response:

(Shannon Bryant) [DVR](#) has a strong relationship with [South Kitsap schools](#). They are serving 90% of those who qualify for services, also helping those with [504 plans](#). Wants to dispel the myth that we don’t do [benefits planning](#), like with Social Security v. work. Port Orchard is advanced in regard to hiring those with disabilities, but could use more career advancement.

(Kimberly McCarty) Good news – hired an employment liaison technical assistant – and has good relationships with Kelly O’Neal with the [Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities program](#), hired a case resource manager to work with [transitional students](#). They can help in early or middle teens, before transition at age of 18 (since the children become adults at this

age according to the government). It's going well – good caseworkers are being promoted, training earlier. Things are heading in the right direction. Employment vendors also have great relationships. They've got staff shortages, and it is harder to mentor new employees, but they remain client-focused.

(Sandra Pearson) Shout Out to [Trillium](#) – her son had job coaching through them, they're amazing. And also, the coordinator for the [Parent organization](#) (Melia Hughes).

(Debbie Adamson) a positive has been working collaboratively with individuals within the county – some clients are employed as soon as graduated. It takes family support too, for students to maintain employment after graduation. Even through the pandemic, students have been able to take jobs after high school.

(Heather Dodge) – liaisons with the schools to provide childcare for those who need it to continue with education.

GCDE wants to note in this report the value of how many do already work well within the community, building a coalition on behalf of those with disabilities.

Kitsap County also has an [Accessible Communities Advisory Committee](#) through GCDE.

Promising Practices

[GCDE's Annual Governor's Employer Awards Program](#) annually recognizes employers who are champions of disability employment across the state.

[WorkSource Kitsap](#) has resources and services available to assist agencies providing employment services.

The [Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) works closely with [WorkSource](#), [South Kitsap Schools](#), and others to serve students and others with disabilities in their employment search, as well as with benefits planning.

The state of [Vermont](#) includes transportation in the job description of their Employment Consultant, Social Security Specialist, and Youth Employment Specialist Positions, something that may be able to be taken into consideration locally.

The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit** - The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a **Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain [targeted groups](#) who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.** WOTC joins other workforce programs that incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers.

For more information on Schedule A Hiring, which is a hiring incentive offered to persons with qualifying disabilities in Federal Government, visit the link [here](#).

[Community Employment Alliance \(CEA\)](#) is a statewide advocacy organization made up of employment providers who help people with disabilities find and retain employment at or above minimum wage. CEA has been partnering for and advocating with people with disabilities, families, businesses, and elected officials to advocate, educate, and promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Washington state since 1974.

The [Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Program](#) through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction states that all students have a right to meaningfully participate in the general education setting, both academically and socially to the fullest extent possible. Inclusion is realized when all students, regardless of their designation to receive special education services, are provided with targeted services, supports, and accommodations; allowing them to learn in the general education classroom, interact with peers, and engage the core curriculum.

To support more inclusive schools in Washington, the State Legislature provided OSPI with \$25M for the 2019–21 biennium and \$12M for the 2021–23 biennium to provide educators with professional development opportunities in support of inclusionary practices across the state.

Social Security - 2022 The Red Book (<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/>)

The Red Book serves as a **general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs** for individuals with disabilities, family members, and for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities.

[Discovery High School](#) in Port Orchard’s mission is to provide a supportive, flexible educational process in which alternative students with individual needs learn to become successful and productive citizens.

Our vision is to remain committed to developing individuals who will earn a diploma and achieve a successful career. They value family, community, and citizenship, consisting of self-respect, self-esteem, and tolerance for others. They are lifelong learners who self-evaluate and take personal responsibility.

The [Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program](#) works closely with the Silverdale office of the Washington State [Developmental Disabilities Administration](#) to support local students in [transition](#) with their [504 plans](#) and [benefits planning](#).

[Trillium Employment Services](#) is an example of one employment vendor available locally that has had success in providing job coaching services to individuals with disabilities.

[The Kitsap County Parent Coalition](#) (KCPC) is a free service providing education, advocacy, and referrals to help people with developmental disabilities get the support and services they need to improve their lives.

The [Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#) (DCYF) is another local resource available to be utilized.

The purpose of the [Kitsap County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee](#) is to support disability awareness and access for people with disabilities through technical assistance and other resources, funded by the [Accessible Communities Act](#) (Chapter 215, Laws of 2010).

Transportation

Participant Comments

1: Participant comment: (Shannon Bryant) with [DVR](#), works in high school transition services, noted a barrier to services – limited transportation, especially because Port Orchard is so rural. Impacts those with disabilities more than others. Biggest issue: busses don’t go far out of town to where those with

disabilities live. So that limits employment options, social activities, especially after high school. Others without disabilities have more options for transportation.

2: Participant comment: (Ronnie Oswald) with [Holly Ridge Adult Employment Services](#). Noted barrier: Transportation. [Kitsap Transit](#) doesn't run on Sundays. The [Access bus](#), if more than half-mile outside main line, costs extra (on top of monthly pass) \$2/trip – if they even go into your area. So hard to find employment within bus line and on bus schedule. Times, hours, and locations buses go are all very limited.

3: Participant comment: (Kimberly McCarty) [Developmental Disabilities Administrator](#) – transportation is a barrier (as above.)

4: Participant comment: (Debbie Adamson) Special Education teacher with [South Kitsap High School](#). Works with 18-21-year-olds with disabilities. Transportation is a barrier. Makes everything difficult, especially finding jobs.

5: Participant comment: (Debbie Adamson) Special Education teacher with [South Kitsap High School](#). Works with 18-21-year-olds with disabilities. Students can't do extracurricular activities, because of no transportation for them after school.

6: Participant comment: (Megan Mason-Todd) Workforce Development director at [Skookum](#) – hires people with disabilities (230 in Kitsap County!) We have desperate problems with transportation and getting people to work.

7: Participant comment: (Sandra) sees issue of transportation, also.

8: Participant comment: (Glenn G) – Transportation is a barrier. We've given up on public transportation, besides the school bus. Where we live, emergency pick up is a half-mile away. If snowy, we have to deliver our child in a wheelchair through that to get on the bus. We rely on our own vehicles, but newer larger wheelchairs make transportation harder. Trying to find a large, All-Wheel-Drive wheelchair van. Very hard to find. Would like more information on funding sources, support, and information on these vehicles. Resources are hard to find, but they're out there apparently.

9: (Jeff Daily) [School Board member](#) – former special education teacher: Most students rely on public transportation, [Kitsap Transit](#).

Promising Practices

Kitsap Transit will continue to work on seeking solutions to provide accessible transit to people with disabilities in Kitsap County so they can access employment, recreation, social opportunities, businesses, and services.

The community rallied around Glenn, the participant who made a comment about needing resources to find a wheelchair van, to offer suggestions such as the [Northwest Access Fund](#), [MS Donor Closet](#), [Kitsap County Resource Guide](#), and [AZ Mobility](#).

For more information on [Kitsap Transit](#) services and the [Access bus](#), visit their websites.

Housing

Participant Comments

1: Participant comment: (Kimberly McCarty) [Developmental Disabilities Administrator](#) – Compounding issues (to transportation as above) – affordable housing, hard to find and hard for residential providers to find them on a bus line.

2: (Comment re: affordable housing from a Marcia R.) Is a parent of a disabled child, and an adult child, who cannot afford to live in their own (independent) housing. Rents have tripled, even an ‘affordable’ 1-bedroom place is expensive – approx. \$1200-1800/month

3: Participant comment: (Megan Mason-Todd) Workforce Development director at [Skookum](#) – hires people with disabilities (230 in Kitsap County!) We have desperate problems with housing.

4: Participant comment: (Glenn G) Also need funding, resources for home modifications as child grows into adult size. Responses:

Pat B: there is a [MS donor closet](#) – Kirkland, Tacoma –that can maybe help. [NW Access Fund](#) has low-interest loans for home modifications, etc.

Marsha: Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Services publishes a [resource guide](#) (seconded by Kelly O’Neal and Damiana Harper)

(Kimberly McCarty) case workers in her office (DDA - [Developmental Disabilities Administration](#)) could help... \$7,000 Housing and Urban Development and 1% loans for those with disabilities – for elevators, ramps, heated driveways, some examples of the funded projects. Waiver programs have funds (Vermont has examples, too).

(Glenn’s wife) – had great case manager at DDA, but she got promoted. Still trying to figure out how to use Basic Funds.

Promising Practices

[Kitsap Community Resources](#) has information around [rent and mortgage assistance](#), as well as [affordable housing](#), and [financial education](#).

[MS Donor Closet](#) states that when durable medical and mobility equipment is no longer needed, most people feel that the right thing to do is pass it along so it can help someone else. That is where MS Donor Closet comes in. We are all volunteers who accept donations of this good equipment, refurbish it, and make it available to others at a very affordable “suggested minimum donation” amount. By saving on mobility equipment, funds may be utilized elsewhere, such as for home modifications.

[Northwest Access Fund](#) offers financial products and services designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities and seniors in Washington and Oregon, including an [assistive technology loan program](#) that offers low-interest loans for people to purchase assistive technology, and Financial Coaching: free one-on-one [financial coaching](#) to help you meet your financial goals.

[Kitsap County Resource Guide](#): The Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program publishes a resource guide, updated annually, that lists essential services for people with disabilities in Kitsap County (including housing and living assistance – see page 15).

The [Department of Social and Health Services](#) has a list of [housing resources](#), including [supportive housing](#) information, available on their website.

[Medicaid Waivers](#) may be available to persons with disabilities to help with home modifications.

Access to Services

Participant Comments

1: Participant comment: (Glenn G.) Father of an 8th grader in a wheelchair. One of the issues he sees – (physical) access to school, businesses etc. – Automatic door opener buttons turned off or not working (broken). His son can't open the doors on his own. Once inside, his son can't open interior doors either. (Note: His son has a large, bulky wheelchair). Responses:

(Marsha Cutting) There are stickers available, with the number of the business listed, to call and someone can come and open the door (contact: KMurray@kitsap.gov to obtain)

Damiana – grant funding is available for County Accessible Community Advisory Committees – to improve local accessibility ([Kitsap County's](#) is very active, Marsha is part of it)

Pat B – information shared here will be provided in this follow-up report

(Glenn's wife) – Son has trouble getting into classrooms – shop teacher building something to get him in, but hasn't done it yet.

2: Participant comment: (Debbie Adamson) Special Education teacher with [South Kitsap High School](#). Works with 18-21-year-olds with disabilities. Door access not “up to code.” Older buildings in the district don't have good access.

3: Participant comment: (Elizabeth Cordy) is a Deaf woman. She has spent 17 years here. One thing she has noticed – the equipment deaf people need, like accessible smoke alarms, are not available widely. They are missing resources, and access, but want that. Essentially, it is about equal access. Another thing – vibrating fire alarms are helpful, but we need more of them in Port Orchard. They are not being distributed as widely as they once were. We need more accessible alarms in the community. Response:

Reg – Statewide [DeafBlind Service Center](#) will provide smoke alarms and visual pagers/alerts, sirens/doorbells

(Joel Bergsbaken) with the [Hearing Speech and Deaf Center](#) (Bellingham office). The [DSHS office](#) has alarm kits – for free – for the deaf.

4: Participant comment: (Megan Mason-Todd) Workforce Development director at [Skookum](#) – hires people with disabilities (230 in Kitsap County!) We have desperate problems with a shortage of mental health providers.

5: Participant comment: (Joel Bergsbaken) with the [Hearing Speech and Deaf Center](#) (Bellingham office). Hard of Hearing folks need access to interpreters and communication equipment, and a shortage of interpreters exacerbates the problem. Virtual platforms are great – but you then need virtual interpreters and internet access (high speed and stable). Emergency services need video/remote interpreters first, then all public services do, and hearing loops. You must schedule interpreters two weeks out to get services. What this means is eventually people “opt out” of participating in activities

because of that challenge. The lack of interpreters and internet access is an issue. In the Bellingham office, we serve 13 counties. Bellingham Police have 24/7 access to [language line](#). All city services have that access now.

6: Participant comment: (Jeff Daily) is a School Board Member – former special education teacher: All students, regardless of disability, should be able to access ALL of schools’ campuses and activities. Businesses with accessible parking are often full, meaning that people with disabilities are out shopping. But sometimes self-checkouts are not ADA compliant, or items on shelves are placed too high to reach. Not all of downtown Port Orchard is ADA compliant either, which he feels is progressing too slowly.

7: Participant comment: (Jo Walter) is a Bremerton mom/guardian. Her daughter is severely disabled, qualifies for 12 hours a day caregiving. It is nice to have convinced the state that she needs that level of support – but they can’t find sufficient staff to provide it. Those qualified are paid more for less challenging work (such as with seniors). Risk of family burnout for those with disabled adult children is real. We need a pay differential – more pay for more demanding work. Families don’t have time to be advocates to change the system, they’re too busy providing care. What’s at risk is keeping families whole and causing them to keep providing care to their relatives as they age and become ill or infirm. Help!

Promising Practices

Kristin Murray with the [Kitsap County ACAC](#) can be contacted at KMurray@kitsap.gov to request a clingfilm sticker that a business can use to post and list their phone number by the front door, so that individuals who may be having trouble getting inside due to lack of automatic door opener buttons or other issues can call to have someone come out to open the door. The Kitsap County ACAC also participates in a number of other projects to improve local accessibility in Kitsap County.

Individuals in Port Orchard who attended the Town Hall meeting seemed very willing to jump in to assist in providing resources that their fellow community members may be able to access to address the different issues they are facing in the local community.

The Statewide [DeafBlind Service Center](#), as well as the [Department of Social and Health Services](#), both have smoke alarms, visual pagers and alerts, as well as sirens or doorbells available for members of the public who are Deaf (referred from the [Hearing Speech and Deafness Center](#)).

Kitsap County Mental Health Services

Kitsap County Aging and Long-Term Care contracts with a counseling provider to provide both Older Adult Counseling and Chemical Dependency Services for people age 60+, or eligible younger family caregivers for an adult, upon referral and service availability. Please call (360) 337-5700 for more information and availability.

Broadband funding

“Kitsap County, Washington Recovery Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2022 Report”
Published on 8/31/22 and found at the link [here](#), states the following:

“Broadband: Kitsap is working with the Kitsap Public Facilities District on the extension of middle mile broadband infrastructure to underserved and unserved areas of our urban (including cities) and rural areas (Kitsap’s largest ARPA-funded capital project). Additionally, these discussions have included the

expansion of free WIFI sites throughout Kitsap County.” – see **page 5 of the document**. More information can also be found on pages 13-16.

[Let's Loop Seattle](#) is an online resource that lists public venues in Washington with hearing loops installed.

[Language Line](#) is another available resource where community members who are Deaf are able to get connected to a remote interpreter 24/7. It is currently in use by the Bellingham Police Department, as well as all other city services in Bellingham now. [UbiDuo](#) is a similar resource in use by the local [WorkSource](#) office in Kitsap County to connect frontline staff to interpreting services when needed. The GCDE's Legislative Workgroup may also be able to advocate around the interpreter shortage issue.

Leadership Meeting Exercise

After a robust discussion at the community town hall meeting, two issues of focus for the Leadership Action Planning meeting (LAP) were identified. The Leadership Action Planning meeting (LAP) was attended by nineteen community members, who then identified strategies for the top two issues that came from the Town Hall group. Those two topics were access to services, and transportation. LAP attendees were assigned breakout groups where they focused on generating ideas and solutions for each topic, and selected their priorities. The entire group then voted on what the top priority was for their work.

QUESTIONS AND BRAINSTORMING FOR INITIAL BREAKOUT SESSIONS

TRANSPORTATION: How can transportation be improved to allow people with disabilities living in and around Port Orchard the ability to experience equitable access to employment and recreation opportunities?

Brainstorming session

A note from John Clauson that Kitsap Transit is obligated under the ADA to provide comparable services to individuals with disabilities within 3/4 of a mile of the fixed bus route. There is an added cost for people outside of that radius.

A note from Bill Kinyon that this is a common issue around the state, and that often, people who use public transit live outside of the fixed routes. Another issue is that work does not always happen from Monday to Friday, and sometimes the scheduling available for public transit doesn't work for people's work schedules.

John Clauson responded that this is the premise behind Access transit – where people can call and schedule to get accessible transportation. There is no service on Sundays, or 24 hours, which is a challenge. There are programs available through non-profits, such as providing groups with vans to offer transportation options beyond what Kitsap Transit is capable of.

Yolonda inquired about whether there is or will be considered a direct route aside from the ferry from South Kitsap to the Silverdale area.

John Clauson shared that currently the ferry is the only connection between Port Orchard and Bremerton. It is a vital link. You can consider it a floating bus. You don't have to pay additional money than taking another bus. It gives individuals more flexibility than what is offered on the bus connections. There is one exception regarding fares, they will offer limited sailing trips for those experiencing accessibility issues. People with limited income also receive 50% off.

Kelly O'Neal said that the biggest issue has to do with funding coming to Kitsap Transit programs. She wondered if there was a way to raise more money to increase impact and availability?

Richard Becker shared that if funding seems to be an issue, maybe we need a more flexible solution to address needs. For example, subsidizing uber and lift rides.

Megan Mason-Todd agreed that the community needs to work on funding sources, because transportation is vital to get people with disabilities to work, appointments, and activities.

Other ideas were trying to expand available hours, dial-a-ride (wheelchair access), routes, and add in Sunday service. Also, they could consider hiring an access or transportation coordinator for the outlying areas. They could also consider paying employment providers to provide transportation to clients. Taking advantage of Non-profit options, such as volunteer van fleets, was suggested. There also needs to be a plan for communicating about cancellations.

Second breakout session – exploring solutions:

Marsha wondered if Jim could clarify where Kitsap Transit funding currently comes from.

John shared that currently the only option is a local sales tax. With voter approval, it can go up an additional 1/10 via the tax. There are also grant funds available in various categories. But essentially, a sales tax would have to be the means to increase funds.

Bill shared that private grants could not be used for employees, but could be used for things like vehicles.

John replied that the transit board is reluctant to make services dependent on grant funding because they want to ensure that things are sustainable.

Kim believes there needs to be a deeper dive around who transportation is supporting. Once we can identify the needs, then we can develop a better plan.

Patti wondered who should be at the table during these conversations.

Megan suggested that we include employment vendors, organizations that hire folks with disabilities, and local legislators. There certainly does not seem to be a shortage of people who could support this. She offered her space as a place where the coalition could meet (at Skookum in Bremerton).

Kim included the local social services providers such as DVR, DDA, and Work Source, along with other community groups.

Kelly suggested to ensure that a transit board representative also sits on the coalition so that the group has a good understanding of how the funding works.

Richard suggested looking at the community resource guide provided by the DDA for additional people to support this group.

Patti suggested that perhaps the Kitsap Transit could coordinate this.

John shared that Kitsap transit couldn't coordinate as a government agency, but could be involved. They are not going to be the solution necessarily, but could look at other organizations to include.

Megan shared that she was happy to start coordinating getting people together. Some may not even be present today.

Patti reminded folks about the commitment statement form and that we need to establish a timeline.

Kim committed to bring this to her upper management and will talk with them on Tuesday.

John also committed to participate.

Kelly offered to help get the word out about the coalition.

Jay said that he will run it up the chain of command at DVR to see if they can participate.

Yolanda shared that she would be happy to participate and remain in contact.

Marsha said she can also help spread the word about the group and see who might like to participate.

Mike said he will offer as much support as possible, given additional context, but is passionate about getting the work moved ahead, and gave an example about parking spaces being made accessible.

Top solutions - TRANSPORTATION: looking at increasing funding and thinking about creative solutions for more accessibility, such as at bus stops. One idea: subsidizing uber and lift rides. Another was highlighting and expanding existing accessibility measures in the community, such as at bus stops.

Ultimately, the top solution as voted on by the team was to create a coalition to come up with ways to increase funding.

Next steps

Kelly O'Neal, Megan Mason-Todd, Kim McCarty will begin to look at possible folks to invite into a coalition to begin conversations around creative funding solutions and organizations to increase accessibility.

ACCESS TO SERVICES: With the resources available to the community, how can accessibility to buildings and public areas (like the waterfront) be improved for people with disabilities?

Brainstorming session

Richard Becker was concerned that access is not being prioritized as a need as much as it should be when considering funding. There are different competing needs, such as the built environment, versus outdoors.

Patti offered clarification that we were discussing access to all environments, not one over another.

Kelly is not sure if it is much of a priority. She feels that we need to pay attention and conduct additional, intentional planning to create accessibility in these spaces.

Megan lives locally and said her community recently did a survey on accessibility and then went through and started fixing things that were addressed in the survey. Perhaps the city of Port Orchard could consider doing something similar, such as an accessibility walkthrough.

Jeff shared that many of the bus stops in Port Orchard are in places where concrete is available, but some are in grass and gravel, which is difficult for those using mobility aids. This needs to be a consideration around access.

Top solutions – ACCESS TO SERVICES: Doing a survey to find gaps and address them, intentional planning of accessible spaces, conducting an accessibility walkthrough, and looking at the bus stops to increase accessibility as a matter of access.

Other items mentioned were to look at the physical access to buildings (doors, etc.), and increase knowledge around universal design. An access coordinator was suggested. Again, conducting an accessibility study was suggested. Attempting to obtain a block grant of some sort for access improvements was mentioned. It was noted that it is the law to be ADA compliant.

Ultimately, the top solution as voted on by the team was to conduct a local survey to find areas where opportunities exist to increase access.

Next steps

Jessica will talk to the leadership of the Kitsap ACAC and has experience in conducting electronic assessments. She can talk to them about what they want to know, break it down by zip code, type of disability, etc. Ranae will discuss this with the ACAC committee next Tuesday as well. She is willing to help Jessica with this project next month. Jessica will also talk to her manager to see what their capacity is, how many questions their survey has, and if they could borrow their template. This will happen within a month and be county wide. Jeff will ask parents and people who work at the school district to collect information and pass it onto GCDE as to where the problems with ADA compliance are.

Commitment Statements

Unfortunately, I had many interruptions during the events, and I missed a lot of details - however, I would like to further participate in issues surrounding employment and training accessibility. Specifically connecting with Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Department of Human Services and other local organizations to create partnerships in order to support streamlined approaches for referrals to support individuals seeking employment and training services. – Mike Robinson, 12/15/2022

We know that some veterans suffer the same access issues as others who suffer physical and mental disabilities. As such, disabled veterans can be assisted through a variety of programs that the Veterans Administration may not be able to cover. Action step: As one who serves Veterans in Kitsap County and their small subset of disabled community members, I will interact more closely with Kelly ONeal of the Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program to inform her of veteran community and home access challenges. – Richard Becker, 12/9/2022

I committed to asking my administration what level of participation DDA would have with the transportation coalition. I also committed to assisting with putting together the first meeting with the County and Megan from Skookum. – Kim McCarty, 12/14/2022

Resources – Employment:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Address: 4710 Auto Center Blvd.
Bremerton, WA 98312
Phone: 360-405-7810
Email: DVRSilverdaleReferral@dshs.wa.gov

Peninsula Services
Address: 4710 Auto Center Blvd.
Bremerton, WA 98312
Phone: (360) 373-1446
Email: info@peninsulaservices.org

Kitsap County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee
Attn: Kristen Murray, Staff
Kitsap County Department of Human Services
Phone: (360) 337-4462
Email: kmurray@kitsap.gov

Kitsap County People First (Poulsbo)
Advisor: Kimberly Adams, Email: kadams@penarc.org;
or Advisor: Nikei Eldrige, Email: nikeie@ckschools.org
Phone: (253) 999-7222

Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program
Address: 614 Division Street, MS-23
Port Orchard, WA 98366-4676 (Attn. Kelly Oneal)
Email: koneal@kitsap.gov
Phone: (360) 337-4624

Washington State Human Rights Commission
Address: 711 S. Capitol Way, Suite 402
Olympia, WA 98504 (Attn: Andreta Armstrong)
Phone: + 1 (800) 233-3247 (toll free)
Email: Andreta.Armstrong@hum.wa.gov

Disability Rights Washington
Address: 315 5th Ave S, Ste 850
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: (206) 324-1521
Email: info@dr-wa.org

Department of Commerce
Address: 2001 6th Avenue, Suite 2600
Seattle, WA 98121 (Seattle Field Office)
Phone: (206) 256-6100

Developmental Disabilities Administration
Address: 4710 Auto Center Blvd
Bremerton, WA 98312 (Kitsap Field Office)
Phone: (360) 405-7800
Email: DD5FSO@dshs.wa.gov

Kitsap County Parent Coalition
Address: 3100 Bucklin Hill Rd NW, Suite 217
Silverdale, WA 98383 (Attn: Melia Hughes)
Phone: (360) 373-2502 Ext 100
Email: kcpc@wa.easterseals.com

Skookum Contract Services
Address: 4525 Auto Center Way
Bremerton, WA 98312
Phone: (360) 475-0756
Fax: (360) 475-0757

Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Address: 4210 Wheaton Way, Suite 100
Bremerton, WA 98310
Phone: (253) 257-5710
Fax: (360) 478-4577

WorkSource Kitsap
Address: 3120 Northwest Randall Way
Silverdale, WA 98383
Phone: (360) 516-1001

Trillium Employment Services
Address: 3501 NW Lowell St #101
Silverdale, WA 98383
Phone: (360) 698-6659

Community Employment Alliance
Address: 129 SW 9th Street
Chehalis, WA 98532
Phone: (360) 277-1407

Discovery High School
Address: 2150 Fircrest Drive SE
Port Orchard, WA 98366
Phone: (360) 443-3680

Holly Ridge Center
Address: 5002 Kitsap Way, Suite 200
Bremerton, WA 98312
Phone: (360) 373-2536
Fax: (360) 479-9274
Email: hrc@hollyridge.org

Google offers an array of self-paced certifications that can be obtained online and paid for on a monthly payment basis. Most certificates cost around \$40 per month. For example, right now data analyst type jobs are in great demand. Google offers certifications in this area. The pay is great, and one can work remotely in many cases. Suggestion: perhaps the state can be asked to pay for unemployed citizens with disabilities to complete certificate programs that will allow them to obtain a great paying job. **Learn more at:** <https://grow.google/certificates/...>

Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities maintains a brochure about Employment and Community Access Services. The most recent version can be found at the link [here](#), and the version before that can be found at the link [here](#).

The **Work Opportunity Tax Credit** - The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) is a **Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain [targeted groups](#) who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.** WOTC joins other workforce programs that incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers. The Consolidated Appropriation Act, 2021 (Section 113 of Division EE P.L. 116-260) **authorized the extension** of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) **until December 31, 2025.** **For more information, visit:** <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit>

Social Security

2022 The Red Book (<https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/index.html>)

The Red Book serves as a **general reference source about the employment-related provisions of Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs** for individuals with disabilities, family members, and for educators, advocates, rehabilitation professionals, and counselors who serve people with disabilities.

Kitsap County Resource Guide - The Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program maintains a list of information on local resources that is updated on a yearly basis and can be found at the link [here](#).

For more information on Schedule A Hiring, which is a hiring incentive offered to persons with qualifying disabilities in Federal Government, visit the link [here](#).

For more information on cultural bias, which is the phenomenon of interpreting and judging phenomena by standards inherent to one's own culture, visit the link [here](#).

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction offers the [Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Program](#) to provide educators with professional development opportunities in support of

inclusionary practices across the state. Another resource around this issue is:

<https://nationaltoday.com/inclusive-schools-week/>.

The Kitsap County [Department of Social and Health Services](#) helps with benefits planning, as well as creating [504 plans](#) for students with disabilities in [transition](#). Another resource around this issue is:

<https://www.benefitu.org/>.

The [Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities program](#) has a case resource manager to work with [transitional students](#).

[GCDE's Annual Governor's Employer Awards Program](#) annually **recognizes employers who are champions of disability employment** across the state.

Resources – Transportation:

The [Disability Mobility Initiative](#) of [Disability Rights Washington](#)

Address: 315 5th Ave S, Ste 850

Seattle, WA 98104

Phone: (800) 562-2702 or

(206) 324-1521;

Fax: (206) 957-0729

Email: info@dr-wa.org

Website: <https://www.disabilityrightswa.org/>

HUD Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships could be a great **Federal Office to seek grants for Transportation related money**

Address: 451 7th Street SW.

Washington, DC 20410;

Phone: (202) 708-2404;

Email: Partnerships@Hud.Gov;

Website: Www.Hud.Gov/Program_Offices/Faith_Based

Kitsap Transit (including the [Access bus](#) system)

60 Washington Avenue, Suite 200, Bremerton, WA 98337

Phone: (360) 373-2877 or 1-800-501-RIDE

The state of [Vermont](#) **includes transportation in the job description** of their Employment Consultant, Social Security Specialist, and Youth Employment Specialist Positions, something that may be able to be taken into consideration locally.

[Northwest Access Fund](#) offers financial products and services designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities and seniors in Washington and Oregon, including an [assistive technology loan program](#) that offers low-interest loans for people to purchase assistive technology, and Financial Coaching: free one-on-one [financial coaching](#) to help you meet your financial goals.

[MS Donor Closet](#) states that when durable medical and mobility equipment is no longer needed, most people feel that the right thing to do is pass it along so it can help someone else. That is where MS Donor Closet comes in. We are all volunteers who accept donations of this good equipment, refurbish it,

and make it available to others at a very affordable “suggested minimum donation” amount. By saving on mobility equipment, funds may be utilized elsewhere, such as for home or vehicle modifications.

[AZ Mobility.com](#) - Since 2001, AZ Mobility has provided high-quality [used wheelchair vans for sale](#) at low prices. We offer nationwide delivery on all of our vehicles, so you never have to worry about being too far away from your next handicap accessible van! And with customized financing options, your purchase will always be hassle-free. If you’re ready to gain the mobility you’ve been looking for, then the AZ Mobility buying experience is for you!

Resources – Housing:

Each state is given **federal money** through the **land grant office to pay for mold removal**. Visit: <https://www.epa.gov/grants/office-land-and-emergency-management-grants-and-funding> for more information.

The [Department of Social and Health Services](#) has a list of [housing resources](#), including [supportive housing](#) information, available on their website.

[Medicaid Waivers](#) may be available to persons with disabilities to help with home modifications.

[Kitsap Community Resources](#) has information around [rent and mortgage assistance](#), as well as [affordable housing](#), and [financial education](#).

KCR Port Orchard

Services offered: Employment & Training, Housing, Energy Assistance, WIC, and Veteran’s Services
3200 SE Rainshadow Court
Port Orchard 98366
(360) 473-2144 x1

The [Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues & Employment’s Legislative Workgroup](#) wants to hear your concerns regarding affordable housing, contact them [here](#).

Resources – Access to Services:

The Statewide [DeafBlind Service Center](#), as well as the [Department of Social and Health Services](#), both have smoke alarms, visual pagers and alerts, as well as sirens or doorbells available for members of the public who are Deaf (referred from the [Hearing Speech and Deafness Center](#)).

[Language Line](#) is another available resource where community members who are Deaf are able to get connected to a remote interpreter 24/7. It is currently in use by the Bellingham Police Department, as well as all other city services in Bellingham now. [UbiDuo](#) is a similar resource in use by the local [WorkSource](#) office in Kitsap County.

[Let’s Loop Seattle](#) is an online resource that lists public venues in Washington with hearing loops installed.

Kitsap County Mental Health Services

Kitsap County Aging and Long-Term Care contracts with a counseling provider to provide both Older Adult Counseling and Chemical Dependency Services for people age 60+, or eligible younger family

caregivers for an adult, upon referral and service availability. Please call (360) 337-5700 for more information and availability.

Kristin Murray with the [Kitsap County ACAC](#) can be contacted at KMurray@kitsap.gov to request a clingfilm sticker that a business can use to post and list their phone number by the front door, so that individuals who may be having trouble getting inside due to lack of automatic door opener buttons or other issues can call to have someone come out to open the door. The Kitsap County ACAC also participates in a number of other projects to improve local accessibility in Kitsap County.

Broadband funding

“Kitsap County, Washington Recovery Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds 2022 Report” Published on 8/31/22 and found at the link [here](#), states the following:

“**Broadband:** Kitsap is working with the Kitsap Public Facilities District on the extension of middle mile broadband infrastructure to underserved and unserved areas of our urban (including cities) and rural areas (Kitsap’s largest ARPA-funded capital project). Additionally, these discussions have included the expansion of free WIFI sites throughout Kitsap County.” – see **page 5 of the document**. More information can also be found on pages 13-16.

Broadband is also mentioned twice in this **article titled “Kitsap County has \$53 million in COVID-19 relief funds. Here's how they will get spent” published in the Kitsap Sun on 8/18/22 and found at the link [here](#)**, as follows –

“To date, Kitsap County has directed the spending of \$47.6 million out of \$52.7 million it received from the federal government. The money will go to a variety of projects that relate to public health, homelessness, childcare, small business assistance, hospitality and tourism, and infrastructure like **broadband expansion**,” and:

“Some of the most expensive projects on the list: \$7.2 million to improve the ventilation system for the Kitsap County Jail and **\$6.6 million for Kitsap Public Utilities District's broadband node expansion project**. In that project, **up to 30 broadband nodes will be built** in underserved areas to give people greater access to in-home reliable high-speed internet.”

Contacts

Marsha Cutting, Kitsap County ACAC, email: mcutting@gmail.com

Todd Faulkner, CEO, Peninsula Services, email: toddf@psvoc.org

Kim McCarty, Developmental Disabilities Administrator, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration, email: kimberly.mccarty@dshs.wa.gov

Megan Mason-Todd, Workforce Development Director, Skookum, email: mmason-todd@skookum.org

Avelino Estrada, Vice President of Programs, Easterseals Washington, email: aestrada@wa.easterseals.com

Jeff Daily, School Board Member, South Kitsap School District, email: daily@skschools.org

Ranae Beeker, Member, Kitsap County ACAC, email: nursebeeker@gmail.com

Jessica Guidry, Equity Program Manager, Kitsap Public Health District, email: jessica.guidry@kitsappublichealth.org

LJ Rohrer, Legislative Assistant to Representative Caldier, Washington State House of Representatives, email: lj.rohrer@leg.wa.gov

Rulon Hopkins, VR Supervisor, Washington State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, email: rulon.hopkins@dshs.wa.gov

Shelby Satko, Executive Director, Washington State Rehabilitation Council, email: shelby.satko@dshs.wa.gov

Michael Robinson, WorkSource Administrator, Employment Security Department, email: Michael.Robinson@esd.wa.gov

Shauna Euritt, Program Manager, Vadis, email: shauna@vadis.org

Richard Becker, Veterans Assistance Program and Advisory Board Coordinator, Kitsap County Veterans Services, email: rbecker@kitsap.gov

John Clauson, Executive Director, Kitsap Transit, email: jclauson@portorchardwa.gov

Kristina Colcock, Member, Kitsap County ACAC, email: kris@colcock.com

Yolanda Fong, Community Health Director, Kitsap Public Health District, email: yolanda.fong@kitsappublichealth.org

Robert Gelder, Commissioner, Kitsap County, email: rgelder@kitsap.gov

Kelly O'Neal, Kitsap County Developmental Disabilities Program, email: koneal@kitsap.gov