



City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

FACT SHEET

**FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR &
THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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Fact Sheet: Equity, Race and Social Justice in City Social Services Investments

SEATTLE (January 20, 2016) – The Seattle Human Services Department is committed to meeting the needs of our communities through innovative and collaborative investments. Our work to serve Seattle’s most vulnerable is rooted in the need to lead with race and address the pervasive and deep disparities faced by people of color. The Human Services Department strives to support a Seattle where the richness of our diversity is valued, all our communities thrive, and people grow up and grow old with opportunity and dignity.

“The Human Services Department’s work in supporting a strong social safety net is rooted in our commitment to eliminating structural racism,” Human Services Department Director Catherine Lester said. “We incorporate social justice measures into our core activities and investments in our contributions for a more equitable Seattle.”

Snapshot of HSD actions to address inequities:

- **Increasing Access to Affordable Utilities:** In partnership with Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle City Light and the Human Services Department, the Utility Discount Program has expanded over the past year to serve the needs of Seattle’s residents, particularly those who have been severely impacted by the rising cost of living in this region. At the end of 2016, more than 30,000 people were enrolled in UDP, a 135% increase over the previous year, made possible by simplifying enrollment and increasing community outreach, with an emphasis on bi-lingual and immigrant populations.
- **Job Readiness for Immigrant and Refugee Youth:** The Human Services Department developed the Immigrant & Refugee Job Readiness Program in partnership with the immigrant & refugee community. The program uses a family-based approach to coordinate high quality, culturally appropriate job readiness training for immigrant and refugee youth and their families. Since July 2012, more than 400 youth and families have increased their employment readiness.

- **Seniors of Color More Likely to Experience Food Insecurity and Isolation:** Older adults (60+) of color are three times more likely to experience food insecurity. Almost twelve percent of older adults of color experience food insecurity compared to 3.8% of white older adults. Within Seattle, older people of color are also more likely to lack the social and emotional supports than older white people. The Human Services Department invests \$3.4M in programs like congregate meals and senior centers, where older adults can access community and nutritious food.
- **More Accurate Data Leads to Better Investment:** The Human Services Department is leading an effort to disaggregate data as it pertains to race, which can be misleading and inaccurately illustrate the service need. For example: about one-third of Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans do not graduate high school across the nation. However, since they are oftentimes grouped in a larger category of “Asian Americans” – and Asian Americans as a whole have much higher graduation rates – the needs of Cambodian and Vietnamese Americans may go overlooked. We are currently piloting collection and analysis of disaggregated race data for the Utility Discount Program and Youth Employment to better assess our investment strategy.
- **Using Equity Lens to Improve Homelessness Contracts:** As recommended in the City’s action plan Pathways Home, this year the Human Services Department will be issuing a Request for Proposals for homelessness funding. As contracts are revisited, HSD will ask providers to use racial equity goals to address the startling disparity that African Americans make up 33% of homeless individuals and only 8% of the total King County population.

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