

# Vashon-Maury Island Behavioral Health Needs Assessment

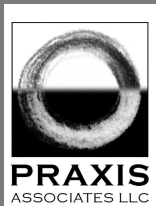
Commissioned by Vashon Youth and Family Services

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## PURPOSES

To help all Vashon service providers, policy makers, advocates and community members achieve a **common, multi-perspective understanding** of the depth of behavioral health needs on Vashon.

To support community members and organizations in their own planning and advocacy work.

# FOCUS

- Risk factors
- Barriers to accessing services
- Systemic challenges and Equity
- What's working

## THE INTERVIEWS

- 17 group and individual interviews
- 38 community members
- People who interact directly with diverse, vulnerable communities on Vashon.

# THE INTERVIEWS

- Elementary and middle school counselors
- Teen and tween out-of-school/mentorship programs
- Vashon Island School District nurse
- LGBTQ+ youth and elders
- Parent advocates/educators
- Parents of Black and Brown children
- VYFS clinicians

- Domestic violence survivor advocates
- Counselors and advocates serving the Latinx community
- Refugees and their advocates
- Affordable housing provider
- Vashon Medical Reserve Corps/Suicide prevention programming
- Providers of services for senior citizens

# THE INTERVIEWS

## Leadership interviews

- Neighborcare Student Clinic
- Vashon Alliance to Reduce Substance Abuse (VARSA)
- Vashon Island School District
- DOVE Project

## THE INTERVIEWS

- Provide an initial, broad understanding of multi-faceted needs and opportunities.
- Findings are based on the opinions, perceptions, observations, experiences and biases of interviewees.
- Should be supplemented with other data, such as resident surveys, population health data, health conditions and indicators and policy analysis

## RISK FACTORS

- Vashon Island's initial presentation as a thoughtful, liberal, inclusive community can obscure problems that exist in the community.
- Social isolation, sense of exclusion and invisibility are particularly severe for low-income Islanders, immigrants and refugees, POC, non-college-bound youth, and those with ideologies different from the Island's liberal norm.
- High cost of living and food and housing insecurity, inadequate mental health support, lack of health insurance, and the absence of living wage jobs, leave some facing impossible choices as they try to make ends meet.



## ISSUES RELATED TO VYFS BEING A COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

- Chronically underfunded
- Medicaid restricts what treatments are covered
- A limited pool of counselors results in delayed appointments and often precludes the possibility to assign clients to the best-fit counselor
- As is typical of CMH providers whose primary source of funding is Medicaid, VYFS relies on trained, supervised but pre-licensed counselors who are less expensive but also less experienced, and there is high turnover meaning people must re-establish relationships with new providers.

# BARRIERS

- Transportation is a major barrier to access.
- Underrepresentation of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and Spanish and Arabic speakers amongst BH providers limits access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed care.
- There is a severe shortage of specialty MH services, SUD treatment options, wraparound services for domestic violence survivors, people with complex and chronic mental illness, and children's educational and behavioral health needs
- This shortage and the difficulty of finding appropriate providers that people don't already have some other relationship with is made worse for people without access to insurance.

## ISSUES RELATED TO COORDINATION

- Inadequacy of case management was prevalent in the interview: Case managers, who help people navigate relevant social services and coordinate among providers to get comprehensive support, are not readily available on the Island. VYFS offers very limited part time case management and so many people who need such support go without.
- The siloing of many small organization and agencies results in lack of care coordination.
- Island agencies, organizations and providers do not have a common trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach

# EQUITY

- Medicaid policies mean low income people can't have the services they most need
- The poorer you are, the worse your access to quality mental health care
- Programs designed to address social inequities - such as ECEAP and Vashon Kids, which provide high quality early learning opportunities for low income children - face the chopping block every year because of changeable and inadequate funding
- That those with the most at stake are left out of decisions that impact them.

## NEXT STEPS

- The report is a springboard for ongoing work
- Finding out who is interested in being on a steering/task force to pick up where we left off
- Will likely require separate funding, raised collectively
  
- The report: <https://vyfs.org/community-needs>
- Contact for getting involved: [jjohnson@vyfs.org](mailto:jjohnson@vyfs.org)
- Contact for questions about the study: [yve@praxisassociates.com](mailto:yve@praxisassociates.com)