



King County and Seattle, WA

▲ Community Example from Chapter 4 of "Lessons for Leaders:"
Lessons in Advancing Policy/Systems Change

Community Background

King County, including Seattle, is home to a growing number of immigrants and refugees from many different countries. The King County Housing Authority, in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority and the King County Health Department, used their *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) grant to improve policies and systems that support healthy eating and active living for children in four affordable housing developments. More than half of the participating families do not speak English at home, with the predominant languages being Somali, Vietnamese and Ukrainian.

Community Action

Rather than allow this diversity to divide their work, HKHC King County/Seattle promoted cross-cultural exchange among residents and addressed necessary social and cultural factors that influence behavior change. Within the housing developments, multiple interpreters were present at most community meetings to foster multicultural connections and help people communicate with one another. The partnership increased opportunities for physical activity for women, particularly of the Muslim faith, who traditionally are not allowed to exercise in front of men. To increase access to healthier foods, the neighborhoods have several community gardens. The housing authorities created garden guidelines, enabling residents to grow their own native foods that may not be available in local grocery or corner stores.

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