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News Release

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Health District Announces Cuts in Services and Staff

Discretionary Revenue Shortage Leads to Difficult Cost-Cutting Decisions

BREMERTON, WA --- Public health services for some of Kitsap County's most vulnerable people will be reduced or eliminated based on the proposed 2009 budget of the Kitsap County Health District released today. The proposed balanced budget will be voted on at the December 2nd Kitsap County Board of Health meeting.

The program scheduled for budget elimination is the El Centro de la Familia outreach program. El Centro provides health education to Spanish-speaking families and links them to needed health and dental care services. In 2007, approximately 350 families received services through this program. Three staff positions (equaling 1.0 full-time equivalent position) would be eliminated from the budget January 1, 2009.

In addition, two nursing positions providing services in the District's First Steps and Welcome Home Baby Programs would be eliminated through attrition. First Steps helps low income pregnant women get the health and social services they need to be a healthy mom and to have a healthy baby. Welcome Home Baby provides newborn home visits for all Kitsap families.

"These budget cuts will be felt throughout the community," said Scott Lindquist, MD, Director of the Kitsap County Health District. "Our funding shortfalls have meant that year after year there have been unavoidable cuts in vital services. Unless a funding solution is identified, we will likely continue to see further reductions in valuable public health services."

In addition to these cuts, two Epidemiologist positions --- half the District's Assessment Program --- will be eliminated, the District's Assistant Environmental Health Division Director

position vacancy will not be filled, staff time will be reduced for two health care positions at the County’s Juvenile Detention Center, and reductions in administrative positions will also occur. Except for the El Centro positions and one of the Epidemiologist positions, all staff reductions will be accomplished either through attrition or staff time reductions. See attached Table 1 for details.

The proposed 2009 District budget continues an annual process of budget reductions over the past few years. Since 2007, District staffing has been reduced by approximately 23 full-time equivalent positions. The 2009 budget includes approximately 106 full-time equivalent staff including 124 full-time and part-time employees. Significant cuts in public health services and staffing are also occurring elsewhere in Washington State.

For more information, contact the Scott Daniels, Health District Public Information Officer, at (360) 337-5287 (office), or (360) 271-9230 (cell).

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