

# “INSIDE THE MUSICAL” GUIDE

## SWEENEY TODD

The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

A Musical Thriller

April 21 - May 14, 2023

**The Second Of Two Productions In Our  
Celebration Of Stephen Sondheim**

**Music and Lyrics by  
Stephen Sondheim**

**Book by  
Hugh Wheeler**

From an Adaptation  
by Christopher Bond

Originally Directed on Broadway  
by Harold Prince

Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick

Originally Produced on Broadway  
by Richard Barr, Charles Woodward,  
Robert Fryer, Mary Lea Johnson,  
Martin Richards in Association with  
Dean and Judy Manos

Fight and Intimacy Directed by Ian Bond  
Music Directed and Conducted by Matt Perri  
Choreographed by Katy Tabb  
Directed by Jay Woods

This “Inside the Musical” Guide offers supplementary curriculum containing educational content, interactive activities, opportunities for reflection, and resources based on the themes of the show *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. This guide can be utilized before or after experiencing the show. Questions? Reach out to [educationprograms@5thavenue.org](mailto:educationprograms@5thavenue.org).

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# SYNOPSIS

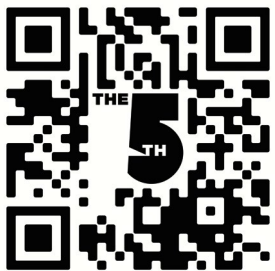
After 15 years in exile, Sweeney Todd, an unsettling man with a mysterious past, arrives in a dark and gritty London, hungry for vengeance against the judge who destroyed his life. Todd joins forces with Mrs. Lovett, the unhinged proprietress of a failing pie shop, and together they develop a spine-tingling plot to exact revenge. When the lights go down and the curtain goes up, you won't dare look away. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is a piercing investigation of a society tearing itself apart.

## CONTENT ADVISORY:

*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* contains material which may not be suitable for all audiences. The production contains sexual content, violence, gore, gun use, and death. Scenes depicting sexual assault and murder are highly theatrical but intense in nature. This production is suitable for individuals familiar/comfortable with content which is typically rated R. For more detailed information please visit <https://www.5thavenue.org/shows/2022-23/sweeney-todd/>



Photo Credit: Tracy Martin



Watch “The Mind of Stephen Sondheim, Part II,” the *Sweeney Todd: Demon Barber of Fleet Street* Show Talks with Albert Evans.

**CLICK HERE** or scan the QR code to access.

# CHARACTER BREAKDOWN



## SWEENEY TODD

A tormented barber returning to London 15 years after his wrongful imprisonment. Consumed by grief, Sweeney seeks revenge against those who have wronged him, regardless of the innocent people he harms in the course of his pursuit.



## MRS. LOVETT

A resourceful meat pie shop owner who is in love with Sweeney Todd and hopes to convince him to start a new life with her. Practical to a fault, her ambitious nature drives her to capitalize on Sweeney's violence.



## ANTHONY HOPE

A naive young sailor who accompanies Sweeney Todd on his journey back to London. He recklessly pursues Johanna after falling passionately in love with her at first sight.



## JOHANNA

A romantic and rebellious teenage girl, Judge Turpin's ward and Sweeney Todd's long-lost daughter. Wary of Turpin and disgusted by his advances, she yearns for freedom.



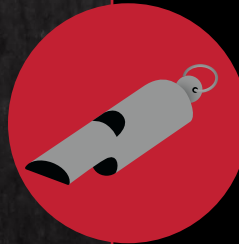
## TOBIAS RAGG

A clever young apprentice to Pirelli, later taken in by Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd. A little too observant for comfort, his exposure to violence and horror leads to his eventual madness.



## JUDGE TURPIN

A corrupt public official who abuses his power, using his authority to imprison Sweeney Todd, assault Sweeney's wife, and capture Johanna. He presents himself as an unyielding steward of the law while continuing to indulge his hypocritical desires.



## THE BEADLE

A pompous civil servant, deeply loyal to Turpin while harboring a secret sense of superiority to him.



## BEGGAR WOMAN

A destitute woman who lives on the streets of London.



## ADOLFO PIRELLI

A flamboyant barber and a charlatan. His unexpected past and morally bankrupt ambitions lead to his downfall.



## JONAS FOGG

The owner of Fogg's Asylum. He refers to his inmates as his "children" and sells their hair to wig-makers for his own profit.



## ENSEMBLE

A chorus of Londoners who serve as a Greek Chorus, recounting the tale of Sweeney Todd

# WHAT'S YOUR BLOOD TYPE?:

## An Interview with Tristan Hansen, Production Propmaster

Director of Education and Engagement, Ariel Bradler, connected with Tristan Hansen, The 5th's Production Propmaster, to learn more about the different types of fake blood used in theater productions!

**Q:** Did you make all of the blood for *Sweeney Todd*? Do you have a favorite formula to share?

**A:** We don't make blood here on site, since it makes more sense for consistency and efficiency of labor to order off-the-shelf products. My favorite liquid drying blood medium is from a company called "Red Drum"...like "redrum" from *The Shining*. So dark, yet so funny!

**Q:** Did you have to test a lot of different kinds of blood as you prepared for the show?

**A:** Yes, there are several different brands on the market that all perform different ways, depending on what you need, and are made with different proprietary ingredients. The goal for us is to find something non-staining and easy to clean up - out of hair, clothes, the floor, wherever. There are at least 4 types we [tested] for *Sweeney*.

**Q:** You tested at least 4 different types? How many different kinds of blood are there?

**A:** Oh yes! There's blood jelly, blood paste, super flow blood for squibs (a miniature explosive device), dark blood for "older" blood. There is also a 2-part blood on the market, so you can pretreat a shirt or something with one chemical and when the other chemical hits it, it turns red like blood!

**Q:** What are some things you learned about theatrical blood as you were testing different options?

**A:** Blood reads differently to an audience member depending on how far away they are from the blood. Our theater is SO BIG that sometimes a shiny red fabric or sequins read as wet blood better than actual fake blood does. And then it is less messy for clean-up for all other departments!

**Q:** Tristan, you're such an expert on fake blood...you have to have a recipe for us to make some at home.

**A:** Yes! Here's the best blood recipe using household goods. It is edible and washes out easily. It's recommended to use Hershey's brand or better, as the higher quality chocolate makes for better viscosity. And also, specifically the brand CoffeeMate, as its mixture is key to stain removal.

### FAKE BLOOD RECIPE

YIELD: 4 CUPS

#### INGREDIENTS

16 oz dark corn syrup

250 ml chocolate syrup

1 cup warm water

1tbsp (heaping) corn starch

1 ½ tbsp (heaping) CoffeeMate

3 drops yellow food coloring

Add red food coloring

(to make it look natural)

#### DIRECTIONS

Heat the corn syrup and the chocolate syrup in a pot on low. Dissolve the corn starch and coffee mate in the water and mix it into the syrup. After this, add the food coloring. Let this all warm for about 15 more minutes, mixing and squishing the CoffeeMate blobs with a fork every 5 minutes. Press a sieve on the top of the blood to help blend the unmixed chunks of CoffeeMate. Pour into storage containers and let cool to room temperature before closing the container. Once cool, this can be stored in a refrigerator for up to two weeks. Makes approximately 4 cups. If you want it to be extra thick, triple the amount of dry goods.

# ATTEND THE TALE...

By Albert Evans, Dramaturg

The story of Sweeney Todd first appeared in the late 1840s as a weekly serial in a British magazine called *The People's Periodical and Family Magazine*.

The benign-sounding *People's Periodical* was one of dozens of penny dreadfuls published at the time—magazines filled with bloodcurdling tales of crime and horror, marketed to a mostly male, mostly young, and mostly lower-class readership.

Even before “The String of Pearls”—the story’s original title—reached its final chapters, it was adapted for the stage by other hands. (Copyright was practically non-existent at the time.)

The stage authors had no idea how the magazine story would end, so they simply made up their own final scenes. They also changed

the play’s title to *Sweeney Todd*, which has a nice sinister ring.

The central characters of *Sweeney Todd* have remained fixed ever since. Sweeney, (the “Demon Barber”); Mrs. Lovett, a baker of meat pies, who makes practical use of Sweeney’s victims; his naïve young shop assistant Tobias Ragg; and a love-starved sailor who is infatuated with an innocent 18-year-old maiden, the ward of a very wicked judge.

For the first 125 years, Sweeney was presented as a maniacal barber/thief, who gleefully cuts the throats of his customers and relieves them of their valuables.

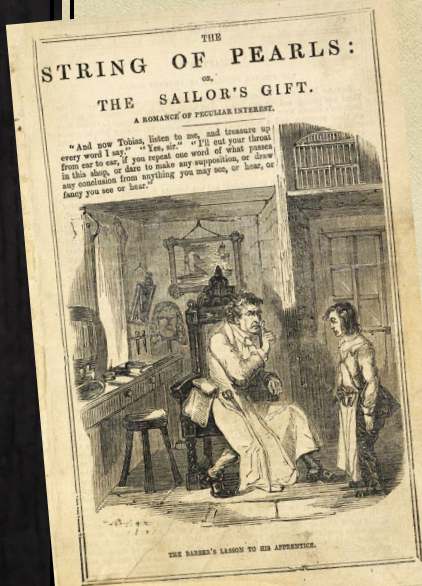
He preys on traveling businessmen and often on sailors who need to be freshened up before returning home to their sweethearts with costly gifts.

Sweeney has no motive other than greed—and the thrill of the kill.

In the early 1970s, Christopher Bond, a young British dramatist, wrote a revisionist version of *Sweeney Todd*, the first to give Sweeney a powerful backstory for his initial killings. He was now driven to wreak revenge on the corrupt judge who lusted after his wife, had her abducted, brutally violated her, and, on a trumped-up charge, sentenced the powerless barber to prison in Australia. Now he’s back... and out for blood!

On a trip to London, Stephen Sondheim saw Bond’s play and right away thought it would make an excellent musical.

He obtained the rights and set to work, crafting a score heavily influenced by the great mid-century Hollywood composers. The result is one of Sondheim’s supreme triumphs, the delicious musical thriller you will see on The 5th Avenue Theatre stage—*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.



# RAVENOUS

# RAGE

## Sweeney Todd's Devolution from Human to Human Hacker

By Bri Little

What about revenge makes it so...delicious? Is it always forbidden? When is it an acceptable form of justice over the due process of court proceedings? In *Sweeney Todd*, Judge Turpin is driven not by what is fair and right, but by lust and power. Sweeney's subsequent revenge is validated when the law, Judge Turpin and Beadle, take what rightfully belongs to him, in this case his wife and daughter. Sweeney's actions are at first driven by an intrinsically human desire for revenge, but soon devolve into indiscriminate evil as he gives in to his bloodlust.

Stephen Sondheim adapted Sweeney Todd from a character who first appeared in a 19th century penny dreadful called *A String of Pearls*. Penny dreadfuls were popular in the United Kingdom among the poor and working class as a way to engage in cheap serial escapist literature. The brutality of the Victorian era further validates Sweeney's decision to kill as a form of justice. Public executions were common during the era, and there was mass concern about crime and the rise of gothic horror literature. Characters like Dracula, Sweeney, and Jack the Ripper marked the Victorian era as men who engaged in murderous behavior to satiate their bloodlust.

Thus, it is not love but pent up rage that fuels Sweeney's actions when he is released from prison. He is angry about being wrongfully imprisoned for 15 years, but when he returns to London, his revenge plot is fueled by the decimation of the idyllic life he once had. He laments the loss of his "beautiful and virtuous" wife, who kept him on the straight and narrow, to madness and subsequent poisoning after her rape. And, having nothing left to lose, he gives himself permission to live out his murderous revenge plot that has been building during his time in exile.

Sweeney is liable to do anything to anyone to avenge his wife's death and the kidnapping of his daughter, and he has little concern for freeing his

daughter from the clutches of the Judge once he goes into business with Mrs. Lovett. Sweeney quickly becomes consumed by bloodlust and is thirsty to cause harm to anyone, even those who have not directly wronged him. Because the vision he had for his life--an adoring wife and innocent daughter--is shattered by Judge Turpin and Beadle, symbols of an institution supposedly dedicated to what is right and good, Sweeney decides to take justice into his own hands and is eager to make anyone pay.

Other characters in the musical also do despicable things in the name of a flawed love that is consumed by lust and obsession. Mrs. Lovett is immediately love-struck by Sweeney and supports his murderous intent with an unsavory (and savory) business offer. Anthony falls in love with Sweeney's kidnapped daughter, Johanna, and promises he'll have her ("*I'll steal you, Johanna/I'll steal you*"), seeming more concerned with having her for himself than freeing her from Judge Turpin.

The larger point Sondheim makes with Sweeney Todd is that the complexities of love, grief and injustice can boil down to pure hot rage and desperation. Throughout the musical, Benjamin Barker devolves from a downtrodden man who has been wronged to Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber. His pursuit of justice proves to be a slippery slope: he thinks he is doing the honorable thing by seeking revenge, but his actions easily shift towards evil and domination. And when that happens, an irredeemable fall from grace is inevitable.



**Bri Little** is a poet, journalist, voracious reader, and copywriter at The 5th Avenue Theatre. She enjoys horror movies, fancy beverages, and starting (and sometimes finishing) crafting projects.

# SEVEN DEADLY SINS

## Conjuring the God of Wrath

By Beth Pollack



### LUST

Unbridled desire or intense longing that overpowers a person's reason and judgment.



### GREED

Also known as avarice or covetousness, greed is the pursuit of material possessions and wealth, as well as an excessive desire for more than one needs.



### GLUTTONY

Often associated with food and drink, gluttony is wasteful overindulgence or overconsumption. The word "gluttony" derives from a Latin word meaning "to gulp or swallow."



### SLOTH

Deriving from a Latin word meaning "without care", sloth is a sin of omission. It encompasses many ideas, including an indifference to duty and obligation, as well as the avoidance of positive action.



### ENVY

Resentful awareness of, and yearning for, another person's traits, status, ability, or possessions.



### PRIDE

Also known as hubris, pride is considered the original and most evil sin. It is thought of as selfishness in the form of putting oneself before all others. It also encompasses an inability to acknowledge one's own faults or weaknesses.



### WRATH

Uncontrolled rage, fury, and hatred, often causing violence and injury. Wrath is closely tied to seeking vengeance.

# COFFINS, CORNISH PASTIES, AND POPPING PEOPLE INTO PIES

By Beth Pollack



“No denying times is hard, sir - even harder than the worst pies in London.”



—Mrs. Lovett, “The Worst Pies in London”

Originally, the pastry shell of a pie was primarily for storing and serving the filling, and was not always edible (or appetizing). These pie shells were referred to as “coffins” or “coffyns” and were thick crusts meant to withstand long bake times and heavy, wet fillings. The crusts were so stiff that the pies could stand on their own, without a dish, and the process of making a pie was referred to as “raising the coffin.”

Many pie fillings of the past would be familiar to us today: early Egyptians filled their pastries with nuts, honey, and fruit, while the ancient Greeks and Romans would bake meat and seafood in their flour crusts. However, sometime around the 14th century, European pie fillings started to become more unusual. Birds, rabbits, frogs, turtles, and other small animals were placed inside crusts and released when the pie was cut into, providing entertainment for banquet guests. People could also be placed inside of pie crusts, from a singular person who would emerge to recite poetry, to

a group of 28 musicians at a banquet held by the Duke of Burgundy in 1454.

Not all pies were big enough to hold a full orchestra. Hand pies were a popular meal for working-class folks and travelers. These smaller, single serving pies were easily held, simple to transport, and useful for preserving food that could otherwise spoil. Some pies, like the Cornish pasty, had a thick crimped edge that served as a handle and could be discarded, thus affording slight protection from dirty hands and workplace contamination.

Since hand pies are so portable, it’s not surprising that versions of hand pies can be found in many cultures spanning the globe. While there’s a whole world of variations to explore out there, from empanadas to samosas, xian bing to bureks, piroshki to patties, it might be best to avoid the shops of Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Lovett—or to opt for a vegetarian option.

Here are some different kinds of hand pies to explore:

## Spanakopita (Greece)

a savory pie of spinach and feta cheese, wrapped in phyllo dough.

## Calzones (Italy)

all your favorite pizza fillings folded inside a pocket of crust.

## Sfeehas (Lebanon)

a flatbread-based pie filled with minced meat.



“Is that just disgusting? You have to concede it. It’s nothing but crusting - here, drink this, you’ll need it ”

—Mrs. Lovett, “The Worst Pies in London”



### **Piroshki** *(Russia)*

savory or sweet fillings wrapped in a yeasted dough and shaped like a boat.

### **Bánh Patê Sô** *(Vietnam)*

a light and flaky dough wrapped around a meat filling, usually a pork pate.

### **Xian Bing** *(China)*

a circle of dough wrapped around filling, twisted closed like a dumpling, and then flattened and fried.

### **Bureks** *(Turkey)*

a thin, flaky pastry filled with a variety of fillings and then shaped into coils, triangles, or oblong cylinders.

### **Cornish Pasties** *(Cornwall)*

regulated by the Cornish Pasty Association, Cornish Pasties must contain a minimum of 12.5% diced or minced beef and a minimum of 25% vegetables.

### **Samosas** *(Central & Southern Asia)*

often filled with spiced potatoes, onions, peas, and accompanied by chutney, these pastries are folded into triangular, cone, or half-moon shapes.

### **Patty** *(Caribbean)*

often bright yellow due to turmeric incorporated into the dough, these pies feature spicy fillings and can incorporate meat or vegetarian and vegan ingredients.

### **Empanadas** *(Latin America, Spain)*

deriving from the Spanish word empanar, meaning “to bread”, these turnovers are filled with a variety of meats and vegetables and then baked or deep fried.

### **Meat Pies** *(Africa, Australia, New Zealand)*

meat filled pie, but snack sized. In Australia and New Zealand, it’s often filled with beef and gravy, then topped with ketchup. Nigerian meat pies feature an African curry spice, while Zimbabwean pies use a spice blend called braai.

# CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

After you experience the show, reflect on the following questions:

- Which character did you relate to the most and why?
- What do you imagine might happen next for each of the characters? What lesson(s) did they learn (or not)?
- A tragic hero is a central character who is nobly inclined but falls on undeserved misfortune, succumbing to a fatal flaw within their own character. Conversely, an antihero is a central character who lacks conventional heroic qualities and who the audience may disagree with morally, but who performs actions that the audience finds morally understandable or even correct. Is Sweeney Todd a tragic hero or an antihero? What is his fatal flaw?
- Can you imagine a version of this story with a happy ending? What would that look like? What parts of the story would have to change?
- Many people characterize *Sweeney Todd* as a show about vengeance consuming its main character, but Stephen Sondheim said the show was actually about obsession. What might he have meant by this? Where in the show do you see evidence of obsession consuming characters?



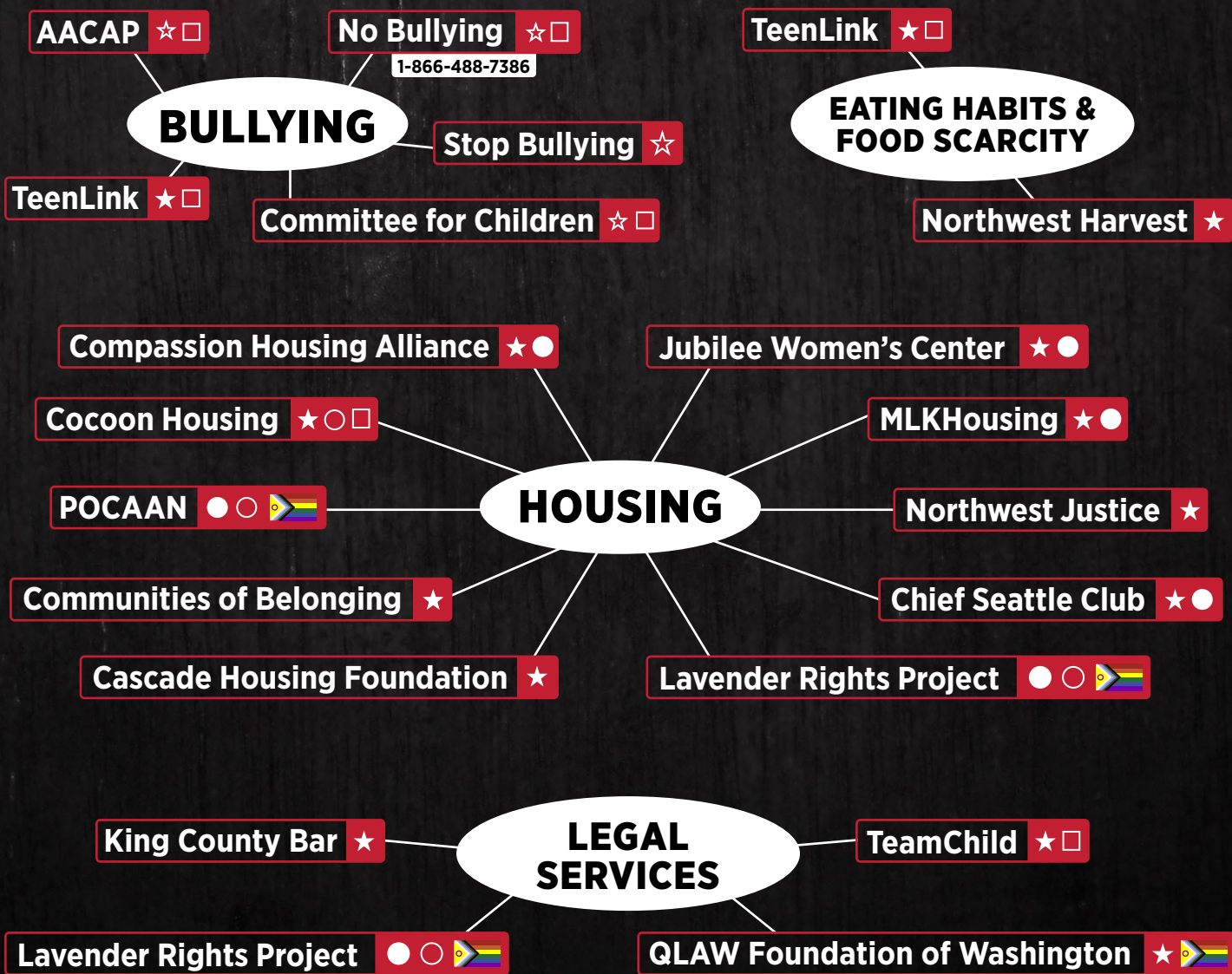
# COMMUNITY RESOURCE LIST

While *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* is based on a fictional story, we recognize that many of the themes and experiences of the characters are relevant to the challenges and hardships existing throughout time in society. The list below is curated to contain both local and national resources for individual and community wellness.

### ORGANIZATIONAL KEY

<p>★ Local WA Organization</p> <p>☆ National Organization</p> <p>□ Youth Focused</p>	<p> LGBTQIA+ Focused</p> <p>● Culturally Focused</p> <p>○ Community Partner Organization</p>
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King County information hotline for any or all of the below listings, call 2-1-1.  
 National Suicide & Crisis Hotline for any or all of the below listings, call 9-8-8.



Fairfax ★

# MENTAL HEALTH

TeenLink ★□

Crisis Connection - County Based Hotline ★

Domestic Shelters ★★

# PHYSICAL ABUSE

Northwest Family Life ★

Children's Hospital ★□

Fusion Housing ★

# POST- INCARCERATION REENTRY

Interaction Transition ★

UpliftNW ★○

OpenArms Services ★  
(206) 772-5242

WeldSeattle ★○

Chief Seattle Club ★●

Transitional Housing ★

TeenLink ★□

# SUICIDE

Crisis Text Line  
Text 741741

Suicide Lifeline  
1-800-273-8255

National Suicide Prevention Hotline  
Call 9-8-8

Now Matters Now

FairFax ★

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Narcotics Anonymous ★

POCAAN ★●○

TeenLink ★□

Washington Recovery Helpline ★  
1-866-789-1511 or Dial 7-1-1

23rd & Cherry Fellowship ★○

# TRANSPORTATION

Crisis Connection - Ride United ★

King County Metro Services ★

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