

NORTH OLYMPIC REGION

STATE OF THE CHILDREN

EARLY LEARNING & CARE



Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam Counties

24,630

CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN THE REGION



6,405 (26%) OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN LOW-INCOME* HOUSEHOLDS

Spanish, Tagalog

MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

40% (9,737)

CHILDREN OF COLOR

CHILD CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY AFFECTS US ALL

Lack of access to child care costs employers an estimated \$93.9M due to employee absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity. **38% of children do not have access to a licensed child care.** For those that do, the average cost of child care for two children is \$28,152, **30% of the average family's income.**

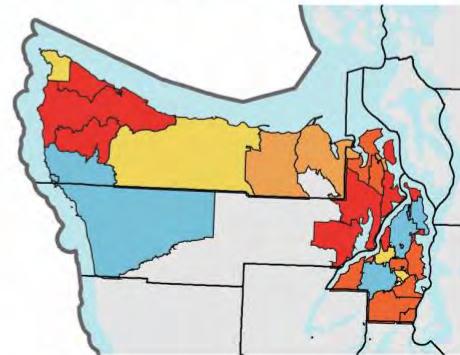
ECEAP AND HEAD START

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start preschool programs specialize in inclusive and high-quality care for low-income families and children with disabilities. Right now, these critical programs only serve half of the 2,177 children in our region who need them.

41%
(895)

OF CHILDREN WHO NEED AN ECEAP/HS SLOT HAVE A SPACE AVAILABLE TO THEM

PERCENT OF CHILD CARE DEMAND MET**



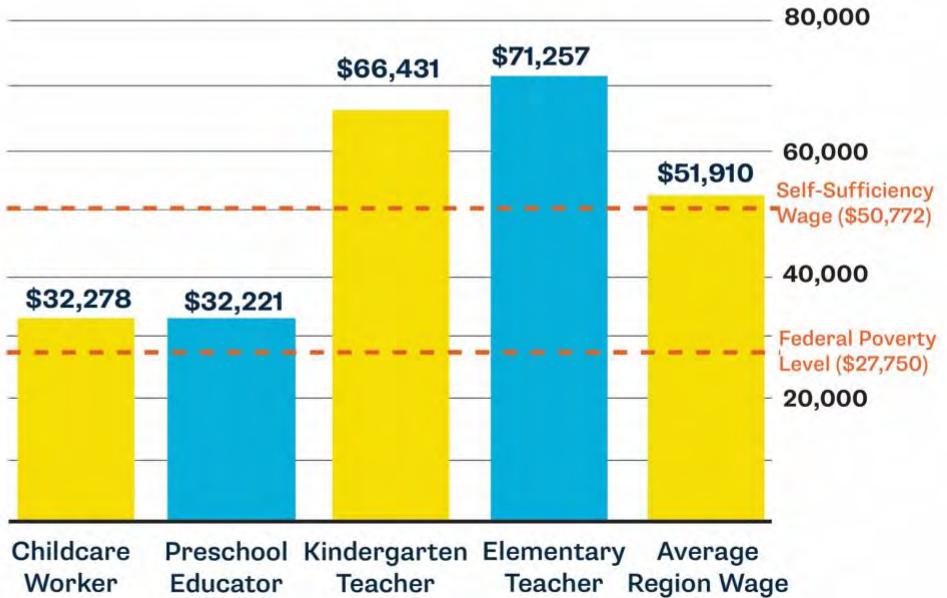
- More than 75% need met
- Between 50 - 74% need met
- Between 25 - 49% need met
- Less than 25% need met
- No Child Care
- Not Enough Data

EARLY LEARNING WORKFORCE

Our early learning and care system currently depends on **596 early learning and child care professionals** in the North Olympic region, of whom **more than half are people of color** and more than 80% are female. While providing an essential service, most child care providers make near poverty wages and **50% with one dependent would qualify for some form of government assistance.**

*We define low-income as 200 percent of the federal poverty line, which is \$52,400 for a family of four.
**Visual of 2020 data. Capacity includes Child Care Centers and Family Homes

CHILD CARE VS. K-12 WAGES



CHALLENGES TO PROVIDING CARE AND EDUCATION

"Being a childcare provider in Kitsap County is similar to drowning in the ocean. Finding employees to keep classrooms open is difficult. It's hard to find money in our budget to offer new staff competitive wages, compared to other industries that offer higher starting wages with benefits to someone with no experience. Minimum wage has skyrocketed to the second highest in the nation. Providers are drowning. The lack of availability for families to find care in their community is frustrating. Every day, we receive phone calls from frantic parents trying to find care for their child so that they can work to provide for their family but also be a community participant who keeps the economy moving! Our families do not deserve this. Our government needs to step in! We need more providers to help our families thrive! We need our government to see that the lack of funding has created this crisis." - Katie Hudkins, Director, Tree Top Village Childcare Center



CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING CARE AND EDUCATION

"My daughter is an alumna of Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Enrolling her in this program allowed me to start to build self-sufficiency and assets for my family. I will forever be grateful to the program for the assistance it provided, however, it has limitations. When my daughter was in Head Start, I decided to finish college, prioritize my health and resiliency. I was able to build relationships with peers and give back to the community. However, when I was enrolled in school, I had to take the required classes for the degree path whenever those classes were available, which did not always match when my daughter was in Head Start. I used the relationships I had built to find babysitters and offered what I could afford to friends and peers. However, as I became more involved with school and community organizations, I could longer afford to pay babysitters. When I sought child care in a center, or extended day classes, I found out I didn't qualify for a child care stipend because I was a student without a job. At this point, I stopped taking classes. This put my education, career pursuit, and aspirations for community involvement on hold. Seven years later, I still haven't completed my degree." - Victoria Hilt, Parent, Bremerton

IMPACT OF THE FAIR START FOR KIDS ACT

Passed in 2021, the Fair Start for Kids Act made historic investments that were intended to accomplish the following:

- Make child care more affordable for low-income families
- Expand early intervention and behavioral health services for young children and caregivers.

While these investments are a good start, the majority of child care providers continue to make near poverty wages, child care deserts persist, and children with disabilities are often unable to access inclusive care. Continued and increased support for our early childhood systems is necessary to create true access and equity for all Washington's children and caregivers.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET INVOLVED



For Washington state, time is of the essence. Children, families, and educators need and deserve a fully funded system that supports them. Please join us in advocating with them for:

- Sustained funding for partners like Washington Communities for Children
- Inclusive, accessible, and affordable early care
- Household sustaining wages and professional supports for early care and education providers
- Aligning systems across early learning, K-12, health, and mental health to connect and coordinate supports for families.

Contact Marlaina Simmons at Marlaina.pecc@gmail.com for information on upcoming meetings and to join our email distribution list!

