

NORTH OLYMPIC REGION STATE OF THE CHILDREN EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam Counties

22,057

CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN THE REGION



6,734 (31%) OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN LOW-INCOME* HOUSEHOLDS

Spanish, Tagalog

MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

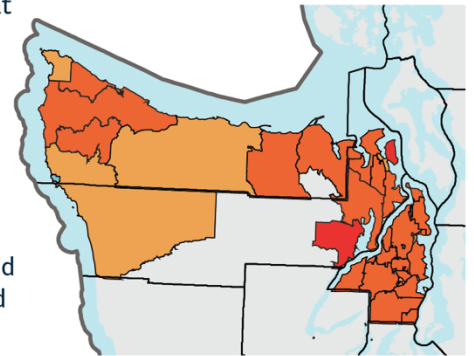
42%

(9,173)
CHILDREN OF COLOR

CHILD CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY AFFECTS US ALL

Lack of access to child care costs employers an estimated **\$112M** due to employee absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity. Meanwhile, **84% of children do not have access to licensed child care.** For those that do, the average cost of child care for two children is **\$31,800, 24% of the average family's income.**

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

ECEAP AND HEAD START

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start (HS) preschool programs specialize in inclusive and high-quality care for low-income families and children with disabilities. **While there are funded slots for 43% of the 2,187 children in our region who qualify for them,** many of these slots go unfilled due to a lack of staffing. More must be done to recruit and retain educators for this critical programming.

43%

OF CHILDREN WHO NEED ECEAP/HS HAVE A SPACE AVAILABLE TO THEM
(945)

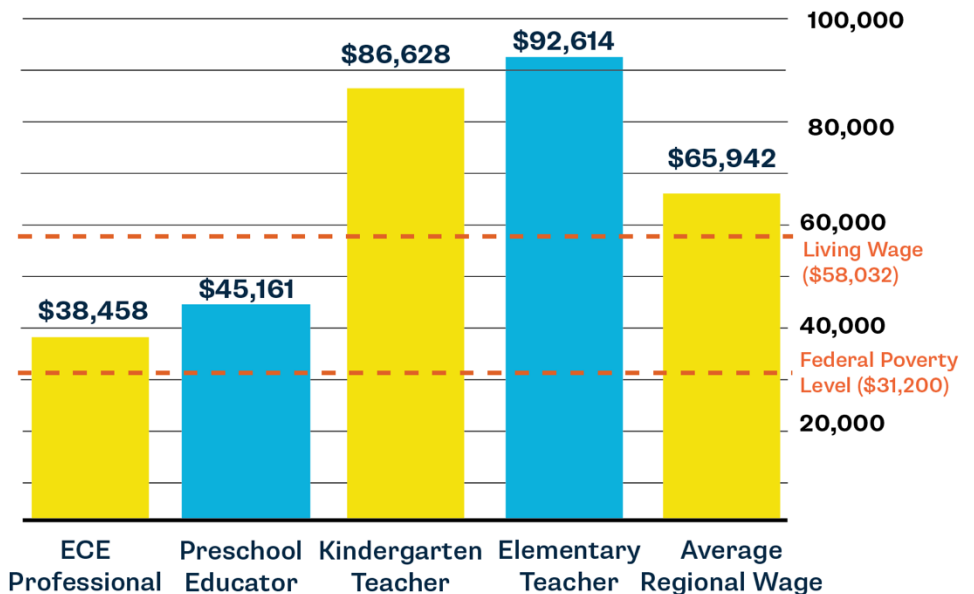
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Our early care and education (ECE) system currently depends on **392 ECE professionals** in the North Olympic region, of whom **48% are people of color** and **96% are women.** While providing an essential service, most ECE professionals make significantly less than the regional living wage and **73% 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 \$62,400 for a family of four.

**Visual of 2024 data. Capacity includes licensed child care; ECEAP; HS; and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care.

ECE 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 no 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

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Washington state has passed legislation to increase the child care quality and access, leading to 201 more children served in our region. Unfortunately, these investments have not funded the true cost of providing high-quality* care, and many ECE professionals make far less than a living wage. In partnership with the Child Care for Washington campaign, we are advocating for the following:

- Maintain the promise of the Fair Start for Kids Act by increasing Working Connections Child Care eligibility** and expanding ECEAP.
- Ensure that Working Connections Child Care rates reflect the true cost for providing high-quality child care.
- Increase capacity for child care by investing in the Early Learning Facilities (ELF) Fund.



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 by:

- Contacting your Early Learning Coalition Lead: Victoria Hilt, Peninsulas Early Childhood Coalition, victoria.hilt@kitsapstrong.org.
- Contacting your STEM Network Director: Kareen Borders, West Sound STEM Network, borders@skschools.org.
- Learning more on the Washington STEM website using the QR code or the link: https://washingtonstem.org/focus_area/early-stem/.
- Talking to your local representatives.

**High-quality ECE is defined here as participation in the Washington Early Achievers Quality Rating and Improvement System; the cost is defined by the 2022 Department of Commerce Cost of Quality Report.*

***Learn more about the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program at www.dcyf.wa.gov.*

