

PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGION
STATE OF THE CHILDREN
 EARLY LEARNING & CARE



Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston, Lewis, and Pacific (north) Counties

34,675

CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN THE REGION



13,115 (38%) OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN LOW-INCOME* HOUSEHOLDS

Spanish, German or other Western Germanic languages MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

41% (14,141) CHILDREN OF COLOR

CHILD CARE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY AFFECTS US ALL

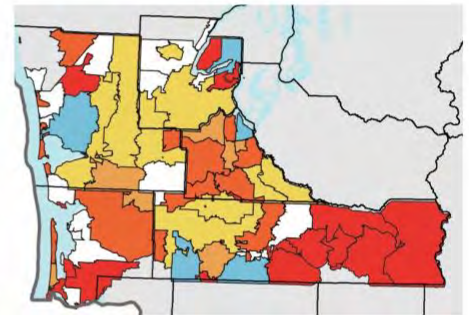
Lack of access to child care costs employers an estimated \$129.7M due to employee absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity. **38% of children do not have access to a licensed child care.** For those that do, the average cost of child care for two children is \$23,496, **27% of the average family's 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 3,934 children in our region who need them.

45% (1,772) OF CHILDREN WHO NEED AN ECEAP/HS SLOT HAVE A SPACE AVAILABLE TO THEM

PERCENT OF CHILD CARE DEMAND MET**



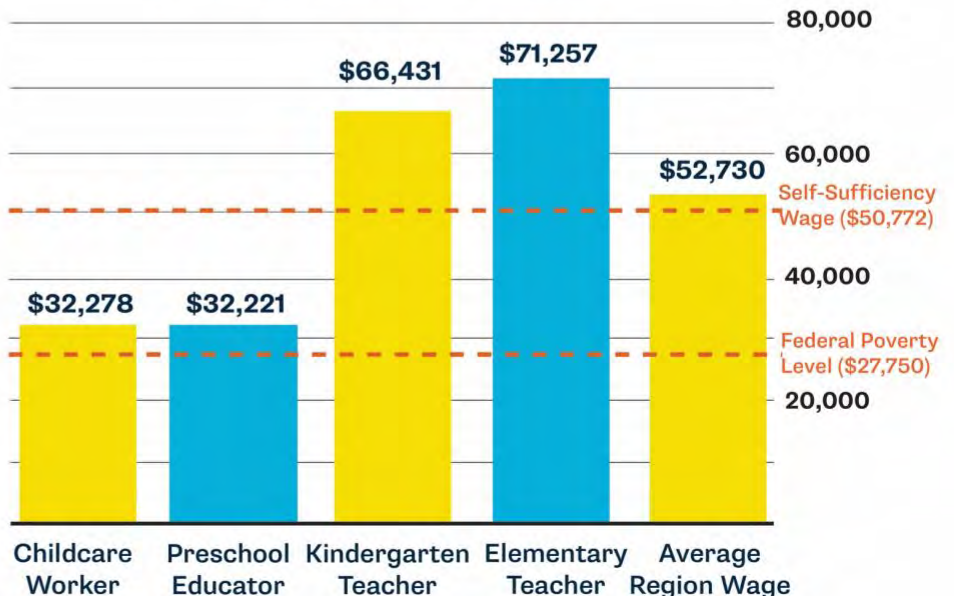
- More than 75% need met
- Between 50 - 74% need met
- Between 25 - 49% need met
- Less than 25% need met
- No Child Care
- Not Enough Data

EARLY LEARNING WORKFORCE

Our early learning and care system currently depends on **1,152 early learning and child care professionals** in the Pacific Mountain 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



GROWING LEARNERS TRANSITIONAL PRESCHOOL: INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

South Sound Parent to Parent (SSP2P) is the regional provider agency for the Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program. SSP2P supports families caring for an infant and/or toddler with a developmental delay and/or disability residing in Thurston, South Mason and Grays Harbor counties. The program offers parents and caregivers information, skills, and resources to ensure they are supported as the most critical influence on their child's early learning and development, as well as provides direct services tailored to the individual needs of the child. Gaps in knowledge and ability between children with developmental delays and typically developing peers can be observed long before kindergarten.



To address an identified need for services in the community, in 2021 SSP2P launched a transitional preschool in Thurston County, *Growing Learners*. This early learning program is for children ages 3-5, who have graduated from the ESIT program but do not qualify for ongoing special education through the school districts at age 3. *Growing Learners* focuses on children who would benefit from continued early learning supports taught by special education and general education certified teachers, and classrooms that have access to and are supported by therapeutic specialists, behavior specialists, and those with autism expertise. To learn more about SSP2P and *Growing Learners*, click [HERE](#).

IMPACT OF THE FAIR START FOR KIDS ACT

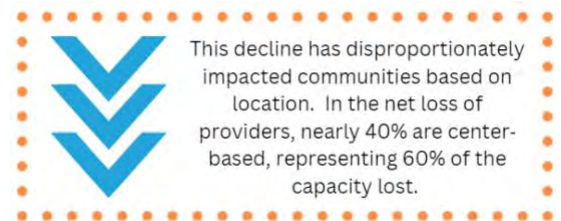
Passed in 2021, the Fair Start for Kids Act made historic investments that were intended to accomplish the following:

- 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.

LACK OF ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILDCARE REMAINS A PROMINENT NEED

Data from Child Care of Washington from 2022 illustrated counties in our region have experienced on average a **22.5%** decline in the availability of childcare providers since 2017.



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.