

Improving Child Care is Essential to Life-Long Health and Economic Stability

Join the Population Health Trust in promoting equitable child care access for all families in Skagit County.



Access to safe, affordable, quality care for children is essential to the health and well-being of Skagit County.

Decades of research shows long-lasting impacts of child care. Children who receive high-quality child care:



Despite clear evidence that access to high-quality care for children is essential, it remains out of reach for many families. This impacts **all of us** - now and into the future.

Access to child care was identified as one of seven priority areas in the 2022 COVID Recovery Plan. What follows is a summary of challenges identified in our assessment and in conversations with Skagit County Population Health Trust members.



A challenge for families: With the limited availability of high-quality child care and the huge financial burden of care, families often have to make choices between work or child care, paying rent, or keeping food on the table. In Washington, the average annual cost of infant care is \$16,380 - more than the cost of college tuition for a year at the University of Washington. Many families, regardless of income, have difficulty finding high-quality care for their children and have to navigate long wait lists.



A challenge for children's future success: Children who are not exposed to consistent positive learning experiences during the critical early years of brain development miss opportunities to develop the cognitive, social and emotional skills they need to succeed in school and in life.



A challenge for health care: Lack of child care is creating a downward economic cycle in health care settings. Healthcare workers experiencing high levels of child care stress are 80% more likely to experience burnout, reduce their work hours, or leave their roles. This decreases appointment availability and delays necessary care, and patients, healthcare workers, and hospitals suffer.



A challenge for teachers and educators: Across Skagit County, 60% of kids entering Kindergarten are not prepared. This increases the costs of K-12 education with expensive remediation work and impacts the quality of classroom experiences for all students. School districts are also challenged with employee retention - up to 50% of employees are lower wage earners and the cost of care can be as much as their salary.



A challenge for businesses and non-profits: Research shows that lack of access to affordable, high-quality child care is costing Washington businesses and non-profits more than \$2 billion per year in employee turnover or missed work. The total cost to the state economy tops more than \$6.5 billion per year.



A challenge for our first responders: Many first responders work varied schedules outside of the traditional 9 to 5 office hours which makes finding high-quality care for their children even more challenging. This also makes it difficult for agencies to ensure shift coverage. The same is true for some health care workers.



A challenge for tribal communities: Funding mechanisms for tribal allocations are not equitable. Tribes receive federal child care dollars based on a flat percentage, while states receive grants based on population. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, tribes receive less than \$600 per child annually, leaving Native American and Alaska Native families with fewer options.

Our kids, families, and communities deserve better.

1/2 of parents in Washington find it difficult or very difficult to access child care.

54% of children under age 6 in Skagit County are left without the option to attend licensed child care.

WE ALL BENEFIT FROM INVESTMENTS IN HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Investing in child care creates a solid foundation for long-term success in life. These benefits do not end with one child but extend to families and communities for years to come.

Let's ensure adequate policies and programs are in place to:

- expand supply of child care options
- adequately compensate the early education workforce, including benefits
- reduce child care costs for working families to less than or equal to 7% of families' incomes - the threshold recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

These investments would increase our state economy by millions of dollars. The national gain in gross domestic product from such investments could increase federal tax revenue by more than \$70 billion annually.



**POPULATION
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Primary Sources: Child Care Aware of Washington, Washington State Department of Commerce, and Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families

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