

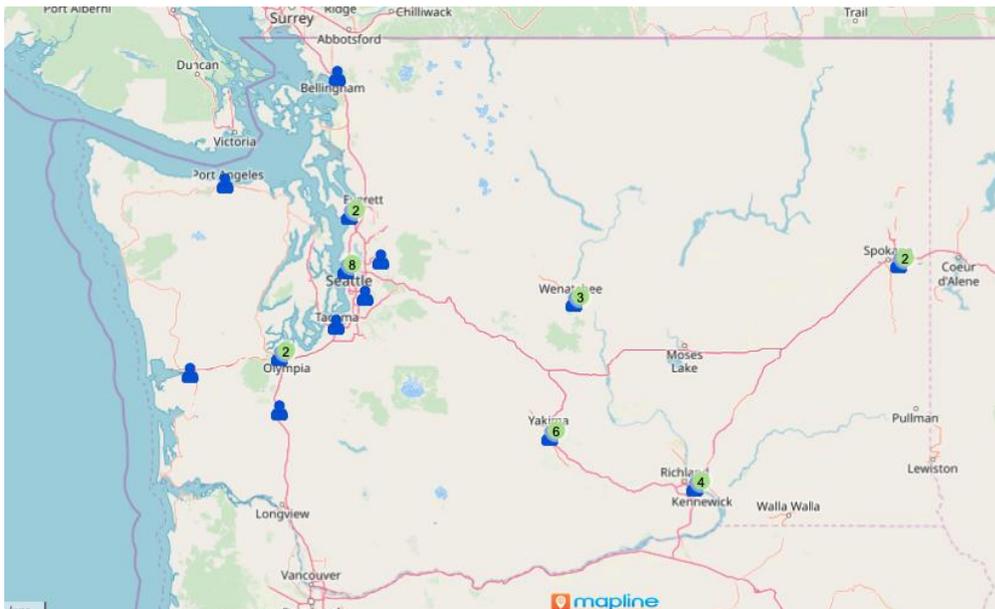
Workforce-Driven Solutions for Recruiting and Retaining Child Care Providers

The problem: It has been just over a year since the Fair Start for Kids Act was signed into law, and it is already benefiting families across Washington State through expanded eligibility and lowered copayments. However, the need for child care still far outweighs the supply and workforce compensation is at the heart of the crisis – child care providers rank in the third percentile of occupational wages (below pet groomers). Licensed child care capacity in Washington State would need to grow by 34 percent to meet demand. Instead, even before COVID-19, our state is turning over providers at a shocking rate of 43 percent and 4 out of 5 child care programs are reporting staff shortages. Poor retention of the child care workforce impedes continuity of care for children, harms family economic security and mobility, and undermines our ability to recover fully and equitably from the COVID-19 crisis.

The opportunity: As part of the Fair Start for Kids Act, Washington State will adopt a subsidy rate-setting model based on the *true* cost of care rather than the market rate survey. Policies and investments that boost compensation for the child care workforce must be incorporated as part of this system reform.



The solution: Providers, families, and advocates have unified around a liberatory design process to identify scalable policy solutions for stabilizing the child care workforce. With support from advocates, 34 members of the child care workforce representing diverse geographic locations, workforce roles, individual racial/ethnic/linguistic identities, and programmatic characteristics are meeting regularly to develop a comprehensive policy proposal for the 2023 legislative session. *The Provider Design Team’s goal is to increase access to high-quality child care for children, families, and communities in Washington State through comprehensive legislation that recruits and retains a diverse and thriving workforce.*



Race and Ethnicity

Black	7
AAPI	4
Latinx	11
White	8
American Indian	5

Workforce Role

Center owners/CEOs	5
Center directors	9
Center teachers	4
FCC owners	1
FCC assistants	3
FFN caregiver	1

Primary Language

English	24
Spanish	10

Workforce Compensation is an ESSENTIAL Component of High-Quality Early Learning

- **Secure attachment between a child and their caregiver is at the heart of high-quality early learning.** A child with consistent and responsive relationships grows a strong foundation of neural connections that benefits healthy social cognitive, physical, and language development. Conversely, a child without secure relationships can be harmed by fewer and/or damaged neural connections. The child care workforce is a buffer for many young children, especially those with adverse experiences, mitigating harm through high-quality early learning experiences. Workforce churn also undermines investments in critical quality improvement efforts like training and coaching.
- **Access to child care is essential for family economic security and mobility, but workforce turnover threatens our current supply of child care programs and our ability to grow.** Nationally, 1 in 5 working mothers with a child ages 0 to 3 work in low-wage jobs – 42 percent of working mothers say they would look for higher paying jobs with better access to child care. In fact, 18.3 percent of parents have turned down a job offer or promotion due to child care issues, more often among Black and Native American parents. Here in Washington, 118,000 families (35 percent) with young children live in a child care desert where they have an inadequate supply of child care. Even when parents can find care, it's frequently unaffordable. Licensed child care capacity in Washington State would need to grow by an estimated 34% to meet demand. At a time when we need to significantly grow capacity, 4 out of 5 Washington providers are reporting staff shortages.
- **Poverty wages for the child care workforce perpetuate the very economic inequalities our child care system is meant to address.** Child care providers fuel economic growth, but frequently it's at the expense of their own economic security. Child care providers rank in the third percentile of occupational wages (below pet groomers). The poverty rate for child care providers in Washington is 17.7 %, much higher than for Washington workers in general (8.2 %) and 7.9 times as high as for K-8 teachers (2.3 %). In fact, 39% of Washington's child care providers rely on one or more sources of public assistance to make ends meet.

Occupation	Median Wage
Child care worker	\$14.57
Preschool teacher	\$15.96
Center director	\$24.12
Kindergarten teacher	\$35.98
Elementary teacher	\$39.58
All U.S. occupations	\$23.15

Earnings by Occupation

- ▶ In 2019, the median wage for child care workers was \$14.57, a **13% increase since 2017**.
- ▶ For preschool teachers, the median wage was \$15.96, a **4% increase since 2017**.
- ▶ For preschool or child care center directors, the median wage was \$24.12, a **4% increase since 2017**.

The Provider Compensation Design Team is supported by: Child Care Aware of WA, Child Care Resources, Children's Alliance, Community Day Center for Children, Early Care & Education Consortium, Economic Opportunity Institute, Imagine Institute, MomsRising, Save the Children Action Network, SEIU 925, WA State Association of Head Start & ECEAP, WA Child Care Center Association, the WA Federation of Independent Schools, and the Washington Family Child Care Association.

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