

ISLAND COUNTY CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP TASK FORCE

June 2021 Needs Assessment

CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WASHINGTON STEM



Island County Child Care Partnership Task Force Needs Assessment

Provided in partnership by Washington STEM and the Island County Child Care Partnership Task Force

June 30, 2021

Island County is home to **6,667 young children and their families** and is experiencing a severe child care shortage. The self-sufficiency wage for a family of four in the county is \$72,000. The typical cost of child care in Island County is **\$13,000**. The vast majority of families, if they had two working adults, would need to have *both* adults making over \$36,000 (for a total over \$72,000 per year) in order to begin to afford the typical cost of care. Child care options are needed to ensure children have access to developmentally supportive settings while parents work. The region is home to vital manufacturing, medical and social service industries, alongside a considerable presence of U.S. Naval personnel at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI). Child care that meets the needs of local families will ensure that the region retains and strengthens its economic vitality and equitable support for its diverse population.

The following needs assessment includes data from publicly available sources including the U.S. Census Bureau and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), as well as proprietary data collected through surveys and listening sessions conducted by the Island County Child Care Partnership Task Force.

Child Care Needs Assessment

Population and Demographics

In Island County, 2,076 (31% percent) of children under six are living in poverty. Children in poverty are defined as those in households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line, which is \$53,000 a year for a family of four.

There are 4,849 children under six (73% of all children) in Island County who have all parents in the workforce. Island County licensed child care availability **only meets the needs of approximately 11 percent** (550 children) of children under six whose parents are in the workforce and need care. In Island County, of children who meet the criteria specifically for ECEAP/Head Start/Early Head Start, there is a gap of 1,642 (88% of eligible children) who are unable to access those programs (eligibility for these programs includes either a household income of 110% of the federal poverty line or children with disabilities or those facing homelessness).

Race/Ethnicity of Children Under Age Six, Island County

Hispanic/Latinx	1,110	17%
American Indian and Alaska Native	41	1%
Asian	287	4%
Black or African American	240	4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	37	1%
Two or More Races	836	13%
White	4,117	62%
Total	6,667	

Most common languages spoken at home other than English, Island County:

- Spanish - 3%
- Tagalog - 2%

Household Average Income and Affordability of Child Care

Child care costs place a tremendous burden on families, impacting income in three areas: work time commitment, productivity levels, and long-term career. The median income of a family in Island County is **\$68,604**. The typical cost of child care is **\$13,000**. The average family in the county pays **19 percent** of their income for one child in child care. However, the Washington State Department of Commerce states child care should cost no more than 7% of a family's income.

These points were underscored in the parent survey responses and listening sessions (see pages 12 - 16) by parents who discussed the economic constraints they face related to child care. Parents described how the cost of child care contributed to a lack of upward mobility for their families, having to sacrifice career goals, and long-term impacts to their careers and earning potential. Military spouses especially spoke to these issues and indicated that they often did not seek employment due to the lack of child care in Island County. As one Active Duty Military parent reports:

“The options for childcare are limited. We are very lucky to have the military child care center but any other options are incredibly expensive. In order to have child care at the CDC, we both have to be working in order to keep our position, but I am trying to transition to a Work from Home position and I am afraid of making any career changes that would jeopardize our position because we can’t afford care anywhere else.”

Average % of Income Spend on Child Care by Race/Ethnicity

	Median Income	Average % of income spent on child care	If child care cost was 7% of average income
All	\$68,604	19%	\$4,802
Hispanic/Latinx	\$57,379	23%	\$4,017
Two or more races	\$67,400	19%	\$4,718
White	\$68,909	19%	\$4,824
Other	\$66,458	20%	\$4,652

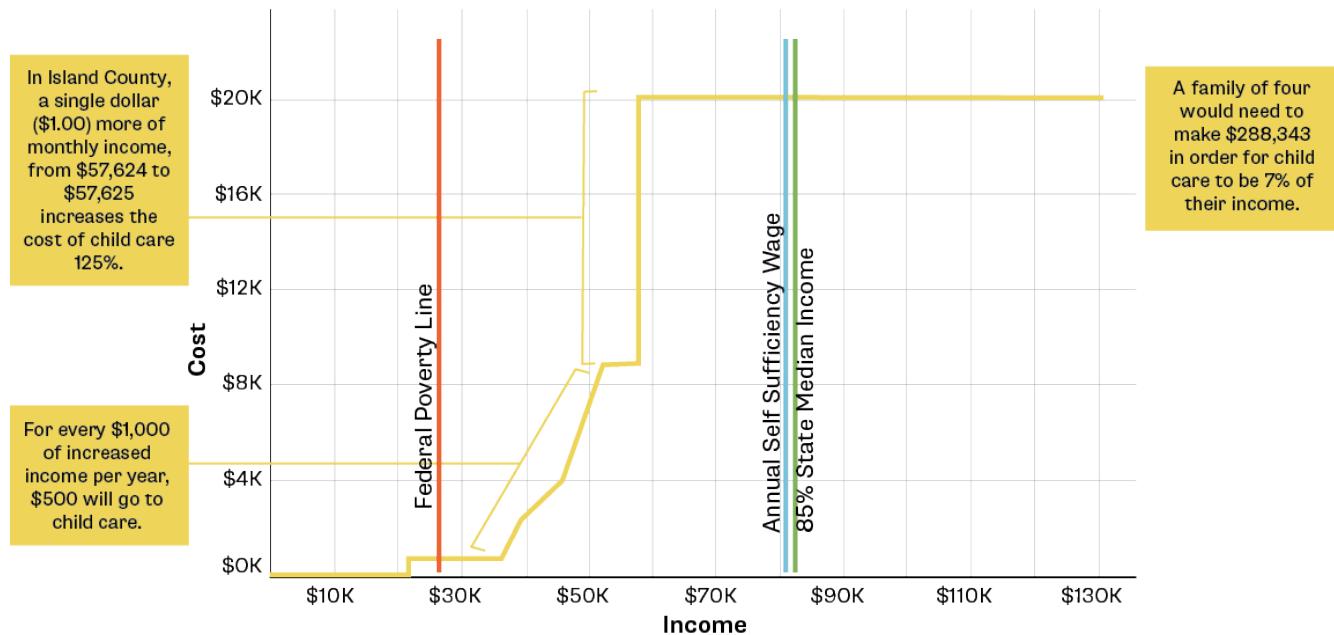
Working Connections Child Care Subsidies and the Cost of Child Care

Families that make 200% of the Federal Poverty line or less can participate in the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program, which provides families with vouchers they can use to cover some of the costs of child care. Families also have to pay a co-pay in most cases. Currently, 114 children in Island County are participating in the WCCC subsidy program. This is only 5% of those eligible (families at or below 200% FPL).

Currently, changes in income can dramatically impact the co-pay costs and eligibility for families participating in this program. For example, a single dollar (\$1.00) more of monthly income, from \$57,624 to \$57,625 increases the cost of child care 125% because families become ineligible for assistance. This dramatic increase in child care costs can sometimes erase the benefits that might come from a job promotion or pay raise, and cause families to forgo these opportunities. Furthermore, for every \$1,000 of increased income per year, \$500 will go to child care. As mentioned above, the Washington State Department of Commerce states child care should cost no more than 7% of a family's income. A family of four, in Island County, would need to make \$288,343 in order for child care to be 7% of their income.

Percent of Annual Income Spent on Child Care

2 Adults, 1 Preschooler, and 1 Infant



Child Care Access

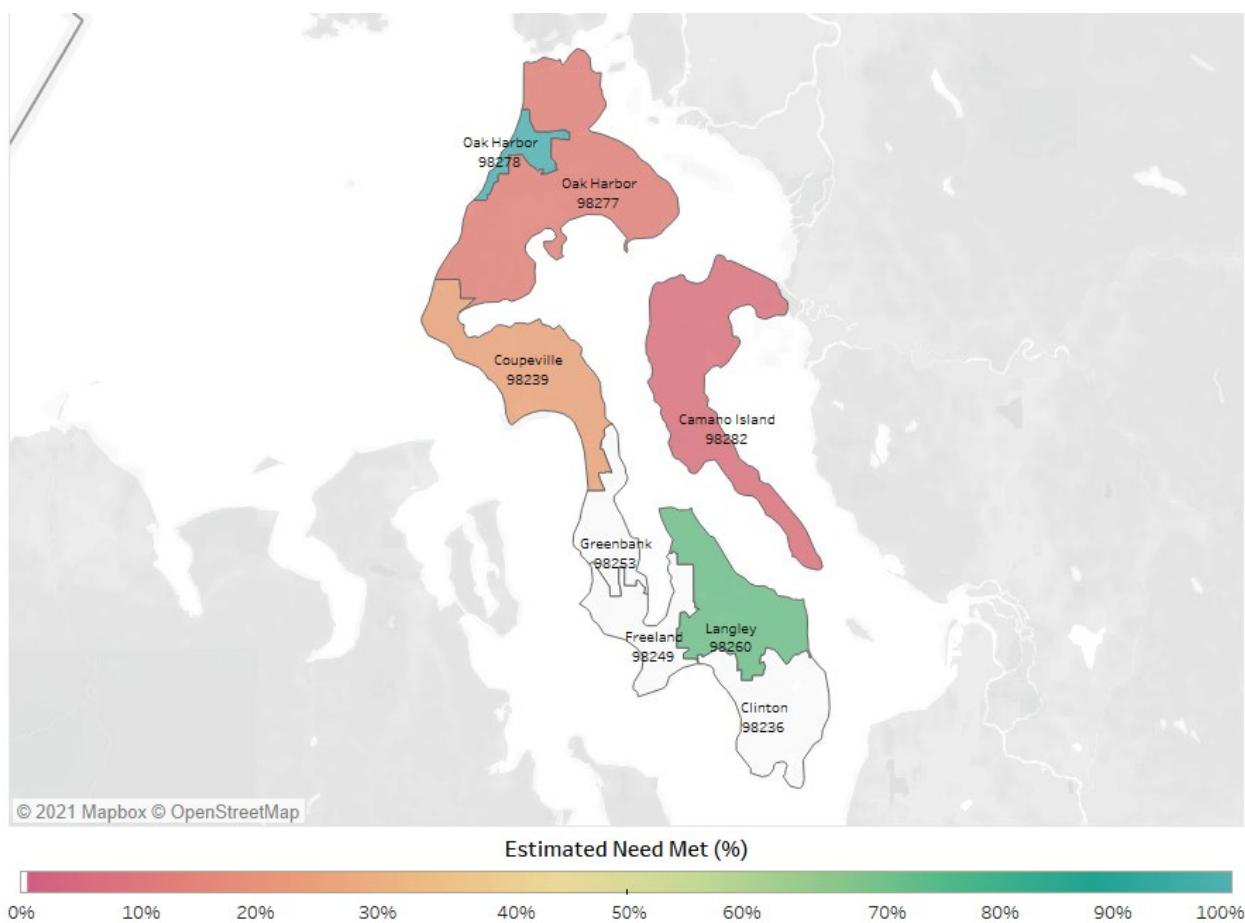
As mentioned above, Island County licensed child care availability **only meets the needs of approximately 11 percent** (550 children) of children under six whose parents are in the workforce and need care. The breakdown of that availability of child care for all ages, for just infants and toddlers, and for just preschoolers can be seen in the below graphic maps and the table that follows the maps.

Map 1: Island County Estimated Percent Child Care Demand Met Overall (All Children Under Six [all infants, toddlers, and preschoolers])

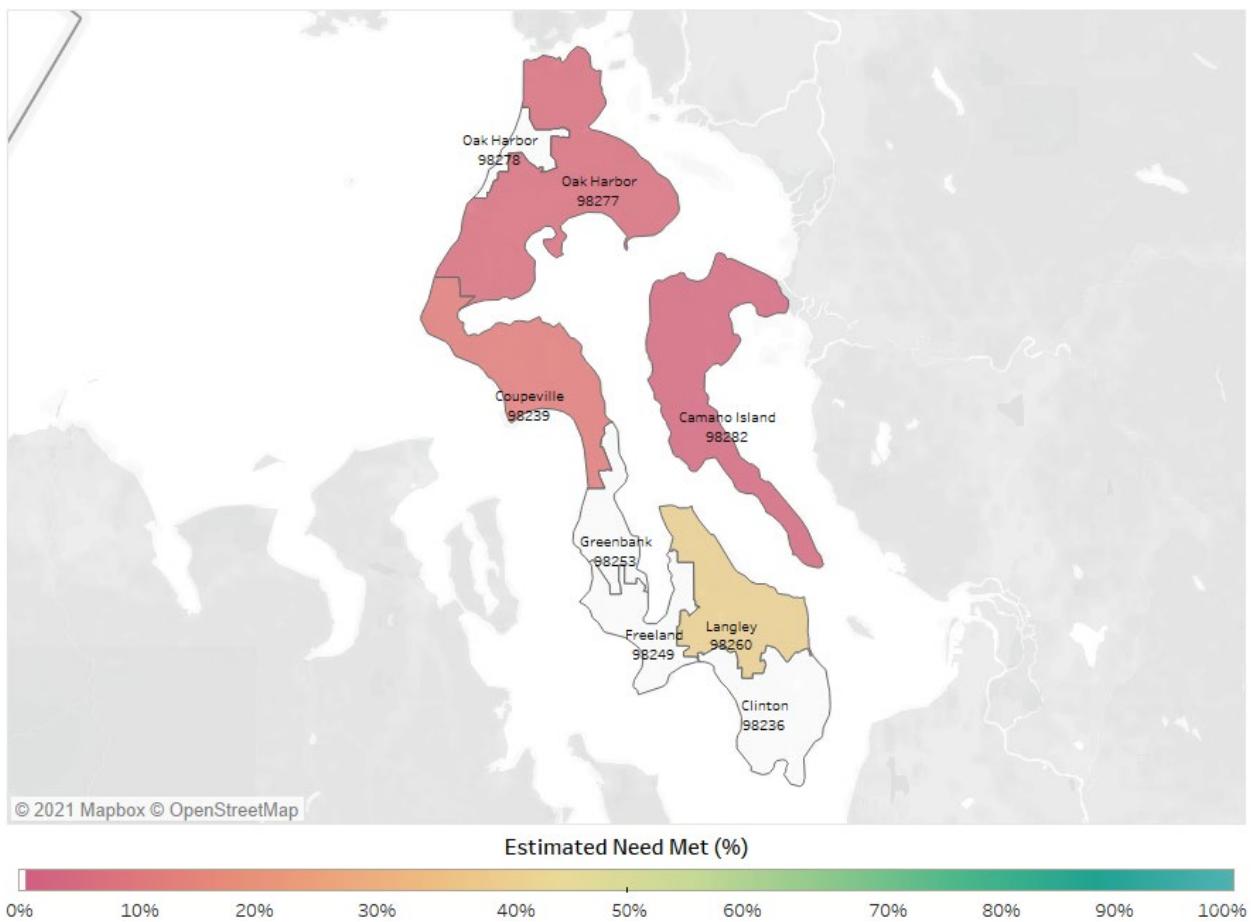
White colored zip codes have fewer than 10 child care slots available.

Note: Oak Harbor 98278 is NASWI and does not have census or DCYF data available that indicate the number of infants and toddlers. There are census data that indicate the number of preschoolers is 27, and according to DCYF all of them have a child care spot available to them. Please see the additional statement on NASWI child care capacity on page 8.

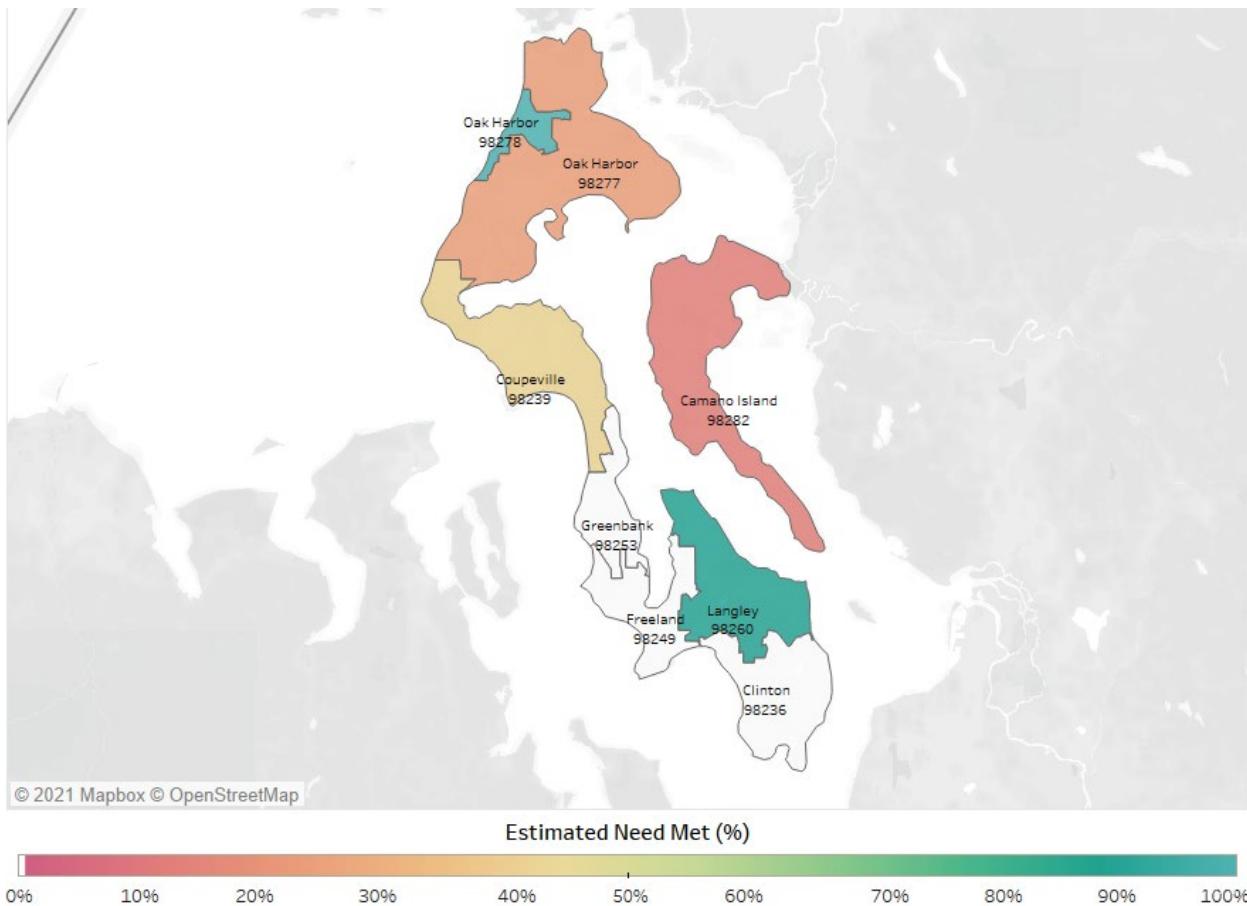
Note: In Clinton 98236, Freeland 98249, and Greenbank 98253, there are fewer than 10 child care spots available. Due to DCYF data sharing rules, these data are suppressed in order to protect the privacy of family child care providers who offer these spots. We do not know the number of spots available, just that it is less than 10. We do know that in Clinton alone, there are 62 preschoolers in this area and 87 infants and toddlers.



Map 2: Island County Estimated Percent Child Care Demand Met, Infants & Toddlers



Map 3: Island County Estimated Percent Child Care Demand Met, Preschoolers



Island County Child Care Capacity by Age & Zip Code

Zip Code	City	Infant/Toddler Capacity (Map 2)	Preschool Capacity (Map 3)	Total Capacity (Map 1)
98253	Greenbank	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)
98249	Freeland	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)
98236	Clinton	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)	N/A (<10)
98278	Oak Harbor	N/A (<10)	27	27
98282	Camano Island	10	22	32
98239	Coupeville	14	44	58

98260	Langley	21	74	94
98277	Oak Harbor	79	209	288
All		124	376	550

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Child Care Capacity Statement

NASWI child care is a support to the mission of the workforce. The military workforce is a mobile workforce with families moving to NASWI and moving to other duty stations throughout the year. NASWI programs are flexible to work with the families. Families use a Department of Defense (DoD) asset called Military Child Care.com (MCC) to request child care anywhere in the world and programs use this system to fill child care spaces.

The Child and Youth Program (CYP) is flexible to serve families at NASWI who need care. Families move or arrive throughout the year depending what mission they support. Additionally, there is a priority system in place as defined by DoD to support personnel assigned to all installations. There are two child development centers on Whidbey Island offering care to children 5 years of age and under and one youth center that offers school age care (SAC) for children 6-12 years of age. CYP at NASWI has more than 475 spaces for child care. The CYP also operates a Child Development Homes (CDH) program for children 5 years of age and under. CDH homes are dependent on how many child care providers are certified on installation or off installation. Youth recreational programs for children 6-18 years of age are offered during normal operations, but are suspended currently due to the pandemic.

Since COVID-19, CYP operations have changed to meet health and safety requirements. In the last full year of operations, 2019, CYP served over 750 children in CDC full day programs, over 70 children in CDH full day programs and over 240 children in SAC care. Care is provided on an hourly basis as spaces are available (children on vacation, gaps in enrollment, etc.). In 2019, in the hourly care program, we cared for over 150 children in CDC, and 50 in SAC.

Estimated Unmet Need

Geography	Infant/Toddler (Map 2)	Preschool (Map 3)	Total all ages (Map 1)
Total Island County Unmet Need	1,460	880	2,340

Additional Educators Needed to Fill Gaps

Strengthening the early care and education workforce in our region requires a focus on compensation and professional development investments to help sustain and expand the workforce needed to address our early care and education crisis. In order to meet these needs in our region, approximately 460 additional early learning educators would need to be hired. This does not include administrative and support staff.

Educators Needed	Infant Teachers	Toddler Teachers	Preschooler Teachers	Total
Island	190	160	110	460

(Numbers based on the assumption that 63% of children with all caregivers in the workforce would indeed use child care if it were to be available.)

Survey data collected from child care providers indicate, however, that there are many barriers to hiring and retaining qualified early care staff. A critical barrier is high turnover, most often related to staff moving (often due to military orders), staff quitting for a better paying job, or staff leaving for a job outside of child care. Of note is the finding that the number one staffing challenge currently faced by child care owners is hiring qualified and competent staff, followed by finding substitutes for staff absences. Providers reported in the listening session that wages and benefits need to improve in order to change this picture:

“To retain staff, we need to make the jobs better. Offering employment packages and benefits like other jobs - medical, retirement – so that people will think it's worth it.”

Island County Labor Market Projections

Island County has an overall labor force of 35,000 people, with a little under 33,000 actually employed given the most recently available data from March 2021. The top jobs held by employed individuals are concentrated in NASWI, retail/tourism, other government (majority in public schools/education), healthcare, and construction.

Over the next five years, the region is projected to see growth in job openings in much of the same high-demand sectors, including healthcare (especially in terms of community clinical staffing and support for aging seniors), government jobs including education, and construction and retail-based jobs.

Island County Employment and Wages

The jobs that adults have will dramatically impact the child care they need as well as the child care they can afford. Employment data is also an indication of which employers

and industries who would most suffer from employees' lack of access to reliable child care, and which employers might be most willing to support child care solutions.

Overall, Island County has over 35,000 adults in the labor force with an unemployment rate of 6.5%. As mentioned above, 4,849 children under age six in Island County have all parents in the workforce.

Island County Employment Rates

Labor market indicators - Island County

	Current and previous month		Over-the-month		Over-the-year	
	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021
Labor force	35,144	34,975	-484	-169	-1,766	-1,668
Employed	32,868	32,705	-548	-163	-2,095	-1,867
Unemployed	2,276	2,270	64	-6	329	199
Initial claims	391	285	-146	-106	234	-2,478
Unemployment rate	6.5%	6.5%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%	0.8%

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Not Seasonally Adjusted

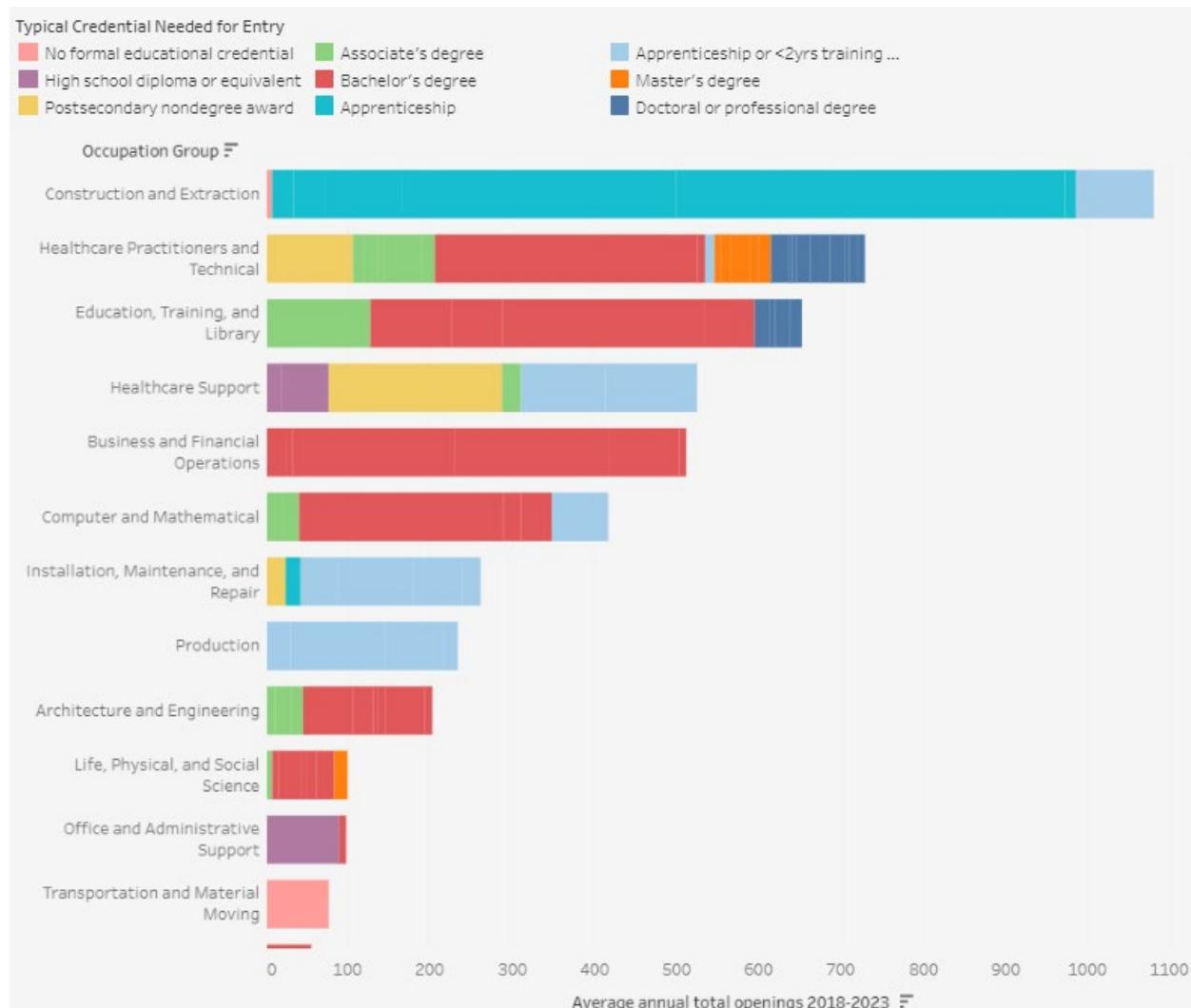
These numbers may not include those hired in the military, because data provided by the Employment Security Department does not provide additional detail for the Federal Government employment industry. According to nonfarm employment estimates for 2019 the Federal Government employed 1,320 people in Island County. This employment estimate is considerably less than estimated employment at NASWI.

The top five industries of employment in Island County are NASWI, retail/tourism, public education, healthcare and healthcare assistance, and construction. These industries include a range of occupations, but the vast majority of the occupations that provide employment provide wages that fall into just above self-sufficiency status. The vast majority of families, if they had two working adults, would need to have *both* adults making over \$36,000 (for a total over \$72,000 per year) in order to begin to afford the total cost of average care in the county.

Top Five Industries of Employment in Island County

Industry	Total Employment	Employment by Race	Average Wages
Retail	3,107	4% Asian 87% White	Retail Salesperson: \$34k Counter and Rental Clerks: \$34k
Education	3,156	3% Asian 88% White	K-12 Teacher \$77k Preschool Teacher \$30k
Healthcare and Social Assistance	4,897	10% Asian 76% White	Medical Assistants: \$42k Registered Nurses: \$85k Medical Techs: \$47k
Construction	2,026	4% Latinx 88% White	Construction Laborer: \$51k Carpenters: \$59k Electrician: \$72k
NASWI employment	9,078 (2017) ~10,700 (2021 estimate of all employed including active duty military, DoD civilian employees, and contractors)	NA	\$60,366 (2017)

Northwest Region Projected Job Openings by Occupation Groupings

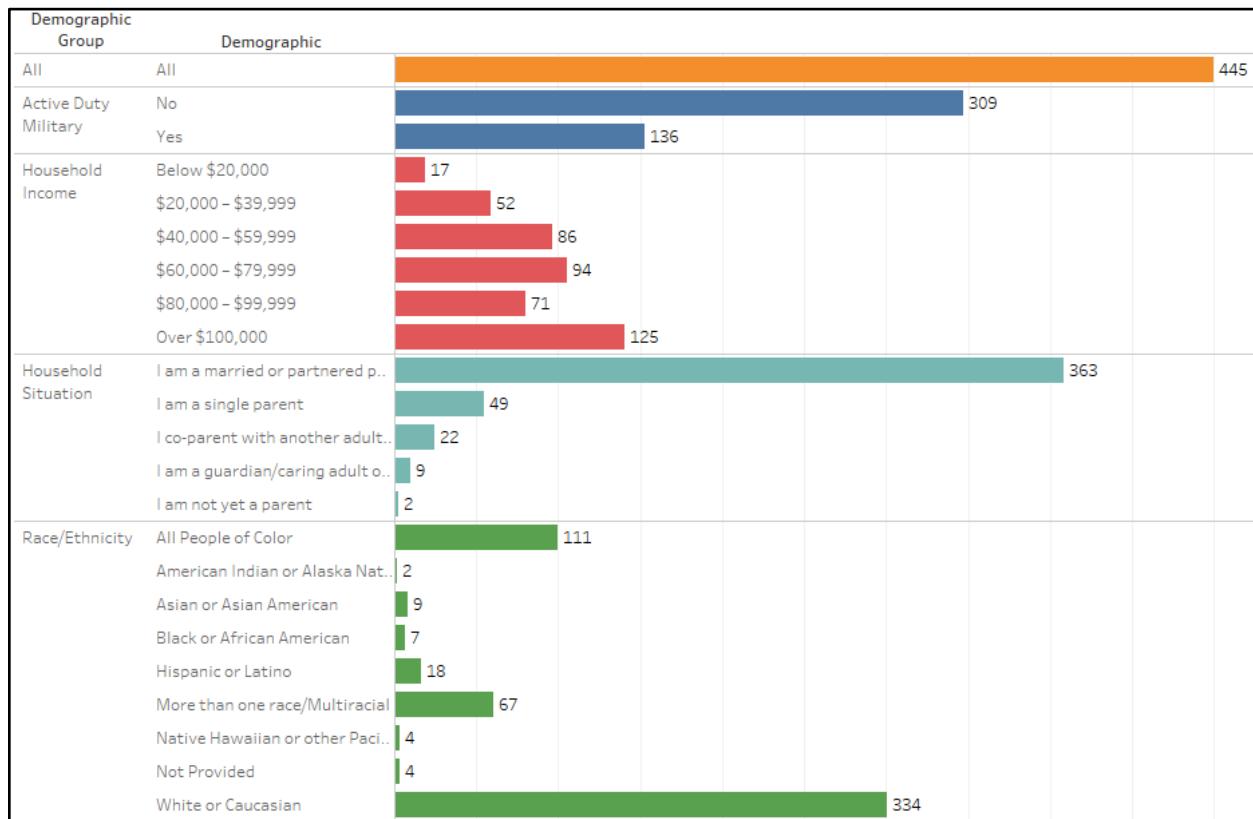


Island County Community Child Care Surveys

Parent/Guardian Survey

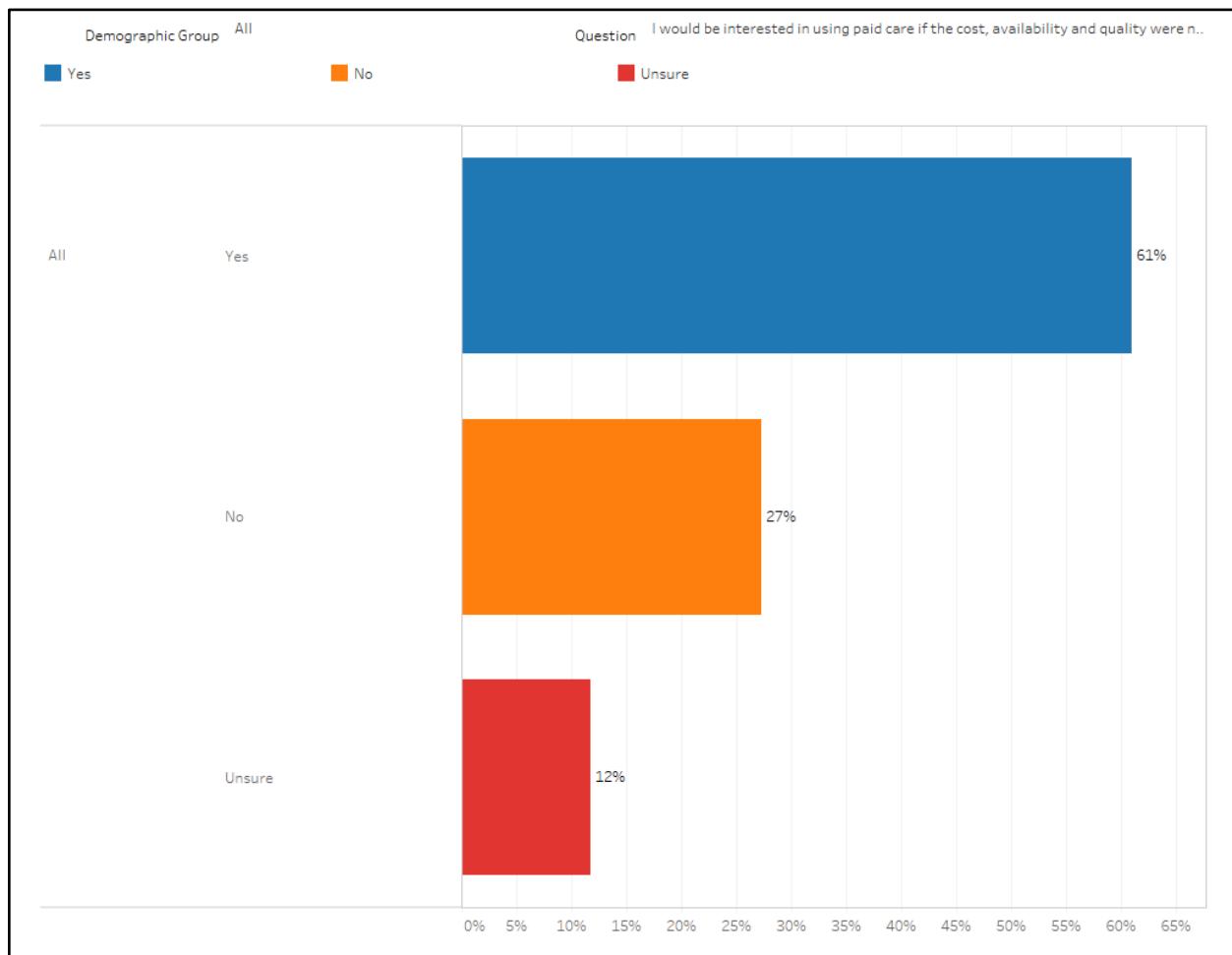
In the spring of 2021, 445 parents and guardians in Island County completed the Island County Community Child Care Survey. All findings are available on the Parent/Guardian Survey tab [at this Tableau website](#). Of the respondents, 31% were Active Duty Military and 25% were people of color. Household income of respondents ranged from under \$20,000/year to over \$100,000/year, with the largest group of parents (28%) in the \$100,000+ category. See chart below for more demographic details.

Parent/Guardian Survey Respondent Demographics

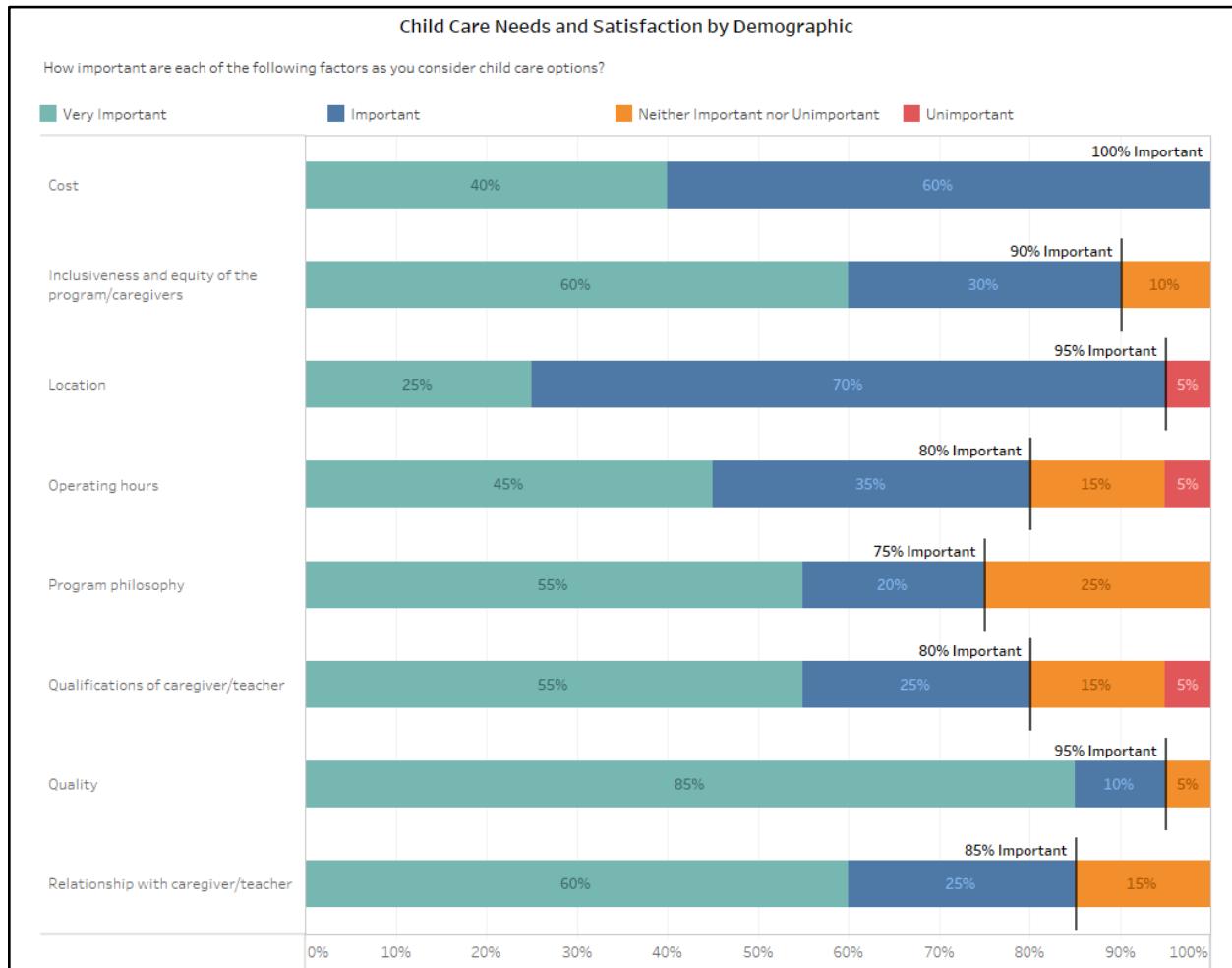


Results from the survey highlight several major themes, including that a strong majority (61%) of families would use licensed child care if it were to be available, and that for all or almost all families their top priorities in the care of their child are cost (100%), quality (95%), and location (95%). Additionally, more families across demographics agreed that they would prefer licensed center based, license-exempt preschool programs, or school-age programs compared to more informal options such as paid or unpaid care by family, friends, or neighbors.

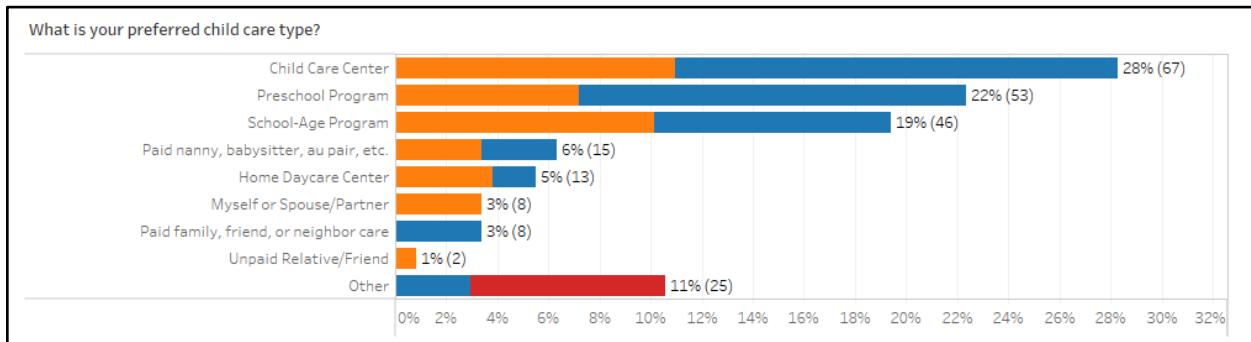
Parent/Guardians Interested in Using Paid Child Care



Parent/Guardian Child Care Priorities



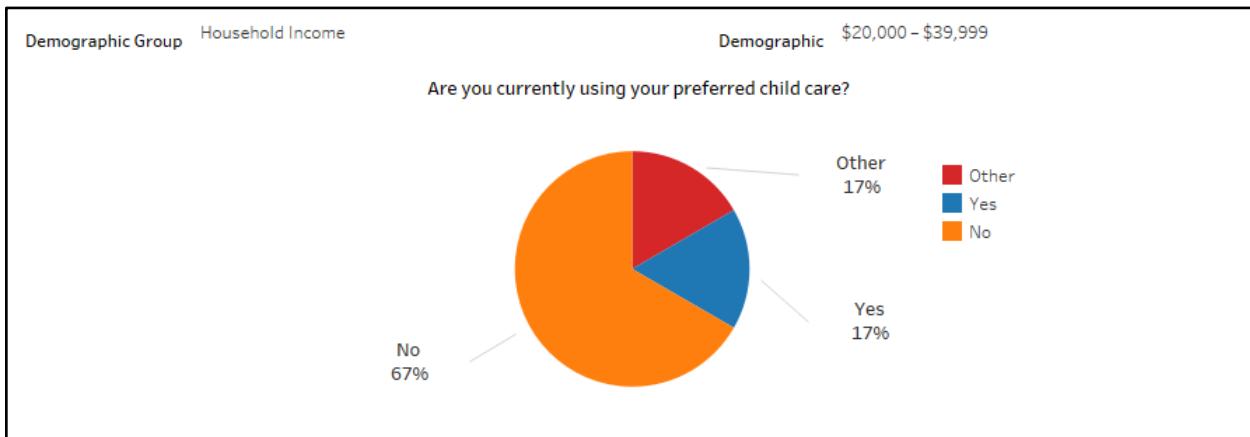
Parent/Guardian Child Care Preferences



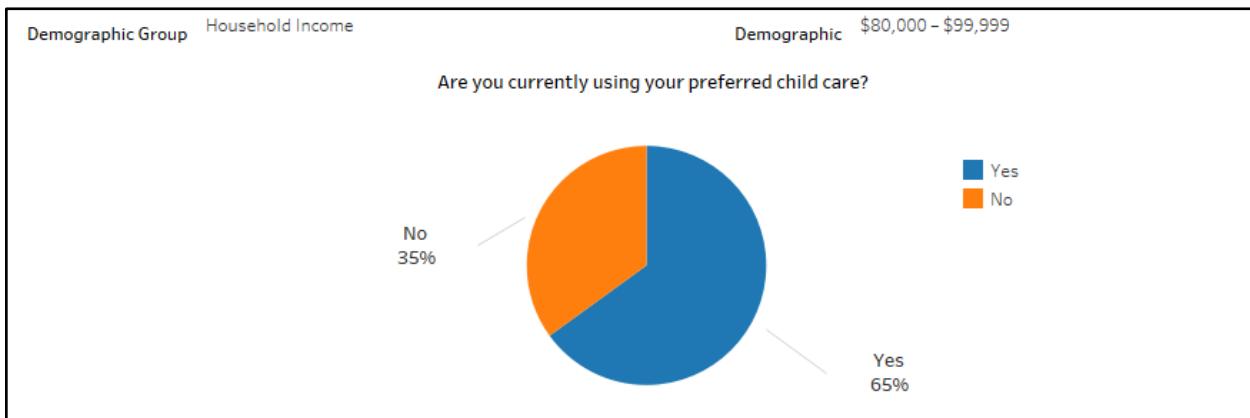
Disparities did emerge in terms of income and race when it came to being able to access preferred care types. For example, no (0%) Latinx parents and only 37% of Multiracial parents reported using their preferred child care type, compared to 59% of White parents. Across income ranges there are also marked differences. For families making less than \$80,000/year, on average, fewer than half of them report being able to access their preferred care type, compared with 65% of families making between \$80,000 - 99,999/year and 59% of families making \$100,000+/year.

Notably, among families in the \$20,000 - \$39,999/year range, only 17% reported being able to access their preferred child care type. This group's diminished access may be due, in part, to a lack of eligibility for federal or state programs that provide for early care and education (such as Head Start, ECEAP, and/or the Working Connections Child Care subsidy) if they make just over the current income eligibility requirements. For example, right now a family of two (one parent, one child) that makes \$34,848/year would be at 200% of the Federal Poverty Line, and just over the eligibility mark for the child care subsidy, and well over the eligibility mark (set at 110% FPL) for ECEAP.

Parent/Guardian Use of Preferred Care for \$20,000 - \$39,999 Income Range



Parent/Guardian Use of Preferred Care for \$80,000 - \$99,000 Income Range



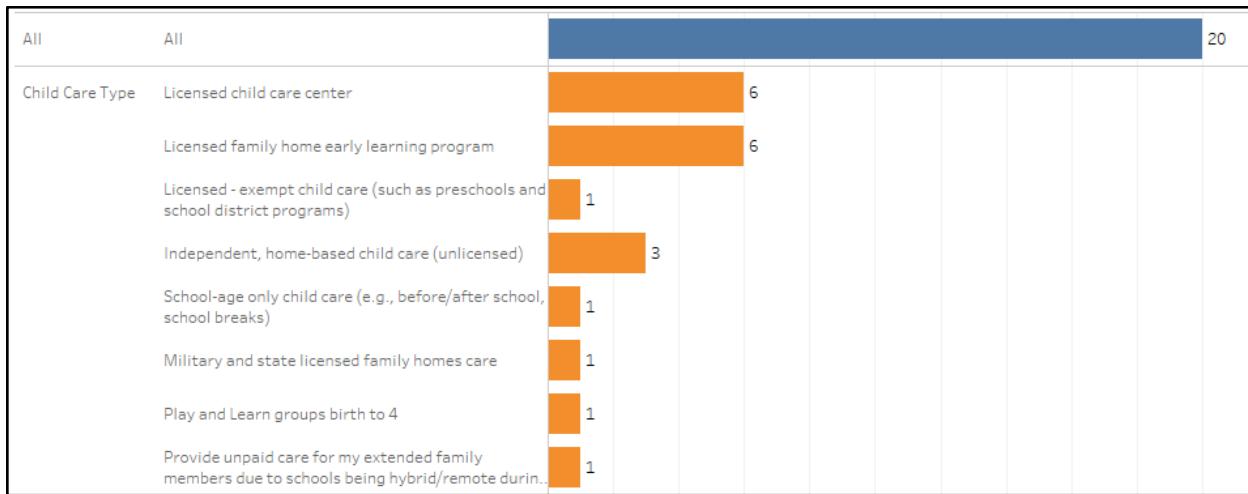
Overall, Parent/Guardian survey results indicate that many families with young and school age children need increased access to affordable, reliable care, and would be likely to pay for child care if it were to become available and meet their needs.

Differences emerge along racial and income categories in terms of who is now able to access their preferred care type. People of color are less likely to report being in their preferred care type, as are people who make less than \$80,000/year, especially those at the lower end of the income range.

Provider Survey

In the spring of 2021, 20 child care providers in Island County completed the Island County Community Child Care Survey. All findings are available on the Provider Survey tab [at this Tableau website](#). Respondents represented a range of characteristics, including diversity in care type provided, location, and ages served. See chart below for more details of provider characteristics.

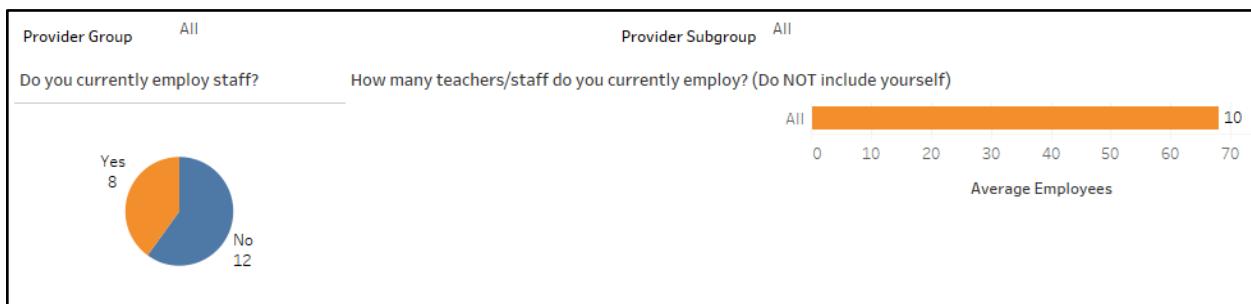
Provider Child Care Type



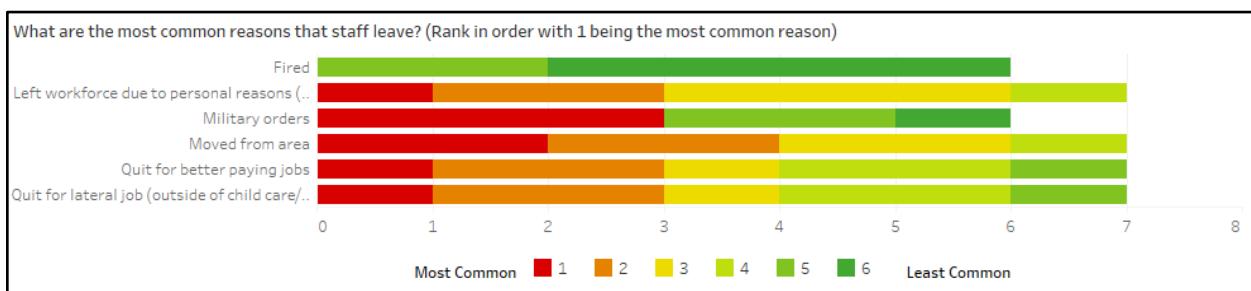
Of the 20 respondents, 13 were from Oak Harbor, two were from Clinton, two from Freeland, and one was from each of the following areas: Camano Island, Langley, and Coupeville. One respondent provided care outside of Island County. It is notable that the Clinton and Freeland zip codes had two respondents each, considering these zip codes had repressed data in the heat maps of child care availability. This survey may provide unique information on child care in these areas that we have not been able to gather elsewhere.

Themes in survey responses emerged related to challenges with child care staffing and child care enrollment. Staffing challenges were discussed previously in the Estimated Unmet Need section (p. 8), and here will be explored again. In terms of staffing, eight of the 20 respondents reported that they hire staff, and hiring an average of 10 employees each. Of those that hire staff they ranked the reasons for staff leaving with Military orders as the most common, followed by Moved from the area, and Fired as the least common.

Child Care Staffing



Reasons Staff Leave



A consistent challenge for providers in terms of staffing is hiring qualified/competent staff. Of the eight providers that hire staff, seven indicated this as a staffing problem they currently experience, followed by finding substitutes and paying for professional staff development.

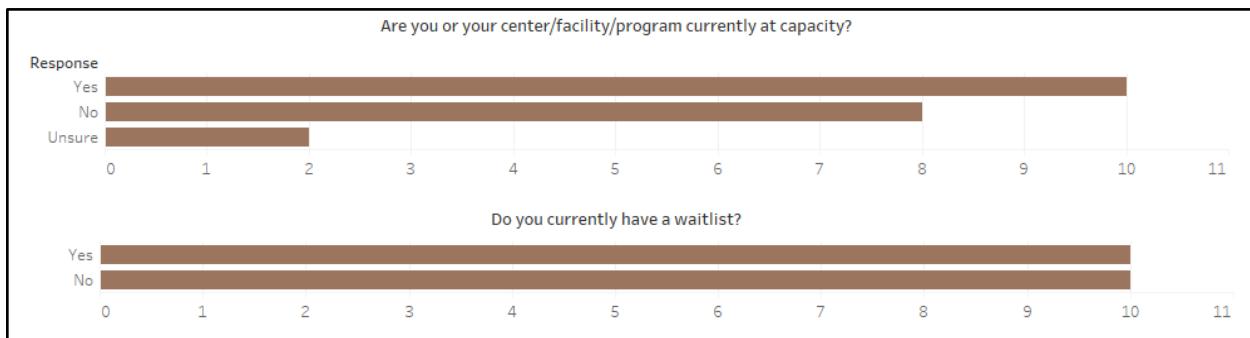
Child Care Staffing Problems



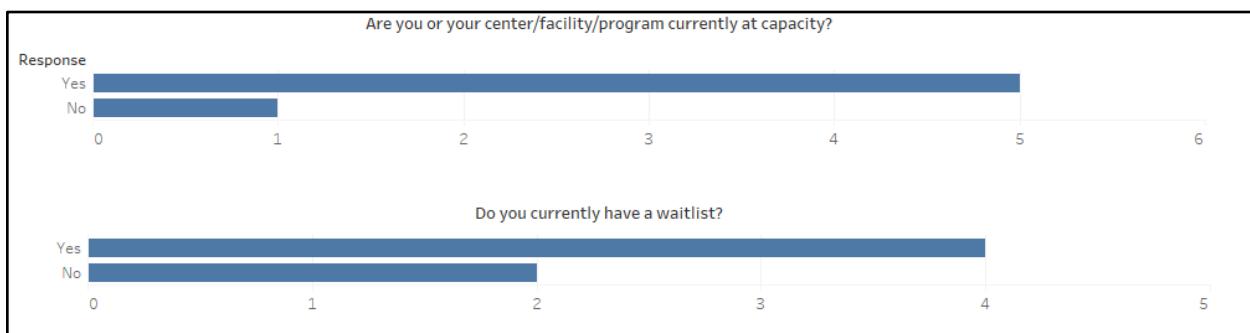
Challenges related to staffing are critical to understand in combination with findings related to child care providers capacity and waitlists. Ten out of the 20 child care providers indicated they are currently at capacity, and the same amount also indicated that they have a waitlist. For child care centers, the proportion is even higher. Of the six licensed child care center providers who responded, five indicated that their programs are at capacity, and four out of the six indicated that they have a waitlist. In comparison, licensed family child care providers, who were six of the 20 survey respondents,

reported slightly different ratios: only two out of the six are currently at capacity, and three indicated that they have a waitlist.

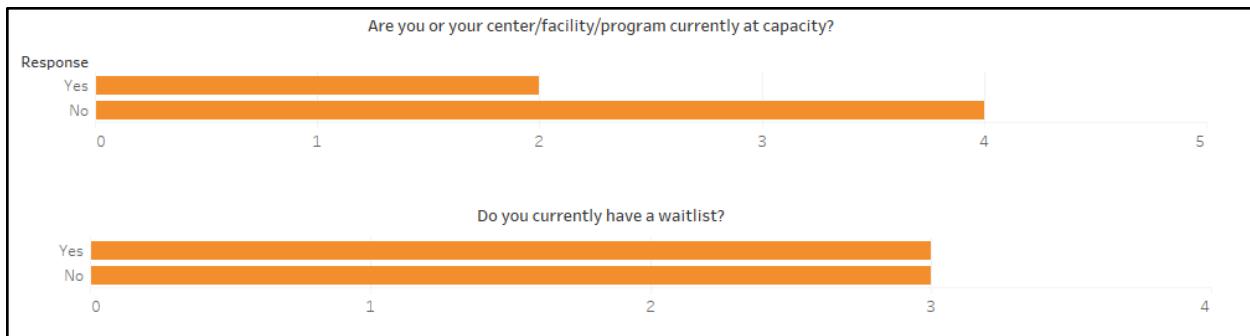
Capacity and Waitlists for All Providers



Capacity and Waitlists for Licensed Child Care Center Providers



Capacity and Waitlists for Licensed Family Child Care Homes



While many programs are at capacity and have waitlists, the COVID-19 pandemic and related shutdowns have had an impact on enrollment numbers, with twelve of the 20 providers indicating that their enrollment has gone down as a result of the pandemic. As the economy reopens and more parents return to the workforce or in person work, it is likely that more programs will reach capacity and that waitlists will grow.

In summary, a cross-section of providers representing various care types, locations, and ages served revealed common challenges in the child care work place. Survey results indicate that many providers have challenges retaining staff and that they face challenges in finding qualified and competent staff, while at the same time, half of the providers indicated they are at capacity and have waitlists. Differences can be found across care types, however, and child care centers are more likely to indicate being at capacity and waitlists compared to family child care home providers. While many providers are at capacity and putting families on waiting lists, they are also struggling to maintain and recruit the workforce necessary to meet these needs. Other providers may not be at capacity or have waitlists, though may still be challenged to recruit qualified staff.

Island County Child Care Listening Sessions – Qualitative Summary

To better understand the local, nuanced needs of parents/guardians and child care providers, two listening sessions were held in May 2021 – one session for parents/guardians and one for providers. Eight parents/guardians and six providers participated in the respective sessions. Parents represented all geographic regions of Island County and the provider session included those working in child care centers, operating before/after school programs, and home-based programs. The listening sessions were semi-structured using broad open-ended questions to allow discussion and themes to emerge. Comments were recorded, transcribed, collated using *Dedoose*, and themes extracted following the Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis. Task Force members helped moderate and support the sessions.

Parent/Guardian Themes

Three central themes emerged from the parent/guardian listening session: the strain of child care cost, availability, and access on family economics and parental careers; quality, with a focus on equity, as the most important aspect of child care for parents; and the importance of policy as both a cause and a solution.

Career Impact/Cost and Economic Strain

All parents spoke to this theme and felt that child care is a major barrier to career advancement in Island County, and that it also causes significant economic strain on families. Many felt it was hard to be a young family in Island County due to the lack of child care options. Parents described great economic strain, lack of available options, and few choices besides having one partner stay home, reducing work hours, switching jobs/professions, or relying heavily on family help.

"I work in education, so I'm definitely not working for the money – higher-ed does not pay that well. It's getting ridiculous that we're having to choose between upward mobility and family...well we can't even choose upward mobility really, because we don't have that option. We're just stuck in this cycle of, essentially, poverty."

Related to economic strain and career impacts, parents specifically noted the problem of limited hours of care facilities and a lack of flexible hours for those not working traditional work schedules. This often resulted in frequent “care shifting” for children to make hours and cost amenable to parents’ work schedules and budgets.

"I am a single mom doing a couple of jobs just to meet my child care needs. I am always thinking about what's available, is this going to work, or do I need to figure something else out?"

In addition, there was discussion of a lack of equity and inclusion within the child care landscape in Island County. Parents discussed low diversity in many child care centers due to families being priced-out of the few available options, and child care centers not being able to provide care for children with special needs. Finally, parents specifically noted the lack of infant care and how this impacts career and family economics.

Quality and Equity

The second theme that emerged was a desire for care that was developmentally appropriate and cultivated a sense of the whole child. While parents noted struggles of affordability and access, this wasn’t what they most desired in their care – quality was the primary concern. Parents also felt that the child care situation in Island County often put them in a situation of having to utilize lower quality care in order to continue working. Quality was also specifically noted as it related to a lack of qualified providers for children with developmental delays and other special needs.

"It's important that mental health is being acknowledged and that there is cultural sensitivity being involved, especially when introducing more kids to different groups of people. I care about my child being seen and cared for as a whole person, and making sure that's being considered."

Policy

The final theme to emerge was consistent discussion of child care policy as both a creation of the economic and career impacts and as potential solution to increasing affordable, quality child care in Island County. Parents expressed frustration with current policy that makes subsidies inaccessible to many middle-income families, while also failing to pay providers and their staff a living wage. There was discussion around restrictive workplace policies that don’t provide adequate parental leave or infants-at-work programs. Parents felt that these were tangible policy development areas. Parents felt that multi-level policy change that clearly prioritizes working families and the

wellbeing of both children and their parents/guardians, was the only real solution to the current child care crisis.

Child Care Provider Themes

Two central themes emerged from the child care provider session: the overall negative view of the profession and the importance of broad policy change to address business feasibility, as well as access and affordability for families.

View of the Profession

The central theme from the provider listening session was discussion of how starkly different early childhood education and child care are viewed in comparison to K-12 education. Providers felt that they are not seen as professionals and that their work is not valued. They noted that this creates a scenario where the profession is not able to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals. Providers felt that there was very little incentive for individuals to work in the profession, especially in Island County, because they are not making a livable wage, earning benefits, or accruing retirement in most cases.

“To retain staff, we need to make the jobs better. Offering employment packages and benefits like other jobs - medical, retirement – so that people will think it's worth it.”

Staff salaries were a consistent subtheme. Providers commented on the extremely low wages for both entry-level and experienced child care providers, despite the known importance of these early years on long-term health and education outcomes.

“Paying minimum wage for child care, it's not right. I hate that I can't offer more to anybody. And it's just a hard incentive, trying to find adults that want to work part-time at minimum wage and watch children that are, across the board, five to 12, and on various age levels with different temperaments. It is very, very difficult.”

Providers were especially frustrated with not being able to pay their staff appropriately, given the high cost of living in Island County. Providers specifically noted the high cost of housing as a barrier to recruiting staff.

“Island County is unique because we have a real disparity in terms of income and wealth distribution, and the housing costs don't reflect some of the economics that families face. So, for people like me and other working parents, to be able to have the ability to buy a home or expand your program or take a program that's been in your home for a long time and invest in property, you're competing with people who are buying homes for vacation rentals, investment properties, or large deposits of cash from the tech industry for people who are buying second homes.”

Policy Change

The second theme that emerged was a need for policy change to support providers across a variety of domains, in addition to supporting availability and equity concerns for parents. A portion of the discussion around policy focused on the struggles with licensing. This subtheme included a discussion of how overwhelming licensing feels and how little support there is for providers who are trying to become licensed or struggling with meeting licensing requirements. Providers felt frustrated with confusing requirements and getting mixed messages from state or local officials when trying to seek clarification. The discussion of licensing also revealed a tangible ask – a licensing liaison for local providers. All providers felt that state funded in-person support for child care providers dealing with licensing struggles would be a significant help.

Additional discussion around policy returned providers to the first theme of how the profession is viewed. There was robust discussion as to why current federal and state policy does not fund and support early childhood education and child care providers via the same types of funding as K-12 education. This discussion focused on changes in high-level policy to invest in quality child care and child care providers. Specific recommendations included, increasing the subsidy rate paid to providers, funding to cover training and education, federal and state funding programs, and incentives for providers to start centers and/or enter the field.

“Where is the money to support the new child care businesses that will need to open up as a result of our population growth? Someone has to be thinking about that, and someone has to be advocating for us providers who have to tell people all the time, “My wait list is too long and I have no spots available.” There needs to be incentives for providers so they will to come into our community”

Conclusion

Both listening sessions reiterated many themes present in the quantitative aspects of this needs assessment. There was alignment between parents/guardians and providers in their desire to see child care elevated as an issue of importance from a policy perspective and the tangible economic impact that the current child care policy situation is having on both groups. In moving towards recommendations and future collaborative projects around child care, seeking additional input from business owners would also be recommended and was not fully addressed within this portion of the needs assessment.

Overview of Needs

- 4,299 (62%) of children under the age of six have all parents in the workforce, and it is unknown where or how they are all being cared for while parents work.

- Of these 4,299 children, 2,340 (63%) would likely use child care if it were to be available but do not have access to a child care spot now.
- Of these 4,299 children, approximately 1,460 (34%) are infants and toddlers, and there is currently a total of 124 child care slots for this age group available in Island County.
- In Island County, of children who meet the criteria specifically for ECEAP/Head Start/Early Head Start, there are 1,642 (88% of eligible children) who do not yet have an ECEAP or Head Start spot available to them. There are 288 infants and toddlers currently who qualify, none of whom are served by Early Head Start in Island County.
- In order to meet the child care needs in Island County, approximately 460 additional educators would need to be hired. This does not include administrative and support staff.
- Parent/Guardian survey findings indicate that most (61%) of families would pay for child care if it were available and met their needs, and that there are currently disparities in access to preferred child care types across race and income.
- Child Care Provider survey findings show that providers face challenges related to turn over and finding qualified staff, and that half of providers are currently at capacity and have waitlists.
- Listening Session findings revealed that families are strained when it comes to balancing child care needs with financial wellbeing, and that child care providers want to elevate the child care profession through improved compensation, recognition, and policy changes.
- Some data are not yet available concerning the child care needs of military families. Additional research and data sharing with NASWI will support a plan that includes their specific child care needs and resources.

Summary

This report brought together publicly available, survey, and listening session data to understand the child care capacity, needs, priorities and possible approaches to help Island County solve their child care problems. Overall findings from each of the sections will now be summarized.

Total Child Care Capacity and Unmet Need

There are currently 4,299 children under the age of six in Island County with all parents in the workforce that do not have access to a reliable child care spot. It is unknown how

many families are managing the care of these children while parents work, and it is critical to provide safe and reliable options for these families. Given that not all families will opt for care, we take an estimate that if care was available, affordable, and met scheduling needs, 63% of families would likely participate. This means that there are approximately **2,340 children likely to enroll in child care if it were to be available in Island County.**

In terms of age, the most critical shortfall is for infant and toddler child care. There are currently only 124 spots available to infants and toddlers in the county, including licensed child care and Early Head Start programs. **Considering that approximately 1,460 infants and toddlers in Island County, this is an important gap to address.**

Additionally, in order to meet the child care need, approximately **460 additional early care professionals** would need to be recruited and supported to take on this role. This does not include the number of additional administrative and support staff that are often needed to support licensed child care.

Parent/Guardian Needs

In Island County, many single income families with a parent employed in the retail, education, health care/social assistance, and construction categories make between \$30,000 - \$59,000/year, well below the regional self-sufficiency wage of \$72,000. However, at this point, only those at the lowest end of the income range (under \$43,920 for a family of three) qualify for any form of child care assistance. This leaves many middle and single-income families in the gap, unable to afford care and ineligible for support. New legislation in the Fair Start for Kids Act will address these gaps, however implementation will take time and many families will continue to struggle with affording care.

Underscoring this struggle are findings from the Island County Parent/Guardian Child Care Needs Survey and Parent Listening Sessions, where parents reported on the tensions between paying for child care and their families economic wellbeing. It is important to hold this in mind while considering that 61% of families reported they would use child care if it were to be available. While families desperately need more child care options, these options must be affordable and aligned to their families' needs in order for them to take it up. In terms of funding the costs to provide quality child care, we must consider what families are able and willing to pay, and consider additional funding approaches to cover all costs. The Department of Commerce has stated that child care should not exceed 7% of a family's income, and on average in Island County, this means that child care should cost, on average, \$4,802 per year. Right now, the cost on average is \$13,000 per year.

Provider Needs

Child care providers across the county currently care for 550 (11%) of Island County children under age six. Half of the providers surveyed reported that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, they are at capacity and have waitlists (many parents also lamented the many and long waitlists they are on in hopes of child care). In listening sessions, providers raised issues related to how the early learning profession is perceived and valued in society. While they provide a critical service supporting young children's development and families' ability to work, they reported feeling undervalued and that low compensation and a lack of societal recognition to their work contributed to turnover and difficulty recruiting new talent to the workforce. Providers also demonstrated a proactive attitude and offered several policy solutions, including enhanced technical support for child care as they navigate the licensing process, as well as legislation to increase and fund pay for child care providers.

Conclusion

Island County has a growing economy and workforce, and there is a high need for child care that is affordable and accessible for working families. Approximately 2,340 new child care spots are needed, and there is an acute need to make infant and toddler age care more available. In order to expand the child care capacity of the county, significant investments in new child care programs, expanding the child care workforce, and sustaining existing programs and workforce will be necessary. The diverse experiences of families across race and income, as well as those who are active duty military, must be considered when developing approaches to make child care more affordable, accessible, and responsive to families' needs. It is likely that multiple options, with continued community input, will be needed to solve these child care challenges and enable Island County to support all of its children and families with high quality and equitable child care choices.

Glossary of Key Terms

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is the lead agency for state-funded services that support children and families to build resilience and health, and to improve educational outcomes. They work with state and local agencies, tribes and other organizations in communities across the state of Washington. Their focus is to support children and families at their most vulnerable points, giving them the tools they need to succeed.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington State's preschool program for children farthest from opportunity (<110% FPL). ECEAP is funded by slots, meaning programs that serve ECEAP children are designated a number of slots, each of which is funded when filled by an eligible child.

Head Start and Early Head Start are programs of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provide comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and families. Head Start is funded by slots, meaning programs that serve Head Start children are designated a number of slots, each of which is funded when filled by an eligible child.

Transitional Kindergarten is a relatively new program in public schools by which they are able to grant early access to kindergarten for children who may need it in the year before kindergarten starts. These children participate in a "transitional kindergarten" classroom that is separate from the regular kindergarten classroom and are with other children their age (age 4), and are in the transitional kindergarten classroom for a full day, just like kindergarten. The goal of transitional kindergarten is to ensure that children who need access to quality early learning in order to have a successful kindergarten and elementary experience, get this access through this program. This program is free to families and is basically starting children in the public school a year early at the age of four. A challenge of this program is that it is part day and school year only and often would not meet the needs of families needing child care. Another is that it could take away from enrollment in licensed child care programs, causing programs to close due to low enrollment. Not every public elementary school has this program, and it would be worth exploring with elementary schools in Island County to understand if any programs are already available and if this is a possible part of meeting the child care needs of the area. According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI),

"Transitional Kindergarten is a kindergarten program for children not yet age five who do not have access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to kindergarten and have been deemed by a school district, through a screening process and/or other instrument(s), to be in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten the following year."

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy is a program to help income eligible families pay for child care. The Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy is a

voucher program and families can take their subsidy voucher to child care providers who will accept it. The state pays part of the cost of childcare when a parent is working or participating in approved work-related activities, with some exceptions. Depending on income, families may be required to pay a copayment to their provider. Families receive 12-month authorizations for the WCCC program.

Reference List

Children under age six and children under the age of six living below 200% of the federal poverty line

- United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months.
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B17024&g=0400000US53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B17024&hidePreview=true>

Children under age six with all parents in the workforce

- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Age Of Own Children Under 18 Years In Families And Subfamilies By Living Arrangements By Employment Status Of Parents.
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B23008&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B23008&hidePreview=true>

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Older.

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=C16001&hidePreview=false&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.C16001>

Data for licensed child care availability by age provided directly to Washington STEM via data sharing agreement with Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Race/Ethnicity of Children Under the Age of Six

- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Black or African American Alone)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001B&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (American Indian and Alaska Native Alone)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001C&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Asian Alone)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001D&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001E&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Some Other Race Alone)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001F&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Two or More Races)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001G&hidePreview=false>
- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53.53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001H&hidePreview=false>

- American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Sex by Age (Hispanic or Latino)
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=SEX%20BY%20AGE&t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&g=0400000US53,53.050000&tid=ACSDT5Y2019.B01001I&hidePreview=false>

American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Median Income in the Past 12 Months.

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=S1903&g=0400000US53,53.050000&tid=ACSST5Y2019.S1903&hidePreview=true>

Median cost of child care

- The Child Care Aware of Washington 2019 data report. <https://childcareawarewa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/2019-Data-Report.pdf>

The State of Washington, Department of Commerce, Washington State Child Care Industry Assessment, 2019, retrieved from: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Child-Care-Collaborative-Task-Force-Industry-Assessment-Report.pdf>

The Child Care Subsidy Copay Calculation Table from the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/copay_calculation_table.pdf

The University of Washington - Self-Sufficiency Standard Tables
<http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/Washington>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services - Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2020 poverty guidelines. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2020-poverty-guidelines>

Estimated Percent Child Care Need Met <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards>

Estimated Likely to Use Care calculated using average between percent of four year olds and percent of three year olds enrolled in free preschool in Washington State. Source data from the 2019 - 2020 ECEAP Caseload Forecast Report
https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/ECEAP_Caseload_Forecast.pdf

Additional Educators Needed to Fill Gaps (see related sources) calculated using:

- Data for licensed child care availability by age provided directly to Washington STEM via data sharing agreement with Department of Children, Youth and Families.
- Children under age 6 with all parents in the workforce
- Children to teacher ratios - Infant 4:1, Toddlers 7:1, Preschool 10:1
- Assumes 63% of children with all caregivers in the workforce would indeed use child care if it were to be available.

County Employment Rates

- Employment Security Department, (navigate to county for county-specific data)
<https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/>

Top Five Industries of Employment in County

- County Non-Farm Employment by Industry <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles>
- Quarterly Workforce Indicator Local Employment Dynamics Extraction Tool – U.S. Census Bureau. <https://ledextract.ces.census.gov/static/data.html>
- Average hourly wage data was collected from the Employment Security Department, Occupational Employment Statistics. <https://esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/occupations>

Labor Market and Credential Data Dashboard. <https://washingtonstem.org/labor-market/>