

# Washington State Child Care Access Strategy:

A strategy, timeline and implementation plan to reach the goal of accessible, affordable child care for all Washington families



Child Care Collaborative Task Force Report to the Legislature and Governor under 2SHB 1344, Laws of 2019

# Acknowledgments

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Tri-Chair, Voting	Luc	Jasmin	Washington Childcare Centers Association & Parkview Early Learning Center	2018
Tri-Chair, Voting	Ryan	Pricco	Child Care Aware of Washington	2018
Voting	Erin	Haick	SEIU 925	2018
Voting	Bob	McCaslin	4th District (R), WA House of Representatives	2018
Voting	Darlene	Peters	Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	2020
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- Transforming Child Care for the Future: Accessible, Affordable and Quality Child Care for All Families in Washington: [Brief](#) | [Infographic](#) | [Video](#)

# Letter from the Task Force Tri-Chairs

We write this about a month after Washington State signed the Fair Start for Kids Act into law and the 2021-23 state budget made historic investments in our state's child care and early learning systems. Organizations and agencies that support child care are in the critical period of simultaneously continuing COVID-19 pandemic response measures, and ramping up to implement system-wide changes and distribute hundreds of millions of dollars to child care programs.

**Thank you for hearing us about the need for major investment.** The Child Care Collaborative Task Force has continuously emphasized the need for increased public and private investment, and to a great extent, this has happened. Federal stimulus funds and revenue from a capital gains tax will stabilize and grow our state's child care industry and help low- and middle-income families access affordable, high-quality child care. Targeted investments will address our state's severe lack of infant care, nonstandard-hour care, child mental health resources, and much more.

**Our children and communities are counting on us to implement this right.** The next two years are pivotal for our state to demonstrate the benefits of increased investment in the child care system. These investments and system improvements have the potential to reduce disparities and achieve equitable outcomes for children, families and child care professionals. This is an opportunity to:

- *Nurture and support child development to close kindergarten readiness gaps and set children up for success in school and life.* Strengthen supports, such as access to high-quality and culturally responsive child care and wraparound services, for children with disparate outcomes. For example, support success of children that identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic/Latino or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, who are 37% less likely than peers of other races and ethnicities to be ready for kindergarten. Give a boost to children in low-income households that are 43% less likely to be kindergarten-ready than their non-low-income peers.
- *Help parents remain in and reenter the workforce, achieve economic security and meet their goals for their children.* Expand, and help families access, child care subsidies and affordability resources. Increase the disproportionately low number of eligible families with non-English home languages that use subsidies. Incentivize and support child care provision in areas and market segments with insufficient licensed child care options.
- *Support livable wages, benefits and lasting careers for our diverse child care workforce to maintain high-quality child care services for families.* Child care educators in our state, predominantly women, largely reflect our state's cultural and linguistic diversity: 50% are people of color and 30% are multilingual or have a first language other than English.

We are making great strides toward accessible, affordable and high-quality child care. **We must now focus on the fourth leg of the stool: a thriving workforce.** Over 30,000 child care professionals provide services that help families meet their goals and children succeed. Our economy and society benefit from this essential work, yet the child care workforce suffers from very high turnover. For professionals to stay and grow in the field, they need livable wages and benefits. For our children to receive the high quality care they need in order to be successful in school and life, they must receive care from trusted and qualified adults who reflect the community they serve. The state must develop and fund a financing model that keeps child care affordable for all families AND ensures adequate compensation of the entire child care workforce. Our state's comprehensive investments through the Fair Start for Kids Act put us on track to achieve our vision of Washington as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system. Let's not stop the momentum. On behalf of the task force, we urge policymakers to continue and build on transformative investments in the child care system in service of Washington's future: our children.



Amy Anderson  
Association of Washington Business



Luc Jasmin  
Washington Childcare Centers Association &  
Parkview Early Learning Center



Ryan Pricco  
Child Care Aware of  
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# Letter from Commerce Director Dr. Lisa Brown



As we discuss the future of our state’s – and nation’s – child care systems, it’s impossible to ignore the moment we’re in and the role child care access will play in our economic recovery. The pandemic has revealed enormous disparities in access to affordable care, how inadequately we compensate and support our child care workforce, and the disproportionate burden that remains on women to fill an unpaid role of caring for children at home.

At the same time, this has been a historic year for children and families in our state, and for child professionals that serve them. The Fair Start for Kids Act doubled our state’s investment in child care and early learning. The Act increases child care affordability for low- and middle-income families, and will help parents and caregivers find care that is a good fit for their family, including infant care, care for children with complex needs, programs with flexible hours and programs with bilingual instruction. The combination of affordability and options that support families’ goals for their child’s development will help more parents—especially women, who have left the workforce in alarming numbers during the pandemic—reenter or remain in the workforce. This will contribute to closing the gender pay gap. It will also support families’ economic self-sufficiency and set up children for success.

Importantly, the Fair Start for Kids Act ends the child care subsidy copay “cliff effect.” This occurs when a parent’s income increases and they can no longer afford the steep increase in copay required to continue receiving a subsidy. I said in the last report that eliminating this disincentive is crucial to supporting all working parents as they move upward on the earnings ladder. I commend the Legislature for resolving this issue.

The Fair Start for Kids Act makes progress to grow and sustain high-quality child care programs. This includes one-time child care stabilization payments, increased subsidy rates, and grants, as well as access to healthcare insurance coverage premium assistance for employees, mental health consultation, and other services. New and ongoing grant programs will support high-quality child care in rural, underserved and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities, which creates equitable opportunities for child care access, school readiness and academic success.

I stand with the Child Care Collaborative Task Force in supporting full implementation of the Fair Start for Kids Act—and furthering the work by creating a finance model to adequately pay and support a thriving child care workforce. The child care workforce – which is a low wage workforce – is disproportionately composed of women and women of color. Turnover rates in the child care field are high at 43%, and studies suggest this is largely due to low benefits and lack of pay. Staff turnover decreases child care program quality and stability. It prevents children from receiving the lasting benefits associated with consistent, loving caregivers. Child care, like many industries, has experienced challenges filling open positions. Providers have noted that they compete with retail sectors that offer comparable or better pay and require less training and education. To achieve a sustainable and robust child care system that promotes healthy child and family outcomes and gender and racial economic equality, we must support competitive, livable wages and benefits, and professional growth opportunities for child care professionals.

This fourth task force report reflects three years of cross-sector engagement, learning and problem-solving among over 30 appointed child care providers, administrators, advocacy organizations, parents, business representatives and professional associations focused together on improving our state’s child care system. I commend the task force for its dedication and persistence in developing a plan for accessible, affordable, high-quality child care for all families. This work has taken on new urgency and attention as we realize the role of child care in an equitable economic recovery. I look forward to working with the task force to identify, and create financial models to fund, the true costs of providing high-quality child care.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa J. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa J. Brown, Ph.D.  
Director, Department of Commerce

# Letter from DCYF Secretary Ross Hunter



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES**  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**  
1500 Jefferson Street, SE • P.O. Box 40975 • Olympia WA 98504-0975

July 13, 2021

Dear Child Care Collaborative Task Force:

I want to thank the Child Care Collaborative Task Force for their persistence and dedication to our collective efforts to provide high-quality child care and early learning to families across our state. These opportunities are critical to a child's success in school and life.

The task force made recommendations to the Legislature, and the passage of the Fair Start for Kids Act ([SB 5237](#)) goes a long way in funding those recommendations. Through this legislation, lawmakers are providing an opportunity to make high-quality child care more accessible and affordable for all families in Washington State.

The Fair Start for Kids Act is reflective of the recommendations made by the task force. It takes a multi-pronged approach to improve child care by increasing investments in early learning and expanding access to programs and services for families. [Through this legislation, DCYF will:](#)

- Reduce copays and expand income eligibility for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).
- Expand eligibility and increase rates for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Early ECEAP.
- Grow recruitment and retention for child care businesses by increasing subsidy rates, expanding access to health insurance for providers, and providing resources for professional development and scholarships.
- Strengthen child care programs by expanding access to support services, mental health consultations, dual language supports, grants and rate enhancements, and more.

Affordable, high-quality child care should be available in all geographic areas, meet family needs, and be culturally and linguistically relevant. Creating a high-quality integrated B-8 system is part of DCYF's [Strategic and Racial Equity Plan](#) and aligns with the work of the Child Care Collaborative Task Force.

This past year, the child care business sector continued to remain open and provide care for children and families that needed it. The pandemic highlighted that child care is essential to the economic recovery of Washington. To ensure a stable, functional, and flexible child care system that supports providers and families, DCYF provided direct support to licensed child care providers. This included:

- More than \$60 million in grants to child care providers in 2020 to help stabilize the industry and provide access to care for children and families.
- Approximately \$50 million in grant funding and incentives to providers in 2021.
- Incentives for school-age and FFN providers.

- The suspension of licensing fees for child care providers between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2023.
- Waiving copayments for all families receiving child care subsidy from April through June and October through December 2020. These are also waived from July through September 2021.
- Capping copayments at \$115 for all families receiving child care subsidy from January through June 2021.

I want to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of our early learning and child care providers. We recognize the challenges they faced this past year, and we are grateful today – and every day – that they have continued to provide essential services throughout this pandemic.

I and DCYF applaud the efforts of the task force for their work in creating a path toward an accessible and affordable child care system for all Washington families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ross Hunter". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Ross Hunter  
Secretary



# Executive Summary

This report follows on the 2020 Washington State Child Care Industry Assessment and previous recommendation reports to "develop a strategy, timeline, and implementation plan to reach the goals of accessible and affordable child care for all families by 2025" as required in Second Substitute House Bill 1344 (2019). The Washington State Department of Commerce co-convened the Child Care Collaborative Task Force with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to issue this report. In the final phase of work, the task force will report findings of a child care cost of quality study to the Legislature and Governor in 2022.

## Strategic Implementation Plan

This report provides a policy framework for affordable and accessible child care that builds on the previous task force work described above, and recent historic policy changes and investments in child care through Washington's Fair Start for Kids Act as the basis for the strategic implementation plan. The purpose of the plan is to transform how the child care sector can better deliver equitable and quality care to families in alignment with the state's policy goals. The plan does not specify a timeline, but aims to complement and build on the timeline of policy changes in the Fair Start for Kids Act. Under the Act, policy changes including increasing Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy eligibility to include families with incomes at or below 85% of state median income, and reaching Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) entitlement, will occur in 2027.

The strategic implementation plan uses a racial-equity approach based on goals, outcomes and objectives identified in the policy framework for affordable and accessible child care, and includes implementation strategies, tactics and roles to achieve the task force's vision of Washington State as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system. The vision was developed by consensus among child care providers, policymakers, businesses and business representatives, employers, advocates, agencies, parents and stakeholders. To implement strategies and monitor progress toward goals, intended outcomes and the vision in this report, the task force identified outcomes that serve as a starting place for developing state performance measures to track progress with an intentional focus on examining and resolving disparities in child care affordability, access and service delivery based on race, ethnicity, home language, ability, income and geography.

Transforming Washington's child care industry is a long-term policy initiative that needs participation from diverse groups and stakeholders to be successful. The strategic implementation plan includes tactics for each goal that can be carried out by different stakeholder groups, such as economic development organizations, schools, community members and state government with specific roles provided. For example, on the topic of compensation under goal one, the implementation plan identifies that the task force and DCYF will evaluate and recommend a compensation structure aligned to regional school system salary scales for use by DCYF to set WCCC subsidy rates and an administrative mechanism and finance model to ensure adequate compensation of the entire child care workforce. In addition, a brief discussion and explanation of progress made to date is provided under each goal to offer subject matter expertise to assist policy makers and the public in their understanding of the child care industry in the state.

## Key Issues

The providers, families and children that rely on the child care industry represent a diversity of cultures and backgrounds, and as a result have varying needs, experiences and circumstances. While this report attempts to address this continuum to the fullest extent possible, the task force finds there are core issues that cut across goal areas that should be given priority in policy and funding discussions.

1. High-quality child care supports healthy development of children, and provides options parents may choose to meet their child's social, emotional, physical, and developmental needs in a way that fits their family.
2. Without competitive, livable wages and benefits for child care professionals, families and children will not have access to a sufficient supply of quality child care services. The child care workforce, composed predominately of women and people of color, has high rates of attrition. Until a financing model is in place to adequately compensate, develop and support longevity of the child care workforce, the task force expects suppressed wages and high staff turnover to continue--and with it, ongoing challenges to maintain child care program quality and capacity.

3. Economic growth depends on quality child care so that families are able to work. Both public and private investments are needed so that labor costs and other quality cost drivers are not disproportionately passed onto child care professionals that provide valuable services without adequate pay, and families that pay child care tuition rates that often exceed in-state college tuition.

## Core Strategies

The strategies in this report build on recent progress through the Fair Start for Kids Act and other 2021 legislative measures, such as [Substitute Senate Bill 5151](#), [Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1370](#), [Substitute House Bill 1331](#), and the 2021-23 state [operating](#) and [capital](#) budgets, to promote: child health, safety and development; the ability for families to choose child care options that meet their needs and support their children; economically secure families; and nurturing environments to support a child's success. The strategies simultaneously support the child care professionals, providers and systems that make this possible.

To address key issues, the task force recommends the Legislature, Governor, DCYF and the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)—as well as task force member organizations and constituencies—lead the charge in implementing the strategies to meet the objectives and intended outcomes described in this report, with particular attention to:

- Creating and funding a financing model to support compensation and development of child care professionals.
- Reducing disparities in child care service delivery and access by families.
- Developing infrastructure to support a robust and sustainable “mixed delivery” child care system, offering families a diverse range of provider types and program models.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, implementation of the strategies would fulfill the task force's vision of Washington, State as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system, benefitting all our children, parents, child care staff and providers, employers and communities.

# Introduction

## Synopsis

In Washington, there are more than 1.1 million children under age twelve who all need to be cared for by an adult, all day, every day, whether it is a parent, family member, child care provider or school teacher. Child care is essential to families, businesses and the economy. Moreover, early childhood experiences have important implications for school readiness and educational outcomes, as well as lifelong health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> **Yet, child care is not financed as a public good, like elementary education and secondary education. In Washington, as in the rest of the nation, the responsibility for paying for child care is placed almost entirely on individual families and child care staff whose wages are not commensurate with their responsibility.** The cost of full-time child care for an infant and a child in preschool can equal up to 35% of a two-parent family's income and up to 150% of a single-parent's income.<sup>3</sup> This approach leaves many families without access to affordable, high-quality child care providers, creating and perpetuating inequality.<sup>4</sup> These circumstances have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic with many child care businesses either permanently closed or struggling to re-open, causing more struggles for families to find the quality child care that is needed to help their children learn and thrive and to help parents and caregivers remain in or join the workforce.

The Fair Start for Kids Act (hereafter "Act"), passed in May 2021, made unprecedented investments in child care that bring the state closer to realizing the goal of accessible, affordable, quality child care for all families. The Child Care Collaborative Task Force's (hereafter "task force") overall aim is to successfully implement and build upon the work of the Act to continue making progress toward this goal. The Act is one of the most significant state investments in child care access and expansion in the nation's history, investing more than \$500 million to improve access to child care for families and to stabilize the precarious finances of providers. However, even with this historic investment, most parents or caregivers will remain solely responsible for paying all child care expenses. In many cases, what families can pay is not enough to cover the full cost of providing quality child care. To fully solve this challenge, **Washington needs to transform the way child care is financed** to ensure that it is affordable for all families and that child care providers have the funding to compensate the workforce fairly.

The following pages describe the problem, the facts and the impacts of child care inaccessibility in Washington.

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# The Problem

*“We’ve gotta find some kind of happy medium here, to where we’re not paying everything we make in child care. Basically, we would be paying for child care and rent, and we’d be lucky to have anything else, and people can’t live that way!” – **Parent with one child***

*“We can’t afford child care, and it doesn’t seem fair. Some families qualify for low-income programs and we do not. But child care still isn’t affordable for us.” – **Parent of three children, using informal relative care***

Child care services are provided almost entirely in the private market, and both parents and child care providers are limited by market forces beyond their control. **Child care providers base their prices on what families are able to afford.** In many cases, this may not cover the full cost of quality care, may limit the services the provider is able to deliver and limit the wages that the provider can pay to recruit and retain staff.

Ideally, there would be a balance between the supply of child care providers and what they charge, and the demand that families have for child care and what they can afford. However, in Washington and throughout the nation, **families alone are responsible for paying for child care in most circumstances.** This allows only a fraction of the families who need high-quality care to be served.

For child care providers, the revenue generated from the fees paid by families is often not enough to cover the cost of care. To survive, child care providers often are forced to keep wages low. In turn, this makes it difficult to develop a stable, highly qualified, and high-quality child care workforce.

The consequences of this long-standing approach to financing child care have left many families without access to affordable, high-quality child care programs, perpetuating and driving inequality.<sup>5</sup> These factors make the child care sector unstable and produces significant **inequities in child care access and affordability for families** as well as **inequities in the wages of the child care workforce**, of which 94% are women and 50% are individuals of color.

# The Facts



## Families

When families search for child care, their options are limited by what they can afford to pay and what is available in their community. If they can find care at all, it **often is priced beyond their budget.** Families with higher incomes are more likely to use licensed care. When middle and lower income parents have access to subsidy, they are also more likely to use child care that is licensed.<sup>6</sup>

For a two-parent family in Washington, licensed child care for an infant and a preschool child would **consume 29% to 35% of income.** For a single mother, it would **consume 120% to 150% of her income.**<sup>7</sup> For a single father, it would **consume 98% to 124% of his income.**<sup>8</sup>

The affordability challenge is more pronounced for lower income families, **leading to inequities, especially for families of color.** As a result, families may have **access to fewer choices and cobble together child care options** that are challenging to manage and of inconsistent quality for their children



## Child Care Providers

Child care providers must pay for the cost of delivering child care **based on what parents in the surrounding area can afford to pay.** Multiple studies have found that the prevailing prices paid in a community may not support the basic structural features that underpin quality child care – e.g., compensation required to attract and retain staff.<sup>9</sup>

Since **60% to 80% of a child care provider's budget goes to pay for the people who care for children,** they may often keep wages low to balance the budget.<sup>10</sup> As a result, the average **child care employee in the state makes under \$15 per hour,** compared to \$36 for a kindergarten teacher.<sup>11</sup>

Low compensation contributes to an **unstable child care workforce with a 43% turnover rate** and that's not good for the quality of care children receive.<sup>12</sup> Staffing costs, facility costs and regulatory requirements create significant barriers.<sup>13</sup> This precarious business model reinforces a cycle of poorly paid staff, with high turnover. That **makes expanding access to quality child care difficult.**



## Market Challenges



## High Prices & Low Wages



## Perpetuates Inequality



### Impact on Children & Families

63% of children live in area with inadequate supply of child care

47% of parents say child care is barrier to reemployment

48% of children not school-ready



### Impact on Child Care Providers

17% decline in family child care since 2014

43% annual employee turnover

Cost and regulations are barriers



### Impact on Child Care Workforce

Earn less than \$15/hour  
(41% of a kindergarten teacher's pay)

Lowest earnings of any college major

Perpetuates gender and racial inequality



### Impact on Economy & Finance

Keeps 133,000 people out of workforce

Reduces state GDP by \$35 billion per year

Reduces tax revenue by \$1 billion per year

## Impacts and Findings

### Child Care Staff Retention is Key

The task force found that one of the key factors—a lynchpin for child care program quality, child outcomes and program sustainability—is the ability to recruit and retain staff. Research has shown that the presence of a consistent, caring adult serves as a protective factor for healthy child development. The Early Achievers quality rating and improvement system, school age child care quality standards and professional development focus on how child care educators interact with children. The quality of interactions between caregiver and child influence program quality ratings. Child care providers on the task force emphasized that high staff turnover—which is typical for the child care industry, reported as 43% in 2015 -- reduces program quality and limits the opportunity for children to benefit from a consistent caregiver. Consequently, a key strategy of the task force is to support child care providers' ability to recruit and retain staff. Any resources that would allow providers to attract, support and retain staff would contribute to quality. As the task force previously reported, competitive, livable wages and benefits have been associated with higher staff retention and higher program quality.

**Our Current and Future Workforce and Economy Depends on High-Quality Child Care. Families and Child Care Professionals Cannot Afford to Pay the Bill--Public and Private Investment is needed.**

The task force has found that typical child care staff compensation levels must be increased for effective retention. However, the funding to increase compensation must be supported by public and private financial investment to succeed--otherwise, increases in child care labor costs would be passed onto families. Washington parents are already paying tuition prices that in many cases exceed the price of in-state public college. There must be a sustainable cost balance for child care, and this is not possible without external funding and a limit on the prices families must pay.

Figure 2: Impacts of Child Care Inaccessibility in Washington<sup>14</sup>

# Framework for Affordable and Accessible Child Care

## Background

This report fulfills a requirement in [2SHB 1344](#) (2019), [RCW 43.330.527](#)(1)(e), which directed the Child Care Collaborative Task Force to "develop a strategy, timeline, and implementation plan to reach the goal of accessible and affordable child care for all families." The report incorporates and builds on previous task force findings and recommendations. In 2019, the task force recommended policy changes to reduce disparities and disproportionalities in child care service delivery and access; streamline licensing and permitting of child care facilities; incentivize employer and business contributions to child care affordability and access; and stabilize, support and sustain the child care industry, providers and workforce. In 2020, the task force completed a comprehensive assessment of the child care industry, began the process of creating models to estimate the cost of high-quality child care; and recommended policy changes to the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy system and to support competitive compensation of the child care workforce. Next, the task force will study the true cost of providing high-quality child care, and report findings to the Legislature and Governor in Nov. 2022.<sup>15</sup>

## Fair Start for Kids Act

While working on this report, and continuing to experience the COVID-19 pandemic, the Washington State Legislature made a historic investment in child care and early childhood development in the Fair Start for Kids Act ([Chapter 199, Laws of 2021](#)). Sponsors designed the Fair Start for Kids Act to make gains simultaneously in four areas: stabilizing and expanding the child care workforce; making child care more affordable for families; supporting the expansion of child care; and strengthening prevention and intervention services to support child development and healthy families. The task force's overall strategy is to successfully implement and build on the work of the Fair Start for Kids Act.

## Task Force Vision

The strategies in this report contribute to achieving the task force's vision, shown in Figure 3. The vision includes access to affordable, high-quality child care for all families. The vision further emphasizes that the child care system should be equitable and benefit all of Washington's children, parents, child care staff, providers, employees and communities. The outcomes identified could serve as a starting place for developing state performance measures to track progress toward achieving the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system.

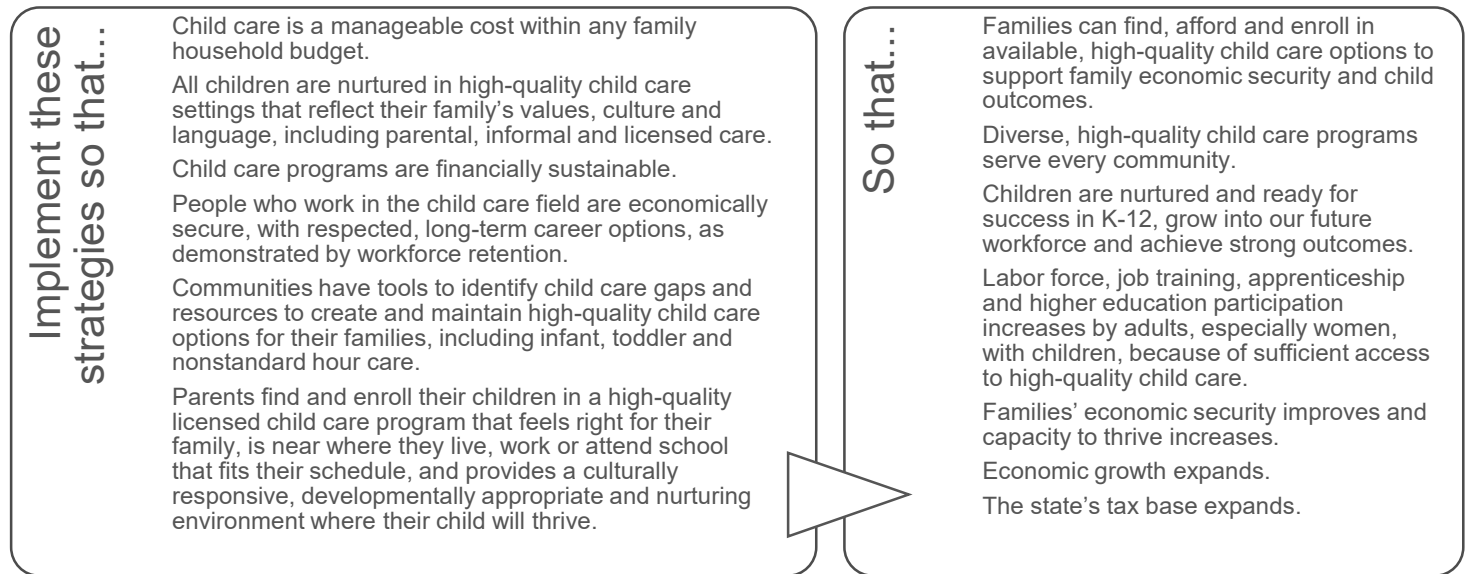
Figure 3: Task Force Vision

<b>The task force envisions Washington State as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system that benefits all our children, parents, child care staff and providers, employers and communities:</b>			
<b>Quality, affordable, accessible licensed child care</b> that gives parents diverse choices to meet their family and employment needs, regardless of their income, race or where they live.	An <b>economically healthy and diverse child care industry</b> with a supported, well-compensated workforce that meets the supply and choice requirements of families and employers.	<b>Increased workforce productivity</b> when employers support the child care needs of their employees through the availability of a scalable set of tools and incentives that increase access and affordability of high-quality child care.	<b>New strategies and investments</b> from the public and private sectors that engage employers in supporting all working families' access to high-quality, affordable child care.

# Intended Outcomes

The goals and implementation strategies in this report contribute to achieving outcomes in Figure 4 below. The outcomes, if realized, would reflect that the state is fulfilling the task force's vision. The task force recommends the state establish a performance measurement system to track progress toward realizing these outcomes.

Figure 4: Long-Term Outcomes



## Goals and Objectives

This report is organized around seven goals, listed below. These goals are ordered to emphasize areas needing urgent attention. Top among these are investing in the longevity and development of child care professionals through increased compensation and supports, as a supported child care workforce is needed to promote healthy child development. The task force recommends creating and funding a financing model to provide an adequate revenue stream for high-quality child care, because until this happens the cost falls on providers, staff and parents. Another high priority is developing robust child care infrastructure, including a system of financial resources and services to startup and sustain high-quality child care programs. The task force recognizes that progress toward these goals will depend on levels of investment and implementation capacity. The task force recommends establishing specific, measurable objectives, performance measures and a performance monitoring system to assess progress. [Appendix C](#) lists all goals and suggested objectives.

### Goals

1. Child care is a field that offers its workforce economic security and respected, long-term career options, as measured by staff retention.
2. Robust child care system infrastructure is in place to sustain a mixed-delivery model of high-quality child care services. Infrastructure includes financial resources, professional development opportunities and access to behavioral, mental health, healthcare and educational and other resources.
3. Child care providers can operate high-quality programs and accept Working Connections Child Care subsidies.
4. Low and middle income families are eligible for, know about and use Working Connections Child Care subsidies.
5. Families can navigate child care supports and enroll in child care programs.
6. Employers and businesses implement practices that make child care more affordable and accessible for their employees.
7. Streamlined and less financially burdensome state and local regulations, codes, permitting processes and fee structures facilitate child care startup, operation and expansion.



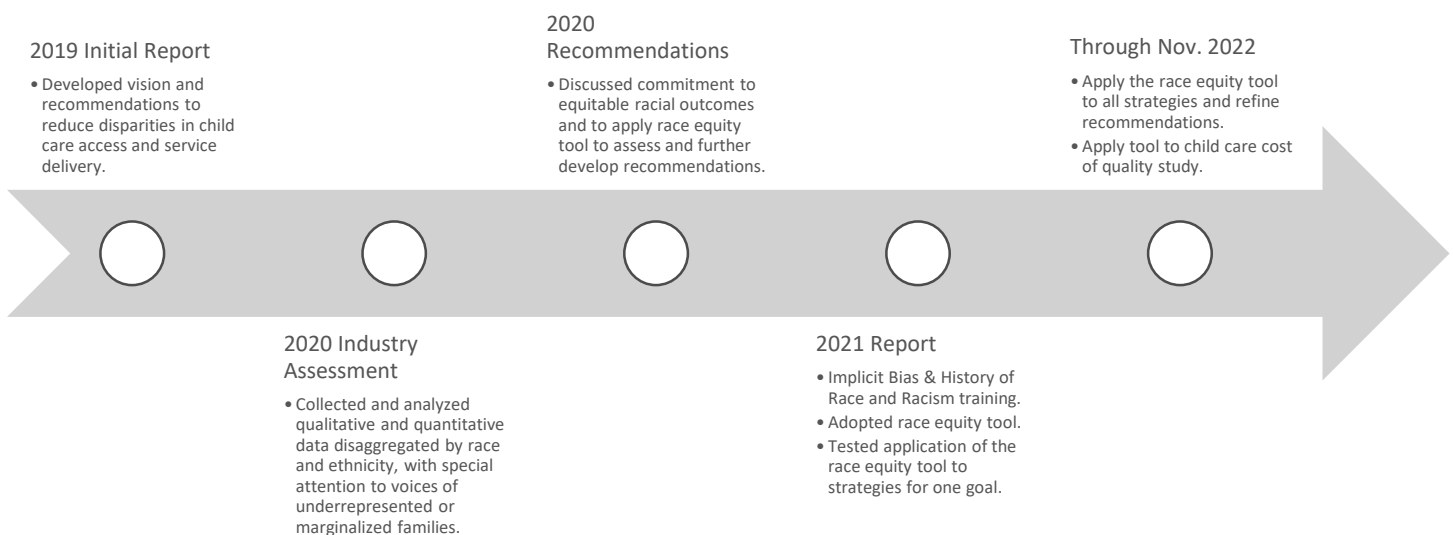
# Strategic Implementation Plan

## Ensuring Implementation Creates Equitable Opportunities for All

How the goals are met matters. The task force recommends achieving child care access goals through strategies that are implemented with cultural humility, cultural responsiveness and language accessibility. The intended outcomes are that all children, families, child care providers and child care staff will have access to opportunities and the ability to succeed regardless of differences in race, ethnicity, income, abilities, family composition or where or how they grew up.

The task force's work began with envisioning a child care system that was working well and meeting the needs of providers, staff, children and families. The task force assessed the child care industry in 2020 and recommended policy changes—that became the goals and strategies in this report—to address the gap between the vision and the experiences of providers, staff, children and families. With recommendations in place, the task force responded to the imperative to ensure consideration of equity during implementation. The task force adopted a race-equity tool in 2021 with a commitment to address drivers of child care system inequities for people accessing and providing care.

Figure 5: Task Force Commitment to Equitable Racial Outcomes



Currently, due to complex underlying conditions, there is not a comprehensive measurement of how the proposed goals would impact diversity across and within stakeholder groups. For example, there is significant disparity between types of providers, between economic security and social safety net access for child care staff, and between a family's access to child care support because of capacity, demographics or geography. Data is unfortunately lacking and there is a challenge to reach communities directly. The task force will frame continued work through questions such as:

- How does the strategy address underlying causes of the child care industry's inequities?
- How does the strategy worsen or ignore stakeholder disparities?
- How might racial equity considerations impact each implementation step of a strategy?

This approach will require stakeholders and state agencies to iteratively scenario-plan improvement metrics for each goal and subsequent strategies. Additionally, race-equity analysis will include consideration of current aligned statewide efforts and how these efforts may impact a goal through process improvement or mitigation. The task force will review relevant available DCYF, child care industry, cost study, and US Census data disaggregated by factors such as race, ethnicity, language spoken, nativity, income, and geography to the extent possible and identify gaps in data where more information is needed. The task force will seek additional community voice through member affiliation with an emphasis of engaging the diverse community of providers, staff and families. Simultaneously, state agencies, particularly DCYF, will implement requirements of the Fair Start for Kids Act. Agencies will proactively consider how to define the agency's

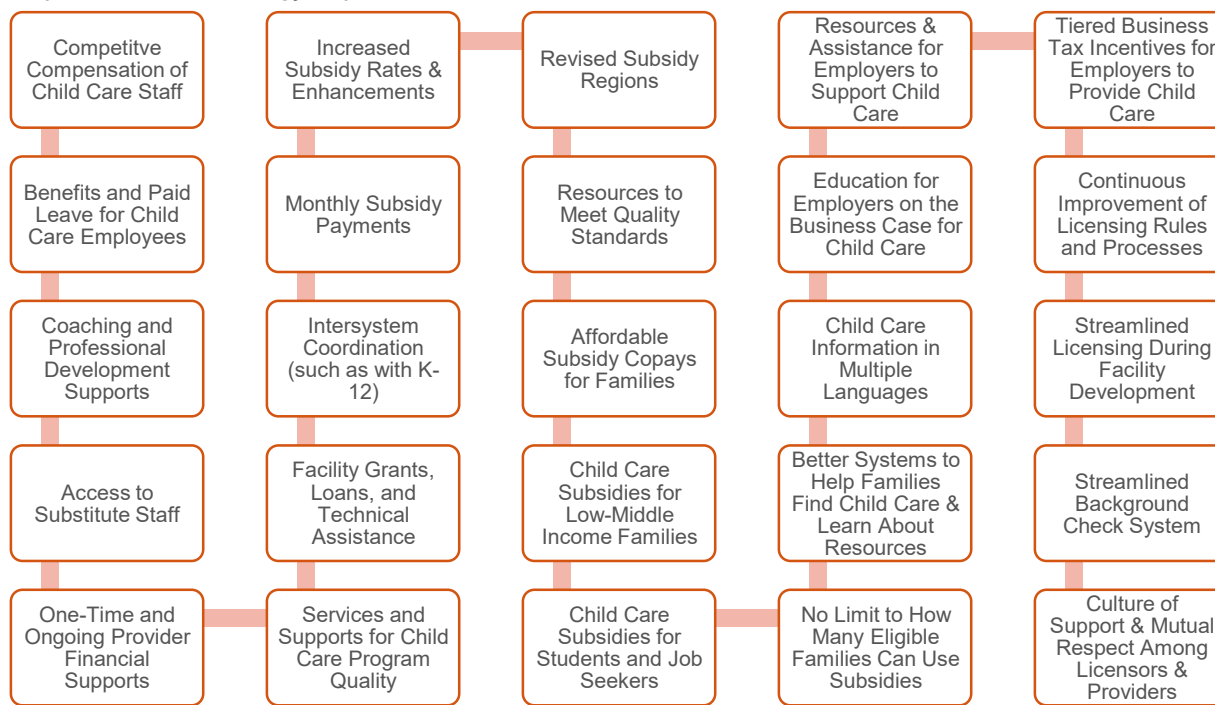
systemic barriers and proactively invest in collecting community experience for reporting and functional process changes. Inherent to these changes is engagement with the end-user, most often families, to identify positive and negative effects.

DCYF recently published a [Strategic and Racial Equity Plan](#). The plan describes DCYF's commitment as program administrators to continually assess equitable program delivery across the agency, focused on liberatory, human-centered and healing-centered design. As part of this plan, DCYF is examining agency operations and opportunities to improve capacity to better serve Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and historically marginalized communities. Programs and divisions have begun implementing plans to advance racial equity, intentionally centering the experience of BIPOC youth and families in current and future program design. The agency is working to align and integrate its services internally and externally, and adequately train and support staff, managers and supervisors within the practice model. The task force finds that this work will strengthen the agency to more fully support family and community across cultures and geography. It is essential for administrative agencies like DCYF to model and lead the industry in implementing equity-centered practices.

## Strategic Topics

The strategies or approaches recommended by the task force are mapped to each goal beginning on [page 18](#). Figure 6 below summarizes the topics addressed by implementation strategies. [Appendix D](#) lists all implementation strategies.

Figure 6: Implementation Strategy Topics



## Tactics and Roles

Every child has a right to a safe, nurturing care environment, essential from birth through childhood. This reality requires communication, engagement and collaboration from a variety of actors: policy makers, program administrators, philanthropy, inter-government entities, K-12, providers and families. Actions that stakeholders can take to support strategy implementation include those listed in Table 1.

This report includes tactics for carrying out each strategy, which may be found in each goal section and summarized in [Appendix E](#). [Appendix G](#) includes the task force's suggestions for organizations and roles that should lead implementation, such as opportunities for the legislature to develop policies or make investments, and for DCYF to incorporate suggested practices into program administration.

**Table 1: Roles in Strategy Implementation**

Role	Actions to Support Strategy Implementation
Families	will identify their needs for child care in relation to meeting career and economic security goals and use child care consumer education resources to learn about child care programs and resources.
Employers & Businesses	will review internal policies on work duties cross-walked with child care realities to support working parents, understand their employees' child care needs, help connect employees with resources and implement practices that make child care more affordable and accessible for their employees.
Child Care Aware Agencies	will be equipped to understand diverse child and family needs related to race and ethnicity, ability, language and geography, and will support working parents with finding child care, programs with providing high-quality care and help policymakers understand child care industry needs.
Child Care Providers	will operate as small businesses with supports to sustain high-quality programs and professional growth and retain knowledgeable and skilled staff, without relying on private tuition alone to cover the full cost. Providers will intentionally seek a diverse workforce and continuously improve employees' access to professional development and workplace culture. Providers will participate in developing child care policies that support sustainable, quality child care businesses.
K-12 Schools	will coordinate with local child care providers and service providers to improve children's entry into kindergarten; provide before and after school care; partner and coordinate with school-based child care programs to dedicate and/or share space, resources, logistics and professional development; and develop systems of support for the education, health and success of students and families.
Higher Education	will facilitate degree and credential attainment for the early childhood workforce and foster partnerships that strengthen training, coaching, mentorship and apprenticeship programs.
Community-Based Orgs.	will include child care providers in developing strategies, advocacy goals, as well policy priorities and will be supported professionally and financially as trusted messengers and conduits between government programs and unique community groups.
Local Governments	will coordinate with economic development organizations to advocate for incentives to increase or sustain child care supply when needed to maintain economic growth and family opportunities and streamline permitting and licensing to facilitate child care facility development and construction.
Economic Development Orgs.	will advocate for private businesses providing employer-supported child care, maintain awareness of child care supply and demand as it relates to economic growth, leverage state technical assistance resources and advocate for incentives to increase or sustain the child care supply when it impacts employers' and businesses' decisions to expand or remain in the area.
State Government	will administer federal and state resources to support affordable, high-quality child care programs; support development of the child care industry and staff; consult with Tribes and coordinate with public, private and other sectors to maintain robust child care infrastructure to maintain and grow our economy, help families achieve self-sufficiency and nurture children--tomorrow's workforce.
Philanthropies	will work with governments and employers to develop public and private child care system infrastructure; develop continuing education opportunities for child care educators; support child care service and system innovations, such as transportation to child care in rural areas.
Community Members	will gain awareness of the essential nature of child care to our state's and families' economic security, support family-friendly employment and governmental policies and support public and private investment in bolstering infrastructure and advancing careers within the industry.

# Goal 1: Child care is a field that offers its workforce economic security and respected, long-term career options, as measured by staff retention.

## Objectives:

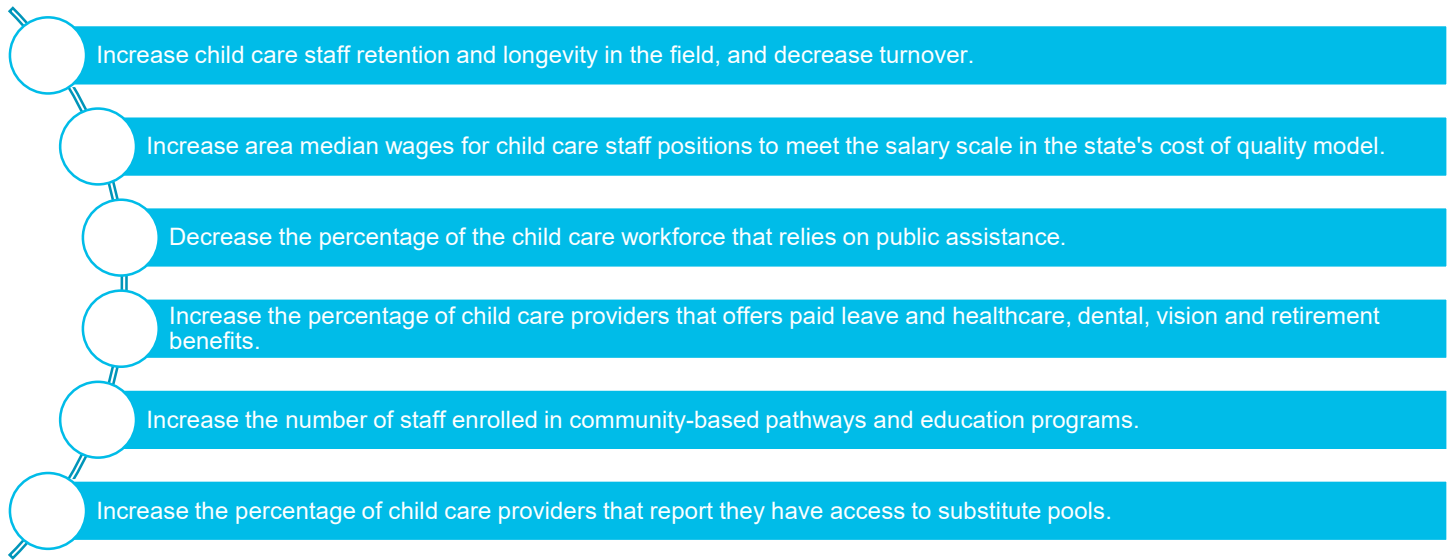


Figure 7: Goal 1 Objectives

## Implementation Strategies:

1. Compensate the child care workforce competitively with educators in the state's education continuum in order to provide living wages, reduce turnover and promote longevity of skilled providers in the child care workforce. Achieving this will require additional government and/or business intervention.
2. Ensure child care professionals can access benefits that complete a good job, including access to healthcare insurance coverage, dental/vision, paid leave and retirement benefits. These benefits are one important strategy toward preventing workforce burnout and will support the wellbeing of child care staff.
3. Fully fund professional development, relationship-based professional development and financial incentives to support providers in meeting staff qualifications, ongoing continuous quality improvement and achieve high quality levels in Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.
4. Expand the Community-Based Pathway to statewide implementation as a process for child care staff to demonstrate competencies that meet licensing education requirements.
5. Support professional development around skills the industry needs and reimburse providers for participation (trauma-informed care, dual language, racial bias training, business development, human resources, finance, business accelerator programs, etc.).
6. Expand eligibility requirements to use the state-funded early care and education substitute pool so licensed child care providers have access to temporary staff coverage or have the option to retain additional staff who are part of the child team to cover so that ratios are met when other staff are absent.

# Tactics:

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

**Table 2: Goal 1 Implementation Tactics**

	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Implementation Tactic</b>
<b>Compensation</b>	Task force DCYF	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, and to fulfill the legislative requirement to implement cost-based subsidy rates, the task force and DCYF will evaluate and recommend a compensation structure aligned to regional school system salary scales for use by DCYF to set WCCC subsidy rates, and an administrative mechanism and finance model to ensure adequate compensation of the entire child care workforce..
	Task force DCYF Legislature	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, the task force and DCYF will assess alternative funding streams (besides family tuition payments and subsidies) and a financing model to support competitive, living wages and benefits for child care employees that reflect their valuable contributions to positive outcomes for children, families and our economy. The legislature should fund and support implementation of the financing model.
	Legislature DCYF	Explore options to assist with worker retention to enable provider retention and expansion by funding retention bonuses for workers making less than a specified compensation threshold. Offer the bonuses at increased frequency in the first two years of employment and annual thereafter but at higher levels as workers advance along the longevity spectrum.
		Explore options to increase the rate of WCCC subsidies for early learning professionals' families if they are registered in the state's MERIT system as a means to complement wage increases and bolster child care employee household financial well-being to increase likelihood of retention.
<b>Benefits</b>	Task force DCYF HCA Legislature	*Evaluate options to support access to affordable healthcare insurance coverage for child care staff. Options include, but are not limited to, the Health Benefit Exchange, Apple Health and association health plans. Implement options to streamline enrollment, ensure adequate coverage and provide bridge funding for employee premiums.
	Legislature HCA	*Fund through the Health Care Authority or another mechanism group medical insurance for the employees of providers under a certain size, if a pool for all child care providers isn't feasible.
	Legislature	Research and implement options to support retirement benefits.
<b>Professional Development</b>	DCYF CCA of WA SEIU 925 SOWA	*Identify resources needed to assure professional development, coaching, rating and quality incentives provide financial support to achieving high quality levels.
		*Identify resources needed to identify high-demand skills and support professional development training and reimbursement.
		*Identify resources needed to implement the Community-Based Pathway statewide as a process for child care staff to demonstrate competencies.
	Legislature DCYF	*Expand relationship-based professional development within licensed programs to realize quick and direct quality improvement.
		*Incentivize higher education attainment and career pathways via scholarships, loan repayment programs and enhanced compensation.
		*Use multiple languages and platforms for all aspects of professional development.
	*Increase professional development and quality supports for providers serving school-age children.	
<b>Substitutes</b>	Legislature DCYF CCA of WA SEIU 925 SOWA	Seek to resolve known issues with the quality of data in the MERIT data system, such as the number of providers with verified education data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify resources needed to increase education data verification.</li> <li>○ Explore options to capture Community Based Pathway competencies in MERIT.</li> <li>○ If wage discrepancies based on race/ethnicity are found, make a plan to support equalization.</li> </ul>
		Evaluate options for expanding eligibility and increasing access to the substitute pool.

## Discussion:

**The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021 investments and initiatives will make significant progress toward this goal, but work remains to ensure child care providers are paid competitive, living wages and have healthcare and other benefits.**

Table 3 summarizes key investments and progress made in 2021. The 2021-23 state operating budget appropriated over \$30 million to implement a healthcare insurance premium assistance program for employees working at licensed child care facilities, as well as funds to promote and help child care staff navigate healthcare insurance options. Section 311 of the Fair Start for Kids Act directs DCYF to provide professional development supports, including Early Achievers scholarships, community-based training pathways, relationship-based professional development, data collection and training on many in-demand topics. Implementation strategies for this goal align with the following Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies:

- Expanding health care coverage through state sponsorship of child care workers on the Washington health benefit exchange and providing consumer assistance through navigators, as well as any other expansions of access to affordable health care for staff in child care centers, family home providers, outdoor nature-based care and early childhood education and assistance program staff.
- Increasing child care and early learning providers' compensation.
- Providing professional development opportunities and supporting the substitute pool for child care and early learning providers.
- Funding special designations in the working connections child care programs, early childhood education and assistance programs, and birth to three early childhood education and assistance programs including designations established in sections 302, 304, 305, and 404 of the Fair Start for Kids Act.
- Conducting quality rating and improvement system activities through the early achievers program.
- Recognizing the benefits of the diverse workforce and facilitating communication in the three most commonly spoken languages by developing a language access plan that centers on equity and access for immigrants, multilingual providers, caregivers, and families.

The task force recommends continuing and building on investments in 2021 and implementing Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies.

**Child care providers must be paid competitive, living wages and have access to healthcare and other benefits in order to stabilize the child care industry and address racial inequities for the child care workforce and the families they serve.**

The child care workforce is comprised disproportionately of low-income women of color: 94% of the U.S. child care workforce are women<sup>16</sup>, 50% of Washington's child care workforce are people of color and 30% are bilingual or multilingual.<sup>17</sup> This is both a strength and an opportunity for the field. Research has suggested that young children with providers and caregivers that reflect their home cultures and speak their home languages have better continuity between home and child care settings. Diverse providers can support children's healthy development.<sup>18</sup> Studies have found that the presence of a consistent caring adult in a child's life in the early years, as well as in childhood and adolescence, is associated better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions and a greater ability to handle stress later in life.<sup>19</sup> However, over half of American child care workers live in households that need to access public assistance. In Washington, child care employees rank in the third percentile of total earnings among occupational groups. A Bachelor of Arts in early childhood education was found to have the lowest projected lifetime earnings of 80 college majors considered.<sup>20</sup> In a 2015 national study, just 15% of child care staff had employer-provided healthcare insurance coverage, compared to 50% of all other workers.<sup>21</sup> Child care professionals leave the industry to go to entry-level jobs with better wages and benefits in other sectors, such as retail.

**We must develop a financial model to adequately fund professionals in the child care workforce.**

Child care staff should earn a living wage, reflective of the area they live. How to support compensation of a largely private-sector workforce is the question. The child care system is made up of various program types and funding structures – many of which are private, for-profit businesses that do not accept child care subsidies. Increased WCCC

subsidy rates and rate enhancements are a means of indirectly compensating a segment of the child care workforce, but subsidized spaces represent less than one-third of child care capacity. Subsidy rates alone will not support a statewide salary floor. However, subsidy rates that are at or very near the cost of providing quality child care will increase providers' ability to sustain their business, participate in the subsidy program and compensate staff appropriately. The task force recommends developing a mechanism that promotes appropriate wages, as subsidy rates are not automatically tied to compensation. The task force will continue examining cost drivers associated with levels of child care program quality, and determine recommended salary scales, for its Nov. 2022 report.

### **Professional development of the child care workforce results in better learning environments and child outcomes.**

A one-size-fits-all approach to demonstrating workforce qualifications and competencies is insufficient for recognizing all the ways child care educators learn, build skills and add value to child care programs and the industry. An approach centered a specific framework, such as higher education, is antithetical to the goal of preserving and increasing the racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of our state's child care workforce. The task force supports providers having a range of options to meet education requirements, including a noncredit-bearing community-based training pathway, work experience equivalencies and relationships-based programs such as Imagine U. Imagine U is a relationship-based mentorship program designed to increase the number of licensed family child care providers. Imagine U pairs experienced and talented licensed child care providers with those interested in becoming licensed, and offers both mentor and intern supports to help them grow professionally. Expansion of relationship-based professional development within licensed programs would rapidly improve quality.

### **No-cost or incentivized professional development opportunities will help child care programs meet Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.**

Licensed centers and family home child care programs that are not school-age-only must participate in Early Achievers quality rating and improvement system in order to accept WCCC subsidy vouchers. However, providers may need financial assistance to attain professional development, implement environmental improvements and make other programmatic changes needed to reach higher quality ratings. Systemic investments in Early Achievers and school-age child care quality standards, as well as targeted rate increases for high-need populations and community-based pathways, are necessary for child care providers and staff to become eligible for increased compensation and meet compensation goals. The task force recommends that the state pay for, or provide financial incentives for child care providers to pay for, professional development opportunities and program improvements to meet Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.

### **The task force recommends policymakers and administrators implement workforce strategies in such a way that:**

- Improving compensation and professional development, including career development pathways, will preserve and increase racial and ethnic equity and diversity in the child care workforce.
- Policy changes and strategies will not reduce or limit the number of providers of color in the field.
- Policy changes will “do no harm.” Policymakers and administrators will implement changes with care not to adversely impact child care affordability and access. For example, policymakers and administrators will prevent child care providers currently receiving a certain base rate from receiving a lower base rate due to changes in the regional structure; seek to prevent inflation of private pay rates as a result of increased subsidy rate payments; and seek to incentivize care in underserved areas or for underserved market segments rather than exacerbate the issue.
- Recommended workforce compensation policy changes will be made in tandem with changes to the subsidy system:
- If resources are limited, investments should prioritize addressing inequities across racial and ethnic groups, language groups and regions of the state.

# Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 3: Progress toward Goal 1: Child Care Workforce Economic Security, Career Options and Retention**

Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancement:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and, beginning in July 2022, provide WCCC subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Wage Supports:</b> DCYF will establish supports for providers in providing trauma-informed care inclusive of professional development and increased wages for employees with additional credentials. (FSKA Section 304, see also Professional Development below)</li> </ul>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Coverage Information:</b> DCYF will establish a process for informing, upon clearance of required background checks, employees of licensed family home, center-based and outdoor nature-based child cares about available financial supports and options for accessing health coverage.</li> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Coverage Outreach:</b> DCYF will help facilitate outreach from Health Benefits Exchange navigators and eligible employees. \$40,000</li> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Premium Assistance:</b> The Health Benefits Exchange will implement a health care insurance premium assistance program for employees working at licensed child care facilities. \$30,266,000</li> <li>○ <b>Evaluation of Healthcare Coverage Options:</b> DCYF will build upon the work of the task force to evaluate options to support access to affordable health care insurance coverage for licensed or certified child care providers. (FSKA Section 301)</li> </ul>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> Beginning July 2022, DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials. \$2,802,000</li> <li>○ <b>Professional Development to Build Capacity:</b> DCYF will provide professional development support for providers to increase business, staff and community capacity (FSKA Section 311).</li> <li>○ <b>Early Achievers System Improvements:</b> DCYF is implementing Early Achievers system improvements, such as virtual quality recognition, multiple pathways to maintain and reach higher levels, and enhanced coaching supports.</li> <li>○ <b>Training, Professional Development and Early Achievers Scholarships:</b> DCYF will implement trainings, Early Achievers scholarships and other professional development activities. DCYF will provide professional development supports to aid eligible providers in reaching the professional education and training standards adopted by the department. This includes activities such as updating training content, data collection and reporting, trainer recruitment, retention, program monitoring, trainings, etc. \$8,021,000</li> </ul>
Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Supporting the Substitute Pool:</b> FSKA includes a spending goal to support the substitute pool for child care and early learning providers (FSKA Section 102) that can also be used for substitutes retained within program staff.</li> </ul>



## Goal 2: Robust child care system infrastructure is in place to sustain a mixed-delivery model of high-quality child care services.

Infrastructure includes financial resources, professional development opportunities and access to behavioral, mental health, healthcare and educational and other resources.

### Objectives:

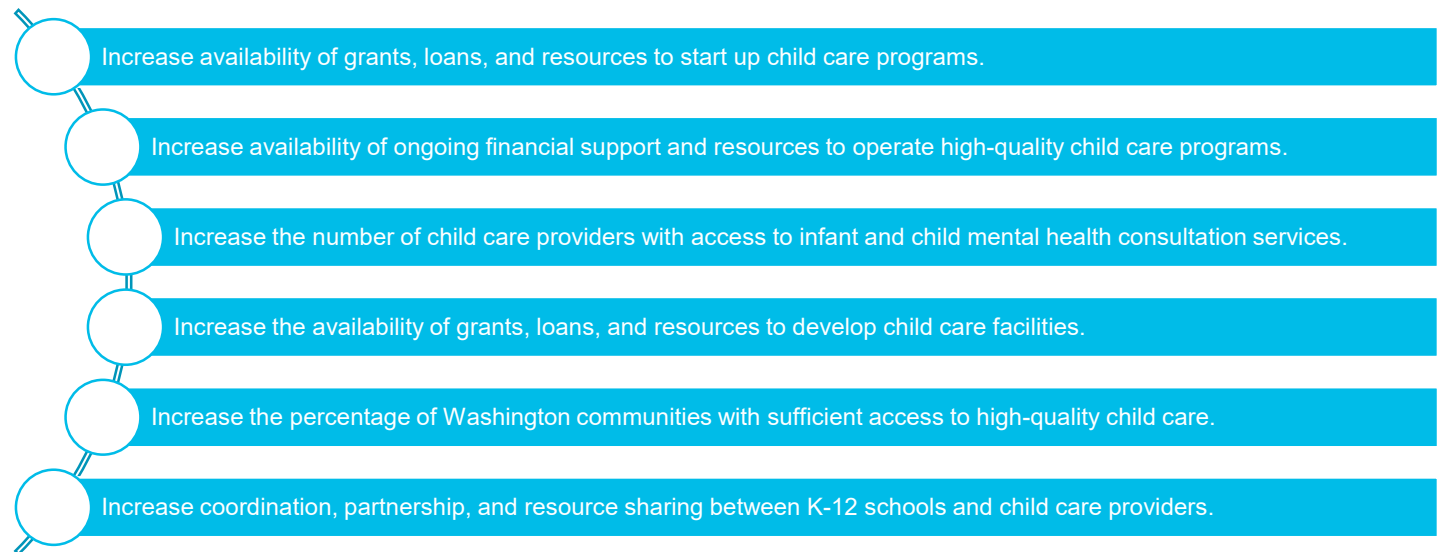


Figure 8: Goal 2 Objectives

### Implementation Strategies:

1. Offer public and private financial resources to support child care startup, operations and expansion.
2. Provide ongoing financial support through grants or contracts with providers to support the full cost of care.
3. Provide resources and services for high-quality child care programs at no cost to providers or families.
4. Support construction, renovation and expansion of child care facilities, including architectural support for construction and renovations, to assure accessibility and accommodations.
5. Establish channels of communication and coordination between the child care system and other related systems, such as K-12 education, healthcare system, economic development, higher education, etc.

# Tactics:

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

**Table 4: Goal 2 Implementation Tactics**

	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic	
<b>Invest in Startup &amp; Operation</b>	Legislature DCYF	*Increase access to grants, loans and other funding sources to offset child care operating and capital facility costs, including but not limited to the Early Learning Facility Fund, small grants and microloans.	
	Legislature Commerce CDFIs	*Provide state funds to leverage public-private partnerships with community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to develop child care financing options, such as loan programs.	
	Legislature DOR	Provide a point of sale, sales (and use) tax exemption on consumables used in providing child care.	
	Legislature DCYF Commerce CDFIs	Explore options to fund new child care business start-up grants up to \$10,000 to meet licensing-required improvements for potential licensed family homes that can expand the supply inventory. *Target investments to incentivize provision of care in underserved market segments.	
	Legislature DCYF	*Incentivize provision of child care in the child’s home language and support dual language learning.	
<b>Provide Services &amp; Supports</b>	Legislature DCYF	*Provide resources so child care programs can implement trauma-informed, culturally responsive and bias-reducing practices.	
	Legislature DCYF Commerce	*Support provision of child care in underserved geographic areas and rural areas so families may access child care in their local communities. *Develop local community capacity to meet local child care needs in a variety of settings.	
	Legislature DCYF CCA system	*Offer technical assistance to child care providers to support business startup, operation and growth. Explore options to implement a “grow your own(ership)” initiative that provides startup funds and mentoring to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) child care educators so they can become child care business owners and build wealth. *Provide access to infant and early childhood mental health consultants. Create and maintain a “best practices” guidebook on child care business and management operations. Explore options to fund and staff a bulk purchase clearinghouse for licensed care providers and the most common supplies, small equipment and furniture they use to reduce operational costs. *Implement statewide shared services programs and cooperatives for provider business needs, such as financial management, human resources, purchasing, etc. Explore options to fund “hub-satellite” models of service provision to provide the mechanism (the hub) for “back office” and other optional shared services to small, new and/or BIPOC-owned enterprises. Explore options to fund legal and other technical assistance supports for child care providers entering negotiations with local businesses to provide child care for those employers’ workers. Explore options to fund Centers for Child Care Recruitment and Expansion throughout the state.	
	<b>Develop Facilities</b>	Legislature Commerce DCYF	*Continue to invest in the Early Learning Facilities Fund, including the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Revolving Account and the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Development Account. *Provide capital investments to build and expand child care facilities. *Continue to invest in technical assistance for construction or renovation of child care facilities to ensure timely and efficient startup and expansion. Encourage municipalities to allow flexibility for child care uses as part of local zoning codes.

	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
		Explore options to fund and provide technical assistance to a pilot of local land trusts to establish a child care version of a home ownership model where the public sector funds the trust to own the land under newly acquired or built licensed child care family homes or centers, with a minimum time commitment to operate as child care. This would reduce expansion and start-up costs. Create an initiative specifically for BIPOC-owned enterprises.
		Considering implementing Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or similar for state-funded facilities, focusing on children's health and wellbeing.
		Support providers' efforts to develop facilities that provide generous, high-quality space for children to move and thrive--beyond the minimum requirement of 35 square feet per child.
	Commerce	Keep records of construction costs for state-funded facilities for future planning, as OSPI does for public school facilities.
	Legislature DOR	Provide a retail sales (and use) tax exemption or deferral for construction, renovation and remodeling of child care facilities.
	DCYF	*Streamline facility permitting and licensing (see Goal 7).
Build Systems	Legislature DCYF OSPI School Districts SOWA	Develop and maintain clear and supportive partnerships between schools, school districts and child care providers (strong memoranda of understanding (MOUs), data sharing agreements, consistent communication, transportation options, sharing of professional development and student-focused technology, increased fund sharing, etc.).
	Legislature	*Develop policies to ensure that we have a fully integrated preschool and child care system to best serve children and families.

## Discussion:

### **Public and private resources must work together for one robust child care system.**

Our state needs an integrated and comprehensive mixed-delivery child care system. Coordination between schools and child care would result in better child care access, the ability for parent choice and children with more support for healthy development, school readiness and success. The task force recommends supporting an integrated child care system through intentional planning and resource coordination between school and child care systems. The task force acknowledged that children, families and educators would benefit from partnerships and sharing of information (such as individualized education programs (IEPs), 504 plans and immunization records as data sharing agreements allow), technology, space in school buildings and professional development opportunities. Additionally, streamlined, single entry points and navigation assistance would help children and families access a variety of services, including but not limited to child care, preschool, developmental screening, healthcare and mental health services, home visiting, parent support groups, play and learn groups and food and resource banks. The task force recommends that the legislature develop policies to support a fully integrated system to support child development and school success. This should build on DCYF and Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI) joint planning underway and investments in systems like Child Care Aware, Help Me Grow and WithinReach.

### **Licensed child care capacity must grow by an estimated 34% to meet demand.**

The 2020 Child Care Industry Assessment estimated that an additional 48,310 licensed child care spaces are needed to meet the demand of families with insufficient access to child care, in addition to the child care system's capacity to serve over 180,000 children. High-quality child care programs often incorporate Early Childhood Education and Assessment Program (ECEAP) classrooms or blend ECEAP with private-pay preschool as part of their business model. DCYF has estimated that over 14,000 additional state-funded ECEAP preschool spaces are needed to meet entitlement in 2026-27.

### **Increased investments in child care system infrastructure will sustain child care businesses and grow the industry.**

Expenses associated with operating a high-quality child care program are often higher than what families can afford to pay. This is particularly true with regard to serving infants and toddlers. Providers operate with slim margins and find it difficult to pay wages and benefits that reflect the high value staff contribute to program quality and positive outcomes for children and families. A combination of indirect support, such as subsidy vouchers with tiered reimbursement rates,

and direct support, such as grants or contracts to support access and quality, will ensure providers have a stable and predictable funding stream that supports high-quality programs. Additionally, non-financial supports and services help child care programs operate at high quality levels and meet children and families' needs. For example, state-funded Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) consultants support Early Achievers coaches and child care providers by providing resources, information and guidance regarding challenging behavior and expulsions and may travel to assist providers in serving families and children with severe behavioral needs. Having specialist and support services come to the child care setting has many benefits: Families do not have to take their child away from the program to receive services, which is a burden when going to school or work. It also allows the opportunity for specialists to observe and interact with the child in their classroom with their peers. The specialist then also has a direct line to the teacher to convey ideas and provide resources.

### **Support universal access to high-quality preschool and child care through mixed delivery.**

Research indicates that high-quality child care can result in less school-age discipline, less involvement in the criminal justice and social service systems, better educational attainment, more productive employment and overall better mental and physical health. At the time of this report, the Biden Administration is proposing the American Families Plan. This legislation would provide universal preschool for three and four year olds. The Plan acknowledges the opportunity high-quality care offers children, particularly children from families with lower incomes or children of color.<sup>22</sup>

Universal preschool would operate separately from the child care market and would offer free enrollment, likely generated from government appropriations at the federal and state levels. Inherently, universal preschool would be a competing option to the child care market unless it was established and funded inclusive of the private child care market.

The Bipartisan Policy Center released a June 2021 report stating that universal preschool is not a solution to child care cost or lack of access.<sup>23</sup> The report outlined potential unintentional consequences of universal preschool:

- The child care market may become destabilized. Child care providers' primary source of income is often tuition. Service delivery often costs more than what a family can afford for care. As a result, one way to balance expenses is to keep wages low. Child care providers adhere to caregiver to child ratios per age group, with infants younger than one year old requiring a ratio of 1:4. One way that child care providers balance their expenses is to increase the number of rooms that serve children ages 3 to 5. The caregiver to child ratio required is generally 1:10. The impact of such competition from a free universal preschool program could disrupt the child care market's delicate equilibrium, if the demand declines for child care in higher-ratio age groups.
- A universal program could disrupt parent choice. Parents may lose the flexibility a mixed-delivery system offers. Opportunities to select or choose care based on a family's needs, values or preferences may become limited.
- Families may need to work within multiple systems to get the care they need. Universal preschool would likely operate within school hours, and neither address a traditional daytime schedule nor address families with nonstandard hours. Because programs would likely not align with a workday, families may be in a position to have to work both within the publically funded system and the private market to fulfill child care needs.

As noted in the report, the child care system consists of a patchwork of providers – a mixed delivery system of for profit and non-profit businesses; large centers with regional or national branding or ownership; family or in-home care providers; friends; neighbors; and faith-based providers. Nationally, and on a statewide level, demand for affordable and high-quality child care outpace supply. The value of a high-quality, free program is supported by the task force. However, there is concern that such an option could irrevocably disrupt the current child care system that needs to be taken into consideration before such a program is available. The task force recommends continuing and increasing the coordination between DCYF and OSPI, as well as promoting regional and local coordination between educational service districts, school districts, child care providers, child care resource and referral agencies and other stakeholders.

### **The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021 investments and initiatives brought us closer to achieving the goal of robust child care system infrastructure.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act, 2021-23 state operating and capital budget and other 2021 legislation made significant initial investments and put into state law important child care policies and infrastructure. Table 5 summarizes key investments

and progress made in 2021. Implementation strategies for this goal align with the following Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies:

- Supporting and expanding access to the early childhood education and assistance program to reach state-funded entitlement required in RCW 43.216.556.
- Providing resources and supports for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers that better reflect the full cost of care.
- Delivering infant and early childhood mental health consultation services.
- Establishing prekindergarten through third grade systems coordinators at educational service districts.
- Supporting youth development programs serving children and youth ages birth through 12 including, but not limited to, expanded learning opportunities, mentoring, school-age child care, and wraparound supports or integrated student supports.
- Awarding grants and loans through the early learning facilities grant and loan program established under chapter 43.31 RCW.
- Supporting costs for transparent data collection and information technology systems operated by the department and department contractors, in particular, to ensure equitable systemic service provision and outcomes.
- Providing access to learning technology.
- Providing child care resource and referral services.
- Expanding prenatal to three services and supports, including the birth to three early childhood education and assistance program and the in-home parent skill-based programs established in RCW 43.216.130.
- Building and delivering a family resource and referral linkage system.
- Administering comprehensive shared services hubs to allow the ongoing pooling and shared use of services by licensed or certified child care centers and family home providers.
- Providing start-up grants to eligible organizations as described in RCW 43.31.575 who provide or commit to providing the early childhood education and assistance program or working connections child care. Start-up grants must be used for one-time start-up costs associated with the start-up of a new child care or early childhood education and assistance program site.
- Recognizing the benefits of the diverse workforce and facilitating communication in the three most commonly spoken languages by developing a language access plan that centers on equity and access for immigrants, multilingual providers, caregivers, and families.

The task force recommends continuing and building on investments in 2021 and implementing Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies.

Figure 9: Spotlight on Child Care Partnership Grants<sup>24</sup>

Commerce, using a combination of state funding and matching grants through the Safe Start Fund administered by the Seattle Foundation, awarded \$3,160,000 in late 2020 to support local collaborative planning and activities to expand access to child care. Six- to nine-month grants supported a broad base of providers, local governments, businesses, schools, families and communities critically problem solving against child care challenges statewide while communities recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Grant project partners assessed needs, studied feasibility of child care options and tested solutions within the unique time, place and populations of their own communities. Two initial rounds of partnership grants have funded 41 projects in Benton, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Ferry, Franklin, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Island, King, Kittitas, Klickitat, Mason, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Spokane, Stevens, Thurston, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Whitman and Yakima counties. Commerce received additional funding to continue this program in the 2021-23 biennium.

# Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 5: Progress toward Goal 2: Developing Robust Child Care System Infrastructure**

Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Stabilization Grants:</b> DCYF will distribute nearly \$400M in grants, via the federal American Rescue Plan Act, to child care providers to stabilize the child care industry as part of the state's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.</li> <li>○ <b>Waived Licensing Fees:</b> DCYF will waive fees for child care applicants and licensed providers through June 2023 per <a href="#">SB 5151</a> (2021).</li> </ul>
Services and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials.</li> <li>○ <b>Mental Health Consultation:</b> DCYF received funding to increase the number of state-funded Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants from six to 12, plus one coordinator position. The IECMH consultants must support Early Achievers program coaches and child care providers by providing resources, information and guidance regarding challenging behavior and expulsions and may travel to assist providers in serving families and children with severe behavioral needs. \$3,946,000</li> <li>○ <b>Play and Learn Groups:</b> Funding was provided for expansion of FFN Play and Learn Groups that offer parents and other caregivers culturally responsive opportunities to support their children's early learning, build relationships that reduce isolation and encourage socialization and promote kindergarten readiness. \$860,000</li> <li>○ <b>Planning Grants:</b> Commerce will issue Child Care Partnership Grants to governmental and non-profit organizations to support collaborative planning and activities that help communities address the shortage of child care during the 2021-23 biennium. \$1,000,000</li> </ul>
Facility Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Facility Grants and Loans:</b> The <a href="#">2021-23 state capital budget</a> included \$55M in Early Learning Facility Fund, WELL Fund, one-time renovation grants and technical assistance. <a href="#">HB 1370</a> (2021) increased grant amounts and made recommended changes to the ELF program.</li> <li>○ <b>Reduced Fees:</b> <a href="#">HB 1331</a> (2021) limits and allows local jurisdictions to waive impact fees for child care facilities.</li> <li>○ <b>ECEAP Facility Needs Assessment:</b> DCYF will develop a methodology to identify, at the school district level, where ECEAP slots are needed by Sep. 2022.</li> </ul>
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>ELAC Expansion:</b> The <a href="#">Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)</a>, established in RCW 43.216.075, was given the purview of providing guidance on the Fair Start for Kids Account, expanded membership and was directed to create a temporary licensing subcommittee. \$272,000 (FSKA Section 104).</li> <li>○ <b>ELAC Annual &amp; Biennial Progress Reporting:</b> ELAC will work with DCYF to provide annual updates on FSKA strategy and priority implementation beginning in Aug. 2022, and submit a biennial report describing how the FSKA investments have impacted policy objectives beginning in Sep. 2023.</li> <li>○ <b>Data Dashboards:</b> The <a href="#">2021-23 state operating budget</a> funded development of public-facing regionalized data dashboards and reports. \$300,000</li> <li>○ <b>Integrated Early Learning Report:</b> DCYF will collaborate with OSPI to report options and recommendations for aligning and integrating high-quality early learning programs administered by both agencies by Sep. 2022. \$1,010,000</li> </ul>

## Goal 3: Child care providers can operate high-quality programs and accept Working Connections Child Care subsidies.

### Objectives:

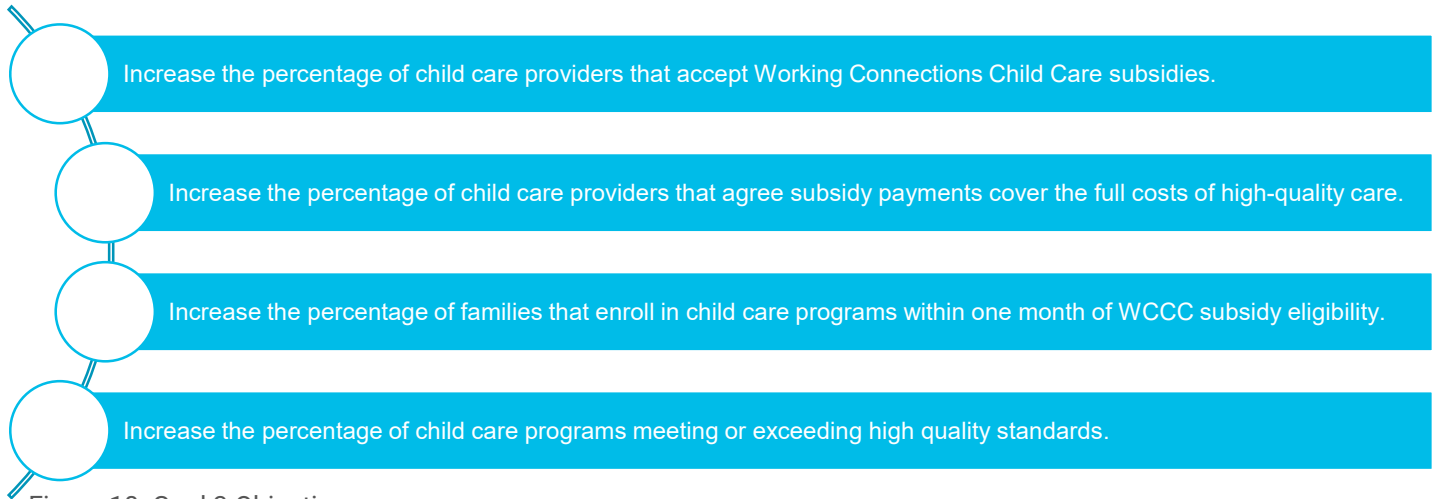


Figure 10: Goal 3 Objectives

### Implementation Strategies:

1. Pay providers a monthly rate for children enrolled in the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy system, structured like the private market.
2. Increase WCCC subsidy base rates and tiered reimbursement payments to cover the full cost associated with providing high-quality child care.
3. Change WCCC subsidy geographic regions to reflect cost of operating a program at the ZIP code level.
4. Provide more resources and professional development to child care programs so they can meet Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.

**Table 6: Goal 3 Implementation Tactics**

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Increase & Simplify Subsidy Payments	Legislature DCYF	*Expand monthly WCCC subsidy reimbursement rates to all licensed child care providers.
		*Continue funding increased WCCC subsidy base rates, tiered reimbursement payments and other financial supports.
		*Continue providing subsidy rate enhancements to incentivize provision of child care in unmet market segments and to programs providing unique services, such as nontraditional hour care; care for underserved age groups such as infants and toddlers; care for populations with specialized health or educational needs; care in underserved geographic, ethnic or linguistic communities; and dual-language programming.
Pay Full Cost of Quality	Task Force DCYF	*Complete cost of quality model to identify gaps between existing WCCC subsidy reimbursement and cost to operate.
	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop and implement subsidy regions based on operating costs by ZIP code group.
		*Develop and implement supported professional development opportunities, including coaching and scholarships.

Discussion:

**The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021 investments and initiatives brought us closer to achieving the goal of providing ongoing support for high levels of quality and affordability in child care programs.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act increased WCCC subsidy base rates to the 85th percentile beginning in July 2021, and implemented subsidy rate enhancements and grants to support provision of high-quality, affordable child care. The Act provided incentives and supports for providers that care for infants, provide dual language programming, serve children who have developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs or other unique needs or operate during nontraditional hours. A 2021-23 state operating budget proviso directed the task force to identify the true cost of providing quality child care and report its findings by Nov. 2022. Under the Fair Start for Kids Act, DCYF will build on the work of the task force to develop and implement a child care cost estimate model. Table 7 summarizes key investments and progress made in 2021. Implementation strategies for this goal align with Fair Start for Kids Act spending goal (a) increasing child care subsidy rates, with the goal of moving toward the full cost of providing high-quality child care; and (d) implementing the provisions of collective bargaining agreements for family child care providers negotiated pursuant to RCW 41.56.028. The task force recommends continued investment in these policies so more providers can offer, and more families can afford and access, high-quality child care.

**The state must determine the cost of quality in accordance with federal requirements in order to pay providers subsidy rates that cover the full costs of high-quality child care.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act expressed that it is the intent of the legislature to "systemically increase child care subsidy rates over time until rates are equal to the full cost of providing high quality child care." In addition to building on the work of the task force to develop and implement a cost estimate model, the Act directed DCYF to consider adjusting subsidy rates to reflect cost of living such as area median income, cost of living by zip code, and grouping by categories such as rural, suburban or urban; and incorporating a nonstandard-hour child care cost model. This approach aligns with previous task force recommendations. It also involves the task force through completion of a cost of quality study.

To provide a foundation for DCYF's cost models and subsidy rate analyses, the task force will coordinate with DCYF to get federal approval of a cost study methodology centered on a comprehensive survey of child care providers. The task force will implement lessons learned from the 2020 cost modeling process that was curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Input from a large, representative sample of child care providers will allow for cost modeling that factors in relevant drivers of cost for centers, family homes, and school-age-only programs by licensed capacity, age of children served, geography, quality rating, supports for children and families served, and other program attributes. The task force recognizes that child care providers may be reluctant to share financial information and business details, and that providers may feel less



vulnerable and be more inclined to complete cost surveys if trusted partner organizations reached out to explain the purpose, potential benefits, and use of information being collected.

The task force therefore aims to develop and deploy the child care cost of quality survey in collaboration with trusted partners, and take steps to ensure the survey is successful and reflective of the actual cost of care needed to support the child care field. This includes, but is not limited to, the following measures:

- Collaborate with partner organizations, such as Child Care Aware of Washington, child care resource and referral agencies, Washington Childcare Centers Association, Washington Communities for Children, SEIU 925, and School's Out Washington, in the development of and rollout of the child care provider survey.
- Structure the survey to capture costs drivers including but not limited to the following:
  - Access to behavioral/mental health consultation and developmental supports
  - Achieving various levels of quality in school-age programs using [Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development Programs](#)
  - Best practices for physical space, including healthy air, materials and access to natural light; adequate indoor and outdoor space per child, meeting or preferably exceeding DCYF minimums.
  - Child assessment tools and the staff training to use them
  - Classroom materials
  - Culturally responsive care
  - Developmentally appropriate care, including for children with developmental disabilities
  - Dual-language programs
  - Evidence-based curriculum and the staff training to use it
  - Initial and ongoing staff training and professional development
  - Licensed facility and environmental improvements
  - Linguistically appropriate or multilingual care
  - Ongoing changes to Early Achievers and Quality Standards for Afterschool and Youth Development Programs, as the program criteria or quality standards change in the future.
  - Staffing with competitive, livable wages; health, dental and retirement benefits; and paid leave, including classroom/teaching staff at ratios that support high program quality, and other staff as needed to support program administration and operation
  - Subsidy region structure changes, such as regions based on groupings of ZIP codes by cost of operation
  - Substitutes
  - Trauma-informed care
- Develop a robust campaign to share information about the survey and explain why it is important. Clarify how and why the information is being gathered and how it will be used. Explain the benefits of the cost of quality study and cost model.
- Conduct outreach through multiple methods, including outreach by trusted organizations and individuals, such as Early Achievers coaches; professional organizations; outreach to school-age programs; and outreach in various languages.
- Review data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, which will be beneficial for understanding potential racial and ethnic disparities and ensuring equitable opportunities.
- Identify how to invest resources and engage with partners to get the most accurate and complete survey responses. Consider providing incentives for completing the survey, such as gift cards or giveaways.

Completing the survey in this manner, and with federal approval, will support the task force and the legislature's intent to transition away from a market rate survey to a cost-based methodology for determining WCCC subsidy rates.

## Implement monthly subsidy rates for all child care providers to increase administrative efficiency and financial stability.

WCCC currently works on a model where families receive authorization for a certain number of hours of care per day in the month, and providers are reimbursed based on daily attendance. This introduces a significant burden on child care providers. Children with subsidized care do not offer the same stability as children in families that directly pay a single monthly tuition rate to hold their slot at the child care. This creates a higher burden on providers for billing subsidy clients than their private pay clients. Transitioning to monthly rates for all licensed providers would better align with center private pay practices and capture the administrative efficiencies of a simplified subsidy program for all licensed care. As part of their Collective Bargaining Agreement, licensed family home child care providers have transitioned to monthly rates. The task force recommends implementing monthly rates for all licensed child care programs.

Figure 11: Spotlight on Rural Child Care in Goldendale, Washington<sup>25</sup>

Goldendale, WA is the largest city in Klickitat County, a rural community of approximately **7,500 residents**. According to the US Census, the median household income is approximately **\$45,400**, with female-median annual incomes averaging \$38,667 and male-median annual incomes averaging \$58,351. **Veterans make up nearly 20%** of the Goldendale population. The city's **median age is approximately 48 years old**. 22.5% of the population identifies as having a disability. The City is overall white, at 92.7%, with the next largest demographic represented by Native populations at 4.5%. **Under the age of 6, nearly 30% identify as children of color**, substantially more diverse than the population as a whole. Goldendale is undergoing change, and there is demonstrated need for accessible and affordable child care options. **Currently, Goldendale does not have a licensed child care provider for infants and toddlers.**

The Klickitat County Childcare Committee (KCCC) formed in 2019 to address such issues. KCCC consists of local agencies, parents and business owners. In 2020, KCCC was awarded a planning grant through Commerce to find solutions to Goldendale's child care crisis. Prominent challenges remain: recruiting and maintaining a trained workforce, paying sustainable wages and keeping child care affordable for families. KCCC recently investigated converting Goldendale's Public Works Building into a child care center. Through a feasibility study of the costs associated with converting and establishing the Public Works Building as a child care center, **it was determined that there was no child care program model that would bring in revenue to cover even salaries alone.** Facility preparation inclusive of remodeling, and interior and exterior furnishings, was estimated to cost nearly \$250,000 not adjusted for post-pandemic cost increases. Assuming three classrooms with two teachers per class, one floating teacher, an assistant director and a director, annual salaries and benefits would total approximately \$395,000. This estimate does not include rent, taxes, fees, food, maintenance, depreciation costs, nor tax benefits and other savings.

Goldendale and broader Klickitat County continue to brainstorm how to increase capacity for developing new child care providers. Ideas include a potential partnership with a local high school to engage high school seniors as child care staff and continued outreach with current providers to more deeply explore challenges that include cost, hours, quality and location. KCCC has launched a community-led effort to build capacity and connections between local government, business and families. A video campaign is in development in an effort to encourage Goldendale and Klickitat County residents to become licensed child care providers, emphasizing the importance of quality licensed child care to advance economic development and child outcomes. Multilingual training and materials are also available.

# Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 7: Progress toward Goal 3: Supporting High-Quality Child Care Programs that Accept Subsidies**

<p>WCCC Subsidy Payments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Subsidy Base Rate Increase:</b> DCYF will increase WCCC subsidy base rates to 85th percentile beginning July 2021. \$116,805,000</li> <li>○ <b>Complex Needs Grants:</b> DCYF will administer two complex needs funds (one for ECEAP/birth-to-three ECEAP; one for child care) to promote inclusive, least restrictive environments and to support contractors and providers serving children who have developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs or other unique needs beginning July 2021. \$9,674,000</li> <li>○ <b>Infant Rate Enhancements:</b> DCYF will implement an infant rate enhancement for child care providers accepting subsidy or birth-to-three ECEAP beginning July 2022. \$2,531,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancements:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and provide subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. beginning July 2022. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials beginning 2022. \$2,802,000</li> <li>○ <b>Grants for Culturally &amp; Linguistically Specific Programs:</b> DCYF will create a grant program to support inclusive and culturally and linguistically specific early learning and early childhood and parent support programs across the state. \$5,309,000</li> <li>○ <b>Collective Bargaining Agreement:</b> The child care provider collective bargaining agreement includes rate increases for Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers and increased rates for child care providers at Early Achievers Level 3.5 and operating nonstandard hours beginning July 2021. \$6,390,000</li> <li>○ <b>SPSS Migration:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF will migrate Social Service Payment System (SPSS) to a cloud-based system to implement grants, rate enhancements and other payments. \$2,487,000</li> </ul>
<p>Cost of Quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Cost of Quality Study:</b> The task force will identify and report on the true cost of providing high-quality child care by Nov. 2022. \$335,000</li> <li>○ <b>Cost-Based Subsidy Rate Model:</b> DCYF will develop and implement a child care cost estimate model for full costs of care.</li> <li>○ <b>Nonstandard Hours Rate Model:</b> DCYF, working with diverse stakeholders, must develop a rate model for nonstandard child care hours and submit the model to the Governor and the Legislature by Jan. 2022.</li> </ul>

## Goal 4: Low and middle income families are eligible for, know about and use Working Connections Child Care subsidies.

### Objectives:

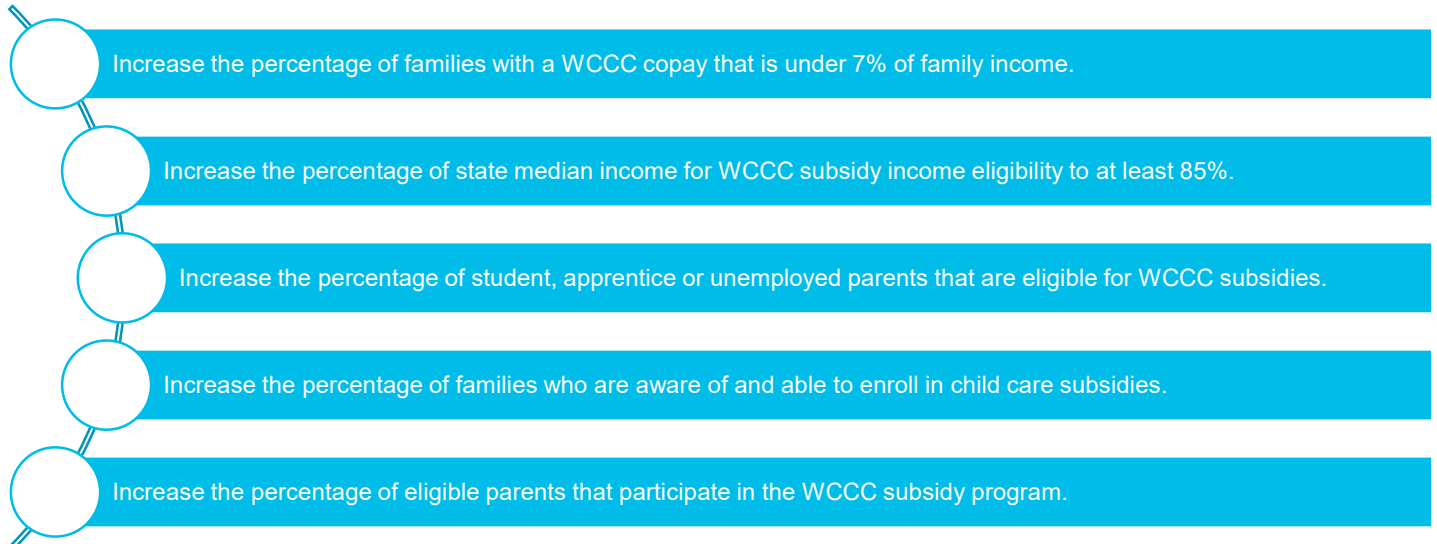


Figure 12: Goal 4 Objectives

### Implementation Strategies:

1. Eliminate the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy copayment "cliff effect" for eligible families by limiting eligible families' copayments to no more than 7% of a family's income.
2. Increase WCCC subsidy eligibility to at least 85% of state median income.
3. Expand allowable activities for WCCC subsidy eligibility to enable employed, unemployed and student parents to seek and retain work and education.
4. Develop comprehensive consumer education methods, information sharing partnerships and resources related to WCCC subsidies.
5. Eliminate the cap on WCCC subsidy program participation.

# Tactics:

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

**Table 8: Goal 4 Implementation Tactics**

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Lower WCCC Copays	Legislature DCYF	*Continue to fund the WCCC subsidy copay model in the Fair Start for Kids Act and sustain copay caps at or below 7% of household income.
		*Continue to fund the Fair Start for Kids Act WCCC subsidy eligibility increases.
Expand WCCC Eligibility		Explore options to increase WCCC subsidy eligibility to 100% of SMI or 100% of area median income.
		Expand WCCC subsidy eligibility for people seeking employment.
		*Continue to fund eliminated WCCC subsidy work requirements for two-year degrees and apprenticeships.
		*Appropriate funding to eliminate WCCC subsidy work requirements for parents completing four-year degrees and graduate degrees.
		Eliminate the cap to allow any eligible family to participate in the WCCC subsidy program.
Inform & Enroll Families in WCCC	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop methods to educate families about WCCC subsidies in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
		Partner and coordinate with child care resource and referral agencies, employers, job training organizations, colleges and universities, apprenticeship programs, labor organizations, community-based organizations, faith organizations, healthcare providers, public health agencies, schools and child care providers to share WCCC subsidy consumer education resources and information with parents and caregivers.
		*Develop and maintain culturally responsive WCCC subsidy consumer education resources in multiple languages.

## Discussion:

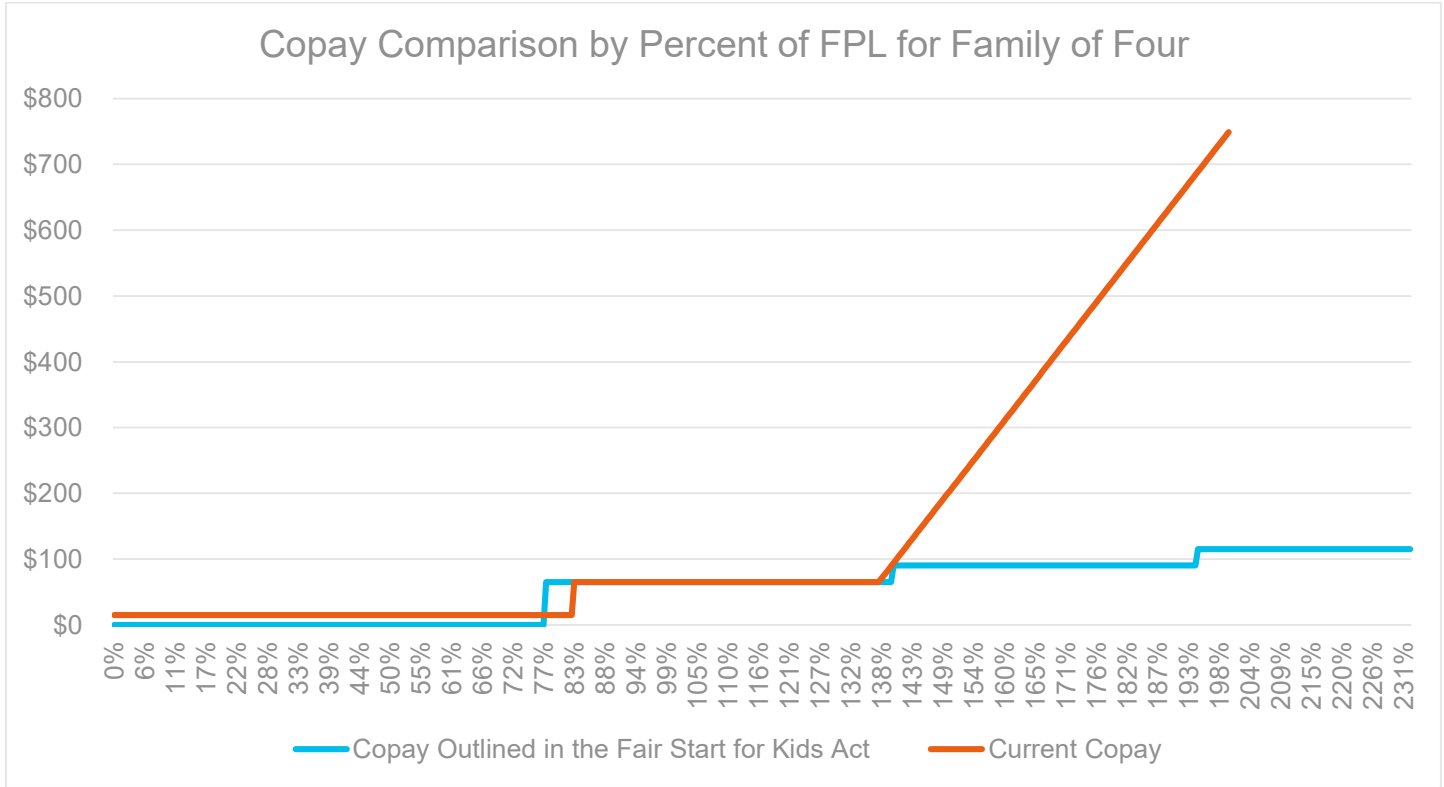
**The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021 investments and initiatives brought us closer to achieving the goal of expanding WCCC subsidy eligibility and enrollment, and work remains to help more families learn about and enroll in the subsidy program and to increase affordability for middle- to moderate-income families.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act expands family income eligibility and decreases copay amounts for the WCCC subsidy program. Figure 13 represents expanded subsidy eligibility and correlating copays based on income. Phased subsidy copay changes begin July 1, 2021. The Fair Start for Kids Act provided that, for households at or below 50% of the state median income (SMI), copays are capped at \$115 through January 1, 2022, and \$90 from January 1, 2022 through fiscal year 2023. For households at or below 60% of the SMI, copays are capped at \$115 through June 30, 2023. The Act requires, subject to the availability of funding, DCYF to adopt a copay model for households with annual incomes above 75% of the SMI and at or below 85% of SMI that is no greater than 7% of household income. This will effectively eliminate the copay "cliff effect" for families at or below 85% of SMI. Additionally, the state can receive federal matching funds for subsidizing families up to 85% of SMI; increasing eligibility to this level avoids leaving potential federal funds on the table.

The Fair Start for Kids Act allows DCYF to waive work requirements for students pursuing two-year, four-year and graduate degrees if funding is provided for that purpose. The 2021-23 state operating budget funded work requirement waivers for students pursuing two-year degrees.

Implementation strategies for this goal align with Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals (f) make child care affordable for families, and (h) provide child care subsidies for families working to resolve homelessness. Table 9 summarizes key investments and progress made in 2021. The task force recommends continued investment in copay structure changes and subsidy eligibility expansion. The task force additionally recommends exploring ways to subsidize families at or below 100% of SMI, and consideration of other measures to increase child care affordability so that cost is not a barrier to access.

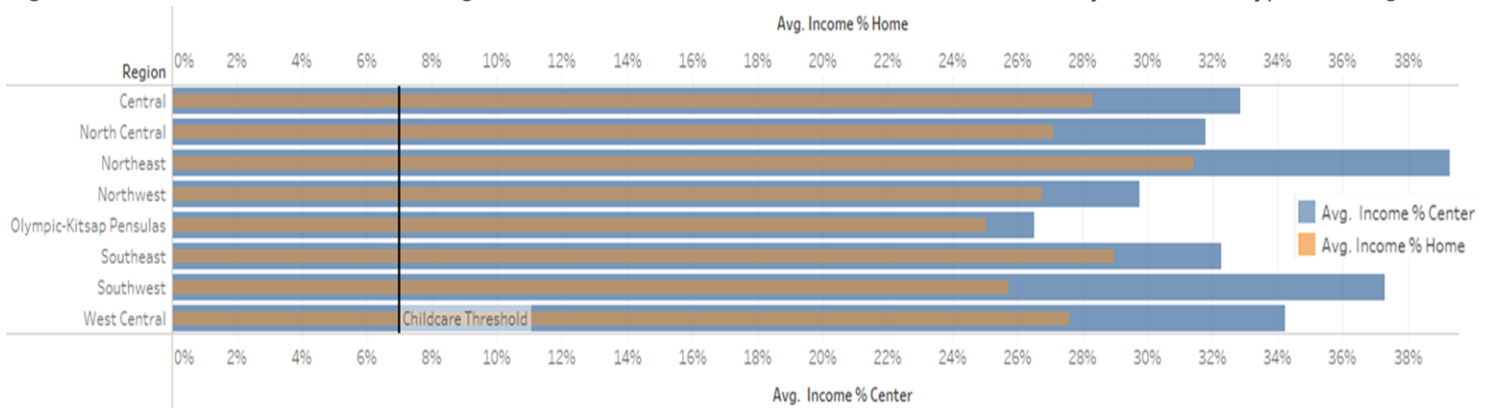
Figure 13: Comparison of Child Care Subsidy Copay and Percent of the Federal Poverty Level for a Family of Four



**Child care subsidies are an essential tool to increase child care affordability for low- and middle-income families, but affordability is a challenge for parents at higher incomes also.**

Subsidies increase child care access for eligible families. Research has shown that families that use subsidies have greater access to child care, more affordable child care and care of higher quality than families that are eligible but do not use subsidies. However, moderate- and even middle-income families also face costs that often exceed tuition at our state’s public colleges. Figure 14 shows that all families, whether they choose a center or a home care arrangement, are paying well over 20% of the median family income for care.<sup>26</sup> As the data is disaggregated by race, the differences become more apparent. For example, a Hispanic or Latino family with a preschooler and infant in the central Washington region would, based on median income by race and region, pay 41% of their income for center-based child care, or 36% of their income for home-based care. In comparison, a white family's median income is higher, and a white family in the same scenario would, based on median income by race a region, pay 25% of their income for center-based care, or 21% of their income for home-based care. The task force recommends supporting child care affordability for all families through expanded access to subsidies and other measures. Parents with access to affordable child care are more likely to participate in the labor force, upgrade their skills through education and become more financially independent. This contributes to long-term economic growth and productivity.

Figure 14: Child Care Cost as Percentage of Median Income for 1 Infant and 1 Preschooler by Child Care Type and Region

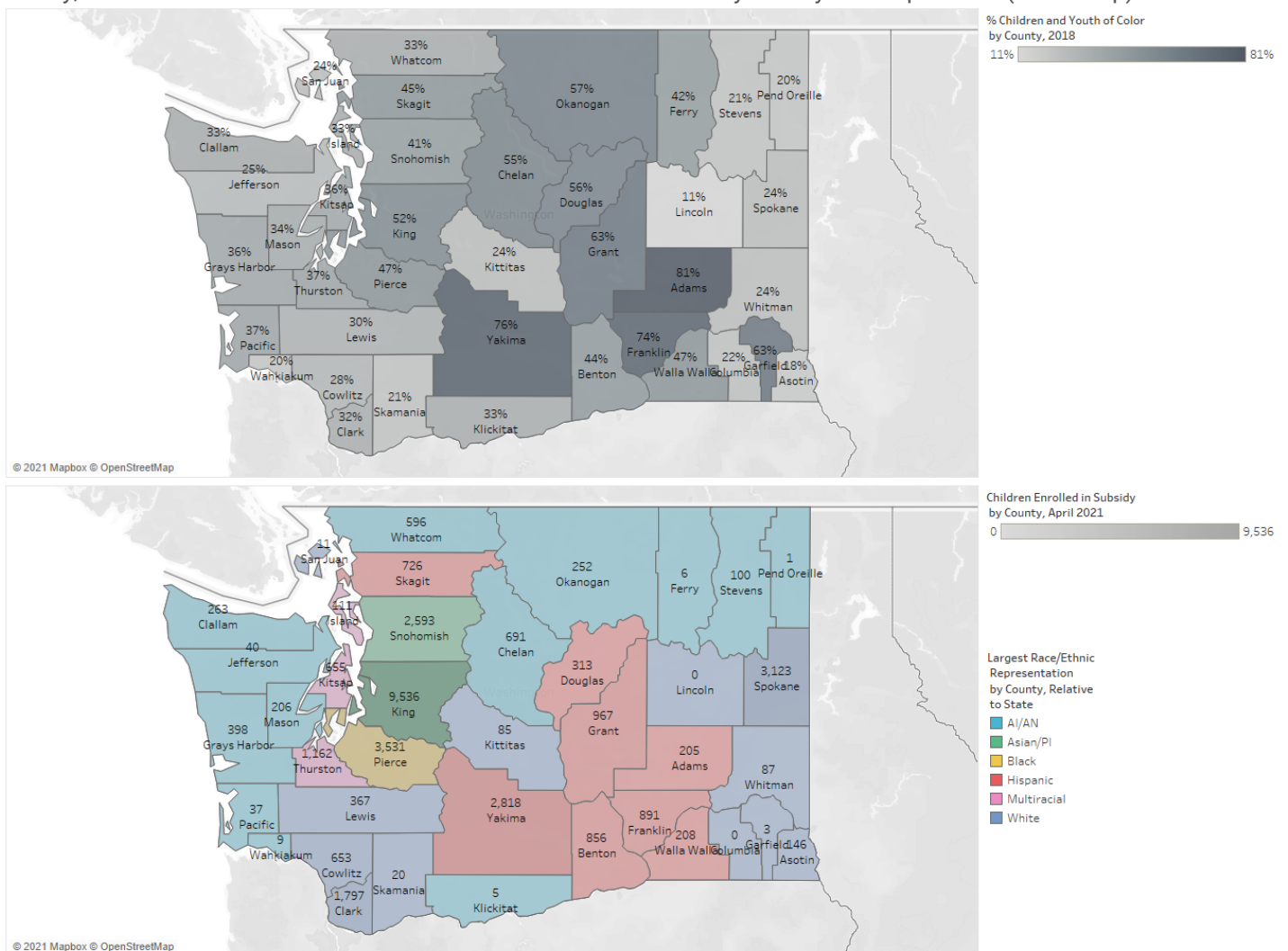


## Families need support in learning about and accessing child care subsidies.

As subsidies are expanded, there must be support for accessing and applying for benefits that is family-centered. Child care providers will likely have more families with subsidies applying for care; providers with care availability will need to be identified. The task force stated that relationships with families utilizing and exiting the system need to be strengthened. Both communities working as trusted messenger conduits and state agencies are responsible for addressing barriers to accessing subsidies.

Washington communities are diverse, with varying concentrations of children and youth of color. This is just one way that families and communities differ; the state also has a range of income levels, costs of living, occupational industries and languages spoken. Figure 15 displays information about the racial and ethnic diversity of children and youth in Washington counties, and the number of children enrolled in WCCC in April 2021 by county.<sup>27</sup> The upper map shows that the percentage of children and youth of color ranges from 11% in Lincoln County to 81% in neighboring Adams County. The shading of the lower map indicates the largest racial and ethnic representation of children and youth in each county, relative to the state. These maps are based on maps in DCYF's 2021 report on using data to advance racial equity.<sup>28</sup> Overlaid on the lower map is the number of children enrolled in WCCC in each county. These maps raise questions, such as, why do some counties have relatively high or low participation rates? What can be done to enable more families to benefit from child care subsidies? The task force suggested DCYF and stakeholders examine subsidy enrollment, exit and other data to identify strategies to help families take advantage of tools that increase child care affordability. This may include exploring opportunities to partner with employers to connect working parents with child care resources.

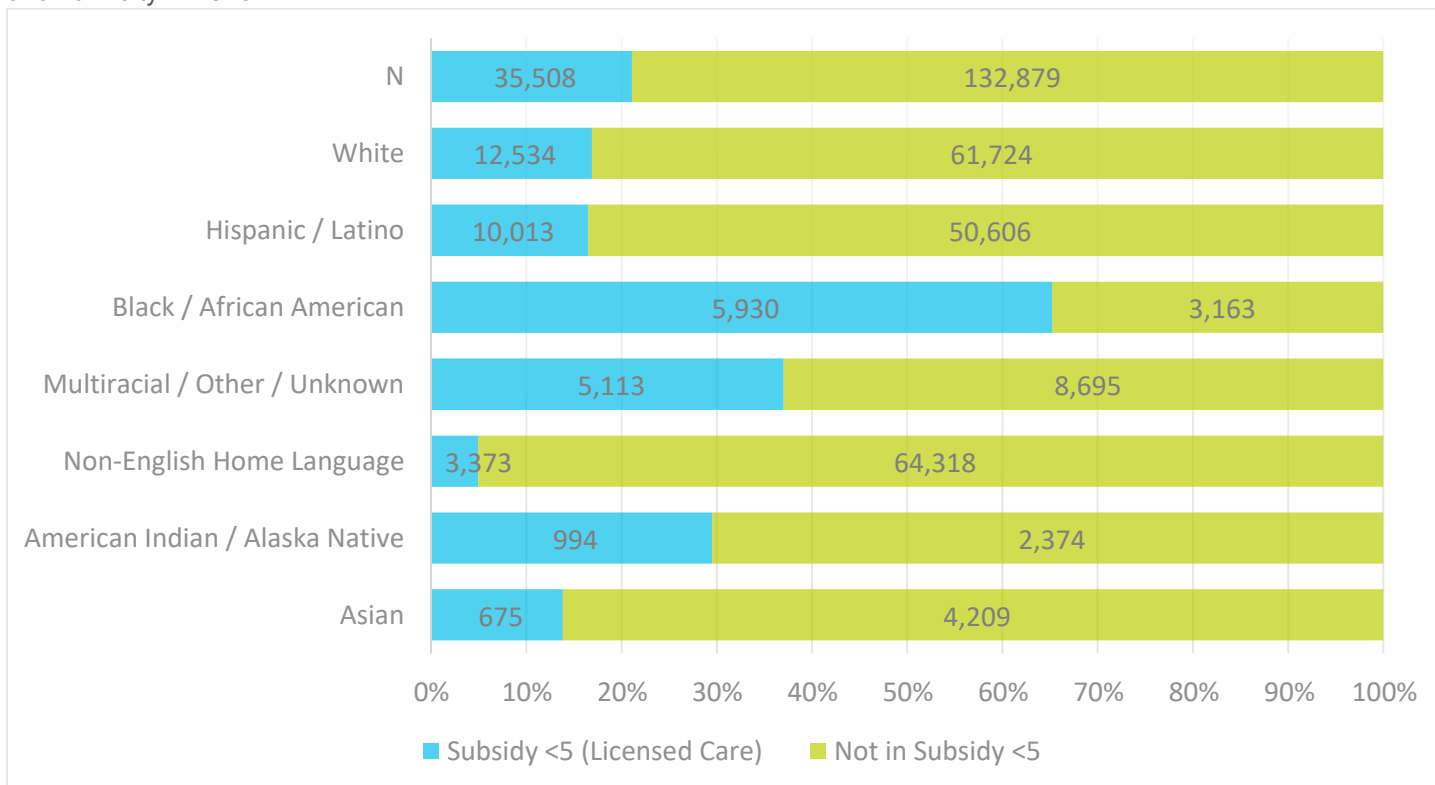
Figure 15: Percent of Child and Youth of Color by County, 2018 (upper map) and Largest Race/Ethnic Representation by County, Relative to State with Number of Children Enrolled in WCCC by County as of April 2021 (lower map)



Sources: [2021 Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity](#); April 2021 [DCYF Early Achievers Dashboard](#)

Estimates suggested that just over 20% of children under five were enrolled in the WCCC program in 2018.<sup>29</sup> This decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 16 shows variations in the proportion of eligible children enrolled in WCCC by race and ethnicity.<sup>30</sup> Notably, a relatively high number of eligible children who identified as Black/African American were enrolled (over 60%) whereas only about 5% of eligible children with a home language other than English participated in the subsidy program. The task force found that data disaggregated by race and ethnicity should inform efforts to expand participation in WCCC and other programs for children and families. The state should identify disparities, examine their root causes, set targets and implement strategies to reduce them, and monitor progress toward their resolution. Additional strategies for assisting families with accessing child care programs and supports are discussed in [Goal 5](#).

Figure 16: Number of Children under Age Five Enrolled in WCCC as a Percent of Total Estimated Eligible Children by Race and Ethnicity in 2018



Source: [2018 Early Start Act Report, DCYF](#)

## Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 9: Progress toward Goal 4: Expanding WCCC Subsidy Eligibility and Enrollment**

WCCC Subsidy Copays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Copay Reduction:</b> FSKA changes the copayment schedule and reduces copayments, with changes set to occur July 2021, Jan. 2022, July 2023 and July 2025. \$76,731,000</li> </ul>
WCCC Subsidy Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Eligibility Expansion:</b> FSKA switched WCCC subsidies to a state median income (SMI) metric, and will increase eligibility to 60% of SMI by Oct. 2021, 75% of SMI by July 2025 and 85% of SMI by July 2027. \$17,359,000</li> <li>○ <b>Student Parents:</b> FSKA waives work requirement for some student populations beginning July 1, 2021. \$8,833,000</li> <li>○ <b>Caseload Restrictions:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF shall manage the program so that the average monthly caseload does not exceed 33,000 households and the department shall give prioritized access to certain groups.</li> </ul>



# Goal 5: Families can navigate child care supports and enroll in child care programs.

## Objectives:

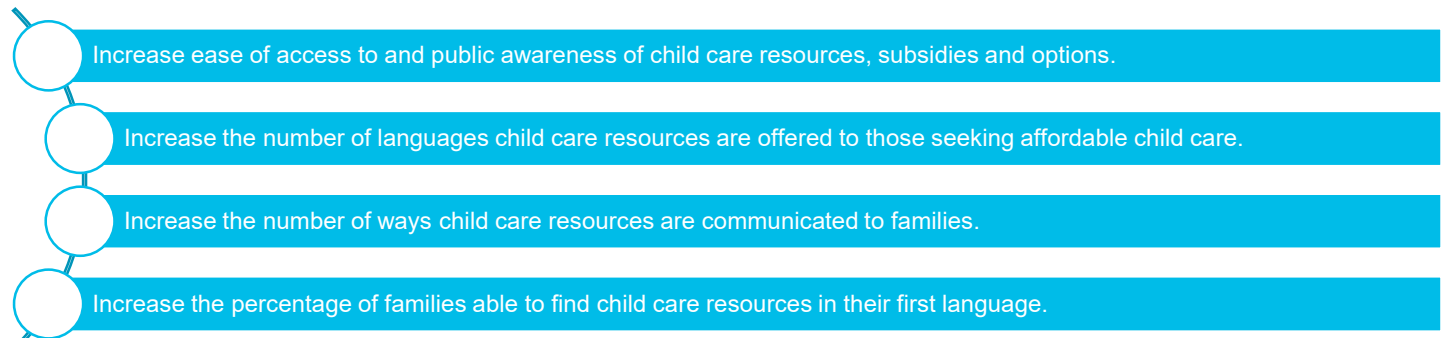


Figure 17: Goal 5 Objectives

## Implementation Strategies:

1. Strengthen child care consumer education systems that help families navigate child care subsidies and options, including informational resources, technical assistance, outreach and other supports.
2. Offer consumer education information in multiple languages to reduce language barriers in seeking and accessing child care.

## Tactics:

*Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021*

Table 10: Goal 5 Implementation Tactics

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Develop Resources	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop methods to educate families about state child care resources in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
		*Develop and maintain culturally responsive child care consumer education resources in multiple languages. Offer information about finding and affording child care, child care program quality and who to contact to learn more or receive assistance.
Coordinate Referrals	Legislature DCYF CCA system WCFC HMG WA WithinReach State agencies	*Continue to support statewide and regional child care resource and referral systems (Child Care Aware agencies).
		*Continue to support statewide family child care resource and referral linkage systems (WithinReach).
		*Continue to expand Help Me Grow statewide.
		*Improve the system of referral to benefits outside DCYF (SNAP, TANF, etc.).
Increase Language Accessibility	DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop and implement a DCYF language access plan.
		*Develop and implement a dual language designation.
		*Provide grants, rate enhancements, professional development and resources for dual language programming.
		*Develop and implement early childhood and school-age equity grants.

## Discussion:

The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021 investments and initiatives will make significant progress toward increasing language accessibility and coordination of referral systems. Table 11 summarizes key investments and progress made in 2021. Implementation strategies for this goal align with the following Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies:

- Establishing prekindergarten through third grade systems coordinators at educational service districts.
- Providing child care resource and referral services.
- Building and delivering a family resource and referral linkage system.
- Recognizing the benefits of the diverse workforce and facilitating communication in the three most commonly spoken languages by developing a language access plan that centers on equity and access for immigrants, multilingual providers, caregivers, and families.

The task force recommends continuing and building on investments in 2021 and implementing Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies.

### **Increasing language access will reduce disparities in child care access for parents with limited English proficiency.**

Using 2013 estimates, language accessibility would make it easier for up to 265,000 Washington parents to search for and find child care. The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 state operating budget made policy changes and invested in a number of resources for language access. This includes, but is not limited to, development of a DCYF language access plan; Somali- and Spanish-speaking language access coordinators at DCYF; dual language programming resources and designation; and grants for linguistically specific child care programs. The task force recommends building on these investments by developing and maintaining culturally responsive child care consumer education resources in multiple languages and leveraging community-based organizations that serve as trusted messengers in linguistic communities to share child care consumer resources.

### **Continuing to expand and improve child care resource and referral and linkage systems will help all families navigate the child care and related services and supports.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act defined "family resource and referral linkage system" as a system that connects families to resources, services and programs for which families are eligible and uses a database that is developed and maintained in partnership with communities, health care providers and early learning providers. The Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 state operating budget invested in expansion of Help Me Grow, WithinReach and child care resource and referral agencies to coordinate services and provide assistance to families. The task force recommends building on these investments by continuing to improve the system of referral to benefits outside DCYF; communicating consumer information in a variety of formats and platforms; and increasing intersystem coordination and partnerships to reach families.

The task force has noted barriers associated with directing parents to make a phone call, which is how the child care resource and referral system currently works. Many families prefer to use mobile technology and on-demand, self-service or chat functions to access information, ask questions, and submit applications. Washington State's online system for applying for benefits, Washington Connections, is not currently optimized for mobile phones or devices. The task force recommends developing feedback loops so administrators can optimize experiences for families seeking services, agencies providing referrals and service providers responding to referrals.

# Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 11: Progress toward Goal 5: Families Easily Navigating and Accessing Child Care Programs & Supports**

Consumer Education Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Employer-Supported Child Care Technical Assistance:</b> DCYF to collaborate with the Department of Commerce on technical assistance to employers interested in providing child care to employees. \$829,000 DCYF, \$789,000 Commerce</li> </ul>
Coordinated Referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Help Me Grow:</b> Funding was provided to continue the Pierce County pilot program, with a report due to the legislature in Sep. 2022. \$1,742,000</li> <li>○ <b>WithinReach:</b> Funding was provided to the WithinReach statewide family resource and referral linkage system to provide a coordinated access point of resource navigators who will connect families with children prenatal through age five with services, programs and community resources through a facilitated referral and linkage process during the 2021-23 biennium. \$530,000</li> </ul>
Language Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Language Access Coordinators:</b> DCYF will hire two temporary language access coordinators with specialties in Spanish and Somali during the 2021-23 biennium to address immediate language access needs at DCYF related to COVID-19 child care relief and recovery in DCYF programs, including: (a) Translation; (b) Outreach to community organizations serving multilingual children and families; (c) Webinars and other technical assistance; and (d) Other means of increasing language access and equity for early learning providers and caregivers. \$500,000</li> <li>○ <b>Grants for Culturally &amp; Linguistically Specific Programs:</b> DCYF will create a grant program to support inclusive and culturally and linguistically specific early learning and early childhood and parent support programs across the state. \$5,309,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancement:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and provide WCCC subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. beginning July 2022. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Learners Training:</b> DCYF created the Dual Language Learner’s (DLL) training in collaboration with community and the University of Washington’s Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences. (<a href="#">RCW 43.216.105</a>)</li> </ul>

# Goal 6: Employers and businesses implement practices that make child care more affordable and accessible for their employees.

## Objectives:

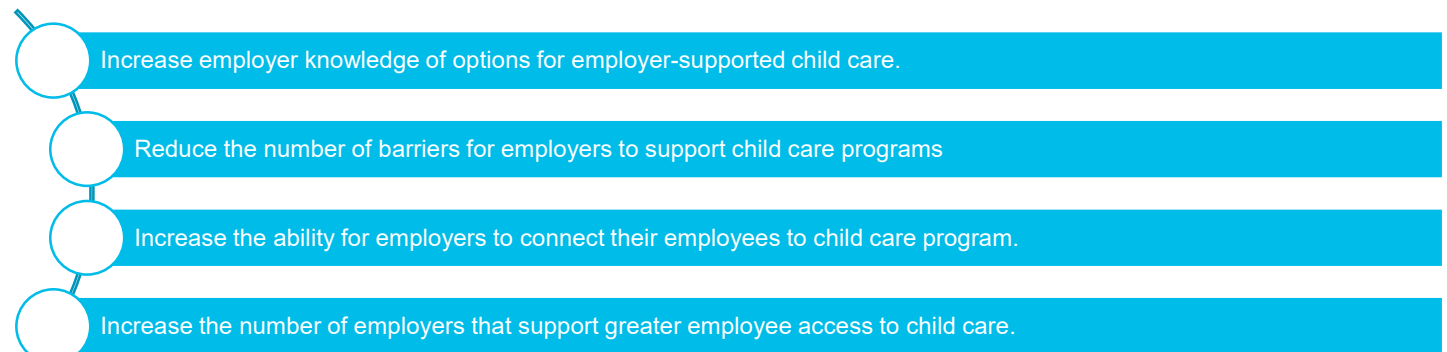


Figure 18: Goal 6 Objectives

## Implementation Strategies:

1. Educate employers on the business case for supporting child care and reducing barriers to participation in employer-supported child care programs. Demonstrate the case with data.
2. Enlist employers in connecting their employees with child care resources, including information about child care subsidies and Help Me Grow.
3. Develop and promote an informational web-based menu of options for employers to support employee provision of child care and offer tailored technical assistance to employers to support implementation of these options.
4. Implement a tiered business tax incentive program to match business expenditures for provision of employee child care.

## Tactics:

*Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021*

Table 12: Goal 6 Implementation Tactics

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Engage & Assist Employers	Commerce DCYF	*Continue outreach to and engagement with employers and community child care stakeholders.
	Business Assns. Chambers of Commerce	*Develop and implement the new employer-supported child care technical assistance program.
	Economic Development Orgs.	*Identify effective approaches to connecting employers with child care system infrastructure to scale up employer support of child care.
		*Develop an employer-supported child care toolkit to implement a menu of options for employers with different business models, sizes and industries.

## Discussion:

**Affordable, accessible child care increases employers' ability to recruit and retain talent; employee attendance and productivity; and workforce participation.**

Availability of high-quality care helps people go to work, but many working families, parents seeking employment and parents participating in educational pursuits, job training or apprenticeships, struggle to find and afford child care. The task force's 2020 child care industry assessment revealed that although 61% of young children live in households where all parents work, Washington state has sufficient licensed child care capacity for only 41% of young children and 5% of school-age children. Among Washington parents that participated in a spring 2020 survey: 38% indicated that affording child care was a challenge, nearly one in five (18.3%) parents surveyed turned down a job offer or promotion due to child care issues and 47% of unemployed parents considered child care issues a barrier to reemployment. One quarter (25%) of parents indicated a need for child care during nontraditional work hours (outside weekday hours of 6:00 am to 6:00 pm) - but only a small percentage of child care programs operate during those hours.<sup>31</sup>

**Employers can take action to support child care for their employees.**

The task force found that increasing employer support will require an incentive for businesses, although some early adopters have invested in onsite child care, child care vouchers, family-friendly policies and backup child care for employees. In 2019, the task force recommended that Washington state promote, incentivize and recognize employer-supported child care so public and private employers invest in family-friendly employment policies and practices. Sharing the business case, tools and tiered tax incentives would enable more employers to support their employees' access to child care. Figure 19 lists many ways employers can support their employees' child care.

**Technical assistance for employer-supported child care will be available in 2021-23.**

The Fair Start for Kids Act created a program at Commerce and DCYF that is funded during the 2021-23 biennium to provide technical assistance to employers interested in supporting their employees' access to high quality child care. Technical assistance may include guidance related to:

- Operating a licensed child care center at or near the workplace for the benefit of employees.
- Financing and construction of a licensed child care center at or near the workplace for the benefit of employees.
- Providing financial assistance to employees for licensed or certified child care providers and license-exempt child care program expenses.
- Encouraging access and support for low-wage employees.
- Sponsoring dependent care flexible spending accounts for employees.
- Developing a "bring your infant to work" program and other family-friendly work policies for employees.

Implementation strategies for this goal align with Fair Start for Kids Act spending goal (y) studying and evaluating options to incentivize business participation in child care and early learning systems. The task force recommends continuing and building on 2021 investments.

### Menu of Options for Employer-Supported Child Care

Employers can support child care many ways:

- Inform employees of child care subsidies
- Connect employees with child care resource and referral networks
- Implement "bring your infant to work" and other family friendly model policies
- Participate in voluntary programs recognizing family-, child-, and breastfeeding-friendly workplaces
- Offer the Dependent Care Assistance Program
- Contribute to child care savings accounts
- Allow for parent choice among options
- Provide backup child care
- Contract with nearby child care programs
- Contract with child care providers for onsite child care
- Offer child care vouchers or tuition payments
- Access federal, state, and local tax incentives
- Provide onsite child care

# Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 13: Progress toward Goal 6: Expanding Employer Supports Child Care**

Employer-Supported Child Care	○ <b>Employer-Supported Child Care Technical Assistance:</b> DCYF to collaborate with the Department of Commerce on technical assistance to employers interested in providing child care to employees. \$829,000 DCYF, \$789,000 Commerce
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Figure 20: Spotlight on Faith-Based Child Care<sup>32</sup>

Faith-based child care and its role in the child care market has been underexplored, both nationally and in Washington. The task force has not had faith-based providers represented. There is room for improvement to more deeply understand the opportunity and service of faith-based providers.

Faith-based providers have different classifications. They may have a direct denomination affiliation or no direct affiliation. They may provide religious instruction, or they may not provide religious instruction. They may offer secular instruction. Providers may operate on the site of a faith organization or in a separate facility. According to BPC, Washington is one of nine states that has accepted the Association of Christian Schools International Accreditation protocol as an alternative pathway to achieve higher rating on the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). There is much more to be known, however, about the capacity faith-based providers contribute to the child care market. There has not been an official national survey of faith-based child care since 1983. In a 2020 BPC national survey, parents preferred faith-based centers over other care situations with only child care provided by the family rated higher.

Faith-based providers, according to BPC, experience similar challenges as the child care market as a whole:

- Family tuition and subsidies do not cover the full cost of providing care.
- Low workforce wages and struggles with worker retention.

Sometimes, faith-based providers benefit from a model similar to that of shared delivery where administrative and back-end office operations may be absorbed by the larger organization. There may also be mutually stabilizing impacts for both the child care provider and the faith organization or lower space costs. However, to the extent of which these relationships exist is unknown.

Faith-based providers face unique challenges. While children receiving subsidies are able to apply them to a faith-based provider, there is a misconception that this option is not allowable. Direct funds through grants and contracts can be limited. The task force acknowledges BPC's recommendation to have faith-based providers represented in future advisory work. There is more to be explored in the supply and demand of faith-based centers in the state, as well as more consideration of how faith-based credentialing is understood in quality assessments and regulations.

## Goal 7: Streamlined state and local regulations, codes, permitting processes and fee structures facilitate child care startup, operation and expansion.

To the extent allowed under federal regulations and state laws, and needed to maintain child health and safety: child care licensing regulations are streamlined and ongoing efforts support simplified local government regulations, building codes, zoning, permitting processes and fee structures, to facilitate startup, operation and expansion of child care programs.

### Objectives:

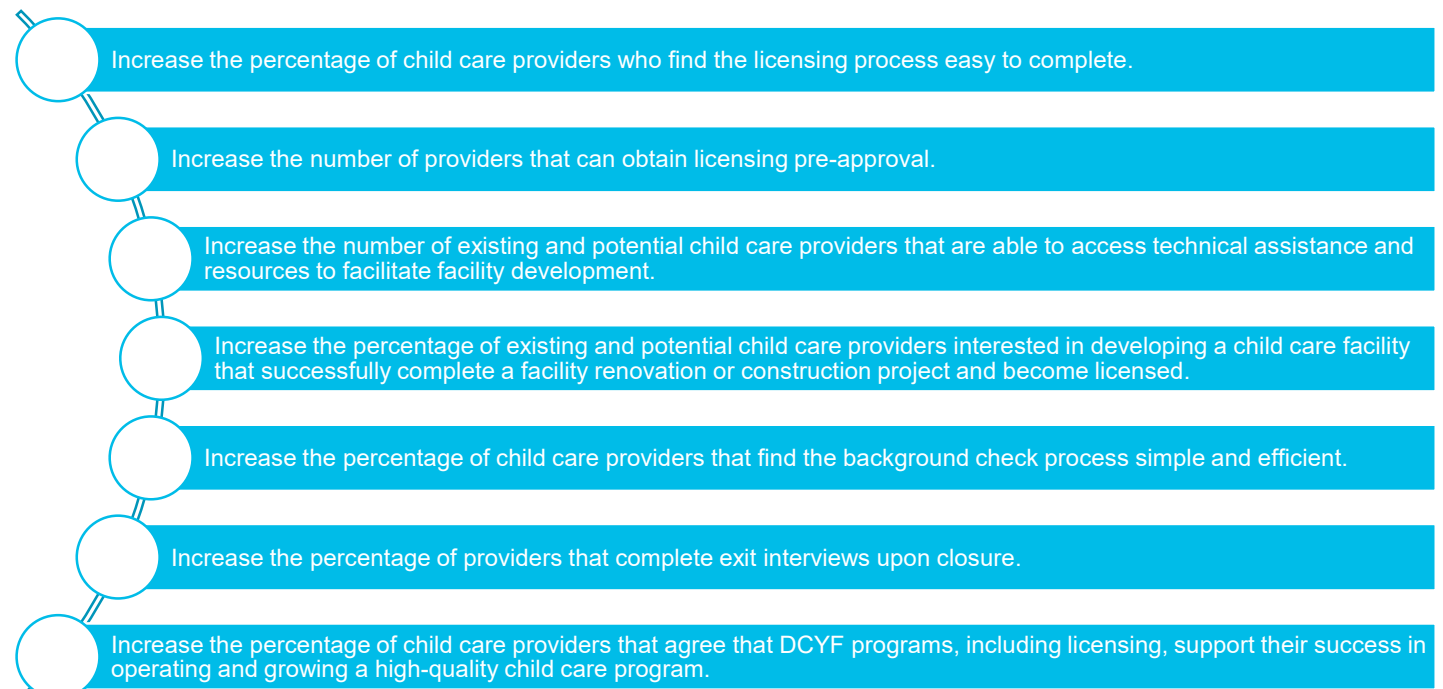


Figure 21: Goal 7 Objectives

### Implementation Strategies:

1. Evaluate child care licensing standards and their impact on the development and operations of child care programs. Initiate collaborative continuous improvement processes for licensing standard revision, implementation and monitoring.
2. Improve child care licensing regulations to match the age of the child and operations of school-age child care (matching school-age child care regulations to standard school day operations and safety protocols).
3. Streamline child care licensing during child care facility development and change of ownership.
4. Streamline the child care background check system.
5. Improve coordination and use of best practices among state and local agencies to simplify and facilitate child care facility development and startup, including state and local regulations, zoning, permitting and fee structures.
6. Foster a culture of support and mutual respect among child care licensors, regulators and providers.

# Tactics:

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

**Table 14: Goal 7 Implementation Tactics**

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Evaluate, Simplify & Streamline Rules, Codes & Processes	ELAC	*Conduct a periodic external evaluation of the state’s regulatory environment to inform continuous improvement to achieve regulatory goals while minimizing burdens on child care providers.
	DCYF Imagine Institute CCA system Stakeholders	*Develop and maintain templates and wizards for creating child care program policies, plans, forms and other resources that are required for child care licensing.
	DCYF SOWA OSPI Schools	Improve school-age child care regulations so they match standard school day operations and safety protocols.
	DCYF with stakeholder input	*Scale up the licensing pre-approval process to all new child care construction and renovation projects.
		*Coordinate local and state agencies such as DCYF, State Fire Marshal and State Building Code Council to assess and streamline licensing processes. Streamline background check system and processes to support onboarding new staff who have completed criminal background clearance and are awaiting clearance on other elements, as allowed under federal rules.
Help Providers Succeed	DCYF with stakeholder input	*Create and maintain a clear, shared guidebook and other resources, for both licensors and providers outlining all licensing standards and expectations in plain language.
		Compile data to track provider closures. Conduct learning interviews with providers leaving the industry or Early Achievers system to better understand exit reasons.
		*Establish standards for consultative child care licensing practices and service.

## Discussion:

**Washington State will need additional child care facilities to meet the demand for child care in each community. Unclear and hard-to-navigate state and local regulations, processes and fees hamper child care facility development.**

Achieving the goal of streamlined state and local regulations, codes, permitting processes and fee structures will facilitate child care startup, operation and expansion. Child care providers face facility development challenges associated with uncertain requirements, costs and processes to permit and license new and expanding child care facilities. Many child care providers are small businesses or nonprofits with limited experience, resources and access to professional services that may help them identify, finance and develop sites and facilities and navigate all of the state and local regulations.<sup>33</sup> These challenges, and the capital funds needed, impede construction, renovation and expansion of child care facilities.

The task force recommends interagency coordination and collaborative review of state and local regulations, processes, and fee structures, including local codes for building, zoning and permitting, to streamline and simplify where possible--to the extent allowed by federal regulations and state laws, and preserving regulations that maintain child health and safety. Child care facility development technical assistance and licensing pre-approval, funded in the 2021-23 biennium, will greatly reduce uncertainties for providers seeking to develop and license child care facilities.

**The State should support the success of high-quality child care programs.**

The task force recommends DCYF evaluate and continuously improve child care licensing rules and practices to meet regulatory goals while minimizing burdens on child care providers. Improving school-age child care regulations so they match standard school day operations and safety protocols would greatly ease burdens on school-age-only child care programs. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, DCYF began to transition what can be considered a "see it, cite it" approach to child care licensing to a more consultative approach to bringing child care programs into compliance with licensing regulations. The task force recommends DCYF establish and fully implement standards for consultative licensing



practices. As allowed under federal rules, the task force also recommends that DCYF streamline the system and processes to support onboarding new staff who have completed criminal background clearance and are awaiting clearance on other elements. Implementing systems to track the reasons child care providers close, as well as capturing ongoing feedback from existing providers, would support continuous licensing rule and process improvement.

The Fair Start for Kids Act created a temporary licensing subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) to complete the following activities, and provide feedback and recommendations to DCYF, by December 1, 2022:

- Examine strategies to increase the number of licensed child care providers in the state, including meeting with prospective licensees to explain the licensure requirements and inspect and provide feedback on the physical space that is contemplated for licensure.
- Develop model policies for licensed child care providers to implement licensing standards including, but not limited to, completing the child care and early learning licensing guidebook, to be made available to support providers with compliance.
- Develop recommendations regarding incentives and financial supports to help prospective providers navigate the licensing process.

Implementation strategies for this goal align with the following Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies:

- Allowing the exploration of options to provide regulatory relief and make licensing more affordable for child care providers.
- Training department staff to ensure consistent and equitable application of child care licensing and quality standards across the state including anti-bias and antiracist training.
- Providing incentives and supports for child care providers to become licensed.

The task force recommends continuing and building on investments in 2021 and implementing Fair Start for Kids Act spending goals and strategies.

## Progress with the Fair Start for Kids Act and 2021-23 State Budget

**Table 15: Progress toward Goal 7: Streamlining State and Local Child Care Rules, Codes, Processes and Fees**

Child Care Licensing Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Organization License Pilot:</b> DCYF will establish a pilot project to determine the feasibility of a child care license category for multi-site programs operating under one owner or one entity and submit recommendations to the legislature by July 2024. \$414,000</li> <li>○ <b>Capacity Flexibility for Family Home Providers:</b> DCYF may waive the limit that restricts family home providers from serving not more than 12 children, if sufficient licensable space and staffing is available. (FSKA Section 313)</li> <li>○ <b>Licensing Subcommittee of ELAC:</b> ELAC will convene a temporary subcommittee to provide feedback and recommendations by December 2022 on increasing the number of licensed child care providers in the state. \$271,000</li> </ul>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Facility Technical Assistance:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF will provide technical assistance to early learning providers interested in applying for, or who have received, funding from the Early Learning Facility Grant or Loan Program. \$956,000</li> <li>○ <b>Licensing Guidebook:</b> DCYF published a <a href="#">child care licensing guidebook</a> in 2020.</li> </ul>
Fee Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Reduced Fees:</b> <a href="#">HB 1331</a> (2021) limits and allows local jurisdictions to waive impact fees for child care facilities.</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

The Washington State Legislature's historic investments in child care through the Fair Start for Kids Act and other measures brought our state closer to realizing access to affordable, high-quality child care for all families. The task force identified strategies that would implement and build on this, with particular attention to:

- Creating and funding a financing model to support compensation and development of child care professionals.
- Reducing disparities in child care service delivery and access by families.
- Developing infrastructure to support a robust and sustainable mixed-delivery child care system.

The strategies in this report promote child health, safety and development; the ability for families to choose child care options that feel right and support their children; families that are economically secure; and nurturing environments to support a child's success. These strategies simultaneously support the child care professionals, providers and systems that make this possible.

The task force recommends the Legislature, Governor, DCYF and ELAC--as well as task force member organizations and constituencies--lead the charge in implementing the strategies to meet the objectives and intended outcomes described in this report. Over time, this would fulfill our vision of Washington State as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system, benefitting all our children, parents, child care staff and providers, employers and communities.

# Appendix A: Authorizing Legislation

## What the Legislation Says

[RCW 43.330.527](#) ([2SHB 1344](#)(6), Laws of 2019), the authorizing legislation for this report, states:

(1) The child care collaborative task force shall:

- (e) Develop a strategy, timeline, and implementation plan to reach the goal of accessible and affordable child care for all families by the year 2025.

## How this Report Fulfills the Legislation

The task force identified seven goals with associated objectives, implementation strategies and tactics that serve as a strategy and implementation plan to reach the goal of accessible and affordable child care for all families. The task force specified that the overall goal is access to affordable, *high-quality* child care.

The task force's strategy does not specify a timeline, but aims to complement and build on the timeline of policy changes in the Fair Start for Kids Act. Under the Act, policy changes including increasing WCCC subsidy eligibility to include families with incomes at or below 85% of state median income, and reaching ECEAP entitlement, will occur in 2027. The task force found that the timeline of the Fair Start for Kids Act puts the state on an achievable path to achieving accessible and affordable child care for all Washington families.

# Appendix B: Task Force Overview

The task force was established in 2018 to make policy recommendations about the child care system to better meet the needs of families, employers and child care providers. Task force reports and milestones are summarized in Figure B1, and the task force vision in B2.

**Figure B1: Child Care Collaborative Task Force Milestones**



**Figure B2: Child Care Collaborative Task Force Vision**

The task force envisions Washington State as the nation's most equitable, affordable and accessible child care system that benefits all our children, parents, child care staff and providers, employers and communities:

<p><b>Quality, affordable, accessible licensed child care</b> that gives parents diverse choices to meet their family and employment needs, regardless of their income, race or where they live.</p>	<p>An <b>economically healthy and diverse child care industry</b> with a supported, well-compensated workforce that meets the supply and choice requirements of families and employers.</p>	<p><b>Increased workforce productivity</b> when employers support the child care needs of their employees through the availability of a scalable set of tools and incentives that increase access and affordability of high-quality child care.</p>	<p><b>New strategies and investments</b> from the public and private sectors that engage employers in supporting all working families' access to high-quality, affordable child care.</p>
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In its [initial report](#), the task force recommended policy changes in four goal areas:

- (A) Stabilize, support and sustain the child care workforce, providers and industry.
- (B) Increase employer supports for child care.
- (C) Streamline permitting and licensing to better support the construction, renovation and acquisition of child care facilities.
- (D) Reduce disparities and disproportionalities in child care service delivery and access.

In 2020, the task force published an in-depth [Child Care Industry Assessment report](#) and [additional recommendations](#).

Find task force information and reports at the [Washington Child Care Collaborative Task Force](#) website.

# Appendix C: Goals and Objectives

## Goals

1. Child care is a field that offers its workforce economic security and respected, long-term career options, as measured by staff retention.
2. Robust child care system infrastructure is in place to sustain a mixed-delivery model of high-quality child care services. Infrastructure includes financial resources, professional development opportunities and access to behavioral, mental health, healthcare and educational and other resources.
3. Child care providers can operate high-quality programs and accept Working Connections Child Care subsidies.
4. Low and middle income families are eligible for, know about and use Working Connections Child Care subsidies.
5. Families can navigate child care supports and enroll in child care programs.
6. Employers and businesses implement practices that make child care more affordable and accessible for their employees.
7. Streamlined state and local regulations, codes, permitting processes and fee structures facilitate child care startup, operation and expansion. To the extent allowed under federal regulations and state laws, and needed to maintain child health and safety: child care licensing regulations are streamlined and ongoing efforts support simplified local government regulations, building codes, zoning, permitting processes and fee structures, to facilitate startup, operation and expansion of child care programs.

## Objectives

- Increase child care staff retention and longevity in the field, and decrease turnover.
- Increase area median wages for child care staff positions to meet the salary scale in the state's cost of quality model.
- Decrease the percentage of the child care workforce that relies on public assistance.
- Increase the percentage of child care providers that offers paid leave and healthcare, dental, vision and retirement benefits.
- Increase the number of staff enrolled in community-based pathways and education programs.
- Increase the percentage of child care providers that report they have access to substitute pools.
- Increase availability of grants, loans and resources to start up child care programs.
- Increase availability of grants, loans, and resources to start up child care programs.
- Increase availability of ongoing financial support and resources to operate high-quality child care programs.
- Increase the number of child care providers with access to infant and child mental health consultation services.
- Increase the availability of grants, loans, and resources to develop child care facilities.
- Increase the percentage of Washington communities with sufficient access to high-quality child care.
- Increase coordination, partnership, and resource sharing between K-12 schools and child care providers.
- Increase availability of grants, loans and resources to start up child care programs.
- Increase availability of ongoing financial support and resources to operate high-quality child care programs.

- Increase the number of child care providers with access to infant and child mental health consultation services.
- Increase the availability of grants, loans and resources to develop child care facilities.
- Increase the percentage of Washington communities with sufficient access to high-quality child care.
- Increase coordination, partnership and resource sharing between K-12 schools and child care providers.
- Increase the percentage of families with a WCCC copay that is under 7% of family income.
- Increase the percentage of state median income for WCCC subsidy income eligibility to at least 85%.
- Increase the percentage of student, apprentice or unemployed parents that are eligible for WCCC subsidies.
- Increase the percentage of families who are aware of and able to enroll in child care subsidies.
- Increase the percentage of eligible parents that participate in the WCCC subsidy program.
- Increase ease of access to and public awareness of child care resources, subsidies and options.
- Increase the number of languages child care resources are offered to those seeking affordable child care.
- Increase the number of ways child care resources are communicated to families.
- Increase the percentage of families able to find child care resources in their first language.
- Increase employer knowledge of options for employer-supported child care.
- Reduce the number of barriers for employers to support child care programs
- Increase the ability for employers to connect their employees to child care program.
- Increase the number of employers that support greater employee access to child care.
- Increase the percentage of child care providers who find the licensing process easy to complete.
- Increase the number of providers that can obtain licensing pre-approval.
- Increase the number of existing and potential child care providers that are able to access technical assistance and resources to facilitate facility development.
- Increase the percentage of existing and potential child care providers interested in developing a child care facility that successfully complete a facility renovation or construction project and become licensed.
- Increase the percentage of child care providers that find the background check process simple and efficient.
- Increase the percentage of providers that complete exit interviews upon closure.
- Increase the percentage of child care providers that agree that DCYF programs, including licensing, support their success in operating and growing a high-quality child care program.

## Appendix D: Implementation Strategies

- Compensate the child care workforce competitively with educators in the state's education continuum in order to provide living wages, reduce turnover and promote longevity of skilled providers in the child care workforce. Achieving this will require additional government and/or business intervention.
- Ensure child care professionals can access benefits that complete a good job, including access to healthcare insurance coverage, dental/vision, paid leave and retirement benefits. These benefits will be one important strategy toward preventing workforce burnout and will support the wellbeing of child care staff.
- Fully fund professional development, relationship-based professional development and financial incentives to support providers in meeting staff qualifications, ongoing continuous quality improvement and achieve high quality levels in Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.
- Expand the Community-Based Pathway to statewide implementation as a process for child care staff to demonstrate competencies that meet licensing education requirements.
- Support professional development around skills the industry needs and reimburse providers for participation (trauma-informed care, dual language, racial bias training, business development, human resources, finance, business accelerator programs, etc.).
- Expand eligibility requirements to use the state-funded early care and education substitute pool so licensed child care providers have access to temporary staff coverage or have the option to retain additional staff who are part of the child team to cover so that ratios are met when other staff are absent.
- Offer public and private financial resources to support child care startup, operations and expansion.
- Provide ongoing financial support through grants or contracts with providers to support the full cost of care.
- Provide resources and services for high-quality child care programs at no cost to providers or families.
- Support construction, renovation and expansion of child care facilities, including architectural support for construction and renovations, to assure accessibility and accommodations.
- Establish channels of communication and coordination between the child care system and other related systems, such as K-12 education, healthcare system, economic development, higher education, etc.
- Pay providers a monthly rate for children enrolled in the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy system, structured like the private market.
- Increase WCCC subsidy base rates and tiered reimbursement payments to cover the full cost associated with providing high-quality child care.
- Change WCCC subsidy geographic regions to reflect cost of operating a program at the ZIP code level.
- Provide more resources and professional development to child care programs so they can meet Early Achievers and school-age quality standards.
- Eliminate the WCCC subsidy copayment "cliff effect" for eligible families by limiting eligible families' copayments to no more than 7% of a family's income.
- Increase WCCC subsidy eligibility to at least 85% of state median income.
- Expand allowable activities for WCCC subsidy eligibility to enable employed, unemployed and student parents to seek and retain work and education.
- Develop comprehensive consumer education methods, information sharing partnerships and resources related to WCCC subsidies.

- Eliminate the cap on WCCC subsidy program participation.
- Strengthen child care consumer education systems that help families navigate child care subsidies and options, including informational resources, technical assistance, outreach and other supports.
- Offer consumer education information in multiple languages to reduce language barriers in seeking and accessing child care.
- Educate employers on the business case for supporting child care and reducing barriers to participation in employer-supported child care programs. Demonstrate the case with data.
- Enlist employers in connecting their employees with child care resources, including information about child care subsidies and Help Me Grow.
- Develop and promote an informational web-based menu of options for employers to support employee provision of child care and offer tailored technical assistance to employers to support implementation of these options.
- Implement a tiered business tax incentive program to match business expenditures for provision of employee child care.
- Evaluate child care licensing standards and their impact on the development and operations of child care programs. Initiate collaborative continuous improvement processes for licensing standard revision, implementation and monitoring.
- Improve child care licensing regulations to match the age of the child and operations of school-age child care (matching school-age child care regulations to standard school day operations and safety protocols).
- Streamline child care licensing during child care facility development and change of ownership.
- Streamline the child care background check system.
- Improve coordination and use of best practices among state and local agencies to simplify and facilitate child care facility development and startup, including state and local regulations, zoning, permitting and fee structures.
- Foster a culture of support and mutual respect among child care licensors, regulators and providers.



# Appendix E: Implementation Tactics

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

Topic	Implementation Tactic
Compensation	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, and to fulfill the legislative requirement to implement cost-based subsidy rates, the task force and DCYF will evaluate and recommend a compensation structure aligned to regional school system salary scales for use by DCYF to set WCCC subsidy rates, and an administrative mechanism and finance model to ensure adequate compensation of the entire child care workforce..
	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, the task force and DCYF will assess alternative funding streams (besides family tuition payments and subsidies) and a financing model to support competitive, living wages and benefits for child care employees that reflect their valuable contributions to positive outcomes for children, families and our economy. The legislature should fund and support implementation of the financing model.
	Explore options to assist with worker retention to enable provider retention and expansion by funding retention bonuses for workers making less than a specified compensation threshold. Offer the bonuses at increased frequency in the first two years of employment and annual thereafter but at higher levels as workers advance along the longevity spectrum.
	Explore options to increase the rate of WCCC subsidies for early learning professionals' families if they are registered in the state's MERIT system as a means to complement wage increases and bolster child care employee household financial well-being to increase likelihood of retention.
Benefits	*Evaluate options to support access to affordable healthcare insurance coverage for child care staff. Options include, but are not limited to, the Health Benefit Exchange, Apple Health and association health plans. Implement options to streamline enrollment, ensure adequate coverage and provide bridge funding for employee premiums.
	*Fund through the Health Care Authority or another mechanism group medical insurance for the employees of providers under a certain size, if a pool for all child care providers isn't feasible.
	Research and implement options to support retirement benefits.
Professional Development	*Identify resources needed to assure professional development, coaching, rating and quality incentives provide financial support to achieving high quality levels.
	*Identify resources needed to identify high-demand skills and support professional development training and reimbursement.
	*Identify resources needed to implement the Community-Based Pathway statewide as a process for child care staff to demonstrate competencies.
	*Expand relationship-based professional development within licensed programs to realize quick and direct quality improvement.
	*Incentivize higher education attainment and career pathways via scholarships, loan repayment programs and enhanced compensation.
	*Use multiple languages and platforms for all aspects of professional development.
	*Increase professional development and quality supports for providers serving school-age children.
	Seek to resolve known issues with the quality of data in the MERIT data system, such as the number of providers with verified education data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify resources needed to increase education data verification.</li> <li>○ Explore options to capture Community Based Pathway competencies in MERIT.</li> </ul> If wage discrepancies based on race/ethnicity are found, make a plan to support equalization.
	Substitutes
Evaluate options for expanding eligibility and increasing access to the substitute pool.	
Invest in Startup & Operation	*Increase access to grants, loans and other funding sources to offset child care operating and capital facility costs, including but not limited to the Early Learning Facility Fund, small grants and microloans.
	*Provide state funds to leverage public-private partnerships with community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to develop child care financing options, such as loan programs.
	Provide a point of sale, sales (and use) tax exemption on consumables used in providing child care.

Topic	Implementation Tactic
	<p>Explore options to fund new child care business start-up grants up to \$10,000 to meet licensing-required improvements for potential licensed family homes that can expand the supply inventory.</p> <p>*Target investments to incentivize provision of care in underserved market segments.</p> <p>*Incentivize provision of child care in the child’s home language and support dual language learning.</p>
Provide Services & Supports	<p>*Provide resources so child care programs can implement trauma-informed, culturally responsive and bias-reducing practices.</p> <p>*Support provision of child care in underserved geographic areas and rural areas so families may access child care in their local communities.</p> <p>*Develop local community capacity to meet local child care needs in a variety of settings.</p> <p>*Offer technical assistance to child care providers to support business startup, operation and growth.</p> <p>Explore options to implement a “grow your own(ership)” initiative that provides startup funds and mentoring to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) child care educators so they can become child care business owners and build wealth.</p> <p>*Provide access to infant and early childhood mental health consultants.</p> <p>Create and maintain a “best practices” guidebook on child care business and management operations.</p> <p>Explore options to fund and staff a bulk purchase clearinghouse for licensed care providers and the most common supplies, small equipment and furniture they use to reduce operational costs.</p> <p>*Implement statewide shared services programs and cooperatives for provider business needs, such as financial management, human resources, purchasing, etc.</p> <p>Explore options to fund “hub-satellite” models of service provision to provide the mechanism (the hub) for “back office” and other optional shared services to small, new and/or BIPOC-owned enterprises.</p> <p>Explore options to fund legal and other technical assistance supports for child care providers entering negotiations with local businesses to provide child care for those employers’ workers.</p> <p>Explore options to fund Centers for Child Care Recruitment and Expansion throughout the state.</p>
Develop Facilities	<p>*Continue to invest in the Early Learning Facilities Fund, including the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Revolving Account and the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Development Account.</p> <p>*Provide capital investments to build and expand child care facilities.</p> <p>*Continue to invest in technical assistance for construction or renovation of child care facilities to ensure timely and efficient startup and expansion.</p> <p>Encourage municipalities to allow flexibility for child care uses as part of local zoning codes.</p> <p>Explore options to fund and provide technical assistance to a pilot of local land trusts to establish a child care version of a home ownership model where the public sector funds the trust to own the land under newly acquired or built licensed child care family homes or centers, with a minimum time commitment to operate as child care. This would reduce expansion and start-up costs. Create an initiative specifically for BIPOC-owned enterprises.</p> <p>Considering implementing Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or similar for state-funded facilities, focusing on children's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Support providers' efforts to develop facilities that provide generous, high-quality space for children to move and thrive—beyond the minimum requirement of 35 square feet per child.</p> <p>Keep records of construction costs for state-funded facilities for future planning, as OSPI does for public school facilities.</p> <p>Provide a retail sales (and use) tax exemption or deferral for construction, renovation and remodeling of child care facilities.</p> <p>*Streamline facility permitting and licensing (see Goal 7).</p>
Build Systems	<p>Develop and maintain clear and supportive partnerships between schools, school districts and child care providers (strong memoranda of understanding (MOUs), data sharing agreements, consistent communication, transportation options, sharing of professional development and student-focused technology, increased fund sharing, etc.).</p> <p>*Develop policies to ensure that we have a fully integrated preschool and child care system to best serve children and families.</p>
Increase &	<p>*Expand monthly WCCC subsidy reimbursement rates to all licensed child care providers.</p>

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Implementation Tactic</b>
Simplify WCCC Subsidy Payments	*Continue funding increased WCCC subsidy base rates, tiered reimbursement payments and other financial supports.
	*Continue providing subsidy rate enhancements to incentivize provision of child care in unmet market segments and to programs providing unique services, such as nontraditional hour care; care for underserved age groups such as infants and toddlers; care for populations with specialized health or educational needs; care in underserved geographic, ethnic or linguistic communities; and dual-language programming.
Pay Full Cost of Quality	*Complete cost of quality model to identify gaps between existing WCCC subsidy reimbursement and cost to operate.
	*Develop and implement subsidy regions based on operating costs by ZIP code group.
	*Develop and implement supported professional development opportunities, including coaching and scholarships.
Lower Copays	*Continue to fund the WCCC subsidy copay model in the Fair Start for Kids Act and sustain copay caps at or below 7% of household income.
Expand Eligibility	*Continue to fund the Fair Start for Kids Act WCCC subsidy eligibility increases.
	Explore options to increase WCCC subsidy eligibility to 100% of SMI or 100% of area median income.
	Expand WCCC subsidy eligibility for people seeking employment.
	*Continue to fund eliminated WCCC subsidy work requirements for two-year degrees and apprenticeships.
	*Appropriate funding to eliminate WCCC subsidy work requirements for parents completing four-year degrees and graduate degrees.
	Eliminate the cap to allow any eligible family to participate in the WCCC subsidy program.
Inform & Enroll Families	*Develop methods to educate families about WCCC subsidies in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
	Partner and coordinate with child care resource and referral agencies, employers, job training organizations, colleges and universities, apprenticeship programs, labor organizations, community-based organizations, faith organizations, healthcare providers, public health agencies, schools and child care providers to share WCCC subsidy consumer education resources and information with parents and caregivers.
	*Develop and maintain culturally responsive WCCC subsidy consumer education resources in multiple languages.
Develop Resources	*Develop methods to educate families about state child care resources in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
	*Develop and maintain culturally responsive child care consumer education resources in multiple languages. Offer information about finding and affording child care, child care program quality and who to contact to learn more or receive assistance.
Coordinate Referrals	*Continue to support statewide and regional child care resource and referral systems (Child Care Aware agencies).
	*Continue to support statewide family child care resource and referral linkage systems (WithinReach).
	*Continue to expand Help Me Grow statewide.
	*Improve the system of referral to benefits outside DCYF (SNAP, TANF, etc.).
Increase Language Accessibility	*Develop and implement a DCYF language access plan.
	*Develop and implement a dual language designation.
	*Provide grants, rate enhancements, professional development and resources for dual language programming.
	*Develop and implement early childhood and school-age equity grants.
Engage & Assist Employers	*Continue outreach to and engagement with employers and community child care stakeholders.
	*Develop and implement the new employer-supported child care technical assistance program.
	*Identify effective approaches to connecting employers with child care system infrastructure to scale up employer support of child care.

Topic	Implementation Tactic
	*Develop an employer-supported child care toolkit to implement a menu of options for employers with different business models, sizes and industries.
Evaluate, Simplify & Streamline Rules, Codes & Processes	*Conduct a periodic external evaluation of the state’s regulatory environment to inform continuous improvement to achieve regulatory goals while minimizing burdens on child care providers.
	*Develop and maintain templates and wizards for creating child care program policies, plans, forms and other resources that are required for child care licensing.
	Improve school-age child care regulations so they match standard school day operations and safety protocols.
	*Scale up the licensing pre-approval process to all new child care construction and renovation projects.
	*Coordinate local and state agencies such as DCYF, State Fire Marshal and State Building Code Council to assess and streamline licensing processes.
	Streamline background check system and processes to support onboarding new staff who have completed criminal background clearance and are awaiting clearance on other elements, as allowed under federal rules.
Help Providers Succeed	*Create and maintain a clear, shared guidebook and other resources, for both licensors and providers outlining all licensing standards and expectations in plain language.
	Compile data to track provider closures. Conduct learning interviews with providers leaving the industry or Early Achievers system to better understand exit reasons.
	*Establish standards for consultative child care licensing practices and service.

## Appendix F: Progress toward Goals in 2021

Topic	Progress in 2021 Due to Legislation, Budget and Other Activities
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancement:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and, beginning in July 2022, provide WCCC subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Wage Supports:</b> DCYF will establish supports for providers in providing trauma-informed care inclusive of professional development and increased wages for employees with additional credentials. (FSKA Section 304, see also Professional Development below)</li> </ul>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Coverage Information:</b> DCYF will establish a process for informing, upon clearance of required background checks, employees of licensed family home, center-based and outdoor nature-based child cares about available financial supports and options for accessing health coverage.</li> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Coverage Outreach:</b> DCYF will help facilitate outreach from Health Benefits Exchange navigators and eligible employees. \$40,000</li> <li>○ <b>Healthcare Premium Assistance:</b> The Health Benefits Exchange will implement a health care insurance premium assistance program for employees working at licensed child care facilities. \$30,266,000</li> <li>○ <b>Evaluation of Healthcare Coverage Options:</b> DCYF will build upon the work of the task force to evaluate options to support access to affordable health care insurance coverage for licensed or certified child care providers. (FSKA Section 301)</li> </ul>
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> Beginning July 2022, DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials. \$2,802,000</li> <li>○ <b>Professional Development to Build Capacity:</b> DCYF will provide professional development support for providers to increase business, staff and community capacity (FSKA Section 311).</li> <li>○ <b>Early Achievers System Improvements:</b> DCYF is implementing Early Achievers system improvements, such as virtual quality recognition, multiple pathways to maintain and reach higher levels, and enhanced coaching supports.</li> <li>○ <b>Training, Professional Development and Early Achievers Scholarships:</b> DCYF will implement trainings, Early Achievers scholarships and other professional development activities. DCYF will provide professional development supports to aid eligible providers in reaching the professional education and training standards adopted by the department. This includes activities such as updating training content, data collection and reporting, trainer recruitment, retention, program monitoring, trainings, etc. \$8,021,000</li> </ul>
Substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Supporting the Substitute Pool:</b> FSKA includes a spending goal to support the substitute pool for child care and early learning providers (FSKA Section 102) that can also be used for substitutes retained within program staff.</li> </ul>
Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Stabilization Grants:</b> DCYF will distribute nearly \$400M in grants, via the federal American Rescue Plan Act, to child care providers to stabilize the child care industry as part of the state's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.</li> <li>○ <b>Waived Licensing Fees:</b> DCYF will waive fees for child care applicants and licensed providers through June 2023 per <a href="#">SB 5151</a> (2021).</li> </ul>

Topic	Progress in 2021 Due to Legislation, Budget and Other Activities
Services and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials.</li> <li>○ <b>Mental Health Consultation:</b> DCYF received funding to increase the number of state-funded Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants from six to 12, plus one coordinator position. The IECMH consultants must support Early Achievers program coaches and child care providers by providing resources, information and guidance regarding challenging behavior and expulsions and may travel to assist providers in serving families and children with severe behavioral needs. \$3,946,000</li> <li>○ <b>Play and Learn Groups:</b> Funding was provided for expansion of FFN Play and Learn Groups that offer parents and other caregivers culturally responsive opportunities to support their children's early learning, build relationships that reduce isolation and encourage socialization and promote kindergarten readiness. \$860,000</li> <li>○ <b>Planning Grants:</b> Commerce will issue Child Care Partnership Grants to governmental and non-profit organizations to support collaborative planning and activities that help communities address the shortage of child care during the 2021-23 biennium. \$1,000,000</li> </ul>
Facility Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Facility Grants and Loans:</b> The <a href="#">2021-23 state capital budget</a> included \$55M in Early Learning Facility Fund, WELL Fund, one-time renovation grants and technical assistance. <a href="#">HB 1370</a> (2021) increased grant amounts and made recommended changes to the ELF program.</li> <li>○ <b>Reduced Fees:</b> <a href="#">HB 1331</a> (2021) limits and allows local jurisdictions to waive impact fees for child care facilities.</li> <li>○ <b>ECEAP Facility Needs Assessment:</b> DCYF will develop a methodology to identify, at the school district level, where ECEAP slots are needed by Sep. 2022.</li> </ul>
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>ELAC Expansion:</b> The <a href="#">Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)</a>, established in RCW 43.216.075, was given the purview of providing guidance on the Fair Start for Kids Account, expanded membership and was directed to create a temporary licensing subcommittee. \$272,000 (FSKA Section 104).</li> <li>○ <b>ELAC Annual &amp; Biennial Progress Reporting:</b> ELAC will work with DCYF to provide annual updates on FSKA strategy and priority implementation beginning in Aug. 2022, and submit a biennial report describing how the FSKA investments have impacted policy objectives beginning in Sep. 2023.</li> <li>○ <b>Data Dashboards:</b> The <a href="#">2021-23 state operating budget</a> funded development of public-facing regionalized data dashboards and reports. \$300,000</li> <li>○ <b>Integrated Early Learning Report:</b> DCYF will collaborate with OSPI to report options and recommendations for aligning and integrating high-quality early learning programs administered by both agencies by Sep. 2022. \$1,010,000</li> </ul>

Topic	Progress in 2021 Due to Legislation, Budget and Other Activities
WCCC Subsidy Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Subsidy Base Rate Increase:</b> DCYF will increase WCCC subsidy base rates to 85th percentile beginning July 2021. \$116,805,000</li> <li>○ <b>Complex Needs Grants:</b> DCYF will administer two complex needs funds (one for ECEAP/birth-to-three ECEAP; one for child care) to promote inclusive, least restrictive environments and to support contractors and providers serving children who have developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs or other unique needs beginning July 2021. \$9,674,000</li> <li>○ <b>Infant Rate Enhancements:</b> DCYF will implement an infant rate enhancement for child care providers accepting subsidy or birth-to-three ECEAP beginning July 2022. \$2,531,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancements:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and provide subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. beginning July 2022. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Trauma-Informed Care Supports:</b> DCYF will provide supports to providers to provide trauma-informed care, including professional development and training, purchase of screening tools or additional compensation for staff with child development specialty credentials beginning 2022. \$2,802,000</li> <li>○ <b>Grants for Culturally &amp; Linguistically Specific Programs:</b> DCYF will create a grant program to support inclusive and culturally and linguistically specific early learning and early childhood and parent support programs across the state. \$5,309,000</li> <li>○ <b>Collective Bargaining Agreement:</b> The child care provider collective bargaining agreement includes rate increases for Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers and increased rates for child care providers at Early Achievers Level 3.5 and operating nonstandard hours beginning July 2021. \$6,390,000</li> <li>○ <b>SPSS Migration:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF will migrate Social Service Payment System (SPSS) to a cloud-based system to implement grants, rate enhancements and other payments. \$2,487,000</li> </ul>
Cost of Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Cost of Quality Study:</b> The task force will identify and report on the true cost of providing high-quality child care by Nov. 2022. \$335,000</li> <li>○ <b>Cost-Based Subsidy Rate Model:</b> DCYF will develop and implement a child care cost estimate model for full costs of care.</li> <li>○ <b>Nonstandard Hours Rate Model:</b> DCYF, working with diverse stakeholders, must develop a rate model for nonstandard child care hours and submit the model to the Governor and the Legislature by Jan. 2022.</li> </ul>
WCCC Subsidy Copays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Copay Reduction:</b> FSKA changes the copayment schedule and reduces copayments, with changes set to occur July 2021, Jan. 2022, July 2023 and July 2025. \$76,731,000</li> </ul>
WCCC Subsidy Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Eligibility Expansion:</b> FSKA switched WCCC subsidies to a state median income (SMI) metric, and will increase eligibility to 60% of SMI by Oct. 2021, 75% of SMI by July 2025 and 85% of SMI by July 2027. \$17,359,000</li> <li>○ <b>Student Parents:</b> FSKA waives work requirement for some student populations beginning July 1, 2021. \$8,833,000</li> <li>○ <b>Caseload Restrictions:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF shall manage the program so that the average monthly caseload does not exceed 33,000 households and the department shall give prioritized access to certain groups.</li> </ul>
Consumer Education Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Employer-Supported Child Care Technical Assistance:</b> DCYF to collaborate with the Department of Commerce on technical assistance to employers interested in providing child care to employees. \$829,000 DCYF, \$789,000 Commerce</li> </ul>

Topic	Progress in 2021 Due to Legislation, Budget and Other Activities
Coordinated Referrals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Help Me Grow:</b> Funding was provided to continue the Pierce County pilot program, with a report due to the legislature in Sep. 2022. \$1,742,000</li> <li>○ <b>WithinReach:</b> Funding was provided to the WithinReach statewide family resource and referral linkage system to provide a coordinated access point of resource navigators who will connect families with children prenatal through age five with services, programs and community resources through a facilitated referral and linkage process during the 2021-23 biennium. \$530,000</li> </ul>
Language Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Language Access Coordinators:</b> DCYF will hire two temporary language access coordinators with specialties in Spanish and Somali during the 2021-23 biennium to address immediate language access needs at DCYF related to COVID-19 child care relief and recovery in DCYF programs, including: (a) Translation; (b) Outreach to community organizations serving multilingual children and families; (c) Webinars and other technical assistance; and (d) Other means of increasing language access and equity for early learning providers and caregivers. \$500,000</li> <li>○ <b>Grants for Culturally &amp; Linguistically Specific Programs:</b> DCYF will create a grant program to support inclusive and culturally and linguistically specific early learning and early childhood and parent support programs across the state. \$5,309,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Designation &amp; Rate Enhancement:</b> DCYF will create a dual language designation and provide WCCC subsidy rate enhancements or site specific grants to support staff who provide bilingual instruction, professional development training, the purchase of dual language and culturally appropriate curricula and accompanying training programs, instructional materials, etc. beginning July 2022. \$3,380,000</li> <li>○ <b>Dual Language Learners Training:</b> DCYF created the Dual Language Learner’s (DLL) training in collaboration with community and the University of Washington’s Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences. (<a href="#">RCW 43.216.105</a>)</li> </ul>
Employer-Supported Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Employer-Supported Child Care Technical Assistance:</b> DCYF to collaborate with the Department of Commerce on technical assistance to employers interested in providing child care to employees. \$829,000 DCYF, \$789,000 Commerce</li> </ul>
Child Care Licensing Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Organization License Pilot:</b> DCYF will establish a pilot project to determine the feasibility of a child care license category for multi-site programs operating under one owner or one entity and submit recommendations to the legislature by July 2024. \$414,000</li> <li>○ <b>Capacity Flexibility for Family Home Providers:</b> DCYF may waive the limit that restricts family home providers from serving not more than 12 children, if sufficient licensable space and staffing is available. (FSKA Section 313)</li> <li>○ <b>Licensing Subcommittee of ELAC:</b> ELAC will convene a temporary subcommittee to provide feedback and recommendations by December 2022 on increasing the number of licensed child care providers in the state. \$271,000</li> </ul>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Facility Technical Assistance:</b> During the 2021-23 biennium, DCYF will provide technical assistance to early learning providers interested in applying for, or who have received, funding from the Early Learning Facility Grant or Loan Program. \$956,000</li> <li>○ <b>Licensing Guidebook:</b> DCYF published a <a href="#">child care licensing guidebook</a> in 2020.</li> </ul>
Fee Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Reduced Fees:</b> <a href="#">HB 1331</a> (2021) limits and allows local jurisdictions to waive impact fees for child care facilities.</li> </ul>



# Appendix G: Roles in Implementation

Note: Asterisk (\*) shows that progress was made in 2021

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Compensation	Task force DCYF	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, and to fulfill the legislative requirement to implement cost-based subsidy rates, the task force and DCYF will evaluate and recommend a compensation structure aligned to regional school system salary scales for use by DCYF to set WCCC subsidy rates, and an administrative mechanism and finance model to ensure adequate compensation of the entire child care workforce..
	Task force DCYF Legislature	*As part of the child care cost of quality study in 2021-22, the task force and DCYF will assess alternative funding streams (besides family tuition payments and subsidies) and a financing model to support competitive, living wages and benefits for child care employees that reflect their valuable contributions to positive outcomes for children, families and our economy. The legislature should fund and support implementation of the financing model.
	Legislature DCYF	Explore options to assist with worker retention to enable provider retention and expansion by funding retention bonuses for workers making less than a specified compensation threshold. Offer the bonuses at increased frequency in the first two years of employment and annual thereafter but at higher levels as workers advance along the longevity spectrum.
		Explore options to increase the rate of WCCC subsidies for early learning professionals' families if they are registered in the state's MERIT system as a means to complement wage increases and bolster child care employee household financial well-being to increase likelihood of retention.
Benefits	Task force DCYF HCA Legislature	*Evaluate options to support access to affordable healthcare insurance coverage for child care staff. Options include, but are not limited to, the Health Benefit Exchange, Apple Health and association health plans. Implement options to streamline enrollment, ensure adequate coverage and provide bridge funding for employee premiums.
	Legislature HCA	*Fund through the Health Care Authority or another mechanism group medical insurance for the employees of providers under a certain size, if a pool for all child care providers isn't feasible.
	Legislature	Research and implement options to support retirement benefits.
Professional Development	DCYF CCA of WA SEIU 925 SOWA	*Identify resources needed to assure professional development, coaching, rating and quality incentives provide financial support to achieving high quality levels.
		*Identify resources needed to identify high-demand skills and support professional development training and reimbursement.
		*Identify resources needed to implement the Community-Based Pathway statewide as a process for child care staff to demonstrate competencies.
	Legislature DCYF	*Expand relationship-based professional development within licensed programs to realize quick and direct quality improvement.
		*Incentivize higher education attainment and career pathways via scholarships, loan repayment programs and enhanced compensation.
		*Use multiple languages and platforms for all aspects of professional development.
		*Increase professional development and quality supports for providers serving school-age children.
		Seek to resolve known issues with the quality of data in the MERIT data system, such as the number of providers with verified education data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify resources needed to increase education data verification.</li> <li>○ Explore options to capture Community Based Pathway competencies in MERIT.</li> </ul> If wage discrepancies based on race/ethnicity are found, make a plan to support equalization.

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
Substitutes	Legislature DCYF CCA of WA SEIU 925 SOWA	Assess providers' potential demand for the substitute pool and compare demand to the existing substitute pool to identify gaps.
		Evaluate options for expanding eligibility and increasing access to the substitute pool.
Invest in Startup & Operation	Legislature DCYF	*Increase access to grants, loans and other funding sources to offset child care operating and capital facility costs, including but not limited to the Early Learning Facility Fund, small grants and microloans.
	Legislature Commerce CDFIs	*Provide state funds to leverage public-private partnerships with community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to develop child care financing options, such as loan programs.
	Legislature DOR	Provide a point of sale, sales (and use) tax exemption on consumables used in providing child care.
	Legislature DCYF Commerce CDFIs	Explore options to fund new child care business start-up grants up to \$10,000 to meet licensing-required improvements for potential licensed family homes that can expand the supply inventory.
		*Target investments to incentivize provision of care in underserved market segments.
	Legislature DCYF	*Incentivize provision of child care in the child's home language and support dual language learning.
Provide Services & Supports	Legislature DCYF	*Provide resources so child care programs can implement trauma-informed, culturally responsive and bias-reducing practices.
	Legislature DCYF Commerce	*Support provision of child care in underserved geographic areas and rural areas so families may access child care in their local communities.
		*Develop local community capacity to meet local child care needs in a variety of settings.
	Legislature DCYF CCA system	*Offer technical assistance to child care providers to support business startup, operation and growth.
		Explore options to implement a "grow your own(ership)" initiative that provides startup funds and mentoring to Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) child care educators so they can become child care business owners and build wealth.
		*Provide access to infant and early childhood mental health consultants.
		Create and maintain a "best practices" guidebook on child care business and management operations.
		Explore options to fund and staff a bulk purchase clearinghouse for licensed care providers and the most common supplies, small equipment and furniture they use to reduce operational costs.
		*Implement statewide shared services programs and cooperatives for provider business needs, such as financial management, human resources, purchasing, etc.
		Explore options to fund "hub-satellite" models of service provision to provide the mechanism (the hub) for "back office" and other optional shared services to small, new and/or BIPOC-owned enterprises.
Explore options to fund legal and other technical assistance supports for child care providers entering negotiations with local businesses to provide child care for those employers' workers.		
Explore options to fund Centers for Child Care Recruitment and Expansion throughout the state.		
Develop Facilities	Legislature Commerce DCYF	*Continue to invest in the Early Learning Facilities Fund, including the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Revolving Account and the Ruth LeCocq Kagi Early Learning Facilities Development Account.
		*Provide capital investments to build and expand child care facilities.
		*Continue to invest in technical assistance for construction or renovation of child care facilities to ensure timely and efficient startup and expansion.
		Encourage municipalities to allow flexibility for child care uses as part of local zoning codes.

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
		Explore options to fund and provide technical assistance to a pilot of local land trusts to establish a child care version of a home ownership model where the public sector funds the trust to own the land under newly acquired or built licensed child care family homes or centers, with a minimum time commitment to operate as child care. This would reduce expansion and start-up costs. Create an initiative specifically for BIPOC-owned enterprises.
		Considering implementing Washington Sustainable Schools Protocol (WSSP), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or similar for state-funded facilities, focusing on children's health and wellbeing.
		Support providers' efforts to develop facilities that provide generous, high-quality space for children to move and thrive—beyond the minimum requirement of 35 square feet per child.
	Commerce	Keep records of construction costs for state-funded facilities for future planning, as OSPI does for public school facilities.
	Legislature DOR	Provide a retail sales (and use) tax exemption or deferral for construction, renovation and remodeling of child care facilities.
	DCYF	*Streamline facility permitting and licensing (see Goal 7).
Build Systems	Legislature DCYF OSPI School Districts SOWA	Develop and maintain clear and supportive partnerships between schools, school districts and child care providers (strong memoranda of understanding (MOUs), data sharing agreements, consistent communication, transportation options, sharing of professional development and student-focused technology, increased fund sharing, etc.).
	Legislature	*Develop policies to ensure that we have a fully integrated preschool and child care system to best serve children and families.
Increase & Simplify WCCC Subsidy Payments	Legislature DCYF	*Expand monthly WCCC subsidy reimbursement rates to all licensed child care providers.
		*Continue funding increased WCCC subsidy base rates, tiered reimbursement payments and other financial supports.
		*Continue providing subsidy rate enhancements to incentivize provision of child care in unmet market segments and to programs providing unique services, such as nontraditional hour care; care for underserved age groups such as infants and toddlers; care for populations with specialized health or educational needs; care in underserved geographic, ethnic or linguistic communities; and dual-language programming.
Pay Full Cost of Quality	Task Force DCYF	*Complete cost of quality model to identify gaps between existing WCCC subsidy reimbursement and cost to operate.
	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop and implement subsidy regions based on operating costs by ZIP code group. *Develop and implement supported professional development opportunities, including coaching and scholarships.
Lower WCCC Copays	Legislature DCYF	*Continue to fund the WCCC subsidy copay model in the Fair Start for Kids Act and sustain copay caps at or below 7% of household income.
Expand WCCC Eligibility		*Continue to fund the Fair Start for Kids Act WCCC subsidy eligibility increases.
		Explore options to increase WCCC subsidy eligibility to 100% of SMI or 100% of area median income.
		Expand WCCC subsidy eligibility for people seeking employment.
		*Continue to fund eliminated WCCC subsidy work requirements for two-year degrees and apprenticeships.
		*Appropriate funding to eliminate WCCC subsidy work requirements for parents completing four-year degrees and graduate degrees.
Eliminate the cap to allow any eligible family to participate in the WCCC subsidy program.		

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>	<b>Implementation Tactic</b>
Inform & Enroll Families in WCCC	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop methods to educate families about WCCC subsidies in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
		Partner and coordinate with child care resource and referral agencies, employers, job training organizations, colleges and universities, apprenticeship programs, labor organizations, community-based organizations, faith organizations, healthcare providers, public health agencies, schools and child care providers to share WCCC subsidy consumer education resources and information with parents and caregivers.
		*Develop and maintain culturally responsive WCCC subsidy consumer education resources in multiple languages.
Develop Resources	Legislature DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop methods to educate families about state child care resources in multiple languages through trusted messengers in a variety of formats and platforms, including written resources, media, social media and direct engagement with parents and caregivers.
		*Develop and maintain culturally responsive child care consumer education resources in multiple languages. Offer information about finding and affording child care, child care program quality and who to contact to learn more or receive assistance.
Coordinate Referrals	Legislature DCYF CCA system WCFC HMG WA WithinReach State agencies	*Continue to support statewide and regional child care resource and referral systems (Child Care Aware agencies).
		*Continue to support statewide family child care resource and referral linkage systems (WithinReach).
		*Continue to expand Help Me Grow statewide.
		*Improve the system of referral to benefits outside DCYF (SNAP, TANF, etc.).
Increase Language Accessibility	DCYF with stakeholder input	*Develop and implement a DCYF language access plan.
		*Develop and implement a dual language designation.
		*Provide grants, rate enhancements, professional development and resources for dual language programming.
		*Develop and implement early childhood and school-age equity grants.
Engage & Assist Employers	Commerce DCYF Business Assns. Chambers of Commerce Economic Development Orgs.	*Continue outreach to and engagement with employers and community child care stakeholders.
		*Develop and implement the new employer-supported child care technical assistance program.
		*Identify effective approaches to connecting employers with child care system infrastructure to scale up employer support of child care.
		*Develop an employer-supported child care toolkit to implement a menu of options for employers with different business models, sizes and industries.
Evaluate, Simplify & Streamline Rules, Codes & Processes	ELAC	*Conduct a periodic external evaluation of the state's regulatory environment to inform continuous improvement to achieve regulatory goals while minimizing burdens on child care providers.
	DCYF Imagine Institute CCA system Stakeholders	*Develop and maintain templates and wizards for creating child care program policies, plans, forms and other resources that are required for child care licensing.
	DCYF SOWA OSPI Schools	Improve school-age child care regulations so they match standard school day operations and safety protocols.
	DCYF with stakeholder	*Scale up the licensing pre-approval process to all new child care construction and renovation projects.

Topic	Lead(s)	Implementation Tactic
	input	<p>*Coordinate local and state agencies such as DCYF, State Fire Marshal and State Building Code Council to assess and streamline licensing processes.</p> <p>Streamline background check system and processes to support onboarding new staff who have completed criminal background clearance and are awaiting clearance on other elements, as allowed under federal rules.</p>
Help Providers Succeed	DCYF with stakeholder input	<p>*Create and maintain a clear, shared guidebook and other resources, for both licensors and providers outlining all licensing standards and expectations in plain language.</p> <p>Compile data to track provider closures. Conduct learning interviews with providers leaving the industry or Early Achievers system to better understand exit reasons.</p> <p>*Establish standards for consultative child care licensing practices and service.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> In Washington state, a variety of providers offer child care and wraparound services serving the whole child and whole family. This includes, but is not limited to, tribal communities, community-based organizations, center and family home child care, nonprofits, school districts and faith-based organizations. Funded through combinations of public and private funds, our state's mixed delivery system reaches families in urban, suburban, rural and frontier areas across the state. Various program models and settings offer options that respond to child and family needs and preferences, and culturally responsive services that reflect the diversity of our communities. (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families 2018); (Morris and Smith, Examples of Mixed-Delivery Early Care and Education Systems 2021)

<sup>2</sup> (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University 2007); (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University 2010); (Karoly 2019); (J. J. Heckman 2007)

<sup>3</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2020)

<sup>4</sup> (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> (Forry, et al. 2013)

<sup>7</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2020)

<sup>8</sup> (U.S. Census Bureau 2018); (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families 2018)

<sup>9</sup> (Bipartisan Policy Center 2020)

<sup>10</sup> (Austin, Whitebook and Dichter 2019)

<sup>11</sup> (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 2020)

<sup>12</sup> (Washington State Department of Early Learning 2015)

<sup>13</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2020)

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- <sup>14</sup> Sources: (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2020); (Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction 2020); (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families 2021); (Moore and Gertseva 2015); (Washington State Department of Early Learning 2015); (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment 2020); (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2019)
- <sup>15</sup> [Appendix A](#) describes how this report fulfills the authorizing legislation, and [Appendix B](#) provides information about the task force.
- <sup>16</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2019)
- <sup>17</sup> (ICF and Fran Kipnis 2020)
- <sup>18</sup> (Center for Law and Social Policy 2017)
- <sup>19</sup> (Child Welfare Information Gateway n.d.), (Murphey, et al. 2013)
- <sup>20</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2019)
- <sup>21</sup> (Gould 2015)
- <sup>22</sup> (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary 2021)
- <sup>23</sup> (Smith and McHenry, A Cohesive Vision for Child Care, Head Start, and Pre-K 2021)
- <sup>24</sup> (Washington State Department of Commerce 2020); (Washington State Department of Commerce 2020)
- <sup>25</sup> (U.S. Census Bureau 2021); (Klickitat County Childcare Committee 2021); (Washington STEM 2021)
- <sup>26</sup> (Washington STEM 2021)
- <sup>27</sup> (Cummings, Graham, et al., Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity 2021); (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families 2021)
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> (Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families 2018)
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2020)
- <sup>32</sup> (Morris and Smith, Examining the Role of Faith-Based Child Care 2021)
- <sup>33</sup> (Child Care Collaborative Task Force 2019)