

Protect Critical Investments in Child Care & Early Learning

Washington's child care system is a complex, community-driven infrastructure that allows parents to work, children to receive play-based early education and our economy to grow. Without it, our state's employers could not rely on their employees who are parents and more children would arrive at kindergarten unprepared for school.

How has the pandemic impacted child care?

- Up to 24% of child care programs have closed, some permanently
- Costs of operating a child care program have increased due to small group sizes and increased sanitation needs
- Families with school-agers are relying on child care providers to care for their children AND support their remote-learning needs
- Young children are experiencing pandemic-related trauma, increasing the need for mental health supports
- Providers who are increasing program quality via higher education are concerned their scholarships will end
- Informal care, with family, friends and neighbors, has increased as licensed programs closed and K-12 schools offered only remote learning.
- More families experiencing homelessness are seeking help finding child care

Yet despite the crucial role child care plays in most families' lives, it is mostly unsupported by public funding, unlike our K-12 education system. Instead, our child care system must rely on young parents, who typically have low incomes and few assets, to fund it. This explains why child care early educators earn so little - less than parking lot attendants and pet groomers.

The little public funding WA's child care system does receive, less than 1% of our state budget, is absolutely essential. Budget cuts will cause more child care programs to close, just as we need them more than ever as we try to rebuild our economy with the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines.

Child Care Aware of Washington has been helping providers keep their doors open with virtual coaching on everything from how to modify early learning spaces to support physical distancing, to connecting them to sources of financial support, to bringing them essential supplies like toilet paper and bleach. Our Family Center has been helping families find open child care programs nearby and connecting them to other resources when needed.

These supports for child care programs and families with young children have become even more critical as the pandemic crisis continues. Washington's investments in child care must be sustained.



Child Care Aware of Washington calls on the legislature to prioritize child care and protect the critical investments that our child care system relies upon:

- 1 Maintain investments in Early Achievers coaching so child care programs have the individual support they need to navigate the pandemic
- 2 Ensure that the Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center can continue to meet increased demand from families seeking care
- 3 Sustain implementation of infant and early childhood mental health consultation, including child care consultations
- 4 Preserve early childhood education scholarships for child care professionals
- 5 Protect and enhance the Working Connections Child Care Homeless Grace Period