

2021 WHITE CENTER

Children's Coalition Report

White Center Community
Development Association

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Introduction

For years, White Center residents have been saying in our White Center community survey that child care is one of their greatest obstacles to financial stability. Larger institutions have been trying to fix the problem for communities, but the missing piece is having real conversations and asking the community what our needs are.

COVID pandemic is creating widespread unemployment and is financially impacting our families more than ever. We need solutions now. We hope that by bringing families and providers together to gather authentic data about the needs and experiences of people most impacted by the system, together, we can come up with solutions to create necessary and transformative change.

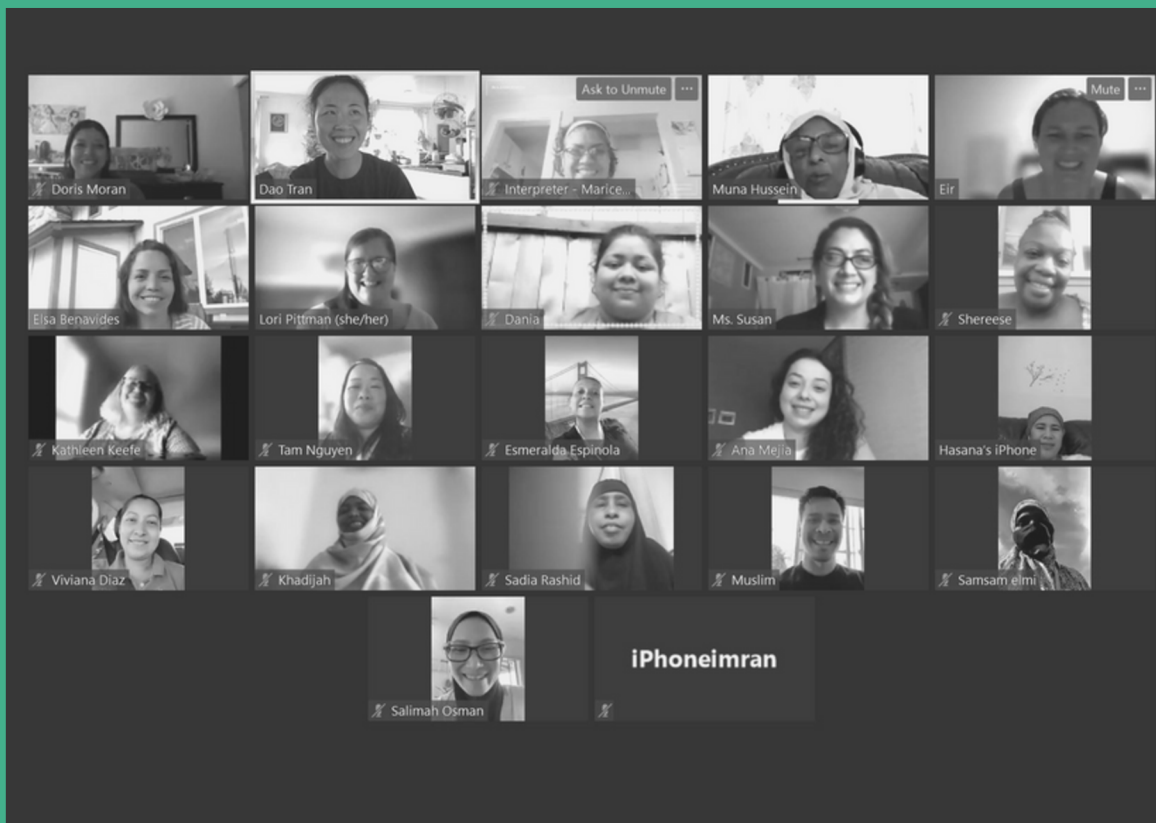
WCCDA's Philosophy

White Center Community Development Association was created from the grit, hard work, and aspirations of a deeply under-resourced community that wanted something better for our children and families. Our mission is to develop authentic leadership, leverage resources, and build economic and social equity to create a strong, connected, and vibrant community.

Our core belief is that communities know best what is needed for building strong neighborhoods. If a system is not serving our community, we are the ones who know how to fix it.

About White Center Children's Coalition

The White Center Children's Coalition is a group of community leaders, parents, and caregivers. From diverse cultures and backgrounds, we came together to share our stories and learn from one another. To help us better understand our community's child care needs, preferences, and challenges, we co-designed and conducted a community-wide survey. We believe through our learnings and collaboration, we can design solutions that will address the issues in our local child care system and create positive changes for our children and families.



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Process & Methods

“I would love that they take us more into account as a community that our voices are listened to and take into account our needs...”

The White Center Children's Coalition met through facilitated multi-lingual conversations on Zoom twice a month for six months. A smaller group of steering committee members also met separately once a month to plan the agenda for the larger group discussion. During our meetings, we dug deep into the issues that families and providers face around child care. We discussed how the system currently works, what families and providers need from our child care system, and how the system could potentially change in order to work better for everyone.

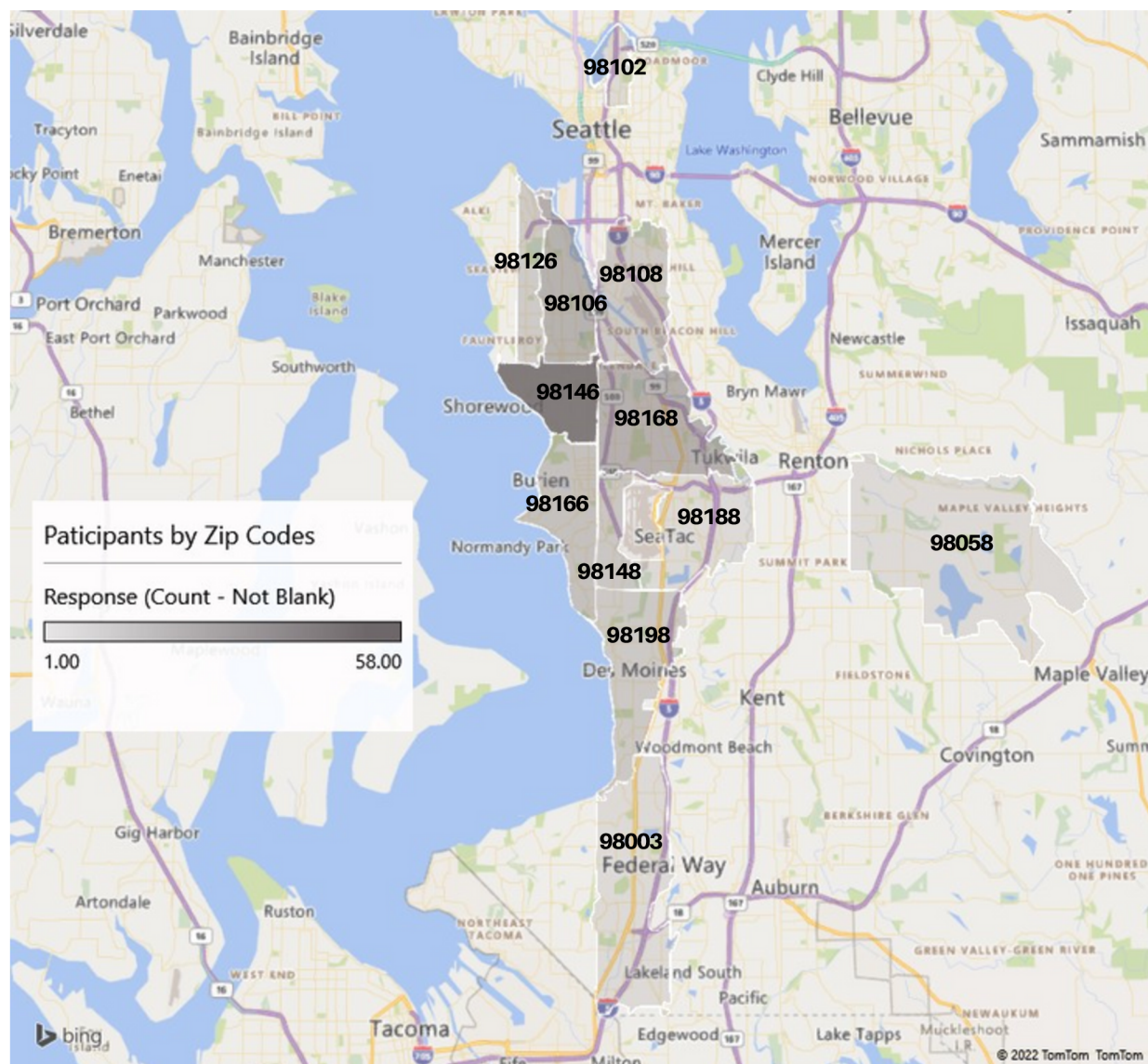
During these six months, we also worked on creating and conducting community-wide surveys for parents and providers. We asked parents and providers about their experience with the child care system, what is working and what is not working for them, what is important to them, how has COVID impacted them and their child care needs, and what changes they think need to happen.

We included as many community voices as we could to ensure that we capture the breadth and depth of our data. The surveys were available in 4 languages: English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Somali. Besides having the surveys accessible online, we also worked with community partners and leaders to ensure accessibility of our surveys to other languages/cultural groups such as our Khmer and Cham communities. Each coalition member also individually reached out to their friends, families, and neighbors. Due to the lack of representation of home care providers in our coalition, we also invited providers to share their experiences with us in conversations outside of our coalition meetings.

Parent Participants

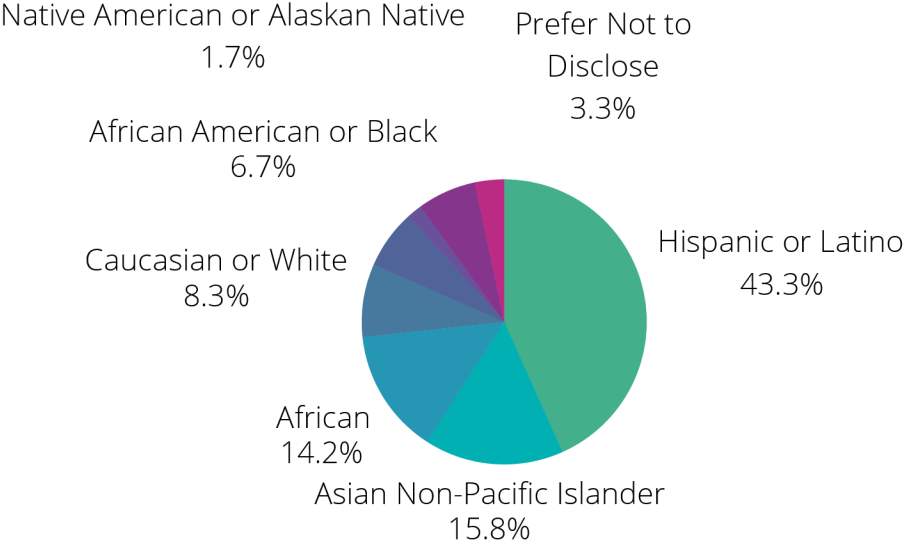
A total of 120 parents participated in the survey, most living within White Center and the immediate surrounding areas. All had 1 or more children with ages ranging from 0 through 12 years. Participants represented the various cultural and ethnic groups - Mexicans, Vietnamese, Somali, Cham, Cambodian, Central Yupik, Choctaw and Blackfeet, Colville, Mestizo, Tsimshian, and Tlingit - and languages of White Center.

Participants by Zip Codes



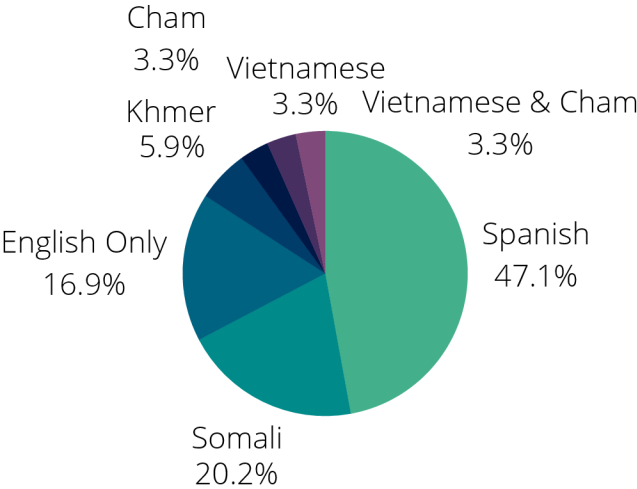
Parent Participants

Race/Ethnicity of Participating Parents



- Multiple races/ethnicities include:
- African American or Black, Caucasian or White, Native American or Alaskan Native (1.7%)
 - African American or Black, Native American or Alaskan Native (1.7%)
 - African, Native American or Alaskan Native (0.8%)
 - Asian Non-Pacific Islander and Caucasian or White (0.8%)
 - Caucasian or White and Hispanic or Latino (0.8%)
 - Caucasian or White and Hispanic or Latino and Native American or Alaskan Native (0.8%)

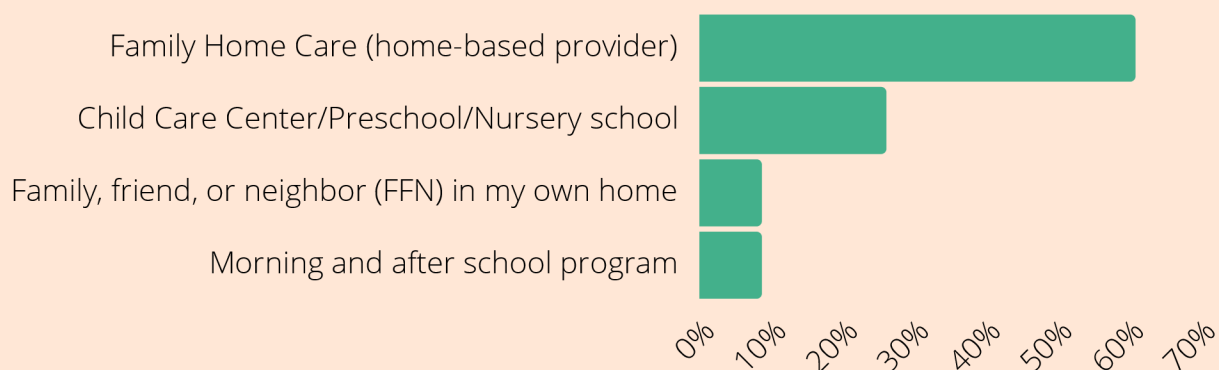
Languages Families Speak at Home



Provider Participants

A total of 23 child care providers participated in the survey and 4 participated in further discussion at our Provider Summit held on Zoom. All participants were providing child care to families in White Center or the immediate surrounding areas. Most (91.3%) were licensed, working in child care centers (26.1%), family home care centers (60.9%), morning and after school programs (4.4%), or as Family, Friend, or Neighbor (FFN) care providers (8.7%). Most (72.7%) were for-profit businesses or self-employed, while 22.7% were working in non-profit settings. Most (82.6%) provided care all year round, while 13.0% provided care all year except summer. Participants provided care for children ages 0-12 years of age in various languages and held various roles such as teacher, lead teachers manager/supervisor, owner/operator, director, and supervisor.

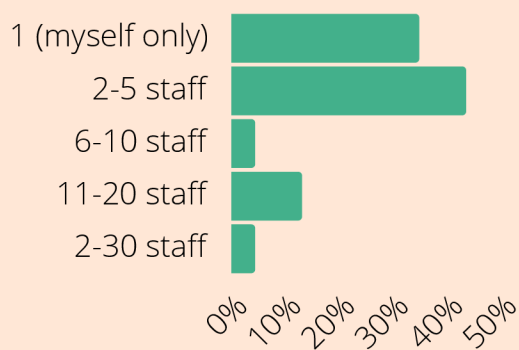
Type of Child Care Provider



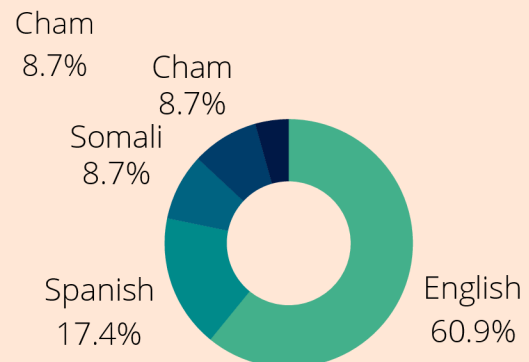
Provider Participants

- Over 90% provide care on weekdays (Monday - Friday); over 20% provide care on weekends (Saturday & Sunday)
- All providers spend time outside playing and learning with their children (8.7% less than 30 min, 39.1% 31 min-1 hour, 26.1% 1-2 hours, 21.7% 2-4 hours, 4.4% more than 4 hours)
- 65.2% of providers do not have screen time for their children; some have 30 mins or less and a few have 1-2 hours

Child Care Provider Size



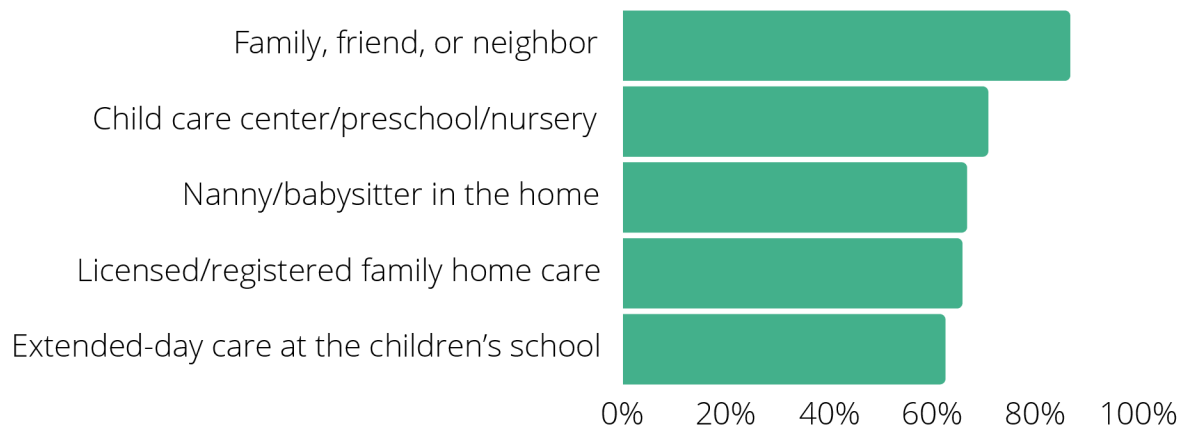
Child Care Programming by Language



Child Care Use

About 38% of parents reported having someone else beside them and/or their partner provide care for their children.

Types of Care Families are Currently Using



Families use a combination of care by a family relative, friend, or neighbor (86.7%), child care center/preschool/nursery (70.8%), nanny/babysitter in the home (66.7%), licensed/registered family home care (65.8%), and extended-day care at the children's school (62.5%).

Child Care Use

Families using child care had about 1-2 children in child care with an average of 20 hours a week per child.

Current Provider Availability by Age Groups

	Yes, we have available spaces	No, we are full	No, we have a waitlist	Not applicable
0 - 12 months	43%	38%	5%	14%
13 months - 24 months	40%	40%	5%	15%
> 2 years - 4 years	41%	27%	23%	9%
5 years - 6 years	45%	25%	10%	20%
7 years - 8 years	35%	40%	0%	25%
9 years - 12 years	20%	30%	10%	40%

Together, parents reported having a total of 66 children currently using child care while needing care for 127 children. When looking at provider availability, about 20-45% of participating providers reported having spaces available to care for additional children in their program, depending on the age range of the children. About 35-50% are full/at capacity, with some having waitlists.

Child Care Barriers

Cost is the number one child care barrier to families, whether they are currently using child care or not.

When asked about child care challenges and barriers, cost continues to come up in conversations with coalition members and was discussed extensively. This was also reflected in the parent survey. Whether families were currently using child care or not, affordability was the top reported challenge for families (currently using child care - 52.2%; currently not using child care - 56.8%).

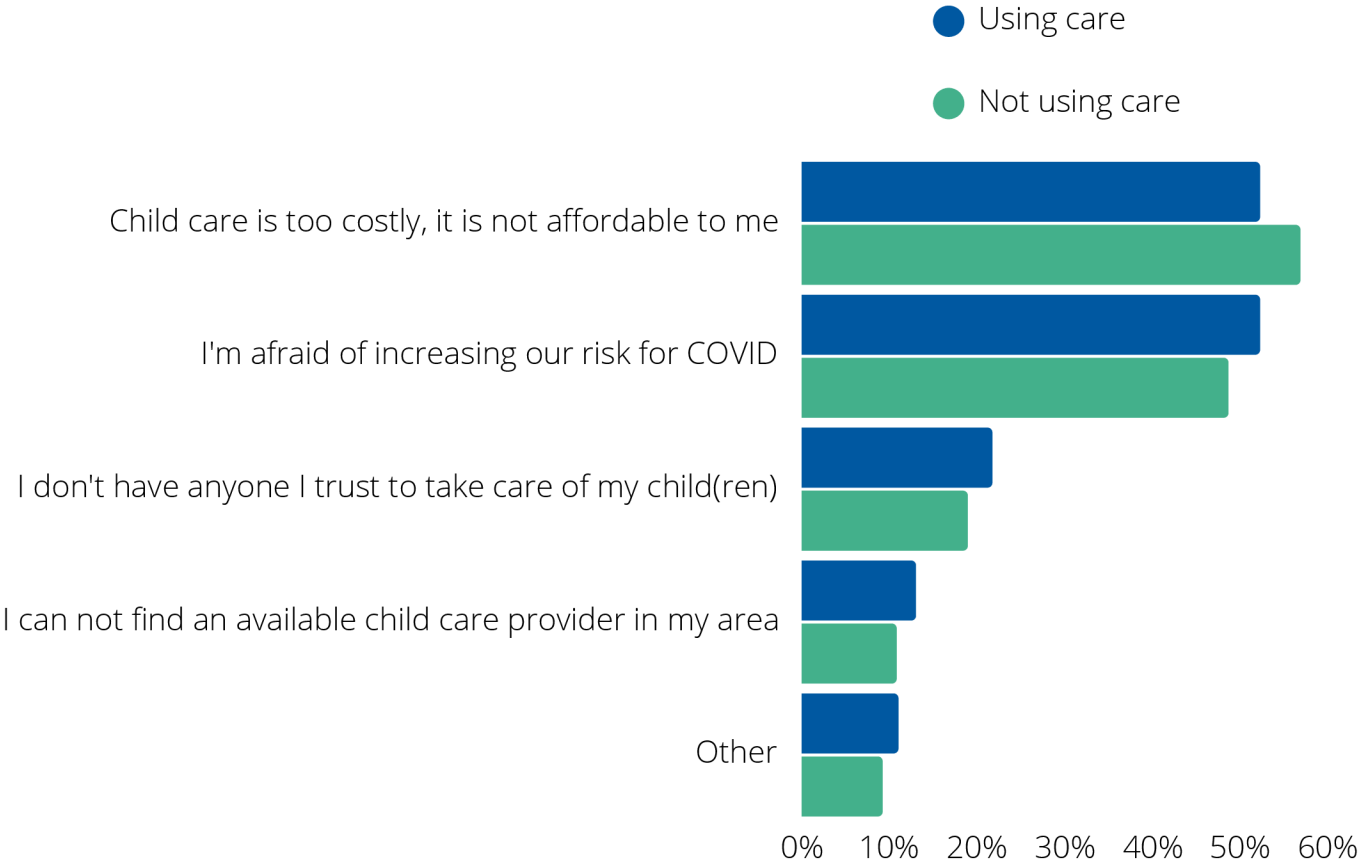
Of families that reported using child care, 82.6% paid for the care they were receiving. Almost half reported having difficulty paying for child care or other bills in the last year because of child care -- always (15.2%), often (15.2%), and sometimes (15.2%). Providers also reported half of the families they provide care to have trouble paying -- always (18.2%), often (9.1%), and sometimes (22.7%).

Many parents in the coalition shared their difficult experience of trying to find child care only to realize that it is not affordable to them. Sometimes the cost is almost as much as their income. And so in consideration of the financial impact that child care would have, parents will typically make changes to their schedule, have family and friends help them, or have one parent stay home to make it work.

Consequently, 68.3% of families in the survey said their school/work schedule is affected because of child care; 32.5% said they or their partner has to rotate their work/school schedule and 35.8% said they work or go to school less or not at all to provide care for their children.

Child Care Barriers

Main Child Care Challenges for Parents



Child Care Barriers: Cost

“Child care is way too expensive for many of us to afford it that it’s easier to just stay home when you have more than one child.”

Most families would use licensed child care providers if it was affordable to them.

Many families use family, friend, or neighbor care because it is most affordable to them. To 45.0% of survey participants, affordable is paying 0-5% of their household income for child care. While 36.7% prefer to pay nothing for child care, about 10.8% are willing to pay 6-10% of their household income for child care.

When comparing the amount families who were currently paying for care versus the amount families who were not using child care predicted they would pay, the amount predicted is higher. One of the reasons might be that families who are not currently using child care are more likely to not qualify for subsidies and therefore would be expected to pay more.

Together, cost and expected cost reported by parents were consistent with the range child care providers reported charging their families. Most providers charge families \$5-\$10/hour (45.45%). Some were charging families less than \$5/hour (27.27%) and \$15-20/hr (22.73%). A few were charging more than \$20/hour (4.55%).

For families who were currently using child care, about 33% were receiving one or more types of subsidies or assistance programs. Many did not know about the different programs or believe that those programs do not apply to them. Some have applied but were not eligible.

For families who were not using child care, a few have applied for subsidy/assistance programs and were either on the waitlist or not eligible. Most also did not know about the different subsidy/assistance programs.

Child Care Barriers: Cost

Families Currently Enrolled in Subsidies/Assistance Programs

	Yes, I am enrolled in this program	No, I don't know this program	No, it doesn't apply to me	No, I know but haven't applied	*No, other reasons
ECEAP or Head Start	13.0%	26.1%	32.6%	15.2%	13.0%
CCAP	6.5%	39.1%	26.1%	6.5%	17.4%
WCCC or Seasonal Child Care	8.7%	52.2%	26.1%	10.9%	9.0%
Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care	15.2%	19.1%	28.3%	10.9%	2.2%
Other need-based scholarship	13.0%	47.8%	26.1%	6.5%	4.4%

**Other reasons include not being able to complete the application process, being on the waitlist, or their child care provider not being eligible for the program they applied for*

ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

CCAP - Seattle Child Care Assistance Program

WCCC - Working Connections Child Care

Child Care Barriers: Cost

Families Applied for Subsidies/Assistance Programs in the Past

	Yes, eligible and/or on waitlist	Yes, but not eligible	No, I don't know this program	No, it doesn't apply to me	*No, other reasons
ECEAP or Head Start	13.3%	12.2%	33.8%	21.6%	16.3%
CCAP	1.4%	2.7%	45.9%	28.4%	17.6%
WCCC or Seasonal Child Care	1.4%	0.0%	58.1%	27.0%	9.6%
Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care	4.1%	5.4%	52.7%	23.0%	13.5%
Other need-based scholarship	2.7%	0.0%	59.5%	27.9%	8.2%

**Other reasons include knowing about the program but haven't applied or not being able to complete the application*

ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

CCAP - Seattle Child Care Assistance Program

WCCC - Working Connections Child Care

Child Care Barriers: Cost

Cost is also a barrier for child care providers. In 2020, 40% of providers reported making less than \$20,000.

Providers shared that though child care is rewarding, work can be challenging and the pay is not enough, especially for teachers and assistant teachers working for home care providers or smaller centers.

Owners of home child care providers may make enough money but have to take on the maximum number of children and work a lot more hours to keep their business running. They often use unpaid family members to help. They also experience a lot more of a burden to support families in other ways. Besides providing child care, 70.59% of providers reported supporting families with connecting to resources such as food access, counseling, rent assistance, etc.

Larger child care centers also struggle with costs. 38.9% of providers reported struggling with the cost of providing child care being too high and revenue being low. Besides paying for teachers' wages and benefits, centers have facilities and operational costs. In the last year, 22.2% of providers reported having problems with facility/home maintenance and operations. Teachers in centers are licensed and trained, which means they have to be paid more. In the last year, 33.3% of providers reported having a hard time finding and retaining staff. The cost of providing care to children under the age of 3 is especially challenging because of the higher adult-to-child ratio.

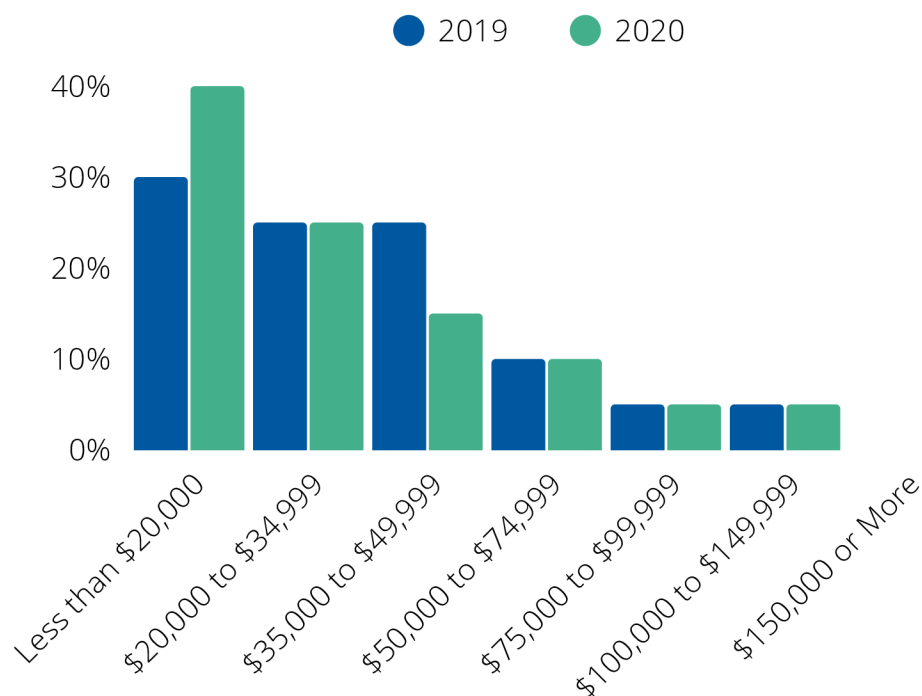
“If I can get some grant, I will buy supplies, food or gas for parents as they need and ask.”

Child Care Barriers: Cost

“My kids are family and I still hear from some that are in their 40s.”

About 42% of providers experienced a change in their income in 2020 when compared to 2019 (21% increase and 21% decrease). In 2020, 10% more providers were making less than \$20,000, and 10% fewer providers were making between \$35,000-\$49,999.

Provider Household Gross Income - 2020



Child Care Barriers: Cost

Some providers accept different subsidy programs; however, subsidy programs can be a burden to providers.

Teachers are not always aware of whether the provider they work for accepts certain subsidies or not. Providers feel that accepting subsidies can be a cost burden on their business. 27.8% of providers said that subsidy programs are difficult to manage and that it's difficult to keep up with the licensing and regulatory compliances. Some may accept subsidies when they first start out but are not motivated to keep accepting once they have built their clientele because the rates are low and the work attached to these programs for example keeping up with Early Achievers is too difficult. Small business home providers also reported not being able to provide scholarships to families.

“I use[d] to years ago but got too complicated to keep up with and any money I earned and did not receive had to do with subsidy families which was a lot.”

Child Care Barriers: Cost

Provider participating in subsidies/assistance programs

	Yes, have families in this program	Yes, but no families	No, not accepting or participating	No, I don't know this program	No, this program is not applicable
ECEAP	15.8%	21.1%	15.8%	5.7%	42.1%
Head Start	15.8%	15.8%	31.9%	0.0%	36.8%
CCAP	23.8%	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	19.1%
WCCC or Seasonal Child Care	33.3%	33.3%	14.3%	9.5%	9.6%
Family, Friend, & Neighbor Care	20.0%	5.0%	25.0%	20.0%	30.0%
Other need-based scholarship	20.0%	10.0%	25.0%	20.0%	25.0%

ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

CCAP - Seattle Child Care Assistance Program

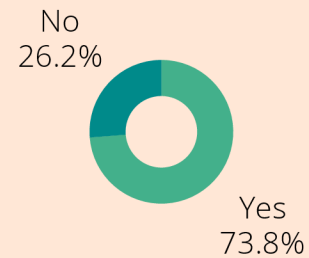
WCCC - Working Connections Child Care

Child Care Barriers: System Navigation

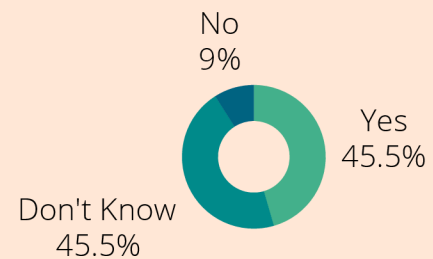
Child care resources are not accessible to parents and providers.

From both discussions in coalition meetings and data from the community survey, a large part of our community is unaware of child care subsidies/ assistance programs, especially for families who are currently not using child care. A few have children enrolled in programs like ECEAP, Head Start, and Working Connections Care or Seasonal Childcare, but many believe these programs don't apply to them or that they do not meet their eligibility requirements. For example, many families in our coalition were unaware that child care subsidy is a benefit to children and is not a public charge. And both parents and providers believe families don't apply because of their immigration status.

Parents believe families don't apply because of immigration status



Providers believe families don't apply because of immigration status



Both families and providers feel unsupported by the system and shared their experiences of not knowing where to find information. 16.7% of providers reported that navigating the system to become a registered/licensed provider is difficult. Those with English language ability use the web as a place for resources, but many, especially parents and providers who don't speak English, are completely reliant on their personal connections to find child care. As information changes, families are oftentimes unaware and rely on outdated information.

Child Care Barriers: COVID Pandemic

About half of participating parents and providers reported the risk of COVID as one of their main child care challenges in the last year.

Both families and providers reported being financially impacted by COVID. In 2019, the median household income of participating families ranged from \$35,000 to \$49,999. When compared to 2020, about 34% of families had a decrease in their household income.

Providers reported various negative impacts of COVID. Providers experienced reduced enrollment and attendance (68.4%), reduced class sizes (52.6%), reduced revenue (52.6%), and reduced staff size (15.8%). In the last year, 44.4% of providers reported not being able to operate at full capacity. A few said they experienced temporary closure due to COVID. More than half of providers (57.89%) also had to modify rules and sanitation practices to reduce COVID risk, and some (31.58%) provided remote curriculum instruction or activities for children which providers reported were challenging for families and providers.

“I really worry [about the] risk of Covid if I open the childcare but I had to do it because it's my income. Parents work at home and they can't afford childcare fees.”

Child Care Barriers: COVID Pandemic

Most parents (95%) believe that their child care needs will be different after COVID.

Though parents are concerned about the COVID in care settings, they are also concerned that their children have been negatively impacted by the lack of opportunities to socialize with other children.

Parents are expecting to have a higher need for child care after the pandemic. They are also expecting safety protocols and procedures to be implemented in child care settings such as sanitation, mask requirement, and social distancing to reduce COVID risk.

“My toddler has never been away from her parents because of covid and we will need help transitioning to care outside the home. Some place that is within walking distance that we can slowly acclimate her to would be best.”

Some coalition members believe that because of COVID, the shortage of infant care is greater than what we are seeing because many families are currently not looking for child care and may not know about the lack of available care in our community.

Child Care Needs

Most importantly, child care has to be affordable for families.

Parents value child care and having space for their children to learn and connect with other children while they work and/or do other tasks. In conversations, parents also shared their value in having care that is intimate, knowing that their children are in a safe place and are well taken care of, and having providers who share the same culture and language as them.

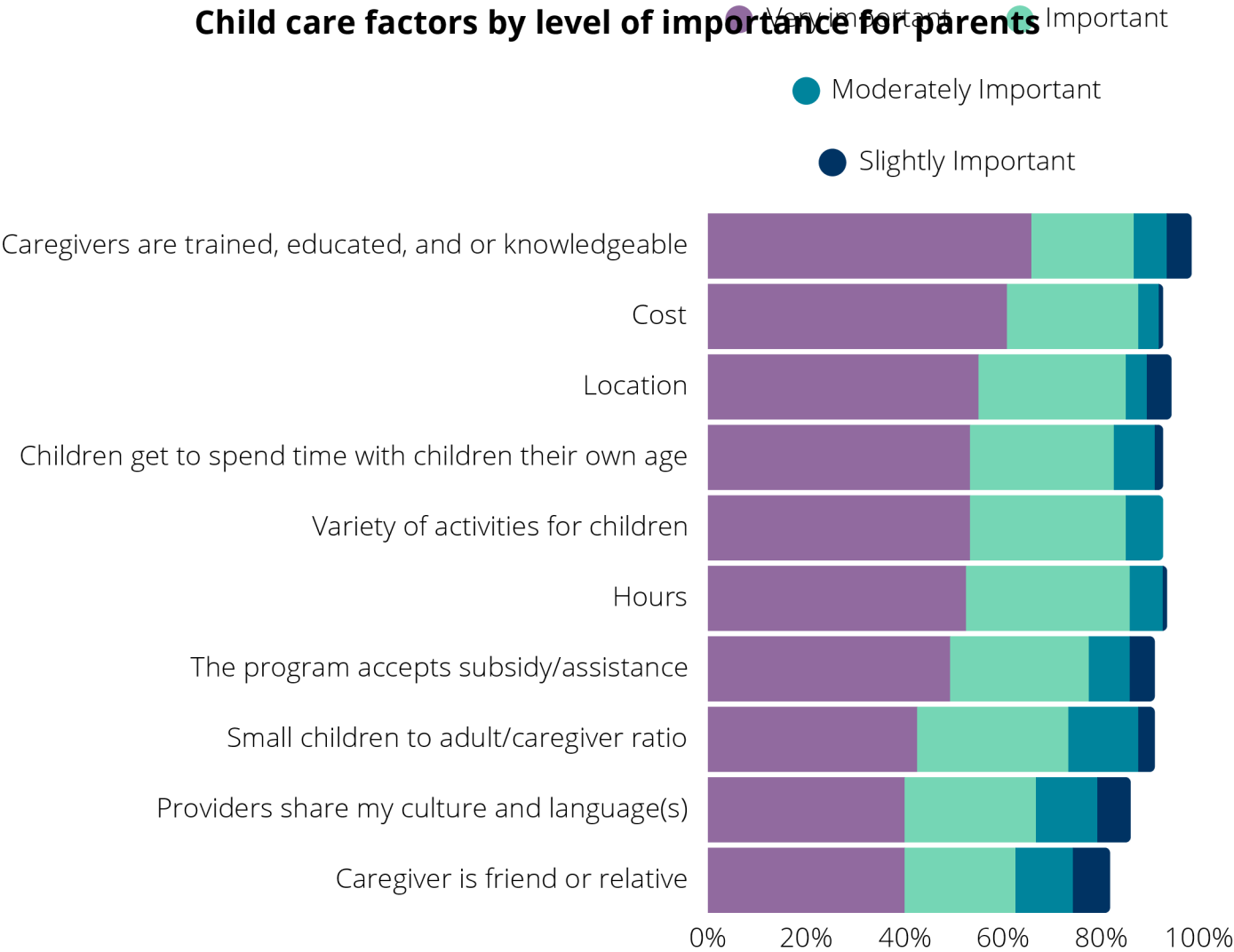
If child care was free, 50.8% of families would use child care full time, 30.8% would use child care part-time, and 12.5% would use child care occasionally.

Most families reported needing child care during the weekdays but some also need care during the weekends. Most need care during work hours, but some need care before/after work hours or 24 hours. 59.2% of families need care all year round, while others could do without child care in the summer (24.2%) or only need child care during the school break times (7.5%). 56% of families would consider all-year nature-based programs and 27.5% would consider summer only.

"I would love to find a low-cost nursery so that I can leave my children for a few hours and study a little English..."

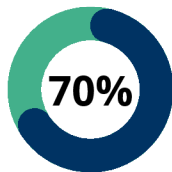
Child Care Needs

Child care factors by level of importance for parents



Child Care Needs: Children with Disabilities

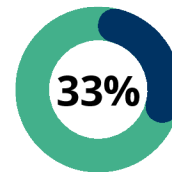
Child care is especially challenging for children with disabilities. Not all parents believe that the current child care system meets the needs of children with disabilities. Parents who have children with disabilities emphasized the importance of having teachers and professionals who are trained and have the patience to take care of their children. However, only 33.3% of participating providers reported having programming or training to care for children with disabilities. Training/programming providers participated include: STARS - State Training And Registry System, ASL - American Sign Language, IEP - Individualized Education Program, etc. A few teachers were unaware and did not know if the provider they work for has training or programming to care for children with disabilities.



Parents believe child care meets the needs of their children with disabilities



Providers currently providing care for children with disabilities



Providers having programming or training to care for children with disabilities

"I usually take only one child with disabilities because I need one provider to [take care of the child so that it] will be safe for the child and other children at my childcare."

Child Care Needs: Kindergarten Readiness

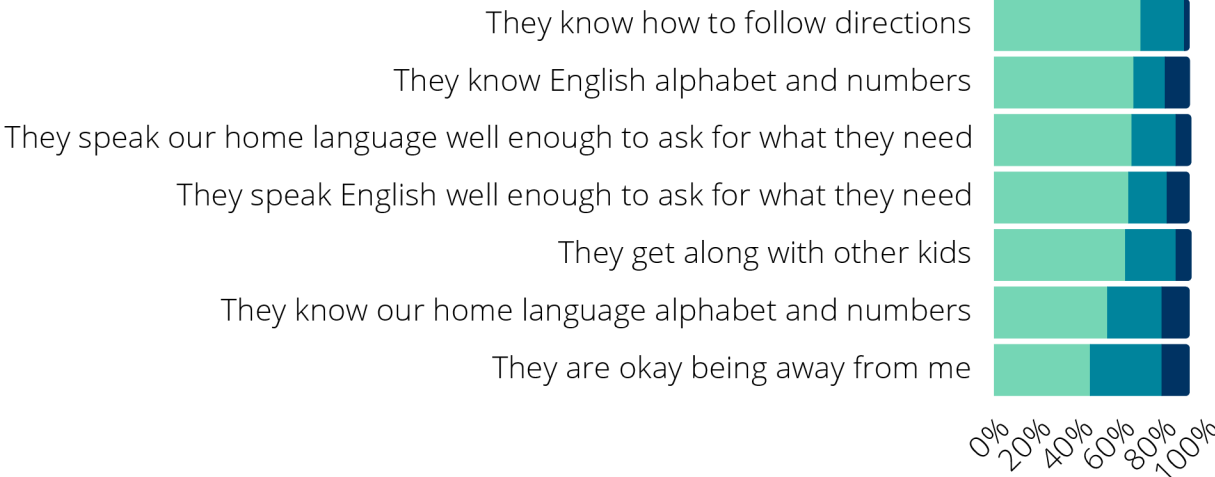
Kindergarten readiness in child care is important for parents. However, most parents reported lower kindergarten readiness skill preparation in their current child care situation -- both with parents currently using child care and not using child care -- than levels reported by participating providers. The type of skills their children are most being prepared for is also slightly different from the skills providers reported.

"I wish my children were in an academic child care program or preschool. Right now their child care is provided by a family member and the caretaker doesn't speak or know English to teach the kids and get them ready for kindergarten. Going to a child care place unplugs them from screen time as most of the time, my kids are either on the iPad or watching tv under the care of my family member. Socializing with other kids their age is important as well and that's what they lack being cared for my family member."

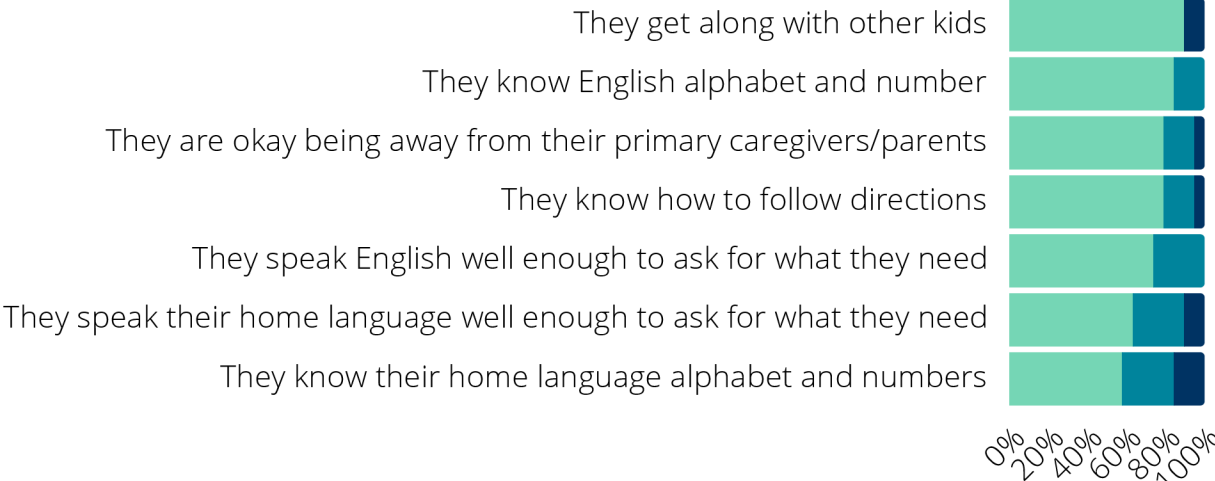
Child Care Needs: Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten Readiness Skill Preparation Reported by Parents

- Yes
- Some...
- No



Kindergarten Readiness Skill Preparation Reported by Providers



Child Care & Systemic Inequity

Barriers in child care perpetuate systemic inequity.

Child care is necessary for parents to work and earn an income. Without affordable child care, parents -- particularly mothers -- must make the difficult choice to either settle for cheaper and potentially lower-quality care or leave the workforce to take on unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

“Some [...] mothers are single moms and it’s really hard when we work we can’t get child care because we can’t afford it.”

“Even though my family is upper middle income, the cost of child care is burdensome. I know other countries that are less wealthy have low or no cost child care capping at a reasonable percentage of the family’s income. There is no excuse for our country’s contempt for families, children and working women.”

Families who are having to make these hard decisions are also the ones who are most disproportionately affected by other systems. Instead of supporting families, the child care system helps widen the economic gap for women and families of color, especially for families with single mothers.

Child Care & Systemic Inequity

Our child care system does not support caregivers and parents.

Amongst parents who were not currently using child care, 24.3% preferred to provide care for their children. However, they did not feel supported by our system and were struggling economically to make their situation work or felt pressured to go back to work.

"I think there are preferences in our system since I have seen lots of people that do not report income and qualify for almost everything and people that do things right don't qualify."

Child care, whether provided by parents or anyone else, should be supported by our community and government. We value our children's education and early learning, yet we don't have a system that adequately pays and supports caregivers and parents to provide care for children.

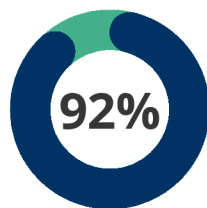
"Many Hispanic families, more than all women, do not have access to child care because they do not have enough income since they work part time to be able to rotate with their partner."

Recommendations for System Change

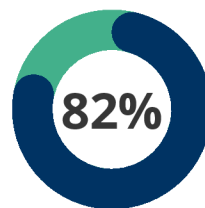
We need to invest in child care to support families and caregivers.

There is a huge gap between what families can pay and what it costs to provide high-quality child care. Our community is not immune to the "cliff effect" in our child care system. Families should be able to afford care, no matter how much they make. Our parents and providers believe that the government should make child care services more affordable and accessible to our community.

Percentage of Participants Believe the Government Should Make Child Care More Accessible



Parents



Providers

"The entire state of Washington is a child care desert. Child care providers earn low wages and have few benefits. Staff turnover at alarming rates. Parents are forced to make impossible choices because of the lack of availability and affordability of child care. We must fund child care as a public good."

Recommendations for System Change

“Only that if it were possible to do this free or low-income childcare, it would be for everyone in the community and not just for some preferred ones.”

For the child care system to work, it needs to be affordable, accessible, and high-quality. Parents should be able to choose whom to provide care for their children without sacrificing one over the other.

- **Affordability** - Our government should invest in the care of our children, no matter the age. Parents should be able to pay for their child care without being impacted economically. Providers should be able to make a living wage. And parents, especially women, shouldn't have to sacrifice their work or education for unpaid caregiving.

- **Accessibility** - Providing care for children can be rewarding. But as our community has shared, providers don't often feel supported. Burnout is high. Providers have difficulties hiring and retaining staff, while families have difficulties finding care. With the COVID pandemic, child care shortages will amplify. We need a system that supports the child care workforce and helps child care businesses thrive.
- **High-quality** - We know that early childhood education is critical for the development of a child. However, our system does not support early education as it does K-12. Caregivers should be supported with resources and training to give our children the highest quality of care no matter if they work at a child care center or provide care in their own home.

Recommendations for System Change

"Give daycare providers a break and cut back on red tape and rule and give more encouragement and support."

We recommend the following changes to support child care providers:

- *Increase training and support for teachers and caregivers, especially for working with children with disabilities*
- *Increase financial resources to support program operations and overhead costs*
- *Cut the red tape & streamline the regulatory framework*
- *Increase reimbursement rate to adequately pay child care providers*
- *Increase capacity building support for family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) care providers*
- *Increase culturally relevant and multilingual informational resources to support providers*

We recommend the following changes to support families:

- *Increase eligibility for subsidies/assistance programs by taking into account local area median income*
- *Increase resources for visiting programs to provide educational support to family caregivers*
- *Create a universal pre-K system that supports diverse types of care, is culturally relevant, and in languages spoken in our community*
- *Increase culturally relevant and multilingual informational resources to support parents*
- *Increase transportation support for families and children to-and-from child care centers*

Closing & Next Steps

Our community is committed to supporting families with access to affordable and quality child care.

Despite the pandemic. Despite the various technical challenges of holding multi-lingual conversations on zoom. We came together as parents, providers, and community members to connect, share our stories, and learn from one another.

We believe government decisions need to be informed by community voices with lived experiences. We hope our stories will be heard and our recommendations for change will be implemented.

"We really appreciate this multicultural community coming together. Together, we can do better. Each [of us] bring our knowledge, culture, and our way of understanding so that we can learn and advocate [for our families]."

We plan to continue to share our stories by:

- Continuing to connect and build relationships with our parents, providers, and partners
- Continuing to support community leadership and capacity building for parent advocacy
- Creating materials that are clear and easy to understand
- Translating materials in languages our community speaks
- Distributing materials through various platforms and cultural/social spaces where our community gathers
- Creating a system for our community to provide feedback
- Continuing to collaborate and share information to new and existing partners and stakeholders
- Sharing this report and any materials we create with our community