

LET'S WORK TOGETHER



How local government can help increase access to child care for the workforce of today and tomorrow.

THE SITUATION

Walla Walla and Columbia counties are **child care deserts**, meaning there are not enough slots to meet basic demand.

The 2021 Walla Walla Valley Child Care Feasibility Study* found



of Walla Walla County families and



of Columbia County families **do not have the child care they need.**

In addition, **82%** of 359 Walla Walla Valley families surveyed said child care challenges limited their job performance or career goals.

Local employers are having difficulty attracting and retaining employees, increased employee absenteeism, and decreased productivity **due to the need for child care.**



WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Supporting the local child care system strengthens our community now, helps it thrive in the future, and enables a strong local economy.

Children who receive high-quality early education:



Perform better in school



Are less likely to commit a crime



Are more likely to go to college

For every **\$1** invested in child care, communities see up to a **\$7** return.



*For the full feasibility study report, including recommendations and the employer guide, please visit <https://www.earlylearningwallawalla.org/research/reports>.



WE CAN ENSURE WALLA WALLA VALLEY FAMILIES HAVE ACCESS TO THE CHILD CARE THEY NEED BY:

- Increasing the number of licensed child care and early learning slots, especially for infants and toddlers.
- Improving affordability by helping families and providers access the supports they are eligible for.
- Offering child care and early education at convenient times and locations.
- Increasing qualified staff.
- All sectors playing a unique role to address this crisis.

HOW CAN CITY, COUNTY, PORTS, HEALTH DISTRICTS, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS HELP?



Prioritize child care and early learning facilities in city and county development through tax credits, special zoning, and streamlined pathways and processes.



Include space for child care centers in new or renovated housing. Offer reduced rent and/or provide improvements to meet licensing requirements.



Promote the child care and early education field as a career and workforce training option.



Work with your employees and community to understand how the lack of child care options negatively impacts families, workers, employers, and our community and how the problem can be solved.



Use or designate COVID-19 relief funding for the child care and early education sector.



Give information to your employees about local child care providers, after and before-school programs, summer child care options, recreational opportunities, and supports available in times of need.



Showcase local child care businesses and/or nonprofits in newsletters, blog posts, webinars and conferences.



Designate specific municipal funding to invest in the child care and early education sector.



Offer land, leasing, or co-location for child care providers and preschools.



Provide space for private child care or preschool programs to operate for a free or reduced price.



Partner with a child care provider by reserving and expanding slots for your employees.