

# LET'S WORK TOGETHER



How K-12 schools and institutions of higher education 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

**18%** 

of Walla Walla County families and

**96%** 

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

## HOW CAN K-12 SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION HELP?



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



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



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



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



Allow child care providers to advertise in your community space.



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

Local examples of this include:



The Kids Place  
at Whitman College



Bright Beginnings  
at Walla Walla  
Community College



Discovery Preschool  
at Walla Walla University