

CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE

PROJECT REPORT



OUR NETWORK IS COMMITTED TO
ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, EQUITABLE, CULTURALLY-RELEVANT
CHILD CARE IN PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE

PROJECT REPORT 2022

CHILD CARE AND
EARLY LEARNING
PROVIDER REPORT
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON



CHERI BEAVERS

first5FUNdamentals

PROJECT MANAGER | CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE

PIERCE COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD NETWORK

www.first5fundamentals.org

*Upholding communities in achieving
their collective goals for children and families*

December 2022

Dear Pierce County Partners, Child Care and Early Learning Providers,
Child Care Voice Network Members, and Community Stakeholders,

The Child Care Capacity Initiative - 2022 Project Report contains information on the design and progress of the Child Care Voice Network and the Child Care Capacity Initiative. You will find unique data that has been gathered from Pierce County Child Care and Early Learning Providers as they shared their perspectives on business needs. Providers interviewed represent in-home care, centers, before and after school care, preschools, FFN, and individuals interested in starting a child care center. This includes licensed and unlicensed providers, and sites accepting various forms of subsidy or none at all.

The Child Care Capacity Initiative (CCCI) report shares expanded definitions of "child care deserts." CCCI utilizes the impacted community to design shared services, technical assistance, and sustainable business solutions to address the child care crisis in Pierce County. In the process of networking, numerous data points were identified and common themes around needed supports have been discovered. This report highlights the group that is often missed which is the directors and small business owners who run the child care industry. Providers feedback and input elevates their voices and conversations to a new level of engagement for all of the organizations that address the child care crisis.

The support historically given for providers has been built from a deficit model. We are coaching educators around regulatory and licensing requirements. Instead, we need to look at the business leaders in the child care field as capable and competent individuals.

Months into this project, I discovered my own life trajectory was impacted by lack of affordable, accessible child care. My birth mother searched for child care for months while she worked full-time. She made the impossible decision to place me into foster care in an attempt to stabilize her financial life. This eventually led to my adoption. My adoption took place in large part due to a mix of poverty and lack of access to child care. The child care crisis impacts our economy, community, employers, neighbors, and families like my own.

The Child Care Capacity Initiative is an important tool that gives child care providers autonomy and support to make decisions for their businesses. The information contained in this report can be used as a stepping stone to continue the commitment to positively impact the child care crisis. We are building a lasting network of shared services and community partnerships for the Pierce County community. Please join this effort!

Yours Truly,

Cheri Beavers

Cheri Beavers, Project Manager
Child Care Capacity Initiative



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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The child care crisis is a national issue reaching back decades. Child care is notoriously under-financed with staff making well below the cost of living. At the same time, families face an uphill battle finding safe, affordable, equitable care in their neighborhoods. The cost of child care for the average family exceeds monthly housing costs, while the cost of infant care is greater than the cost of tuition for a public university.

The harmful impact of high child care costs, low wages for the provider workforce, and lack of options for care affects our local economy, families' livelihoods and stability, and providers' small business outcomes. The majority of currently operating child care businesses function on an antiquated business model that allocates over 60 percent of the total operating budget for wages. This creates an overburdened system with little to no profit and underpaid staff.

In Pierce County there are an estimated 925,708 residents with 6.1% of those residents (56,468) being children between the ages of birth - five years. As of December 2022, there are 203 licensed child care centers, 226 in-home child care providers, and 100 licensed before and after school care programs in our county. There are 14,317 children being served in child care centers, 2,272 going to in-home care, and 5,962 attending school age programs. There are still an estimated 12,000 children currently needing access to care. There is a deep disparity in the need for child care versus current availability.

The child care crisis has a major financial impact on employers. According to a Department of Commerce report, employers in Washington state paid \$6.5 billion of Direct and Opportunity Costs due to child care pitfalls. With \$2.8 billion of that being direct cost due to turnover and missed work.





In 2020, the pandemic increased the crisis exponentially. Providers were expected to serve on the front lines with unvaccinated children from multiple families with nearly no hazard pay or PPE supports. They continued to open their businesses and homes despite the inherent risk in an effort to keep our economy functioning. Before and after school care programs were also minimized in an effort to contain COVID-19, with families leaving work in record numbers due to lack of options. This has caused a significant decrease in child care slots in Pierce County for ages birth - 5 years recently.

Pierce County saw the imperative need for immediate action and in December 2021 made a \$2.4 million investment into the Child Care Capacity Initiative. The initiative is managed by First 5 FUNdamentals and is built into the work of the Pierce County Early Childhood Network (PCECN), a community of partners that have come together to improve the wellbeing of children and families. PCECN also established a new component called the Child Care Voice (CCV) Network.

The purpose of the Child Care Capacity Initiative is to increase the number of child care slots in Pierce County, so that families are able to return to work, children and families have the support they need, and the Pierce County economy thrives. This is being done through a process called Liberatory Design. Liberatory Design uses a cycle where strategic thinking and problem solving are generated, modeled, and tested with input from those in the community who are most impacted. An integral part of this process is the the utilization of cohorts, or collective decision-making groups, comprised of community child care providers.

The cohorts are an opportunity for local child care providers to participate in a larger network. Providers will have the opportunity to access technical assistance, shared services, and receive funding for stabilization, expansion, and/or start up of their child care businesses. Child care provider cohorts begin in January 2023.

CHILD CARE VOICE NETWORK

Child Care Voice (CCV) is an active network component of the Pierce County Early Childhood Network. The CCV team is made up of over 300 organizations and individuals across Pierce County who are dedicated to solving our child care crisis.

CCV is committed to the long-term goal in which each family in Pierce County can access the high-quality, equitable, culturally-inclusive child care they desire, where and when it's needed. The Child Care Capacity Initiative serves the Child Care Voice team by sharing provider resources, funding opportunities, increasing provider networking, and uplifting provider voice.



Key partners include child care providers, county and city government leaders, non-profit and social service organizations, representatives from the business community, child care policy experts, advocates, and families.

This network meets virtually each month on the 4th Friday of the month from 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. This meeting is open to anyone who shares the goal of positive impact for local child care.

CHILD CARE VOICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

CHILD CARE VOICE LEADERSHIP TEAM

In addition to the action team, the Child Care Voice Leadership team meets monthly. The Leadership Team acts as the main decision makers for the Child Care Capacity Initiative. The Leadership Team participates in the strategic planning of activities and actions, engagement support with the full CCV Team, as well as refining and execution of the project with the community's input.

LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBERS

- Cheri Beavers, Project Manager, First 5 Fundamentals
- Tayisha Winston, Executive Director, All Blessed Children
- Phoebe Anderson Sade, Chief Executive Officer, Child Care Resources
- Diane Kroll, Board Member, Early Learning Expert, First 5 Fundamentals
- Gail Neal, Executive Director, Multicultural and Family Hope Center, Provider
- Holly Hunt, Director, Bamford Foundation
- Jessica Winston, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Greentrike
- Kari M. Haugen, Director of Partnerships, Workforce Central
- Susan Barbeau, Executive Director, First 5 Fundamentals
- Tanya Overton, Director, Tacoma Community College ELC
- Janine Meyers, EL Department Director, Child Care Resources
- Ben Mitchell, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Foundation for Tacoma Students
- Elvin Bucu, Strategic Initiative Consultant, Foundation for Tacoma Students
- Ben Paganelli, Executive Director, Key Peninsula Partnership



LIBERATORY DESIGN

PROCESS



The Child Care Voice Team is utilizing a process called Liberatory Design for the design and implementation of the Child Care Capacity Initiative.

This method is a way to infuse design thinking into system and program building, with a mission toward equity.

Liberatory Design utilizes a cycle where ideas are generated, prototyped or modeled, and tested with those most impacted.

In this case, the menu of supports will be designed and delivered collaboratively with experts on the CCV Teams and the Cohort of providers. This plan will be prototyped and tested with child care providers using funding from the Child Care Capacity Initiative.

LIBERATORY DESIGN

PROCESS

STEP ONE: SEE

SEE

RECOGNIZE PATTERNS OF INEQUITY,
LOOK AT THE SYSTEM CREATING THOSE—
AND IDENTIFY A CHALLENGE TO ADDRESS.

EMPATHIZE

LISTEN TO STORIES FROM THOSE
IMPACTED BY THE CHALLENGE—AND
BUILD RELATIONSHIP IN THE PROCESS

STEP TWO: ENGAGE

DEFINE

DETERMINE HOW COMPLEX THE
CHALLENGE IS AND IF WE NEED TO
UNDERSTAND IT BETTER

PROBE

DESIGN SMALL “SAFE-TO-FAIL” ACTIONS
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SYSTEM
AND THE CHALLENGE

STEP THREE: ACT

PROTOTYPE

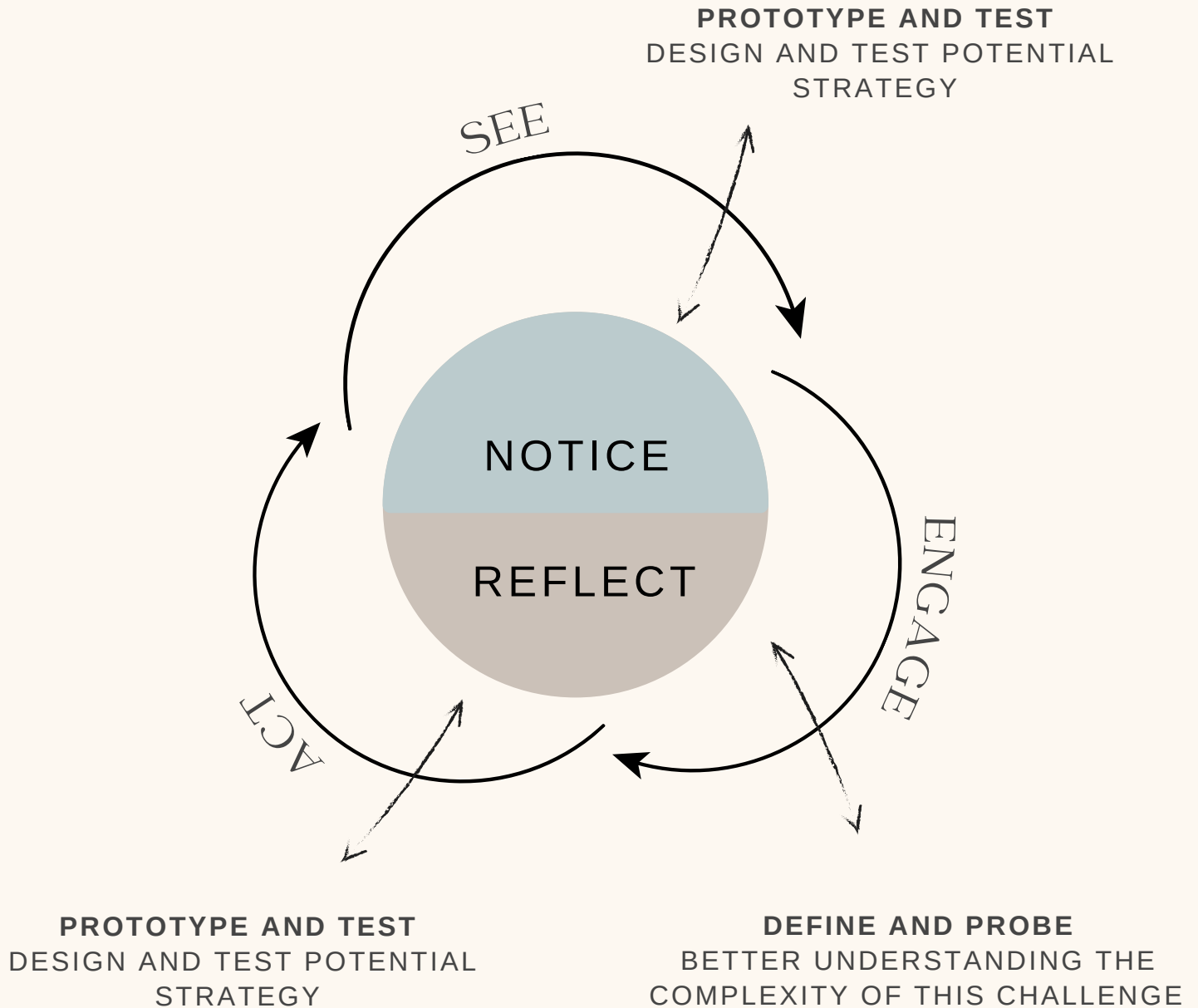
IMAGINE POSSIBLE APPROACHES AND
DESIGN POTENTIAL STRATEGIES TO TEST
AND LEARN FROM

TEST

TEST STRATEGIES WITH STAKEHOLDERS
AND USE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE THE
DESIGN

LIBERATORY DESIGN

PROCESS



MINDSET

REFLECT

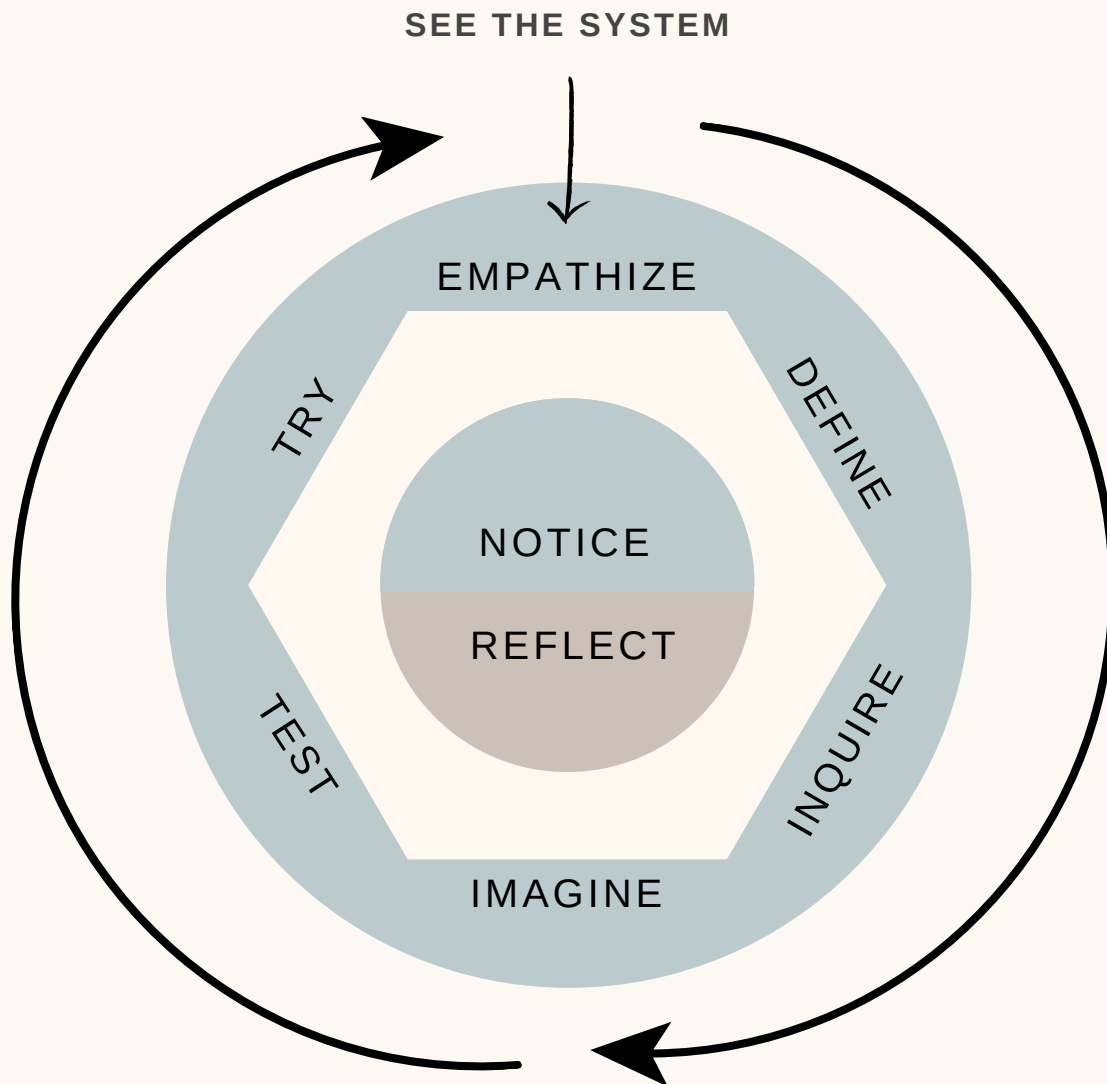
PAUSE TO REFLECT ON
ACTIONS, IMPACT, EMOTIONS,
RELATIONSHIP — AND ADJUST
INTENTIONS, DIRECTION,
PRESENCE

NOTICE

PRACTICE SELF-AWARENESS
(IDENTITY, EMOTIONS, POWER) AND
SITUATIONAL AWARENESS
(CONTEXT, PEOPLE, HISTORY)

LIBERATORY DESIGN

PROCESS



LIBERATORY DESIGN MODES PROVIDE GUIDANCE THROUGH THE PROCESS. LIBERATORY DESIGN EMERGED FROM THE ADDITION OF TWO STEPS TO THE DESIGN THINKING PROCESS: NOTICE AND REFLECT. THESE MODES HELP US TO PAUSE AND INTERRUPT THE DOMINANT CULTURAL HABITS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO INEQUITY.

NOTICE AND REFLECT ARE AT THE HEART OF LIBERATORY DESIGN AND INTEGRAL TO EVERY STEP WITHIN THE PROCESS. LIBERATORY DESIGN IS FLUID AND EMERGENT. A DESIGN PROCESS CAN BEGIN WITH ANY MODE AND MOVE IN VARIOUS DIRECTIONS. AS MODES, NOTICE AND REFLECT REPRESENT A SET OF POSSIBLE BEHAVIORS THAT REFOCUS OUR ATTENTION AND HELP US MAINTAIN OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY IN DESIGN PROCESSES.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

FAMILY, FRIEND, & NEIGHBOR CARE

Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers include extended family, friends, and neighbors who support families by offering child care.

FFN providers are not required to be licensed. Some FFN providers receive child care subsidies for the care they provide. Nationally, FFN care is the most common type of child care. This offers care for children in a trusted, familiar setting.

For the purposes of this report, FFN care is defined as any child care outside of the primary parent or guardian's care.



IN-HOME CHILD CARE

In-home child care is when licensed providers care for smaller groups of children in their home. This includes apartments, houses, or condominiums. These sites vary in size depending on space availability. The number of younger children including infants and toddlers are usually limited as they require more 1:1 care.

In-home child care offers smaller ratios, a home setting, lower child turnover, and often has opportunities to engage in a strong network of families.

CHILD CARE CENTERS

Child care centers are most often located in commercial buildings and are usually licensed by the state. They generally have children divided by ages into classrooms and groups. They are able to take more children due to the larger spaces.

Some programs that may not have to be licensed such as before and after school programs, seasonal programs like summer camps, or those operating part-time including some preschools, faith-based programs, and pre-kindergarten programs.



PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Preschool programs mostly serve children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old. Preschools are open part-time and during the school year. Not all preschool programs are required to be licensed. This allows for parental groups like local co-ops to run preschool activities.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Before and after school care is generally for children ages 5 through 12 who aren't yet able to stay home alone. There are several options for before and after school care; including local community centers like the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, recreation, music, and sports centers, places of worship, and youth programs.

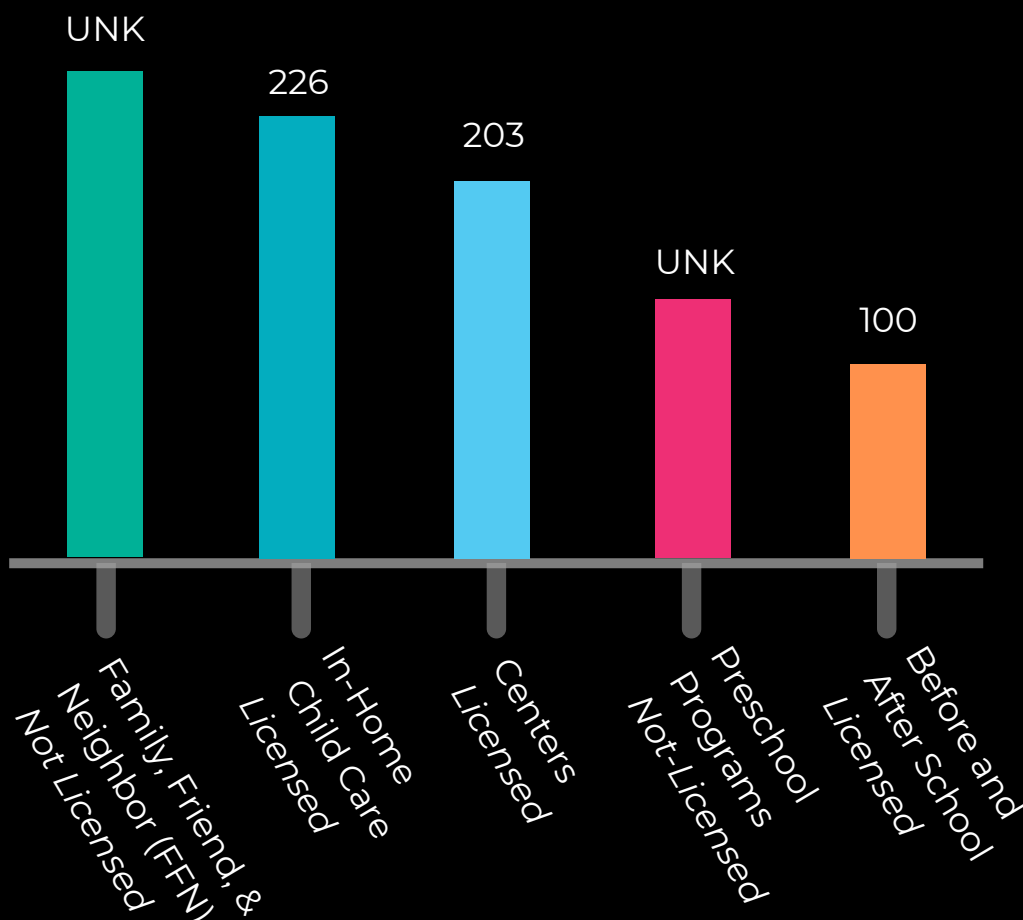
Pierce County also has programs where local schools provide before and after school care. They often hire another agency to provide onsite support. These programs are convenient for families since their children don't have to be transported elsewhere when school isn't in session.



PIERCE COUNTY PROVIDER DEMOGRAPHICS

As of Fall 2022, Pierce County, Washington has a total of 529 licensed Child Care Programs. This includes 203 Child Care Centers, 226 In-Home Child Care, and 100 school age programs offering before and after school care. The numbered data below reflects licensed programs.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS



Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (FFN) and independent preschool programs are tracked with estimates. These programs are not required to be licensed which means that they aren't represented in official state numerical data. The exact number of FFN and unlicensed preschool programs are unknown (UNK).



Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (FFN) total estimates for Pierce County, Washington are based on various national studies taken in different parts of the country which show consistent patterns:

Of young children birth to 5 years:

- 25% are in formal early learning, like licensed child care, Head Start, or preschools, etc.
- 25% are in the care of an FFN caregiver regularly
- 50% are solely with a parent and not enrolled in care

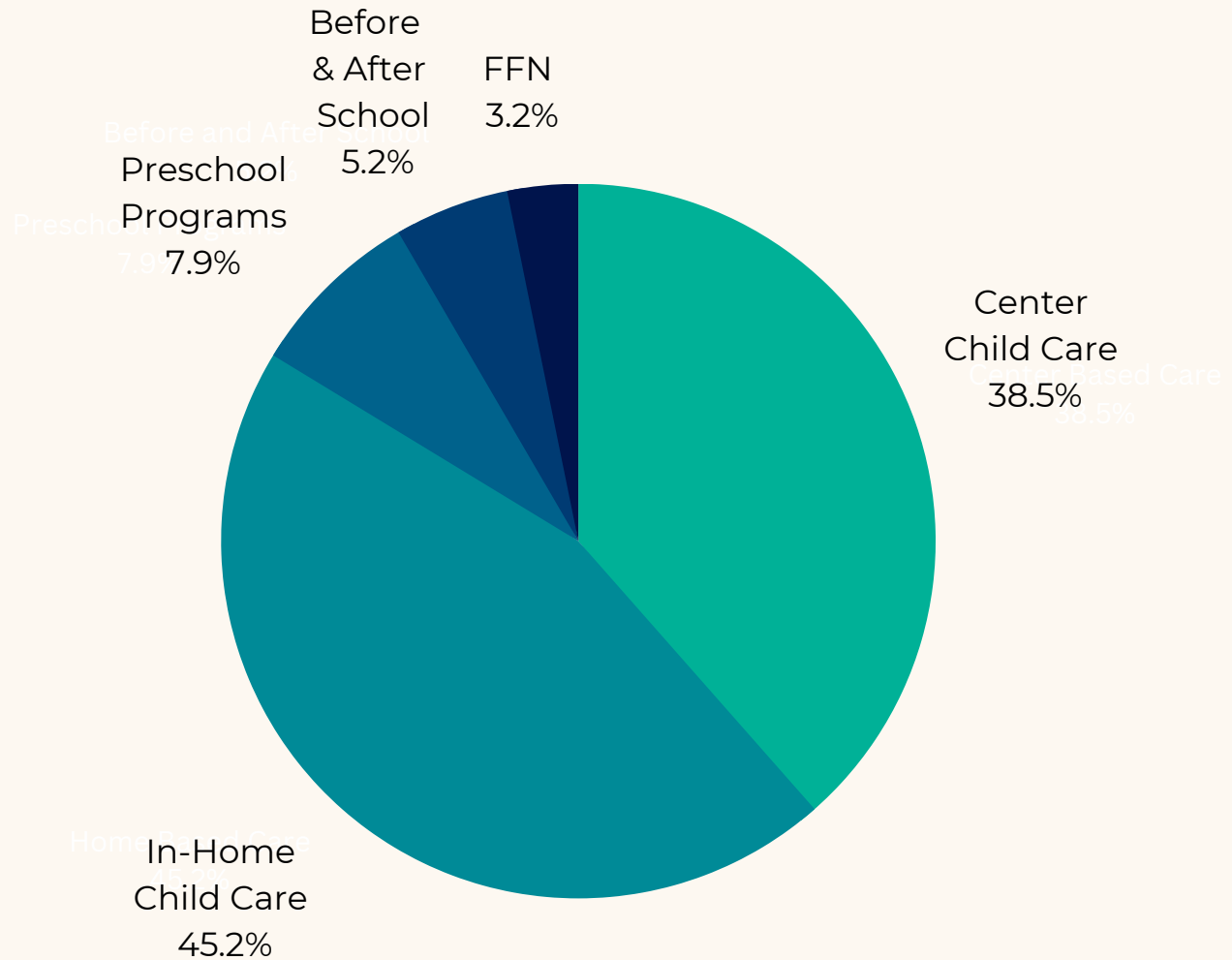
The most recent data available on total numbers of children in Pierce County shows 60,324, with children ranging in ages birth - 4 years. This data does not include five year old children who haven't started Kindergarten yet.

Using the estimates above:

- 15,081 were in formal early learning
- 15,081 were in FFN care on a regular basis
- 30,162 were solely with a parent

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

CCCI PROVIDER SURVEY 252 PARTICIPANTS



- In-Home Child Care 114
- Centers 97
- Preschools 20
- Before and After School 13
- FFN 8

**Percentages are based off of nearest estimates.*

252 Participants

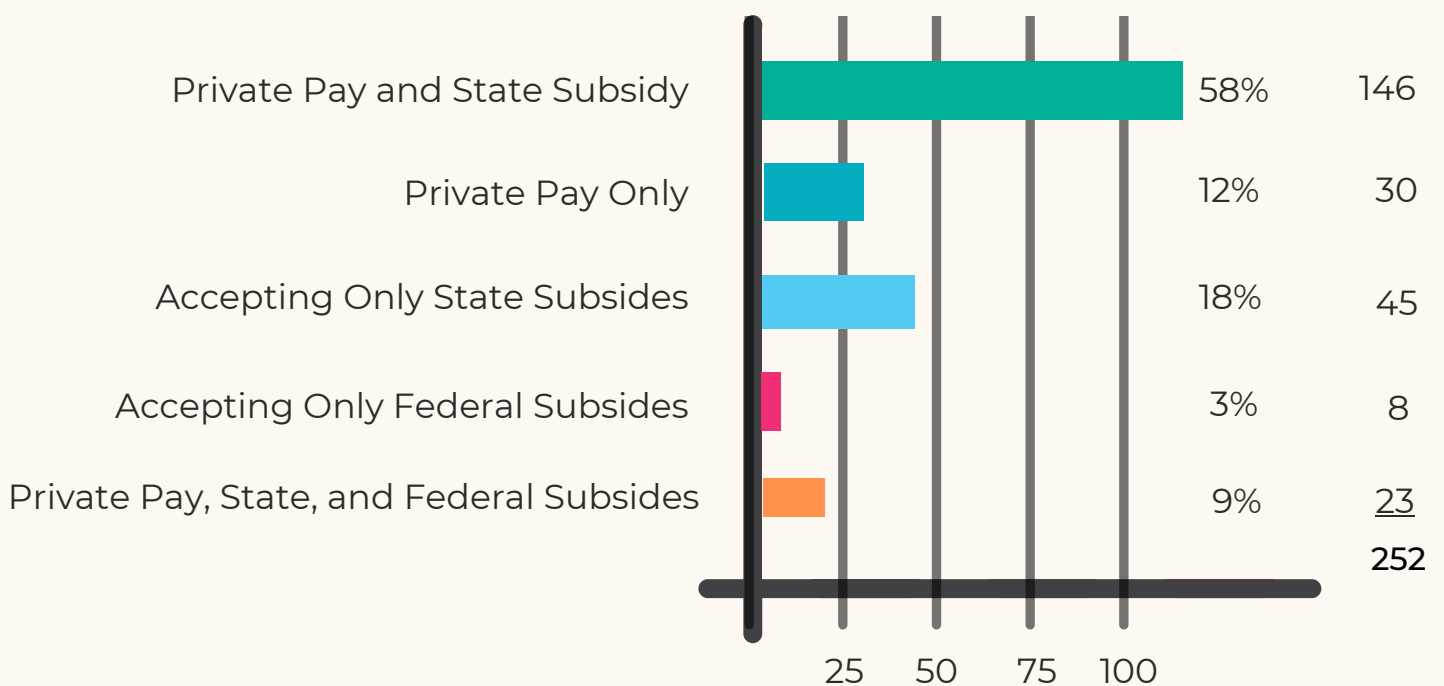
Over 250 Pierce County Child Care & Early Learning Providers took the time to discuss their individual needs for business stabilization, start up, and/or expansion.

SURVEY SUBSIDY DEMOGRAPHICS



Providers that participated in the survey offer varying services. This includes FFN, Preschool, In-Home, Centers, and Before and After School care. The child care system is made up of both private and for profit businesses. They count on varying funding streams for success. For-profit businesses rarely accept child care subsidies.

Out of the 252 providers that we interviewed the following estimated demographics represent their subsidy acceptance rates:



CHILDREN SERVED

The Child Care Capacity Initiative provider survey participants serve a large number of infants, children, and youth in Pierce County. This shows the community impact of their work.

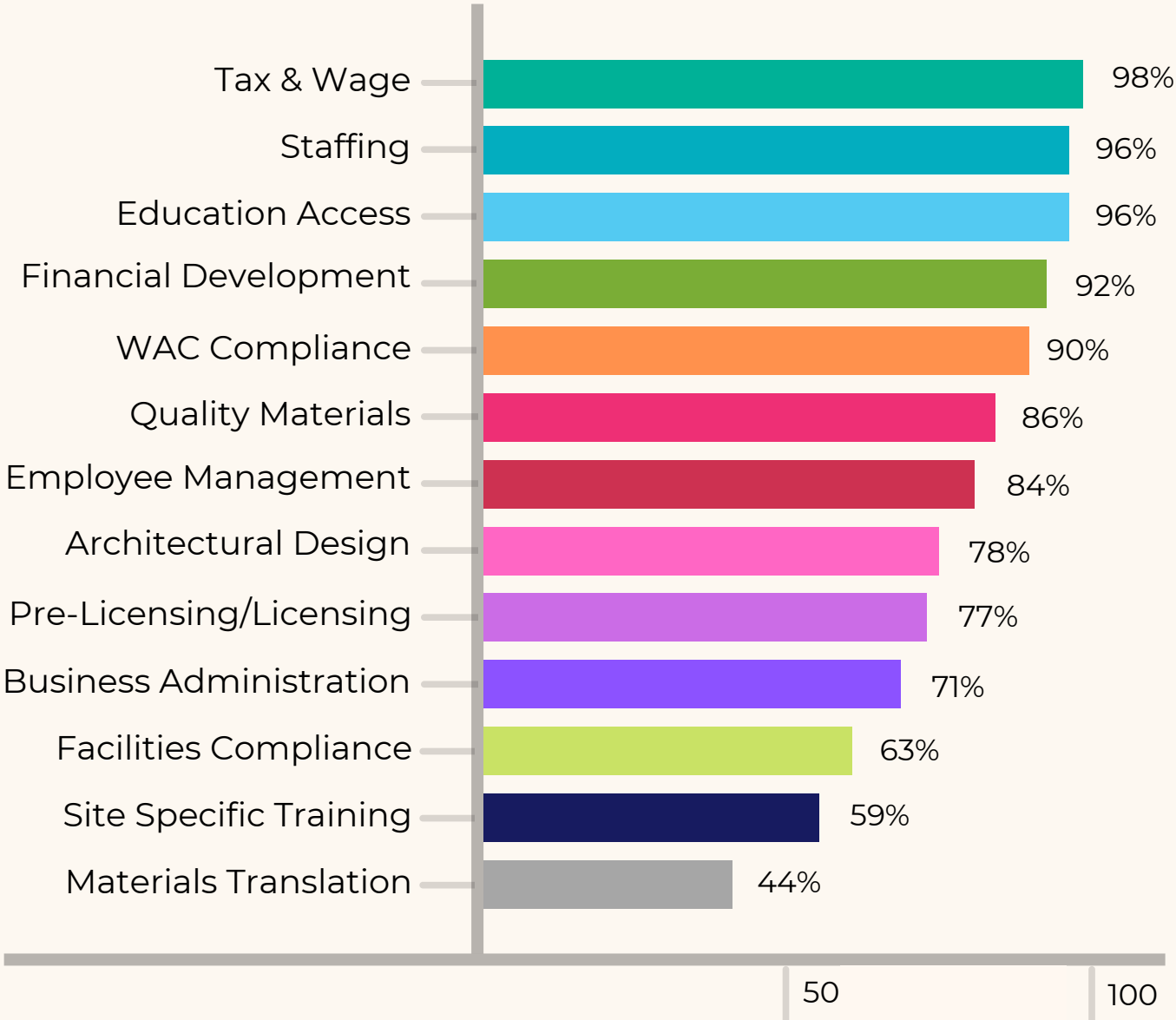


THE PROVIDERS SURVEYED SERVE A TOTAL OF 3,736 CHILDREN,
WHICH IS AN ESTIMATED 1675 FAMILIES.

3,736

PIERCE COUNTY PROVIDER NEEDS OVERVIEW

In line with Liberatory Design, over 250 providers were interviewed for this project. Providers were asked to identify what barriers were preventing stability, business growth, and expansion for their businesses. Pierce County providers identified the following needed supports. The following pages contain in-depth explanations of each category.



State Wide Overhaul Needed

TAX AND WAGE

98%



In the CCCI survey 98% of providers shared they make below living wages. The average child care provider salary in Tacoma, WA is \$38,423 as of November 23, 2022. Salary ranges vary depending on many important factors, including education, certifications, additional skills, number of children served, funding streams, type of child care business, and years of experience.



An overhaul of the wage scale for child care providers is necessary for system sustainability. The cost of living in Washington state is 13% higher than the national average. The cost of housing is 22% higher, with both food and clothing 12% higher than the rest of the country. The average experienced, educated, licensed provider in Pierce County, Washington makes between \$16.70 to \$18.47 per hour without medical benefits. In contrast, local fast food chains are offering starting wages between \$16.79 and \$19.00 per hour for cashier and brazier positions with full benefits.

Full-time experienced child care providers not connected to a center have less opportunity for health insurance access than fast food employees. However, basic healthcare services such as primary care and annual dentistry cost 22% higher in Washington compared to the national average. If our community is determined to set up a sustainable system of support for providers as part of addressing the child care crisis, then acknowledgement of basic human needs has to be taken into consideration.



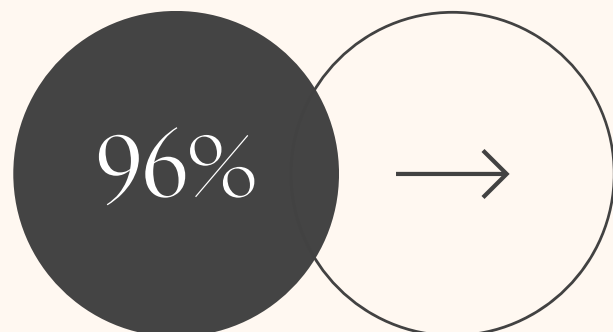
An introduction to basic tax support for annual filing is needed. The law requires that Child Care Providers report all child care payments to the IRS as earned income. Federal Taxes are not taken out of the checks that providers receive. Any child care provider receiving over \$600 per year will receive a Form 1099-misc. Most providers are responsible for quarterly tax payments that need to be budgeted into their monthly income. Providers are asking for comprehensive tax support as less-expensive tax preparers (which is the service within their budgets) are not trained in navigating qualified business income reduction, including market costs, business use of the home, vehicle, and food costs. This request includes support with understanding self-employment tax, incentives, and deadlines.

Without access to training on financial management, local providers are closing their businesses and going bankrupt due to tax and wage issues.



STAFFING

As part of the CCCI survey, 96% of providers said staffing is an immediate ongoing need. Issues include potential staff not showing up for interviews, not showing up after hire, quitting without notice, having no substitute pool, and the lack of pay and benefits to entice qualified candidates. This creates instability, reduces productivity, and increases stress levels. High turnover rates are damaging to both providers and the families they serve.



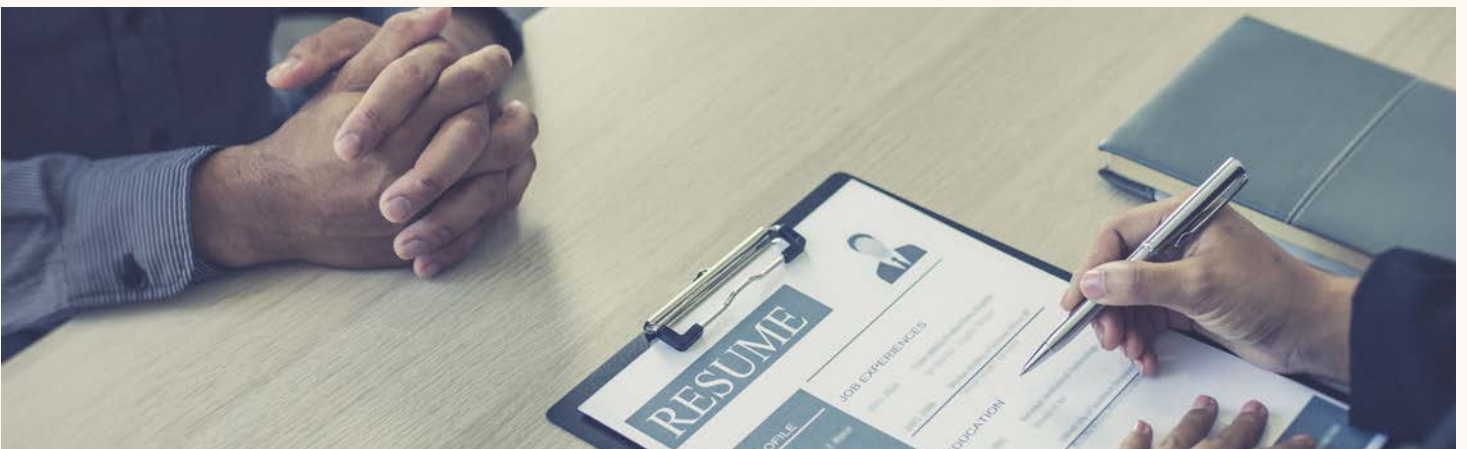


Providers are requesting access to reliable and experienced staffing in Pierce County. Solving this complex problem includes implementing effective marketing strategies, increasing funding streams, identifying incentives for potential employees including pay increases, paid time off (PTO), sick days, and access to medical benefits.

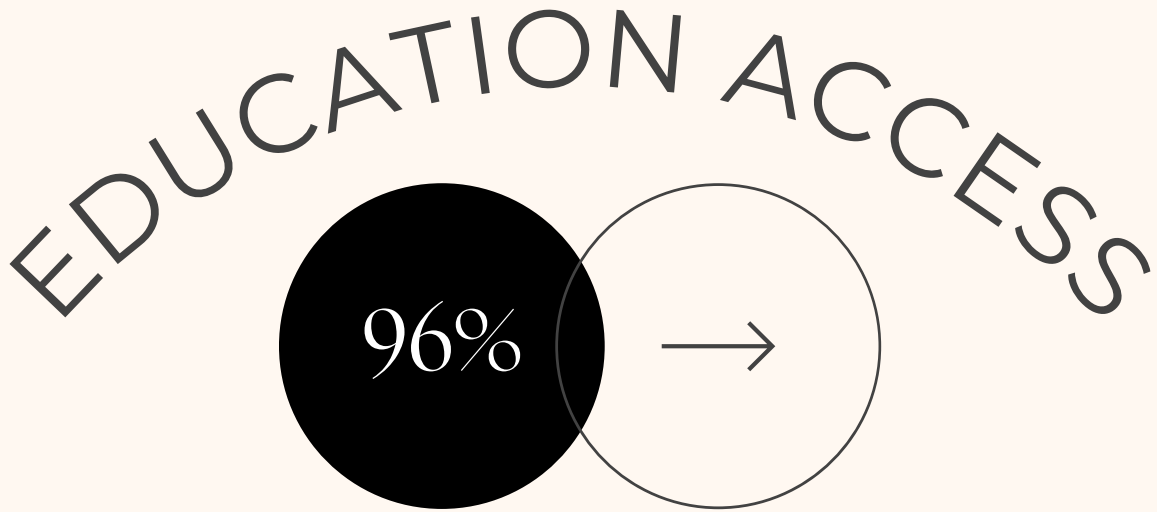
Out of the 252 Providers surveyed, less than 4% had more than an annual week-long vacation in the last 5 years. Due to the lack of a local, accessible, trustworthy substitute pool the majority of providers are unable to take or offer PTO and sick days to employees.

The average provider's business operating budget doesn't allow for basic employee benefits. The reimbursement rate for providing subsidy care falls short of the state wide salary floor. Child care staff in Pierce County should earn living wages that are reflective of the cost of living in Washington state.

According to the Department of Commerce, *"The child care workforce is comprised disproportionately of low-income women of color: 94% of the U.S. child care workforce are women, 50% of Washington's child care workforce are people of color, and 30% are bilingual or multilingual."* These demographics showcase both strength and opportunity for children to thrive in their own cultures. It also exposes the disparities in living wages for minorities. One solution would be an effort to supply and train staffing for local providers.



SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, AND LOANS REQUESTED



Ninety-six percent of Providers asked for support with education access through scholarships and grants. Since providers make well below the cost of living, they can't afford the ongoing costs of education. It is a substantial personal sacrifice to access required certifications and education. The state requires ongoing learning for providers which is a good and necessary protocol. However, it is also another expense that drains and pulls from an already struggling budget.





Initial requirements for licensing include a 30-hour course on Child Care or School Age Basics, as well as CPR/First Aid, Bloodborne Pathogens and HIV/AIDS training. Ongoing annual education requirements are necessary to continue training each year. Education must be maintained to hold the licensing and certifications necessary to operate a child care business. These are important standards of care and providers support and understand their necessity.



While some scholarships are available through subsidized programs, a provider usually must participate long-term in the program to receive the benefit of the scholarship.

Some providers benefit greatly from enrolling in these programs and incentives which can include coaching, education, scholarships, training, and additional business support.

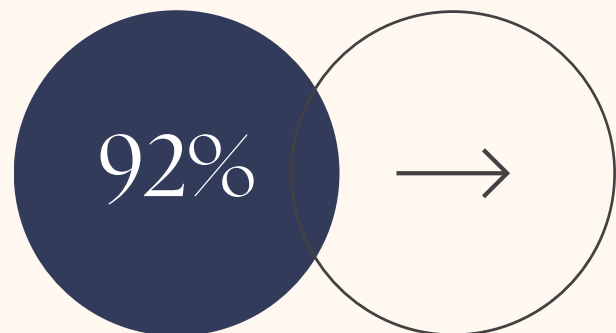
Providers are viewing this type of support in multiple ways. Imagine a scenario in which a restaurant that needs funding for a new kitchen has to then enroll their employees and menus into a subsidized governmental food program. Visualize a car dealership that needs marketing support training for staff and receives a scholarship. Then the dealership is required to move their cars off of the lot and sell someone else's vehicles at a fraction of the profit they would be making if they sold their own vehicles. This is similar to some provider's experiences attempting to gain support.

Child care providers are asking for more choices. One program doesn't fit all provider's needs. What benefits one provider may not work for another. Early childhood providers would like funding to continue education while maintaining business autonomy. They are here to help children and families thrive, they would like those same equitable choices and opportunities for their own families.



FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ninety-two percent of providers shared that lack of funding streams impact their ability to operate at capacity and expand. One example is that infant rooms are needed but they are not cost-effective. Infant rooms require more staff and smaller ratios. The state also requires additional licensing, training, and staff to operate a site in the evenings or overnight. Those wanting to open a new site are met with high start up fees prior to opening. The cost of opening, expanding, or running a child care site with infant care or one that operates non-traditional hours far exceeds available funding.





There are numerous aspects to funding a child care business. Providers count on diverse and varying funding streams to maintain their businesses.

GRANT WRITING

Providers are requesting support and training that will lead to more business success and growth. This includes training for grant writing. Grant writing is the practice of completing an application process for financial support. Grants can be provided from various funders. Providers who are equipped to submit grant proposals have better staff retention, more incentives, and can offer more support for children and families.

FUNDING FOR 1:1 WORK

A common interest for providers who want to learning grant writing is the ability to find funding for 1:1 work. This funding would go to support children who have both cognitive and physical disabilities. According to providers, there is no ongoing funding to support staff 1:1 work in Washington state.

SUBSIDY ACCESS & SUPPORT

Providers shared interest in learning more about state and federal subsidy funding streams from their peers. They were interested in learning business ramifications of accepting subsidies, in hearing from military families on the benefits of holding child care slots for federal funding, and further understanding the possibilities of stability by engaging in multiple subsidies.

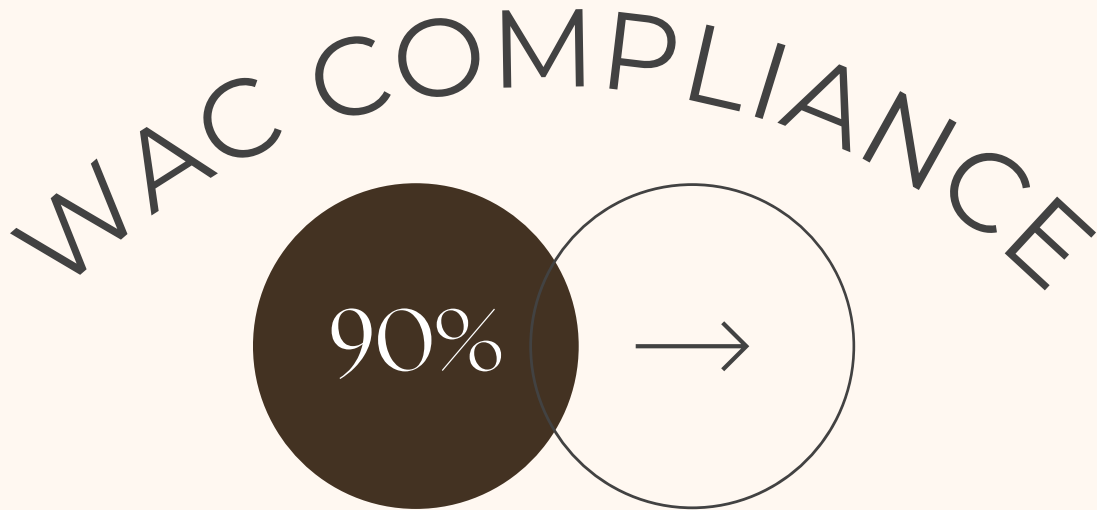
INFANT ROOM/CRISIS NURSERY FUNDING

Infant care in Pierce County is nearly non-existent. The reason for this includes the high cost of care and training versus the cost to families and the income generated for providers. Infant care has not traditionally been cost effective, however, infant care is the greatest child care desert we face in Pierce County.

EXTRANEIOUS FEE SUPPORT

Providers that want to open up sites in new locations are often faced with fees from landlords, cities, and counties. This includes utilities, traffic impact fees, agriculture, parking, and more. Over 67% of providers stated they would have already opened or expanded were it not for the substantial start-up and expansion fees preventing stabilization and growth.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE



Ninety percent of FFN, in-home, and larger sites report needing support meeting Washington Administrative Codes or WAC requirements for remaining licensed. WAC requirements are enforced by the Department of Children and Families (DCYF). Under normal circumstances, the DCYF Licensor visits each site at least once every 12 to 18 months. The licensor creates a list of any needed updates and works the provider to create a timeline to resolve those concerns. Providers then need to come up with funding to purchase items or hire vendors to complete any required work within the timeline laid out by the DCYF Licensor.





Survey participants shared the need for additional support related to WAC requirements including the following:

- Improved relationships with DCYF Licensors; providers report that they aren't able to stay with the same licensor for very long. Many have new licensors with varying styles of communication which impacts their businesses.
- Providers request clear timelines for needed improvements in writing. Providers report, *"that licensors give them a month but come back a week later."* Providers share that this impacts trust and adds to the stress. It also doesn't allow a reasonable amount of time to make needed changes.
- Financial funding and practical support for meeting WAC requirements
- Providers request WAC requirements be provided annually in writing at the beginning of each year
- Written notification of any WAC changes that impact a provider's business ahead of time would go a long way. This will give time to plan and coordinate with contractors, ordering supplies, and getting professional support when needed (playground bark, locks, fences, lighting, furniture, etc.)

One provider stated, *"I feel that a good relationship and communication with my licensor is important to the success of my business and for ensured WAC compliance. Kindness and respect go a long way in impacting our work for the better."*



QUALITY MATERIALS ACCESS

Eight-six percent of providers shared the need for access to affordable, high-quality supplies. Quality classroom supplies are important for the function, enjoyment, and participation of children and staff in activities. This includes art supplies, technology access, fresh food, toys, furniture, books, play equipment, and more.



86%





QUALITY SUPPLIES

Providers shared that when children create pieces of art; they take the time to imagine, cut, paint, glue, tape, and follow directions. When they come back and see that their art has fallen apart due to low quality supplies, it discourages both staff and children from creating. Most affordable supplies are not made of quality and durability. Providers are asking for a local store where they can shop and order affordable quality supplies.

TECHNOLOGY, INTERNET, AND SOFTWARE

Providers need access to updated technology and software. This includes high-speed internet and WiFi for business operations and communication with families. Funding for installation upgrades would improve each family's experience. Child care providers also need access to updated computers that can run current software. They are asking for access to Microsoft Office Suite, Leg-up, Bright-Wheel, and other supporting software and programs. Portable laptops would help improve their experiences because they could work during nap times in the same room as the children. This would increase production as they have to remain present during naps for younger children. They also requested projectors for projects and learning. Tablets that can be utilized for check-in/check out would help streamline drop-off and pick-up.

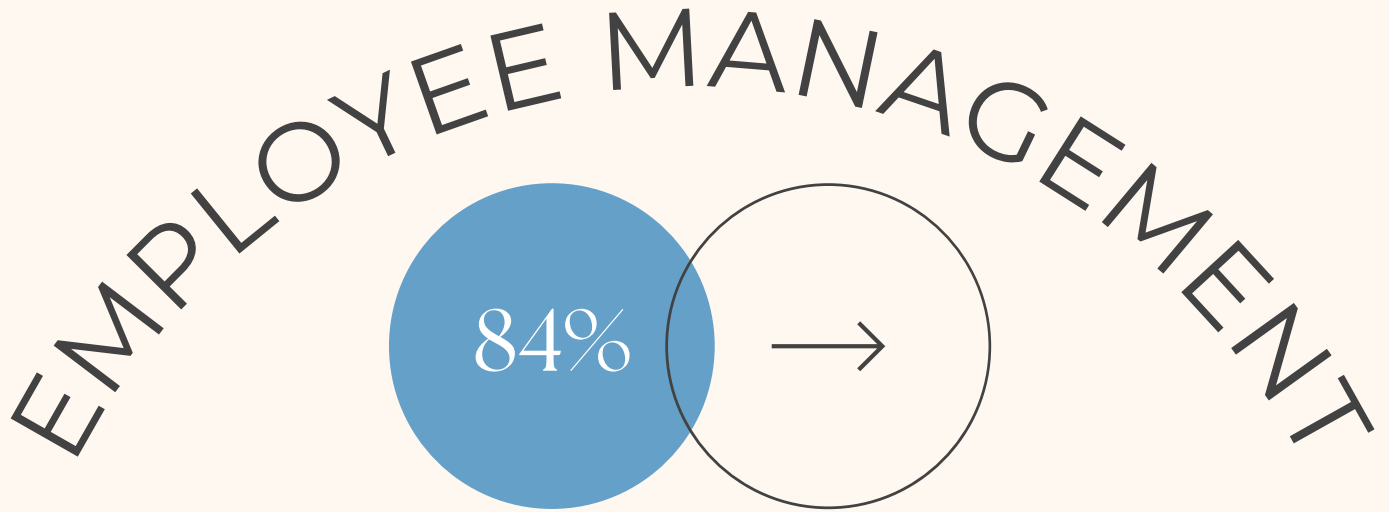
SAFETY AND SECURITY

There are many safety issues facing our community. Quality security cameras, locks, tablets, Ring doorbells, and other safety measures can add a layer of needed security.

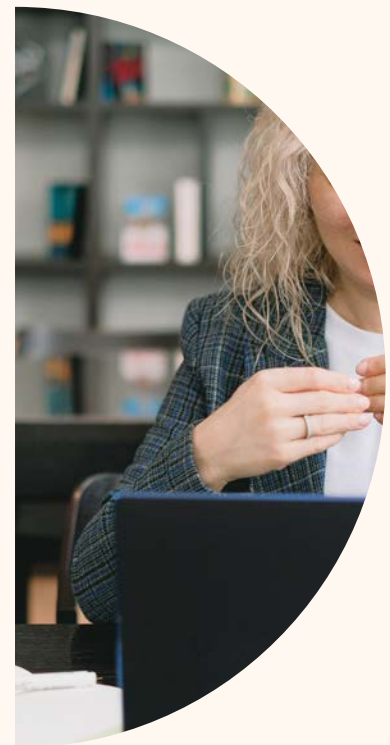
SUPPORT ITEMS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Providers serving children with disabilities need sensory supports and training. This includes weighted blankets, ramps, specialized toys and books, slant boards, wiggle chairs, feet bands, noise canceling headphones, soft lighting, white noise, and other specialized items.

OVERSIGHT AND DEVELOPMENT



Eighty-four percent of providers asked for support with Employee Management. This includes recruitment support, onboarding, employee training, creation of corrective action and performance improvement plans, scheduling, employee dismissal protocol, and more. Providers want to create teams that build and maintain healthy relationships with employees, access to tools for measuring progress and setting goals, and engage in crisis support for stress and mental health needs.



STAFF MANAGEMENT

Providers are requesting a centralized county-wide editable employee manual. Support with staff management includes recruitment, onboarding, training, scheduling, creation of Performance Improvement Plans (PIP), Corrective Action Plans, protocol for employee dismissal, progress trackers, and other employee performance goals.

ON CALL SUBSTITUTE

Providers are requesting a resource for coverage so that they can take a vacation and stay home when ill. Development of PTO is essential as a normal part of provider benefits.

ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The majority of providers can't afford mental health insurance but are required to work in a high-demand, stressful environment. Providers served children throughout the pandemic; they continue to serve in every season, through family crisis, illness, and loss. Mental health care access without strings attached is essential for providers.

FUNDED/EXPEDITED BACKGROUND CHECKS

Providers shared that it is a hardship to wait long periods of time for background checks. The long waits have caused losses in new hires and potential clients.

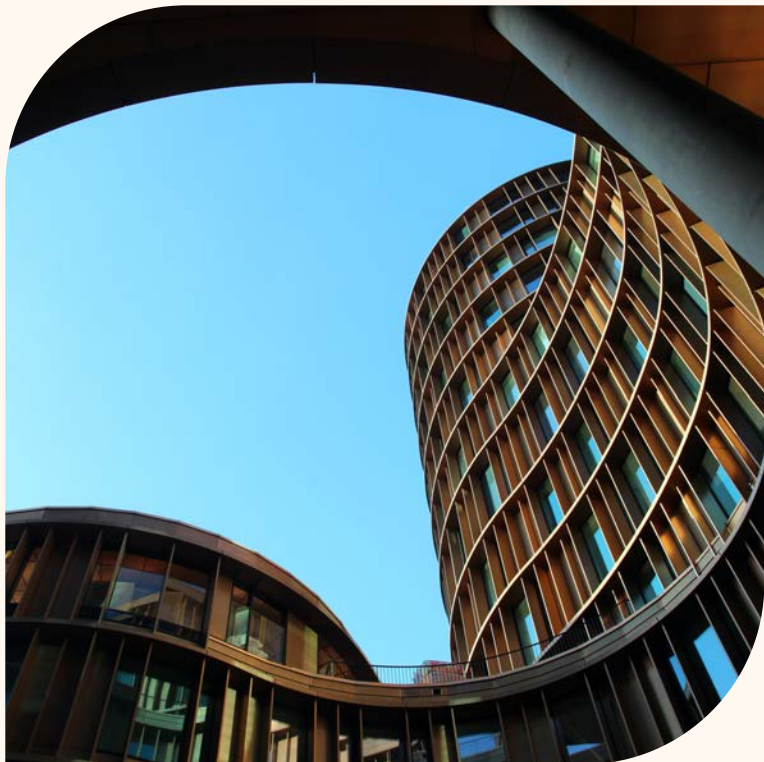
MANAGING CRITICAL NEEDS

Providers defined "critical needs" as items including, but not limited to: water, food, infant formula, diapers, pull-ups, rent and utility support for clients, personal hygiene items, and fuel for transportation.

FUNDING FOR BENEFITS

The opportunity to provide medical, dental, and vision to employees would allow for staff retention and system stabilization.

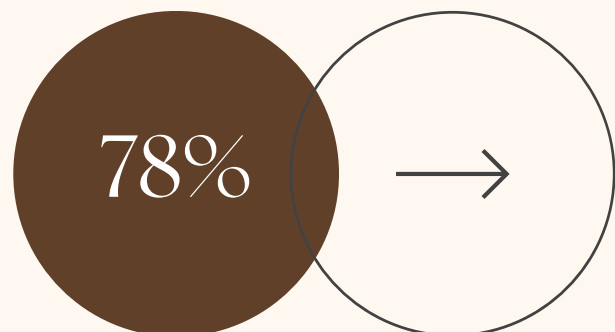




ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Seventy-eight percent of providers reported not receiving any support with early learning space design. Less than 1% report having access to any architectural consulting with early learning experience. Providers shared that donated goods and furniture from families or other businesses helped them open.

Providers enrolled in subsidies that had access to grants when opening or remodeling reported some early learning organization and furniture lay out support with an interior designer. *"We aren't interior design experts, so we do the best that we can. Funding for design would improve client experience."*





Providers are requesting access to architects with professional experience in early learning and child care. Expertise in space function and design for children ages birth - 12 years, would allow for child care spaces to transform.

"Students come here after school, and there isn't any clear separation of space. We have tried different things over the years. If a student is sad or overwhelmed, where can they sit for a few minutes? If a student wants to help, what opportunities is the space giving them?" -Before & After School Care Provider

Architects with familiarity regarding state WAC requirements would change the learning experience for children.

"The potential of taking this space from cluttered and crowded to having natural light, open concepts of play, places for emotional regulation, and warm neutrals... I imagine it everyday."





Access to interior design consulting including furniture, storage, space design, art, and organization is being requested by providers.

"I am responsible for the space that children spend 8-10 hours in each day. If I could dream I would ask for soft colors, quality furniture, a space with natural flow, and accessible toys and crafts. I would love some lighting in here, there is just that one window and it's so dark during the winter months. If I could afford it, there is so much I would do to make this space magical!!" - Pierce County Provider





"The physical environment is critical to children's physical health and mental health. Providers need freedom to define their values, vision, and mission because that shapes the entire experience for staff and families. How spaces are created defines how children and families will engage. Providers need to be inspired to create intentional, reflective, and inspirational early learning spaces. I have been a director, and the physical environment is often the result of surviving the many safety codes and regulations. The lighting, the noise, and the ambiance of spaces are sending messages to us. What can we do to inspire children and create a sense of awe and wonder?"

- Diane Kroll, Design for Early Learning Co-Founder





LICENSING & PRE-LICENSING SUPPORT

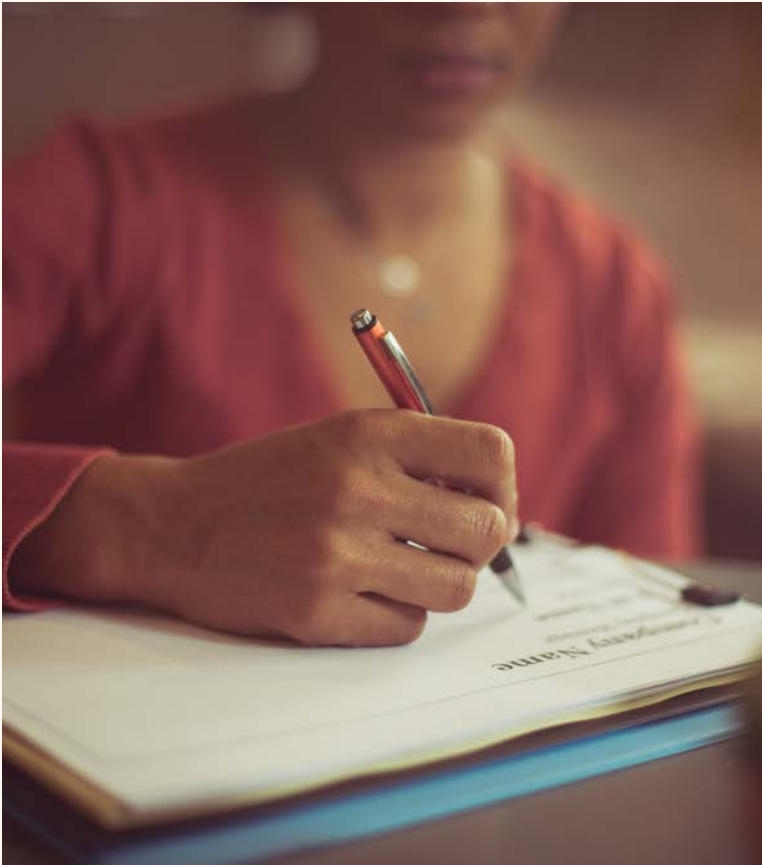
Seventy-seven percent of providers asked for support meeting licensing requirements. Visits from licensors bring new information. Providers expressed having high levels of anxiety around licensing.

"There is no way to be fully prepared for a visit from a licensor. Their job is to find something wrong. I sit with my heart in my throat every time they knock. Will I be closed down without notice? Will I be able to feed my family next week?"

- Pierce County Provider

Clear communication of changing requirements in writing prior to visits would help with success, trust building, and financial planning.





Improving licensing and pre-licensing support presents an opportunity to build on provider's experiences, budget, outcomes, and mental health. This will also positively impact the children and families served.

Providers are required to meet licensing requirements and receive annual visits from their DCYF licensor. This can be stressful for providers because the licensor is looking for needed improvements.

"I worry because whatever is found can be very expensive, and sometimes the timeline that I have to fix things isn't realistic. It could be more bark on the playground, additional locks, or something as expensive as play equipment, shelving, or gutting an entire room because the flooring isn't up to new codes."

- Pierce County Provider



Annual guidelines in printed booklets given to providers would improve compliance. When a new WAC requirement is created and implemented, providers are asking for notification in writing so that they can prepare and budget for any business impacts.

When a licensor receives a complaint about a business, providers would like to be communicated with regarding the complaint and supported in implementing solutions.

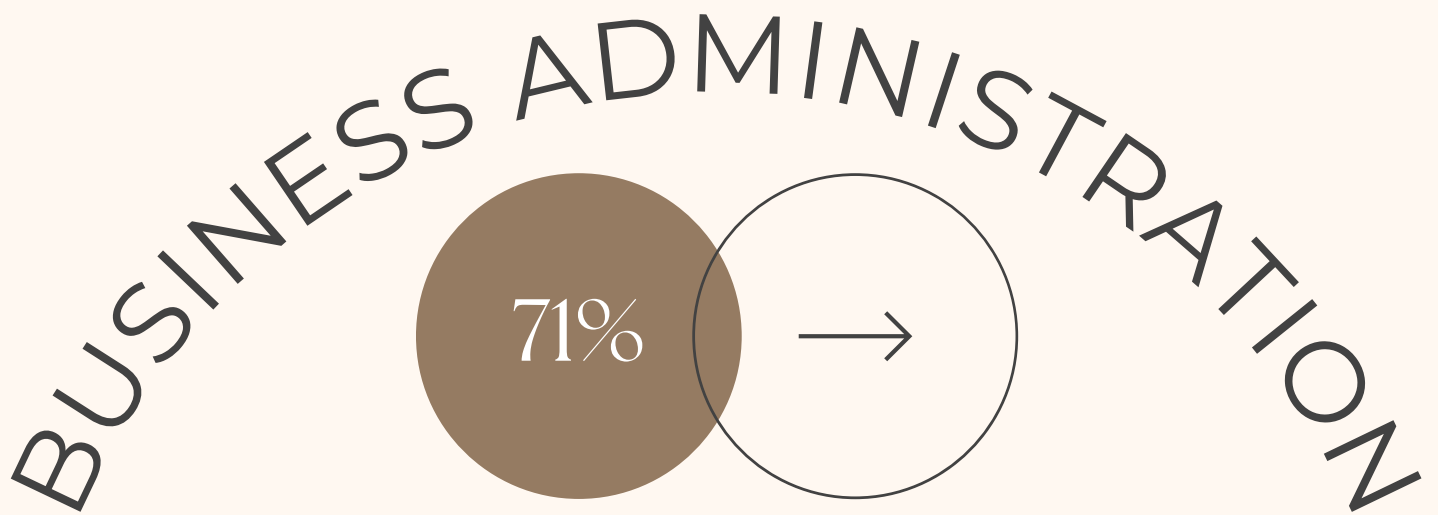
PRE-LICENSING SUPPORT

The child care crisis has created an atmosphere where entrepreneurs are stepping up to help in fill in the gaps. Potential child care providers are asking for clear guidance through the process of opening up a business, cost, and licensing.

"I call landlords and sites to negotiate when I have never done this before. I would already be open if I had access to professionals who walked me through opening my business."



LOCAL MENTORING & SUPPORT



Seventy-one percent of providers shared they need support with business administration. They are requesting training and resources for streamlined record keeping, marketing, organization, budgeting, employee handbooks, family welcome packets, contracts, and improved communication with families.



Business administration is an important part of a provider's responsibilities. According to providers, support with business management would improve their outcomes, increase child care slots, and improve staff and family interactions.

RECORD KEEPING

Providers are required to keep financial records, progress records for children and staff, employee records, facility and licensing records and more. Providers are requesting training on how to best organize, share, and store records.

SOFTWARE ACCESS

The most efficient software on organizing and storing records are often outside of the provider's budget. Being able to access this software and utilize it will save on time, stress levels, and improve organization.

TECHNOLOGY

Due to small profit margins, most providers do not have access to the technology needed to oversee their small businesses. Funding specific for technology access is needed.

BUSINESS STRUCTURE

Improving business structure by outlining roles within varying types of child care organizations from start-up to expansion would improve staff experiences. Many providers work with their family members and if there aren't defined roles, then the work is not as efficient.

MARKETING SUPPORT

Business marketing is essential for child care providers. Advertising services, highlighting available slots, defining their mission, vision, and philosophy would improve communication and bring in new families. Access to funding and programs for business advertising will fill more child care slots and improve branding.



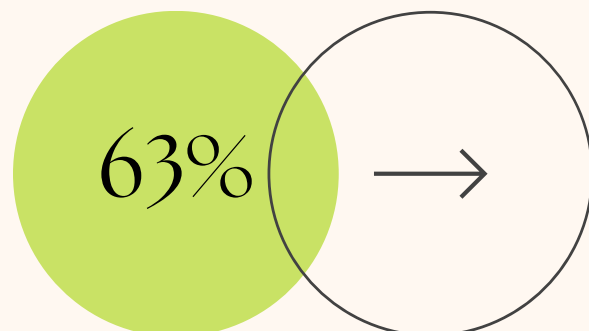


FACILITIES COMPLIANCE

Sixty-three percent of providers are asking for support with meeting fire code, emergency preparation, and facilities support related to licensing.

Compliance for early learning and child care providers means adhering to a policy, standard, or law outlined by the county, city, state, or federal government.

Regulatory compliance defines the goals that small business owners want to achieve to ensure that they understand the rules. Then they can take the necessary steps to comply with policies, relevant laws, and regulations.



FIRE CODE

Providers are asking for support meeting the set of standards of fire code that are established and enforced by the government for fire prevention and safety. Access to fire ladders, glass breaks, fire extinguishers, lighted exits and signs, and fire plans will improve the safety and timeliness of emergency response for providers.



OSHA

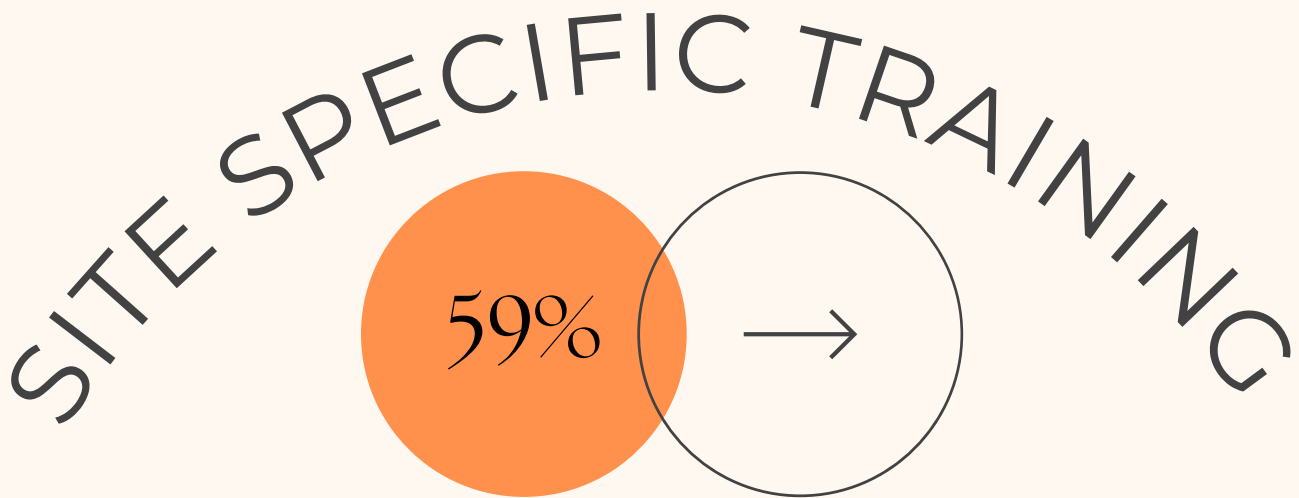
The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also requires that all child care programs with staff (even family child care homes with assistants or volunteers) have an Exposure Control Plan for Blood-borne Pathogens.



FACILITIES LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Licensed child care centers and family child care staff are required to attend initial and ongoing training for facilities compliance. All facilities must also pass regular health and safety inspections. The number of children who can be cared for by one adult is limited by licensing regulations and is based on available space in each site.

STRENGTH-BASED SUPPORT



Fifty-nine percent of providers requested solution-based training. Providers are requesting training focused on serving children and families' unique needs. This request includes specialized equipment and facilities funding for disabled children. Traditionally, families have to come up with these supports on their own and must transfer them to and from most child care sites. This means that one child might have access to equipment while another child with the same needs does not.





Providers experience the gambit of needs that come with serving Pierce County families. They desire to create warm, safe, and welcoming environments for children to enjoy in all walks of life.

Access to solution-based training for children with cognitive, visual, verbal, and developmental delays, as well as physical disabilities is needed.



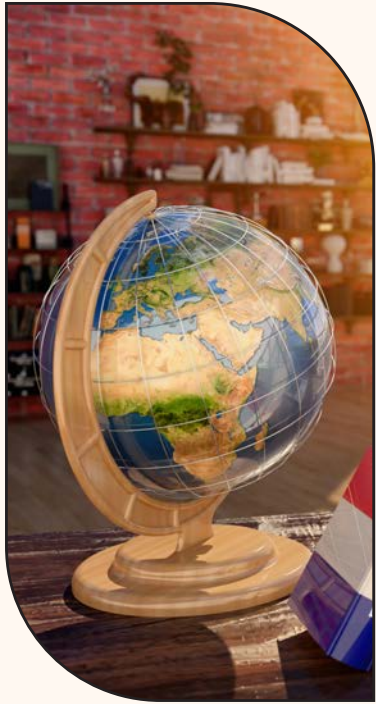
Current trainings help identify and define the diagnosis of children in care. Providers report the trainings are informational and that they would benefit from more action steps. Providers are requesting strength-based training that supports child care staff and teaches solutions to serving children with disabilities.



What should the environment be like? How can they include children with disabilities into the larger group? What things help calm, soothe, or engage the children individually?

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training is being requested at over 90% by providers. Skills to manage emotional and physical trauma while transitioning children into learning environments is necessary for all child care providers.



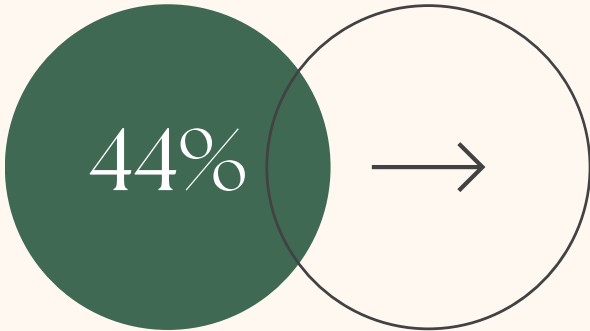


MATERIALS TRANSLATION

Forty-four percent of providers asked for materials translation for staff, children, and families. We have a diverse culture in Pierce County, with over 30,000 residents speaking languages other than English as their primary language.

Providers are serving families who need to be able to communicate in their native language.

Translation is needed for employee handbooks, advertising, communication with families, and on site by having reading materials, sign-in and sign-out sheets, and other communications available in multiple languages.





Pierce County child care providers who participated in the Child Care Capacity Initiative survey in 2022, are actively serving children and families speaking the following languages:

- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Arabic
- Swahili
- Nigerian
- Spanish
- Samoan & Hawaiian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Chinese
- Vietnamese
- Thai
- American Sign Language
- English



ZIP CODES



Providers from the following zip codes participated in the CCCI survey:

98070 98373
 98321 98374
 98327 98375
 98328 98387
 98332 98388
 98335 98390
 98338 98391
 98354 98394
 98360 98402
 98361 98403
 98371 98404
 98372 98405



98406 98445
 98407 98446
 98408 98447
 98409 98465
 98412 98466
 98418 98467
 98422 98492
 98424 98497
 98433 98498
 98439 98499
 98443 98558
 98444 98580

SOURCES AND THANK YOU!

SOURCES:

HENSSLER.COM
SALARY.COM
RENTCAFE.COM
OSHA.GOV
LIVESTORIES.COM
FACILITYFORCE.COM
CHILD CARE RESOURCES
USCHAMBERFOUNDATION.ORG
NATIONALEQUITYPROJECT.ORG
WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE
WASHINGTON COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (DCYF)
PIERCE COUNTY CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS



THANK YOU:

First 5 Fundamentals and the Pierce County Early Childhood Network would like to thank the Child Care Voice Leadership and Action Teams, the hundreds of Pierce County Providers that participated in the survey, showed us their sites, and shared their stories. Thank you to our community partners that have uplifted provider voice and shared this work with the community!

CHILD CARE PROVIDER COHORTS BEGIN ON JANUARY 2, 2023!



PIERCE COUNTY
EARLY CHILDHOOD
N E T W O R K

PCECN

IMPROVING THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILIES IN PIERCE COUNTY

TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE

CONTACT PROJECT MANAGER, CHERI BEAVERS AT CCCI@PCECN.ORG