

CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE

DECEMBER 2023 YEAR END PROGRESS REPORT

REPORT BY CHERI BEAVERS



Child Care Capacity Initiative project leaders, along with local early learning educators and key community partners, have been working tirelessly to ensure new spaces are created in which families can access equitable, affordable, high-quality, culturally-inclusive child care in Pierce County, Washington.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES 3 - 5

Why Child Care Matters

PAGE 6 & 7

Project Overview

PAGE 8

How Cohorts are Chosen

PAGE 9

Cohort A

PAGE 10

Cohort B

PAGE 11

Cohort C

PAGE 12-14

Project Focuses

PAGE 15

Demographics



PAGE 16

Expansion

PAGE 17

Ways to Get Involved

PAGE 18

Coming Soon

PAGE 19

Blueprints Conference

PAGE 20

Sources & Thank You

WHY CHILD CARE MATTERS



Child Care and Early Learning Educators are foundational for the success of families and essential to our economy's recovery from pandemic impacts.

CHILD CARE GIVES CHILDREN AND FAMILIES A HEAD START

According to research by the *Harvard Gazette*, a child's early years are critical to their development. Children who participate in early childhood education receive a strong foundation that is pivotal for their lives. Early learning sets children on a path to positive economic and social impacts that are proven to last into adulthood. Research shows that children who participate in early learning programs achieve higher educational attainment, higher lifetime earnings, and are able to achieve higher status throughout their employment. Additionally, they are considerably less likely to engage in illegal activity. Children starting in child care as young as infants and moving through toddler years, into elementary ages receive educational, social, and economic benefits. Early learning is also proven to yield long-lasting benefits for society.

EARLY EDUCATION ENSURES WORKING PARENTS CAN SUCCEED

Child care providers ensure that working parents are able to continue to invest in their futures. Safe and equitable child care allows parents access to continuing education, opportunity to engage in workforce development goals, and the ability to obtain and keep employment. These professionals give parents peace-of-mind knowing that their children are in a safe, culturally-inclusive, enriching and healthy environment. Early learning educators are essential to the needs of children and families.

EARLY DETECTORS OF SPECIAL NEEDS

Early learning educators are trained to observe the emotional and mental developmental milestones of children in their care. They are trained to provide focused, individualized attention, ensuring that each child's special needs are met. Child care providers develop strong bonds with children in their daily routines, which allow for the tracking of their progression. They can recognize barriers that children may face while learning.

Research shows that early diagnosis of a disability means that parents can access needed support and resources earlier in their children's lives. This early detection means that children have an improved ability to reach their academic goals. Early detection also helps children's social and emotional development, ensuring that major milestones are achieved.

According to parents in our community, early learning educators help them navigate the challenges of raising children with special needs. The peace and direction this provides for each family is important for stability.

VITAL FOR WASHINGTON STATE'S POST-PANDEMIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY

In Washington, six out of every ten children under the age of 12 live in families where all parents or caregivers are working. This is another reason that child care providers are a critical and necessary component of our state's economic infrastructure.

Providers ensure that children have a safe space to learn and grow while parents work. This keeps children in their homes and keeps families stable. During the pandemic, child care providers served as largely unnoticed frontline workers caring for our youngest, most vulnerable population, prior to vaccine availability. Providers worked hard to step up to the challenge of supporting families and educating children by delivering care and distance learning throughout COVID-19. Our state's child care system has a long way to go! Studies show that single parents spend more than 33% of their income on child care. This is not a sustainable model. What barriers are preventing child cares from opening?

"The child care crisis is going to get worse for everyone—parents, kids, businesses, and our whole economy—if we don't act soon to keep our child care system afloat. I'll keep pushing to take action now to fix our broken child care system." - Senator Patty Murray

The Washington State economy can only recover and thrive when children and families' needs are treated as priority. Families must have access to affordable, equitable, culturally-inclusive child care where and when they need it. The child care industry is critical to our local and national infrastructures. We cannot stress enough as a community the importance and critical nature of this project. This is worth our best efforts, our time, and our attention.

In addition to the benefits to children and families, we embrace the opportunity of host larger conversations emphasizing the importance of community investments in young lives and the implementation of equitable solutions resulting in tangible and measurable lasting change in Pierce County, Washington.

Cheri Beavers

Cheri Beavers, Project Manager | Child Care Capacity Initiative | Child Care Voice



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Child Care Capacity Initiative Project - CCCI was officially created in December of 2021, in response to the local child care crisis caused by a lack of affordable, culturally-inclusive, high-quality child care in Pierce County, Washington.

The [2022 Child Care Capacity Initiative Report](#) addressed the growing host of barriers preventing child care educators from opening and expanding their businesses.

In an effort to open new child care slots, serve a wider range of ages, and meet community needs, cohorts of Early Learning Educators and small business owners stepped up to join the Child Care Capacity Initiative in January of 2023. These Cohort participants engage with industry professionals utilizing technical assistance, shared services, and direct support. These services have increased the number of child care slots while creating sustainable networks and lasting partnerships ensuring continued access for Pierce County residents.

In May of 2023, the CCCI [Project Progress Report](#) highlighted the successful creation of 120 new child care slots. The expansion includes before and after school care, infant and toddler slots, and increased access to care for children with disabilities.

As noted in previous reports, CCCI, through the [Pierce County Early Childhood Network](#) operates with complex layers of support and is actively engaged with more than 300 partners including local school districts, the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), local nonprofit and for-profit partners, early learning educators and small business owners. Technical assistance providers such as architects, brokers, contractors, grant writers, stakeholders, employers, and community members have been essential to this process.



The Child Care Capacity Initiative Project utilizes [Liberatory Design](#), ensuring that cohort participants' individual visions for serving the community are highlighted and implemented throughout the process. Early learning educators and the families they welcome are the inspiration behind this project. Child care educators have the experiences and relationships to successfully serve children and families. Project success is attributed to the grit, determination, compassion, competence, and care of local early learning professionals.

The December 2023 Progress Report provides current updates and demographics of the cohorts creating new slots for child care in Pierce County. This report explores information on Cohorts A, B, and C, their areas of focus, and current demographics including project highlights. This report shares project focuses and gives a glimpse at upcoming cohort goals. You will also find opportunities for involvement and continued learning. CCCI is excited to share the announcement of current child care slots overseen by the Child Care Capacity Initiative.

For a detailed outline of our current goals, strategy, and impacts, please see our [May 2022 Progress Report](#).



"The childcare crisis is not new. It shouldn't take a global pandemic to raise awareness about these issues," says Sarah Brafman, Senior Policy Counsel at [A Better Balance](#). "This is an opportunity to address the failings of our past."



HOW ARE COHORTS CHOSEN?

CHILD CARE COHORTS

Each child care cohort includes a selection of child care providers working as a collective decision-making group designed to meet their individual business needs. Cohort members apply to participate through an accessible, equitable, and private process. Along with a provider's own investments into their business, CCCI provides funding in alignment with project values and mission. Current cohorts are operating simultaneously.

Cohort selection is based on the following requirements as decided by the Child Care Voice Leadership Team:

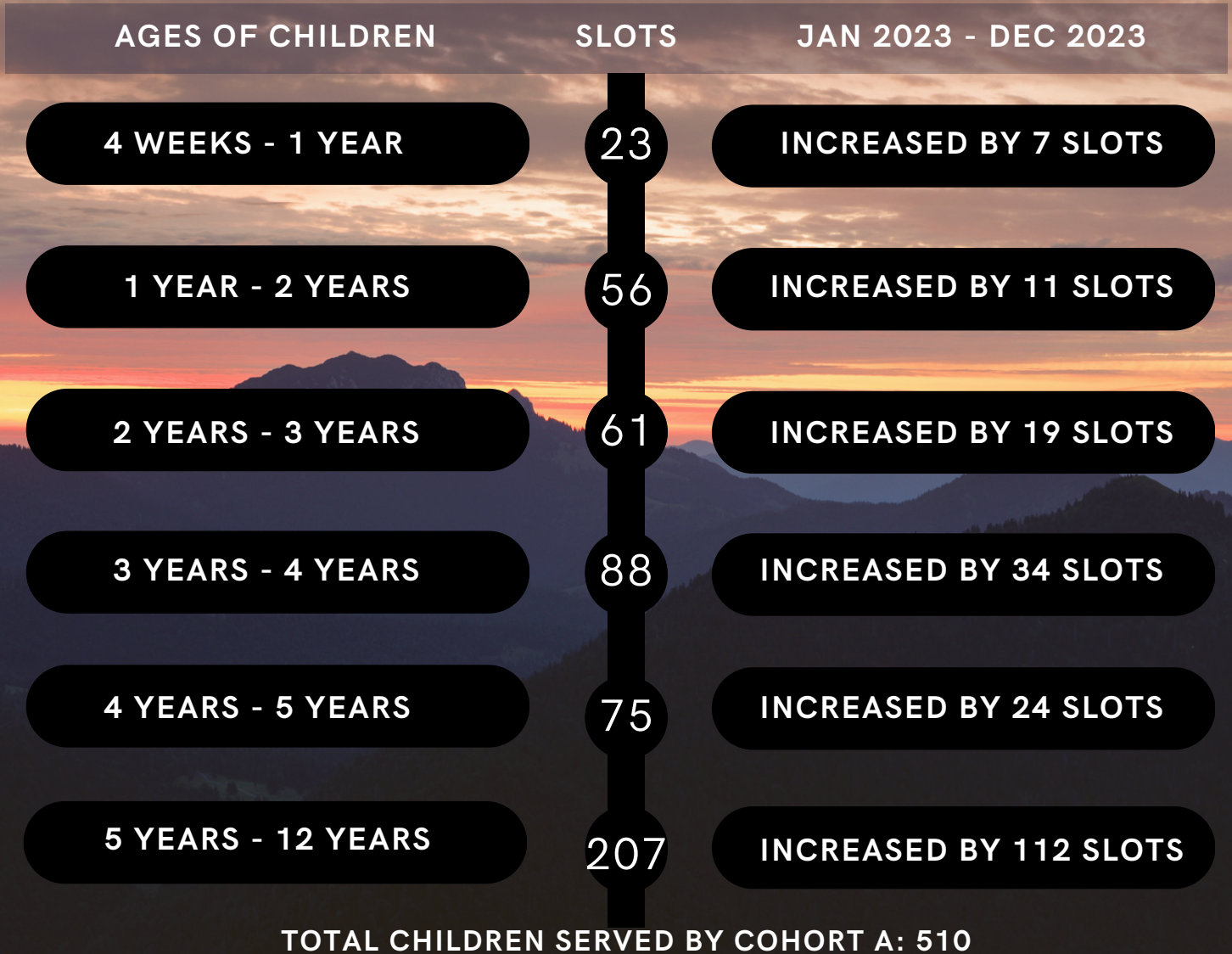
- Site accepts subsidies or is willing to begin accepting subsidies
- Operating in a child care desert; CCCI uses an expanded definition of Washington State's Department of Children, Youth, and Families definition of "*child care desert*" to extend beyond zip codes into including hours/days open and ages served.
- Opening or operating a child care site in Pierce County, Washington
- Ensure home-based, center-based, and before/after school care providers are represented
- Prioritizing providers serving marginalized populations (disabilities, in state care, experiencing houselessness, speaking multiple languages, etc.)
- Prioritizing providers who plan to expand hours or days of operation, open a new location, provide infant care, crisis nurseries, weekend and evening care, site expansion, and/or are operating under capacity.

Cohort members start or expand their businesses with a strong foundation of support. They have access to a menu of technical, administrative, financial, staffing, facilities, and design support with services offered through sub-contractors. Cohort participants attend regular meetings, activities, and shared services in both group and individual settings.



CCCI - COHORT A

The Child Care Capacity Initiative's Cohort A started on January 3, 2023. Cohort A has 13 Early Learning Educators who continue to serve children ages 4 weeks - 12 years. Cohort A providers have increased their initial number of children served from 303 to over 510!



We affectionately refer to this Cohort as the *Resilient Way-Makers*. This is the Cohort that tried it all, endured it all, pivoted, envisioned, and is still moving toward success. We are grateful to be in a community with these brilliant leaders. They are examples of risk-taking, resilience, advocacy, innovation, and equity, all within a framework of kindness.

COHORT B

Cohort B began in August of 2023. Several providers in this cohort have faced years of delays on their expansion projects due to government turnover and delayed responses to requests. Challenges included, but are not limited to permitting and compliance with the ADA, health department certifications, and outdated city and state fire codes leading to tens of thousands of dollars in added costs and hardship. Most of these providers have been serving the community for decades, while some are looking to open sites for the first time.

CCCI prioritized the needs of Cohort B's providers, making significant gains in permitting resolutions, facilities upgrades, and fostering a greater understanding of fire code requirements. Cohort B is projected to open over 150 new child care slots in 2024. Watch for future CCCI reports for progress and detailed demographics as new slots are opened.

CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS FOR COHORT B ARE AS FOLLOWS:



Cohort B also serves infants, children with disabilities, children in state care, and children experiencing homelessness.

CURRENT ZIP CODES

98390 98417
98375 98408
98405 98335
98445 98418
98465 98338

STARTING SLOTS



CURRENT AGES SERVED





INTRODUCING COHORT C

Cohort C begins in January of 2024. Cohort C is a specialized cohort focused on the East and South ends of Tacoma, which includes Lakewood.

This cohort will run in partnership with [Foundation for Tacoma Students](#). Thanks to [Senator Patty Murray's](#) office and their generous partnership, the Foundation for Tacoma Students and the Child Care Capacity Initiative are able to offer specialized wrap around services to these providers. Additional project partners helping with oversight for Cohort C include [Brightspark](#), [Workforce Central](#), and [Tacoma Housing Authority](#).

Tacoma's East and South ends, including Lakewood, are considered "child care deserts." These are challenging locations to open new child care slots due to zoning restrictions, crime, lack of financial backing, and limited commercial spaces. Through this partnership, we are seeking to open more child care slots in neglected zones to give increased child care access to our community. This will also build educational and vocational opportunities for residents and children. Foundation for Tacoma Students has done an outstanding job ensuring school age children have access to needed educational opportunities. This year, this movement acknowledges the birth through five community as being part of the foundation for future progress! Applications for Cohort C are now closed. More to come in 2024!



PROJECT FOCUSES

The Child Care Capacity Initiative is focused on opening new child care slots in Pierce County. Along with technical assistance, network support, and shared services - this project highlights the additional child care needs outlined below.

ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

An important component of opening new child care slots is acknowledging the diverse needs in our community. This includes serving children with developmental and physical disabilities. CCCI offers incentives to providers serving children with disabilities with specialized equipment and furniture, classroom design, ADA permitting advocacy, walk-way grading, lighting, noise reduction, and other supports as defined by early learning educators and families.

RESPIRE CARE

Pierce County, Washington has no crisis nurseries for parents and caregivers needing care support for special needs children and infants. For example, single parents needing surgery or recovering from injury, for doctor's appointments, parents who have to work unusual hours or long days, and those that need postpartum supports are left without resources. Military families serving away from their support structure are unable to find the needed support to complete their required duties. CCCI is in ongoing planning and conversations about creating a respite care/crisis nursery network within our current cohorts that will allow emergency care access for Pierce County families.

CHILD CARE DESERTS

The national child care crisis has afforded us an opportunity to examine our approach and rethink how we are addressing the lack of affordable access. In elementary school, children are taught that curiosity leads to knowledge. Often this is presented with the posing of *The Five Ws*. Who? What? When? Where? Why? Once those concepts are introduced and understood next comes the action question - HOW?

The Child Care Capacity Initiative Project is determined to implement strategies that resolve those questions. Implementation is done both collectively and through addressing barriers on a case-by-case basis.

Our first steps of investigation included understanding child care deserts, their definitions, and the data that can be gathered from answering the *Five Ws*. We quickly realized that the traditional definitions of child care deserts were not inclusive enough to resolve the needs of our local community. After extensive research, we realized that expansion of this definition would make way for more equitable opportunities for Pierce County families.

CCCI operates under an expanded definition of the Washington State Department of Youth and Families - DCYF's definition of a "*child care desert*." DCYF defines a child care desert as, "*Any zip code identified as an extreme access desert for any subset of populations - infants/toddlers and preschoolers, from low-income households as well as non-low-income households.*" While this is an important starting point that gives a foundational look into the populations impacted by lack of child care, there are parts of the community needing access in child care deserts who fall outside of that criteria.

CCCI used data from Joint Base Lewis-McChord (*JBLM*) and Camp Murray's Leadership Committees, and surveyed local child care providers and families to add additional language to the definition of child care deserts. For the purpose of this project, our definition includes zip codes, communities needing extended hours for child care or overnight access, crisis nursery access, rural communities, places where there is a lack of transportation, communities without weekend child care access, and ages served to include school age children requesting before and after school care. This definition presents a more comprehensive picture of the child care needs in Pierce County.

RURAL AND URBAN

Pierce County has both rural and urban areas that include cities, towns, and Census Designated Places - CDPs. CDPs are statistical geography zones representing closely settled, unincorporated communities, that are locally recognized and identified by name. The Child Care Capacity Initiative is actively creating new child care slots in each of these areas. This includes populations that have never had accessible center-based child care.

CULTURAL INCLUSION

A major outcry from the Pierce County community related to child care access includes the desire for more culturally-inclusive child care sites. This stems from both the diverse population, and the high number of refugees and immigrants who have made Pierce County their home. Wars and other political unrest throughout the world have made it necessary for families to transition to the United States for their safety and survival. CCCI is committed to opening sites where children and families can learn and grow in an environment that is honoring of their cultural heritages and family values.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES

The December 2022 [CCCI Project Report](#) highlighted the need for quality supplies and materials for local early learning sites. The multi-million dollar investment in the Child Care Capacity Initiative by the Pierce County Council ensured that early learning educators participating in CCCI Cohorts are able to access quality items for their classrooms. To date, providers have received special needs equipment and materials, furniture, classroom and office supplies, curriculum, facilities support, and other essential items for operations.

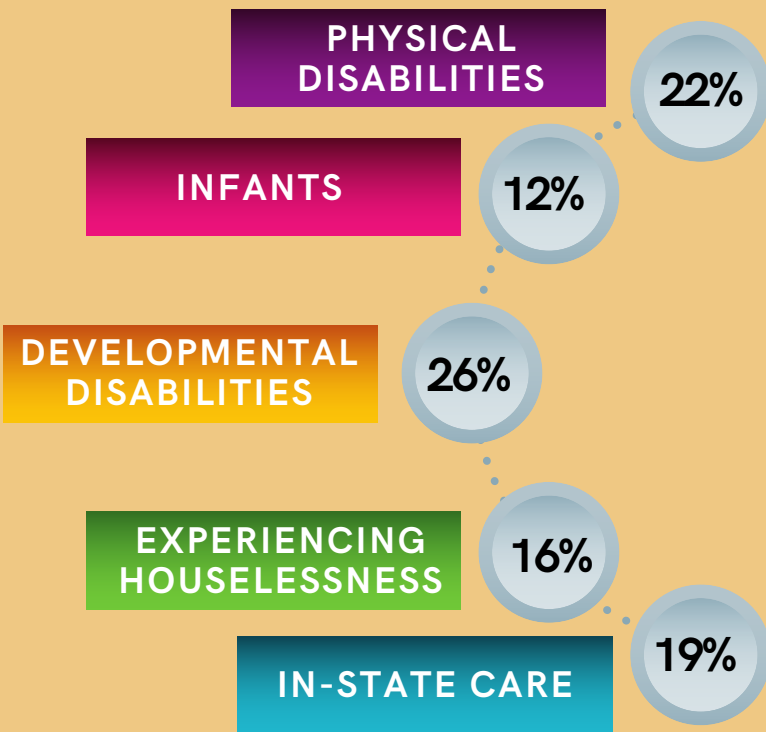
GRANTS

In addition to technical assistance, the CCCI Project developed and implemented a system for providing new business start-up funding to child care provider entrepreneurs. These funds can be used to eliminate access barriers, prioritize services in areas with the greatest needs, and ensure widespread awareness and accessibility of funding opportunities through partnerships.

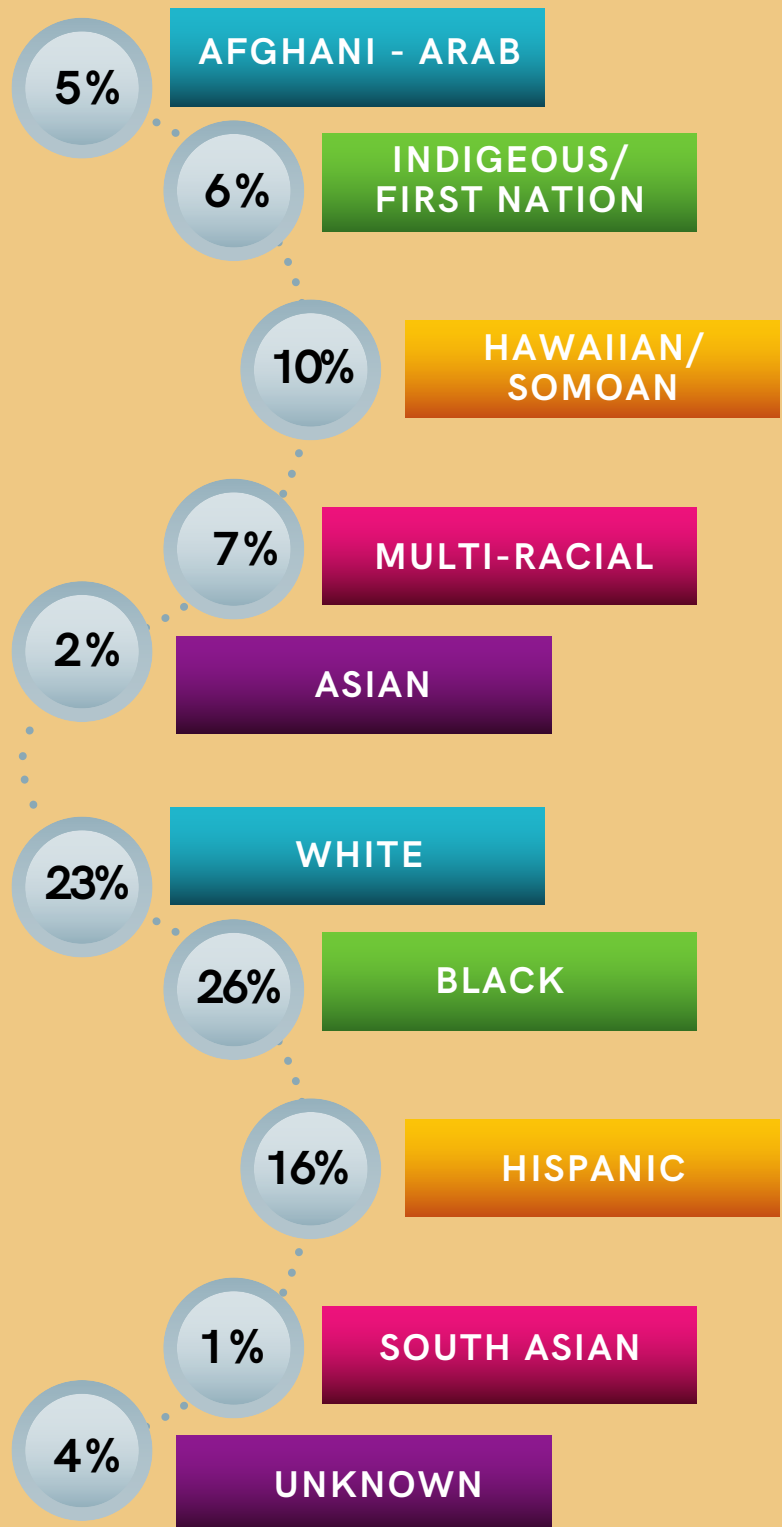
DEMOGRAPHICS

As of December 2023, Cohorts A-C from the Child Care Capacity Initiative currently serve the following demographics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN SERVED BY ALL THREE COHORTS IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:



CURRENT CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN SERVED IN CCCI COHORTS:



SLOT EXPANSION

COHORT A HAS INCREASED SLOTS BY 207
- AN INCREASE OF OVER 41% -
AND GROWING!



207

HOW DO CHILD CARE SLOTS WORK?

The phrase “child care slots” represents available spaces for families to enroll children into early education and child care programs. There are both licensed and unlicensed child care slots in Washington state. In some cases, there are exemptions for requiring licensing depending on hours open, ages served, and site location. You can learn more about [licensing exemptions here](#).

For the purpose of the Child Care Capacity Initiative Project, we are creating licensable child care slots. The CCCI Project focuses on the development and expansion of licensed child care slots requiring extensive work with DCYF, fire departments, health departments, city, county, and state governments to ensure compliance with all WAC, fire codes, health codes, planning, permitting, and zoning requirements. These approvals create child care slots that can be licensed. This complex process takes ongoing advocacy, funding, and partnerships.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

One way that the [Child Care Capacity Initiative \(CCCI\)](#) is making a difference in our community is by offering excellence and beauty in our designs and planning of child care sites. CCCI works with teams of talented architects and designers to create spaces allowing children, families, and educators to feel inspired through innovation. These architects are committed to equitable, natural, and affordable design using sustainable methods and materials that flex in response to the need of caregivers and children. Join us at our upcoming [Blueprints](#) conference to learn more about architectural design in early learning!

Our current Cohorts are full, but we are actively looking to create future cohorts to serve and assist additional child care providers. You can join the list to be notified when additional Cohorts open by [clicking here](#). There is more about CCCI on the [Pierce County Early Childhood Network's \(PCECN\)](#) website.

To tap into our network of childcare providers and supports, join the [Child Care Voice Action Team](#). This is a cross-sector group of organizations and individuals committed to a long term goal where each family in Pierce County can access the high-quality, equitable, culturally inclusive child care they desire, where and when they need it. 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. To join the monthly email list, please visit [Child Care Voice](#).

You can read the last Child Care Voice PCECN newsletter [here](#). We routinely share local provider stories, opportunities for child care communities and families to access resources and events, and where we build the Child Care Voice Network. To be included in future CCV newsletters please email ccci@pcecn.org. Reading our previous project reports (*linked on page 6*) will also give context for involvement in the CCCI Project!



PIERCE COUNTY
EARLY CHILDHOOD
NETWORK
PCECN





COMING SOON

Our final project report for the Child Care Capacity Initiative - Phase One - is coming in late 2024. It will detail CCCI's Washington State Early Learning Roadmap, individual educator experiences, number of slots opened and locations within Pierce County, ongoing barriers, partner information, subcontractor information, successes, and upcoming opportunities to advance child care in our community and state. CCCI is a sustainable model we expect to take state-wide.

We will explore the setbacks and successes experienced by local child care providers while detailing journeys to opening child care slots in rural and urban places, exploring impacted demographics, and outlining needed technical assistance and shared service projects for long-term success. We will share subcontractor details and highlight their extraordinary work.

One of our goals is to make the way clear for others in our state to embrace the challenge of child care with a clear strategy for success. This helps to ensure an appropriate project timeline for the various cohorts to access and utilize services, data collection, and for partners and vendors to deliver services and goods to sites.

We look forward to hosting a larger conversation about processes that aided or slowed the progress for opening new sites. This includes explaining how partners stepped in to fill gaps in service and supports, and how professionals engaged to ensure providers got the best services, designs, and access possible. Finally, we will celebrate the fearless and determined early learning educators who have endured incredible adversity and continued to stand in willingness to welcome our community into their homes, classrooms, and centers.

THE CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE INVITES YOU TO:



Blueprints 2024: An Architectural Conference for Early Learning Design offers a unique opportunity to build relationships and gain knowledge from passionate experts committed to improving the quality of early childhood environments. If you were three years old and three feet tall, how would the elements in your environment inspire you to play, take risks, and create?

The Child Care Capacity Initiative is bringing together experts and thought leaders to elevate the physical environment by designing, developing, and uplifting early childhood education. We are hosting an ongoing dialogue around creating and celebrating exceptional spaces for early learners that reflect the community they welcome. We seek to create spaces that acknowledge that children and educators are capable and competent. The result is a creative, dynamic, physical space that enhances the relationships between children, families, and educators.

[CLICK HERE
TO LEARN MORE](#)

[CLICK HERE
TO REGISTER](#)



Thank you for your ongoing support of the CHILD CARE CAPACITY INITIATIVE PROJECT

First, thank you to the **cohort members** who are doing the hard work of navigating complex and adverse systems where they have little autonomy and for backing efforts to serve children and families in Pierce County! They are the true game-changers who are igniting the community with hope and possibility.

As always, thank you to **Diane Kroll**, who steps into the community with joy and imagination! Diane connects early learning educators to their classrooms by cultivating wonder in design and inspires high-quality learning environments that are reflective of the communities around them. She reminds us that we must be present and bring our unique perspectives and values into each space we enter.

Thank you to the **Child Care Voice Leadership and Action Teams!** We strategize, advocate, connect, mentor, share resources, and welcome the community with open arms. I am grateful for each of you!

Thank you to our partners who serve alongside of us including the **Multi-Cultural Child Family Hope Center, Brightspark, Workforce, KP Partnership for a Healthy Community, Greentrike, Foundation for Tacoma Students, DCYF Pre-Licensing - Jody, Lorraine, Shelly, and Kathy, you are amazing!** Thank you to our architects, brokers, and subcontractors who will all be acknowledged by name in the upcoming CCCI - Phase One - report in 2024!

Thank you to the staff at **First 5 Fundamentals, the Pierce County Early Childhood Network**, and to the brilliant **Carrie Duffy-Pearce, Mirna Fritz, Naomi Carleton, and Kate Ginn** for assisting with payments, ordering, and contracts on this intensive project!



SOURCES

[Statistica](#)

[Harvard Gazette](#)

[Eye on Early Childhood Blog](#)

[Washington Department of Children,
Youth, and Families](#)

CHERI BEAVERS

first **5FUN**
damentals

FIRST 5 FUNDAMENTALS
1501 Pacific Ave, Suite 201
Tacoma, WA 98402

<https://first5fundamentals.org>

*Upholding communities in achieving their
collective goals for children and families*
Report Designer, Writer, & Project Manager