



PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

June 22, 2020

Pierce County Allocates CARES Act Dollars to Child Care

Pierce County received \$158 million in federal CARES Act funding and has announced how these dollars will be allocated. We are thrilled as an early learning community that \$2 million is dedicated to child care and will be invested in the two programs - a voucher system for families and relief grants for providers.

A Voucher System for Families:

\$1.5 million will go towards vouchers for Pierce County families to access any 0-12 years old licensed child care program, or any school aged only program. The funding will support 300 children attending child care for 3 months. Child Care Resources (CCR) will administer this program. Attached to this release is a flyer with specific information on how families can access the programs.

Relief Grants for Providers:

\$500,000 will go towards provider relief grants, with an emphasis on child care deserts. Most child care providers are private businesses that operate on very small profit margins. The COVID-19 Pandemic has created a huge financial impact on things such as ability to maintain payroll, rent, and utilities; increased costs related to personal protection equipment and cleaning supplies; and increased staffing costs in order to meet the safe physical distancing classroom sizes. Grants will allow closed providers to re-open, and ensure providers have resources necessary to offer safe care that meets the safety guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control. There will be an upfront provider and community input process, facilitated by First 5 FUNdamentals (F5F). Through this process, the eligibility for grants will be finalized. Child care providers will participate in both the input, criteria determination, and the grant award process. F5F and CCR will co-administer the program.

Ongoing Child Care Reforms

The child care industry in Washington has been deeply underfunded and overburdened for decades. Child care providers make little over minimum wage, while the monthly cost of care is often the most expensive bill many families pay. Infant care, for example, surpasses the cost of tuition at a public university. Not only is this stressful for families, but also for businesses, who need a reliable workforce. In 2017, the childcare crisis cost employers in Washington \$6.5 billion in direct and opportunity costs, according to The Mounting Costs of Child Care report. The report was produced in partnership with the Association of Washington Business Institute, Child Care Aware of Washington, Children's Alliance, the Washington State Department of Commerce, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and is [available here](#). The report also found that 36% of Washington parents departed from their jobs or schooling due to a lack of access to quality child care.

In the coming months, Child Care Resource and First 5 FUNdamentals will continue to engage community partners, to identify reforms that will ensure child care is available to families not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but well into the future. To be part of the conversation [sign up here](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION

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