



Think about a young child you know in Southwest Washington. Your young friend is one of 47,000 children under 6 in the 5-1/2-county region, which stretches from the Gorge to the Coast.

Is your young friend in a family that earns more than \$52,400 a year? About 18,000 (37%) are not.

Is your young friend in a family where all parents are in the workforce? Some 25,000 (53%) are.

Does your young friend have access to early learning in a licensed child care or ECEAP/Head Start program? Of kids under 6 with all parents working, 11,700 (47%) do not.

Did your young friend stay in child care when COVID-19 hit? The pandemic shut down 30% of licensed child care capacity — 3,000 slots — as of June 2020.

Do those statistics make you feel stressed? You can join the parents and employers who need reliable, quality child care and education, not just for the stability of the family, but for the stability of the workforce. In one year in Southwest Washington, 5,200 workers with children under 6 quit a job, and 2,600 are fired, due to child care issues. The cost to employers is \$83.5 million.

The thing is, for every dollar invested in early childhood, society gets a \$7 return down the road. When children develop the critical skills of early childhood, they enter school ready to succeed. They need fewer supports and find higher success throughout school and in life. In the end, this results in higher wages, less need for supplemental services, and

healthier, more robust local economies. If we invested \$24,000 per year over three years in high-quality early childhood education for every low-income child in our region, we'd get a \$500,000 return on each one.

Now, think about your young friend's family. The typical cost of child care is \$9,288. A family in Southwest Washington making the median income, \$67,048, pays 14% of their income on child care for one child. Does this put stress on the family?

Finally, consider your young friend's child care provider. If the provider accepts lower-income families in the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program, she can serve her community — at a loss. Subsidy rates are far below the market rate for child care.

There's a lot more to consider for your young friend and the other 46,999 young children in Southwest Washington. You can read more in the report, State of the Children: Early Learning & Care for Southwest Washington, published by SELF, SWEL (Southwest Washington Early Learning Regional Coalition), Washington STEM, and Washington Communities for Children.

[READ THE REPORT](#)

Stay healthy and safe

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