



STATE OF OUR CHILDREN & FAMILIES : *Report 2018*

Southwest Washington: Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, South Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties



“The quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society as an adult can be traced back to the first few years of life. From birth until about five years old, a child undergoes tremendous growth and change. If this period of life includes support for growth in cognition, language, motor skills, adaptive skills and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and later contribute to society.”

ARTHUR ROLNICK

*Senior Fellow, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota
Former Senior VP and Director of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota*



GREETINGS

Our dream is that all children have a chance for a great start in life. We believe that all children deserve access to high-quality basics of health, education, nurturing and love. Each fall, over half of the children in our region start their first day of kindergarten unprepared. We can do better! It is true that children and families living in poverty, or children learning English as a second language, may need a little extra support, but we are not talking about “those” children, or “other” children. We are talking about “our” children. The 36,893 children aged 0-4 in our region who grow, live and learn in Southwest Washington.

This report highlights where we’ve made progress. Let’s celebrate those successes. We must also recognize that early childhood unpreparedness is preventable, and we must aggressively tackle the gaps. Fred Rogers of Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood said, “Every child is welcome into the world of learning – not just a few, not just ones from certain neighborhoods but every child.”

Our Children Can’t Wait -- we must act now. Help us build a movement in Southwest Washington. Let’s make sure that every child living in our region is loved, nurtured and prepared not just for kindergarten but for lifelong success.

Joan Caley

JOAN CALEY

Chair - SELF Board of Directors

Debbie Ham

DEBBIE HAM

Executive Director, SELF

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Klickitat County Public Health
Klickitat-Lyle Against Substance Abuse
Coalition
Klickitat School District
Latino Community Resource Group
Learning Avenues Childcare Centers

Longview Public Schools
Lower Columbia College
Lower Columbia College Head Start/EHS/
ECEAP
Lower Columbia Early Learning Center
Mid-Columbia Children's Council
Miss Jamie's Daycare Center
Ocean Beach School District
OK Committee -- South Pacific County
Parents Place
Parent-to-Parent of Klickitat County
Pathways 2020
Progress Center
Pacific County Health Department
Skamania Klickitat Community Network
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BRAINS ARE BUILT, NOT BORN.

ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and Resilience



Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as neglect, abuse, and family dysfunction, can affect brain development and impact a child's ability to trust, self-regulate and learn. Experiences of poverty, racism, inadequate housing/homelessness, and food insecurity also add toxic stress that may harm a child. Repeated trauma can result in lifelong health, learning and behavior problems.

The ability to handle life's challenges and to bounce back and thrive is called resilience. Resilience is a learned trait. The most important factor in developing it is to have at least one stable and committed relationship with a caring adult. The responsiveness and protection from such a relationship buffers a child from developmental disruption and builds key capacities such as the ability to regulate behavior and problem solve. These skills enable a child to adapt and thrive. The combination of supportive relationships, adaptive skill building, and positive experience is the foundation of resilience.

Child Care, Work Force and Education



Child care has a critical impact on children during the most consequential phase of human development. High-quality child care is essential to developing a competent workforce for tomorrow. The commonly made distinction between "care" and "education" in early childhood is a false one. Child care is early education.

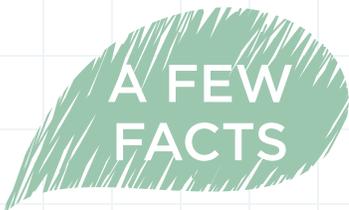
High-quality child care is essential for today's stable workforce. Fifty-eight percent of children under the age of six in Southwest Washington have all parents in the workforce; our licensed child care market has slots for fewer than half of these children.

CHILDREN

Early development is impacted by issues such as poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, inadequate or unavailable child care, etc. The good news is that early childhood development is also impacted by love, hugs, singing, reading, comfort, nurture, security and more. These actions build connections that allow a child to develop lifelong skills like problem-solving, communication, self-control, and relationship building, that will allow them to survive and thrive in their family, community and culture.

Children	WA State	SW Washington	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Number of children under 5	447,765	36,893	28,084	6,103	1,078	964	517	146
Children under 5 living in poverty	18%	16%	13%	27%	32%	30%	32%	6%
Children aged 5-17 living in poverty	16%	15%	13%	21%	21%	26%	15%	26%
Children aged 0-17 in foster care, per 1,000	5.8	6.3	5.4	8.0	7.8	13.9	14.1	18.3
Victims of child abuse and neglect, per 1,000*	34	35	28	59	56	66	46	49

* Pacific County data for this indicator includes only the south portion of the county: Naselle-Grays River Valley and Ocean Beach school districts.



There are **36,893 children** ages 0-4 in our region. This number has **decreased 2.7%** over the last 10 years, compared with a **7.4% increase statewide**. Both our region's and state's total population increased 12% in this same time frame. While all counties in our region saw a decrease in the number of young children, more rural counties saw the largest decreases.

16% of children under the **age of 5** in our region are living below the poverty level; this is on par with the state rate.

3.5% of children in our region are victims of child abuse or neglect each year; this is on par with the state rate.

“We are experiencing a child care crisis in our community and in our state. Families cannot afford to pay higher rates for child care yet child care businesses are struggling to make ends meet due to minimum wage increases and other rising costs. As a community, we need to come together to solve this issue for our kids.”

JODI WALL

Executive Director

Early Care and Education, ESD 112



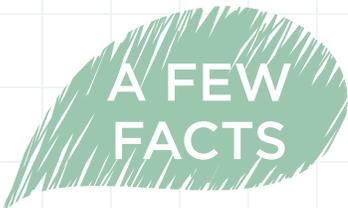
0 to 1 YEARS

Talk to your baby · Sing to your baby · Respond to your baby · Read every day
Give lots and lots of love · Cuddle · Hold your baby · Sing · Introduce their brave new world to them

FAMILIES

Parents are a child’s first and most influential teacher. When families struggle to secure essentials like food, shelter, clothing and health care, or encounter a crisis such as job loss, illness or domestic violence, the whole family is at heightened risk for a cascade of negative outcomes. Making just one connection with someone in their community who is willing to listen and help can make the difference. Strong, flourishing communities are full of adults who look out for children, intervene when children are in trouble, do favors for one another and offer hope and social/emotional support and commit acts of kindness.

Families	WA State	SW Washington	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Percent of women giving birth who receive Medicaid	51%	55%	52%	67%	68%	75%	58%	23%
Families in or near poverty	20%	21%	19%	25%	27%	29%	22%	-
Homeless households with children under 18, per 1,000 families	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.7	0.6	0.2	0	0
Poor family management, 8th graders	33%	30%	30%	31%	38%	41%	44%	22%
Percent of children 0-5 with all parents in the labor force	59%	58%	58%	61%	60%	54%	50%	53%



55% of women who gave birth in our region were on Medicaid; this is **higher than the state rate**. This has **increased 9%** in our region over the past 10 years while the state rate has **decreased by 2%**.

21% of families in our region are living in or near poverty, which represents **32,663 families**. This is on par with the state average.

30% of 8th graders in our region live in households that are lacking parental engagement, supervision and discipline needed to be successful. This is on par with the state rate and has improved over time for the region and statewide.

“Not only do our efforts with early childhood learning help with a child’s education, it also helps keep them out of trouble. Studies show a 33% decrease in juvenile arrests when early learning is applied. That’s good for the kids, the community and saves millions in criminal justice costs.”

SHERIFF MARK NELSON
Cowlitz County Sheriff



1 to 2 YEARS

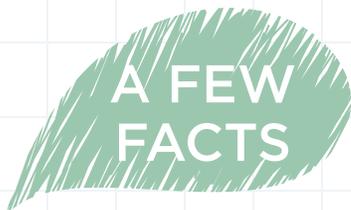
Ask your baby to identify simple things · Play matching games · Work on simple puzzles
Ask them about different shapes and colors · Encourage words
Go on adventures and field trips to the park or other outings

PROFESSIONALS & CHILD CARE

An estimated 58% of our region’s children need child care; it has become the place where many children receive early learning. Many families struggle to afford high-quality care, and it is difficult to find and retain qualified workers in the field because of increasing standards and low pay. Child care workers are paid less than dog groomers. Ultimately, high-quality child care is critical to a stable workforce, both for today’s working parents and to prepare the workforce of the future.

Professionals & Child Care	WA State	SW Washington	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Licensed child care center providers & slots	1,616/ 114,201	125/ 9,073	89/ 6,767	25/ 1,912	3/ 54	5/ 224	1/ 49	2/ 67
Licensed family child care providers & slots	3,396/ 33,815	164/ 1,608	124/ 1,227	19/ 190	7/ 64	9/ 75	4/ 44	1/ 8
Total licensed child care providers & slots	5,012/ 148,016	289/ 10,681	213/ 7,994	44/ 2,102	10/ 118	14/ 299	5/ 93	3/ 75
Percent of licensed providers enrolled in Early Achievers*	72%	66%	64%	68%	90%	79%	80%	33%
Percent of Early Achievers enrollees who rate at a “3” or higher	87%	92%	91%	93%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of child care employees	19,240	1,369	1,056	218	-	40	-	-
Median hourly wage for child care workers	\$13.06	\$11.99	\$12.07	\$11.04	-	\$12.42	-	-

* Early Achievers is Washington’s Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) for licensed child care facilities that commit to providing high-quality early learning experiences for children birth to 5 years old.



Our region’s child care workers’ median hourly wage is **\$11.99 per hour**. This has increased 12% over inflation in the past 10 years, but is still just over half of the overall median regional wage of **\$21.37 per hour**.

Our region has licensed child care slots for only about **40%** of our **25,713** children aged 0-5 with all parents in the workforce.

“The importance of early learning is not theory, it is fact. How a child learns, emotionally, mentally and socially, before the age of 8, will impact their future success. Even though this is thoroughly supported by research, our state has yet to fund high-quality early learning programs for all children. Unfortunately, this means that only the families that can afford preschool are able to send their children. Our communities must find ways to meet this need.”

KAREN DOUGLASS

Superintendent

Stevenson-Carson School District



2 to 3 YEARS

Read, read, read · Pretend play · Play parade or follow the leader · Hide and seek
Get outside for adventures and walks often · Play “what’s your name” · Say rhymes
Praise, praise, praise!

SCHOOLS

It is unacceptable that only 48% of our children enter kindergarten prepared, it's unnecessary and puts a significant strain on schools and taxes the resources of the entire system. Children who enter school behind their peers often stay behind. For example, children who do not recognize the letters of the alphabet when they enter kindergarten demonstrate significantly lower reading skills at the end of first grade. We can do better!

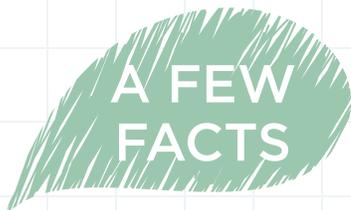
Schools	WA State	SW Washington	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
PK-12 public school enrollment	1,103,269	105,508	80,590	17,168	3,145	3,107	1,057	441
Percent of children who are ready for kindergarten*	47%	48%	53%	30%	36%	30%	43%	34%
Percent of 3rd graders who meet math standards+	58%	54%	56%	42%	46%	56%	42%	71%
Percent of 3rd graders who meet reading standards+	53%	49%	51%	42%	46%	58%	42%	61%
High school 4-year graduation rate	79%	81%	82%	79%	84%	71%	81%	82%
Percent of children 0-3 participating in ESIT#	2.9%	2.4%	1.9%	4.1%#	5.7%	3.4%	5.1%	4.1%#
Percent of low-income preschoolers served by **ECEAP or Head Start	50%	51%	47%	57%	80%	54%	76%	100%
Percent of K-12 students who are emerging bilingual+	11.3%	8.9%	9.9%	5.4%	7.9%	5.4%	2.0%	3.6%
Percent of public school students who are homeless	3.6%	4.0%	3.5%	4.9%	5.1%	9.0%	6.8%	10.9%
Percent of K-12 teachers who are People of Color+	11%	10%	12%	5%	2%	7%	3%	6%

* Kindergarten readiness is measured by the WaKIDS tool, which assesses children in six domains: cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics, physical, and social-emotional.

+ Pacific County data for this indicator includes only the south portion of the county: Naselle-Grays River Valley and Ocean Beach School Districts.

Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties combined. ESIT – Early Support for Infants and Toddlers, which provides services to children birth to age 3 who have disabilities or developmental delays.

** ECEAP - Early Childhood Education Assistance Program. ECEAP and Head Start are, respectively, state and federal pre-K programs for 3- and 4-year olds from low-income families.



4% of students in our region are considered homeless, which includes students who are in a temporary living situation or one that is inadequate for basic needs.

10% of K-12 teachers in our region are People of Color, compared with 32% of students.

“Educating a child is similar to cultivating a tree. In both cases, the objective is to provide them with their needs in order to coax out the potential that they have.

The endless potential of our next generation is dependent upon the foundation that we prepare for them. The roots that we establish for them. The light that we shine on them.

As a community, we must dedicate our time, energy and resources to assuring our children grow into strong, resilient individuals who are truly ready for school and for life. There is no greater need, and no greater reward.

ANNE McENERNY-OGLE

Mayor, City of Vancouver



3 to 4 YEARS

Ask your early learner to do simple chores · Nurture reading by going to the library
Be consistent in discipline · Do simple chores · Encourage play with other children
Use adult language with your little one · Encourage problem solving · Offer choices

COMMUNITY

The greatest asset we have for building a thriving society is the people who live in our community. The key to achieving success is to focus on our youngest residents. Imagine if all children grew up in a place that valued and supported them as active participants in our community. Southwest Washington would be changed forever.

Community	WA State	SW Washington	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Percent of population that is food insecure	13%	14%	13%	15%	13%	16%	14%	15%
*SNAP participation	19%	22%	20%	31%	24%	27%	21%	23%
Renters spending more than 30% of income on housing	49%	51%	50%	56%	51%	50%	49%	65%

A FEW FACTS

51% of rental households in our region are income distressed, meaning that they spend more than **30%** of their income on housing. This is on par with the state rate.

14% of people in our region are considered food insecure, which means that they do not have enough food for themselves because they lack money and/or other resources.

22% of people in our region receive *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits; this is similar to the state rate.



4 to 5 YEARS

- Go to community events · Talk about the future · Ask them to participate in family responsibilities
- Be careful of that “dreaded” technology use · Work with teachers that might be in their lives to ensure they are successful · Take turns with your child · Praise them
- Encourage new experiences and group activities

NEXT STEPS Building Blocks of a Healthy Child



Resilient parents -- Parents who know how to solve problems, who have healthy relationships with other adults and who build healthy relationships with their children.



Nurturing relationships -- Adults who listen and respond patiently to a child in a supportive way and pay attention to a child's physical and emotional needs.



Social connections -- Having family, friends and/or neighbors who support, help and listen to children.



Basic needs -- Providing children with safe housing, nutritious foods, appropriate clothing and access to health care and quality education.



Learning about parenting -- Understanding how parents can help their children grow in a healthy way and what to expect from children as they grow.



Social and emotional skills -- Helping children interact in a healthy way with others, manage their emotions and communicate their feelings and needs.

Our Children Can't Wait - Call to Action

Advocate

Leverage your influence and expertise by serving as a public policy advocate for young children. Include early childhood education in your organization's legislative agenda. Share the story about the impact that quality child care and preschool can have on later outcomes in life. Support and advocate for our local policy agenda.

Speak Out for Children

Share your knowledge through speaking engagements, op-eds, and blogs that highlight the impact of early childhood education on our communities. Assist us in launching a media campaign with local partners to focus public attention on the critical role early childhood education plays in improved school achievement and a stronger regional economy.

Lead by Example

Within your organization, advocate for policies that support employees' young families such as a child care benefits program, baby at work policies, on-site child care, or time off to attend to children's needs. Employees who know that their children are in safe, reliable, and high-quality environments are more engaged, productive workers.

Visit a Program

Take time to visit a local early childhood education program. You will gain a new perspective on what's working and what can be improved. Children love visitors, and program staff will welcome your interest and appreciation for their work.



Our Children CAN'T WAIT!

"I came to believe that the topic of high-quality early care, development, and education spoke to the future of a country I love. My reading of history, and how social progress is achieved, gave me the philosophical understanding that doing right by our children is essential for our nation's future. It requires building a 'movement,' one for everyone's child. A real 'movement' can never be built just for 'those children,' whoever they may be; it must be about all our children."

DAVID LAWRENCE

*The Children's Movement of Florida Chair
Retired publisher of the Miami Herald*

