



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Meeting
February 6, 2024

**Regional Coalition & Washington Communities for
Children (WCFC) Updates**

Regional Coalition Update

Inland Northwest Early Learning Alliance, Northeast

For more information, please contact: Colleen Condon, colleen@lilaccityelc.com

INWELA recently started working with Melia LaCour from Becoming Justice to continue diving deeper into a previously named equity challenge: our alliance does not reflect the communities we serve. We are excited to be engaged in this work while also working on a handful of other projects that seem to present wonderful opportunities to connect more intentionally with folks in our communities.

We recently hired a Project Manager to assist us with our Washington STEM Catalyst and Living Wage Proviso work. Soon, we will connect with community leaders to host listening sessions with people in areas that are not well represented in our region's historical data.

This year, INWELA is part of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) grant cohort. We are working to improve the quality of resources in our local CHAS Clinic FindHelp system, to improve resources for children and youth with special health care needs, and to begin the needed conversations to create a more sustainable and effective resource system.

WCFC's Advocacy Day is next week! INWELA will be joined by two folks from Health and Justice Recovery Alliance to advocate for our shared priorities for children and families in our region.

Investing in Children Coalition: Central

For more information, please contact: Lindsay Bowsell, lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org or Marina Medrano, marinam@yakimavalleycf.org

We're thrilled to share that eight members from the Investing in Children Coalition will be participating in the WCFC Advocacy Day in Olympia, representing our commitment to early learning initiatives. Additionally, we're making great strides in building our new website for Help Me Grow Central WA, and it is anticipated to be up and running in the upcoming months. This platform will play a key role in providing valuable resources and support for families in Central Washington.

King County

For more information, please contact: Donny Willeto or Bob Findlay, kcelc@childcare.org

No updates to share at this time.

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North Central

For more information please contact: Nancy Spurgeon, nspurgeon49@gmail.com

In partnership with Apple STEM and NCESD, the coalition hosted Town Hall Forums in District 12, 13, & 7 with legislators, community partners, and providers. The State of the Children survey was shared, and conversations were discussed about the ongoing issue of childcare shortages in our region.

In efforts to co-design a more inclusive strategic plan, the NCELC hosted focus groups and gathered diverse feedback from partnering organizations in our region.

Northwest

For more information please contact: Linden Obel, linden@first5fundamentals.org

As a regional network of early childhood partners and local early learning coalitions, Northwest Early Learning Coalition (NWEL) continues to collaborate to ensure high-quality early learning experiences for all children. Our current focus areas have been 1) advocating for more equitable policies in the early learning field, 2) strengthening and expanding regional partnerships and collaborative opportunities, and 3) prioritizing resource navigation and access activities that improve how families with young children access the culturally responsive and high-quality resources they want and need to support their children's development and wellbeing. Below are current Highlights:

Early Learning Catalyst Project: in partnership with our STEM Networks, our region is collaborating 1) to co-create a regional strategic plan to increase equitable access to high quality early learning opportunities that aligns with the Early Learning Coordination Plan; 2) grow Family Friendly Workplace Business Champions through cross-sector engagement; and 3) develop a strategic policy agenda and advocacy campaign aligned with regional and state priorities.

Early Care & Education Access and Living Wage Proviso: in partnership with DCYF and CCA of WA, and as the northwest regional representative for Washington Communities for Children (WCFC), we are engaged in data activities to elevate families' experiences navigating the early care and education system and providers' experiences in the workforce. We have completed a regional data landscape analysis to synthesize what we know and identify knowledge gaps. This process will inform planning for listening sessions with families and providers and distribution of a survey this spring.

County Coalition News:

- Snohomish County Early Learning Coalition is working to form an impactful, broad based council of business, elected officials, early learning leaders and other decision-makers to centralize, build capacity and tackle key challenges in the Snohomish County Early Learning community. Representative Cortes is sponsoring a budget request of \$30,000 for the 2024 fiscal year and \$170,000 for the 2025 fiscal year to accomplish this goal.
- Help Me Grow Skagit has launched their 2024 education learning series Hot Topics in Pediatric Primary Care. Each session is free and will be held over Zoom and will rotate between morning and evening sessions. Participants may claim up to 1.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit for each session. [Learn more and register here!](#)
- Island County has received a grant from the Department of Children, Youth & Families to

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further their local Help Me Grow efforts by purchasing a subscription to Bright By Text. [Learn more and download resources here!](#)

Interested in learning more or getting connected to a local coalition? [Find coalition contact information here!](#)

Peninsula Early Learning Coalition

For more information, please contact: Elisia Anderson, elisiaf_fstep@olypen.com

No updates to share at this time.

Pierce County Early Childhood Network

For more information please contact: Muriel Herrera-Velasquez, muriel@first5fundamentals.org

No updates to share at this time.

Southeast (SEELC)

For more information, please contact: Brittany Hartikainen, brittany@bh-consulting.org

The SEELC has been actively working through several different grants, including the WA STEM Catalyst Grant, Living Wage Proviso Work, the CCPG, and various ELF grants awarded to early programs in our region. We are excited about this work because we are able to combine efforts to paint a clear picture of what early learning looks like in our region. Through these efforts we are able to target communities that we have traditionally struggled to reach. Through the combination of these grants, we hope to have an executive summary to be able to share with legislators, community members, local council, etc. to actively engage them in advocacy for early learning. We are looking forward to the opportunities this will bring.

Southwest Washington Early Learning (SWEL)

For more information please contact: Debbie Ham, Debbie.ham@selfwa.org

We have experienced significant expansion of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library; at the end of 2023 we reached a milestone of 10,000 registered children. We are excited to be working with the ECCS cohort to develop a community resource information system that will allow parents and providers dependable access to community resource information. We are working closely with our Infant Toddler Collaborative, the Clark County Baby Court, Children's Home Society, and others on developing this concept. We are excited to hold living wage listening sessions in the rural communities in our region. We will also be using information gathered by Clark County Public Health, as part of their Raising Clark County. The expansion of distributing Vroom information to pediatric offices in partnership with CPH.

We are excited about participating in advocacy day with our WCFC colleagues at the end of January. This is our first year as part of the ECCS cohort. We are starting to enter community resources into a spread sheet that will ultimately end up in Air Table and will be available in the community. We are excited to begin this process. In a recent Clark County community needs assessment survey respondents said accessing resources was their biggest challenge. We are hoping this work will help address this community need.

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Visions for Early Learning, West Central

For more information, please contact: Sheila Kavanaugh, kav.consulting231@gmail.com

WCFC Legislative Advocacy Update:

Visions for Early Learning (VEL) was actively involved in supporting WCFC's legislative priorities. Time was spent identifying, aligning house and senate bills that support WCFC's legislative priorities that include summaries and/or high-level talking points. VEL assisted in drafting other advocacy related materials.

WCFC Living Wage Proviso:

VEL completed a data landscape analysis which provided key takeaways from publications, reports, needs assessments, gaps analysis, etc. to learn more about the challenges faced by parents accessing childcare and from the perspective of child care providers. From this process, it was evident some local communities within our region have not been asked to voice their concerns. The next steps are to host local listening sessions, including separate ones for Spanish speaking parents and providers.

WA STEM/Catalyst:

VEL and other community partners are working with our regional STEM network where the group prioritized the following to concentrate their efforts moving forward:

1. Non traditional work hours for child care (increasing access for families)
2. Staff retention
3. Increased mental health consultant support for providers

Diaper Bank Conversations:

Two diaper bank networks have emerged from our region. The North Pacific early learning coalition, Know and Grow, partnered with their local early supports for infants and toddlers program as well as other home visiting programs serving families with infants and toddlers for wide spread diaper distribution. The service launched in September of 2023 and since they began their efforts distributed over 1,000 diapers in their community. The neighboring county's public health department in Grays Harbor recently secured a grant to begin the planning and implementation process to start distributing diapers to families who are struggling.

Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)/Coordinated Access:

The Grays Harbor Early Learning (GHLE) coalition is learning more about the different partnership opportunities with Help Me Grow. The coalition is working with the public health department and other stakeholders to create an exploratory strategic plan with the aim to collect information from coalition members and other partners that will inform next steps on what is collectively the most sustainable approach to creating a coordinated access and resource navigation system in their community.

WCFC Updates – For more information please contact: info@washingtoncfc.org

WCFC State Updates

For more information please contact: Rachel Hall, WCFC State Lead,
rachelh@first5fundamentals.org

WCFC Legislative Priorities

WCFC is excited to present our first ever legislative agenda. Our priorities (below) were informed by network members across the ten [WCFC Regions](#). These priorities align with our [Statewide Learning Networks](#) and the Washington State [Early Learning Coordination Plan](#) (ELCP). For more information, please visit our website at: **washingtoncfc.org/advocacy-updates**

1. Support and uplift child care and early learning providers in child care deserts.
2. Strengthen the child care workforce by increasing compensation, support, and quality of life.
3. Increase coordination between health and early childhood systems to equitably serve families in underserved communities.

Living Wage Proviso

WCFC's role is to support and inform the work of DCYF's project to create an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's early care and education system and provide a living wage to its workforce. Over the coming months, we will do so by:

- Identifying and analyzing existing local data from families about access to affordable child care and early education and from child care providers about wages and benefits since 2020. Our goal is to avoid duplication of activities and leverage data to which we already have access.
- Hosting listening sessions throughout the WCFC Network, and administering an online survey, to capture perspectives from families with children B-12, and child care providers.
- Reviewing, compiling and summarizing survey data and develop a report for DCYF.

Family Voice & Resource Navigation Network

WCFC is excited to launch the new Family Voice & Resource Access Network in February. The purpose of this network is to promote strategies to engage and connect families with young children to the resources they need, when they need them. This Network will be led by Henedina Tavares (welcome Henedina) and the next gathering will take place on February 15th at 11:00am. If you'd like to be added to the calendar invite, please email Henedina at henedina@washingtoncfc.org.

New Workgroup – Diaper Bank

WCFC is hosting a new monthly Diaper Bank conversation on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. Ongoing topics of interest for this group include sharing current best thinking/best practices, funding opportunities, sustainability, accessing discounted or free supplies, and diaper bank operations. **[Contact Rachel Hall](#)** to join - all are welcome!

First 5 Fundamentals – Executive Director Search

First 5 Fundamentals is the support agency for WCFC. We are excited to introduce our new Executive Director, Maile Hadley! As the former Executive Director of Zeno, Maile comes with a wealth of knowledge and leadership experience that will be instrumental to First 5 Fundamentals' future success. She has spent the past 7 years in the early learning space, collaborating with community to co-develop equity-driven strategic plans that are reflective of families, funders, providers, and community.

WCFC Learning Networks – Join us!

WCFC is organized around statewide Learning Networks. The purpose of these teams is to foster learning and connections across the state, with particular focus in each of the component areas below. Participation is open to anyone, including state and local partners who are interested in shared learning and activities. For meeting schedules, and to get in touch with Learning Network Leads, please visit our website at **washingtoncfc.org/learning-networks**

- Child Care Voice
- Data
- Family Voice & Resource Access
- Health Provider Voice
- Policy & Advocacy