



# **Child And Family Well-Being Task Force**

## **September 2025 Report**

## Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin this report by acknowledging that we work on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.

May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future—our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.

This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices and leadership of the first people of this land.

## Task Force Membership

**Vesla Tonnessen**, Task Force Co-Chair

**Colton Kaltenfeldt**, Task Force Co-Chair

**Sallye Quinn**, Task Force Co-Chair

**Tilda Doughty**, Task Force Co-Chair

**Jason Oldham**, Generations Forward

**Christina Jackson**, Generations Forward

**Karla Anderson**, Whatcom Early Learning Alliance

**Beverly Porter**, Whatcom Taking Action

**Kristi Dominguez**, Ferndale School District Superintendent

**Allison Williams**, Whatcom County Health and Community Services

**Sterling Chick**, Public Health Advisory Board

**Jon Scanlon**, Whatcom County Council

**Jill Boudreau**, Whatcom County Executive Representative

**Jason Korneliussen**, City of Bellingham

**Amber Wilder**, Department of Children, Youth and Families

**Ray Deck III**, Community Member

**Gregory Hansen**, Small Cities Partnership

**Sativa Robertson**, Nooksack Tribe

**Jamie Desmul**, Community Member

**Jennifer Wright**, Community Member

**Anne Granberg**, Community Member

**Allison Bishop**, Community Member

**Monika Mahal**, Community Member

**Katherine Orlowski**, Community Member

**Samantha Cruz-Mendoza**, Community Member

**Megan Juenemann**, Community Member

**Lynn Schreiber**, Community Member

**Susan Marks**, Community Member

## Introduction

The Child & Family Well-Being Task Force is pleased to present this annual report in response to the requirements set forth in Ordinance 2020-079. This report details the major highlights of our non-Healthy Children's Fund-related work since [our last report in September 2024](#).

## Fostering Community Engagement & Input

In support of the Child & Family Well-Being Task Force's purpose to *consider input from diverse families throughout Whatcom County*, 2025 saw new outreach and community engagement efforts come to fruition.

The task force tabled Saturday, May 17th at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair, which was hosted at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in Maple Falls, organized by Opportunity Council and the East Whatcom Health Services

Coalition, and sponsored by Northwest Regional Council, Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD), PeaceHealth St. Joseph, Molina Healthcare, Arcora Foundation and Puget Sound Energy. The event featured over 40 organizations tabling and/or providing services supporting all areas of health and wellness.

On Thursday, July 10th, the task force tabled at the Early Childhood Resource Fair, held on the Bellingham Central Library lawn. Other organizations tabling included Whatcom County Health and Community Services/Healthy Children's Fund, Whatcom Center for Early Learning, Brigid Collins, Whatcom Family & Community Network, Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative (WRIC), Opportunity Council, Heart of Play, Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, Skookum Kids, Bellingham Public Library, and Animals as Natural Therapy.

At both events, we posed the question "What would it look like for your family to thrive in Whatcom County?" Task force members engaged with the community and invited them to write their response on a leaf and add it to our tree.





## Learning from Local Experts in the Field

In November 2024, Imagine Institute presented to the task force on their efforts to expand in-home childcare in Whatcom County through their “Imagine You” program, which supports aspiring family childcare providers to become licensed by providing comprehensive training and guidance on licensing, business management, and early childhood care, as well as mentorship with experienced providers. Imagine Institute is focusing these efforts on rural and underserved areas, such as Blaine, Maple Falls, Sudden Valley, and Point Roberts.

In January 2025, Whatcom County Health and Community Services Community Health Specialist Kathryn DeFilippo provided an in-depth presentation on children and youth with special healthcare needs and disabilities in Whatcom County and the resources available to support families as they navigate the complex process of identifying and accessing necessary services. Gaps and opportunities were discussed, and successful community partnerships and processes—such as Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS), Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) provided locally by Whatcom Center for Early Learning (WCEL) and Opportunity Council, and Whatcom Taking Action—were highlighted.

In May 2025, the task force’s own Allison Williams (Whatcom County Health and Community Services, Parent-Child Program Specialist) presented on the county’s doula services pilot program which offers birthing families non-clinical providers of emotional, physical and informational support during pregnancy, labor and postpartum to help reduce disparities in clinical outcomes, increase family satisfaction and breastfeeding rates, and provide culturally and linguistically reflective care.

## Looking to the Future: Ensuring Children with Incarcerated Family Members are Supported

During the first half of 2025, the task force has focused on identifying new areas for research and potential recommendations. Through this process, we’ve recognized an important opportunity: developing recommendations to help our County better support children and families involved with the criminal justice system.

A [2017 report by the Vera Institute of Justice](#), commissioned by the County, noted that “holding people in jail can disrupt employment, housing, education, caregiving for children, and any community-based treatment or services in which they may have been engaged, leaving them destabilized on their release.” In light of these impacts, and the pending construction of a new jail facility, the task force believes this is a critical and timely area for further exploration.

We look forward to partnering with County colleagues, including the Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force, to better understand how our work can align and contribute.