



# Memorandum

**TO:** SATPAL SIDHU, COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**FROM:** Erika Lautenbach, Health and Community Services Director

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 27, 2023

**RE:** HEALTHY CHILDREN'S FUND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

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I'm pleased to transmit the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan package and accompanying documents, which includes:

- Resolution accepting the Implementation Plan
- Implementation Plan.

Whatcom County Health and Community Services will also bring forward a supplemental budget request to utilize the Healthy Children's Fund to support the 2023 spending plan and for position authority to hire staff dedicated to Healthy Children's Fund activities.

Last fall, voters in Whatcom County approved Proposition 5 and Whatcom County Health and Community Services, serving as Fund Administrator, was tasked with developing an implementation plan consistent with the ordinance directives that placed the measure on the ballot. The property tax measure is estimated to raise approximately \$9.98M each year for 10 years, for investments in early learning and care and vulnerable families.

Ordinance 2022-045 states,

"The Department of Health [Whatcom County Health & Community Services] shall serve as the fund administrator to develop an implementation plan and oversee the implementation of the Healthy Children's Fund... The Fund Administrator shall develop an implementation plan that identifies the specific strategies and projects to be funded and the outcomes to be achieved with the use of levy proceeds... and shall be approved by the County Council and transmitted to the County Executive by March 31, 2023... The Implementation Plan, including the spending plan, shall be open to and shared with the public."

Developing the Implementation Plan in a little more than two months, as required by ordinance, would not have been possible without the staff and partners on the planning team or without the thoughtful consideration and 453 comments by boards, commissions, and task force members consulted. These comments helped expand the perspectives and breadth of knowledge, improving the plan in significant and impactful ways.



The plan included in this package is an initial two-year plan that balances specificity and flexibility, and recognizes the need to first develop infrastructure, evaluation and performance measures, and transparent and accessible contracting processes to ensure the effectiveness of the fund. Some of the high-value strategies identified, such as childcare subsidies, will require developing new programs, processes, and contracting models never offered by the County previously. The administrative portion of the fund includes investments to build this infrastructure and provide technical assistance, support with contracts, evaluation expertise, and subject matter expertise. WCHCS administrative funds also include significant investments in program evaluation, performance management and system integration software, and county process auditing/evaluation. We recognize that as we learn and develop strategies through the implementation process, we may adapt to changing conditions or new opportunities that this plan does not address or foresee. We are committed to transparency and community involvement throughout this and future implementation plans.

The program portion of the plan contains 10 priority area investments within two broad goals to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities. The bulleted goals and numbered strategies are:

- Affordable, high-quality, professional, and accessible early learning and care experiences (64% of program funds, or \$12,800,000 over the two-year plan)<sup>1</sup>
  1. Provide funds for small capital projects to expand, renovate, or repurpose buildings to increase early learning & care slots in a mixed-delivery system.
  2. Coordinate current and develop additional pathways to ensure a stable early learning & care workforce to deliver high-quality programs for children.
  3. Improve access to early learning & care through subsidies that reduce the cost of programs for children from families which are cost-burdened.
  4. Ensure access to early learning and care by promoting the expansion and retention of the early learning & care workforce.
  5. Create regional early learning & care hubs that include shared administrative services, co-located early learning and other services for children and families, and support for smaller providers in the County (i.e. the “hub and spoke model”).
  6. Support innovative approaches to meet various Healthy Children’s Fund goals related to Early Learning & Care.
  
- Support for vulnerable children and families, particularly around mental and behavioral health and reducing child and family homelessness. (27% of program funds, or \$5,356,400 over the two-year period)<sup>2</sup>
  7. Recruit Mental & Behavioral Health workforce to Whatcom County.
  8. Develop and/or expand resources and programs for families who disproportionately experience housing instability.
  9. Expand and enhance early parenting supports.

<sup>1</sup> Must be between 55% and 68%, per Ordinance 2022-045.

<sup>2</sup> Must be between 20% and 36%, per Ordinance 2022-045.





10. Integrate and co-locate services via coordinated access to resource navigation using the Help Me Grow model.

Following the Council's consideration of the Implementation Plan and transmittal to the Executive by March 31, 2023, WCHCS will move forward with implementation activities as follows. Please note that actual spending will lag behind spending commitments due to the timing of revenue collections as well as checks and balances in the spending process.

Infrastructure Built: April-Sept 2023

- Implementation team formed
- Staff hired
- Processes/policies developed
- Strategy prioritization timeline published

Development of Initial Strategies: July-October 2023

- Funding mechanisms and logistics designed, RFPs drafted

Initial Strategy Funding Opportunities Advertised: October-January 2023

- Technical Assistance available
- Outreach and communication to providers

Initial Projects Selected: February-March 2024

Annual Report & Implementation Update: March 2024

- Evaluation, Communication, and Community Engagement Plans published

Contracts Executed: April-June 2024

Years 3 and 4 Implementation Plan: March 31, 2025

Annual Report and Bi-annual Evaluation: 2025

The Healthy Children's Fund offers a rare opportunity to make targeted, science-based investments that support our youngest residents, which will ultimately benefit our workforce and economy, our social service and criminal justice systems, and the very fabric of our community. As the Fund Administrator, WCHCS recognizes both the generosity of voters to support children and families, and their explicit expectation that the programs and services supported by the fund be effective. To that end, we have built in robust and sustained external evaluations and audits, extensive community engagement and input, and opportunities to adjust, pivot, or discontinue programs that do not meet our high standards for effectiveness. It is our sincere goal and plan design that children and families will benefit from the impactful and sustained



investments proposed in this plan, and that our community will be changed for the better because of the foresight and commitment by voters to improve every child's first years.

Whatcom County Health and Human Services honors, through this plan, the 26 years of dedication our late Judy Ziels contributed through her service supervising the WIC and Nurse Family Partnership programs, and contributing to many, many collaborative and community efforts to improve the lives of children and families in Whatcom County.

Whatcom County Health and Community Services staff look forward to working with you and the Council in further refining the Implementation Plan and in partnering to execute the plan deliverables. Please call Erika Lautenbach at 360-778-6000 if there are any questions. Thank you.