



# Memorandum

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
**FROM:** Erika Lautenbach, Director  
**RE:** Peace Centers – Healthy Children’s Fund Drop-In Care Contract  
**DATE:** JANUARY 16, 2025

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Attached is a contract between Whatcom County and Peace Centers for your review and signature.

## ■ Background and Purpose

The purpose of this contract is to implement a coordinated system of licensed drop-in childcare within Whatcom County. Utilizing existing licensed home-based childcare and/or ECEAP, Head Start, and other licensed childcare centers, the Contractor will create and maintain a system to match licensed childcare providers interested in offering drop-in care. Priority of drop-in care slots will be for low-income guardians and children in Foster Care, if slots remain private pay families in need of drop-in childcare will be able to access the program at a cost. This contract is awarded as a result of RFP 24-26 and aligns with Strategy 5 of the Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan to increase access to early learning opportunities by increasing the number of child care slots across Whatcom County, prioritizing slots for underserved children.

According to the latest census<sup>1</sup>, there are approximately 10,500 children under the age of five living in Whatcom County. Of these, approximately 8,463 children need at least part-time childcare according to a recent childcare demand study conducted by Western Washington University<sup>2</sup>. According to the same report, the total current child care capacity in the County is, however, 4,436 children enrolled in 106 programs, leaving a substantial gap of over 4,000 children. Access to safe and affordable childcare is more salient among families at or below the federal poverty line. High-quality childcare and early learning programs are fundamental to promoting long-term and positive social and school readiness outcomes among children and employment security for families. Safe and consistent childcare is pivotal for participation in the workforce and local economic development.

## ■ Funding Amount and Source

Funding for this contract, in an amount not to exceed \$499,921 is provided by the Healthy Children’s Fund. These funds are included in the 2025 budget. Council authorization is required, per WCC 3.08.100, as funding for this contract exceeds \$40,000.

Please contact Sarah Simpson, Children and Family Program Supervisor at 360-410-2400 ([SSimpson@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:SSimpson@co.whatcom.wa.us)), if you have any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/whatcomcountywashington>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cbe.wvu.edu/files/2021-11/2021%20Whatcom%20Child%20Care%20Demand%20Report.pdf>

