



# **CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE**

**April 2023**

## **PHASE III REPORT**

**Prepared by the Child and Family Well-being  
Task Force and Whatcom County Health and  
Community Services Department Staff**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Land Acknowledgment .....	2
Executive Summary .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Strategy Alignment .....	7
Status Report on Phase II Recommendations .....	9
Overview of Phase III Task Force Workgroups .....	13
Phase III Recommendations .....	14
What's Next .....	21
References .....	22
Appendix A: Current Task Force Membership .....	24

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

---

The Child and Family Well-being Task Force opens each meeting by acknowledging that we gather 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.

We ask to be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future: 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, honor, and gratitude to our Indigenous neighbors, the first people of this land, for their enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

This report is presented to the Whatcom County Council in response to requirements for the Child and Family Well-being Task Force set forth in [Ordinance 2020-079](#). The Phase III report provides an update on the implementation of priorities established in Phase II and presents recommendations for next steps in the continued implementation of the [Child and Family Action Plan](#). While the Task Force continued its work over the past year, several other efforts to improve child and family well-being have gained momentum. Therefore, the report also provides context regarding the various efforts underway and how the Task Force's work both informs and benefits from these aligned initiatives.

In Phase III of the Task Force's work, Task Force members formed the three workgroups. The workgroups focused on:

- Increasing Access to Family Services and Support.
- Increasing Family Involvement in County Government.
- Modeling Family-friendly Employment Practices and Policies.

As Phase III concludes, the workgroups make the following recommendations, several of which are included in or align with the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan. These recommendations are presented to the Whatcom County Council to guide future efforts to further improve outcomes for Whatcom County's children and families.

- Continue support of the Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative (WRIC).
- Continue support of the Help Me Grow expansion in Whatcom County.
- Designate resources to develop a landscape assessment of the system for connecting families to behavioral health support.
- Fully support the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan.
- Fully resource Whatcom County participation in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)
- Increase opportunities for family outreach, engagement, and communication.
- Eliminate barriers to serving on county advisory boards or commissions.
- Provide resources for Human Resources to fully assess which family-friendly policies are currently in place across collective bargaining unit agreements and for exempt staff.
- Conduct an internal gender pay gap audit in order to identify any existing pay disparities within the Whatcom County government workforce.

## INTRODUCTION

---

### About the Child and Family Well-being Task Force

The Child and Family Well-being Task Force was established by the Whatcom County Council in December 2020 ([Whatcom County Ordinance 2020-079](#)). The Task Force was formed to support the implementation of [Whatcom Working Toward Well-Being: An Action Plan for County Government](#), commonly referred to as the **2020 Child and Family Action Plan**. The Child and Family Action Plan was adopted on February 4, 2020.

The Child and Family Action Plan called on Whatcom County government to take a leading role in improving the well-being of Whatcom County's children and families. Guided by a participatory community process, the Plan established a vision for Whatcom County in which:

- Children are safe, healthy, and ready to learn.
- Families are strong, stable, and supported from the start.
- Communities are supportive and welcoming places for children and families to live, learn, work, and play.

To achieve this vision, the Action Plan identified needed improvements in:

- Homelessness and housing stability.
- Access to child care and early learning opportunities.
- Family services and supports navigation resources, including behavioral health.

Whatcom County government's role in this work would consist of establishing structures and processes within County government to elevate child and family well-being as a priority and to leverage County resources and public-private partnerships to meet identified needs. Such action by County government would complement and enhance other community initiatives focused on child and family well-being while providing a model for family-friendly policy and practice.

The collaborative, community-grounded approach that informed the development of the Action Plan has been replicated in the implementation phase. The Task Force includes community members, local government representatives, and staff of community-based service provider agencies (See Appendix A).

As defined in the ordinance, the Child and Family Well-being Task Force has six foundational responsibilities:

1. Develop processes and procedures to ensure that the work of the Task Force is embedded in principles of equity, most specifically racial equity, family engagement, and results-based approaches.
2. Develop recommendations for County infrastructure needed to promote child and family well-being.

# Child and Family Well-being Task Force

## Phase III Report

3. Develop recommendations for “a children and families first” approach across County departments.
4. Develop recommendations to promote shared government and community accountability for child and family results.
5. Develop recommendations for coordination and enhancement of existing County initiatives focused on issues impacting young children and their families.
6. Develop recommendations for new, or enhancement of existing, funding streams to support child and family programs and services that are aligned with desired results.

## The Work of the Task Force

The ordinance structured the Task Force’s work into three phases, with particular objectives defined for each phase.

- **Phase I:**
  - Establish Task Force processes and procedures.
  - Clarify goals and metrics.
  - Establish processes for shared accountability for results.
  - Evaluate and recommend an infrastructure model for County adoption.
  - Propose scope and approach for County fiscal analysis to identify existing and potential funding streams for child and family programs.
  - Review and identify existing child and family serving collaborative resources and initiatives, and infrastructure.
  - Recommend strategies to fill the gaps identified.
- **Phase II:**
  - Develop and establish methods to increase and stabilize funding streams for child and family programs, services, and infrastructure.
- **Phase III:**
  - Develop specific operational plans and budgets leading to implementation of appropriate programs, services, and infrastructure.
  - Include details on assignment of responsibilities and projected outcomes anticipated.

Phase I of implementation was completed in June 2021 with the delivery of the Phase I report to the Whatcom County Council. The Phase II report was completed in March 2022. Through each of the implementation phases, the Task Force has engaged with and gathered input from diverse families throughout Whatcom County. It has identified evidence-based and promising practices. Using this information, the Task Force has reported on and made recommendations to the County Council, the County Executive, and other appropriate officials.

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### *Phase III Report*

The Phase III report provides an update on the implementation of priorities established in Phase II and presents recommendations for next steps in the continued implementation of the Child and Family Action Plan. While the Task Force continued its work over the past year, several other efforts to improve child and family well-being have gained momentum. Therefore, the report also provides context regarding the various efforts underway and how the Task Force's work both informs and benefits from these aligned initiatives.

# STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

---

In the past few years, Whatcom County has been moving forward on multiple tracks with the goal of improving outcomes for children and families. The recent passage of the **Healthy Children's Fund**, the completion of the latest **Community Health Improvement planning process**, and the continued work of the **Child and Family Well-being Task Force** in implementing the Child and Family Action Plan point to a commitment to robust action in Whatcom County on behalf of children and families. At the same time, local government and service providers are aligning behind adoption of the **Help Me Grow Washington** framework, which identifies key components for effective service delivery.

Taken together, these efforts are addressing the priority needs identified in the Child and Family Action Plan relating to homelessness and housing stability, access to child care and early learning opportunities, service development, and resource navigation support. Underlying these efforts is a commitment to ensuring racial equity, implementing trauma-informed approaches, and enhancing peer support.

There has been a synergistic relationship between these initiatives and the priorities and recommendations established by the Child and Family Well-being Task Force. As described in the Status Update on Phase II Recommendations and the Phase III Recommendations included below, there is strong alignment across initiatives:

- Building on the priorities identified in the Child and Family Action Plan, the [2022-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#) defines early childhood as the foundation of community health. To ensure children thrive in childhood and as adults, the CHIP calls for improvements in housing security, affordable child care, and access to mental health care.
- If the CHIP is the “what,” the Help Me Grow Washington framework might be described as the “how.” This model, based on national best practice, identifies six aspects of effective service delivery.
- The Child and Well-being Task Force’s role is to recommend actions that can be taken by Whatcom County government to facilitate and support such efforts through enhancements to County infrastructure and the fostering of participatory governance.
- The passage of the Healthy Children’s Fund provides the funding mechanism to bring about improved outcomes in all these areas on behalf of Whatcom County children and families.



## 2022-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan

Every four years, Whatcom County undertakes a community health improvement planning process. This work is guided by [Healthy Whatcom](#), working closely with staff of the Whatcom County Health and Community Services Department. The process involves the assessment of community needs, strategic planning, and the identification of action steps to advance health equity. The result is the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which sets priorities and identifies steps to be taken in the implementation process.

Whatcom County's 2022-2026 Community Health Improvement Plan focuses on early childhood as a foundation of community health and is grounded in racial equity. Priorities established for 2022-2026 include:

- Building resilience through investments in **child and youth mental health**.
- Creating a strong foundation for children through **early learning and care**.
- Increasing stability through **housing for families and children**.

## Help Me Grow Framework

Help Me Grow is a national model for resource and referral linkages to help families navigate local services and community supports. It relies on a collaborative, community-based approach to provide timely and easy access to services for parents and caregivers. The [Help Me Grow Washington](#) framework includes:

- **Coordinated access points.**
- **Family and community outreach.**
- **Child health care provider outreach.**
- **Data collection and analysis.**
- **Equity.**
- **Advocacy.**

## The Healthy Children's Fund

In November 2022, Whatcom County voters passed the Healthy Children's Fund, Proposition 5, establishing a dedicated fund of nearly \$100 million over 10 years to support young children and their families.

The Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan identifies funding strategies and outcome measurement metrics to improve early learning and care and support vulnerable children and their families in Whatcom County. The Plan identifies four priority areas. These are:

- **Early Learning & Care.**
- **Support for Vulnerable Children.**
- **Equity.**
- **Systemic.**

## **STATUS REPORT ON PHASE II RECOMMENDATIONS**

---

To advance the objectives of the Child and Family Action Plan in Phase II, the Task Force organized its work around four priority areas. These were:

- 1. Identifying the results and strategies that should be shared across government and the community to improve the well-being of young children and their families.***
- 2. Identifying the necessary infrastructure to support children and families as a priority throughout County government***
- 3. Increasing family involvement in County government processes and decision-making***
- 4. Identifying resources and funding needed to increase and stabilize programs for families***

Within each priority area, the Task Force made several recommendations to the County Council. Taken together, recommendations adopted the following strategies:

- Ensuring racial equity.
- Implementing trauma-informed policies and practices.
- Enhancing peer support.
- Building County infrastructure.
- Fostering participatory governance.
- Increasing funding and available resources.

These strategies informed work across the four priority areas, serving as the underlying commitments behind the recommendations and associated action items. They grounded actions taken and created the capacity for achieving desired results. Progress on each of these strategies made over the past year has advanced work in the priority areas, as detailed below.

### **Racial Equity**

An infrastructure for ensuring racial equity is being developed in Whatcom County, in alignment with desired outcomes for children and families:

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### Phase III Report

- The creation of **Whatcom County's Racial Equity Commission**, which was established by the passage of a Whatcom County Council ordinance in October 2022, provides a new resource to advance this work.
- The **Whatcom Coordinated Entry Governing Body (CEBG)** is taking steps to develop and implement anti-racist principles and trauma-informed policies. Formed in 2022, the CEBG guides the implementation of Whatcom County's Coordinated Entry system for homeless housing services. One aspect of its work is to identify how racial disparities affects access to housing and to address such disparities through changes in policy and practice.
- Learning from Northwest Youth Services' **Youth Action Board and Cultural Impact Committee**, Healthy Whatcom is working to generate and share case studies with other housing organizations to elevate and adopt anti-racist principles and approaches.
- Enhancing the County organizational commitment to racial equity through **membership in the Government Alliance on Racial Equity and staffing to support racial equity initiatives**. The Executive's Office is working to bring together an inter-departmental team to develop an action plan for racial equity within County government.

The Task Force is committed to actively engaging with and supporting all of these efforts to realize shared goals.

### Trauma-informed Policies and Practices

A key accomplishment in this area is Healthy Whatcom's replication and implementation of Snohomish County's **C.A.R.E. (Compassion, Appreciation, Resilience & Empowerment) model** of trauma-informed policy and practice. The C.A.R.E. model provides a framework for implementing and embedding trauma-informed practices and policies. The model cultivates an equitable, sustainable environment and fosters relationships and a strong feeling of belonging.

Building organizational and individual wellness and resiliency is central to this work. A resilient organization focused on intentional relationships with staff and the community is more likely to adapt, thrive, and succeed.

A Snohomish/Whatcom cohort has been now been formed. Cohort member organizations, which includes the Whatcom County Health and Community Services Department, PeaceHealth, and Bellingham Technical College, are receiving training. Future work will involve implementing trauma-informed policies and practices within the cohort organizations using the C.A.R.E. model and adapting the model specific to Whatcom County, based on what is learned during the first phase of implementation.

### Peer Support

Healthy Whatcom is leading efforts to expand peer support opportunities in Whatcom County. This includes a plan to work with [GPS \(Group Peer Support\)](#), a national organization offering a trauma-responsive support group model. GPS will train up to 20 peer leaders. Healthy Whatcom has initiated conversation with the [Whatcom Perinatal Mental Health Task Force](#) and the [Generations Forward Family Council](#) about possible collaboration in this effort. Healthy Whatcom is exploring other opportunities to develop peer support, which may include a pilot program based on Seattle's [Program for Early Parent Support \(PEPS\)](#) and a pilot project using Johns Hopkins University and Denver Health's [RISE \(Resilience in Stressful Events\) model](#).

### County Infrastructure

Key actions taken include **the hiring of a Strategic Initiatives Manager** in the Executive's Office to coordinate interdepartmental efforts to support children and families. **Additional staffing** has been included in the budget of the Health and Community Services Department to foster increased equity and better support children and families. These positions include an Equity Specialist, an Early Learning and Care Program Specialist, a Child and Families Supervisor, and other positions specified in the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan. To date, the Early Learning and Care Program Specialist has been hired. Finally, with the passage of the Healthy Children's Fund, there is now **potential capacity to expand the Help Me Grow framework**.

### Participatory Governance

Healthy Whatcom is developing funding strategies to shift power to community members and enhance participatory processes. This includes launching and expanding a **stipend program** for community member participation for those from marginalized communities and/or small organizations who would not otherwise be able to participate in community health planning processes. This initiative is in alignment with guidance issued by the Washington State Office of Equity. Recently-enactment [state legislation](#) calls for the provision of stipends to those involved in public processes, such as boards, commissions, and workgroups, who are low income or have lived experience.

### Funding and Resource Development

Several notable achievements in this area include:

- **Passage of the Healthy Children's Fund** (referred to in the Phase II report as the Children's Fund Levy) by Whatcom County voters in November 2022.
- Leveraging of **over \$25 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds** to provide critical housing, childcare, and food security investments.

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### *Phase III Report*

- Development of a **Request for Proposals (RFP) for childcare facility funding** through the Executive's Office, working with the Task Force. The County plans to allocate up to \$10 million in ARPA funding for childcare facility expansion.
- Investment in the **Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative (WRIC)**, a new local tool for community resource navigation.
- **Expansion of the SEAS (Single Entry Access to Services) program** to include navigation services for parents prenatal to age five. SEAS now serves all families with a child who has a disability or developmental concern up to age 21.

# OVERVIEW OF PHASE III TASK FORCE WORKGROUPS

---

As Phase III of the Task Force's work launched, Task Force members reviewed the workgroup composition to assess the need for change. The Task Force co-chairs developed and shared a survey after the Phase II report was submitted that collected input on member interest in specific work group topics. Based on the number of responses in each area, the five topic areas with the highest weighted responses were proposed as the Phase III workgroups. Members voted on their top three choices, which subsequently became the topic areas for the Phase III workgroups.

The Phase III workgroups are:

- Increasing Access to Family Services and Support.
- Increasing Family Involvement in County Government.
- Modeling Family-friendly Employment Practices and Policies.

## PHASE III RECOMMENDATIONS

### Increasing Access to Family Services and Support

The Task Force workgroup on Increasing Access to Family Services and Support is tasked with developing recommendations focused on the **government's role in providing resources to improve access to family services and supports**. In Phase III, the workgroup focused its work specifically on:

- Families with children from prenatal to age eight.
- Behavioral health supports.
- Funding support, rather than the provision of services.

The workgroup recognized that keeping a narrow focus on behavioral health supports for perinatal populations would create a strong alignment with recommendations in the Community Health Improvement Plan and the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan. They focused initially on learning about the services and funding supported by County funding to improve access to family services and supports. This included learning about current support through the Behavioral Health Fund, SEAS (Single Entry Access to Services), Nurse-Family Partnership, expansion of the Help Me Grow framework, and the Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative, among others. They reviewed relevant assessments and reports, including the Whatcom Early Learning Alliance's [Family Needs Assessment](#) and [Washington's Statewide Early Learning Needs Assessment](#).

This workgroup recommends the following ways for County government to increase and improve access to family services and support:

1. **Continue support of the Whatcom Resource Information Collaborative (WRIC).** This aligns with the Child and Family Action Plan directive to "support the funding for a culturally and linguistically responsive health navigation system for families seeking information and assistance with health and social services." While the fully-built WRIC will be a comprehensive central service directory for all community members, the current focus population is young children and their families.

**Estimated Budget:** \$40,000 annually.

2. **Continue support of the Help Me Grow expansion in Whatcom County.** This includes expansion of SEAS navigation. All expansion efforts should align with the specific recommendations in the Whatcom Early Learning Alliance Family Needs Assessment report, which will be completed by May 2023. The report will include:

- Status updates on each of the six core components of Help Me Grow and the engagement status of the partners involved with each component: Coordinated Access Point, Family and Community Outreach, Provider Outreach, Data Collection and Analysis, Advocacy, and Equity.
- A summary of Help Me Grow implementation at the state and regional levels and specific recommendations for how Whatcom County can engage with the regional and state work being done.
- Specific recommendations for Help Me Grow implementation, including key activities to conduct in 2023, infrastructure needs, and how to utilize the findings of the 2021 Parent Survey which documented barriers and opportunities families face when accessing services and resources.

**Estimated Budget:** See the approved Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan for the anticipated budgetary impact.

3. **Designate resources to develop a landscape assessment of the system for connecting families to behavioral health support.** The [Help Me Grow National Center](#) identifies data collection and analysis as an essential component of the framework. It allows communities to “track progress, identify areas of opportunity and systemic gaps, determine potentially advantageous partnerships, and guide strategic quality improvement projects.” Guided by key windows of opportunities in a child’s life from prenatal to age five, the Task Force recommends that resources be allocated to develop a landscape assessment of the system for connecting families to behavioral health support. This should include:

- Programs in place.
- Programs in place with a resource shortage.
- Programs recommended but not in existence.

Whatcom Early Learning Alliance’s [2021 Survey of Family Needs](#) and [Harvard’s Center for the Developing Child’s](#) core principles of development inform the importance of these windows of opportunity:

- Relationships matter. Support responsive relationships for children and adults.
- Strengthen core skills for planning, adapting, and achieving goals.
- Reduce sources of stress in the lives of children and families.

**Estimated Budget:** \$20,000.

4. **Fully support the Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan**, with the recognition that both strategies and County systems are at different levels of readiness for implementation. This may include developing new processes for strategy funding, support, and implementation, as well as hiring additional County staff.

**Estimated Budget:** See the approved Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation Plan for the anticipated budgetary impact.



# Increasing Family Involvement in County Government

The Increasing Family Involvement in County Government workgroup is tasked with developing recommendations for **decreasing barriers to family participation in government meetings and events and supporting building the civic muscle of local families** so that they inform policy and budget decisions.

This workgroup grounds its work in the understanding that building strong, thriving communities happens when:

- Community members feel valued and have a sense of belonging.
- Community members have support through strong social networks.
- Community members with diverse backgrounds and experiences work together to improve community infrastructure, solve problems, and make decisions impacting the community.

The workgroup considered alternate pathways for engaging families in local government, how to develop more effective bi-directional communication between families and government, and how to measure meaningful engagement for families. Using and prioritizing the Phase II recommendations, the workgroup recommends the following:

1. **Fully resource Whatcom County participation in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE)** to ensure policy and practice changes throughout County government that help elevate models and practices in which the County and communities work together to make collective policy decisions, co-create strategies to meet community needs, and ensure policies and programs are implemented effectively.

**Estimated Budget:** \$50,000 annually for training, facilitation, and project implementation.

2. **Increase opportunities for family outreach, engagement, and communication.**

- Increase outreach and engagement with elected officials and County department directors to families with children.

**Action example:** Develop opportunities for families to meet and talk with elected officials in settings where families gather physically and virtually.

- Increase communication by the county to families with children

**Action example:** Add a “check box” to Council agenda items that impact children and families in order to create a communication narrative to share with the Child and Family Well-being Task Force, community partners, and families.

**Action example:** Create an accessible tool to share communication narratives about child and family Council agenda items with family-focused community organizations and collaboratives.

- Increase accessible public testimony opportunities for families.

**Action example:** Create opportunities for families to pre-record public comment that can be shared asynchronously.

**Action example:** Create opportunities for family input in diverse locations such as libraries, pediatric or family medicine offices, schools, housing complexes, and community/neighborhood meetings or events.

- Empower and resource advisory boards and commissions to engage families with children.

**Action example:** Provide a budget for advisory boards to gather input from families on both issues relevant to families using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools: surveys, town halls, community roundtable discussions, etc.

**Estimated Budget:** \$10,000.

### 3. Eliminate barriers to serving on county advisory boards or commissions.

**Action example:** Amend County Code WCC 2.106 for the Child and Family Well-being Task Force to include, as appropriate, “This position (or these positions) are not required to be registered voter(s) in Whatcom County or hold U.S. citizenship, as required per WCC 2.03.100.”

**Action example:** Amend County Code for other Whatcom County volunteer boards and commissions to eliminate the requirement for participation to include voter registration or U.S. citizenship.

**Action example:** Find a sustainable model to provide stipends to eligible members of all County task forces, boards, and commissions. [\*\*Second Substitute Senate Bill \(2SSB\) 5793 states\*\*](#) that “public policy discussions should include individuals directly impacted by that policy. In order to do so, the legislature supports removing barriers to that participation.” Stipends can incentivize participation and demonstrate the value County government places on diverse participation in our governmental processes and stipends.

**Estimated Budget:** \$300,000 annually for stipends.

### Modeling Family-friendly Employment Practices & Policies

The Task Force workgroup on Modeling Family-friendly Employment Policies and Practices is tasked with developing recommendations to **promote, implement, and model family-friendly employment policies and practices within the County government.**

Family-friendly employment policies make it easier for employees to balance family and work obligations, which can reduce stress, allow more employee choice at work, and help families flourish economically. These policies recognize family well-being as an important contributor to community health and resiliency. They can also strengthen and sustain businesses and organizations by improving employee retention, productivity, and morale. Governments can model being family-friendly by implementing policies in their own workplaces and by using laws or other methods that encourage similar policies in businesses or public spheres.

The workgroup contacted Whatcom County Human Resources to learn more about family-friendly employment practices and policies already in place. They researched resources and best practices and found the University of Kansas's Community Tool Box most helpful, specifically focusing on the chapter on changing policies and promoting family-friendly policies in businesses and government. (See [Chapter 25, Section 11 Promoting Family-Friendly Policies in Business and Government](#).)

Through communication with the county's Human Resources Department, the group learned about existing family-friendly workplace policies and the Department's work to promote a family-friendly work environment:

- Whatcom County maintains a webpage devoted to family-friendly employment, including information on benefits, resources, planning considerations, and family leave laws.
- Whatcom County Health and Community Services is the only County department with a formal policy on bringing an infant to work.
- Other current County policies in place include:
  - Working from Remote Locations.
  - Supporting Breastfeeding Mothers.
  - Administering Leave Sharing.
  - Administering Federal Family and Medical Leave (FMLA).
  - Administering State Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML).
  - Offering Paid Sick Leave.
  - Requesting Unpaid Time Off.
  - Preventing Domestic Violence.
  - Providing Reasonable Accommodation.
  - Classifying County Positions.

Human Resources identified challenges to implementing some County-wide family-friendly policies. These include:

# Child and Family Well-being Task Force

## Phase III Report

- Managing risk for policies related to on-site child or elder care.
- Accommodating positions that are not conducive to remote or telework options.
- Revising scheduling, such as for breaks and meal periods, as these are currently determined by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries and are documented in collective bargaining agreements

The workgroup recommends the following:

**1. Provide resources for Human Resources to fully assess which family-friendly policies are currently in place across collective bargaining unit agreements and for exempt staff.** They have prioritized the policy topics listed below.

- Accommodative Support of Hours
  - Flex-time
  - Job-Sharing
  - Temporary or permanent switch to part-time position
  - Voluntary reduced time
  - Telework and remote work
  - Unplanned absence
  - Late arrival
  - Early departure
- Accommodative Leave
  - Family leave
  - FMLA
  - Emergency leave
  - Parental, Caregiver & Eldercare leave
- Support Benefits
  - Counseling services
  - Caregiving provider referral service
  - Caregiving support groups & networks
- Care Service Benefits
  - On-site or near-site childcare
  - Subsidy for childcare services
  - On-site or near-site elder care
  - Subsidize for elder care services

**Estimated Budget:** Approximately 8 hours of staff time, with an estimated cost of \$600.

**2. Conduct an internal gender pay gap audit in order to identify any existing pay disparities within the Whatcom County government workforce.** Addressing any identified pay disparities is the first step in ensuring pay equity. It also provides an opportunity to build employee engagement, trust, and retention.

Whatcom County Administrative Services does not currently have these data readily available. However, through implementation of a new financial and Human Resources data system in 2024, it is possible this information may be easily accessible. Should Council wish to move

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### *Phase III Report*

forward with this audit sooner or absent readily-available data through the new system, the Task Force recommends allocating funding for a consultant contract to undertake the audit.

**Estimated Budget:** \$70,000 for consultant contract.

# WHAT'S NEXT

---

Since the adoption of the Child and Family Action Plan, much progress has been made throughout the three phases of implementation. This includes:

- The **development of County infrastructure** for prioritizing early childhood in policy making and funding decisions in order to improve child and family well-being.
- The **expansion of the SEAS program** to serve families with children prenatal through age 8.
- **Adoption of the Help Me Grow Washington framework** as a model for program and service delivery.
- A **pilot stipend program** to facilitate family participation in Whatcom County governance.
- **Passage of the Healthy Children's Fund and the leveraging of other available funding** to enhance the stability of child and family programs and services and foster future improvements in child and family outcomes.

This work has been grounded in the principles of active family engagement and a commitment to racial equity.

The Child and Family Well-being Task Force celebrates and acknowledges the work of its members and community partners as it completes this phase of implementation. As implementation of the Healthy Children's Fund begins, the Task Force looks forward to future opportunities to advise the Whatcom County Council on the priorities identified in the Child and Family Action Plan.

# REFERENCES

---

- Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality, Johns Hopkins University. (2023). *Caring for the Caregiver: The RISE Program*. Retrieved from [https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/armstrong\\_institute/training\\_services/workshops/Caring\\_for\\_the\\_Caregiver/](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/armstrong_institute/training_services/workshops/Caring_for_the_Caregiver/)
- Center for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas. (2023). *Community Tool Box: Promoting Family-Friendly Policies in Business and Government*. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/changing-policies/business-government-family-friendly/main>
- Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University. (2023). Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- Generations Forward Family Council. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www.generationsforward.net/>
- Group Peer Support (GPS). (2023). Retrieved from <https://groupeersupport.org/>
- Healthy Children's Fund Implementation Plan. (2023). Retrieved from <https://whatcom.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11801152&GUID=21BA9AF8-AAAD-4B27-A1F2-F27FACD8EE58>
- Healthy Whatcom. (2023). Retrieved from <https://healthywhatcom.org/>
- Healthy Whatcom. (March 2022). *Community Health Improvement Plan*. Retrieved from <https://healthywhatcom.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Healthy-Whatcom-CHIP.pdf>
- Help Me Grow National Center. (2023). Retrieved from <https://helpmegrownational.org/hmg-system-model/>
- Help Me Grow Washington. (2023). Retrieved from <https://helpmegrowwa.org/>
- Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS). (2023.) Retrieved from <https://www.peps.org/>
- Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (December 2020). *Washington Statewide Early Learning Needs Assessment*. Retrieved from <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/2020StatewideNeedsAssessment.pdf>
- Washington State Legislature. Second Substitute Senate Bill 5793. (March 30, 2022). Retrieved from <https://lawfilesextra.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5793-S2.SL.pdf?q=20220526134140>

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### Phase III Report

Washington State Office of Equity. *Community Compensation Guidelines*. Retrieved from <https://equity.wa.gov/people/community-compensation-guidelines>

Whatcom County Council, Ordinance 2020-079, December 8, 2020. Retrieved from <https://documents.whatcomcounty.us/WebLink/DocView.aspx?dbid=0&id=4672477&page=1&searchid=9a2a6c2c-f45c-459c-bfeb-6e7041e2f743&cr=1>

Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board, Whatcom County Health Department, Generations Forward, and Healthy Whatcom. (January 2020). *Whatcom Working Towards Well-Being: An Action Plan for County Government*. Retrieved from <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/49297/Child-and-Family-Action-Plan---January-2020>

Whatcom Early Learning Alliance. (2021). *Building a Better Future for Whatcom County Children: Survey of Families' Needs in Their Child's First Five Years*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61bc1ff6a2cfc87db5833219/t/625611c584f9dc0bc1b6823a/1649807817167/SEASHMG+Report-All+Families+%281%29.pdf>

Whatcom Perinatal Mental Health Task Force. (2023). Retrieved from <https://whatcomperinatal.org/>



# APPENDIX A: CURRENT TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

**Key to workgroup abbreviations:**

IAFSS=Increasing Access to Family Services and Supports

MFPEP=Modeling Family-friendly Employment Practices and Policies

IFPCG=Increasing Family Participation in County Government

\* indicates member is serving as a Task Force Co-chair

Member Name, Role	IAFSS	MFPEP	IFPCG
Allison Bishop, Community Member, Term ends 2025			
Anne Granberg, Community Member, Term ends 2027	X		
Beverly Porter, Whatcom Taking Action, permanent		X	
Carol Frazey, Whatcom County Health Board, permanent		X	
Chelsea Johnson, Whatcom County Health Department, permanent	X		
Christina Jackson*, Community Member, Term ends 2027		X	
Colton Redtfeldt, Community Member, Term ends 2027			
Gregory Hansen, Small Cities Partnership, permanent	X		
Jamie Desmul, Community Member, Term ends 2025	X		
Jennifer Wright*, Community Member, Term ends 2025	X		

# Child and Family Well-being Task Force

## Phase III Report

Member Name, Role	IAFSS	MFEPF	IFPCG
<b>Katherine Orlowski</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2027			
<b>Kayla Schott-Bresler</b> , Whatcom County Executive, permanent		X	
<b>Keith Montoya*</b> , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent		X	
<b>Mary Sewright</b> , School Superintendents, permanent	X		
<b>Mike Ford</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2025		X	
<b>Monika Mahal</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2027			
<b>Pamela Jons</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2027			
<b>Ray Deck*</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2025			
<b>Rosalva Santos-Guzman</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2025			
<b>Samantha Cruz-Mendoza</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2025			
<b>Samya Lutz</b> , City of Bellingham, permanent			
<b>Sarah Kidd</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2025			
<b>Sativa Robertson</b> , Nooksack Tribe, permanent			X
<b>Sterling Chick</b> , Public Health Advisory Board, permanent	X		

# Child and Family Well-being Task Force

## Phase III Report

Member Name, Role	IAFSS	MFEPF	IFPCG
<b>Sunshine Nelson</b> , Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families, permanent	X		
<b>Tilda Doughty</b> , Community Member, Term ends 2027			X
<b>Vann Dartt</b> , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent			
<b>Vesla Tonnessen</b> , Whatcom Early Learning Alliance, permanent	X		
<b>Yarrow Greer</b> , Generations Forward Family Council, permanent	X		
<b>Vacant</b> , Lummi Nation, permanent			

### Also served in 2022-2023

- Alicia Hanning**, Community Member
- Annie Taylor**, Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families
- Brian Nelson**, Community Member
- Chris Cochran**, Community Member
- Debbie Ahl**, Community Member
- Escarleth De Leon**, Community Member
- Komal Shah**, Community Member
- Mara Kelley**, Community Member
- Monica Koller**, Generations Forward Family Council
- Neta Darling**, Community Member
- Sarah Cook**, Lummi Nation
- Urvashi Graham**, Community Member

Whatcom County Ordinance 2020-079, which formed the Child and Family Well-being Task Force, calls for 30 Task Force members representing a variety of stakeholders, identities, and perspectives in Whatcom County. Half are permanent members appointed by their designated organization or agency, as specifically specified in the ordinance. The remaining 15 members are community members who applied directly to the County Council and were appointed to serve either a two- or four-year term. In soliciting applications, every effort was made to reach community members with lived experience with issues facing young children and families, particularly those from under-represented communities and diverse backgrounds.

## Child and Family Well-being Task Force

### *Phase III Report*

Members appointed from the community represent at least one of the following experiences or communities:

- Under-represented communities: Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Immigrant, Rural (up to 5 members)
- Community action agency, non-profit housing organization, or social service agency (up to 2 members)
- Faith community
- Private school, home school, higher education, or child care provider (up to 2 members)
- Medical and behavioral health care providers serving young children and families
- Child caregivers such as a parent, foster parent, grandparent, or guardian (up to 3 members)
- Private business, corporation, or philanthropic organization

As of February 1, 2023, all appointed members serve four-year terms.