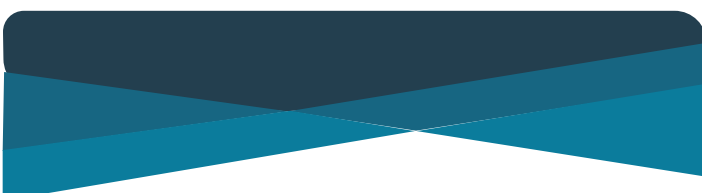




East Jefferson County Rural Child Care Partnership CHILD CARE CAPACITY-BUILDING Concept Paper

A variety of needs assessments related to child care accessibility in Jefferson County, including our own needs assessment, have found that the County has far more need for child care than current child care availability can meet. *But solving Jefferson County's child care deficit will require a multi-staged approach.*

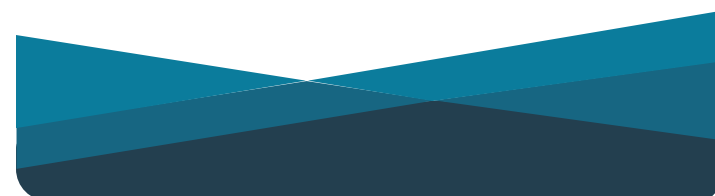
Jefferson County's population is dispersed across a large land area, with the largest population center in Port Townsend where six of its largest employers are also located. As a **critical step** in this multi-staged solution, we explore the creation of a new early learning center for 40 children, ages 0 to 5, located in Port Townsend, operated by a teaching institution with an early childhood education department: our own community college, Peninsula College. Our proposed early learning center will meet the most urgent needs of the most families as identified in the 2021 Jefferson County Child Care Needs Assessment.



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Conceptualizing Our First Step Toward Greater Child Care Accessibility

The Early Learning Center

The East Jefferson County Rural Child Care Partnership, made up of Jefferson Healthcare, the Olympic Peninsula YMCA, and Peninsula College explores the development of a licensed child care center for ages 0-5 in the next 12 to 18 months by a partner with early learning expertise. In a survey of Jefferson County parents, the respondents' highest priorities for child care were educational activities and teachers' knowledge of early childhood education.¹

A child care center led and operated by a community college early childhood education program would promote the use of an evidence-based curriculum and the high quality care that parents describe as essential. In addition, the center could provide practicum opportunities for the community college early childhood education students seeking certification. This would help increase the much needed skilled child care work force in our County. As an indicator of the quality of the program, we recommend the child care center strive to attain Washington State Early Achiever's Ratings of 4 or higher within the first 5 years.

Parents surveyed also indicated a preference for a curriculum including a nature component, physical activity, and free play for their children.¹ Consistent communication between teachers and parents was also emphasized as essential by focus groups and survey respondents. A program incorporating these features would be attractive to current families.

Capacity

The initial vision for center capacity is forty children: eight infants, 14 toddlers, and 18 preschoolers. Table 1 shows a more detailed description of classroom sizes and their age groups.

As conceptualized, this configuration will only partially address current child care need for 0 to 5 year olds. We recommend planning for eventual expansion. A minimum of 2200 square feet will be needed for classroom space to meet licensing requirements for 40 children. Additional space for storage, restrooms, commercial kitchen, hand-washing and changing stations, offices, and parking will be required.

Table 1
Detail of Early Learning Center Configuration

	Age range	Class size	Classrooms	# of Children Served at One Time
Infants	8 weeks - 1 year	4	2 (200 sq ft ea)	8
Toddlers	1 to 3 years	7	2 (450 sq ft ea)	14
Preschool	3 to 5 years	9	2 (450 sq ft ea)	18
Totals			6 (2200 sqft for classroom space)	40

Site Selection

To expedite opening, we recommend use of an existing building to be rented or leased and renovated to meet licensing requirements. Site options are being studied for child care feasibility with current grant funding. Site assessments and renovation costs estimates will be completed during this grant cycle.

Surveyed parents prefer child care close to their place of work. Six of the 10 largest Jefferson County employers are located in the 98368 zip code and represent 1835 employees; this

zip code includes Port Townsend, where approximately one third of the county population resides. Three other large employers representing 450 employees are in the Tri-Area region in three separate zip codes.⁸ Locating the child care within one of those two regions would provide greatly needed access for families working in Jefferson County.

Once a child care center is thriving in an existing building, we recommend construction of a dedicated building either as a stand-alone child care center or incorporated

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into a multi-use recreational center or senior day health center for intergenerational care. Infrastructure funding is anticipated to become available through federal and state sources over the next 1-2 years to facilitate pursuit of the second phase. The East Jefferson County Rural Child Care Partnership anticipates planning for and supporting application for funds with the active child care partner(s).

Learning Center Schedule

Parent focus group data indicate that weekday hours of operation from 6:45 a.m. to 7:15 p.m. will accommodate most families.¹ Parents indicated a drop-in care option would be ideal but not required. This is an area where our largest employers may play a role: by purchasing child care slots for their staff members who are parents and may need drop-in child care in order to respond to emergent needs at work.

Table 2
Parent Input on Key Aspects of the Ideal and Acceptable Early Learning Center

Attribute	Acceptable	Ideal
High Quality	Licensed	Early Achievers Rating of 4 or higher
Capacity	36	40, with ability to expand + drop-in
Location	In Port Townsend or Tri-Area	In the 98368 zip code, with infant room on site of large employer(s)
Site	Rented space retrofitted to meet licensing code.	Dedicated building with ability to expand. Perhaps to co-locate with a senior day health program for intergenerational component.
Cost	Accepts State Child Care Subsidies	Sliding fee scale for low and middle income families
Schedule	7:00am-6:00pm	6:45am-7:15pm
Curriculum	Daily activities communicated regularly to parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age appropriate, evidence based curriculum including nature component. • Preparation for kindergarten. • Partnership with local occupational, physical and speech therapy providers for children with special needs.
Activity	Access to outdoor play area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor play area • Natural environment nearby with structured and unstructured outdoor play.

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Learning Center Income for Services

Based on income data for the county, we anticipate 25-50% of the children at the child care center will meet the current criteria for state subsidies. This percentage will likely increase with recent legislative changes expanding family eligibility and subsidy amounts.

The 2020-2021 subsidy daily rate is \$50.36 for infants, \$44.59 for toddlers, and \$40.18 for pre-schoolers.⁹ If higher fees are required for operational sustainability, a sliding scale will be needed to support those who do not qualify for subsidies

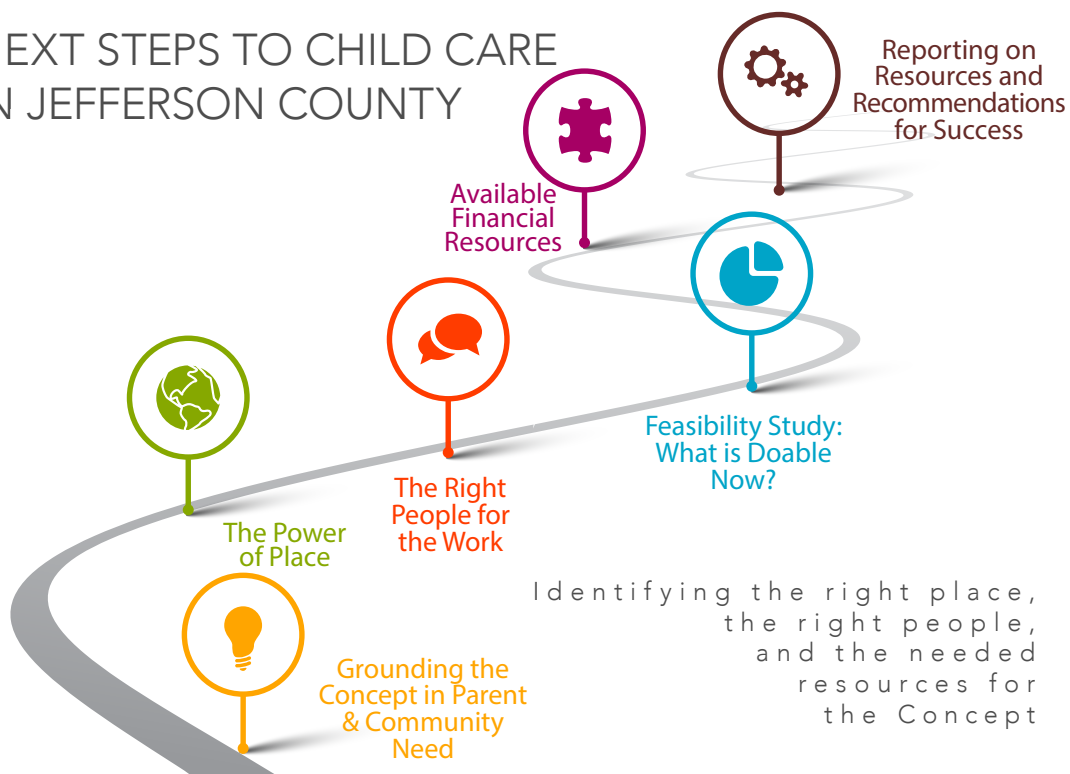
but who pay an out-sized portion of their income on child care. Additional funding sources will be needed to support ongoing operational costs in this sliding fee scale model.

The feasibility study will be completed midway through the current grant cycle, bringing greater clarity to the financial resources necessary to establish and run the center. Start-up and sustainability fund options are being identified and will be included in our final grant report.

Next Steps

In the next three months we will take big steps from vision to the reality of increasing childcare in Jefferson County...

NEXT STEPS TO CHILD CARE IN JEFFERSON COUNTY



References

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8. Jefferson County Top Employers List 4.30.18. Provided by EDC Team Jefferson on January 7, 2021.
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Appendix 1

Background: Jefferson County Child Care Landscape

Demand outstrips child care availability in Jefferson County, Washington and has worsened in recent years. Seventy two percent of Jefferson County parents involved in a 2021 survey reported a “difficult or very difficult time” finding child care.¹ These results mirror data from a 2016 Jefferson Healthcare (JH) survey,² the JH Child Care Task Force 2019 key informant data,³ and a 2020 internal JH employee survey. Child Care Aware of Washington reports 166 licensed child care slots for the 962 children under age 5 in Jefferson County.⁴ This is a decrease from 303 slots in 2015. Infant care is especially scarce with under 10 licensed slots for the 165-199 babies born per year to Jefferson County residents.⁵ Sixty-two percent of children under 6 (approximately 596 children) have all parents working.⁴

Poverty complicates access to child care. Many of the licensed Jefferson County child care providers are not able to take state subsidies. Based on the percent of families who qualify for free and reduced school lunch, we estimate more than 49% of Jefferson County families qualify for child care subsidies.⁶ This number was placed at 75% for Jefferson and Clallam by the 2017 Olympic Community Action Programs (OlyCAP).

Parents cite additional barriers to accessing adequate child care such as limited hours, the lack of part-time and drop-in care, location, and variations in quality of care.^{1,2,3} After-school and holiday care were also cited as an ongoing need.

Appendix 2 Solutions

Because the need is great, increasing child care accessibility requires a multi-staged approach. This includes growth of existing programs where possible and creation of new child care facilities. Current child care providers report plans to expand but note multiple barriers. A farm-based child care co-operative is in the pilot stages and appeals to many. School-age child care became more available through Cedarbrook ELC and the Olympic Peninsula YMCA during the COVID-19 pandemic to address distance learning needs. Once the pandemic subsides, it is clear there will be an ongoing need for after-school, summer and holiday care for children 5-12, as there was before the pandemic. Stabilizing this resource will be crucial for working families.

Although this proposal focuses on the option of a new child care center for 0-5 year olds, this group fully supports expansion of existing care and other pilot programs. A diverse child care ecosystem will best meet the needs of families, children, and the community. Let's grow together to serve our youngest citizens!

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