



CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

JUNE 12, 2023

Present: Allison Bishop, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Carol Frazey, Chelsea Johnson, Christina Jackson, Colton Redtfeldt, Jamie Desmul, Jen Wright, Katherine Orłowski, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Keith Montoya, Mary Sewright, Samantha Cruz Mendoza, Pamela Jons, Ray Deck, Samya Lutz, Sarah Kidd, Sterling Chick, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson, Yarrow Greer, Vann Dartt

Not Present: Gregory Hansen, Mike Ford, Monika Mahal, Rosalva Santos-Guzman, Sativa Robertson, Yarrow Greer

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p>Welcome</p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u></p> <p>I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today 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 (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 of the first people of this land.</p> <p>Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways. https://www.lhaqtemish.org/ -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and self-care come first. • Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everyone has the best intentions. ○ Listen with an open mind and heart. • Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out/Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights. • Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances. • Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County. • What is said here stays here. • Have fun. <p>Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</p>



Approve Meeting Minutes	No amendments to discuss. Minutes from May 8 th , 2023, were approved as presented.
Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation	<p>Evaluation tool: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhjlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</p> <p>The purpose of this Task Force was reviewed, as stated in the Ordinance. “The purpose of Whatcom County Child and Family Well-being Task Force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and family make recommendations for improvement for all departments.”</p>
Community Shares, Shout-outs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allison Williams mentioned former Senator John McCoy passed away on June 6th. John was a Tulalip Tribe member and was instrumental in creating and passing time and memorial curriculum for schools. More information on the work that John did: https://ictnews.org/news/former-washington-state-sen-john-mccoy-dies-at-79 • Katherine Orłowski wanted to shout-out to all of the people paying attention to and doing this work. • Jennifer Wright mentioned that Sunday is not only father’s day but also Juneteenth and there is a celebration at Maritime Heritage park. • Tilda Doughty shared that there is recruiting happening for Opportunity Council’s head start and early head start program.
Workgroup structure proposal	<p>Jennifer Wright put together a “when to meet” for different workgroups and will be coordinating the first meeting. The links to this will be put in the chat for people to indicate when they can meet.</p> <p>Ray Deck is leading a conversation around workgroups. Once the discussion ends there will be a vote on whether to proceed with this proposal. The proposal can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DDThR2YCMOXijEN8ubGegWimBEwSumVe/view</p> <p>There are three static workgroups, and one that is as needed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Issues & Policy – a group subset of this body that go out and do preliminary research on an issue and get organized in a way for the whole task force to engage. 2. Progress & Accountability – this group would track progress of items on the agenda from past to current. This can be recommendations that this body has made to council, as well as other groups recommendations to be aware. 3. Healthy Children’s Fund – a group to participate in the implementation of the Healthy Children’s Fund. 4. Rapid Response – this group will gather when it is needed as time-sensitive advocacy is needed. <p>Today there is an ask to vote using the Fist to Five. Prior to voting a temperature check was taken of the group. Carol Frazey asked a question about whether the rapid response would then put something together to the task force for review and vote on behalf of the task force. Ray clarified that most often yes, this group would function as a drafting committee to then bring back to the task force, however at times there will be a need to discuss framework in the task force and allow the group to create and deliver on behalf of the task force within that framework. Jennifer Wright shared that there have been four workgroups in the past, and the Rapid Response is more flexible depending on what is happening.</p>



	<p>Pamela Jons mentioned that four seems like a lot for workgroups, and was wondering if Rapid Response could be a part of the Issues & Policy group. Ray clarified that this workgroup would not have standing meetings, and would also be related to other workgroups.</p> <p>A Fist to Five consensus was conducted to pass the workgroups as proposed. The proposal passed with consensus.</p> <p>Jennifer Wright shared the When to Meet scheduling tool link for Jen to use to schedule the meeting. She asked that everyone please provide all availability for this first meeting. These links will also be circulated after the meeting.</p>
<p>Review the draft Healthy Children’s Fund strategy prioritization and introduce Sarah Simpson, the new program supervisor for Children & Families at the Whatcom County Health and Community Services</p>	<p>Sarah Simpson is the new Children & Families supervisor for the Whatcom County Health and Community Services. She introduced herself and shared her experience in education and other fields, managing grants and program development.</p> <p>A memo was sent on June 9th to Whatcom County Council to provide an update on the Healthy Children’s Fund Implementation. The team is considering questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies should be addressed first • How can the HCF equitably and innovatively distribute funding, so it reaches the children and families with the most need • How to best engage with and communicate with the community? <p>Strategies that were considered highly impactful and can move forward quickly –</p> <p>Strategy 3: Improve access to early learning & care through subsidies that reduce the cost of programs for children from families which are cost-burdened.</p> <p>Strategy 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”).</p> <p>Strategy 6: Support innovative approaches to meet various Healthy Children’s Fund goals related to Early Learning & Care.</p> <p>Strategy 8: Develop and/or expand resources and programs for families who disproportionately experience housing instability.</p> <p>Strategy 9: Expand and enhance early parenting supports.</p> <p>Technical Assistance: Identifying technical assistance needs fore ach strategy (for instance grant-writing support, proposal design, and transformational change workshops).</p> <p>The update will go to Public Works and Health Committee on June 20th.</p>
<p>Transitional Kindergarten</p>	<p>Jamie Desmul and Debbie Haney are presenting on what Transitional Kindergarten is, how it started and what it is.</p> <p>Transitional Kindergarten is referred to as this everywhere in the state except in Bellingham, which is called Promise K. The is a state funded program that is available for children turning 4 before Sept 1st of that year. It was created to provide the least restrictive environment for children that have IEPs and allows for a mixed model approach. An IEP is an Individual Educational Program and is for ages 3 to 21. The IEP is the document that outlines these services needed.</p> <p>Transitional Kindergarten received state sponsorship just a few years ago, but Bellingham started it back around 11 years ago as a 10 week program. There is a policy in the WAC that says children can qualify early for</p>



kindergarten based on ability or need. The “need” part is what qualified Bellingham at that time. The families that would apply for ability it was discovered most of these applicants were needing that early access due to gaps in systems available. The state recognized the benefits of this program and found them more able to be successful in Kindergarten and that is how it was developed.

This year 101 institutions in the state are implementing a Transitional Kindergarten, which is around 3,000 students.

Debbie mentioned the focus right now is in enrollment and recruitment and meeting families to get into the right program for the children. This is a developing system, and improving this year from last as relationships are built and gaps are identified.

Jamie shared there are not enough programs in Whatcom County to meet the community needs. The school district has the resources are best to serve the individual needs of students with IEPs. The challenge with Transitional Kindergarten is the revenue that it unintentionally takes away from community care options. It costs more money to run the infant/toddler program, so they run them at a subsidized rate by breaking even from the revenue of the preschool aged students. The infant/toddler programs require a lower student/teacher ratio than that of a preschool age program and that is why it balances out, but if the schools continue to fill up those preschool age programs those spots will be removed and it will raise the costs for the infant/toddler program.

Another challenge is the care gaps around school days and hours. Traditional after school care does not allow for youth under the age of 5.

For the standard early learning care programs, creating part time care for this age group would require transportation, social emotional support after a full day of school, and financial challenges.

Every care center that offers more than four hours of care must be licensed and go through several systems of compliance, however the Transitional Kindergarten program through the schools does not have to comply with this because they are run through OSPI. This is going to have an impact on the workforce.

A public-school teacher can make around \$50,000 a year, but a preschool program teacher is usually making \$30,000 a year. This is impacting the workforce, and as people get certified they move on.

As the future is considered around early learning, these are important factors to consider.

Debbie mentioned that there is a new [HB 1550](#) and that OSPI has been charged with putting some emergency rulings in for the 23/24 school year and this should be considered. There will be some new things coming related to 3 year olds as well so it will be important to consider.

Bellingham has 742 children enrolled in Kindergarten. 275 children are served in Promise K. We have not reached all kids.

Ray asked Sarah about the innovation strategy in the Healthy Children’s Fund, and if that is the right space to create a request to design a way to meet this gap. Sarah thinks that this could be an appropriate place, but is early into this work as well. Debbie reiterated that Transitional Kindergarten is not the right fit for all kids. Jamie mentioned that they have had a rough time finding 4 and 5 year olds for their programs on YMCA, and if they are not being placed into Promise K and there are openings in many places then it should be evaluated.

Vesla Tonnessen is wondering if a convening has been done for parental feedback, and wondering if there is a way to subsidize the infants/toddler rooms. Jamie responded that there has been consideration about reconstructing rooms and allowing businesses to stay afloat, which would require a lot of funds. Next year it will be interesting to see if it is having the impact it appears to have.



Public Comment	No public comment.
Closing	Adjourned at 5:22 PM
<i>Next Meeting</i>	Next regular meeting: July 10, 2023 <u>Location: Hybrid</u>

