



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Grants boost childcare providers, offer stability for working families**

### *Whatcom ReStart childcare grants support local COVID-19 economic recovery*

The Whatcom ReStart grant program, a countywide collaboration, has allocated nearly \$700,000 to more than two dozen childcare providers across Whatcom County. The purpose of the program is to support licensed childcare providers and further COVID-19 economic recovery.

“Many families depend on childcare to keep their jobs, pursue educational opportunities and remain self-sufficient. We are grateful to our local childcare providers, who have met significant new challenges in recent months and stepped up with creativity and commitment to serving families in our community. These grants will assist childcare providers impacted by COVID-19 as they continue to offer these vital services,” said Bellingham Mayor Seth Fleetwood.

Eighteen small to mid-sized childcare providers (<50 spots) will receive grants totaling \$218,095 and 8 large providers (>50 spots) will cumulatively receive \$452,221.<sup>1</sup>

The original source of the childcare grants is federal CARES Act funds allocated to Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham, which pooled resources for the Whatcom ReStart program. CARES Act funding is intended to reimburse the cost of business interruptions that are caused by reduced operational size, temporary closures, or stay-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Representatives from Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, and the Opportunity Council met regularly over the course of three months to build the application, solicit submissions, review eligibility, and offer funding recommendations.

“I am pleased to see how our different jurisdictions and partners have come together to find working solutions. Through collaboration and pooling of resources, we are maximizing the impact of our modest tools and means, which benefits both the providers and the families they serve. I hope that this experience will serve as a model for future cooperation,” said Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive.

The application review committees were staffed by knowledgeable community members and professionals from the City of Bellingham, Opportunity Council, Whatcom County Health Department and Mount Baker Foundation. The applications were scored on three criteria: 1) social/demographic

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<sup>1</sup> Two of the grants awarded by Whatcom County are in excess of \$40,000 and thus contingent on County Council approval.

factors; 2) enrollment data; and 3) financial information. This included, but was not limited to, considerations of vulnerable populations served, toddler and infant care, and participation in state and federal subsidy programs.

A full list of the recipients and grant amounts can be viewed here:

<https://www.portofbellingham.com/936/Licensed-Childcare-Provider-Grants>

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*Childcare services are vital to our community. Photo courtesy of Whatcom Family YMCA*

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