



## CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

MARCH 29, 2024

**Present:** Allison Bishop, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Chelsea Johnson, Colton Kaltenfeldt, Jamie Desmul, Katherine Orlowski, Jason Oldham, Jon Scanlon, Karla Anderson, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Megan Juenemann, Monika Mahal, Ray Deck, Sallye Quinn, Samya Lutz, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson

**Not Present:** Greg Hansen, Jen Wright, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Kristi Dominguez, Lyn Salazar, Pamela Jons, Sativa Robertson, Sterling Chick, Samantha Cruz Mendoza

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p><b>Welcome</b></p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u> 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. <a href="https://www.lhaqtemish.org/">https://www.lhaqtemish.org/</a> -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and self-care come first.</li> <li>• Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Everyone has the best intentions.</li> <li>○ Listen with an open mind and heart.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• What is said here stays here.</li> <li>• Have fun.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</a></p>



<b>Approve Meeting Minutes</b>	Minutes from February 23, 2024 were approved as presented.
<b>Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation</b>	<p>Evaluation tool: <a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhijlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhijlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</a></p> <p>The purpose of this Task Force was reviewed, as stated in the <a href="#">Ordinance</a>. “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>
<b>Connecting question</b>	Members shared their motivations to join this task force.
<b>History &amp; Purpose</b>	<p>Ray gave a brief overview of the history and purpose of the Child and Family Well-being Task Force.</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 2020: The Child and Family Action Plan was passed, which called for the creation of the task force.</li> <li>• December 2020: The ordinance that created the task force was passed.</li> <li>• January 2021: The task force held its first meeting.</li> <li>• March 2021: The County Council asked the task force for recommendations on how to spend \$44 million on childcare. Money was provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council wanted most of the money to go to capital projects.</li> <li>○ There was a discussion regarding the lack of funds going to staff development and ongoing concern that newly built centers won't have adequate staffing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• October 2021: The task force completed a report with recommendations regarding ARPA funding.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council members Brown and Frazey recommended that \$22 million go to childcare. The task force recommended not all of it go to capital projects. The final budget for all the ARPA dollars earmarked \$13.5 million for childcare, however \$11-12 million ended up going to capital projects.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 2022: The Healthy Children's Fund (HCF) was passed by 19 votes.</li> <li>• Founding members that are still part of the Task Force: Beverly, Vesla, Ray, Jen, Sterling, and Anne</li> </ul> <p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop processes and procedures to ensure the Task Force's work is based on equity principles, with a focus on racial equity, family engagement, and results-based approach.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations for County infrastructure to promote child and family wellbeing.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations for adopting a “children and families first” approach in County policy and funding decisions across all departments.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop recommendations to promote shared governmental and community accountability for child and family results.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations for coordinating and enhancing existing county initiatives impacting young children and their families.</li> <li>• Develop recommendations for new or enhanced funding streams to support child and family programs and services aligned with desired results.</li> <li>• Although not in the ordinance, the task force intends to track the progress of these recommendations.</li> <li>• Colton shared the about the subcommittee groups within the task force. These groups can change as needed depending on what the task force may be asked to do or what they are supposed to do.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HCF group– does work around the Healthy Children’s Fund</li> <li>○ Issues group – as new issues arise that will impact children and families, this group will bring research and questions for learning and discussion the task force as a whole.</li> <li>○ Accountability group – will track the status of recommendations made to Council</li> <li>○ Rapid Response group – convenes only when the task force needs a quick response to an issue. An example is when the task force provided input on the Comprehensive Plan on short notice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Adjournment</b>	Meeting adjourned at 1:55 pm.
<b>Health Children’s Fund (HCF)</b>	<p>Meeting reconvened.</p> <p>Introduction of the Ordinance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah provided an overview of the first section of the ordinance, highlighting its purpose to support young people, children, and their families. She emphasized the importance of early learning, citing studies showing that 90% of the human brain develops before the age of 5. She also noted the lack of access to early learning in Whatcom County, particularly in rural areas, and the benefits of high-quality preschool education.</li> <li>• She discussed the Healthy Children’s Fund, an effort to provide critical resources for children and families through early learning, care, and support of vulnerable children. She reiterated the fund’s goals, including increasing the percentage of children who are kindergarten-ready and the number of early learning slots in Whatcom County.</li> </ul> <p>Proposed Levy Lid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed levy lid which would permit the county to increase its regular property tax levy by 19 cents per \$1,000 of assessed evaluation resulting in a regular property tax levy of 94 cents per \$1,000 of assessed evaluation.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Calculated using the regular property tax rate and 2022 based on total assessed value in 2021 and to increase the levy allowed by 84.55 RCW. The amount collected in 2023 and the following 9 years will be approximately 8,200,000.00.</li> <li>○ \$9,814,001.00 was collected in 2023.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



#### Eligibility Expenditures

- The eligible expenditures of the Healthy Children’s Fund, which are exclusively used for increasing affordable, high-quality, professional, and accessible early learning and childcare opportunities. The fund addresses priorities such as affordability, quality, professionalism, and accessibility of early learning and childcare services.
- The fund also helps vulnerable children of all backgrounds, including homeless and at-risk children. It expands mental and behavioral health services and prevents and reduces homelessness. The fund also supports parents of vulnerable children. However, services funded under this section do not include those already funded through the continuum of care system for homelessness.
- Sarah highlighted the fund’s focus on equity, aiming to decrease disparities by race, income, and geography. The fund also aims to impact the system rather than just providing funds, making county processes efficient and easy to navigate. The fund serves as a model for government and partner accountability and transparency.

#### Funding Requirements and Limitations

- The next section discusses audits and oversight, which are also under funding requirements and limitations. Independent performance audits and oversight ensure that taxpayer money is spent effectively to achieve the goals adopted by the County Council and endorsed by the voters through the passage of the levy.
- The Healthy Children’s Fund is used exclusively to sustain an increase in overall public expenditures for eligible services. The fund should not be used in lieu of Federal, state, county, city, or school district funding already committed for providing outlined services.
- All service providers, vendors, and subcontractors of the Healthy Children’s Fund shall be selected by fund administrators in compliance with county purchasing procedures. All service providers must have and adhere to robust anti-discrimination and child protection policies.
- All contracts for service resulting from the Healthy Children’s Fund should state the contract’s objective, whether from this ordinance or the community’s Health Improvement Plan.
- Reimbursements to the county for administrative costs, evaluation, and overhead shall be limited to 9% of levy proceeds, with up to 3% used for auditing and evaluation.
- The Healthy Children’s Fund may maintain reserve funds. It is intended that substantially all levy proceeds will be used for the purposes set forth in this ordinance within the 10-year levy period.
- Funding goals should demonstrate measurable outcomes showing progress towards desired results. They should be community-centered, provide opportunities for innovation, adhere to Whatcom county purchasing policies, and provide technical assistance to applicants as needed.
- The first section of the ordinance was drafted specifically to prevent ARPA money from moving from childcare after health insurance.
- Anti-discrimination child protection policies are relevant, especially for churches that run childcare. They can receive Healthy Children’s Fund money if they do not discriminate in their hiring.



- Discussed four main funding mechanisms - RFP, MRSC roster, inter-local agreement, and sole source contract.

#### Implementation Plan Overview

- The Department of Health will serve as the fund administrator to develop an implementation plan and oversee the implementation of the Healthy Children's Fund. If a more appropriate department or entity is created later, the role of fund administrator may be transferred to that new department or entity with the concurrence of the County Council
- The fund administrator will develop an implementation plan that identifies the specific strategies and projects to be funded and the outcomes to be achieved with the use of the levy proceeds. The implementation plan will be developed in collaboration with the Child and Family Wellbeing Task Force and approved by the County Council.
- The implementation plan, including the spending plan, will be open to and shared with the public before submitting to the county executive. The fund administrator will seek input from relevant advisory groups, including the Child and Family Wellbeing Task Force.
- The implementation plan will include details of fund allocations across eligible expenditures and strategies, working as a percentage of the fund revenue. It will also provide an overview of the granting/contracting processes that includes opportunities for community members to provide input into the fund allocation decisions.
- The initial 2-year Implementation Plan will allocate no less than 55% and no more than 68% of levy revenue and proceeds to improving early learning and care. It will also allocate no less than 20% and no more than 30% of levy revenue and proceeds to supporting vulnerable children. Adjustments may be made to the allocations by County Council based on the information reflected in the independent audit, recommendations by the Child and Family Wellbeing Task Force, and changes in State and Federal funding availability.
- There was a discussion on leveraging ARPA dollars and state money for capital expenditures to build childcare centers. The Healthy Children's Fund dollars will be used to train staff for these centers. The goal is to take advantage of State and Federal funding to lessen the burden on local resources.

#### Community Engagement

- Who was on the Implementation Planning Team?
  - Representatives from Whatcom County Health and Community Services, the Executive's Office and community group members.
- What advisory groups shared feedback?
  - Child and Family Well-being Task Force, Healthy Whatcom, Whatcom Child Care Coalition, Business and Commerce Committee, Public Health Advisory Board, County Council
- There were 452 comments on the first draft of the Implementation Plan.



- The Implementation team formed a strategy ad hoc team with reps from the several advisory groups as subject matter experts, and the solutions were evaluated by subject matter. Experts who developed cost and estimates and looked at the required focus areas for funding and applied community developed criteria.

#### Early Learning & Care and Supporting Vulnerable Children Strategies

- Discussed strategies through the implementation plan after the ordinance, including providing funds for small capital projects to expand, renovate, or repurpose facilities, coordinating current and developing additional pathways to ensure a stable workforce, and improving access through subsidies to reduce the cost for programs for children.
- Discussed the concept of subsidies for families to reduce the cost of childcare. The mechanism for how these subsidies will be implemented is still up for discussion. The subsidies could either go to the provider who will subsidize the family or be subsidized before the family gets into the center.
- Discussed supporting vulnerable children by recruiting a mental and behavioral health workforce, developing and expanding resources for programs for families who disproportionately experience housing instability, expanding and enhancing early parenting supports, and integrating and co-locating services via coordinated access to resource navigation. Noted that this piece cannot go through the typical coordinated entry system.

#### Metrics & Evaluation – Independent, performance audits and oversight

- An independent auditor will conduct a performance audit every year, with the audit process developed in consultation with the child and family well-being task force. The audit will collect and review data, evaluate progress towards achieving goals and strategies, collect and report on feedback from stakeholders, and include recommendations for improvements or adjustments.
- Clarified that the independent audit will occur every other year, and an annual report will be written and delivered to the Public and County Council.
- The goals of the evaluation are: strategic learning and accountability, evaluating the effects of the Healthy Children's Fund, ensuring the most effective use of public funds, and communicating data and results clearly.
  - Discussed the use of Results Based Accountability (RBA) as part of the evaluation tactics.
- There is an invitation by Stanford to apply for their RFP to get a RAPID survey, which contributes to building a new implementation plan and evaluating the lives of children and families.
- Also discussed the child wellness survey delivered through the Department of Health, which explores how families are doing by asking them about their health and development of their child.
- Village Reach, external consultants, will develop the Healthy Children's Fund evaluation plan over the next three months. The implementation of the evaluation plan will be done by Whatcom County Health and Community Services and an internal evaluator.
- Discussed the engagement of stakeholders in the creation of the plan, with multiple opportunities to provide feedback between now and the end of June.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The three-part accountability system for the Healthy Children’s Fund, includes an external audit every two years, an annual report by the task force, and the allowance that the responsibility of fund administrator can be relocated.</li> <li>• Summarized the evaluation process, which includes an external auditor, an internal evaluator and contractors, the RAPID survey, and program-level evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarah touched on the topic of leveraging ARPA dollars for capital expansion. The total RFAs amount to \$13 million, which includes the donation of the Laurel Forest land for a project.</li> <li>• The Imagine contract was mentioned, which supports the initiation of 15 new home-based childcare businesses. They are currently reviewing applicants for a potential addition of 114 new slots and over 2 million dollars’ worth of resources.</li> <li>• Sarah shared information about various funding mechanisms they are working on, including subsidies, an innovation fund, hubs, a professional development network, capital and expansion, and drop-in care.</li> <li>• The work being done for vulnerable children, includes a mental and behavioral health RFP, supports in the maternal health and infant world, a peer-to-peer support RFP for training, a doula program for Medicaid-eligible parents, a housing RFP that has already closed, and a basic needs RFP focusing on diapers and formulas.</li> <li>• Sarah explained the concept of innovation, which will look a lot like auxiliary services, such as hiring a speech pathologist or a behavioral health specialist.</li> <li>• Council member Scanlon posed a budget question regarding the allocation in the ordinance, which includes 55% for early learning and 20 to 36% for vulnerable children. He asked whether there are sub-allocations under early learning and care, and if the percentage allocation would remain the same across the whole ten years.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sarah said that the percentage allocation would fluctuate.</li> <li>○ It was also advised that the percentages are outlined in the Implementation Plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Public comment</b>	No public comment.
<b>Closing</b>	Meeting adjourned at 4:51 pm
<b>Next Meeting</b>	<b>Next regular meeting: April 22, 2024</b> <b><u>Location: Hybrid</u></b>