

JEFFERSON COUNTY EARLY LEARNING & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

BACKGROUND

Even before the pandemic, the lack of available child care was at a crisis level in Jefferson County. As of July, 2024 the Washington State Department of Children Youth & Families (DCYF) estimated that of the 907 children eligible* in Jefferson County, only 96 were enrolled in licensed early learning child care¹. This represents less than 15% of the total need.

THE CASE FOR EARLY LEARNING & FAMILY SUPPORT



- ▶ **For Children:** 90% of brain development happens in the first five years; early childhood education increases kindergarten preparedness so children start school ready to learn; and participation in a quality early learning program lowers risk factors and improves health outcomes in adulthood. According to the National Education Association, children in early childhood education programs are less likely to repeat a grade, less likely to be identified as having special needs, more likely to graduate from college, and are higher earners in the workforce.
- ▶ **For The Workforce:** Parents rely on childcare to help them enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce. Current licensed availability meets the need of less than 15% of children under six whose parents are in the workforce and need care. Based on estimates provided by Washington State Department of Commerce employers in our region incur almost \$94 million per year in compensation and turnover costs for workers arriving late or leaving early as a result of child care issues and for workers who leave employment because of a lack of child care; 2,900 employees with children under six years of age quit a job due to challenges related to child care; and 1,400 employees with children under the age of six were fired from work due to challenges related to child care.
- ▶ **For Families:** 25% of Jefferson County households are considered ALICE families (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). These families earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county. Among Jefferson County's combined ALICE/poverty households, 40% have school-aged children. ALICE families have experienced heightened social and economic burdens as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and are increasingly in need of help meeting their basic needs (e.g., shelter, health care, food, child care).
- ▶ **Food Security:** Almost half of all children in Jefferson County live under 185% of the federal poverty level and qualify for free or reduced lunch. One in five 8th and 12th graders report missing meals or eating less due to no money. Half (53%) of infants born to families in Jefferson County qualify for WIC, and half of births are to families who qualify for Medicaid, compared to 41% statewide.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS

- ▶ **Serve more families:** An estimated 30 families and up to 42 children ages 0 to 5 will be enrolled in child care. An additional 50 families will access support services through the Family Resource Navigator.
- ▶ **Improve workforce recruitment and retention:** Employees will be able to work knowing that they have access to safe, quality, affordable child care.
- ▶ **Address food and nutrition insecurity:** An additional 75 families will receive food boxes during out-of-school times and an additional 15,000 meals will be prepared and distributed throughout Jefferson County.

EARLY LEARNING & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER – BUDGET: \$4,715,000

CAPITAL FUNDING

U.S. Congressionally Directed Appropriation	\$1,375,000.00
Government Pledges.....	\$290,000.00
Jefferson Healthcare.....	\$50,000.00
Washington State Department of Commerce.....	\$1,000,000.00
Community Development Block Grant.....	\$2,000,000.00
TOTAL To-Date.....	\$4,715,000.00

* All caregivers in the workforce

¹ <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards/child-care-need-supply-data>

THE VISION

To enable children and families in our community to thrive by establishing a hub for early learning, family support, and access to fresh, locally-sourced, healthy food.

THE PROJECT

The early learning and family support center will be built on property owned by the Port Townsend School District. The property is centrally located and within 5 minutes of the largest employers in Jefferson County. The site will accommodate a 7,000+ square foot facility, providing child care for up to 42 children, support meal preparation and delivery for more than 75 families, and facilitate family resource navigation for more than 50 families. The facility will be owned and operated by the Olympic Peninsula YMCA.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The vision for this project is the result of a partnership between **Jefferson Healthcare, Port Townsend School District, Jefferson County, City of Port Townsend, Peninsula College,** and the **Olympic Peninsula YMCA.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional information about the Jefferson County Early Learning & Family Support Center can be found at <https://www.olympicpeninsulaymca.org/early-learning-port-townsend>.

Questions, comments, or ideas regarding this project may be sent to info@olympicpeninsulaymca.org.

EARLY LEARNING

- ▶ High quality, licensed child care for 42 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.
- ▶ 30% of spots reserved for families eligible for ECEAP and/or WCCC (state subsidy)
- ▶ Nine full-time-equivalent staff, and one to two office staff
- ▶ Partnership with Peninsula College Early Childhood Education Program
- ▶ Anticipated hours: 6:45 am to 7:15 pm

MEALS/FOOD & NUTRITION SECURITY

- ▶ Providing food & nutrition support for kids and families throughout Jefferson County
- ▶ Early Learning Center/YMCA After-School Programs – meals and snacks
- ▶ YMCA Summer Day Camp & East Jefferson County Summer School – meals and snacks
- ▶ Out-of-School Time (Summers & School Breaks) – family food boxes

FAMILY SUPPORT

- ▶ Providing one-to-one support for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families – 25% of Jefferson County households
- ▶ Storage for diaper and clothing bank
- ▶ Meeting room for parenting classes and preschool playgroups

