

A Year of Impact

2025

Our Vision: Every Child in Our Community Thrives

This vision is not just a statement—it's a commitment to the heart of our community: our children. But today, that commitment is under threat.

In recent months, Support for Early Learning & Families (SELF), along with many other early childhood programs across our region, has suffered painful losses in funding and vital services that support young children and families. And the worst may be yet to come. More cuts are on the horizon, and with each one, we risk turning our backs on the very foundation of a thriving society.

It's hard to understand how programs that nurture our youngest children—those in their most critical years of development—are seen as expendable. From birth to age five, a child's brain is growing faster than it ever will again. These early years shape everything: learning, behavior, health, and future success. When we cut funding or treat early care and education as optional, we don't just delay progress—we derail it.

High-quality early childhood programs are not a luxury. They are a lifeline. They help children build essential skills, prepare them for school, and support working families who are striving to give their children a better future. Without these supports, children fall behind—academically, socially, and emotionally. And the consequences echo for a lifetime: lower graduation rates, reduced earning potential, and increased reliance on social services.

The cost of inaction is staggering. But the cost of investment? It's hope. It's equity. It's a future where every child has the chance to thrive.

We must act now! Because when we invest in children, we invest in the strength, resilience, and prosperity of our entire community.



Building small businesses and increasing access to child care

The Southwest Washington Child Care Partnership was formed in 2021 to help get child care businesses open and running successfully. Fourteen businesses have received the support they needed to successfully launch their programs. Four more prospective businesses are in development. Monthly cohort meetings provide relationship building and technical assistance to foster peer support. Providers also received training and implemented a new system to provide financial tracking and improved parent engagement. In June 2025, the program received the Choice Grant to support the expansion of the project into Cowlitz County. More than 100 new child care slots have opened thanks to this program.

Family child care providers have dropped 20% in the past five years



Working together across the state

Washington Communities for Children (WCFC) is a network of coalitions across the state dedicated to improving the well-being of children, families, and communities. SELF proudly serves as the SW Washington regional lead representing Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, Clark, Skamania, Klickitat, and South Pacific counties. This body of work connects local and statewide efforts to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities, focusing on advocacy and legislation at the state level. Each year SELF joins WCFC in Olympia for the annual Early Learning Advocacy Day to engage with policymakers and represent the child care needs of SW Washington.

“Monthly surprises of books have made reading a joyful habit in our home.”

- DPIL PARENT

Hello Dolly!

SELF became an affiliate of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) in 2021, and to date we've helped put 374,935 free, high-quality books into the hands of birth to age five children in our communities! We believe it is part of our core mission to advocate and cultivate the love of reading for the children and families in our community and this program has become one of the most recognized hallmarks of SELF's work. With heartfelt thanks, the program is made possible through state funding from OSPI, which covers half the cost of books and shipping, and the generosity of hundreds of donors who help fund the rest.

374,935 books delivered to local doorsteps



Shared Services Alliance

The SW Alliance for Child Care Success creates a robust support system to help child care businesses across SW Washington build and sustain quality early learning programs. SELF and ESD 112's Child Care Aware team have worked this past year to create an infrastructure to help streamline operations, connect business owners with the tools, services and resources they need, and remove barriers to building a successful child care business. Local providers will be part of a shared network that offers the support they need to be successful business owners and quality child care providers. A survey launched this winter provided insights from providers about their successes, as well as the systemic challenges they face including staffing, time constraints, support for children with complex needs, and equity. The findings will help shape future endeavors to best support providers in operating their businesses efficiently.

60% of kids under six have all parents in the workforce



Dedication to child care

Providing high-quality child care is an important component of our work. We work alongside ESD 112, providing staffing & Human Resource services for their early care and education programs. Our contractual partnership consists of 10 centers and 170 staff.

We work hard to ensure our employees are recognized for their leadership, caring relationships and enduring commitment to early care and education. One way we honor staff is by awarding 'Employee Of The Quarter.' This special recognition is made even more meaningful because it comes from peer nominations and votes! We're deeply grateful to our passionate staff for their heartfelt commitment to caring for our children.



Clark County Children's Council

At the 2023 Child Care Summit, the Children's Council in Clark County was announced. Since then, eleven dedicated members from across the community have worked to address the child care crisis, promote equity, and reform systems for families. PointNorth, a local woman- and minority-owned business, has guided the council in setting strategic goals.

Ongoing funding is essential to maintain progress. Efforts are underway to secure legislative and private support. The council also launched a new website (ccchildrenscouncil.com) and is active on social media platforms.

Over 50% of Washington families report spending time outdoors together weekly



Let's talk about the child care crisis

Evolving from the Child Care Summit in 2023, a series of Community Conversations fostered meaningful discussions surrounding the challenges and solutions facing families in need of quality child care. This past year, fifteen sessions were held with community members, industry experts and policy makers to highlight the critical role of accessible, high-quality child care and drive action for additional supports. Common concerns were workforce shortages, affordability, and limited flexible child care options were raised. Insights from these conversations are now informing policy recommendations and shaping future investments in child care infrastructure. The estimated SW Washington annual economic loss due to the child care crisis is \$585.1 million. This includes lost income to families, reduced productivity for employers and decreased tax revenue for communities.

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