

The State of Child Care in Pierce County



A Report on Cost and Availability of Child Care in Pierce County
October, 2018



About This Report

In May 2018, Project Child Success (PCS) was contracted by the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation to summarize the state of child care in Pierce County. Scope of work included analysis of the cost and availability of childcare, a review of the utilization of the Working Connections Child Care Benefit program, and stories from families and child care providers about their real-life experiences accessing childcare in Pierce County.

This report does not include findings on the quality of child care in Pierce County. While the intent of this report was to focus on access and affordability, we acknowledge that quality care is also an important factor that must be addressed. Information about Washington State's quality rating system, Early Achievers, is available at dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/early-achievers

A high-level summary of the findings of this report will be presented at the United Way of Pierce County's Poverty to Possibilities Summit on November 7th, 2018.

Acknowledgments

This report was a collaborative project made possible by support of multiple agencies. Data related to the Working Connections Child Care Benefits came from publicly available data from the following Washington State agencies: Department of Early Learning (DEL), Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA) and the Children's Alliance contributed data and analysis related to the state of child care in Pierce County.

Family stories were gathered at focus groups hosted by partner organizations who regularly engage communities using the Working Connections benefits. Partners included Goodwill, Bethel School District, and the Tacoma Housing Authority. An online survey was also distributed.

Child care provider stories were gathered via email communication, phone interviews, and an online survey.

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INTRODUCTION

Pierce County families, like their counterparts in many communities, often struggle to find affordable, accessible, high quality child care when they need it. Simultaneously, the early learning professionals who work in this field find it difficult to operate profitable businesses. For those who can afford the cost of care, availability is a barrier. Families report contacting dozens of facilities only to be added to long waiting lists, and ultimately having to settle for lower quality care than they expect for their children.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) Working Connections Child Care program subsidizes the cost of child care at a licensed center or home provider for families with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level. However, there are obstacles for both providers and families to use this subsidy which this report describes.

These challenges experienced by families with young children are felt, albeit unknowingly, by the entire community. Employers report they cannot find the talent they need while many parents remain out of the workforce because their paychecks would be insufficient to cover the cost of child care. Solving these problems for families and child care providers is imperative to the long-term success and health of Pierce County residents.

This report endeavors to lay out the challenges related to child care, and present concrete opportunities to address the problem.

PIERCE COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

Pierce County is the second most populous county in Washington State, and is home to over 65,000 children under the age of six. Supporting young children and their caregivers during this developmental stage is critical to a healthy society, as the development of a child’s brain architecture in the first few years of life provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2018).

| | Pierce County | WA |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| Age and Family Composition | | |
| Total population | 832,896 | 7,073,146 |
| Number of children 0-5 (percent of total population) | 65,179 (7.8%) | 516,781 (7.3%) |
| Civilian Veterans: individuals 18 and older | 14.1% | 10.2% |
| % of Children < 6 living with single parent (per total population < 6) | 30.3% | 28.6% |
| Number of households with grandparents responsible for grandchildren <18 years old | 4,082 | 29,566 |
| Immigrants (foreign born, naturalized US citizen) | 5.2% | 6.3% |
| Income and Employment | | |
| Median Household Income (in the last 12 months) | \$61,468 | \$62,848 |
| Unemployment Rate (population 16 and older) | 7.8% | 6.8% |
| % of families with all parents working (with children 0-5) | 56.0% | 59.1% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2012-2016

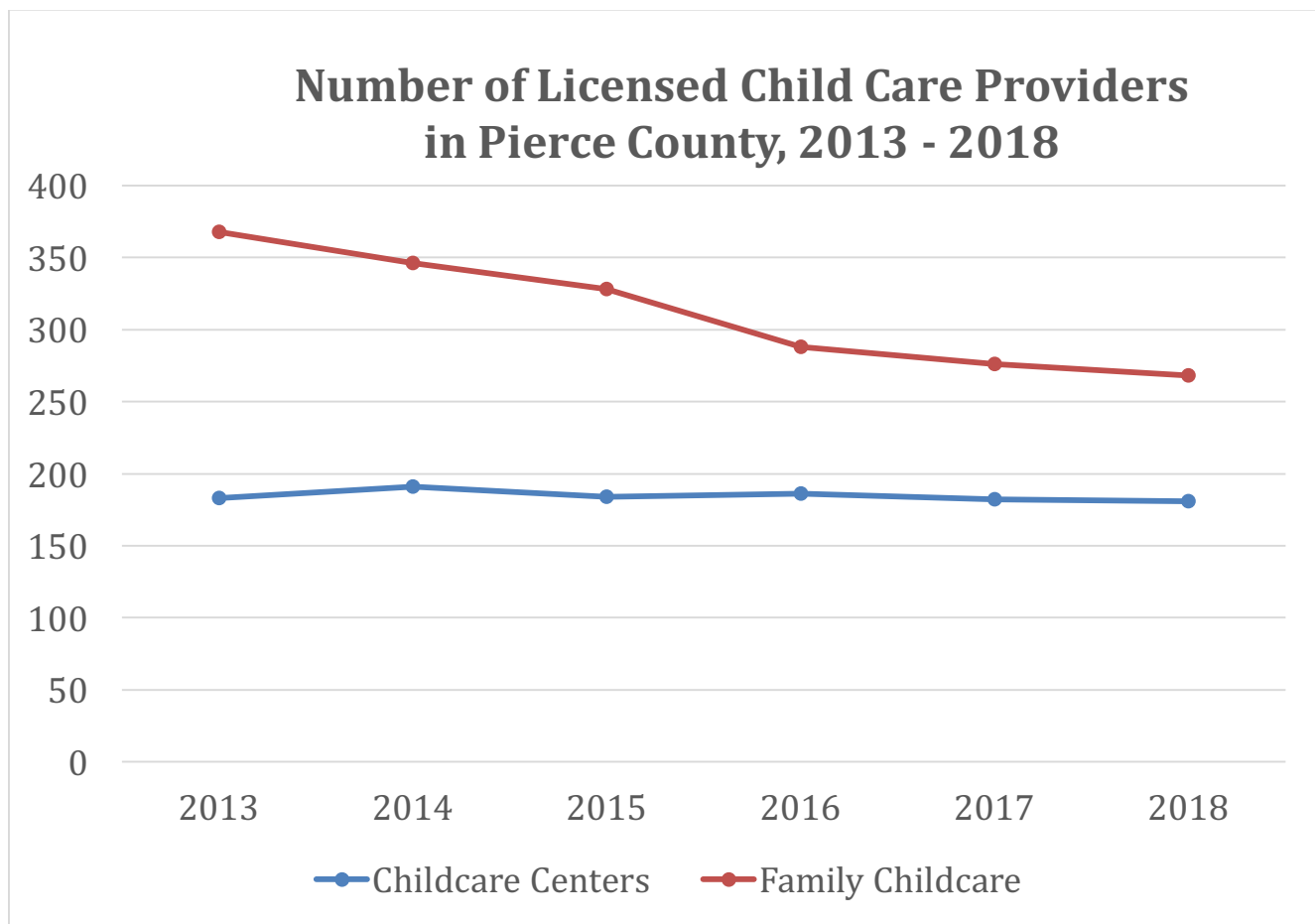
CHILD CARE – SUPPLY, COSTS, & WAGES

Supply

The number of child care providers in Pierce County has steadily declined over the past five years, with an 18.5 percent reduction in total providers.

| Year | Number of Licensed Child Care Centers | Number of Licensed Family Child Care Homes | Total |
|------|---------------------------------------|--|-------|
| 2018 | 181 | 268 | 449 |
| 2017 | 182 | 276 | 458 |
| 2016 | 186 | 288 | 474 |
| 2015 | 184 | 328 | 512 |
| 2014 | 191 | 346 | 537 |
| 2013 | 183 | 368 | 551 |

Source: Child Care Aware of WA, 2013 – 2018 Data Reports: Trends, Childcare Supply, Cost of Care, & Demand for Referrals



Source: Child Care Aware of WA, 2013 – 2018 Data Reports: Trends, Childcare Supply, Cost of Care, & Demand for Referrals

Cost

Meanwhile, the cost of care for families continues to rise. Families spend a significant amount of their income on child care. The Economic Policy Institute recommends families spend less than ten percent of household income on child care, a percentage far out of reach for most families. Washington State in particular struggles with child care affordability and ranks as one of the least affordable states in several categories.

Child Care Center Rates: Monthly Average (Self-reported by Providers)

| Age Group | Pierce County | WA |
|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Infant | \$1017 | \$1,264 |
| Toddler | \$875 | \$1,069 |
| Preschool | \$790 | \$957 |

Sources: Child Care Aware of Washington, September 2018

Child Care Aware of America. "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care". 2017

Family Child Care Rates: Monthly Average (Self-reported by Providers)

| Age Group | Pierce County | WA |
|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Infant | \$808 | \$1,019 |
| Toddler | \$762 | \$886 |
| Preschool | \$701 | \$818 |

Sources: Child Care Aware of Washington, September 2018

Child Care Aware of America. "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care". 2017

Washington State's National Unaffordability Ratings

| Category | Ranking |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Center-Based Infant Care | 7 th least affordable |
| Family Child Care for Infants | 2 nd least affordable |
| Center-Based Toddler Care | 7 th least affordable |
| Family Child Care for Toddlers | 4 th least affordable |
| Center-Based 4-year Old Care | 7 th least affordable |

Source: Child Care Aware of America. "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care". 2017

Child Care Costs for a Family of 4 in Pierce County (2 adults working, 1 infant, 1 preschooler)

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Child care center rate for infants ¹ | \$1,017 |
| Child care center rate for preschoolers ¹ | \$790 |
| Total child care costs for family of 4¹ | \$1,807 |
| Recommended % of income to spend on child care ² | 10% |
| Median Household Income ³ | \$61,468 |
| Percentage of income spent on child care | 35% |

Source:

1. Child Care Aware of Washington, September 2018
2. Economic Policy Institute, "High quality child care is out of reach for working families", October 6, 2015.
3. U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2012-2016

Child Care Provider Wages

Despite the decreasing supply, and increased costs, child care providers remain some of the lowest paid professionals among all industries in Washington State.

Compensation Comparisons

| Position | Average Annual Salary |
|--|-----------------------|
| Child Care Center Teacher ¹ | \$29,604 |
| Child Care Center Director ¹ | \$40,248 |
| Family Child Care Provider ¹ | \$33,096 |
| K-12 Teacher (Statewide) ² | \$58,821 |
| Food Service Worker (Statewide) ³ | \$30,346 |
| Retail Sales Worker (Statewide) ³ | \$33,667 |

Sources:

1. Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report 2018
2. Office of the Superintendent Public Instruction, Historical Comparison of Statewide School District Personnel, 2016-2017
3. Employment Security Department of WA State, Workforce Development Council OID List, 8/21/2018

Licensed Center Staff Monthly Wages

A. Full-Time Staff

| Position | Min | Max | Average |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Director | \$1,750 | \$9,504 | \$3,354 |
| Program Manager | \$1,800 | \$8,750 | \$2,792 |
| Administrator | \$1,764 | \$8,500 | \$3,065 |
| Additional Staff | \$1,745 | \$9,810 | \$2,459 |
| Lead Teacher | \$1,750 | \$8,320 | \$2,467 |
| Assistant Teacher | \$1,733 | \$9,169 | \$2,429 |

Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report 2018

B. Part-Time Staff

| Position | Min | Max | Average |
|-------------------|-------|---------|---------|
| Director | \$367 | \$3,210 | \$1,276 |
| Program Manager | \$500 | \$2,405 | \$1,440 |
| Administrator | \$258 | \$4,141 | \$1,572 |
| Additional Staff | \$83 | \$4,873 | \$1,124 |
| Lead Teacher | \$220 | \$1,725 | \$1,277 |
| Assistant Teacher | \$120 | \$1,725 | \$1,225 |

Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report 2018

Licensed Family Child Care Staff Monthly Wages

A. Full-Time Staff

| Position | Min | Max | Average |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Program Manager | \$1,800 | \$5,000 | \$2,758 |
| Administrator | \$1,800 | \$5,000 | \$2,639 |
| Additional Staff | \$1,800 | \$5,000 | \$2,236 |
| Lead Teacher | \$1,733 | \$6,000 | \$2,657 |
| Assistant Teacher | \$1,750 | \$3,700 | \$2,389 |

Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report 2018

B. Part-Time Staff

| Position | Min | Max | Average |
|-------------------|-------|---------|---------|
| Program Manager | \$300 | \$1,700 | \$1,060 |
| Administrator | \$400 | \$1,600 | \$1,150 |
| Additional Staff | \$100 | \$1,700 | \$1,074 |
| Lead Teacher | \$300 | \$1,700 | \$1,056 |
| Assistant Teacher | \$100 | \$2,200 | \$1,100 |

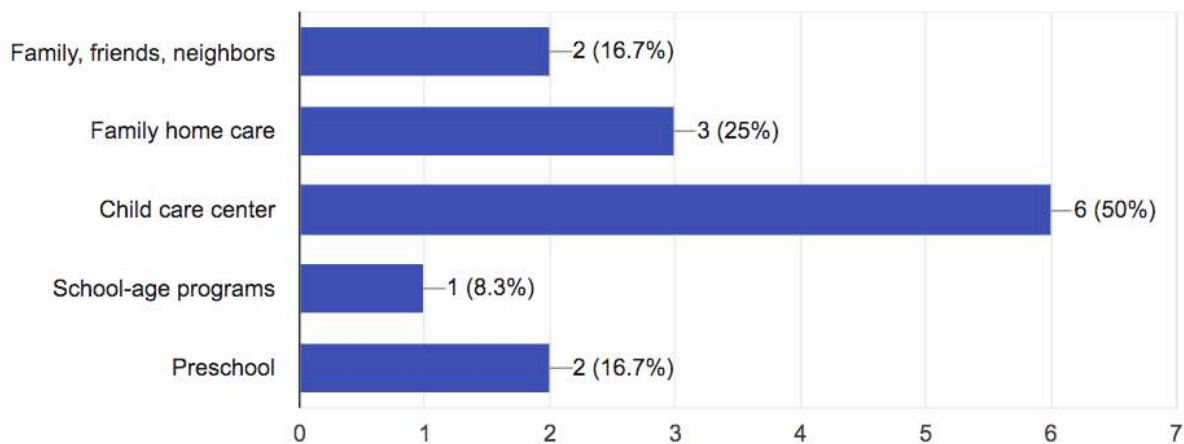
Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report 2018

CHILD CARE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE – COST VS. QUALITY

As part of this report, Project Child Success reached out to a small number of child care providers to gain stories and perspective of what providers are experiencing in the field and how they are balancing costs and quality. The sample size is not a representative sample, and no conclusions can be drawn from the data. Rather, personal stories were collected to add context to the quantitative data. The consistent narrative is wages must remain low, and providers are cutting corners wherever they can, and depending on other types of local community funding to supplement the costs.

What type of child care do you provide?

12 responses



How have you been managing costs while maintaining high quality?

Having to cut back on help and anything extra that would be helpful in the children's learning.

Our church considers this a ministry to the community and helps supplement when necessary. Most of our other families though can afford our rates!

One way is to pay minimum wage and I don't like doing that. Another way is to take fewer families with working connections and take in a little more.

Very little WCCC enrollments not a big issue.

If a family can't pay child care then they shouldn't have had children

I do not take many state paid children unfortunately

We just budget our income as carefully as we can. Enrollment fluctuates from year to year, so we

have to be mindful of income, particularly with regard to staffing. We cut corners elsewhere to ensure we can pay our assistant what she's worth. Quality of care is most impacted by the quality of the caregiver.

We are not able to offer our staff a good wage or any benefits which causes turnover and reduces the quality care we are able to offer.

The quality is high because everyone here cares about children. But no one who works with the children is paid enough so I can't say we are managing costs.

We are a preschool supported by a church which helps. Costs are going up which is harder to make work for our families.

It is difficult and we have to manage expenses very carefully and often go without things we really need.

Source: Project Child Success Survey, October 2018

What else would you like us to know?

Child care for school age kids must be state funded/subsidized. The time kids spend with us is crucial to their Social Emotional development which schools are unable to provide. School age programs should be an opportunity for kids, not a necessity for working families.

I am trying to phase out working connections by only accepting cash from now on.

I think it is sad that when a person on working connections finds a job that pays too much they are cut off when they usually need more time to save some money.

Keeping the center open is getting harder. I have to pay workers more and they have better jobs options. And regulations are hard to keep up with.

We would like to have more WCCC enrollment but generally run full so don't have space on short notice. This impacts our Early Achievers award money.

Don't force us to take families that can't pay and give us less than half of what families pay

I also am not willing now to go to a technical sign in so I will not accept any WCCC.

DSHS does not communicate well with their clients or the providers. the wait times for clients who call in are exceptionally long and sometimes they get different answers depending on who answers the phone.

Source: Project Child Success Survey, October 2018

WORKING CONNECTIONS CHILD CARE BENEFITS

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is a program through the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) that helps low income families pay for child care while they work or meet WorkFirst participation requirements. As funds are available, when a family qualifies for child care subsidy benefits and chooses an eligible provider, the state pays a portion of the cost of child care.

Basic eligibility requirements include:

- The child who needs subsidized care must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident
- The family must live in Washington State
- Family income must be at or below 200% the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
- The parent must be employed or self-employed in legal, income-generating, taxable activities; or the parent must meet all TANF/WorkFirst requirements
- The parent must complete the WCCC application and verification process through DSHS

Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning. "Working Connections Child Care Benefit"

Income eligibility is based on 200% of Federal Poverty Level Guidelines which are as follows:

| Family Size | 200% FPL (Monthly Income) |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | \$2,024 |
| 2 | \$2,744 |
| 3 | \$3,464 |
| 4 | \$4,184 |
| 5 | \$4,904 |
| 6 | \$5,624 |
| 7 | \$6,344 |
| 8 | \$7,064 |
| 9 | \$7,784 |
| 10 | \$8,504 |

Source: U.S. Department of Healthy & Human Services Poverty Guidelines

Working Connections Child Care In Pierce County

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of families using the WCCC ¹ | 6,591 |
| Number of children covered by WCCC ¹ | 11,082 |
| Licensed Child Care Centers that accept WCCC ² | 79% |
| Licensed Home Based Care Providers that accept WCCC ² | 60% |

Source:

1. DSHS Client Services Database, State Fiscal Year 2017, Pierce County
2. Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report

Subsidy Rates

WCCC pays child care providers less than the market rate as demonstrated by the table below. The percentage difference disproportionately affects child care centers over family child care providers, because family providers adhere to collective bargaining, whereas child care centers do not. With a reduction in provider capacity, there is a growing concern amongst both types of providers that fewer will accept families on WCCC subsidy. This can lead to inequity in access to child care based on income.

Cost of Market Rate Licensed Child Care Compared to Subsidies

| | Infant | Toddler | Preschool |
|--|---------|---------|-----------|
| Child Care Center Market Rate (Average self-reported by providers) ¹ | \$1,017 | \$875 | \$790 |
| Child Care Center Subsidy ² | \$841 | \$724 | \$637 |
| Percentage difference | 17.3% | 17.3% | 19.4% |
| Family Child Care Market Rate (Average self-reported by providers) ¹ | \$808 | \$762 | \$701 |
| Family Child Care Subsidy ² | \$803 | \$698 | \$589 |
| Percentage difference | 1% | 8.4% | 15.9% |

Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. Washington State Department of Early Learning 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report

Co-Payments

WCCC requires a monthly co-pay that increases as a household’s monthly income approaches 200% FPL. The co-pay starts at \$15 but increases to \$65 when the household earns more than 82% FPL. The co-pay increases by \$.50 for every dollar earned above 137.5% FPL. This means a family of three earning 199% FPL would pay \$605 per month in co-pays. While that is a significant amount for a family earning \$41,360 per year, it is still much less than the market rate.

There is also a phase out period when a family’s income exceeds 200% FPL up to 219% FPL. However, a family is not eligible if they are applying for WCCC with a monthly income above 200% FPL. The phase out is for families who already use the subsidy and have an increase in income. The difference between 200% and 220% for a family of three is \$346 per month, or just under \$2 per hour, a consideration for families experiencing a moderate increase in income.

| Working Connections Copay Calculation table Effective April 1, 2018 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|--------------|---------|-------------------------|---------|--|---------|--|----------------------------------|---|----------|-------------------------------|
| | Column 1 | Column 2 | Column 3 | | Column 4 | | Column 5 | | Column 6 | Column 7 | | Column 8 | Column 9 |
| If Countable Income is: | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Family Size | 100% of FPL | 200% FPL | 0 to 82% FPL | | More than 82% to 137.5% | | More than 137.5% to 200% | | 137.5% FPL | Phase Out Period** 201%-219% FPL | | 220% FPL | 85% state median income (SMI) |
| 1 | \$1,012 | \$2,024 | \$0 | \$830 | \$831 | \$1,392 | \$1,393 | \$2,024 | \$1,392 | \$2,025 | \$2,225 | \$2,226 | \$3,243 |
| 2 | \$1,372 | \$2,744 | \$0 | \$1,125 | \$1,126 | \$1,887 | \$1,888 | \$2,744 | \$1,887 | \$2,745 | \$3,017 | \$3,018 | \$4,241 |
| 3 | \$1,732 | \$3,464 | \$0 | \$1,420 | \$1,421 | \$2,382 | \$2,383 | \$3,464 | \$2,382 | \$3,465 | \$3,809 | \$3,810 | \$5,239 |
| 4 | \$2,092 | \$4,184 | \$0 | \$1,715 | \$1,716 | \$2,877 | \$2,878 | \$4,184 | \$2,877 | \$4,185 | \$4,601 | \$4,602 | \$6,237 |
| 5 | \$2,452 | \$4,904 | \$0 | \$2,011 | \$2,012 | \$3,372 | \$3,373 | \$4,904 | \$3,372 | \$4,905 | \$5,393 | \$5,394 | \$7,235 |
| 6 | \$2,812 | \$5,624 | \$0 | \$2,306 | \$2,307 | \$3,867 | \$3,868 | \$5,624 | \$3,867 | \$5,625 | \$6,185 | \$6,186 | \$8,233 |
| 7 | \$3,172 | \$6,344 | \$0 | \$2,601 | \$2,602 | \$4,362 | \$4,363 | \$6,344 | \$4,362 | \$6,345 | \$6,977 | \$6,978 | \$8,420 |
| 8 | \$3,532 | \$7,064 | \$0 | \$2,896 | \$2,897 | \$4,857 | \$4,858 | \$7,064 | \$4,857 | \$7,065 | \$7,769 | \$7,770 | \$8,607 |
| 9 | \$3,892 | \$7,784 | \$0 | \$3,191 | \$3,192 | \$5,352 | \$5,353 | \$7,784 | \$5,352 | \$7,785 | \$8,561 | \$8,562 | \$8,794 |
| 10 | \$4,252 | \$8,504 | \$0 | \$3,487 | \$3,488 | \$5,847 | \$5,848 | \$8,504 | \$5,847 | \$8,505 | \$9,353 | \$9,354 | \$8,981 |
| Copay | | If income is OVER 200% FPL Not Eligible | \$15 Copay | | \$65 Copay | | Subtract 137.5% FPL From Countable income, then multiply by .50 and add \$65 | | Subtract 137.5% FPL from 200% FPL, then multiply by .50 and add \$65 | | If income IS OVER 219% FPL at review, not eligible for Phase-Out. | | |

Source: Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. “The Child Care Subsidy Program”

The Pierce County child care providers surveyed also provided input regarding WCCC. Nine reported they currently accept the subsidy, however many limit the number of slots. Eight of the nine providers that accept the WCCC benefit have had families become ineligible while those children were in their care. Six of those eight reported families could not keep their children in care at the market rate.

If you currently accept, or have accepted, children whose families use the Working Connections child care benefit, what was your experience?

Cannot stand dealing with DSHS working connections. Late pay, over payment problems, no support and have to fight for the money owed to you.

It was a good experience.

Yes but now I take fewer because the comp is too small.

I have had to limit the number to only a few because of the amount I receive for them.

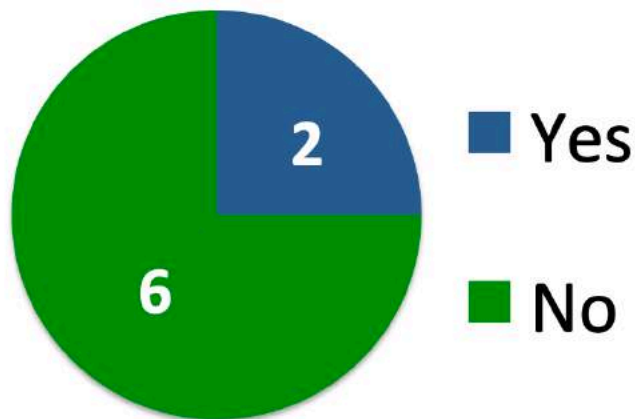
I am prepared to accept children who are paid for by subsidy, but currently have no children who qualify.

Yes, but it does not come close to our regular tuition so we have to tuition waiver the difference.

I did but it doesn't pay enough so we only take 1 or 2. Sometimes we don't have any.

Yes, the reimbursement rates are very low, especially when we are going to have to raise our pay rates when the new WACS (Washington Administrative Codes) come into effect with the new education requirements.

If you have had families with the Working Connections benefit who lost eligibility while you were providing child care, were those families able to keep paying market rates?



The WCCC Benefits Cliff

The 200% of FPL eligibility requirement for WCCC does not align with cost of living in Pierce County. Providers frequently report families becoming ineligible for the benefit and then consequently taking their children out of care because paying the market rate is not feasible. For those who qualify for WCCC and find a facility that will accept the subsidy, a family can easily find themselves with income over the low threshold eligibility. A family earning 220% of the FPL may still be experiencing poverty in Pierce County, and the loss of WCCC can feel like a significant reduction in income. Once a family loses their WCCC benefit, the percentage of income spent on child care significantly increases.

| Child Care Costs for Family of 3 in Pierce County at 220% of FPL (1 adult, 1 infant, 1 preschooler) | |
|---|----------------|
| Monthly Income at 220% FPL | \$3,810 |
| Child care center rate for infants | \$1,017 |
| Child care center rate for preschoolers | \$790 |
| Total Child Care Costs | \$1,807 |
| Percentage of income spent on child care | 47% |

Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. Washington State Department of Early Learning. Copay Calculation Tables. 2018

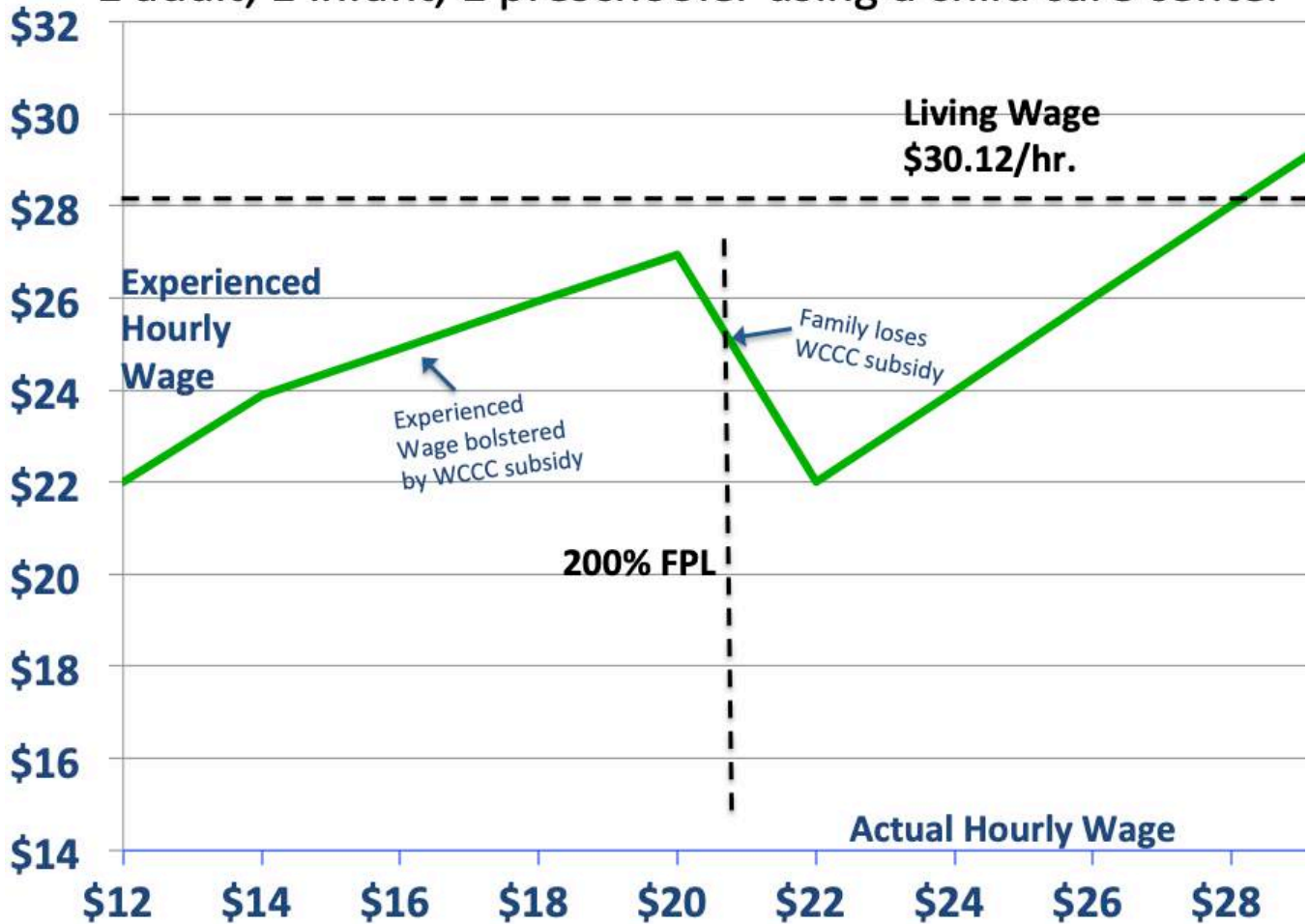
The graph below compares the potential earned wages versus the experienced wage of a family of three (1 adult, 1 infant, 1 preschooler) living at 220% of FPL who no longer qualifies for WCCC.

The Experienced Hourly Wage is a family's actual wages plus the value of the WCCC benefit. For this family of three the value of the benefit is \$1,807 based on the market rate for a child care center for an infant and preschooler. The Experienced Wage graph takes into account the escalating co-pays as the actual wage rises.

The living wage for each family size is based on the MIT Living Wage Calculator for Pierce County. These target wages are not precise for every family since each situation varies, and the MIT underestimates many costs. For instance, the calculator assumes this family of three would be paying \$1,142 per month in market rate rent and utilities which is probably unrealistic in 2018. Nevertheless, this living wage is a good estimate to visualize how much a family is likely struggling financially in Pierce County even with the WCCC benefit.

What the Working Connections Benefits Cliff Feels Like

1 adult, 1 infant, 1 preschooler using a child care center



Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. MIT Living Wage Calculator. "Calculation for Pierce County, WA". 2018
3. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. "The Child Care Subsidy Program"

In many cases, at the point when a family is close to experiencing the target living wage in Pierce County with the WCCC subsidy, they lose eligibility and their experienced wage falls. This is a strong disincentive for families to increase their income unless they can increase it substantially enough to overcome this benefits cliff. However, going from \$20 an hour to \$26 an hour is often a challenge, unless the parent is in a field with a clear career pathway.

For additional benefits cliff charts see the Appendix.

FAMILIES' PERSPECTIVE – BALANCING PRIORITIES

The challenges families with young children experience are more obvious when one considers the difference between how the K-12 school system is funded versus how child care is funded in Washington State. Imagine the parent of a 12 year-old paying the full cost of 6th grade, or being forced to quit a job and home school that child if the family could not pay the market rate. Families would be financially devastated. Yet, this is the reality for families with young children. Many families struggle to make ends meet and see publicly funded kindergarten as the light at the end of a five or six-year tunnel (per child).

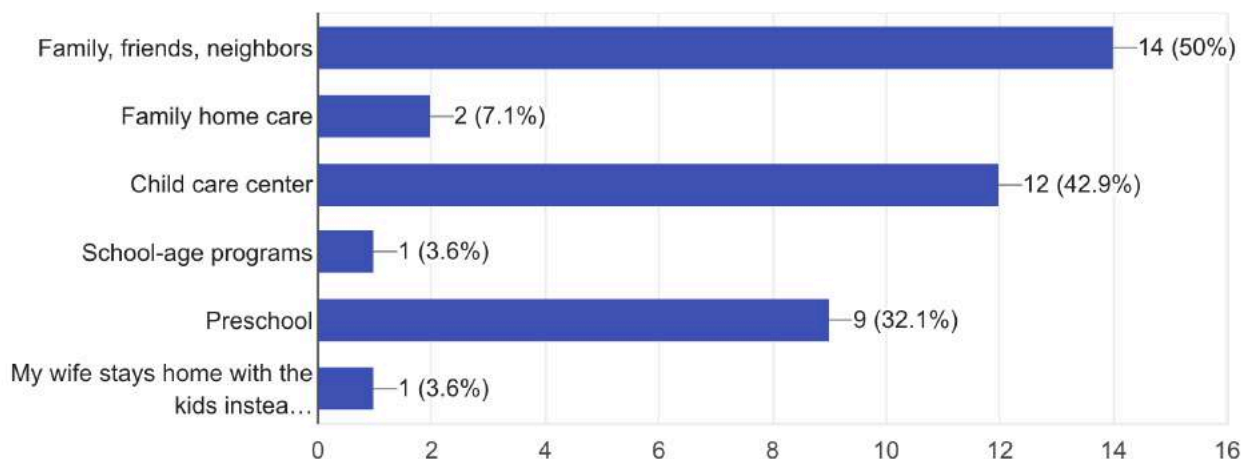
Making child care work for families is increasingly about tradeoffs and balancing priorities. Working full time requires children be placed in full-time care. Yet, the cost of that care can eat up a significant portion of income earned. A parent might feel the tradeoff is necessary in order build work experience to eventually attain a higher paying job and continue a successful career.

Other families choose to work part time and place their children in part time child care, or have some combination of licensed child care and or family, friends, or neighbor (FFN) care. There is also growing concern over the quality of FFN care. Supporting young children and their caregivers during this developmental stage is critical to a healthy society, as the development of a child's brain architecture in the first few years of life provides the foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health (Harvard Center on the Developing Child, 2018).

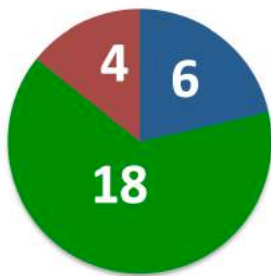
As part of this report, Project Child Success conducted focus groups and surveys to gain families' perspectives on accessing child care. The sample size is not a representative sample, and no conclusions can be drawn from the data. Rather, personal stories were collected that add context to the quantitative data. Twenty-eight families provided feedback about their experiences trying to find and afford child care:

What kinds of child care does your family use? Check all that apply.

28 responses



Do you use, or have you used, the Working Connections childcare benefit?



- Yes
- No
- No Answer

If you use or have used the benefit, tell us about your experience.

Yes, very helpful.

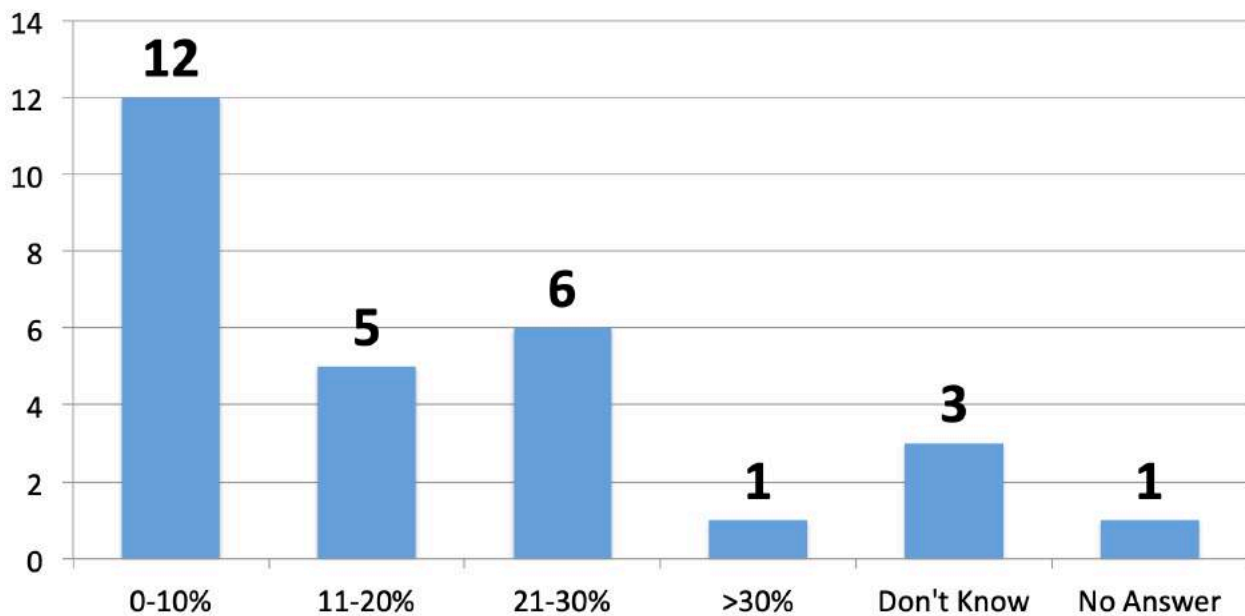
Yes. It took 2 weeks to process which held up beginning employment. Also, the communication between the Child Care Facility and Working Connections was also a process. There should be a direct number providers can call.

I applied for it but I couldn't find anyone who takes it so I just use a center half day. It works for us because my hours change every week and my family watches the children when I have to work when there isn't school. I try to make my hours work with when they're at daycare.

I used it for my daughter. I do not use it for my son because the only place that had room for him was too far from work.

Twelve of the participants reported spending more than the recommended 10% of their income on child care, although a common narrative is that families are limiting the number of hours they work to avoid the costs of full time child care, restricting their overall income.

About what percentage of your household's monthly income goes to child care?



What else would you like us to know?

Possible ways where daycare is close to home.

My wife would work if child care was cheaper or we knew how to get it

Applying and receiving Washington Connections is exhausting and overwhelming! Often there is no child care that has available space! If you have a child care related question you are often on hold for an hour.

This is a great helpful program.

Numbers for the Benefit cliff to help my clients

I believe if mothers and single mothers were able to have some type of financial help with child care it will help us take care of getting back into the work field or school and pursuing our goals.

I spend that much of my income because I use a preschool at a church. I can afford it but it is only 3 days a week for part of the day. I want to work more but full time child care is too expensive.

I wish childcare was more affordable

Childcare is very complicated and I don't know what other options there are or how much they cost.

I am a teacher as well as a parent so I work at my kids schools to make care happen.

The availability of infant/toddler spots across centers is dismal to say the least. In expecting our second child, I placed our name on our current center's waiting list pretty much the moment I found out I was pregnant in hopes of securing a spot when our daughter (due date December 2018) is 12 months. Many of my friends would prefer a childcare placement but have to find other creative solutions to their childcare needs because centers are unable to accommodate their 2-3 children, and/or the multiple tuition payments is too astronomical to afford.

The place I use is fine but I want to find something better if I can afford it and its close to where I work.

My girlfriend lives on her own so her family watches my daughters and I get them on weekends when I don't work.

I wish child care made sense.

My wife's parents watch the kids while we work.

My wife and I separated last year. Our daycare is probably going to change. I don't know what the options are if we do change.

A Real Life Story

On September 13, 2018 one Pierce County mother who is working and has used the WCCC benefit told her child care needs story to the Joint Select Committee on Early Achievers. Her compelling narrative reflects the challenge to find any child care that suits her job. Kelly's presentation can be found at the 2:14:15 mark of the recording of that session at:

<https://www.tvw.org/watch/?clientID=9375922947&eventID=2018091048&eventID=2018091048&autoStartStream=true>

IMPACT TO EMPLOYERS

The focus of the October 2018 Results Review meeting for the Results Washington initiative was accessible and affordable child care. The Department of Commerce presented feedback from the Association of Washington Businesses on the effect of child care needs of their current and future workforce:

- 67% report having issues with absenteeism due to child care
- 73% of post secondary students with children take more than six years to complete a degree

Source: Results Washington. Results Review. October 24 2018

The challenges with child care are not a problem unique to Pierce County. A recent survey of 33 employers in Whatcom County showed how parents' problems with child care affect them:

- 88 percent of responding employers said child care barriers — availability and cost were the main problems — affected their workers' job performance
- Employee absence was the biggest issue, according to 80 percent of employers
- 69 percent reported that employees were late for work, making it the second biggest issue
- 50 percent said they had problems with recruiting. One employer said being able to get people in for an interview was an issue
- 44 percent said they had problems keeping employees. One employer said workers have resigned after having their babies because they couldn't find child care for infants

Source: Early Care & Learning Council: New York's Childcare Resource Network. "Why Should Employers Care? Relationship Between Productivity and Working Parents". July 2014

The New York Early Care & Learning Council studied the relationship between productivity and working parents and found the following:

- Employers reported that child care services decrease employee absences by 20-30 percent and reduce turnover by 37-60 percent
- An average business with 250 employees can save \$75,000 per year in lost work time by subsidizing care for employees' sick children
- SAS Institute has the lowest turnover rate in the software industry in large part due to their emphasis on work-life balance. Part of that strategy includes two on-site child care centers
- U.S. companies lose \$3 billion annually as a consequence of child care-related absences
- 85% of employers report that providing child care services improves employee recruitment
- Almost two-thirds of employers found that providing child care services reduced turnover
- 49% of employers reported that child care services helped boost employee productivity

When Washington D.C. implemented universal preschool for children 3-5, the labor force participation rate of the mothers of children under 5 increased by 12%.

Source: Malik, Rasheed. Center for American Progress. "The Effects of Universal Preschool in Washington, D.C."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

The challenges that our current child care system faces ripples through all of Pierce County. The impacts are multi-faceted and include children's long-term health and well-being, economic stability of families, and employer's workforce competitive advantage. Finding solutions are imperative to us all. The following recommendations are ways to have an impact.

For Employers

- Offer flexible work schedules. Child care hours often differ from traditional work hours. Without built in flexibility, parents must scramble to find care for their children.
- Offer child care on site, or partner with a licensed child care provider in close proximity to your location. On site care can significantly improve employee productivity and retention. For example, the outdoor apparel company Patagonia estimates a return of up to 125% on investments for its on-site child care program.
- Add a child care stipend as part of your company's benefit program. Many employers offer health benefits, retirement, or wellness programs. Consider adding a child care benefit into your benefits package, as a way to recruit and retain employees.

Follow Policy Discussion

The cost, quality, and access to child care is a topic that will be addressed during the 2019 Washington State legislative session. Advocacy groups and legislative members are currently discussing this topic through various workgroups and preparing recommendations for policy changes. Two groups to follow include:

Joint Select Committee on Early Achievers

This legislative committee was created in 2015 as part of the Early Achievers legislation. The intent is to review the current state of child care in Washington State. The committee will be publishing its findings in late 2018. Information is available online at <http://leg.wa.gov/JointCommittees/EAP/Pages/default.aspx>

The Child Care Collaborative Task Force (CCCTF)

The Child Care Collaborative Task Force (CCCTF) was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2018 (SHB 2367) to develop policies and recommendations to incentivize employer-supported child care and improve child care access and affordability for employees. Meeting materials and reports can be found at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/about-us/boards-and-commissions/child-care-collaborative-task-force/>

Participate in Advocacy

Project Child Success operates an action team, the Community Awareness Team (CAT), that works on Advocacy. The team is closely following child care policy development and will be participating in legislative advocacy efforts during the 2019 session. This includes contacting legislative members via email, writing, and in person as needed. The team meets monthly and regularly communicates via email. Anyone is welcome to join the group. Individuals do not need to be part of an organization to participate. To sign up or for more information, contact Brian Humphreys at brianh@first5fundamentals.org

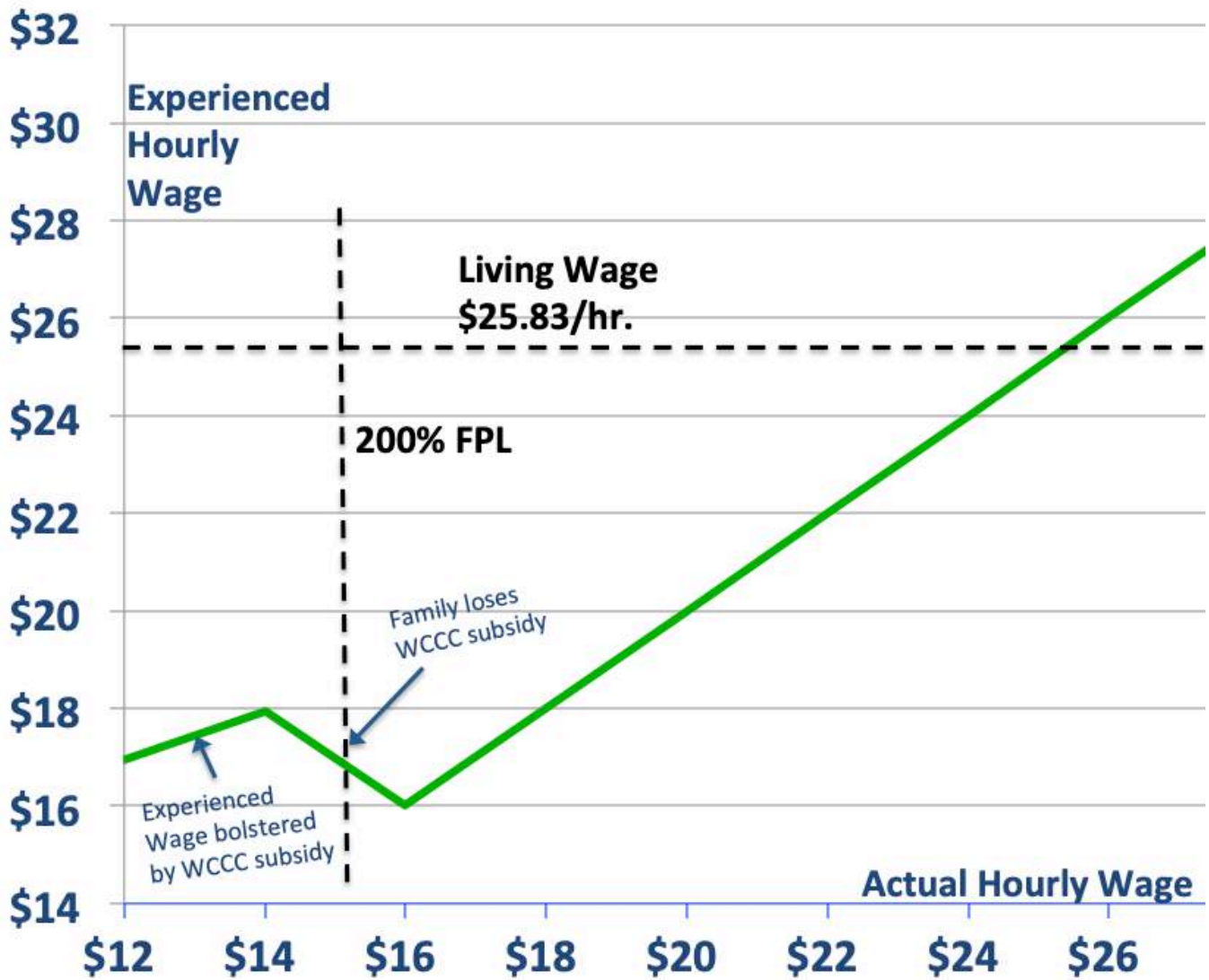
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Appendix – Benefits Cliff Experience Charts

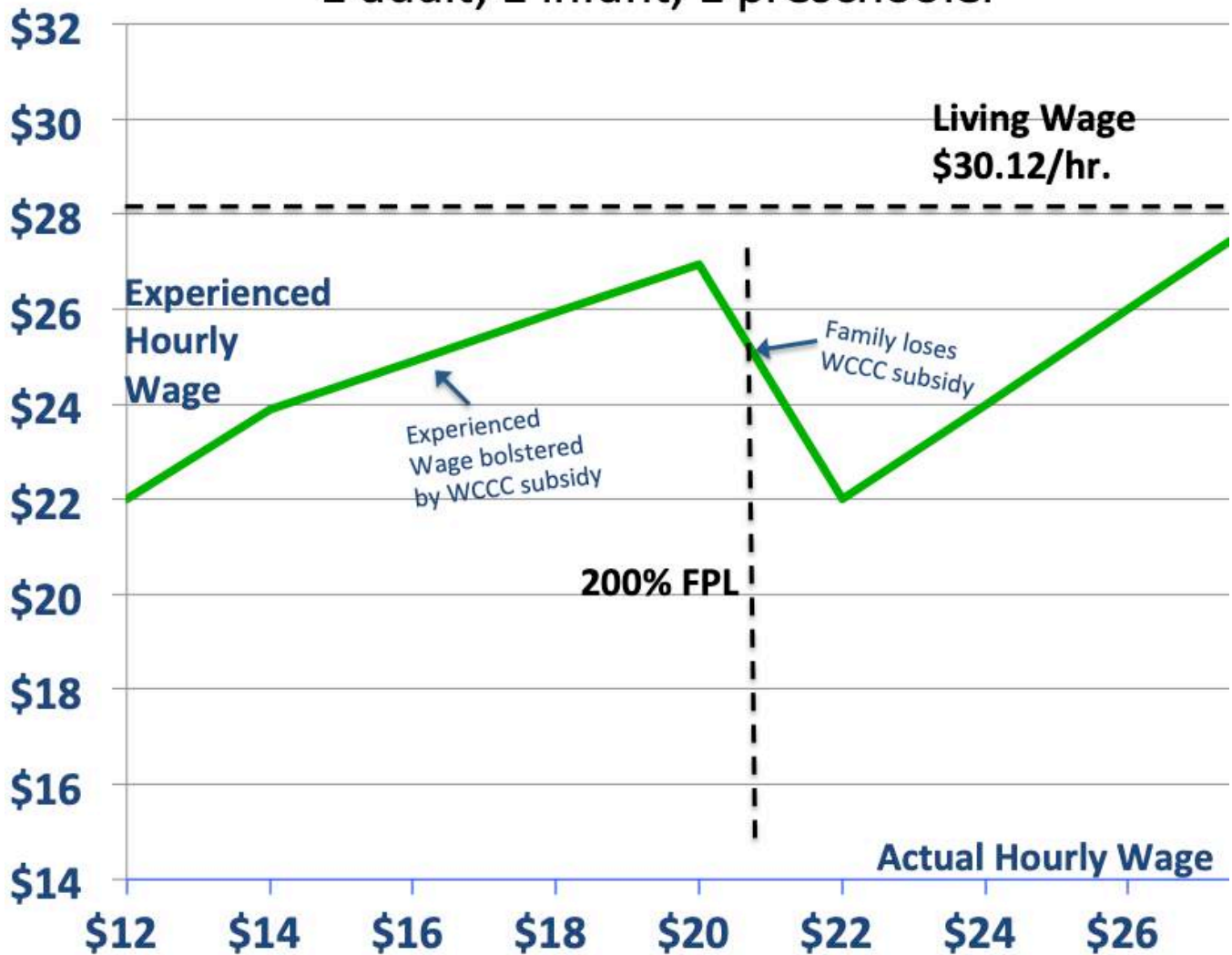
Family of 2 using a child care center 1 adult, 1 infant



Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. MIT Living Wage Calculator. "Calculation for Pierce County, WA". 2018
3. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. "The Child Care Subsidy Program"

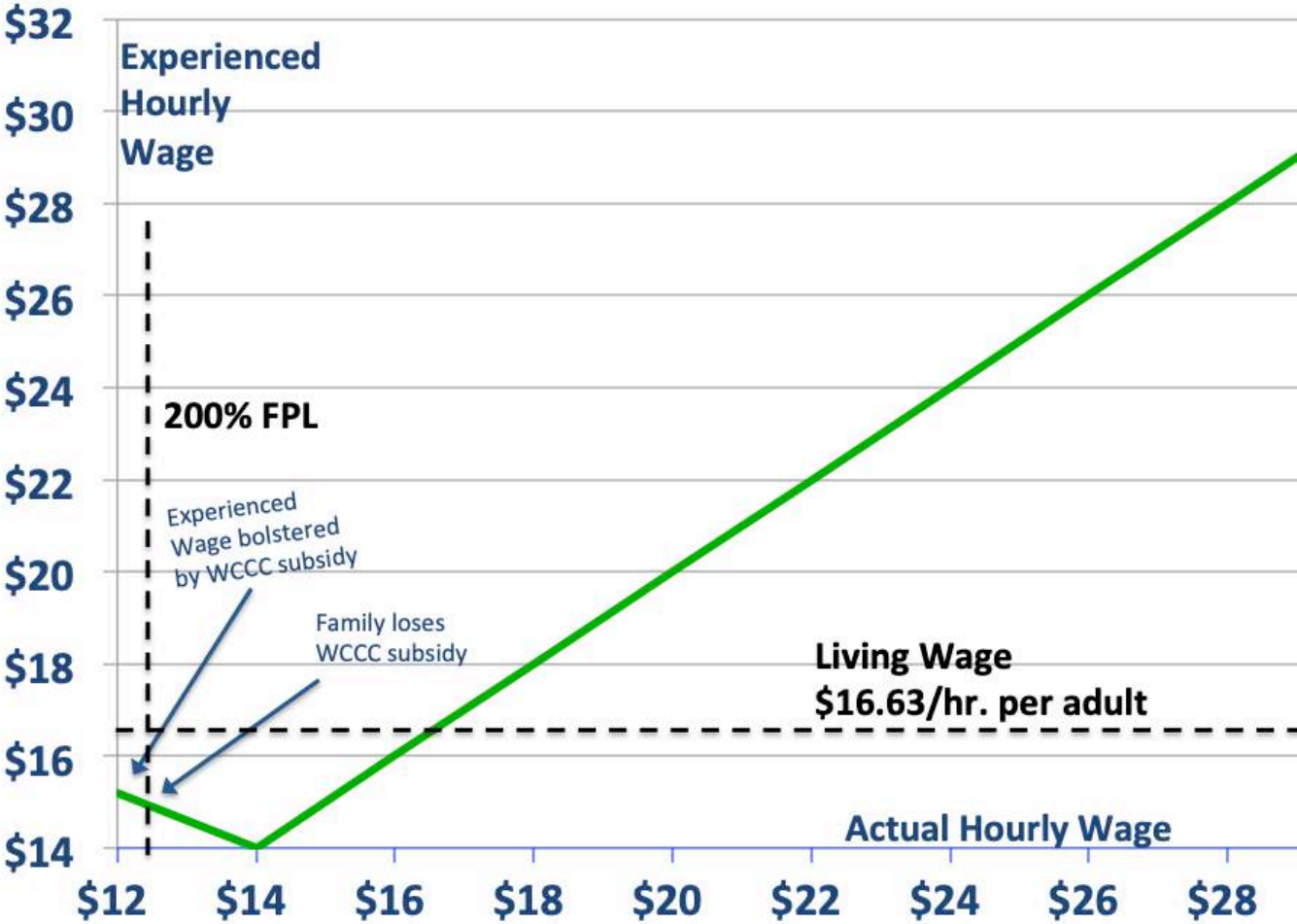
Family of 3 using a child care center 1 adult, 1 infant, 1 preschooler



Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. MIT Living Wage Calculator. "Calculation for Pierce County, WA". 2018
3. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. "The Child Care Subsidy Program"

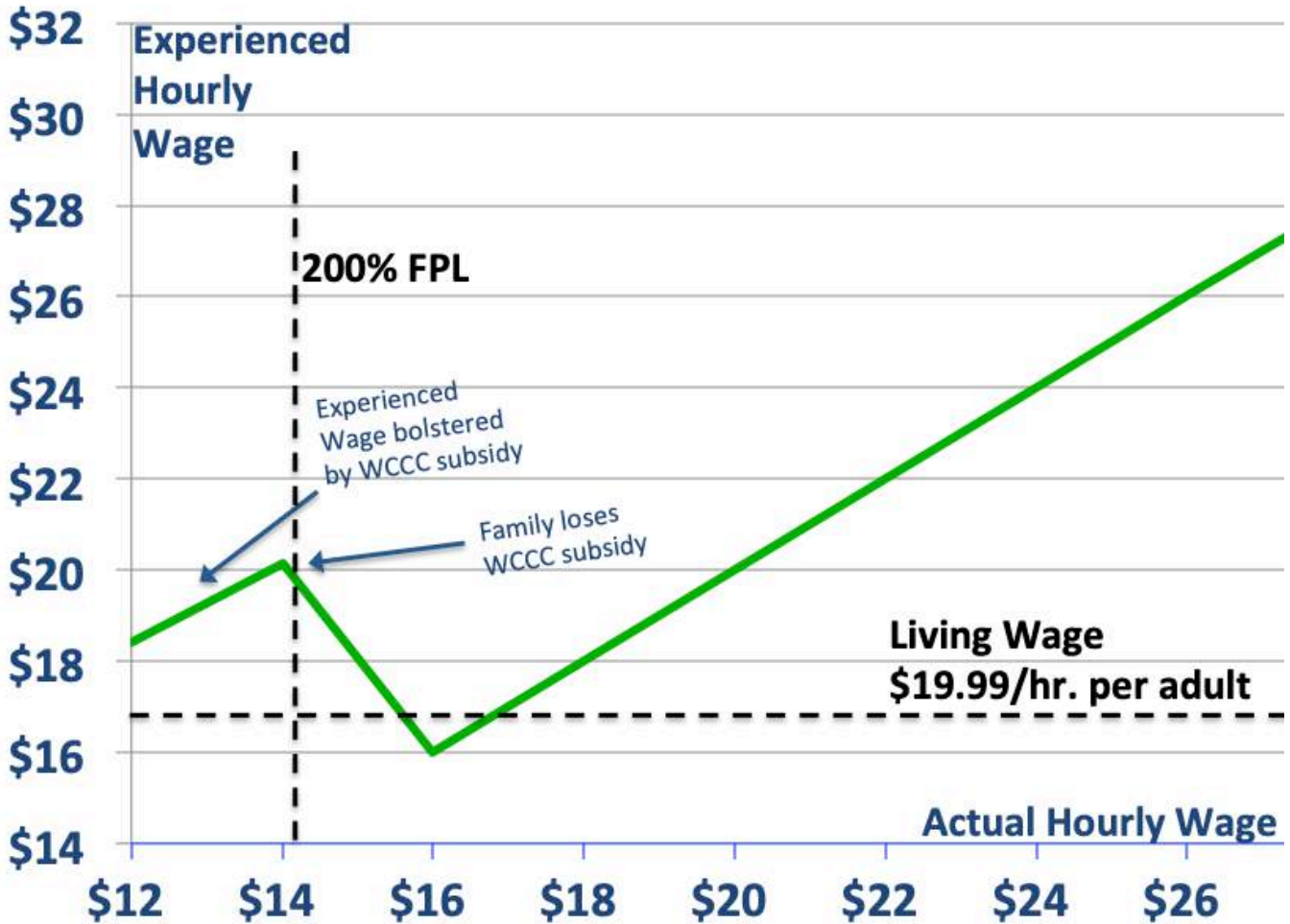
Family of 4 using a child care center
2 adults (both working), 1 infant, 1 preschooler
 Graph is per adult if each earns the same wage



Source:

4. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
5. MIT Living Wage Calculator. "Calculation for Pierce County, WA". 2018
6. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. "The Child Care Subsidy Program"

Family of 5 using a child care center
 2 adults (both working),
 1 infant, 1 toddler, 1 preschooler
 Graph is per adult if each earns the same wage



Source:

1. Child Care Aware, September 2018 Database
2. MIT Living Wage Calculator. "Calculation for Pierce County, WA". 2018
3. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Economic Services Administration. "The Child Care Subsidy Program"