



# Examining Compensation Data of Washington's Child Care Workforce

Child care plays an important role in supporting children's growth, development, and educational advancement, while also supporting families in their ability to work, train, or pursue an education. Investing in high-quality child care is good for children and their families, as well as our communities, businesses and economy. Annually, [Washington](#) serves 14,100 families, or 25,100 children, on average in its child care subsidy program.

## CHILD CARE WORKFORCE CHALLENGES IN WASHINGTON

Despite these many benefits, the supply of child care remains at a standstill, while the cost to families continues to increase. The lack of affordable program availability can be tied, in part, to workforce shortages in the child care sector. [Research](#) shows that child care workers are among the lowest paid workers in the United States, which results in high turnover as child care workers leave the field for other occupations where they can access benefits and higher wages.

An analysis of child care compensation data in Washington shows gaps and challenges that need to be addressed.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Turnover, absenteeism, and lost family income because of child care issues results in a [\\$6 billion reduction](#) of Washington's economy. Without policy intervention to help resolve the issue of under-compensation of the child care workforce, the market is unable to meet the urgent child care supply, affordability and accessibility needs of Washington's families and employers. This hinders our children's healthy development and ability for our communities to thrive.

Solving our child care crisis requires a combination of policy levers and public investment that leads to the viability of the system long-term. Washington's lawmakers have the power to support its child care workforce by expanding state funding to improve compensation and access to benefits. Increased funding for child care in Washington can be used to [implement strategies](#) that support the sector's workforce, including, but are not limited to: setting reimbursement rates that reflect the true cost of quality care, including living wages and benefits for the child care workforce; ongoing compensation grants; and establishing wage scales which includes a wage floor for all child care workers and wage bands that allow flexibility for child care employers.

Learn more about child care compensation in Washington: <https://data.childcareaware.org/Washington/>.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Washington child care providers make **\$19.32 per hour**, on average.
- Overall, **80% of Washington providers** report wages that were less than the state's calculated living wage of \$25.60.
- Washington's child care workforce identifying as Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, or White had wages **ranging between \$1 to \$5 more per hour** compared to other races and ethnicities.
- Providers whose primary language was Spanish made nearly **\$4 dollars less per hour** on average than those who primarily spoke English.
- The most common benefit available to child care providers are **paid sick days** (47% report receiving this benefit) and **paid time off** (43% report receiving this benefit).
- **Only 32%** of child care providers report receiving **health insurance** and just **29%** report contributing to a **retirement plan**.