



**Snohomish County**  
**Dave Somers**  
County Executive

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## **Executive Somers Announces Plan for \$12 Million in Federal Pandemic Recovery Funding for Child Care**

*Includes Investments in Facility Creation and Expansion and Workforce Stabilization and Growth*

**Snohomish County, Wash., January 12, 2023** – Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers announced the spending plan for \$12 million in new investments to expand access to affordable, high-quality child care. The \$12 million is part of the County’s federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation and was appropriated late last year as part of the 2023 budget.

Child care was identified as a [top community priority](#) during the County’s pandemic recovery engagement effort. An estimated 80 percent of county residents live in an [extreme child care desert](#), and there are only [62 slots of child care for every 100 infants](#), toddlers, or preschoolers whose parents work, far below the state average of 79 slots per 100 children.

To increase the accessibility and availability of child care, Snohomish County proposes the following \$12 million spending plan:

- \$5 million – Start-Up and Expansion Grants
- \$3.8 million – Workforce Development and Retention
- \$200,000 – Community-Led Recruitment and Mentorship
- \$3 million – Continued Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Stabilization

“A major barrier to people joining or returning to the workforce is the lack of available child care. The effects of child care deserts across our county impact all of us, but they have an even more acute impact on women, who are pushed out of the job market at higher rates due to the extremely high cost of child care,” said Executive Somers. “That’s why we want to expand access for communities across our county, particularly in places where child care is already extremely scarce.”

“ORR has done a tremendous job assessing and supporting the needs for our community on the heels of the pandemic. A top priority in my work as a Councilmember continues to be the child care needs for our families, and I’m proud to support the efforts of ORR as they allocate necessary dollars to providers, families, and organizations throughout the child care sector in our community,” said Chair Jared Mead ([District 4](#)).

“The pandemic highlighted the child care challenges many families face in Snohomish County. These investments in child care will help expand the availability of quality child care and help workers looking to re-enter the workforce with the peace of mind that their children are well looked after,” said Vice Chair Nate Nehring ([District 1](#)).

“The pandemic has been difficult for so many people and has shined a bright light on some of the inequitable gaps in our community,” said Councilmember Megan Dunn ([District 2](#)). “One of these gaps is access to affordable child care and pathways towards employment in early childhood learning centers. This ARPA allocation by the county to help expand child care availability will be instrumental in our recovery from the pandemic to help get families back to work.”

“We can’t strengthen our economy without supporting our small businesses and our small businesses can’t thrive without a workforce that can afford quality child care in their community. This plan will help build that bridge and all of Snohomish County will be the better for it,” said Councilmember Strom Peterson ([District 3](#)).

“Investing in child care and behavioral health services is critical so that there is improved access to these programs for Snohomish County residents. I am grateful we are getting these funds out to the families that need them,” said Councilmember Sam Low ([District 5](#)).

#### **Start-up and Expansion Grants - \$5,000,000**

Snohomish County will invest \$5 million in child care facilities to increase the availability of slots. These grants include the [Child Care Facilities Notice of Funding Availability](#) (NOFA), which closes Friday, January 13 and provides capital grants between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000 for for-profit, nonprofit, and governments to increase child care capacity. The County will offer a second funding opportunity for smaller licensed child care providers, including Family Home Centers. The goal of this funding is to ensure smaller providers can access capital funding to create new slots and ensure business stability through technical assistance and connections to workforce development programs.

#### **Workforce Development and Retention - \$3,800,000**

Child care providers made clear that stabilizing and expanding the early learning workforce is an urgent recovery need. This programming will support individuals in obtaining the necessary certificates and training to enter the child care workforce. Participants would complete the required 30 hours of Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS) training, receive the Early Childhood Education Initial Certificate and can be matched to a child care organization.

#### **Community-Led Recruitment and Mentorship - \$200,000**

The Office of Recovery & Resilience’s (ORR) outreach with highly impacted populations shows that significant barriers exist to connect potential providers with the child care workforce system. In response, this program will partner with at least one community-based organization to reach potential providers who face systemic barriers to access, including language and transportation barriers.

#### **ECEAP Stabilization - \$3,000,000**

ECEAP stabilization efforts will continue, as costs related to providing ECEAP services remain high. It is crucial that these child care slots remain available to some of the most vulnerable families in the county.

This spending plan builds on the [\\$7.8 million ARPA investment](#) the County made in child care in 2022, which a focus on children and families’ social-emotional development and affordability programs. In total, the County is investing nearly \$20 million in ARPA toward the expansion of high-quality, affordable child care.

Executive Somers established the Office of Recovery and Resilience to guide the County’s recovery work by ensuring federal pandemic relief is administered quickly, effectively, and equitably. Information on the County’s recovery work can be found at [www.snohomishcountywa.gov/recovery](http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/recovery).

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