



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Meeting  
February 4, 2025

**Regional Coalition & Washington Communities for  
Children (WCFC) Updates**

**Regional Coalition Update**

**Inland Northwest Early Learning Alliance, Northeast**

INWELA is continuing our work with Melia LaCour at Becoming Justice through March 2025. We hope to create a values statement and continue to address our equity challenge. Through this work we have realized that we need a conflict resolution policy and a bit more parameters around our membership requirements. All of this will contribute to the ongoing work of creating a charter and naming a fiscal sponsor.

We wrapped up our Washington STEM Catalyst Grant activities in December by hosting an Early Learning Summit. There were over 30 people in attendance and just over 25 regional goals were created based on our data landscape and listening sessions for our region. We are now working on our Early Learning Strategic Plan and final report.

Jana and Kaitlyn, two INWELA members who live in rural Pend Orielle County, have joined the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) cohort this year. They began last month by adding to the Strategy Memo developed last year and are defining what success for this project looks like in their county and the larger tri-county area. In addition to setting goals for the next six months, they have begun to identify potential partners to help create a local resource database.

INWELA has launched a local Child Care Voice meeting. The purpose of this group is “coming together to create a more supported and connected child care workforce in Eastern Washington.” We hope that through these efforts providers feel more connected and empowered, and that the needs of those in EW are better represented at the state level.

**For more information, please contact: Colleen Condon, [colleen@lilaccityelc.com](mailto:colleen@lilaccityelc.com)**

**Investing in Children Coalition: Central**

No updates currently...

**For more information, please contact: Lindsay Bowsell, [lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org](mailto:lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org)**

**King County**

No updates currently...

**For more information, please contact: Logan Endres or Tristen Hall, [kcelc@childcare.org](mailto:kcelc@childcare.org)**

## Regional Coalition Update

### North Central

No updates currently...

For more information please contact: Nancy Spurgeon, [nspurgeon49@gmail.com](mailto:nspurgeon49@gmail.com)

### Northwest

As a regional network of early childhood partners and local early learning coalitions, the Northwest Early Learning Coalition (NWEL) continues to collaborate to ensure high-quality early learning experiences for all children. Our focus remains on advocating for equitable early learning policies, expanding regional partnerships, and prioritizing resource navigation efforts to meet the diverse needs of families with young children. Below are some current highlights:

#### **Newborn Outreach Initiative:**

NWEL is expanding its newborn outreach efforts across the region to ensure new parents receive vital resources and support.

- **Newborn Bags:** Island County has launched its first round of newborn bags in partnership with Island Hospital, with plans to expand to other healthcare providers. The bags include educational materials, community connections, and essential items like Halo sleep sacks.
- **Pre-Birth Outreach:** Skagit County is piloting a program to connect with families through OB providers, enhancing support before birth. These efforts are funded through a mix of unexpended grants, Help Me Grow (HMG) funding, and ongoing sponsorship development.

#### **Advocacy Day Preparation:**

NWEL is preparing for Washington Communities for Children's (WCFC) Advocacy Day on February 5, where coalition representatives will advocate for a \$4 million funding request to strengthen statewide coalition infrastructure. This funding is crucial to maintain coordination across state, regional, and community levels, addressing the \$5 billion economic impact of insufficient childcare in Washington. NWEL will highlight its support of over 3,500 families and early learning professionals, as well as its role in promoting Vroom and fostering equity and rural support through listening sessions with underserved communities. The coalition's work in advancing the Early Learning Coordination Plan and building cross-sector partnerships will also demonstrate the long-term benefits of investing in early learning infrastructure.

#### **Inspire Brunch:**

Inspire Brunch 2025 is scheduled for May 7 at Swinomish Lodge. This year's event will highlight the coalition's successes and focus on the critical need to invest in early learning infrastructure. Key topics will include equity, local leadership, and community impact, with discussions centered on funding needs and advocacy priorities. We are excited to announce potential keynote speakers Tana Senn and Stephan Blanford. A coordinating team has been formed to plan the event, and we will be meeting monthly leading up to May. We are actively seeking sponsorships to support this important

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event.

### Vroom:

Vroom continues to make a positive impact for families, with its simple, science-based tips for early brain development being widely accessed. Recently, we've seen growing partnerships with libraries and community organizations, including the Whatcom County Library, expanding opportunities for parents to engage with Vroom resources. These efforts are helping foster more meaningful interactions that support children's growth and learning, and Vroom materials remain available free of charge through the WCFC website.

### Help Me Grow Resource Navigation Expansion:

NWEL continues to expand Help Me Grow (HMG) efforts across the region, with Skagit and Island counties leading initiatives to enhance cross-trained navigation staff and improve coordinated access points. Island County is finalizing its resource directory with feedback from parent groups, ensuring it meets the practical needs of families.

For more information please contact: Breana Ramos, [breana@nwelcoalition.org](mailto:breana@nwelcoalition.org)

### Peninsula Early Childhood Coalition

No updates currently...

For more information, please contact: Victoria Hilt, [victoria.hilt@kitsapstrong.org](mailto:victoria.hilt@kitsapstrong.org)

### Pierce County Early Childhood Network

No updates currently...

For more information please contact: Ruba Ayub, [rubaa@first5fundamentals.org](mailto:rubaa@first5fundamentals.org)

### Southeast (SEELC)

No updates currently...

For more information, please contact: Brittany Hartikainen, [brittany@bh-consulting.org](mailto:brittany@bh-consulting.org)

### Southwest Washington Early Learning (SWEL)

No updates currently...

For more information please contact: Debbie Ham, [Debbie.ham@selfwa.org](mailto:Debbie.ham@selfwa.org)

### Visions for Early Learning, West Central

Visions for Early Learning continues to make significant progress in partnership with the Early Childhood Developmental Health Systems (ECDHS) and Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) initiatives, supporting local coalitions and advancing systems-level coordination in Grays Harbor County. Through these initiatives, we are actively engaging with county-level coordinated access workgroups and stakeholder groups to strengthen the connections between early learning providers, healthcare professionals, and ultimately improving access to local community resources. These efforts focus on enhancing existing statewide systems like Help Me Grow WA that ensures families can access the support they need through streamlined pathways and warm hand-offs,

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fostering a “no wrong door” approach to care.

Additionally, Visions for Early Learning (VEL) is providing regional support for Grays Harbor’s early learning public awareness communications campaign. This campaign aims to elevate awareness of early learning opportunities, highlight available resources, and emphasize the importance of early childhood development for long-term community well-being. By collaborating with local coalitions and community stakeholders, we are working to create messaging that resonates with the entire community and promotes the value of investing in early learning systems. These collective efforts continue to enhance equity, accessibility, and community engagement across the region.

VEL is actively involved in regional coordination with Washington Communities for Children's (WCFC) upcoming advocacy day efforts, leveraging its robust team to advocate for WCFC’s request to maintain funding for the existing statewide early childhood network infrastructure. VEL has secured several meetings with legislators to discuss the need for continued sustainable infrastructure to support early learning coalition networks. By representing the voices of local coalitions and stakeholders, VEL is ensuring the impact the network has at the local level during legislative discussions. This collaboration highlights the importance of a united approach showcasing the importance for connected early learning systems and long-term support for early learning initiatives across Washington State.

### Grays Harbor

Grays Harbor Early Learning (GHLE) coalition typically meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month from 1:30 – 3:00 pm. Contact [Molly Leithold](#), coalition lead to get connected.

### Lewis

Lewis County’s Early Learning Coalition (ELC) typically meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month from 11:30 – 1:00 pm. Contact [Juli Jager](#), coalition lead to get connected.

### Mason

The ELC of Mason County typically meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month from 8:30 – 10:00 am. Contact [April Messenger](#), coalition lead to get connected.

### Thurston

The Thurston Early Childhood Coalition (TECC) typically meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month from 9:30 – 11:00 am. Contact [Shawn Thurman](#), coalition lead to get connected.

### Pacific

Know and Grow, North Pacific County’s early learning coalition typically meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month from 2:00 – 3:30 pm. Contact [Rhonda Johnson](#), coalition lead to get connected.

**For more information, please contact: Sheila Kavanaugh, [kav.consulting231@gmail.com](mailto:kav.consulting231@gmail.com)**

**WCFC Updates – For more information please contact: [info@washingtoncfc.org](mailto:info@washingtoncfc.org)**

## WCFC State Updates

### WCFC 2025 Budget Request

As you all know, the WA State legislative session is underway. This year, Washington Communities for Children

(WCFC) requests \$4 million to maintain and strengthen the WCFC network infrastructure across Washington state. The WCFC Network is a critical component of our state's early childhood system because of our coordination of cross-sector partnerships at the state, regional, and community level. [Here is a link](#) to a one-pager detailing our ask. In addition to our budget proviso request, WCFC has a list of priorities we are mobilizing around. [Here is a link to our legislative priorities.](#)

### **WCFC Workgroups**

WCFC hosts a bi-monthly Diaper Bank conversation on the 3rd Wednesday of the month from 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. The next meeting is March 19, 2025. Ongoing topics of interest include sharing current best thinking/best practices, funding opportunities, sustainability, accessing discounted or free supplies, and diaper bank operations. [Contact Rachel Hall](#) to join - all are welcome!

WCFC hosts a monthly conversation regarding the Washington State Early Learning Coordination Plan on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month from 2:00 – 3:00pm. The purpose of this space is to provide strategy to crosswalk the WCFC Network with the Goals and Strategies of the ELCP, and support local communities aligning their work with the ELCP. [Contact Rachel Hall](#) to join - all are welcome!

### **Stay in Touch!**

Want to learn more about WCFC, be the first to hear updates, or get connected with your local early childhood coalition? Get in touch with us!

- Website: [washingtoncfc.org](http://washingtoncfc.org)
- Facebook: WashingtonCFC
- Instagram: Washington\_cfc

**For more information please contact: Rachel Hall, WCFC State Director,**  
[rachelh@first5fundamentals.org](mailto:rachelh@first5fundamentals.org)