

Wanted: Child care providers

By Joy Sheedy
 Clallam County Prevention Works
 child care task force

Finding quality, affordable child care has always been a challenge for families in our remote area. COVID has brought this issue to the forefront and has made finding child care an even more difficult process. This rewarding job is in demand on the Olympic Peninsula. In fact, the need far outweighs the availability of licensed, quality care.

In April 2021, the Clallam County Economic Development Council showed a 25% vacancy rate for children due to staff shortages. In a recent survey of our county's workforce employees, the EDC reported approximately 370 preschool-age children needing child care. This reinforces the Washington Department of Commerce definition of a child care desert for our region.

Prevention Works, a 24-year-old nonprofit agency, promotes positive childhoods for all children in Clallam County. In 2018, Prevention Works made addressing the lack of child care one of its strategic goals. Since then, the Child Care Task Force consisting of business leaders, big employers, volunteers and service agencies has made a recruitment video, placed a billboard on Highway 101, created a job fair with 40 attendees, and made presentations to clubs, government groups and interested citizens.

Child care workers are needed in both centers and as family child care home providers in Clallam County.

Prevention Works encourages anyone interested in making a difference in the lives of children to consider a career in child care.



Kylee Lotzgesell, child care specialist, leads an outdoor art project with young children.

"I enjoyed seeing children's faces light up when they learned a new skill. I loved all the hugs from children, their excitement and innocence, holding the babies, and working as my wife's assistant for 26 years."
 Karl Skogman, retired
 Family home child care provider

"I am reminded every day that these young children are just as much my teacher as I am theirs. Working with young children during their most important developmental years is truly rewarding. As a teacher, I am there to support them socially and emotionally as they learn about the world and others around them. It is really an amazing career."
 Kylee Lotzgesell
 Child care specialist



"Every day there is something new to learn and discover with children. I get to celebrate with a child when they climb to the top of the climbing tower for the first time or pick up the worm from the sidewalk after a heavy rain and giggle as it wiggles in their hands. I see new skills blossom, hear new words spoken, and watch as they make friends and share ideas. It makes you slow down and appreciate the day-to-day wonders through a child's eyes."
 Kelsey Hamilton
 Child care specialist



Susan Herbert, child care specialist, enjoys a ride on a tricycle with a preschool child.



Nikki Thomason, family home child care provider, shares a book with her young children.

Michelle Johnson, family home child care provider, plays float the scarves with children in her care.

Photos courtesy of Joy Sheedy

Interested in offering child care?

The following requirements apply for all child care providers:

- TB test
- First aid and CPR
- Background check
- Food handler card
- Bloodborne pathogen training
- MMR vaccination

Resources to help on the way:

- **Current job listings:** PW4kids.org
- **Workshop and financial assistance for meetings job requirements:** Contact Anna King, AKing@pencol.edu.

• **Licensing questions and information:**
 Contact Rachael.rossfeld@dcyf.wa.gov-care, www.dcyf.wa.gov/news/child-care-and-early-learning-licensing-guidebook

• **Imagine Institute for In-home Child Care Training and Support:** Imagine U is a mentorship program designed to increase the number of licensed, family in-home child care providers in Washington. Imagine U pairs experienced, licensed in-home child care providers with those interested in becoming licensed, and offers mentorship and support. For information contact imaginewa.org or Nikki Tomason at ntomason@gmail.com.

Clockwise from top left:
 Child care specialist Kelsey Hamilton explores sandbox play with toddlers.