



## CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

JANUARY 26, 2026

**Present:** Allison Bishop, Allison Williams, Anne Granberg, Beverly Porter, Christina Jackson, Colton Kaltenfeldt, Elizabeth Boyle, Jamie Desmul, Karla Anderson, Kristi Dominguez, Megan Juenemann, Sallye Quinn, Susan Marks, Sterling Chick, Tilda Doughty, Vesla Tonnesson

**Not Present:** Greg Hansen, Heather Carson, Jason Oldham, Jason Koneliussen, Jen Wright, Katherine Orlowski, Lynn Schreiber, Sativa Robertson

Topic	Discussion/Outcome
<p><b>Welcome</b></p>	<p>Introductions, land acknowledgment, housekeeping, and review of agreements.</p> <p><u>Land Acknowledgement:</u></p> <p>I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are here today on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples who have lived in the Salish Sea basin and the North Cascades watershed from time immemorial, in particular, the Lhaq'temish (LOCK-tuh-mish) people who we recognize today to be the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and Semiahmoo.</p> <p>May we be mindful of the inherent owners of this land, our children, who are our future. Our future stewards of the land and advocates for the generation to come. May that truth guide our work and efforts to improve the well-being of all families and children, native and non-native, living in this beautiful county.</p> <p>This land acknowledgment is not meant to be a substitute for authentic relationship-building and understanding. It is meant to introduce us to one way we can show respect and honor for the sacrifices of the first people of this land.</p> <p>Please join me in expressing the deepest respect for our Indigenous neighbors, and gratitude for the enduring stewardship of our shared lands and waterways. <a href="https://www.lhaqtemishfoundation.org/">https://www.lhaqtemishfoundation.org/</a> -Lhaq'temish Foundation</p> <p><u>Agreements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family and self-care come first.</li> <li>• Be kind and gentle with yourself and others and assume everyone is coming from a positive place.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Everyone has the best intentions.</li> <li>○ Listen with an open mind and heart.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Be mindful of this space. Step-in and step-out/Step-up and step-back. Offer your truth and insights and listen to others' truths and insights.</li> <li>• Treat each other with honor and grace. We are all working under difficult circumstances.</li> <li>• Embrace diversity. Remember that we all come from different backgrounds giving us different perspectives and only when we embrace that diversity can we develop creative solutions to address the child and family well-being needs in Whatcom County.</li> <li>• What is said here stays here.</li> <li>• Have fun.</li> </ul>





	<a href="#">Fist to Five Consensus Tool – Amended 4.25.22</a>
<b>Call to Order</b>	Meeting called to order when quorum was present.
<b>Approve Meeting Minutes</b>	Meeting minutes for December, 15 2025 were approved.
<b>Agenda Overview, Meeting Input/Evaluation</b>	<p>Evaluation tool: <a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhjlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf59ubhjlyXFZQJa0pXGgQQ5HhwJ1jamGFziQLXS6-zZC1hKQ/viewform</a></p> <p>The purpose of this Task Force was reviewed, as stated in the <a href="#">Ordinance</a>. “The purpose of Whatcom County Child and Family Well-being Task Force is to continually review Whatcom governmental impact on children and family make recommendations for improvement for all departments.”</p>
<b>Community Shares and Shout outs</b>	<p>Councilmember Elizabeth Boyle and alternate Jessica Reinstra were welcomed and introduced; both expressed commitments to supporting the Task Force’s work.</p> <p>Sallye confirmed that the next meeting will be held in person on February 23, 3:30–5:00 PM.</p> <p>Allie shared that Whatcom Community College is ending its Parenting Education Program after 53 years, affecting four parent co-op preschools or 150 childcare slots. Program will continue through next year while alternative partnerships are explored. You can reach out to Allie with any questions. Allie provided her email: <a href="mailto:abishop@whatcom.edu">mailto:abishop@whatcom.edu</a></p> <p>Allison shared that the Perinatal Mental Health Task Force announced its 6th Annual Training on grief and loss. The training is on March 18, free and open to community.</p> <p>Allison also shared that Bellingham Technical College announced new Spanish-language childbirth education classes. The classes are online and in person at Project HOPE.</p> <p>Vesla gave a shout out to Tilda and her advocacy efforts at the state level for early learning. Vesla also mentioned state wide proposed cuts for early learning. Vesla shared an article from the Washington State Standard: <a href="#">An icy reception for Gov. Bob Ferguson’s proposed budget cuts</a></p> <p>Megan gave a shout out in celebration of the Dad Space support group’s two-year anniversary and announced of expansion to Bellingham.</p> <p>Karla announced the Focus on Children Conference on February 7, hosted by BTC and held at Whatcom Community College.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allie mentioned there was a potential opportunity for the task force to staff a table at the Focus on Children Conference. If there was time at the end of the meeting it could be discussed further.</li> <li>• More information on the event could be found on the <a href="#">BTC website</a>.</li> </ul>



<b>Public Comment</b>	No public comment.
<b>Nominations for Task Force Co-Chair and Vote</b>	<p>Vesla shared that she and Colton have concluded their two-year terms as co-chairs. Sallye and Tilda are entering their second year. There are two open co-chair positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vesla called for nominations and self-nominations.</li> <li>• Colton nominated Allie. Allie accepted her nomination.</li> <li>• Vesla nominated Karla. Karla accepted her nomination.</li> </ul> <p>The task force voted for Allie and Karla to be the new co-chairs.</p> <p>Vesla also shared that Ray Deck formally resigned from the Task Force due to work commitments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A community member seat is now vacant and will require Council approval to fill.</li> </ul>
<b>Healthy Children’s Fund Update and Flood Response Update</b>	<p>Sarah presented an update on the Health Children’s Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team is actively working on numerous contracts, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Capital contracts for early learning providers.</li> <li>○ Contract renewals for over 39 existing contracts, many reissued through a new RFP process.</li> <li>○ This marks a shift into second-round funding, indicating program maturity and stability</li> <li>○ Conducted kickoff meetings with in-home early learning providers receiving capital funding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Doula Program is entering its second year of implementation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New contracts are underway.</li> <li>○ Exploring transition from contractor model to a part-time county employee coordinator to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve integration with county staff.</li> <li>▪ Strengthen program sustainability and oversight.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• A Peer Support Contract is in development and expected to go to County Council within the next few meetings.</li> <li>• There will be an announcement forthcoming in the next few weeks regarding a subsidy administrator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Progress was delayed due to flood response but remains active.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• County Council unanimously approved \$750,000 for flood relief. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Families with children under age 5 in Whatcom County will be eligible</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



- An RFP was released to community organizations late last week. Focus areas: housing and rental support, especially for renters displaced by flooding and basic needs assistance
- Application details and contract information are publicly accessible.
  - [Applications Open for December Storm Recovery Assistance Program](#)
- Sarah shared that there are significant proposed cuts to early learning and care.
  - The major concern is the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy.
  - Proposal to cap WCCC at 33,000 children statewide, likely reached by early summer.
    - This would limit availability of state childcare subsidies
    - Undermine Whatcom County's local subsidy strategy. Forcing local funds to cover families who should otherwise be state-served.
    - Reduce capacity to serve families earning 60–75% of State Median Income, and halt planned expansion beyond that range.
- Sarah has been working on a land use and capital policy initiative with the Lincoln Institute
  - Six-month technical assistance project focused on land management, building policy for early learning and child care facilities.
  - Participants include Sarah, Councilmember Elizabeth Boyle, representatives from construction, municipal leadership, and county staff.
  - The goal is to develop policy recommendations to support the expansion of child care facilities, responsible use of public capital dollars, and long-term maintenance and protection of buildings.
  - Monthly progress updates will be provided.
- Sarah gave an update on the Innovation Fund outcomes
  - Innovation Fund supported embedding: Occupational therapy, Physical therapy, Mental and behavioral health services directly within child care centers.
  - Evaluation support provided by Western Washington University.
  - Participating organizations include: Whatcom Family YMCA, Sendan Behavioral Health, Whatcom Center for Early Learning and WCC Cooperative Preschools
- The Final external audit and evaluation delivered to the Executive's Office on December 31.
  - Audit covers countywide processes, not just Healthy Children's Fund.
  - Next steps and formal response expected from the Executive's Office.
  - Sarah committed to updating the Task Force on the review process and follow-up actions
  - Task Force may reference the audit in drafting the Healthy Children's Fund Report Card.
  - Vesla requested that Allyson send the final audit to the Task Force.





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Children’s Fund website launch delayed due to flood response. New target for launch is February.</li> <li>• Continued partnership with videographer.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recent and upcoming stories include:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ferndale playground project, Latin family liaison from Ferndale School District, Douglas, In-home child care providers and Ferndale Community Services.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Salish current did a recent article on the Healthy Children’s Fund: <a href="#">Whatever happened to the Healthy Children’s Fund?</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Introduce Champ Thomaskutty – Health Director</b></p>	<p>Champ Thomaskutty has marked 90 days in role as Director of Health &amp; Community Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently relocated cross-country; described first months as a steep learning curve with high activity.</li> <li>• Champ shared his professional background. He trained as an epidemiologist. Spent the last 13 years in public health management and operations.</li> <li>• Expressed strong interest in upstream prevention work, particularly programs like the Healthy Children’s Fund.</li> <li>• Emphasized commitment to accountability for public funds, using audits and evaluation to assess whether commitments are being met, how to scale successful programs and how to pivot quickly when improvements are needed.</li> <li>• Sallye raised concerns about ongoing logjams outside Health &amp; Community Services, noting that successful administration of the Healthy Children’s Fund requires coordinated effort across finance, legal, executive leadership, and other departments. She asked whether Champ had observed this.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Champ acknowledged that the Healthy Children’s Fund launched before systems were fully ready, requiring sustained catch-up work.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Noted significant progress over the past year: and improved cross-department collaboration.</li> <li>▪ Finance, legal, and other central partners now consistently at the table.</li> <li>▪ Public-private partnerships are inherently complex and require strong due diligence.</li> <li>▪ He highlighted careful risk management of public funds such as contracts structured to ensure accountability with a focus on serving populations identified in the Fund’s mandate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ He addressed storm-related funding concerns. The intent is to avoid disrupting evaluation of existing projects.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy aims to balance emergency response while maintaining long-term program goals</li> <li>▪ Stressed importance of ongoing evaluation, clear deliverables established before projects begin, along with transparency and storytelling to build public trust.</li> <li>▪ Champ noted the 7–0 Council approval of the spending plan as evidence of growing confidence and collaboration.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>



- Tilda asked about the status of the Early Childhood Career Development Network, especially after the partnership with BTC fell apart, and highlighted workforce challenges in early learning.
  - Ann noted that Champ had not yet been fully briefed on this project.
    - Flood response and staffing shortages, including a vacant Deputy Executive role, slowed progress.
    - The project has not been dropped, but is currently paused.
    - She committed to checking in with Sarah Simpson and providing an update.
    - Tilda requested the update be included in Sarah's next Healthy Children's Fund report.
    - Champ added protecting paused strategies, including workforce initiatives, was part of discussions around using Fund dollars for storm relief.
      - Goal is to resume and implement paused projects once capacity allows.
- Vesla asked whether Champ had identified top audit findings he plans to prioritize addressing in the first half of the year.
  - Champ noted much of the audit reflects early-stage challenges, which are less relevant to current operations.
  - Key takeaways are communication gaps; community lacks clarity on why the Fund matters and how dollars are used.
    - Need to better articulate goals, rationale, and progress.
  - Visibility of governance and oversight; important for skeptics to understand risk management, accountability, and performance monitoring.
  - Evaluation and accountability in contracts increasingly include performance metrics.
    - Oversight mechanisms ensure both implementers and monitors are accountable
  - Champ acknowledged direct aid and private-sector investments are resource-intensive.
    - Emphasized limited staff capacity relative to scope of work
- Vesla shared the Task Force perspective on recurring concerns which include the gift of public funds issue, interdepartmental bottlenecks, and underspending in administrative budget despite capacity constraints.
  - Champ acknowledged the points and noted continued engagement across county government will be essential
- Sallye asked what other areas should the Task Force focus on beyond the Fund and what past work is Champ most excited to potentially bring to Whatcom County?
  - Champ shared about his extensive prior experience building systems of care around behavioral health, particularly for pregnant individuals with substance use and mental health needs.
  - There was a cross-sector collaboration involving healthcare, criminal justice, and social services.
  - Outcomes from prior work included near-zero infant removals by CPS, reduced stigma among providers and institutions, hiring people with lived experience into service roles, development of mobile crisis and peer-led response programs.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In regards to what the Task Force should focus on Champ noted limited familiarity so early in tenure. However, he suggested Task Force engagement in jail planning and behavioral care center discussions, given impacts on families, trauma, and ACEs.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasized continuity of care for incarcerated parents to reduce harm to children.</li> <li>▪ Sallye agreed that the Task Force should play a stronger role in jail planning and behavioral care discussions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The Task Force agreed to revisit this conversation in 3–6 months once Champ is more acclimated.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Champ tentatively scheduled a return discussion in April or May, pending legislative session outcomes.</li> <li>○ Allyson to place Champ’s return on a future agenda.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Call for HCF Council Report Card Drafters</b></p>	<p>Sallye discussed preparation of the spring Report Card, traditionally focused on the Healthy Children’s Fund.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The SEVA audit and county responses may inform this year’s report.</li> <li>▪ The report is intended primarily to inform County Council, especially new councilmembers, about Task Force priorities and discussions.</li> <li>▪ Report Card must be approved by the Task Force in February 2026.</li> <li>▪ Submission required in time for March County Council meetings either March 10 or March 24.</li> <li>▪ Sallye volunteered to begin drafting and requested review partners.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tilda, Allie and Colton volunteered to review the draft</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjournment</b></p>	<p>Allie brought up tabling at the FOCUS Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Date: Saturday, February 7</li> <li>▪ Timeframe: 8:00 AM – 1:00 PM (two suggested shifts: 8–10 AM and 12–1 PM)</li> <li>▪ Would allow the Task Force to engage directly with child care providers, a group not regularly reached by the Task Force.</li> <li>▪ Participation is optional but encouraged.</li> <li>▪ Allie Bishop, Karla, Sallye, and Tilda volunteered</li> </ul> <p>Meeting adjourned at approx. 4:56 pm.</p>
<p><b>Next Meeting</b></p>	<p><b>Next regular meeting: February 23, 2026</b>      <b><u>Location: 322 N Commercial St.</u></b></p>

# Grief and Loss in the Perinatal Period

MARCH 18, 2026 | 8:30AM-4:30PM | IN PERSON | FREE

For Washington State providers serving families in Whatcom County

*Join us for a multimodal training to deepen understanding of perinatal grief and loss, build practical, trauma-informed skills to support families and provider well-being, and advance a shared community standard of compassionate care.*



## Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this training, participants will be able to:

- Understand the full spectrum of grief and loss in the perinatal period, its impact on individuals, family units, and communities, and how systemic inequities shape experiences and access.
- Identify and strengthen skills in best practices for compassionate care to build strong therapeutic relationships when assessing, treating, and referring perinatal individuals experiencing grief and loss.
- Recognize the impacts of secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and moral distress on providers.
- Develop grounding and emotional regulation practices, deepen supportive supervision strategies, and identify community support networks that uphold grief work.
- Connect individual practice to broader systems of care and to local and regional advocacy in developing a community standard of care for perinatal grief and loss.

**Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> 8:30am - 4:30pm**

**PeaceHealth St. Luke's Community Education Center  
3333 Squalicum Pkwy, Bellingham, WA 98225**

**Lunch Provided by Guud Bowls**

**Registration: <https://bit.ly/4syYCG6>  
Questions: [training@perinatalsupport.org](mailto:training@perinatalsupport.org)**

**Keynote Speaker:** Marquita Straus (she/they), MSW, LICSW, is a perinatal grief and trauma therapist, death doula, and bereaved parent with over 15 years of experience supporting families through pregnancy loss and birth trauma. She is the founder of Imani's Light, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting BIPOC families through perinatal grief and advancing compassionate, trauma-informed care. CEUs pending for LICSW, LMHC, LMFT and RNs



Presented by the Whatcom Perinatal Mental Health Task Force, with support from DCYF and Perinatal Support WA, this training is for Washington State providers serving families in Whatcom County.

# Preparación para el Parto y Cuidado del Recién Nacido

## Calendario de CLASES GRATIS

**Semana 1:** Introducción al embarazo y al parto

**Semana 2:** Conociendo el proceso del parto y el nacimiento

**Semana 3:** Técnicas para sobrellevar el trabajo de parto

**Semana 4:** Intervenciones médicas y toma de decisiones

**Semana 5:** Recuperación postparto y cuidado del recién nacido

**Semana 6:** Lactancia, vínculo afectivo y llegada del bebé al hogar

*(Puedes asistir a las sesiones que más te interesen - no es necesario seguir un orden)*

**MIÉRCOLES:** en línea

21 de enero – 25 de febrero

6–8 p.m.



Zoom:

<https://btc-tech.zoom.us/j/92375751712>

**SÁBADO:** en persona

24 de enero – 28 de febrero

10 a.m.–12 p.m.

**PROJECT HOPE:**

205 South B.C. Avenue

Lynden, WA 98264

¡Incentivos semanales proporcionados!

¿Preguntas o necesita ayuda con el transporte?

Por favor contacte al instructor,

Yazil Castro: (661) 247-7706 o la directora,

Jen Knudsen: [jknudsen@btc.edu](mailto:jknudsen@btc.edu)





# Whatcom Healthy Children's Fund

## Report to the Child and Family Well Being Task Force on the Healthy Children's Fund Implementation

Meeting Date: 1.26.26

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### Healthy Children's Fund Narrative

Actively working on Early Learning and Care Capital Contracts, Doulas for Vulnerable Families and Peer Support Program.

Announcements will be made with in the next two weeks regarding Subsidy Administrators.

Our team is currently in a contract renewal phase, which includes reviewing past evaluations, refining scopes of work, and making necessary budget adjustments across more than 39 contracts. Managing this complex process with such a wide range of providers and organizations is no small task, and the team continues to impress with the grace, skill, and care they bring to every step.

In addition to the strategies in the Council approved Implementation Plan, County Council unanimously approved a resolution directing up to \$750,000 in Healthy Children's Fund dollars to be used to provide Winter Storm Recovery Assistance Program to organizations that can help families with young children recover from the December 2025 winter storm. **This money provides reimbursement for time-limited (short-term), recovery-focused assistance** related to:

- Housing stabilization - Things like rent or deposit help, utility payments, and temporary lodging.
- Basic needs - Things like food and groceries, transportation, and diapers.
- Case management - Things like individualized support from the organization, service coordination, and eligibility checks.

To learn more about this funding opportunity follow the link below:

[https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAWHATCOMCO-40581e4?wgt\\_ref=WAWHATCOMCO\\_WIDGET\\_29](https://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/WAWHATCOMCO-40581e4?wgt_ref=WAWHATCOMCO_WIDGET_29)

To view the most up-to-date list of all current HCF contracts, please visit:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/4485/Contracts>

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## **Staffing Updates**

No staffing updates

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## **Spotlight on Healthy Children's Fund Success**

<https://salish-current.org/2026/01/20/whatever-happened-to-the-healthy-childrens-fund/>

The above linked article highlights a unique and innovative Auxiliary Projects Pilot funded by HCF, it is designed to bring critical services directly into early learning classrooms. Through this pilot, three organizations; the Whatcom Family YMCA, Sendan, and the Whatcom Center for Early Learning received funding to integrate services such as physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), and mental and behavioral health supports within early childhood education settings.

Rather than requiring families to seek services elsewhere, providers deliver support on site, where children already learn and grow. In addition to working directly with children, providers also support early learning staff by offering training, consultation, and coaching. Many of the funded programs also include resources, education, and training opportunities for parents, strengthening family engagement and reinforcing developmental progress at home.

A key strength of this pilot is its connection to Dr. Fincham, a professor at Western Washington University, who is supporting both the evaluation of the pilot and the learning community formed among participating providers. This evaluation and shared learning approach allow the group to better understand which services, delivery models, and supports have the greatest impact. The insights gained will help inform how these efforts can be refined, scaled, and replicated across early learning centers throughout the county.

Good stuff happening all around us!

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## **Evaluation Updates**

SEVA consulting delivered the final external audit and program evaluation report to the executive's office on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

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## **Outreach & Communication Updates**

A Healthy Children's Fund specific website has been underway since Late September 2025. We have already received a first draft and are so excited to release the full website into the community in February of 2025. The launch date has been pushed back from January due to flood

response efforts, during which HCF staff were temporarily redirected to support urgent community needs.

We've hired a videographer to help share the story of the Healthy Children's Fund and its impact in our community. Please visit and share our YouTube Page to see what has been created to date!

[bit.ly/4o6LgOT](https://bit.ly/4o6LgOT)

Thank you for helping us share the story of HCF's impact in our community!

These efforts reflect our commitment to increasing public awareness and ensuring that families, providers, and community stakeholders are informed and engaged.