

# Essentials for Childhood

*Our vision: All children in Washington State thrive in safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments*



## BACKGROUND

In Washington, we take our role as stewards of the next generation very seriously. We know that our ability to raise healthy children who can lead tomorrow's communities requires smart and innovative thinking today. The good news is that developmental science is clear about what children need to thrive.

We know that children's brains are developed over time and from the bottom up, much like how a house is built. Sturdy architecture is built when children have stable, positive experiences and relationships with caring adults at home and in their communities. But severe or repeated exposure to harmful experiences without the support of caring adults can cause toxic stress responses in children. This weakens the brain's architecture, leaving children vulnerable to a number of health, learning, and behavioral problems throughout their lives.

Fortunately, research suggests that safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments help to prevent or even reverse a child's previous exposure to experiences that caused toxic stress responses.

## ***Washington's Essentials for Childhood Common Agenda***

### **VISION**

All children in Washington State thrive in safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments.

### **COMMITMENT**

To promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships in families, communities, and early learning and school environments. By 2025, this leads to measurable and significant improvements in children's health, development, and education outcomes and eliminating equity gaps. Our initial work focuses primarily on our state's youngest and most vulnerable children and their families.

### **STRATEGIES**

- Support community ownership, impact, and action
- Educate and motivate key stakeholders on brain science, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and resilience
- Transform systems and services to prevent and mitigate the impact of trauma
- Align systems to enable family-centered service provision
- Improve data sharing and use across systems
- Spark innovative policy and financing solutions

### **PRINCIPLES**

- |                               |                   |                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| • Bold, innovative            | • Cross-sector    | • Prevention focused      |
| • Population-level, statewide | • Assets-based    | • Community informed      |
| • Addresses inequalities      | • Evidence-driven | • Builds on existing work |

## ESSENTIALS FOR CHILDHOOD IN WASHINGTON STATE

In 2013, Washington was one of five state health departments funded to implement Essentials for Childhood, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's child maltreatment framework. This grant supports cross-sector collaboration to support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children. It builds on over two decades of pioneering work in our state on understanding and addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences. The Department of Health co-leads this initiative with the Department of Early Learning.

The Essentials for Childhood Steering Committee provides strategic leadership and is championing this vision. The Steering Committee is a cross-sector, public-private leadership group with representatives of state government, community, philanthropy, business and statewide advocacy organizations concerned with the fostering healthy children and families.

The Steering Committee is working to focus action and improve collaboration in support of the Essentials vision, particularly focusing on impacting the **North Star Metrics**:

- |  |                                     |                               |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ✓ Increase <b>Kindergarten Readiness</b> | ✓ Reduce <b>Adverse Experiences</b> | ✓ Improve <b>Child Health</b> |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|

Workgroups are implementing Common Agenda strategies.

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American Academy of Pediatrics	Department of Early Learning	Partners for Our Children
American Indian Health Commission	Department of Health	Public Health Seattle & King County
Bastyr University	Department of Social and Health Services	ReadyNation
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Empire Health Foundation	Reach Out and Read
Boeing Corporate Citizenship	Fight Crime: Invest in Kids	Thrive
Broetje Orchards/First Fruits	Foundation for Healthy Generations	Thurston County Prosecutor's Office
Casey Family Programs, Systems Improvement Unit	Health Care Authority	University of Washington, Center for Child and Family Well-Being
Center for Children & Youth Justice	Northwest Venture Philanthropy	WA State Association of Public Health Officials
Childhaven	Office of the Governor	WA State Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Community Café Collaborative of Washington	Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction	
Department of Commerce	Parent Trust for Washington Children	

## CONTACT

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