

# Best Starts Child Care/Early Learning Plan In a Nutshell

## Best Starts Overview for Affordable Available High Quality Child Care/Early Learning for all of Juneau's Kids

1. High Quality incentive: For every child in licensed care:  
\$100/child/or infant/toddler per month @ **Quality level 2\***  
\$200/child & \$350/infant/toddler per month @ **Quality levels 3-5\***
2. Incentive to serve low income families (in addition to the above):  
\$150/child or infant/toddler/month - Low Income Family Incentive.
3. Sliding scale financial support for low income families. (Existing State program)
4. CBJ HEARTS funding increase - incentive for early learning training.
5. Connect kids and parents with services.
6. Management and Quality Control.  
(\*State of Alaska – “Learn and Grow” 5 Quality Levels)

**Best Starts Strategy:** Similar subsidy strategies have been implemented successfully in other cities including Seattle. In fact, subsidy is the only way to guarantee providers have the resources to raise quality.

- 1. High Quality incentive:** Provides a moderate subsidy per child to make up the difference between what parents can afford, and the cost of hiring qualified workers who can implement a high quality curriculum (as measured by the AK Dept of Education 5 quality level “Learn and Grow” standards). Infant/toddler care has the highest subsidy because it is the most expensive to provide due to high staff ratios. This strategy benefits every child in Juneau by raising overall consistency and quality, and makes it economically feasible existing providers to stay in business and new providers to open.
- 2. Incentive to serve low income families and allow parents to work:** In addition, provides a \$150 per low income child per month incentive for licensed providers that are quality level 3-5.
- 3. Sliding scale financial support for low income families:** Since the 1970's, the State has provided a partial subsidy on a sliding scale based on income, but it has not been enough to make child care affordable for all low income families.
- 4. CBJ HEARTS incentive for training:** For several years the CBJ has successfully provided an education award program that has proven effective in increasing the number of qualified child care teachers. Best Starts would increase the number of teachers with needed training (currently only 30% of Juneau child care teachers are trained).
- 5. Connect kids and parents with services:** Providers will be assisted in connecting kids and parents with family support and parenting services, health services, and other family oriented services to build stronger families and reduce the incidence and impact of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences).
- 6. Management and Quality Control:** The cost to administer and evaluate Best Starts is low because it largely uses existing measures and systems. The Assembly will appoint an Early Education Steering Committee to guide implementation & report to the public. Representatives: Assembly/CBJ, School District, Tlingit and Haida Central Council, other providers, Juneau Association for the Education of Young Children, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, parents, & interested citizens. The School District will be the fiscal agent and hire a Quality Coordinator to assist and maintain high quality for public and private participating providers.

## Why is child care/early learning important to Juneau?

- We know that the first 5 years of life are the most critical for learning and developing successful character traits to become healthy successful adults. To illustrate the critical nature of early education, state assessments show that only one out of three Juneau kids are prepared to enter Kindergarten, AND, according to state tests, a large number of Juneau kids never achieve proficiency in language, science and math in K-12. A nationally recognized forty year study of children to adults show that **high quality** child care/early learning during ages 0-5 increases academic and lifetime success and reduces future government and societal costs far greater than the investment in early learning.
- Child care is difficult to find in Juneau, and expensive. It is a stress to families and employers. Available high quality care is a family stress reducer, and can decrease ACES impacts due to parental involvement, potential early identification of problems, and building resilience in children.
- An available, affordable, high quality child care/early learning system in Juneau is a key to our economic growth. Child care is a critical need for recruiting and retaining employees. Best Starts will make Juneau one of the most Business and Family Friendly cities in the nation.

## What is the child care crises in Juneau?

- **Quantity** – Juneau has lost over 100 or 20% of its child care spaces in the 12 months. There are about half as many spaces as needed to serve Juneau families who want child care.
- **Quality** – The state “Learn and Grow” quality system gives ratings from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) based on qualifications of staff, curriculum, facilities, etc. Juneau currently has only two child care/early learning centers beyond a 1 rating.
- **Affordability for families** - The cost for child care in Juneau is an average of \$938 per month. The state “Child Care Assistance Program” helps families only with the first \$675 of cost paying a % of \$675 on a sliding scale based on family income, requiring low income families to pay 100% of amounts over \$675. This makes child care unaffordable to many lower income families.

## What is the root cause of the child care crises in Juneau?

The root cause is: **most parents cannot afford to pay enough for child care to enable providers to operate a quality child care or preschool.** Currently, child care teachers in Juneau earn an average of approximately \$12.50/hour with few benefits. There is little financial future for child care workers, so few qualified teachers are hired and turnover is very high. Providers are also facing increased state pressure to raise quality standards and hire more qualified staff, but they do not have the revenue to do so, further worsening the problem.

## Do Juneau’s Schools, Child Care and Pre-school system support Best Starts?

Yes, the public, private, and non-profit providers all support Best Starts and are partners.

**Can Juneau Afford Best Starts for its kids?** The cost of Best Starts ramps up over 5 years to a sustaining program of \$2.8 million per year adjusted annually for inflation. If growth exceeds the funding, the incentives can be scaled back instead of costing more. For reference: the entire proposed FY 19-20 CBJ budget is \$330 million; Total Sales and Property taxes \$89.6 million; the total cost of K-12 is \$85.7 million (Juneau’s local tax contribution to K-12 is \$27 million).

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