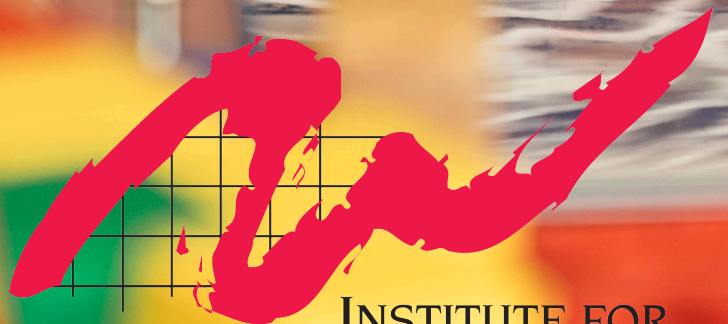


# **CHILD CARE SUPPORTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION TRADES:**

**Building and  
Sustaining  
Diversity  
in Oregon**



**INSTITUTE FOR  
WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH**



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report profiles three Oregon initiatives to provide child care supports to pre-apprentices, apprentices in highway trades, and fully skilled workers in the construction trades. It draws on the perspectives of apprentices, labor, management, and other stakeholders to highlight the need for child care supports and their benefits for diversifying, developing, recruiting and retaining the next generation of skilled workers for Oregon's construction industry. This report was prepared with financial support from Oregon Labor and Industries.

This report was written by Ariane Hegewisch, IWPR Program Director for Employment and Earnings.

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A background image of a smiling woman with curly hair holding a baby in denim overalls. The woman is wearing a white shirt and the baby is wearing blue denim overalls. The image is faded to serve as a background for the text.

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE NEED FOR CHILD CARE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE

The construction industry in Oregon is booming. Employment has grown steadily since 2010 and is now higher than during the pre-recession boom (Simonson 2019b). Yet, meeting demand is difficult for many companies. In a recent survey, close to 90 percent of construction industry employers in Oregon reported difficulties with filling hourly paid craft positions, and in many trades over half of contractors report that recruitment difficulties increased since 2018 (Simonson 2019a). To keep growing and meet demand over the coming years, the industry has to train and retain a new generation of workers to replace retiring workers, and it has to diversify its employment profile to meet stakeholder expectations for a more racially, ethnically, and gender diverse workforce.

Access to child care is an often overlooked building block for improving recruitment, retention, and diversity in the trades. Reliable child care allows an individual to develop the skills and work habits that employers look for, and broadens the pool from which the industry can recruit; without reliable child care, a parent with dependent children may find it difficult to be successful in their career, or may not even consider entering a training program.

Oregon is one of the most expensive states in the nation for child care (Child Care Aware of America 2018).<sup>1</sup> In many counties, finding child care – at whatever price—is difficult (King and Dodson 2019). A 2018 survey of construction apprentices found that 45 percent of mothers and 26 percent of fathers identified the cost of child care as a problem, with similar responses in relation to finding consistent child care (Wilkinson and Kelly 2018). Work in construction starts early and traveling to sites can often require substantial time, requiring child care drop off before formal child care centers open. Even though apprentices earn comparatively high hourly wages compared to many typically female jobs,<sup>2</sup> there may be considerable out-of-work periods especially early on during the apprenticeship, and when working, the need for care during travel and early hours may still make child care costs a substantial barrier to staying in the trades.

<sup>1</sup> In recognition of the need to tackle child care, Oregon's legislature in 2019 passed House Bill 2346 to establish a Task Force on Access to Quality Affordable Child Care and report back by the end of 2020; see <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2019R1/Downloads/Measure-Document/HB2346/Enrolled>.

<sup>2</sup> The hourly pay of an apprentice increases approximately every six months (subject to the apprentice having worked a set number of hours and completed classes). An apprentice carpenter in a union apprenticeship program in Oregon starts with half the hourly rate of a journey level carpenter (after 4 years apprenticeship), at around \$18.50 in Term 1, and then increases in regular steps after each term, reaching 94% of the journey level rate (around \$38) during their 8th and last term. Laborers, who complete a two-year apprenticeship, start at 63 percent of the journey level rate (between \$25.77 and \$29.70 in union apprenticeship programs in the state), and reach 90 percent of the journey-level rate in Term 4; see Oregon Labor & Industry "PWR Apprenticeship Rates Effective 1, 2019" <<https://www.oregon.gov/boli/WHD/PWR/docs/January%201,%202019%20Apprenticeship%20rates.pdf>>.

The construction industry in Oregon, however, is fortunate to have access to a range of supports to tackle the child care barriers to recruiting and retaining a more diverse workforce, with supports available at each stage of the skilled construction labor spectrum. Since 2010, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Oregon Labor & Industries have provided public funding for Apprentice-Related Child Care (ARCC) and other supports for apprentices in highway-related trades. In 2017, Labor's Community Service Agency instituted the Pre-Apprenticeship Child Care Initiative (PACCI), a pilot public-private program to extend child care supports to pre-apprentices. Last not least, in 2019, Labor Littles, a new privately funded non-profit supported by Oregon's Building Trades, is helping union tradesmen and women find union in-home child care providers willing to provide care to cover the construction work day.

This briefing paper describes the three child care initiatives and discusses how these help construction businesses in Oregon recruit and retain the next generation of skilled workers.

## **HOW OREGON SUPPORTS THE CONSTRUCTION TRADES THROUGH CHILD CARE SUPPORTS FOR APPRENTICES IN HEAVY HIGHWAY RELATED TRADES**

In 2009, the Oregon legislature passed a bill to draw down a designated amount up to one half of one percent (1/2 of 1%) of Oregon's federal highway funding to set up the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program designed to diversify the heavy highway construction trades (Hegewisch et al. 2014). The program is funded biannually, currently at up to \$2.1 million (ODOT/BOLI 2018). Registered apprentices and those preparing to enter an apprenticeship in six trades related to highway construction--Carpenters, Cement Masons, Ironworkers, Laborers, Operating Engineers, and Painters—can receive support and services; child care is one of 10 areas of supports provided under the program (Williams 2019).

Apprentices seeking child care supports through the Apprenticeship Related Child Care (ARCC) program must apply to Akana (a local provider of apprenticeship supportive services), and the application is then reviewed by both Akana and Oregon's Department for Human Services (DHS) Employment Related Daycare Program (ERDC), which also processes any payments to child care providers for the applicants. The details of the collaboration between the DHS and Oregon



Labor & Industry are laid out in a memorandum of agreement between the departments. Applying for funds and figuring out eligibility can be daunting, filling in a number of forms and providing supporting evidence. Apprentices can draw on the help of dedicated staff to support them through the child care application and the other supports that are available under the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program. Apprentices who attend a financial planning class delivered under the program qualify for a further enhancement of their child care subsidies. These supports are provided through Akana.

**“The cost of child care is often as high if not higher than your mortgage payments. It creates this big barrier for apprentices, like somebody dropping a metal wall — and it’s three-quarter-inch thick steel — in front of them, between them and their work and their career. It’s that important.”**

Child care is not the only barrier that may keep apprentices from succeeding in their apprenticeship, but it is a very substantial one: “The cost of child care is often as high if not higher than your mortgage payments. It creates this big barrier for apprentices, like somebody dropping a metal wall — and it’s three-quarter-inch thick steel— in front of them, between them and their work and their career. It’s that important,” explains Penny Painter, who is a Project Manager at Akana, a firm which specializes in providing workforce development services to construction companies in the Oregon area and beyond. Since 2011, Akana has been a contractor for the ODOT-BOLI program to provide subsidies for child care, promoting positive outcomes for highway apprentices and their employers.

Involved since the beginning, Painter has seen many families struggle with finding adequate child care during work hours. She works to connect apprentices with child care subsidies and find creative solutions to their caregiving needs.

Supports through ARCC are available to individuals with higher household incomes than under the ERDC program, and are available to married apprentices whose partner is a full-time student (under ERDC criteria the spouse of an apprentice would also need to be employed; see Box 1 for eligibility details). Under the ERDC program, those who qualify need to pay a co-pay and are also responsible for any child care costs higher than authorized ERDC rates; through the ARCC programs, apprentices with household incomes that would qualify them for ERDC supports have their co-pays and overages paid, too, so that effectively 100 percent of their child care costs are covered. As the apprentice progresses through the apprenticeship, their co-pay increases, with the level of co-pay depending on household income (see Box 1). For an apprentice with at least one child under the age of three or of at least one older child with special needs, supports of up to \$18,000 are available during the apprenticeship; for an apprentice whose youngest child is between age six and age eleven, supports are up to \$12,000 (Painter 2019).<sup>3</sup>

Since its introduction in 2011, 169 apprentices have been supported, at a total cost of \$629,369, averaging at \$3,724 per supported apprentice (Williams 2019). Women are 27 percent of recipients, a much higher proportion than their share of all apprentices in Oregon (around 7 percent), and a reflection of the program’s effort to improve gender diversity in the trades (Williams 2019). Women of color are particularly likely to have received child care supports (Wilkinson and Kelly 2018). The large majority of recipients, however, are fathers, with men of color accounting for three in ten

<sup>3</sup> Starting January 2020.



child care recipients, which is also a higher proportion of their share of all apprenticeships though less disproportionate than for women (Williams 2019). Single fatherhood is no longer a rarity in the trades, at the same time it has become more common for mothers to be in the workforce. That said, among apprentices surveyed about receipt of child care and other supports in 2018, mothers were much more likely to report being single parents than fathers (40 compared with 11 percent; Wilkinson and Kelly 2018).

Child care subsidies are only available to child care providers who are registered with Oregon DHS, and providers are paid directly through the program. Many apprentices rely on informal care from families and friends, in response both to the cost of more formal day care and because of the need to cover construction schedules. The program has offered assistance to informal child care providers interested in registering with the DHS; registration means that the provider can receive the official child care re-imbursement rates set by the DHS. Thus, the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program has also improved livelihoods beyond the trades.

### **THE PRE-APPRENTICESHIP CHILD CARE INITIATIVE (PACCI)**

The second pillar of child care supports in Oregon is the Pre-Apprenticeship Child Care Initiative (PACCI), a pilot program run by the Labor’s Community Service Agency (LCSA), to provide child care supports to pre-apprentices. Pre-apprenticeship programs, such as those run by Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTW), Constructing Hope, Portland Youth Builders (PYB), the Pacific Northwest Carpenter Institute, and the NECA IBEW Electrical Training Center, are increasing diversity in the trades by bridging the gap in the networks and knowledge that women and men of color need to enter apprenticeships.<sup>4</sup> Entry to apprenticeship programs is typically highly competitive, requiring trades-related numeracy and literacy skills, some prior knowledge of the tools and work environment of each trade, including the routes for applying to an apprenticeship. Men are much more likely than women to have learned about tools as part of growing up, and White men are much more likely than women or men of color to have relatives (or buddies) in the trades who can help navigate the path into an apprenticeship program.

Pre-apprenticeship programs typically last 6 to 8 weeks and are offered free of charge. Yet, while the training is free, participants typically have to support themselves during

<sup>4</sup> A full list of pre-apprenticeship programs is available at [https://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/ATD/pages/A\\_AG\\_PreApprentice.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/BOLI/ATD/pages/A_AG_PreApprentice.aspx)

**“We realized that [parents] are not even looking at these programs because they get it straight away that they cannot afford to pay child care and be unpaid for eight to ten weeks of a pre-apprenticeship program—they are not even knocking at the door.”**



the program. For those who have children, that means finding the means to support their families and provide for child care during the program. As Christina Daniels, electrician, and co-founder of the PACCI, explains: “We realized that [parents] are not even looking at these programs because they get it straight away that they cannot afford to pay child care and be unpaid for eight to ten weeks of a pre-apprenticeship program—they are not even knocking at the door.” Community based pre-apprenticeship programs can sometimes provide child care supports, or have established partnerships with organizations providing such support; yet child care is one of the most commonly stated unfulfilled needs in view of administrators of career and technical training providers (Hess et al. 2016).



The PACCI program is designed to ensure that parents from low-income households at least consider pre-apprenticeship programs among their options. The program is reaching out to churches, community centers, and other organizations and venues working with low-income parents to increase awareness of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship options. The program is also able to fund the child care costs of a small number

of pre-apprentices. So far, the program has supported five pre-apprentices, a single mother who since entered a sheet metal apprenticeship, a single father and ex-offender, who since then has become an ironworker apprentice, and three women who received supports during the electricians' pre-apprenticeship program.

Oregon Tradeswomen Executive Director Kelly Kupcak stresses the importance of child care funds: “The funding that has been made available through Oregon’s Bureau of Labor and Industries to support child care for jobseekers enrolled in training programs such as ours is huge – it makes all the difference for parents who need support during this transitional time. No one should have to choose between having quality, affordable and accessible care for their children and being able to obtain the necessary training for a living wage career. Oregon is third in the nation for highest child care costs and this small piece is making a big difference in the lives of families.”

Sadie Woods, a single mother who was able to attend Oregon Tradeswomen’s pre-apprenticeship program and is now a sheet metal apprentice, explains the vital impact of the subsidies she received: “I graduated my pre-apprenticeship program with perfect attendance. I managed to come in early and stay late, which wouldn’t have been possible without the child care.” Sadie’s children were already of school age when she joined OTW’s program, but during the summer she was without care, and her usual child care arrangement, through her parents, had fallen through because her parents were experiencing a care crisis themselves. LCSA helped her apply for funding through the PACCI program to pay for a child care provider to look after her children, and who received union rates for the service.

The PACCI program started with the help of private donations. In February 2019, PACCI received a \$50,000 two-year grant from Oregon Labor & Industries. The grant will fund child care supports



for at least seven pre-apprentices, and provide funding to continue PACCI's outreach focus and help to potential pre-apprentices with accessing funding for support such as ERDC for those who qualify. Oregon Labor & Industries is funding the grant through federal funds received by Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission from the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration.



**“We are working with child care professionals- we are letting the providers run their business. It creates a firewall [between the contractor and the child] – it makes contractors more comfortable to get involved with child care because there isn't that fear of liability – what if a child should get injured - if a contractor provides a space or if [child care is provided] on site.”**

## **LABOR LITTLES: CONNECTING UNION TRADESPEOPLE WITH UNION DAYCARE PROVIDERS**

Labor Littles is the newest and third pillar in region's initiatives to tackle the child care needs of tradespeople. It is still at a pilot stage, and was co-developed by Eryn Byram of LCSA and Christina Daniels of IBEW. It has the support of Oregon Building Trades (Northwest Labor Press 2019). While ARCC and PACCI are focused on improving apprentice diversity, Labor Littles' goal is to improve the

retention of journey workers by helping union tradeswomen and men find child care that matches the construction industry working and commuting times.



Getting to construction sites can require leaving the house at 4:30 or 5am, but few childcare centers open before 6 am. Labor Littles builds on an informal relationship with AFCSME Local 132, the union organizing in-home daycare providers in

the greater Portland area, to identify child care providers in the greater Portland Oregon willing and able to provide 24 hour care, including when children are sick, and provide transportation to and from school. The relationship with AFCSME developed through PACCI's work with pre-apprentices.

Labor Littles works as an intermediary; it provides tradespeople with the information about providers, but is not involved in the payments for the child care. While funding it is a problem that mostly impacts pre-apprentices and early term apprentices until their wages and hours reach a level at which they can afford care, finding reliable care to cover construction hours is a problem for tradespeople at every level. As a means of creating a more stable supply of child care, Labor Littles is reserving slots

for tradespeople with providers. Whenever reserved slots are not filled, Labor Littles is responsible for reimbursing the provider for the slot; currently it has relationships with two providers offering a slot in three locations.

Child care providers receive union negotiated rates, and must be state-registered. Having well-earning tradespeople as their clients and being paid directly is attractive for promoting market development and for providing an earning source complementary to reimbursements from the DHS and other agencies.

Working with professional in-home child care providers has the potential of increasing buy-in and support from contractors. “We are working with child care professionals- we are letting the providers run their business. It creates a firewall [between the contractor and the child] – it makes contractors more comfortable to get involved with child care because there isn’t that fear of liability – what if a child should get

injured - if a contractor provides a space or if [child care is provided] on site,” explains Labor Littles co-director Christina Daniels. Too often the discussion on employer-related child care is narrowly focused on child care centers at or close to the workplace. While that may work for some workers some of the time, many parents prefer child care closer to where they live, particularly when children are no longer infants and/or have older school age siblings (IFC 2017).

Funding for the program has come from industry and private donations. Labor Littles is working to expand its funding from industry, and is also planning to apply for grants and public funding, to help pay for its work as an intermediary and to secure child care slots across the region (Daniels 2019). As part of its goal of diversifying the trades, Labor Littles also hopes to raise funds to subsidize child care costs for women and men of color who are in apprenticeship programs not covered under the ARCC highways initiative.





**“It is make-or-break it out there if you’re a single parent and you really want to have a better job to provide for your family. How you get [that better jobs] is through one of these apprenticeship programs.”**



## **INVESTING IN CHILD CARE SUPPORTS PROVIDES ACCESS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY**

For the recipients of the supports, child care offers potentially life changing opportunities by providing a route to a career with a family supporting wage that does not require (to pay for) a college education. As PNCI Carpenter Trades Preparation program coordinator Amber McCoy put it, “It is make- or- break it out there it if you’re a single parent and you really want to have a better job to provide for your family. How you get [that better jobs] is through one of these apprenticeship programs.” A woman apprentice described the impact of receiving child care supports in the Oregon Labor & Industries sponsored evaluation of the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program, “[Receiving child care subsidies] helped immensely. It took a lot of the stress off of spending every penny I had on child care. I was able to pay for boots, clothes, equipment. I was able to better provide for my children” (Wilkinson and Kelly 2018).

Having access to reliable child care means that the apprentice is able to get to work on time. In the construction industry, punctual and regular attendance is taken as a key performance criterion. As the assistant director of PNCI explains, “The carpentry trade as well as many construction trades, is not very sympathetic to missing work. If you’re a productive member of their crew, they gauge that not by how much you produce every day but by the fact that you are producing every day.” For those who cannot make it to work because of a child care issue, “you know, one strike, two strikes- you’re out. Employers, they remember that and they don’t necessarily empathize as much as you would hope.” Child care subsidy is not a magic bullet for perfect attendance; pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs drill into apprentices who are receiving such benefits that they also need back up plans for their formal child care, and a back-up plan for the back-up plan- but it gives apprentices who are parents a realistic chance to succeed in their trade.

PNCI apprenticeship administrator Azadeh Ryan describes how the supports with finding and paying for child care opened new opportunities to one of their women apprentices from a rural area. The single mother had had a hard time maintaining consistent work because she could not travel very far; the child care support from the ODOT/Oregon L&I program allowed her the opportunity to travel and to maintain employment. As she points out, “A lot of the time if you are a single parent, you only look for work within your small little radius so that if something happens, you can be there quickly. Having a reliable child care service affords the opportunity to [take more jobs] and the more you’re working, the quicker you progress through the apprenticeship- that is huge.”



**“A lot of the time if you are a single parent, you only look for work within your small little radius so that if something happens, you can be there quickly. Having a reliable child care service affords the opportunity to [take more jobs] and the more you’re working, the quicker you progress through the apprenticeship- that is huge.”**

### **INVESTING IN CHILD CARE HELPS THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR GROW AND IMPROVE THE BOTTOM LINE**

The business benefits of child care are well established. Employers who offer child care supports are better able to recruit and retain workers, improve attendance, increase productivity, and reduce accidents by ensuring that workers can fully focus on their work and are not distracted by concerns over child care. It can also improve their reputation as a good employer (BOLI 2015; IFC 2017). The child care supports available in Oregon help contractors and unions in the construction sector attract and retain a new and more diverse group of workers and allow them to acquire the skills needed to continue and sustain the growth of the sector.

### **CHILD CARE HELPS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY RECRUIT A NEW SET OF WORKERS**

Because the construction industry struggles with recruitment into the trades, it is crucial that employers tap into pools of previously excluded demographics, including women and racial and ethnic minorities (Portland Metro Workforce Development Board 2018). Apprenticeships ensure future access to skilled workers as much as providing a cost-effective means of meeting current demand for workers. Recruiting a new set of workers is a particularly high priority in Oregon because a high proportion of the current workforce is close to retirement. “Right now making sure that our [...] apprentices work out [...] is on every single one of our contractors’ minds because they are faced with a skilled worker shortage - within the next five years they’re looking at 40 percent or more of the workforce retiring,” explains Miguel Montaña, Assistant Director at Pacific Northwest Carpenters Institute (PNCI).

Yet, as Aaron Bouchane, AGC Workforce and Professional Development Manager for Oregon-Columbia, explains, at a time when demand for labor is generally high, the construction industry often is not the first career choice for young people. Other industries are more digitally intensive and innovative,<sup>5</sup> and the construction sector is also lagging behind in offering family-friendly working conditions, including to men. With a few exceptions regarding maternity leave – most recently added by Oregon Electricians IBEW local 48—paid family leave is not offered (Hegewisch 2019).<sup>6</sup> Child care supports bring a previously excluded group of workers into the industry, and

<sup>5</sup> Construction occupations on the whole have seen much less digitalization than other occupations; see Muro et al. 2017.



**“Right now making sure that our [...] apprentices work out [...] is on every single one of our contractor’s minds because they are faced with a skilled worker shortage - within the next five years they’re looking at 40 percent or more of the workforce retiring,”**



it sends a signal that workers with child care responsibilities are wanted in the industry.

### **CHILD CARE HELPS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY MEET GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR WORKFORCE DIVERSITY**

The construction trades offer much better earnings opportunities than typically female occupations accessible without a college degree (Hegewisch et al. 2016). Even though there has been progress in diversifying the trades, and more women than ever work in construction occupations, the trades remain among the least gender diverse of any occupations with just 3.4 percent of workers in trades occupations being women (Hegewisch and Ahmed 2019<sup>7</sup>). While Oregon has made significant progress towards attracting more women and minority males, with women’s share of apprentices in the double digits in some joint apprenticeship programs, overall only one in 14 apprentices in the state is a woman.<sup>8</sup>

Equitable access to such jobs, particularly on projects funded through tax dollars, has long been recognized as an economic equity issue, and the construction trades have been subjects to employment targets for women and minorities

for many decades (Moir, Thompson, and Kelleher 2011). While enforcement of such targets has often been low, a number of jurisdictions, including the Greater Portland Metro Council, have recently revisited and increased their expectations of diversity on publicly funded projects. In October 2019 the Council passed ambitious new employment targets for all publicly funded projects in the Greater Metro Portland Metro Area; these include that 14 percent of hours to be worked by women (twice the current level) and 25 percent of hours by people of color (Metro News 2019; see also Oregon Metro 2019).

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<sup>6</sup> Oregon’s recently passed paid family leave program will provide 12 weeks of leave to both mothers and fathers from 2023 onwards; see Oregon Business(November 2019) <<https://www.oregonbusiness.com/article/opinion/item/18910-policy-brief-what-employers-need-to-know-about-oregon-s-paid-family-leave-law>>

<sup>7</sup> The data also show that Black and Asian workers are underrepresented in the trades, while Hispanic workers are over-represented, but they are much less likely than other workers of color in the industry to work in the well-paid non-residential sector or be union members; see Hegewisch and Ahmed 2019.

<sup>8</sup> In January 2019, women were 6.8% of all registered apprentices in construction trades, rising to 8.8% for union apprenticeship programs; data analysis based on Bureau of Labor and Industry Oregon, Portland Metropolitan Statistical Area Apprentices, Construction Only, January 2019; provided by Connie Ashbrook, independent consultant.

Individual projects already have higher targets; for example, the Central Courthouse in Multnomah County – a 17-story office building- set a goal for women to make up 25 percent of apprentices worked on the project, for 20 percent of apprentices to be men of color, and for women journey workers to work 6 percent of project hours (Multnomah County 2018). The diversity performance is monitored monthly to help contractors focus and meet their goals.

The Sellwood Bridge Project, which began in 2011 and was completed in 2016, is another example of a publicly funded project with diversity goals, of 14 percent of hours worked by women, 20 percent by minorities, and 20 percent by apprentices (Inside ODOT 2017). Jennifer Erickson, Pacific Project Partners (workforce, diversity, inclusion consulting) and former Director of Human Resources at Slayden Construction, a contractor on the project, notes, “These are big contracts. [Meeting the diversity goals] is part of the contract – if you can’t meet them, you won’t get the contract.” Erickson met the targets by being proactive, working with Oregon Tradeswomen, for example, well ahead of time to make sure women coming through the OTW were aware of job

opportunities on Slayden project. She also made sure that subcontractors were both aware of the need to meet diversity goals, and of opportunities offered for meeting them by working with organizations such as OTW. While Erickson was not aware of any single apprentice who received child care supports—as Akana workforce support manager Penny Painter explains, the purpose of the supports is to help the apprentice do her or his job like anyone else, not to make them stick out as support recipients—she acknowledges the importance of the supports from the ODOT and Oregon L&I program, particularly on projects that require travel outside of metro areas.

The Sellwood Bridge and Multnomah Courthouse Projects show that it is possible to meet diversity goals. Yet, once all larger public projects include these goals, meeting the diversity targets will become more challenging. A detailed analysis of workforce requirements for the largest publicly funded projects in the Portland Metro region in the pipeline until 2022, based on the 2016 workforce profile of the sector, showed that the industry would need an additional 1,074 men of color, 1,416 women, and 445 apprentices to meet diversity goals (and would need every

**“These are big contracts. [Meeting the diversity goals] is part of the contract – if you can’t meet them, you won’t get the contract.”**







single one of these workers to choose to work on these and not any other contracts; Portland Metro Workforce Development Board 2018). Thus, to meet these goals, the industry will not only have to sustain progress that has been made in recent years, but to further step up its efforts. Child care supports help by signaling that the industry welcomes those with child care needs, and by helping those who enter stay in the industry.

### **CHILD CARE HELPS THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY RETAIN ITS WORKERS AND SAFEGUARD INVESTMENTS IN TRAINING**

Retention is a significant problem in the construction industry. Aftan Walsh of Walsh Construction notes, “To be frank, we have put a lot of focus on how to get women in the door- that is where we have been expanding our energy and have missed the full picture- [...] because ] that is only half the battle and half the story.” Only about half of all apprentices complete their apprenticeships, and women’s completion rates are lower than men’s (Reed et al 2012). The supports available to apprentices through the Oregon Highway Construction Workforce Development Program are significantly increasing apprenticeship completion (ODOT/

BOLI 2018). Given that child care is only one component of the supports available, and typically apprentices receive more than one support (Wilkinson and Kelly 2018), it is not possible to isolate the impact of child care for retention, yet individual stories show its important role.

Losing an apprentice or a journeyworker is expensive. On average replacing a worker costs between 16-20 percent of their annual salary (Boushey and Glyn 2012). Replacement costs are higher in the construction sector because of the systematic approach to on-the-job and off-the-job training provided during apprenticeships. As Miguel Montaña explains, “[...] the moment an apprentice comes through the door, we’ve already invested thousands to get them to that point. And that’s just the training center. Now you get that apprentice over to a contractor and they start to invest into that apprentice and they’re training and just their on-boarding procedure and by the time that apprentice starts feeling comfortable, it may be six months, nine months down the road and if all of a sudden that apprentice says, “Mm-mm, financial difficulty- I can’t continue,” they got to start all over with a new selection and that hurts them, that hurts them badly actually right now.” Jennifer Erickson, Pacific Project Partners, formally Human Resources Manager for Slayden, explains, “Apprentices are part of the crew. We invest in them. We send them to training. We do not want them to leave.”

The majority of men and women become parents at some stage of their lives (Livingstone 2018; Monte and Knop 2019). Apprenticeship typically occurs during an age when many people have children. When child care is unobtainable, unaffordable, or of low quality, families are likely to prioritize their children over their careers. The child care supports available to construction workers in Oregon show that with the right supports, people can commit to the industry, benefiting their own career trajectory as much as the industry.

## CONCLUSION

### **OREGON'S CHILD CARE INITIATIVES ARE A MODEL FOR RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND DIVERSITY IN THE TRADES**

The system of child care supports in the trades in Oregon is still emerging and has many gaps, particularly because child care and other retention services for apprentices are currently limited to heavy highway trades. Yet, by supporting and piloting child care initiatives during pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and for journey workers, Oregon is a model for supporting diversity in the construction trades.

The state of Oregon has spearheaded substantial improvements in the equity and accessibility of its highways construction apprenticeship programs. By linking support services to apprenticeships in the trades, the construction industry can recruit and retain more skilled workers, improve productivity, and continue its growth trajectory. Child care supports for pre-apprentices through the Pre-Apprenticeship Child Care Initiative improve access to apprenticeship programs to groups of workers previously excluded or marginalized by the industry, and collaboration between Labor Littles, the Building Trades' and child care provider union AFCSME makes it easier for tradespeople to stay in the industry by helping them find child care that matches construction hours.

Child care supports make a tangible difference in the lives of those working and training in the trades. A construction apprenticeship means an opportunity for upward economic mobility, a chance to provide for their families and to learn new skills. Child care subsidies open this possibility to more women, single parents, primary caretakers, and people of color. By supporting the recruitment and retention of a new and more diverse generation of skilled workers, child care supports are improving the bottom line for Oregon's construction industry and helping union construction trades to maintain and grow their membership.

The results of Oregon's efforts are out there for all to see. As Penny Painter, manager of Oregon's Workforce Development Support Services Program through Akana, reflects, "Now, you go to a job site, and you do see a woman, at least one. That is the blessing of it all. Before you could go to 25 job sites, and you would never see a single women. Now that is no longer the case."





# BOX 1

## Oregon Child Care Programs and Resources

### Department of Human Services (DHS) Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)

⟨<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ASSISTANCE/CHILD-CARE/Pages/Parents.aspx>⟩

### ODOT - OR Labor & Industries Apprentice Related Child Care (ARCC)

Contact penny.painter@akana.us )

Level of child care supports, for parents of children younger than 12 (2019):

- Applicant must apply to ERDC but can have higher household income.
- If the applicant qualifies for ERDC (up to 185 percent of Federal Poverty Limit) but still has a co-pay: the copay will be paid by the ARCC program. So their child care is 100 percent covered.
- Up to 280 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit (FPL): ODOT Support Service pays 75 percent of the child care costs and the applicant is responsible for 25 percent.
- More than 280 percent and up to 335 percent of the FPL: ODOT Support Service pays 50 percent of the child care costs and the applicant is responsible for 50 percent.
- More than 335 percent of the FPL, and until the apprentice is advanced to Journey level or meets the cap amount of their available child care funds: ODOT Support Service pays 25 percent of the child care costs and the applicant is responsible for 75 percent.

### Pre-Apprenticeship Child Care Initiative (PACCI)

Contact Jackie Whitt, 971-990-1142;

child care@lcsaportland.org or check website <https://www.lcsaportland.org/childcare>

### Labor Littles

Contact Christina Daniels, 360-430-2575, christina@laborlittles.org





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