



## Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Health (DOH) requests ongoing funds to maintain the state's Watch Me Grow Washington program (formerly known as the Child Profile Health Promotion System) which delivers critical health messages to parents, well-child visit and immunization information and reminders, and other important public health information (General Fund-State).

## Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2022	2023	2021-23	2024	2025	2023-25
<b>Staffing</b>						
FTEs	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>						
Fund 001 - 1	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Total Expenditures	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>

## Decision Package Description

### Problem

In the 2020 legislative session, DOH submitted a similar request to sustain its Child Profile Health Promotion System. In that request, DOH highlighted how the federal grant historically used to sustain this program – the Core Immunization Grant – remained relatively unchanged since fiscal year 2010, while the activities charged to the grant have grown. Some of the cost increases were the result of typical inflationary factors such as cost of living adjustments, but in other cases, additional core immunization activities have added maintenance and operations costs. This combination of stagnant grant revenue and increasing core expenditures left no ability to continue the use of the Core Grant to support the Child Profile Health Promotion System.

The Legislature provided one-time funding in fiscal years 2021 and 2022 (\$1,000,000 GF-State each year) with the additional requirement in the 2020 supplemental budget (ESSB 6168), The legislature directed the department to review its processes for efficiencies and possible technological advances to reduce costs. DOH submitted a report of its findings in December 2020. The finding and recommendations included:

- Recommendation #1: Support the Child Profile Health Promotion Program’s current structure with dedicated General Fund-State (GF-S) funding. The population health interventions provided by this program benefit all Washingtonians by investing in the health of our children.
- Recommendation #2: Support the Child Profile Health Promotion Program with funding for an additional two years, to allow DOH to explore the possibilities to integrate a fee to support the program in the future. Due to the department’s COVID-19 response efforts, the ability to work with appropriate staff to integrate a fee structure was limited and could not be implemented by the end of fiscal year 2021. Implementation of a new fee is anticipated to take 18-24 months to fully complete the Agency and Washington Administrative Code requirements for plan development, public notice, evaluation, communication, and implementation.

This proposal seeks an ongoing appropriation from the state’s general fund to allow DOH to continue sending critical health messages to parents, well-child visit and immunization information and reminders, and other important public health information. This aligns with recommendations from the 2020 legislative report that dedicate funding to this program, as it provides lifelong benefits to our children in Washington State.

### Background

Watch Me Grow Washington is our state’s centralized system to communicate key health and safety information, immunization information, and well-child visit reminders to families with children ages birth to six years old. Information is mailed to families in English and Spanish (families may also request the information to come via email instead of U.S. mail). The DOH uses the address information from its Immunization Information System (IIS) and the agency’s Center for Health Statistics (birth/death records, etc.) to send mailings to families about two weeks in advance of the time their child should be receiving a well-child visit from their primary care provider. A family will receive a total of 17 mailings for their child until they reach six years old. The frequency of mailings a family will receive are at birth, one month, three months, six months, nine months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, two years, 2-1/2 years, three years, 3-1/2 years, four years, 4-1/2 years, five years, 5-1/2 years, and six years.

For 21 years, the system has been the primary method for DOH to deliver important health information to Washington State families – reaching 98 percent of families with children aged birth to six years (nearly 500,000 families a year) – and is the only system like it in the country.

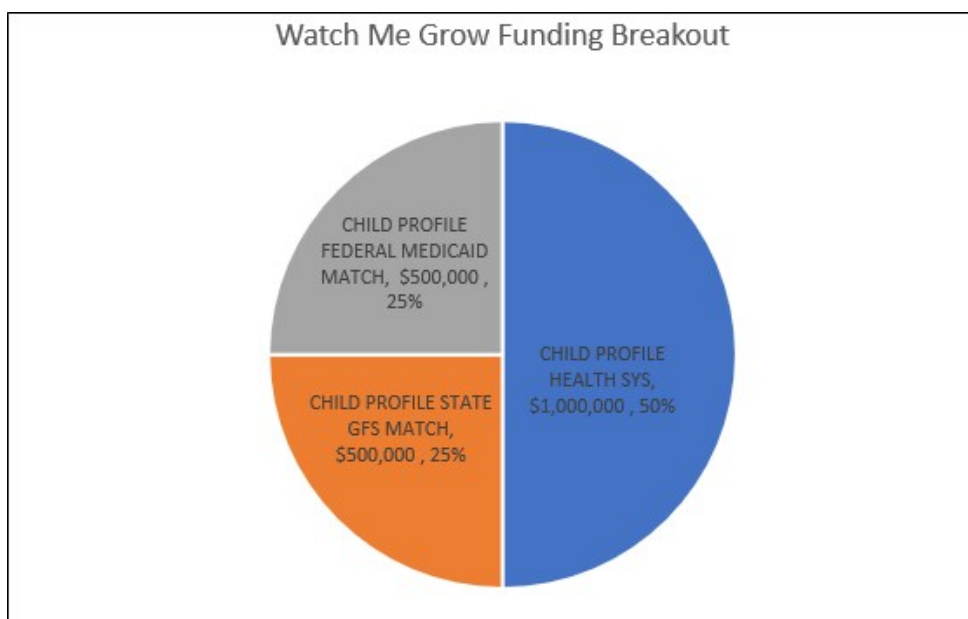
This comprehensive system is designed to influence health behaviors on multiple levels. It provides parents/guardians information relevant to their

child's health and developmental stage, with the goal of educating parents on the critical decisions they make about their child's health. It also drives interaction between parents/guardians and health care providers, providing a leverage point for questions, concerns, and recommendations. Because the system also reaches every parent with a child at the age of six and under, it creates a community of parents in Washington State who receive consistent, evidence-based messaging on how to help their children reach their full health potential. Regular evaluations of the mailings show that parents find the information useful; they look to the mailings and DOH as trusted sources of health information; and the messages either reinforce current parenting decisions or help change their knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

Multiple key partners throughout the State of Washington also use this system to deliver key health and safety information to this population. The following is a current list of partners who include material or guide the messaging in the mailings:

- Seattle Children's Hospital;
- Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA);
- Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF);
- Washington Dental Service/~~Arcora~~ Foundation;
- Washington State Dairy Products Commission;
- Guaranteed Education Tuition (GET) Program;
- Washington Poison Center; and
- DOH, Division of Environmental Public Health.

While Watch Me Grow Washington is not considered "core immunization" work, DOH had historically been able to cover 50 percent of the system's costs through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Core Immunization Grant. Since this system supports the state's Medicaid program, it is eligible for Medicaid financial participation to cover 50 percent of Medicaid-eligible costs. Thus, the other half of the system's costs are covered by a combination of state general funds (25 percent) and the Title XIX Medicaid (25 percent) grant.



In addition to its historical use, during times of pandemic or other public health crises, the Watch Me Grow Washington program can be used to disseminate relevant and accurate information regarding health risks and prevention strategies for children.

If this proposal is not supported, the agency will face the following alternatives:

- Discontinuation of the Watch Me Grow Washington program. This option will create a cost to shut down the system, discontinue the mailings, end established contracts and partnerships, and reduce staffing costs (total staff of 5 FTEs). More importantly, parents will no longer receive health and safety messages and immunization and well-child visit reminders; or
- Distribute the communications primarily by e-mail and reduce physical mailings to once per year to maintain accurate address data. Currently, the hard copy mailing system is an opt-out system and the e-mail distribution system is opt-in. DOH does not currently have sufficient e-mail address data to e-mail every family with a child aged birth to six years. It will take considerable additional resources (both funding and time) for the department to move to such a system.

## Assumptions and Calculations

### **Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:**

This request does not expand or alter the existing Watch Me Grow Washington program. It seeks to sustain the existing system in structure and volume.

### **Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:**



The \$1 million annual investment requested in this proposal seeks to replace the funding previously covered through the Core Immunization Grant.

### **Workforce Assumptions:**

For each staff position listed below, funding is matched by state general funds and federal match funds.

*Health Promotion and Education Supervisor (.5 FTE – Health Services Consultant 4)*

**Content areas:** Supervision, Health Promotion System management and oversight, system testing, IIS consortium lead for health promotion, contracts management, budget

*Materials Coordinator (.5 FTE – Health Services Consultant 3)*

**Content areas:** Materials coordination and distribution, contracts management, data quality, budget, system testing

*Data Distribution Coordinator (.5 FTE – Health Services Consultant 2)*

**Content areas:** Data quality, e-mail and mail delivery, system testing

*Health Educator – English Materials (.5 FTE – Health Services Consultant 3)*

**Content areas:** English materials oversight, review, and revision; evaluation; e-mail distribution; partnerships; Spanish translation; social media; Web

*Health Educator – Spanish Materials (0.5 FTE – Health Services Consultant 3)*

**Content areas:** Spanish materials oversight, review, and revision; evaluation; e-mail distribution; partnerships; Spanish translation lead; social media; Web

### **How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?**

This proposal supports equity within Washington State by continuing to offer important health and safety information to all families with children ages 0-6. Since this information is sent by paper mail, there are minimal barriers to having equitable access to this information. Due to the vast reach of the program almost all families in Washington with children ages 0-6 (excluding those who have opted out of receiving mailings) are impacted by decisions made regarding this proposal, despite demographic or geographic considerations. If funding for Watch Me Grow is not provided at the requested level this important health and safety information will not be able to be mailed in all age categories and will be available only online, creating disparities for those that are unable to access information online. Additionally, if the option to create fee based support for the program is selected to move forward, this will possibly create financial disparities for certain populations depending on which fee is implemented.

## Strategic and Performance Outcomes

### **Strategic Framework:**

This request supports the Governor's Results Washington Goal: Healthy and Safe Communities, specifically the goals of Reducing Infant Mortality and Ensuring Access to Quality Health Care. The messages in the mailings give parents safety and injury prevention information directly related to reducing infant mortality. Example messages include:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) prevention and safe sleep
- Shaken Baby Syndrome and child abuse prevention
- Drowning, burns/scalds, poisoning, choking, falls prevention
- Product recalls
- Firearm safety
- Motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bike safety
- Learning Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and calling 911

The messages in the mailings also refer parents to trusted resources and referrals, including how to find a health care provider.

This request supports the agency's strategic plan goals of Public Safety, Healthiest Next Generation, and Healthy Living, Healthy Aging.

### **Performance Outcomes:**

The messages in the mailings cover many public safety topics, including environmental health issues, such as lead testing, pesticides, and air quality. Parents also receive messages on how to give babies a planned, healthy start in life; growth and developmental milestones, including resources and referrals; the importance of immunizations; nutrition and physical activity; promoting safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, including preventing and mitigating adverse childhood experiences; and reducing the use of tobacco, e-cigarettes/vaping devices, and marijuana. Parents receive messages on how to reduce and prevent violence and firearm injuries and deaths and promoting behavioral health and preventing mental illness.

Parents consistently report high readership of the materials in the Watch Me Grow Washington mailings. The information collected from the most recent parent survey in 2015 demonstrates how the program promotes the following positive outcomes.

Parents have reported:

#### **Interest in the materials**

96% of parents from the survey reported reading the materials when they received them, and almost half (46%) read them carefully.

#### **Learning from the materials**

(93%) of parents from the survey reported learning something from the materials and reported that the materials were helpful. Parents in focus groups reported learning new information about lead poisoning, dental care, toxins, and better feeding habits.

#### **Important reminders from the materials**

82% of parents from the survey indicated the materials reinforced their parenting decisions. More than half of the parents from the focus groups reported the materials in the mailings helped them remember important milestones, particularly for growth and development.

## Other Collateral Connections

### **Puget Sound Recovery:**

This request is not related to Puget Sound recovery efforts.

### **State Workforce Impacts:**

This request does not impact existing collective bargaining.

### **Intergovernmental:**

Several state agencies benefit from the Watch Me Grow Washington mailings and the messages sent to families, including HCA, DSHS, and DCYF. Stabilization and expansion of the system will allow continued coordination between these agencies and DOH in message development and outreach to families with young children.

### **Legal or Administrative Mandates:**

This request is not driven by a legal or administrative mandate against the state.

### **Stakeholder Response:**

Non-governmental stakeholders include:

- Seattle Children’s Hospital– support anticipated
- Washington Poison Center – support anticipated
- Washington State Dairy Products Commission – support anticipated
- Washington Dental Service/Arcora Foundation – support anticipated
- Guaranteed Education Tuition program – support anticipated
- WithinReach – support anticipated
- Scientific Technologies Corporation – support anticipated

### **Changes from Current Law:**

This request does not require any changes to statutes or rules.

### **State Facilities Impacts:**

This request does not impact facilities and workplace needs.

## IT Addendum

### **Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?**

No

## Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2022	2023	2021-23	2024	2025	2023-25
Obj. A	\$227	\$227	\$454	\$227	\$227	\$454
Obj. B	\$90	\$90	\$180	\$90	\$90	\$180
Obj. E	\$644	\$644	\$1,288	\$644	\$644	\$1,288
Obj. N	\$13	\$13	\$26	\$13	\$13	\$26
Obj. T	\$26	\$26	\$52	\$26	\$26	\$52

## Agency Contact Information

Alisa Weld  
 (360) 236-2907  
 alisa.weld@doh.wa.gov