



Washington State Department of **CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Meeting
Feb. 4, 2025

State Agency and Partner Updates

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Updates

DCYF's Early Learning Division Updates

2025 Child Care Complex Needs Fund Now Open

DCYF is pleased to announce that the 2025 Child Care Complex Needs Fund application is now open. Eligible licensed, certified, and certified-for-payment-only child care providers and eligible license-exempt Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) providers can apply for the Child Care Complex Needs Fund in the [WA Compass Provider Portal](#).

What Can the Fund Be Used For?

- Adding staff members to support children with complex needs, increasing staff hours to support children with complex needs, and up to a \$5,000 hiring bonus for new staff that support children with complex needs.
- Facility improvements to comply with ADA accessibility requirements.
- Therapeutic services. Therapeutic services mean services offered by skilled professionals, that focus on curative, rehabilitative, preventative or healing practices.
- Supportive and adaptive materials and equipment.

How Much Funding Can a Provider Request?

- Eligible licensed, certified, and certified for payment only child care providers can request between \$5,000 and \$50,000.
- Eligible Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers can request between \$100 and \$2,000.

DCYF strongly encourages all providers to utilize our technical assistance partners. Individual technical assistance is available and includes guidance on preparing for and accessing the application, in addition to advice on saving receipts and documentation. Providers may access technical assistance in their preferred language and by telephone, internet, or in-person. For technical assistance contact information, please see the [Child Care Complex Needs Fund webpage](#).

The Child Care Complex Needs Fund application will close at 5 p.m. PST on March 19, 2025. If you have questions about the grant timeline or other questions, email dcyf.childcaregrants@dcyf.wa.gov.

Early Achievers Updates – Timeline and Quality Level Finalization

Exciting news! In spring 2025, DCYF will be implementing two changes to Early Achievers to support participants whose timelines were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic pause:

- **Timeline Adjustments:** DCYF will be doing a one-time extension of Quality Level due dates to be based on when a site completed its Program Profile. Participants will see this change reflected in their Early Achievers profile in MERIT.
- **Quality Level Finalization:** Early Achievers participants can finalize a Quality Level at any time in MERIT. If they do not finalize a Quality Level by the due date, MERIT will do this on their behalf.

DCYF will notify Early Achievers participants of these timeline adjustments and who to contact for questions. If you have any questions about these changes, please contact QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov.

Early Achievers Updates – Program Profile

DCYF is happy to share the revised Program Profile, made to better support early learning providers, families, and coaches. This update comes from feedback from many sources, including the early adopters survey and direct comments from users.

What's New?

- **Easier Family Surveys:** Families can now fill out surveys using a link or QR code, so teachers and directors don't have to enter email addresses one by one.
- **Self-Check Tool:** Program leaders can now review their practices at the start of the three-year cycle to see where they are and where they might want help.
- **New Report Design:** The reports now look better and make it easier to see strengths and areas for growth.

Access and Living Wage Proviso Status Update

The Washington State Legislature has tasked DCYF to submit an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's mixed delivery child care system (ESSB [5950](#) Section 229(31)).

The Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso Implementation Plan will outline DCYF's plan to lower family contributions to high-quality early care and education at no more than 7% of a family's income (a sustainable amount for a family) and uplift the early care and education workforce with a living wage and benefits.

DCYF will submit the Implementation Plan by June 30, 2025. Because the full implementation plan is not available until after the 2025 Legislative session, DCYF has prepared a [Status Update Report](#) on the plan's progress.

For more information about the Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso work, please visit [the webpage](#). For questions about the Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso, please contact DCYF's Government Affairs team at dcyf.govaffairs@dcyf.wa.gov.

Prospective and Enrollment Based Pay for Child Care Subsidy – Feedback Next Steps

In October, Matt Judge and Jason Ramynke presented to ELAC on Prospective and Enrollment Based Payment for Child Care Subsidy, specifically the CCDF requirements and options for implementation. During their presentation they asked attendees for feedback on the following areas:

- Paying one provider per child at a time
- Verifying a child's enrollment and other eligibility requirements
- Timeframe of no attendance before closing authorizations
- Monthly vs. daily rates

Please see the appendix which includes all the feedback received and the DCYF responses. DCYF will use this feedback in development of policies with implementation and provide updates and opportunity for feedback through that process.

Early Care and Education Updates

Additional Early Care and Education topics can be found in the most recent edition of the Early Care and Education (ECE) Newsletter, here: [Early Care and Education Newsletter | February 2025 \(English | Español | Soomaali\)](#). [Click here](#) to sign up for the monthly newsletter.

Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability

OIAA has convened a report team comprised of DCYF staff who will use their subject matter expertise to review the 2025 FSKA evaluation legislative report. We held our scoping meeting in September 2024 and submitted the scoping document according to DCYF's Government Affairs process. OIAA will be reaching out to this team in spring of 2025 to begin reviewing the draft report, which is due to the legislature on September 15th, 2025. We continue conducting supplemental analyses (e.g., child care continuity), as well as updating some of the existing analyses with 2024 data (e.g., provider churn) for the FSKA evaluation. For resources related to the FSKA evaluation please visit our site on DCYF's Agency Performance Page: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/fska>

Rule Making Update – Recently Completed Rules

Capacity Waivers for Family Home Providers and Training Requirements

DCYF Licensing Division filed [WSR 25-01-087](#) to amend the Capacity waivers for family home providers and training requirements rules. These amended rules, WACs 110-300-0106 and 110-301-0106, are needed to allow a three-month timeframe to obtain training requirements for child care and early learning programs, specifically first aid and CPR certifications. The

amended WAC 110-300-0358 is needed to issue capacity waivers to allow no more than 16 children in a family home child care program, only after they meet all other requirements. It also updated the emergency preparedness requirements and now requires better coordination between DCYF, child care providers, and local building authorities. The new rules go into effect Jan. 13, 2025.

Note:

WAC 110-300-0331, WAC 110-301-0331, and WAC 110-302-0331 were previously filed with the above WACs. These WACs will now be filed separately in January 2025.

Questions? If you have questions about DCYF rules or require an alternate format for this information, please contact dcyf.rulescoordinator@dcyf.wa.gov.

To view the original message, visit the [Rule Making Update – December 27, 2024](#).

Additional State Agency/Partner Updates

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

Early Learning:

Fall 2024 WaKIDS data is now live on the Washington State Report Card. During the **2024-25** school year, **53.6%** of all **70,343** Kindergartners met expectations in all 6 domains of kindergarten readiness.

<https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

OSPI Early Learning is updating the TK Minimum Standards and Requirements to clarify requirements around the following areas:

- Use of LAP funds, added resources on braiding funding
- Health and Safety Guidelines to include information on toileting, vision and hearing screenings, medication management and care planning, and vaccination requirements
- Updated School Improvement Plan templates

Current guidance and resources can be found on the OSPI TK web page:

<https://ospi.k12.wa.us/student-success/support-programs/early-learning-washington-state/transition-kindergarten>

Special Education:

[OSPI Special Education Update - January 2025](#)

[Month 2023 Early Childhood Special Education Updates](#)

Additional Resources:

[Guidance Expands on Implementation of Inclusive Educational Practices](#)

“We need states and school districts to create educational systems that are intentionally designed and implemented to support inclusive educational practices,” said Wright-Gallo. “We also recognize that there is a time and place for intensive instruction and intervention for any student with a disability who needs it. These are not binary – we can both create

general education environments that are inclusive and accessible to all learners, while also ensuring that those who need more intensive instruction receive it.”

To learn more, or if you have questions for OSPI, please contact Ryan Guzman at Ryan.Guzman@k12.wa.us

Department of Health (DOH)

No updates currently.

For more information, please contact Astrid Newell and Angie Funaiole at astrid.newell@doh.wa.gov and angie.funaiole@doh.wa.gov.

Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA)

No updates currently.

For more information, please contact Olivia Burley at Olivia.burley@dva.wa.gov.

Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

- Food and cash benefits stolen by card skimming, card cloning or other fraudulent methods after Dec. 20 can no longer be replaced. SNAP replacement was a last-minute deletion from H.R. Bill 10545. DSHS is still committed to protecting benefits and supporting those affected by fraud, and has made successful investments to protect its clients in this regard.



Replacement of
Stolen Benefits Is En

- As of Jan. 1, 2025, Washington state’s minimum wage increased to \$16.66 per hour.
- Also effective Jan. 1, the maximum Diversion Cash Assistance benefit increased from \$1,250 to \$2,000 in a 12-month period. The increase in the DCA payment makes diversion a more practical option for families in transition. Some families don’t need a monthly TANF grant but have enough income to meet ongoing needs. Such families could opt to receive a one-time DCA payment to pay rent, access transportation to work, or keep current on utilities without using their TANF months, assigning their child support rights or having to comply with WorkFirst requirements.



DCA Increase Tribal
Leader Letter.pdf

- The DSHS website has been updated to include 10 new Community Services FAQ pages. This work is part of a project to increase access and engagement, improve the

customer experience, respond to customer needs and offer clear information on programs and services. The updates:

- Help people find the information they need on their own.
- Reduce the need to wait on the phone or in a lobby.
- Highlight Washington Connection.
- Promote 24/7 access to self-service options.



DSHS FAQ Website
Partner Letter.pdf

For more information, please contact Christian Carvajal at Christian.carvajal@dshs.wa.gov.



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION
Economic Services Administration
Post Office Box 45440 Olympia WA 98504-5440

Dec. 26, 2024

Dear interested parties and community partners,

Congress passed the [Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025](#), on Sept. 26, 2024, which extended the replacements authorized in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#). The act required states to replace food benefits stolen between Oct. 1, 2022, and Dec. 20, 2024, via card skimming, card cloning and other similar, fraudulent methods.

As of today's date, Congress did not extend the date to replace these benefits. Based on current guidance, food benefits stolen on or after Dec. 21, 2024, cannot be replaced.

Cash replacements will also end, as rules authorized under [ESSB 5950](#) to replace Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, State Family Assistance, Pregnant Women's Assistance, Refugee Cash Assistance and Aged, Blind or Disabled cash benefits stolen July 1, 2024, or later mirror the end date for food replacements.

The department will deny any claims for benefits that are stolen on or after Dec. 21, 2024. This change does not affect claims for benefits stolen on or before Dec. 20, 2024; we will continue to process these claims if reported within 30 days of discovery, even if the date of discovery is after Dec. 20, 2024.

We're notifying clients about the conclusion of benefit replacement via:

- Social media.
- Call center hold messaging.
- DSHS webpages.

Please feel free to share this information with our constituents.

If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Hill-Laguerre, Basic Food Policy administrator, at sharon.hill-laguerre@dshs.wa.gov.

Your ongoing support is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brice Montgomery, Interim Director
Community Services Division

DSHS: *Partnering with People*



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION
Economic Services Administration
Post Office Box 45440 Olympia WA 98504-5440

Dec. 13, 2024

Dear Respected Tribal Leaders,

We have great news. The Community Services Division is increasing the maximum Diversion Cash Assistance benefit from \$1,250 to \$2,000, effective Jan. 1, 2025. The costs of everyday living needs such as housing, transportation and employment-related expenses have grown significantly since the DCA program was created. The changes to [RCW 74.08A.210](#) “*Diversion program – Emergency assistance*” increases the DCA maximum cash benefit to \$2,000 to better meet a family’s true expenses for one month.

DCA provides one month of assistance in a 12-month period to families that meet income and resource limits for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program but only need short-term help. To qualify for DCA, families must show how they will meet their basic living needs for the following 12 months. Families are often eligible for the program when they experience a gap in employment and have a new job offer or start working but have not yet received a paycheck. As an alternative to TANF, the DCA program assists families in meeting basic needs such as child care, housing, transportation and other expenses to get a job or stay employed. These payments are made directly to vendors whenever possible, with the actual payment continuing to be based on the family’s needs.

This change helps families and aligns with DSHS’ mission to partner with people to access support, care and resources. If you have any questions, please reach out to Melissa Kenney, TANF and WorkFirst program administrator, at Melissa.Kenney@dshs.wa.gov.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brice Montgomery, Interim Director
Community Services Division

DSHS: *Partnering with People*



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION
Economic Services Administration
Post Office Box 45440 Olympia WA 98504-5440

Dear valued partners,

The Economic Services Administration is committed to using customer input to streamline our operations. We are thrilled to share recent upgrades to the [DSHS website](#).

Based on customer and employee feedback, we have updated 10 Community Services FAQ webpages:

- [EBT and EFT Make Getting Benefits Easier](#)
- [Basic Food](#)
- [Aged, Blind or Disabled Cash Program](#)
- [Emergency Resources](#)
- [Housing and Essential Needs Referral Program](#)
- [Eligibility Reviews and Mid-Certification Reviews](#)
- [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#)
- [Health Care Coverage for the Aged, Blind or Disabled](#)
- [Medicare Savings Program](#)
- [DSHS Mobile Offices](#)

This work is part of a website project to increase access and be responsive to customer needs. Our goal is to provide clear information on programs and services. These updates:

- Help people find the information they need on their own.
- Reduce the need to wait on the phone or in a lobby.
- Highlight Washington Connection to promote 24/7 access to self-service options.

These changes improve the customer experience, increase engagement and make our services more efficient, user-friendly and satisfying.

We are excited to share this news with you. Thank you for partnering with us to help people access support, care and resources. Together, we are helping people find human services to shape their own lives.

Sincerely,

Lori Manning

Lori Manning, Chief Administrative Officer
Economic Services Administration
Lori.Manning@dshs.wa.gov