

Provider Supports Subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Feedback Loop

Date: March 18, 2026

Follow-up items from: December 16, 2025, Joint ELAC & Provider Supports Subcommittee Meeting

DCYF Leadership Panel Presentation

1648 Workgroup

- What is the timeline for changing the WAC to be aligned with the new staff qualifications rules?
 - The WACs will be updated before the original August 1, 2026, deadline. Because WAC changes are a lengthy process, this update is being bundled with another set of changes that were already in progress, with an anticipated approval by late spring 2026.
 - A more detailed breakdown of the rule-making process can be found here: [Rule Making Process | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#). For the HB1648, the initial filing can be found here: [WSR25-15-045.pdf](#)

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

- Now that summer is out, why are we home providers having a hard time getting kids enrolled?
 - To support enrollment and family engagement, our partner, Child Care Aware of Washington, can assist with essential business services and tools, such as developing a business plan, marketing, and business management and enrollment software. For more information, please visit: [Business Supports - Child Care Aware WA](#).
 - DCYF has also developed the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program [campaign toolkit](#) so providers can access outreach messages and materials to help spread the word about the subsidy program.
- DCYF plays a key role in how enrollment data is framed for policymakers. How is DCYF distinguishing between improved access and the reality that rising SMI and costs are



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pulling more families into eligibility? How is that interpretation informing policy choices?

- For WCCC specifically we see most growth in the expanded income group of 50-60% SMI and most growth for families with 0-20%SMI.
- While we continue to see growth and the need for expanded eligibility, the [Fair Start for Kids Act \(FSKA\)](#) outlines the commitment to increasing eligibility in WCCC, ECEAP Entitlement, and transitioning to the Cost of Quality Care rate model. This lays the foundation of the [Access and Living Wage Plan](#), which serves as DCYF's long-term roadmap for increasing access to high-quality, affordable early care and education (ECE), and uplifting our ECE workforce with living wages and benefits.
- How can we get access to the information regarding WCCC eligibility for self-employed parents?
 - Self-employment can count as an approved activity. Verifying income requires tax returns. More information is included in [WAC 110-15-0050](#).
 - Eligibility criteria can be found on the [Working Connections Child Care webpage](#).
 - For more information, please reach out to our call center at 1-844-626-8687.
- What is being taken into account to determine eligibility, gross income or adjusted gross income?
 - Gross income is used. For self-employment, the adjusted gross income (income after costs of self-employment) is used following [WAC 110-15-0050](#).

Transition to Kindergarten (TK)

DCYF addressed TK at a system level, however, specific questions about TK program requirements, enrollment, and implementation should be directed to OSPI. More information can be found here: [OSPI Transition to Kindergarten](#).

- Can you provide more clarity on the income eligibility process for TK? In my community many high-income families are leaving Centers to move to TK programs. I don't think this aligns with the initial implementation plan and intent.
 - Specific questions about TK program requirements, enrollment, and implementation should be directed to OSPI. More information can be found here: [OSPI Transition to Kindergarten](#).
- Since school districts have been given a contract for TK, we have lost lots of high-income families due to the program offering free care. We as small business owners cannot compete with this. Will there be funding for licensed family home/TK or another type of support?

- DCYF and OSPI are working together to better support families with finding early care and education opportunities that best fits the family's needs. Washington's mixed-delivery system for early care and education provides families with many options when they are looking for care. This allows families to make informed choices on the type of care that aligns with their child's strengths, needs, family values, culture, language and financial situation.
- Currently, there are opportunities for child care providers to accept Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), a family benefit, or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) to provide additional services for children. Additionally, participation in Early Achievers provides financial incentives for programs that are eligible.
- For more information, please visit: <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/cre>.
- Will DCYF work with OSPI to make rules around transporting TK students?
 - Please refer to [RCW 28A.160](https://leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.160) and OSPI guidance on Student Transportation: <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/policy-funding/student-transportation>.

Additional Questions from Leadership Panel Presentation

- What kind of support or resources are there for families that are private pay but have children with a learning disability? We see a lot of kids who need support, but families don't qualify for child care or any services.
 - A key resource is the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program, which provides services like speech, occupational, and physical therapy to children birth to age 3 with disabilities or developmental delays. These services are delivered in natural environments where same-aged peers without disabilities learn, play, and grow, including child care centers, and providers frequently coordinate with ESIT to assess, refer, and support children.
 - ESIT's statewide directory includes referral contacts and provider agency listings: [ESIT Contacts Directory \(PDF\)](#).
 - Additional support is available through the [WithinReach Help Me Grow WA](#) Hotline at (800) 322-2588. You can also connect directly with ESIT by emailing ESIT@dcyf.wa.gov or calling 360-725-3500.

Early Learning Budget and Legislative Updates Presentation

- Is there related push to add ECEAP providers? Who will teach these kids? We will need more staff.
 - The 10-year Ballmer Group commitment is intended to go to ECEAP contractors to implement ECEAP and create 10,000 additional ECEAP slots. This will likely

include both new and existing ECEAP contractors over the ten-year period. For current ECEAP contractors, DCYF encourages collaboration with other local partners and organizations, thoughtful planning and collaborative efforts such as coordinated recruitment and enrollment, facilities, and workforce partnerships.

- As an ECEAP provider with open slots, will there be a system in place to send kids my way?
 - DCYF is developing an ECEAP campaign toolkit, which will include messages and materials to help ECEAP contractors and others spread the word about ECEAP. When ready, the toolkit will be posted on <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/eceap/contractors/direct-service-staff/enrollment>.

Supporting Young Children's Mental Health Presentation

- It is a long wait for the FIND Program in my area and there is a constant turnover in therapists. Any chance there could be recorded trainings that are readily available like videos for staff mental health or how to videos, such as, how to meet a child's sensory needs or when and when not to respond to behavior?
 - We're aware that there can be a wait list for FIND in some areas, and we have also had a waitlist in the past for Holding Hope IECMHC as well. Starting last July, Holding Hope added a program component which we hope will mitigate the provider access issue. The Mental Health Consultation team in each of the CCA of WA regions have now established Open Office Hours and/or Group Consultation options for providers. This means that any provider can have quicker access to MHCs where they can address questions in a virtual/phone format in English or Spanish. We may not always have the capacity to offer on-site intensive ongoing consultation services, but we do have consultants available for support and problem solving in the short term. If providers are interested in this, they can reach out to their Early Achievers Coach for a list of open hours for consultation, contact their [CCA regional partner agencies](#) or reach out through the Holding Hope email box (holdinghope@childcareawarewa.org or or the [CCA website](#), and we will direct them to a consultant in their area. There are some [video-based resources on Holding Hope](#) mental health consultation and the team also created a [podcast](#). We'd like to do more of this in the future if our staffing and budget allow, but for now, I will also mention to the CCA Professional Development team that there is an interest in more video-based resources for providers.
 - *Additional answer specific to the King/Pierce Region:*
 - While some areas have reported turnover, our current Mental Health Consultants in King/Pierce have been with their agency for years; prior staff departures were related to funding, not staff commitment. Regarding the waitlist for the FIND program, we seek to use this time proactively through our Pre-FIND approach, focusing on building relationships with providers and preparing for engagement.

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- As for recorded trainings, we currently do not have these available. In the past, we found that providers did not use recorded materials as much as we hoped. Instead, our team prioritizes ongoing, real-time support and guidance, often through live events where staff can ask questions and get immediate feedback. However, we're always open to revisiting this approach based on provider input and emerging needs.
- Can we use lived Expert testimony as a parent on DCYF's Parent Advisory Group (PAG)?
 - If I understand the question correctly, if a parent wants to testify on behalf of FIND or Holding Hope IECMHC, CCA of WA would welcome the support! They are both valuable programs worthy of more investment, and neither are able to fully meet the provider need with current funding levels. CCA is also sometimes contacted by reporters who are covering stories related to early childhood mental health (and broader child care issues) and our Advocacy Department tries to keep track of providers and families who might want to speak on behalf of our programs. I suggest that they reach out through the [agency website](#) to get connected to someone on the Advocacy team.
 - *Additional answer specific to the King/Pierce Region:*
 - BrightSpark's advocacy focuses on Early Learning broadly rather than specifically on the FIND program. At this time, advocacy for FIND is primarily led by DCYF's Quality and Access | Early Learning Division. For more detailed information or opportunities for lived expert testimony, such as parents from PAG advocating at the legislative level or participating in FIND-specific advisory or advocacy groups, I would suggest reaching out to Roxanne Garzon, QRIS Innovation and Birth to Three Quality Initiatives Manager.
- Do you have outcome data? I wonder if some of this work could be lined up next to other funding models to rate effectiveness so we can advocate for this funding.
 - Holding Hope has not done a formal outcomes evaluation as yet, but there is a sizable [body of evidence](#) showing the positive impact of [Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#) for providers, children, families and programs as a whole.
 - *Additional answer specific to the King/Pierce Region:*
 - FIND (Filming Interactions to Nurture Development) is a strengths-based, video-supported program developed by Stanford University to promote positive adult-child interactions and support provider retention. Currently, BrightSpark does not have outcome data to share for FIND. DCYF is best positioned to analyze program impact, as they alone can track participation and retention using MERIT data. Aligning FIND with other funding models for effectiveness and advocacy purposes may be possible in the future as more data becomes available.

Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) Study on Child Care Presentation

- Do licensed family home providers need to notify OIC when they increase their rates? Is there an insurance cap for child care providers?

- This question primarily falls under the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC), which regulates insurance companies and reviews their rate filings, rather than something DCYF oversees directly. Insurance companies must file proposed rate changes with the OIC, and the agency reviews and either approves or denies them. Carriers must provide actuarial and financial data to justify increases under state law. To learn more, visit OIC's webpage: [How we review auto and homeowner rates.](#)

Staff Qualifications Updates/Presentation

- With the new legislation on the Experience Waiver, can you go over who needs to pursue the certificates, PACE, etc.?
 - Staff hired on or before August 1, 2025 can use their work experience to meet the education requirements, as defined in state rules and law. If they qualify this way, they won't need to complete PACE or additional education in the future to meet the requirements for their current role.
 - Staff hired after August 1, 2025, or staff who do not complete five years of qualifying licensed child care experience by August 1, 2030, must meet the required education or credential requirements. They cannot rely on work experience alone to qualify.
- What is the average co-hort length for each pace module?
 - The [PACE Program Overview](#) outlines the suggested timeline and milestones for staff moving through this pathway.
- How many providers have finished the PACE program in WA? And when they finish, what is the equivalent to the ECE credits?
 - The number of providers who have completed each level of the PACE program is as follows:
 - PACE 1: 445
 - PACE 2: 270
 - PACE 3: 55
 - PACE is a non-credit-bearing pathway, but it is intentionally aligned with the stackable certificate curriculum. Completion of PACE 1 and PACE 2 covers the content included in the Initial Certificate. Once PACE 4 is available, completion of PACE 1 through PACE 4 will cover the content included in the Short Certificate.
- As educators with neurodivergent children, we often absorb the impact of these decisions without guidance, advocacy, or recourse when being approved for a lower rate. Where can early learning providers access advocacy or support from a team that can help ensure special needs rate decisions are equitable, unbiased, and aligned with the actual level of care required—especially when the authorized rate does not reflect the intensity of support the Special Needs team has determined is necessary?
 - Special Needs rates are established in WAC. Level 1 rates are the standard special needs rate. They are established in [WAC 110-15-0225](#) for licensed center providers, [WAC 110-15-0230](#) for licensed family homes, and [WAC 110-15-0235](#) for FFN providers. Licensed Center and Licensed Family Home Level 2 rates

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are greater than level 1, not to exceed \$15.89 per hour. Providers and families submit a [Special Needs Child Care Rate Request](#) (Form 12-001) plus documentation, which DCYF's Special Needs Panel reviews to determine the level and amount.

- Providers with questions about the Special Needs Rate can reach out to the Provider Help Line at 1-800-394-4571 or email providerhelp@dcyf.wa.gov.