

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

Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2026: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Provider Supports Executive Committee member David Mayer welcomed attendees and initiated introductions.

Meeting Material Review

Provider Supports Executive Committee member Julie Schroath led the group in the review of meeting materials.

[Dec. 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes](#)

[Feedback Loop](#)

[Agency Updates](#)

- **Discussion**
 - Staff hired on or before August 1, 2025 can qualify if they reach five years of field experience by August 1, 2030.
 - Experience does not need to be with the same employer.
 - DCYF plans to use MERIT to verify experience and will update the system to count leadership roles and apply the five-year timeline.
 - The Staff Qualifications Workgroup expressed the need for more coordination as decisions about how experience is counted are still in progress.
 - Attendees raised concerns that the process may be overly complicated and that automated denials could require a strong appeal process.
- **Action Items**
 - DCYF to continue updating MERIT to accurately calculate experience.
 - Staff Qualifications Workgroup wants to stay involved in shaping how experience is counted.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - Additional information will be shared once decisions are finalized.
- If you have any questions, please email the Community Engagement Team (dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov).



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Understanding Our Workforce Data

DCYF Workforce Systems Integration Administrator Karma Hugo and Workforce Data and Systems Manager Julie Dean gathered feedback from members to establish a shared understanding of who makes up the Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce and gathered recommendations about how to most meaningfully share workforce data in a responsive and collaborative way.

- **Discussion**
 - Attendees questioned the necessity of this project given [E2SHB 1128](#) and asked if any other professions have a regulatory body determining wages.
 - DCYF explained that current efforts focus on gathering better workforce data. This information will help the Workforce Standards Board make broader decisions about compensation and workforce standards.
 - It was noted that child care is different from many private industries because it relies heavily on public funding, which means the state plays a role.
- **Action Items**
 - There was a request for MERIT to have a role for support staff like “cook”.
 - DCYF to continue data work to increase understanding of cost of care and living wages.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - DCYF to explore updates to MERIT role categories
- Please reach out to Karma Hugo (karma.hugo@dcyf.wa.gov) and Julie Dean (Julie.Dean@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

Staff Qualifications Updates

DCYF Child Care Policy Manager Brett Skinner and Staff Qualifications Coordinator Suzie Campbell provided an update on the Staff Qualifications Workgroup as part of [HB 1648](#).

- **Discussion**
 - Attendees asked what DCYF hopes to learn from families. DCYF explained that family input would be used to inform the workgroup, not replace its decisions.
 - Some participants felt that existing tools like Provider Check already offer public information and noted concerns about how some tools have been misused against communities of color.
 - The idea behind family engagement was that parents might have helpful insights about where training, education, and experience come from.
 - Attendees asked whether DCYF is required to seek parent voice and DCYF clarified that it is not a requirement.
- **Action Items**
 - No action items noted at this time.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - DCYF will consider how family input could support the workgroup without creating additional risks or confusion.

- Please reach out to Brett Skinner, (brett.skinner@dcyf.wa.gov), and Suzie Campbell, (suzanna.campbell@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

ECEAP Expansion

DCYF Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Senior Administrator Kimberly Burgess-Simms provided updates about the long-term plans for ECEAP expansion.

[ECEAP Expansion of Services Webpage](#)

[ECEAP Request for Application Guide](#)

[ECEAP Saturation Study](#)

- **Discussion**
 - Providers shared positive experiences with ECEAP and noted that added requirements can feel overwhelming, especially for small communities.
 - Many ECEAP requirements are already met through licensing, and some contractors have offered training to support providers.
 - Attendees asked whether contractors must have a minimum number of slots. DCYF clarified that 75 slots is encouraged but not required.
 - Concerns were raised about families being priced out of ECEAP on the west side of the state.
 - Providers asked for less intimidating materials on how to start an ECEAP program.
 - Questions were raised about the Ballmer Group funding: how it flows, what deliverables are expected, and whether funds could support the broader field. DCYF explained that the funds must be used for ECEAP and are tied to maintaining current state investment.
 - DCYF hopes to add at least 2,000 new slots in the first school year, with our contractors anticipating even more.
 - Concerns were raised about the tight application timeline. DCYF acknowledged these concerns and shared that the timeline will allow for contracts to be awarded in time for the school year.
 - Providers asked how to determine community need and emphasized the importance of funding inclusive developmental supports as ECEAP expands. DCYF pointed to the [Saturation Study](#) as a data source.
- **Action Items**
 - DCYF to consider revising provider materials to make them clearer and less overwhelming.
 - DCYF to follow up with information on facilities planning and expansion projections.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - Provider Supports may be engaged for feedback on improving onboarding materials.
- Please send additional feedback or questions to ECEAP@dcyf.wa.gov.

OIC Study on Child Care Insurance

David Forte with the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) provided an update on the report OIC submitted to the legislature that was focused on the availability and affordability of liability insurance for child care providers.

OIC submits report on insurance for child housing service providers to Legislature OIC Feasibility Study

- **Discussion**
 - The OIC report includes data for both group homes and foster homes.
 - Insurance payout data cannot be compared across industries because they are funded from different pools. OIC only included data from child care specific insurance entities.
 - Attendees suggested creating a DCYF webpage listing insurers that still offer broad coverage to child care providers.
 - OIC clarified that their report does not include DCYF or school district claims.
 - A suggestion was raised to create a pool for child care providers to bring costs to a reasonable level.
 - OIC clarified that costs are driven by claims and a pool would not reduce costs.
 - A question was raised about why background and licensing checks are not leading to less claims.
 - OIC noted that the report shows many of these claims are historical, but it is still creating issues with sustainability for the insurance industry.
- **Action Items**
 - DCYF to consider a webpage listing available insurers for child care providers.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - DCYF to continue following insurance trends and noting provider concerns around this issue.

Early Learning Budget and Legislative Updates

DCYF Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Learning Amy Russell and Assistant Secretary of Licensing Ruben Reeves provided an update on early learning this legislative session, including budget considerations and potential impacts on early learning programs.

- **Discussion**
 - DCYF explained “repealing prospective payments” means the agency will no longer work towards allowing providers to claim payments in advance.
 - Attendees asked how budget cuts may impact staffing. DCYF clarified that implementation is not finalized and is still planning.
 - Question was raised about when changes would go into affect. DCYF shared that most would begin July 1, 2026, but the date would be specified in the bill and could vary.
- **Action Items**
 - None noted

- **Potential Next Steps**
 - DCYF to follow up when implementation is finalized.
- Please reach out to Amy Russell (Amy.Russell@dcyf.wa.gov) and Ruben Reeves (Ruben.Reeves@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow up questions.

Licensing Updates

DCYF Senior Child Care Administrator Travis Hansen and Child Care Policy Manager Brett Skinner provided updates on the Community Child Care Conversations as well Licensing Washington Administrative Code (WAC) up for review and consideration.

[2024 Community Child Care Forums Report](#)

[DCYF Webpage with local office information, to include Area Administrators](#)

[DCYF Rule Making Email Updates](#)

[DCYF Rule Making Process](#)

[OFM Petition for Adoption, Amendment or Repeal of a State Administrative Rule](#)

- **Discussion**
 - Attendees asked when Negotiated Rulemaking (NRM) webinars will be announced and if this is a new process.
 - DCYF shared that planning is still underway and clarified that it is a newer process to better gather feedback within the timeline. Additional information can be found on the [Rule Making Webpage](#).
 - Questions were raised around tracking the exception to rules (ETRs) to WACs. DCYF confirmed these are tracked in WA Compass and reviewed when clarifying or consolidating WACs.
 - Providers can ask for a variance/waiver using the WA Compass Portal.
 - WAC amendments are still in draft stage and the full process takes 6-12 months before final approval.
 - Providers suggested regular updates to PS (every 6 months) to review and provide feedback on potential WAC amendments.
 - Question was raised around the process to participate in NRM. DCYF clarified that providers are invited through email and surveys and the opportunity to be invited to virtual meetings.
 - DCYF shared that part of the process to revise any WAC is to involve internal and external impacted parties, including Tribal engagement. Internal DCYF staff can provide feedback before the public comment is filed.
- **Action Items**
 - DCYF to consider regular updates to Provider Supports on potential WAC amendments.
- **Potential Next Steps**
 - DCYF will finalize the communication plan for NRM webinars.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

- The next Provider Supports Meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2026.