



Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and Provider Supports Subcommittee Access & Living Wage Proviso Special Webinar Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2024 – 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso Overview

DCYF’s Early Care and Education Access Project Manager Diana Stokes and Federal Initiatives and Collaboration Administrator Matt Judge provided an update and gathered feedback on the Access and Living Wage Proviso.

- [Webinar Slides](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think Access and Living Wage Proviso should be the first thing in the equation. None of the rest can happen unless we can recruit and retain staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes! And how are "we" recruiting into this industry? Is it for workers and childcare providers (centers, homes, etc.)? We will need more childcare spaces if more people qualify for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC). Everyone I know already has a long waitlist. • Where do discussions with childcare providers fit into that timeline? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are currently engaging with providers across the state. Childcare Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) has an advocacy campaign that is informing our implementation plan. DCYF is also partnering and engaging with SEIU 925, CCA of WA, and existing partner organizations. ○ DCYF is also partnering with Washington Communities for Children who is engaging providers across the state via listening sessions and surveys. • What does provider mean? Is it the business owner or is it workers? If it is business owners, I hope you will also be talking to workers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are doing both. The survey that went out for the cost of quality care study did particularly go to the family home licensee and center directors. • Is the plan for these benefits to be available to every provider in the state or only those who have families with working connections grants? Is it only Early Achiever participants? What about providers who are open to receiving but don't have students receiving grants? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Design Team recommendation is a vision of what the subsidy base rate could afford to purchase if all children in care received subsidy benefits. A provider is required to participate in Early Achievers to receive subsidy payments. • Did you say where the wage data was coming from? Are you using real wages or estimates? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) data is based on periodically updated wages in different part of the country. The idea is you have a wage for different positions that is equal to the living wage standard set by MIT. In the current subsidy wage data, we asked providers that question in the cost of quality care study. So, we have updated data for what current wages are in the field in Washington and then MIT has suggested wages. ○ MIT Self Sufficiency Index ○ MIT Calculator • Is that 85th percentile of SMI or 85% of the median (midpoint)?
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- 85% SMI is the income threshold subsidy is moving to under Fair Start for Kids Act. 85th percentile refers to the Legislatively mandated private pay rate level subsidy rates are currently set to.
- Washington Childcare Centers Association (WCCA) is missing from the engagement list. However, the center association is working with DCYF to include us in the engagement process.
- Is DCYF planning to change the subsidy regions? Seattle on the west and Spokane on the east have their own high-cost issues.
 - Same question for Snohomish County.
 - We heard the Design Team loud and clear they wanted a change to regions and their method makes sense. I honestly don't know what the sequence is for increasing base rates vs also changing the regions. The issue also comes up in bargaining with SEIU 925 which starts in April so we may soon find out more.
- There should be more ground level provider feedback engagement in this process.
 - I agree. Providers need to be at the table where discussions and decisions are being made. That way we can give instant feedback to help prevent unintended consequences.
- Did providers sit on the Early Educator Design Team?
 - Yes, the Design Team is all providers from various regions and provider types, subsidy, private pay, very diverse -- that was a priority. DCYF was there in support mode, it was provider driven.
- There needs to be discussion about removing racist policies and practices or how DCYF is addressing biases. This is embedded throughout the system and there needs to be conversation when policies are being developed, especially because we're impacting an entire sector that is predominantly comprised of women of color. I'm hopeful that in the future we see more emphasis and work toward solving that problem.
 - Thank you for that feedback. Those are things that we have in the forefront of conversations as we work with others.
- Is off-hour care a piece of the information being gathered from both families as well as providers?
 - Yes, we began that conversation with the Design Team and questions in the community engagement and community survey also speak to non-standard hours care. It's a critical issue.
- Can you share how a racial equity lens was used? If not today, but in the future.
 - For the Design Team we used the Liberatory Design framework that explicitly centers racial equity as the lens for collaboration. Each of our evening sessions, and our weekend marathon sessions centered particular modes and mindset of Liberatory Design that we examined in the context of rates. We were also very intentional to address issues that arose around participation of e.g. the Spanish speaking provider participants - their feedback was hugely impactful on the group's recommendations.
- Regarding staff, we really need to develop staff. I'm working with our local high school on adding a Career & Technical Education (CTE) program. I think it's one of those untapped resources. Are we getting the public schools involved in this?
 - We are connecting with OSPI and having discussions on how to connect with high school students. We're hoping to provide opportunities and resources so that when they turn 18, they can come in as an assistant or lead teacher. But how do we encourage them to get their start as an aid?
- Some schools moved away from Early Childhood Education (ECE) in their Career and Technical programs because of the low wages.



- Are there pathways for paid apprentice programs for early learning teachers?
 - Not to my knowledge but DCYF has been exploring how apprenticeships can fit into early learning in Washington State.
- Quick comment on Provider Access to a Community Equivalent (PACE), if we are doing Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), my understanding is that it is not allowed and must be an ECE initial certification instead.
 - PACE is not eligible for Early Achievers professional development points or meeting ECEAP Performance Standards. Please see the [Equivalent Options for Education](#).
 - It should be and is definitely a barrier to staff.
 - Conversations continue to be held on this topic. I will share this with the ECEAP and Workforce Growth, Quality, and Recognition (WGQR) teams.
- It's important to note that there is no financial incentive for these staff to stay, which is one of the reasons why we can't keep them. If we're going to require all this professional development, we have to provide a living wage and benefits.
- Make the application portal for providers portable to other grants, so providers don't have to keep applying again and again.
- Providers, particularly smaller providers, have difficulty applying for grants. The process needs to be simpler, or grant writers need to be available for smaller providers.
 - It would be helpful if providers were grouped by size so not everyone is competing for the same pool of funds.
- There needs to be alternate paths for people who want to work in the childcare industry but do not have a high school diploma. The education requirements can be a barrier especially in communities of color.
 - This is not just an issue in immigrant communities. It is an issue in every community of color. There are other systemic barriers that keep Black and Brown people from completing high school or college.
- The comment about infant rates and equipment also makes me think about how we support programs to expand into infant care that weren't doing it before. Even solid rates might not be enough to make a big step like that.
 - It'd be interesting to add this or similar to questions being used in listening sessions with providers.