



## Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

April 9, 2024 – 10:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting

### Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions

ELAC Executive Committee member Enrica Hampton welcomed attendees and walked through virtual meeting protocols. Introductions were completed via chat.

### Review of Meeting Materials

ELAC Executive Committee member Lois Martin led the group in the review of meeting materials.

- [February 6, 2024, Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Early Learning Legislative Update](#)
- [State Agency/Partner Updates](#)
- [Regional Coalition Updates](#)

<b>Discussion</b>	<p><b>Early Learning Legislative Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely disappointed the HB2300 didn't get a hearing.</li> <li>• Regarding 5774: Do we have any idea of which offices will host the fingerprinting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The implementation plan of 5774 is still being developed - but the bill requires that prioritizing areas that lack convenient access to fingerprinting services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Please reach out to Melissa Cheesman (<a href="mailto:Melissa.cheesman@dcyf.wa.gov">Melissa.cheesman@dcyf.wa.gov</a>) if you think of 2024 Legislative Session questions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional Coalition Updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washington Communities for Children (WCFC) had enormous participation in listening sessions throughout the state regarding the living wage proviso. The data is still being finalized but will be shared broadly but we are very excited to see the level of community voice being included in this work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Can you share what are the next steps for this work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There was also quite a bit of work done throughout the regions to get an existing data landscape and to see what voices were represented and more importantly what voices were not. Then there was strategic outreach to engage organizations or communities that were missing and then holding intentional listening sessions. Now our data lead is compiling and synthesizing everything from the listening sessions and will be sharing that in a report format with DCYF. That data will then be used to inform work that happening at the Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) partner round table as well as some of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant planning and the living wage proviso as it was passed by our legislature.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
-------------------	--

### Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

DCYF Federal Initiatives and Collaboration Administrator Matt Judge provided an update and gathered feedback on the CCDF.

- [CCDF Plan/New Rules Questions](#)

<b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to have transparent communications being sent out regularly because most of the public is unaware of this work. In the WCFC listening sessions, I don't feel that information about the block grant was communicated. I think it would be important to</li> </ul>
-------------------	--



go back to those communities to ensure they are well aware of how and why their information was used.

- I participated in one and it was not shared at that time. Would be good to circle back.
  - Yes, I will be sure to bring this forward within WCFC. It was shared informally but we will work to make sure we get the information out to participants.
- Why wait two years instead of asking for the difference in funding the upcoming session? If a waiver is in place and we miss the biennium budget, it may be another four to six years before the state is in compliance with this requirement that will fiscally benefit providers.
  - We are going to have an ask in the 25-27 biennium to implement. Even if we get a waiver, we would need to implement at the end of fiscal year (FY) 26 and be fully implementing in FY 27. I would just ask you all to be thinking about timeframe and whether this is something we should ask for at the beginning of FY 26 instead of at the end.
    - The data evaluation was there. Maybe the methodology may have changed a little bit, but you should be able to just dust that off and utilize it again.
- Can we have access to Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) previous year budgets compared to "actual" dollars spent?
  - Are you asking for the total amounts spent on subsidy payments?
    - A budget versus actual.
      - The budget gets adjusted, as this is a forecasted program.
        - I understand. I'm wondering if there is documentation of the initial forecast vs the adjustments for previous years.
          - We will take this as a follow-up and see what we can provide for the feedback loop.
- Regarding the quality rating improvement, did you say quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) are not required?
  - The Federal rules don't require the states participation in the quality recognition improvement system. However, Early Achievers is essential to DCYF's vision of an integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable, high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children, birth to twelve years old. Provider participation in Early Achievers supports child outcomes, school readiness, and family well-being. Under the Early Start Act from 2015, that is state law in Washington and of course we're allowed to exceed CCDF requirements.
- I would say we need to ask for it as soon as feasible on DCYF's side. We know how impactful those changes were during COVID and the federal dollars we had access to. If I may ask, if DCYF had the dollars readily available, what would the timeline need to be to make these changes?
  - The new federal funding is insufficient to cover the changes and we would have to request funds from the legislature.
    - What timeline does DCYF need to make the changes internally? If we request a waiver that covers us for two years, I'm hearing it's crucial that we still implement sooner even if we have a waiver that's existing.
      - I'm happy to follow up with our subsidy program about the timelines.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarding copay waivers, the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) allows waiver to the extent allowed under federal law, so does that mean that more people will have copays waived or will the legislature have to appropriate more funds to implement that?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiving additional copayments will require additional funds to implement.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Are the <a href="#">CCDF Plan/New Rules Questions</a> mostly about the administrative processes?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It could be framed that way but impacts to providers and families are significant in these cases. What should DCYF do to support these situations especially in terms of informing?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Can you clarify the difference between how grants are processed versus contract? I believe a grant example is WCCC. Would that be more seamless than needing signed contracts from each provider?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are receiving more guidance from the feds around implementing grants versus contracts. When we think about a contract, it's a provider signing a contract and they're probably billing us a little bit differently and there may be some different requirements around that. The Working Connection Subsidy is more of a voucher versus a grant or a contract.</li> <li>CCDF considers our program a voucher program. What we do now wouldn't qualify has a contracted slot.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Next Steps/Follow Up</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please reach out to Matt Judge (<a href="mailto:matt.judge@dcyf.wa.gov">matt.judge@dcyf.wa.gov</a>) with any follow-up questions.</li> </ul>

**Child Care Access and Living Wage Proviso**

DCYF Early Care and Education Access Project Manager Diana Stokes provided a progress update and gathered feedback on the Early Care and Education (ECE) Access and Living Wage Proviso.

- [ECE Access & Living Wage Feedback Form](#)

<p><b>Discussion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the accountability measures from providers that all these measures are resulting in higher wages and benefits? I'm making a distinction between educators in the classroom and childcare owners and directors. Will educators be surveyed or are there other accountability measures?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are still reviewing the data from WCFC. We are trying to be very intentional of talking to the teaching staff, the administrators and all of the different roles within programs. As the data comes in, we will have an opportunity to determine what additional information is still needed and determine the best way to follow up and re-engage with participants.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Can you also share the background behind the 7% family payment threshold and what income level will this be applied to?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 percent applied based on household income.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes. May be helpful for attendees to know.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>I know that there is a fair bit of research into what options we can put in place to ensure any funds do end up in teachers' pockets. There is complexity in the mechanisms available.</li> <li>MERIT should not be the mechanism under any circumstances. Please.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Next Steps/Follow Up</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please reach out to Diana Stokes (<a href="mailto:diana.stokes@dcyf.wa.gov">diana.stokes@dcyf.wa.gov</a>) with any follow up questions.</li> </ul>

**Early Learning Decision Package Concepts**

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Early Learning Nicole Rose provided an overview of timeline and preview of next steps for Early Learning Decision Packages.



**Discussion**

- Please consider pushing the cost of quality rate model to the 26 short session and move to enrollment base in the biennium budget (25-27). It is financially better for providers, can increase staff wages and meet CCDF requirements. It seems to be low hanging fruit.
  - Regarding CCDF, for each year in the biennium (FY 26 and FY 27) we would be asking for the funds in order to do all of these things.
- What I've really heard from this group is that even though we might be able to request a waiver that would take us to the end of April 2026, we should think about asking to implement this at the beginning of FY 26 if possible.
- It would be great if it could happen at the beginning of fiscal year 2025. Wouldn't that be July 1, 2025? Right after session? If not, January 2026 is better than end of year. Would be interested to hear what others think.
  - July 1, 2025, is actually the start of FY 26. FY 26 actually runs July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. I hear that you would like us to ask for that right at the end of session as they're looking at the 25-27 budget.
- Enrollment based pay and prospective payment should be an immediate implementation. Not sure what would be required to make that happen, but Representative Leavitt used the words, I think, make the ask now and do not request waivers. I don't know enough about what is required, just heard her say that.
  - On prospective payment, there are a couple of things that we're researching about what it will take to do that. We're trying to better understand if that is just a rule change, or if we need Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and law change to do prospective payment. These are all things that the team is engaged in as we work to understand what complexity is involved in implementing these and being clear about when we can implement. Sometimes there are system developments that take time and so we've got to look at what are the things that we're implementing now and how long would it take to implement some of these new items.
- Will there be contracted slots specifically to be used for infants and toddlers needing short turnaround placement by child welfare?
  - There were funds through the opioid abatement settlement that have a hundred contracted slots for infants who may be impacted by substance abuse. We do want to connect with providers about how DCYF should prioritize contracts for infants and toddlers in out-of-home placement. Maybe there are other high needs areas that we need to look at.
    - It seems like when there is a connection between a referring organization and slots, it can be a helpful and successful partnership. Whereas if it's contracted and left to the provider to do a lot of the marketing, it might not be as functional.
      - Connections between a navigator, provider, and the family resource center are important. At DCYF we also have our child welfare early learning navigators which try and make some of those intentional connections.
- Regarding contracted slots, are you going to look at childcare deserts or look at placement around areas where there seems to be a higher need? And what metrics would be used to determine what areas are a higher need?
  - In the past, we've looked at our DCYF dashboards around supply and need and access deserts, with access to infant and toddler care in particular. The Office of Innovation Alignment and Accountability (OIAA) has also done some research on high needs areas which includes kindergarten readiness outcomes or high rates of maltreatment. However, we would welcome feedback about what else we should be considering as we think about where to place contracted slots.



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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think without some additional financial incentives that result in an expansion of infant and toddler slots that the contracted slots won't improve the situation much. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What would those financial incentives look like?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Infant Rate Enhancement from \$90 to \$300 per month, beginning July 1, 2024. Budget provides an additional \$5.561 million to fund this increase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The \$300 enhancement is a great start. But if you're a center deciding between a preschool class with 10-20 versus an infant class, the incentive need to be much higher.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Next Steps/Follow Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please reach out to Nicole Rose (<a href="mailto:nicole.rose@dcyf.wa.gov">nicole.rose@dcyf.wa.gov</a>) with any follow up questions.</li> </ul>

**Closing Remarks/Adjourn**

<b>Next Steps/Follow Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next ELAC Report Development Session will be on May 14, 2024</li> <li>• The next ELAC Public Meeting will be on June 4, 2024</li> </ul>
-----------------------------	--

**Members in Attendance:**

Astrid Newell, Brittany Hartikainen, Cheryl Smith, Claudette Lindquist, Colleen Condon, Debbie Carlsen, Debbie Ham, Deeann Puffert, Enrica Hampton, Gary Burris, Heidi Scott, Isis Lara Fernandez, Jen Sandvig, Kathy Carman, Lois Martin, Lola Moses, Michelle Perez, Nancy Spurgeon, Olivia Burley, Representative Mari Leavitt, Ryan Guzman, Samantha Masters, Waylon Ballew

**Members Absent:**

Aida Rodriguez, Alexandra Martin-Truesdell, Ami Magisos, Carlina Brown-Banks, Catherine Duffy, Danielle Rasmussen, Deborah Sioux Lee, Dr. Nucha Isarowong, Grace Yoo, Julie Rolling, Kathy Goebel, Kimberly Hoover, Luz Gomez, Mary Rulewicz, Milan Mulye, Samantha Bowen, Senator Claire Wilson, Shereese Rhodes, Susan Yang, Valerie Arnold, Valisa Smith