

Provider Supports Subcommittee of ELAC

Feedback Loop

Date: May 13, 2026

Follow-up items from the March 18 Meeting

March 18 agenda here: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/031826-PS-Agenda.pdf>

Morning Meeting Material Review

- **How will people apply for the experience waiver and who will be verifying?**
 - DCYF is still finalizing how experience will be documented and verified through MERIT, informed by the Staff Qualifications Workgroup. MERIT is the official record for workforce education and experience and will be updated to reflect years of service based on employment information entered into an individual's account. More guidance will be shared with providers and partners once it is available.
 - Clarification: the experience-based competency is an equivalency, not a waiver, that honors experience as one way to meet staff qualification requirements.
- **Why is there no in-person staff at the licensing office in Kennewick?**
 - Child Care Licensing does not have an office in Kennewick, however there is an office in Richland. While our statewide licensing team may be working in the field, or remotely as part of their assigned duties, we remain committed to supporting the provider community. Please feel free to contact the licensing team to schedule an in-person meeting. Contact information for the local office, supervisor and area administrator can be found on the DCYF website. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/find-an-office/el-offices>

Understanding our Workforce Data Presentation

- **In regards to the workforce data collections: What is exactly the point of this group? What changes they foresee happening? What is the end goal of the group? How would this data support providers?**
 - This work is a joint effort between the Early Learning Division and the Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA). The primary goal is to support forecasting of workforce needs, such as training and coaching, so the right resources are in place.



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- The purpose of this presentation was to collect input on:
 1. Clarity of the active workforce definitions
 2. How best to describe the limitations of the data
 3. What information people would want to see and how they might use it
- Once the data is available, it will allow us to look at broader trends across programs and roles and conduct analysis to improve data quality. While there are different ways to define the early learning workforce, the goal of this effort is to establish a consistent set of information that can be produced regularly and reliably.

Staff Qualifications Update

- **If the changes are made and are reflected in the WACs, how will we find out? (Translated from Spanish)**
 - For information about child care licensing rule changes, providers can visit this page: [Rule Making | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#). It includes broad information about rule-making and related updates.
 - Anyone can participate and sign up on the [distribution list](#) or by [offering comments online](#). Providers may subscribe to the applicable list or lists to receive notices related to child care licensing rules:
 - **Rules – family home child care**
 - **Rules – child care centers**
 - **Rules – school-age**
 - When updates to WAC are adopted, providers are formally notified through these communications channels. Notifications may be distributed directly and, for licensed family home providers, may also be shared through union communications. Providers may also receive information about important changes through general email communications sent to licensed providers.
 - An example of what those rule-making emails look like is available here: [Rule Making Update - August 27, 2025 \(Español | Soomaali\)](#)
 - Providers may also bookmark this page to view rule-making filings and track rules that are currently being worked on: [Rule Filings | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)
- **Why does having family input matter? What Other industry has clients dictate qualifications?**
 - While family perspectives can offer a distinct and valuable viewpoint to the workgroup’s discussions, based on the feedback received, DCYF and the Staff Qualifications Workgroup have decided not to move forward with incorporating family input into staff qualifications.
- **Can someone update on the status of getting STARS hours for our participation?**
 - DCYF is actively discussing this proposal and is weighing the potential benefits and considerations related to offering in-service hours for participation. We will share an update as soon as more information is available.

ECEAP Expansion

- **Does ECEAP allow staff to use the Experience Waiver and/or PACE? Or do they all have to have degrees?**

- No, experience waiver does not count. ECEAP staff qualifications vary by role. View staff qualifications requirements in the 2025-26 [ECEAP Performance Standards](#) in the Professional Development, Training, and Requirements (PDTR) section.
- **What is the benefit to providers? I mean, why would a provider want to do ECEAP in their center? Staff quals are very different, so compensation would go up.**
 - The primary benefit of providing ECEAP is predictable funding to offer a comprehensive early learning program to children and families who qualify. You can find more information on [Becoming an ECEAP Provider](#) on the [DCYF ECEAP webpage](#).
 - While staff qualifications may be higher for ECEAP than in non-ECEAP licensed programs, if the best candidate for the position is not fully qualified, staff may serve while on a Professional Development Plan (PDP) to fully meet the qualifications of their role within five years of the date of hire. (See [2025-26 ECEAP Performance Standards](#) PDTR-5 for details.)
- **People who start to investigate ECEAP and there is a perception of the requirements being overwhelming. From a provider who has not started yet, are there pathways for how to be involved with this that could be an entry point?**
 - There are two different ways to provide ECEAP: as a Contractor and as a Subcontractor. An ECEAP contractor is the organization that holds the contract with DCYF and is responsible for meeting ECEAP requirements, including fiscal management, reporting, and performance standards. Contractors provide ECEAP either directly or in partnership with community providers through subcontracting.
 - Providers who want to subcontract work directly with a current Contractor to apply for ECEAP. You can reach out to existing ECEAP contractors through the [ECEAP Directors List](#) and the [ECEAP Neighboring Organizations Program Finder](#). Where is expansion projected to occur?
- **Where is expansion projected to occur? Is the expansion projected to be primarily in school districts or is it the hope that it will be community based (centers, homes)? In the projections that the state has worked on over the last year - what are the current results? 50% schools, 25% centers.....?? If 2000 slots did the agency look at where they realistically will be placed?**
 - The program is currently offered in multiple settings, and we believe it's important that model continues. We are hoping that the expansion will fully leverage our mixed-delivery system and be able to provide ECEAP in the settings families hope to have their children.
- **Was there a study about the infrastructure required in order to fill up to 10,000 slots a year? How are ECEAP slots expected to be utilized if there is no support for buildings/ Early learning facilities? Where is class expected to be held at given that early learning facilities/ classrooms are already limited. May need to connect with Dept. of Commerce about the ELF grant to make the funds more accessible, less restrictive to support facilities for ECEAP.**
 - DCYF is currently conducting an ECE Facilities Exploration project to better understand the facility needs to support ECE programs and families. An implementation plan will be made available after June 2026 that will identify the number of buildings that will be needed to accommodate the number of children who may need care. This plan looks at potential costs for facility development and will provide strategies for all types of care, in reflection of the state's mixed-delivery system.
 - Appropriations for the Early Learning Facilities Fund, enacted in 2017, support the planning, renovation, purchase, and construction of early learning facilities through a

competitive grant process for eligible organizations and a ranked and prioritized list for [school districts](#) and [Tribal compact schools](#). For program requirements, see [RCW 43.31.575](#). For eligible activities, see [RCW 43.31.577](#). More information can be found on the [Department of Commerce website](#).

- **Is there a way to publish a list of contractors that are willing to take subcontractors?**
 - Not at this time. Applicants can reach out to any contractor in their area to discuss partnership opportunities and ask if they are accepting new subcontractors. You can reach out to existing ECEAP contractors through the [ECEAP Directors List](#) and the [ECEAP Neighboring Organizations Program Finder](#).

Early Learning Budget and Legislative Updates

- **Does the recent legislative change put off a subsidy increase for a year? Is this for both centers and family homes?**
 - SHB 2689 further supports the current RCW, increasing center rates to the 85th percentile of the 2024 Market Rate Study. This bill also removes the rate exceptions for Benton, Clark, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties. Both policies will take effect on July 1, 2026.
 - This bill also sets rates at the 75th percentile of the market for licensed centers and licensed family homes beginning July 1, 2027.
- **Will these cuts impact DCYF staffing levels?**
 - An estimated \$2.3 million in savings is anticipated from administrative reductions for the agency. While this amount is significantly lower than in the previous cycle, the agency has not yet determined how these reductions will be implemented. Through this process, changes to staffing are expected, as realignments are made to meet both resource reductions and agency goals.
- **Can you discuss the impact SHB 2689, Sec 3? Specifically with the new subsidy rates, kids qualifying for half or full days, and the current situation with staffing. Providers are going to feel pressure if only half of the child rate is going to be paid even though staff will be there full time. Do you know how that will roll out?**
 - DCFY is still analyzing this policy and will provide clear communication and guidance to providers before implementation.

Licensing Updates

WAC's Up for Consideration Presentation:

- **Can you share any WACs that were updated after seeing the same variance requested multiple times?**
 - More information is needed to understand whether this question relates to variances or waivers. These are different, and each one is designed to support the specific needs of the provider making the request.
 - One topic identified from past waiver requests is staff qualification requirements for hiring. The 1648 workgroup is currently reviewing this issue and focusing on the following WACs: 110-300-0100; 110-301-0100; and 110-302-0100
 - Another example is waivers for mixed age grouping in centers. WAC 110-300-0356 allowed for mixed age grouping, however the passing of ESHB 2219 expands allowable timeframes for mixed-age grouping in centers.