



## Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

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Date: June 3, 2025

Time: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Meeting Minutes

#### Welcome and Introductions

DCYF Community Engagement Administrator Erin Kerrigan welcomed attendees and initiated introductions.

#### ELAC Executive Session

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Early Learning Nicole Rose gave an update on the FSKA Recommendation Report Development. Following the update, elections were held for the vacant ELAC Executive Committee co-chair seat.

#### *Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) Recommendation Report Development*

- At the End-of-Legislative Session Update Webinar it was shared that DCYF was working on communications to help providers and families understand changes to Working Connections Child Care (WCCC). Do you know when those communications might come out?
  - We are working on those now and expect them to come out soon.
- Regarding the expansion of WCCC eligibility, one of the concerns we have is there isn't enough funding for the current program. While current families will be able to continue, we had to pause the expansion this legislative session. How is the request to expand a priority?
  - We want to make sure the pieces of the FSKA that were pushed out are our first priority. We are talking about this as a 10-year plan which starts whenever funding is available.
- How do we tell what's being asked for now versus aspirational things that we want in the future?
  - All requests are subject to the availability of funding. The legislature has shared this session some of the timing and timelines of things moving forward. Rates and family eligibility are the two levers that we have to move things forward; those are foundational pieces that we are focused on. We currently don't have dates to move forward but are trying to strike a balance about remaining committed to our priorities while acknowledging the state's financial situation.

#### *Executive Committee Elections*

- Dr. Brian Knowles who holds the Infant or Early Childhood Mental Health Expert ELAC seat was elected to the co-chair position.
- If you have any questions, please email the Community Engagement Team ([dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov))

#### ELAC Committee Business

Members reviewed meeting materials and asked questions.

- April 1, 2025, Meeting Minutes
- State Agency/Partner Updates
- Regional Coalition Updates
- Feedback Loop

### ***State Agency Partner Updates***

- The in-person child care conversations in Pasco will now be virtual. Please see the [Community Child Care Conversations webpage](#) for updates.
- In Snohomish County we have been hearing that military families on long waitlists for child care. What is locally happening to support military family access to child care?
  - A couple of years ago there was another bill that focused on removing barriers to child care in Homeowners Associations (HOAs); it banned HOAs from prohibiting child care in home settings. This session the legislature passed [SB 5545](#) this session that allows broader access to child care for military families and home-based care. Another bill that was passed this session is [SB 5509](#) which focuses on zoning. It changed the zoning requirements to allow more child care homes.

### **Health Consultation and Immunization Registry Access**

DCYF Health Systems Analyst Jennifer Helseth provided an update on the role of Child Care Health Consultation and the value of immunization registry access in preparing for vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks.

- [Child Care Health Consultants](#)
  - [Find a King County Child Care Health Consultant](#)
  - [School and Child Care Immunization Module](#)
  - [Lead in Child Care Drinking Water](#)
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- How do you collaborate with the county health departments?
    - I work with every health department that has staff available to support child care health consultation.
  - Do you consider mental health?
    - Yes, we work regularly with infant and early childhood mental health consultants. However, this specific Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requirement is only for nursing services for physical health in infant rooms. All of them broadly are considered child care health consultation. In a perfect world we would have both services and more to offer to every child care provider, but that's not the case right now considering in our fiscal situation. But generally, if you're looking for a specific service, and it's not one of the nurses, I have contacts to be able to connect you to those services.
  - We have home-based providers who might need this service but will not have funds to pay. Is this service offered for free?
    - It should be a free service that's available to every child care provider who has any desire for it. Everybody should have access to good health advice or environmental support in their centers. Unfortunately, this is not the way our system is set up. All the nurses who do this work are independent consultants or are paid by the Local Health Department in King County. They offer services for free to child care providers who are part of the Seattle Preschool program, but beyond that all the nurses charge for their time
  - What is the role of child care health consultants around developmental screenings and assessments?
    - Many child care health consultants are trained to do developmental screenings, but it is not a part of their role. They are not there to treat, diagnose or do anything with the children unless the child care provider hires them to do so.
  - These services are through Public Health - so Snohomish Public health?

- Snohomish Public Health does offer this service but only has 2.5 FTEs for the entire county that are paid for through their general fund. They do not offer direct consultation because they don't have capacity but they offer support and health trainings.
  - Is there a model out there where smaller providers pool together to hire a nurse consultant? Or is that allowed?
    - Yes, there are models. Pre-Covid we had put together a plan for a co-op system.
- There is a huge need for early intervention. Is there any work around training providers to provide ASQ screenings?
  - In the past there was a program for training providers on how to do Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) screenings. DCYF is planning to do some training but are looking at the reductions in funding for evaluation where those dollars will go.
  - If child care providers are part of Early Achievers, they can speak to their coach about getting training on how to implement ASQ screeners into their program.
- Can this water testing program offer support in multiple languages?
  - All the printed materials are translated into English, Spanish and Somali. We also have translation services available with interpreters.
- Please reach out to Jennifer Helseth ([jennifer.helseth@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:jennifer.helseth@dcyf.wa.gov)) with any follow-up questions.

## Early Learning Legislative Update

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Early Learning, Nicole Rose, and Government Affairs Policy Advisor, Courtney Parker, provided an update on early learning legislation.

- DCYF Government Affairs Webpage
- DCYF End of Session Webinar Slides
- When will DCYF begin recruiting for the professional development workgroup?
  - We will be reaching out to the organizations that were named in [Section 4](#) of the legislation. There will also be an email coming out soon to Provider Supports and ELAC to begin recruitment beyond what was named in the legislation. We heard at Provider Supports that we should make sure there is good representation across provider types.
    - It is very important to make sure providers make up the majority on the work group because providers must live with the rules that are determined.
- When does HB 1351 go into effect?
  - It goes into effect July 1<sup>st</sup> as space is available. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) still needs to prioritize 4-year-olds, who are 4 by August 31<sup>st</sup> and 3-year-olds, who are 3 by August 31<sup>st</sup> of that school year.
- HB 1648 lists the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) as a member of the workgroup. Although I totally agree that most of the members should be providers in all Early Learning Programs, I would like SBCTC to identify an Early Childhood Education (ECE) faculty and or director to participate in this discussion. If we want people with lived experience in higher education that would be the ECE faculty and not representation from state board as those individuals oversee many programs throughout the system and do not work directly with students.
- What happened to the commitment to parity between homes and centers?
  - We're seeing a really challenging budget where there was a collective bargaining agreement in place and a commitment to honor that while also trying to get funds to centers quickly and the best way possible. I would have to ask the legislature to speak to their decision-making process as they navigated through the large budget deficit.

- For staff who previously qualified because of the WCCC expanded eligibility, when they renew, can they qualify for the higher renewal qualification column?
  - Families who re-apply have second-tier eligibility up to 65% of State Median Income (SMI).
    - What does "second-tier eligibility" mean?
      - Second-tier is also known as the phase out. Families who reapply can have income up to 65% SMI, where at initial application families must be under 60% SMI.
- Given that legislation didn't pass to move to a cost of quality care reimbursement versus market rate reimbursement, what are next steps in the effort?
  - One of the things that did pass was a requirement for DCYF to do a cost of quality care study and a market rate survey every two years. We will put those forward as we set rates through our decision package process. We know that increasing rates and increasing family eligibility helps us increase access to care, so we'll be committed to continuing to look at those two things when funding allows us to make those types of requests.
- How is the legislature demonstrating a commitment to the development and mental health of the providers and children in the communities we serve with such massive cuts? The passing of SB 5752, even after negotiations, does not reflect a strong or trustworthy commitment to the development of children and their providers. Can you elaborate on any delays specifically related to mental health consultations being offered at the sites, and any possible talks to any increase (if any)?
  - There has been a significant expansion of mental health consultation services being offered. Child Care Aware, who is the implementing partner of that work, has a strong commitment to ensuring that there is a base level of services that's available in each region, as well as the bilingual mental health consultant at the state office.
  - Child Care Aware is moving from 26 infant and early childhood mental health consultants (ICEMHC) to 13. We're looking at re-tooling to try and spread out as much support as possible. We're looking at having open office hours statewide for providers and coaches. We won't be able to meet all the need but will continue to offer regional mental health consultation. We are also thinking about helping coaches to build their skill set even more around meeting some of the more basic needs that don't require mental health consultation.
- With Secretary Senn's new leadership, how will advocacy and strategy be different to build capacity for the ECE system in WA state?
  - DCYF is still committed to FSKA and increasing eligibility and rates. The funding is the place where there are some challenges right now. As state agencies we don't advocate but encourage you to talk with others who do that work.
- Please reach out to Courtney Parker ([courtney.parker@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:courtney.parker@dcyf.wa.gov)) and Nicole Rose ([nicole.rose@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:nicole.rose@dcyf.wa.gov)) with any follow-up questions.

## Community Child Care Conversations Update

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Licensing Ruben Reeves, and Assistant Secretary of Early Learning Nicole Rose provided a summary of the 2024 Community Child Care Forum action items.

- [DCYF Rule Making Webpage](#)
- [Capacity Waivers for Family Home Child Care Providers](#)
- [2024 Community Child Care Forums Summary Report](#)

### **2024 Community Child Care Forums**

- What will the six-month workgroup look like? Will that be a recorded training that is consistent across the state, or will each region do their own?
  - This is part of our commitment to getting consistent training to our staff. In the past, all our staff have been trained at the unit level. We are now providing a second training at the statewide level.
- I want to express my appreciation for the pre-licensing unit. They have been great to work with, and I have referred several people to them.
- Do you see any success in the legislation that was passed that may allow providers to make a transition from family home with a capacity waiver to being a center provider when they had been prohibited before due to city ordinances?
  - We are still looking into that. I don't see our WAC changing but we are hopeful this will make it easier for some of our family homes who want to become centers in these zoning requirements.

### **2025 Community Child Care Conversations**

- Future sessions are currently being scheduled and dates will be posted on the [Community Child Care Conversations webpage](#).
- Please reach out to [dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow up questions.

### **Closing Remarks/Adjourn**

The next ELAC Public Meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 5, 2025.

We also have a session scheduled for Tuesday, July 22, 2025, originally planned as an Executive Session/Orientation; however, we may use that time for a focused FSKA report session instead. We'll follow up with an email to all ELAC members to confirm—stay tuned!

### **Members in Attendance**

Ami Magisos, Amy Nelson, Andrea Carrillo, Anna Olson, Astrid Newell, Brittany Hartikainen, Carlina Brown-Banks, Cheryl Smith, Colleen Condon, Courtney Whitaker, Danielle Rasmussen, Debbie Carlsen, Debbie Ham, Dr. Brian Knowles, Hanna Bruning, Jaymie Davis, Jen Sandvig, Julie Rolling, Laura Murphey, Lois Martin, Lola Moses, Michelle Perez, Million Shiferaw, Nancy Spurgeon, Olivia Burley, Patti Bailey, Representative Mari Leavitt, Samantha Bowen, Shereese Rhodes, Tafra Jones, Victoria Hilt, Waylon Ballew.

### **Members Absent**

Claudette Lindquist, Muriel Herrera-Velasquez, Senator Claire Wilson, Senator Paul Harris, Valerie Arnold, Valisa Smith.