



Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Meeting Minutes

October 3, 2023 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions

ELAC Executive Committee member and Regional Advisor Representative, Enrica Hampton welcomed attendees, walked through virtual meeting protocols, and initiated introductions.

DCYF Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ)

DCYF ORESJ Racial Equity and Social Justice Administrator Ray Soriano provided members with an update on the work being done at ORESJ and discussed centering racial equity in the development of the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) Recommendation Report.

- [ORESJ Presentation](#)

<p>Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the field, it does feel like there are some unconscious biases and even racist policies and practices within DCYF and how that is applied to the childcare sector. What work has your office done historically to address these issues and what will be done moving forward? Solving some of these issues will work towards building more trust between the sector and DCYF. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ That is a complex issue. One of the main things we need to be doing is diversifying those in leadership at all levels in early learning across the state. Historically there was a lot done in the department of early learning. Moving forward one of the most important pieces is to be in collaboration with providers on the ground level. ○ Every division in the department is required to have an action plan to advance racial equity and social justice. The childcare licensing team completed implicit bias training last year and we’re also looking at our Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) and our policies to advance racial equity and social justice. ○ In the early learning division, we have an internal racial equity and social justice advisory team that is helping us as we think through decision packages and fiscal notes. We’re also trying to engage in more refinement of processes as they go out. • What are the challenges and barriers to being able to do the deeper work that you had hoped and how can we advocate as on-the-ground professionals and citizens? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This work is so complex and there aren’t any quick fixes. Even with legislation, we are not where we should be with inclusive practices. It has taken years. On the ground, a big part is each of us doing our own work about our own biases and being more aware of how oppression is being played out in our community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An example of a racist practice is that the federal government requires that if DCYF suspects fraud in Working Connections they are to investigate. Right now, the practice is to audit regardless of whether fraud is apparent. When you think of the childcare sector being comprised of mostly women of diverse racial and ethnics backgrounds, that is not an equitable fair, or socially justice practice. It could also be a cost-saving measure for DCYF to only investigate fraud and not audit a lot of people.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not fully aware of the data on that but personally, I can say that is probably true. That's a very real issue and we need to look at the mechanisms that continue to uphold that inequity. • We can follow up on DCYF's Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) audit requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I appreciate the offer. I was attempting to share one example of the depth of review that is needed to truly engage in reversing racist practices in childcare licensing policies and practices whether conscious or unconscious. • Are department racial equity social justice plans available to the public? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Here are DCYF's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Priorities and Strategic Priorities.
Next Steps/Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please contact Ray Soriano (ray.soriano@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) Recommendation Report

DCYF Community Engagement Manager Eric LaFontaine led the group through a discussion regarding the draft ELAC Recommendation Report.

• [Draft ELAC FSKA Recommendation Report](#)

Discussion	<p><u>Investing in Childcare and Early Learning</u> <i>Create more contracted slots to secure access for children with behavioral health needs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) or generally speaking? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would be investing in childcare and early learning as a category itself. It could be either or both. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does a contracted slot mean? Is that the same thing as enrollment-based or for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) or is this we want you to pay for so many slots in our centers? I think it's missing that specificity. ▪ There needs to be funding allocated specifically and support. It needs to list what additional support is needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific additional supports? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Actual mental health interventions are needed including mental health consultation and pyramid model support. ○ What I hear from early learning providers, particularly those working with youth with behavioral challenges, there needs to be access to training, free and paid options. Additional support also means additional staff and resources for those staff to support children with behavioral challenges. • I am hearing two asks here - contracted slots to childcare providers and additional funds for pyramid and infant early childhood mental health consultation, is that accurate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes - I think they have to go together. • What does the regarding language piece mean? • There is a crisis across the nation in terms of addressing the mental health and behavioral health workforce. One of the potential ways of addressing this is DCYF partnering up with bodies that help with the workforce development piece so that we have a more diversified
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workforce. We need to bring in a workforce that is diversified and representative of the communities that are being served. The workforce needs training to provide culturally affirming and responsive care to the communities.

- We need real-time on-the-ground center support like a public health psychologist to come into our centers and work with our staff on a practical day-to-day things and make recommendations to improve the environment.
 - That is very true - that's what infant-early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultants do!
 - More like challenges vs. tasks
- In our region, with the Early Achievers program, we have a program called Holding Hope which has seen a lot of success. Local mental health consultants do very intensive work around children with high needs. We see a lot of growth, change, and success. The challenge is there are about five times the amount of providers that need support. We should look at existing programs that are seeing success in this area and provide more funding. It's a model that's been in practice and they continue to refine it every year.
 - This is also consistent with the children and behavioral health group recommendations.
 - Holding Hope is funded by DCYF through Childcare Aware and Early Achievers. I would encourage us to leverage some of the similar recommendations that are coming out from other organizations, like the behavioral health work group. We can draw some of those connections and say multiple places are talking about this and have a systemic approach.

Expanding Access to Child Care and Early Learning Programs

Make data available on the amount of stabilization funds invested into each program type broken down per licensed capacity, the number of kids served, and by the number of early learning professionals employed at each learning facility.

- Remember to include school-age programs so that our elementary school kids in care and our staff don't get forgotten.
- I'm confused by the term stabilization funds because those were directly related to the pandemic and the relief was coming from the Federal Government. I don't believe those stabilization funds will continue regularly. Perhaps, this is a conversation about how the department shares data around how the dollars are spread across service areas and delivery types and kinds of programs.
 - I would be more interested in a recommendation that leans into making sure we collect this data with future funds and have that information provided on dashboards.
 - A better term might just be grant funds.
 - Grant funds sound like a competitive process. I like the term childcare sustainability funds. I'm not a proponent of making it a competitive process.
 - I like the option of changing the name to "childcare sustainability funds".
- Is there a reason why the legislature can't amend the capital gains funds legislation to allow for stabilization funding? That should be added as a recommendation.
 - This could be added in an appendix section as something important identified by the group.
 - You will not find anyone trying to reopen that piece of legislation. It went through the Supreme Court. We can talk about how we're utilizing the dollars that are collected from capital gains.
 - Is there is a way that we can look at an operational use of those funds?



- I do hear you and appreciate everything you all do every day for kids and families across the state. It's about the resources and how we're spending, leveraging, and supporting this economic recovery and the profession of care.
- There's a lot of concern around capital gains funds and the amount that was supposed to be spent on early learning. It would be critical to name in this recommendation that we need to track the capital gains collars going in the Education Legacy Fund and then how those are being spent on early learning. Is the money being spent on early learning in the private sector or early learning in the K-12 sector?

Ensure reports and data is shared with the community including both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a clearer picture of what is happening.

- This should be combined with the previous recommendation.

Provide financial supports to attract and retain members of the early learning workforce through state funding for compensation.

- Does this have a connection between the living wage proviso and the cost of care work? It's important to connect things and use the resources and information we're gathering to move forward in this system creation. Pieces would be critical as we think about the state's role.
- If the sustainability funds are a route, that would give childcare providers the ability to use funds for increased compensation as long as it's meaningful and significant.
- Perhaps like the Retention grant, but more as an entitlement amount to the center according to enrollment size?
- The Compensation Design Team will have their report ready to present to ELAC in December. This combines the Cost of Quality Care rate model and compensation.
- Is this recommending that DCYF include these funds in their "decision package" or some agency-requested legislation?
 - The compensation design team is working on a living wage proviso and cost of quality care rate model. I would read this recommendation as the agency continuing to support that work.
- Are recommendations from this report taken from the Temporary Licensing Subcommittee (TLS) report? How do the two work together?
 - The context of them both is similar. These two are not intertwined. The TLS report was specific to licensing. This report is similar in style, but the content is a little more specific to FSKA items/programs. If there are recommendations from the TLS report that you feel are important and should be in this recommendation report related to FSKA and DCYF it would be applicable here.
 - Couldn't some of those recommendations be in a decision package? The recommendations are there to help the childcare crisis. I'm confused about the disconnect.
 - The TLS has a process. It has a tracker being used and there is work being done within licensing to make a better operational workflow.
 - This report is to the legislature. The TLS report was for the agency.
 - It might be useful to have a crosswalk of both reports as a way to see what recommendations in the TLS report we want to include in this document.
 - The TLS report should be a tool, not a task. There are recommendations that support the work of the agency like operations, procedures, rulemaking, etc. that don't have a legislative nexus. There may also be recommendations that have a



legislative nexus and those things might show up in a decision package at a later date (a long session versus the upcoming short session).

Supporting Child Care and Early Learning Providers

Finding more providers to serve families, use of telehealth services, and funding to support this. Recruitment and retention of staff.

- I'm not sure what this is trying to ask, could it be mental health supports for providers?
- This is a topic of conversation on the behavioral health subcommittee. This is definitely an issue in rural communities. If it was removed from the report, it wouldn't be lost as groups are working on this issue.
- For Recruiting and Retention that would be funds available to all providers. Perhaps the thought was somehow DCYF could assist in attracting providers.
- But also access mental health support for early learning providers for retention and sustaining.
 - This wording does make it easier to understand the request.

Provide resources for education and health care to bring people into the field.

- Loan forgiveness for those entering the field.
 - We do have loan forgiveness programs for healthcare workers choosing to work in rural areas or conditional scholarships for rural or high-need areas. It would be great to gather more information if you'd like to examine this for childcare.
- We also have to address the upfront barriers for accessing education programs. We want to make sure we're putting robust funding into community-based pathways and alternatives to traditional education. The funding needs to be addressed on both ends. We know a lot of our childcare staff are at max capacity. Classes might not be available at times they can participate or the staff does not have childcare available. We need to look at resources across the whole spectrum.
 - It is challenging to find community cohorts and this aspect of the professional development work needs more funding/staffing.
- Most of my staff don't qualify for the state's healthcare plan because there were income provisions in place but they also couldn't afford the employer's plan due to the premium cost. We need something more robust in place.
 - And for those that did qualify, it ends in three months.
 - Having healthcare access without income requirements is crucial to retaining and recruiting staff. This program adjustment is needed even more so as wages continue to increase (as they should).
- Childcare providers whose children receive working connections subsidies can't work in the same center as their children. We haven't been able to retain staff because they couldn't bring their kids to the same center where they work. This is a barrier that could be removed to open up possibilities for childcare workers in the sector.
- The [Washington State Educator Workforce Program](#) (EWP) has some examples of education affordability programs for teachers.

Shift income from Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to Area Median.

- Our state is so economically diverse it doesn't make sense to do state median income (SMI).
- Yes, we have a lot of income outliers across counties, which mathematically skews the state median.

Offer a thriving wage and support from burnout.



- It seems like a lot of these recommendations are similar. Many of them would be approved upon by moving to the cost-of-care rate model which would allow providers to allow a living wage.
 - Can we please use “thriving” wage instead?
- Related to SMI. This was a conversation when FSKA was being developed moving from FPL. Would be interested in what other programs have income qualifications and how we look systemically in some way at this - an alignment opportunity.
 - The key is not adding more requirements to access wage increases or health benefits. The field needs a lifeline, not a scaffold.
- I think burnout references retention and sustaining. We need mental health support access for professionals.
- I would like a way to find out what is working for different programs. We need a way for directors to collaborate. I’m open to whatever is working and I’m trying to support the staff’s mental and social-emotional needs. It would be beneficial to have a monthly meeting to discuss strategies.
- Because the childcare workforce is shrinking, we need to think about marketing strategies to bring people to the field. We need to examine the things that are preventing people from entering this field.
- We need thriving compensation, sustainable workload, opportunities for development and advancement, mental health and physical health support (healing), and reducing or eliminating pressures and anxieties related to being evaluated and monitored. Being part of a supportive community of practice.

Make it easy to tease out what is being done to address wage inequity within the early learning sector.

- I read this as differentiating between mixed delivery systems and the differing pay that individuals receive. The inequity comes when we continue to look at wages, there are differing pay scales whether it’s transitional kindergarten (TK), developmental pre-k, Head Start, or ECEAP.
- Perhaps a list of options and explanations that would exist on the DCYF website.
- We do have a group working on the pay equity issue, cost of care, and living wage proviso. We need to make sure it’s not just one set of individuals but that we look at all of the different delivery systems to ensure equity in wages.
- It is a systemic problem. If a teacher has a housing subsidy and receives a pay increase, rent goes up negating the increase. This has a number of staff turning down raises. The safety net system in our state needs an overhaul.

Address Burnout for Caregivers/Providers.

- Leadership training and mental health supports for burnout.

DCYF and the legislature should work with providers, parents, and communities to ensure that the workforce receives a thriving wage.

- Can we decide which language we would like to use around this topic, so everyone is on the same page? Living or thriving should be used so our language is consistent throughout the report.
 - Thriving wage is more inclusive. Childcare workers need to be paid for the value of the work they provide.
 - We will need to define how we quantify a thriving wage.
 - The [MIT Calculator](#) can be used.



DCYF and the legislature should work with providers, parents, and communities to ensure professional development opportunities are accessible and affordable.

- Could we strengthen this recommendation by looking to a workgroup or a review committee to lean into and create the time for some co-design to take place? This seems pretty general and doesn't give tangible ways to do this.
 - The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has good training opportunities around the pyramid model that they provide to their early learning staff. OSPI could offer these trainings to center-based providers in their area.
 - For information on these trainings please contact Kelly Saavedra (kelly.saavedra@k12.wa.us).
- For Professional development there should be incentives like employers actually paying for time to take the trainings, it shouldn't have to be on personal time.
 - To build on that, allow the substitute pool to be utilized for this purpose, not just for Early Achiever trainings/events.

DCYF and the legislature should work with providers, parents, and communities to ensure there are proper resources and support for infants, toddlers, and children.

- We need an increase in rates for infants and toddlers.
- Support for [HB 1325](#) in addition to the Holding Hope work.
- Could this be around our Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) dollars and expanding? Is it enough and are we serving enough families?
 - Funding to support ESIT services is critical.
- What are the resources that are in place to help families, what are we missing, and where are the gaps for families with young kids?

DCYF should create more outreach strategies that allow community gatherings.

- Community building and resource sharing?
- Who is this aimed at? Early learning providers? What kind of gatherings? Things like professional development conferences? Or is the thinking to find new providers through community gatherings?
- A great new thing I'm starting to see is DCYF leadership going out and doing site visits to see the impacts and talking to providers in their environment. That's a good next step to not making decisions in a bubble. More site visits from leadership and connecting to communities. We look forward to more of that.
- Coordinating with the State Coalitions who have been doing this work.
- Early Learning/Childcare needs a Public Service Announcement— showcasing the work done in centers as well as how all employment is enabled by Childcare.
 - We need continuous communication broadcast.

Develop an easier platform, like a webpage, to be used to collect feedback and requests.

- It is not clear on the DCYF web pages so having a dedicated page would be helpful.
- The [FSKA webpage](#) is a good example. It's very user-friendly.
 - Maybe the FSKA web page can be duplicated and then modified into a clear contact page for the various programs?

DCYF should Work with the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to ensure those utilizing Provider Access and Community Equivalent (PACE) who want to end up with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Early Childhood Education (ECE) have the opportunity to do so.



- Are there scholarships available from DCYF to increase this workforce? If there aren't, is there any way that's a possibility to increase the workforce for childcare and early Head Start programs?
 - DCYF does scholarship programs mostly for those in Early Achievers: [Scholarships for Early Care and Education Providers](#).
 - It would be helpful if there were scholarships available outside of Early Achievers or for colleges/universities outside of Washington.
- I would like to see alternative options for staff qualifications outside of the college system. A lot of work was done on this with the Workgroup for Workforce Development—but it was put aside by Mr. Hunter.
- There are different opportunities for professional development for different roles in centers and homes. The PACE program has no college credits and I believe this recommendation is asking that college credits be earned by those in the PACE program.
 - Ensure pathways and checking opportunities to access for degrees and credentials in child care development. Representative Mari Leavitt will reach out to the State Board of Community Technical Colleges for their matrix on childcare provider-accredited education programs and how they work together.

In addition to sharing information and providing access to PACE and other educational pathways, the experience waiver should be broadly promoted so that providers are aware of all their options. The experience waiver should also be available to childcare directors.

- I have heard that DCYF is working on trying to create an experience waiver pathway for directors. Currently, if you're a director, the only pathway is education (PACE or state certificate) for job requirements; the experience pathway for directors isn't an option.
- I believe this is DCYF/Merit specific.
- DCYF controls this piece. The ask is that this information be advertised broadly. This should be an easy request to grant.
 - This can be clarified on the DCYF page.

DCYF should continue to offer scholarships and FSKA-funded premium assistance through the Washington Health Benefit Exchange.

- My hope was that this is a temporary solution put in place as a way to support the profession. If we want to increase the income level of eligible individuals, that would be a legislative change, and if it's around continuing to fund those stipends that would be a budget proviso.
 - Maintaining this funding until the Cost of Quality Care rate model goes into effect seems vital. Also raising the income level is imperative.
 - We are hopeful to include health benefits in the cost-of-care rate model. Instead of scholarships, would a better term be a stipend for healthcar
- We should raise the income level for those eligible while we're using the health benefits exchange.

When new requirements and mandates are implemented, DCYF needs to prevent the cost from being passed to families and should provide funding, in addition to technical support.

- From a provider perspective, it seems like changes from licensing come as unfunded mandates. With tight provider budgets that's potentially driving centers out of business.
 - This is very true. The revenue stream for the childcare business is families paying tuition or subsidy rates. When costs come in, you are passing them to families because you don't have the capacity to change subsidies. Parents can only afford what they can afford.



- Ground covering is a good example but a lot of the regulations that get changed are cost drivers of your daily operations like how you can sub staff or whether aides can be in ratio.
- Providers aren't against regulation; we want kids to be safe but we are against unfunded mandates. Regulations need to be funded.
 - Unfunded mandates are the largest cost drivers in the field.

Language Access.

- How many of these things are covered in FSKA funding? Perhaps we need to look at what is currently available within FSKA that relates to this. Do we need to put it in statute and make it ongoing funding or is it something we need to fund and put forth in a budget proviso?
- There is a bill on language access in K-12 which is being implemented now. We should look at what knowledge there might be in that bill for programs that sit inside K-12.
- Look at partners like Imagine Institute and how it ties into this. Are we talking about recruiting folks out in our programs? Or is it both, within DCYF and out in the profession?
- People struggle with language access. DCYF has moved to having webinars in different languages. But DCYF should make sure those aren't isolated segregated webinars; they should have simultaneous translations in Spanish.
- Are groups like ELAC and PS doing a disservice to the community by being English-only?

Negotiated Rule Making (NRM) needs to happen before provisions of the Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) that impact early learning communities are changed.

- The issue is that DCYF has unilateral control over NRM and can make WAC changes without any feedback in advance.
- Does this apply to other things that maybe aren't WACs? Maybe things that don't have to go through that process?

Providers who have ECEAP and non-ECEAP slots should have access to apply for both.

- We're looking to have this be allowed across the board, when you are both an ECEAP provider and a non-ECEAP provider you can apply for various funding streams.
- We should clarify if we are talking about complex needs or ECEAP slots. We did adjust the opportunities for ECEAP contractors to ensure there were no barriers. We definitely try to keep a close eye on the funding source, so we don't have two different funding sources go to the same providers. We can look into this.

There should be an FSKA webpage that shows progress, timelines, and what will and will not be implemented.

- Yes, we want to know the timelines and what will or won't be implemented. But when something is determined not to be implemented, is that a done deal? If you're not going to do something, we want to communicate about why and perhaps change the decision. Is there a process for that?

Strengthening Prenatal to Three Supports

To determine what resources would be beneficial to support providers serving infants and toddlers with special needs, DCYF needs to look at funding on the whole continuum and increase the dollars coming in.

- Complex needs and special needs are two different things. When I think special needs, I think of developmental, intellectual, and physical disabilities. When I think of complex needs oftentimes there are social emotional things as well. We want to know the



definition so we are very clear. We want to use appropriate language but don't want to mix up.

- Is this in reference to early support for infants and toddlers? I would use a different language than special needs. You could put infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities and delays. It would be beneficial to get some clarification around whether this a recommendation specific to funding ESIT or if are we looking at more.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

Next

Steps/Follow Up

- The next ELAC Public Meeting will be on December 5, 2023.

Members in Attendance:

Alexandra Martin-Truesdell, Ami Magisos, Angelica Hernandez, Claudette Lindquist, Colleen Condon, Enrica Hampton, Gary Burris, Heidi Scott, Isis Lara Fernandez, Jen Sandvig, Kathy Carman, Kelly Saavedra, Leah White, Lois Martin, Lola Moses, Mary Rulewicz, Michelle Perez, Milan Mulye, Nancy Spurgeon, Nucha Isarowong, Representative Mari Leavitt, Samantha Masters, Sen. Claire Wilson, Waylon Ballew

Members Absent:

Aida Rodriguez, Astrid Newell, Carlina Brown-Banks, Catherine Duffy, Cheryl Smith, Christianna Clinton, Danielle Rasmussen, Debbie Carlsen, Debbie Ham, Deborah Sioux Lee, Deeann Puffert, Jasmin Schmidt, Julie Rolling, Kathy Goebel, Kimberly Hoover, Luz Gomez, Olivia Burley, Samantha Bowen, Shereese Rhodes, Susan Yang, Val Arnold, Valisa Smith