



## **Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)** **FSKA Report Development Session**

November 19, 2024

### **2024 Recommendations Summary**

The following are the six broad categories submitted for DCYF's 2024 FSKA Recommendations Report. A full summary is provided below:

- **Funding and Grant Opportunities**
- **Improving Language Access**
- **Mental Health Supports**
- **Provider Recruitment and Retention**
- **Professional Development**
- **Compensation and Engagement Strategies**

### **Funding and Grant Opportunities**

#### **Funding**

- Provide stable funding for the entire ECE system to support its proper functioning and sustainability. This includes:
  - Making the system fully sustainable, regardless of the funding source, to fund increased provider compensation and family affordability, and fund rates that compensate at or near the full cost of providing high quality child care.
  - Fully fund the new federal requirements regarding child care subsidies - enrollment based pay and paying on the first of the month, prospective payment.

#### **Grants**

- Create more grant funding opportunities that encourage cross-collaboration and are less competitive and more equitable.
- Provide frequent and small-dollar facility grants to support family home start-up and expansion, for example expansion of the 'Business Start Up Series.'

### **Improving Language Access**

- Increased funding to incentivize dual language learner training, expand training opportunities, and increase the number of bilingual and bicultural trainers.
- Ensure adequate funding to allow the department to provide language access based on identified needs supported by statewide data.
- Increased funding to ensure human translation and interpretation of all early care and education information provided by DCYF beyond two language access coordinators, to support culturally responsive translation and reduce the use of Google Translate.



## **Mental Health: Complex Needs and Behavioral Health**

- Increased funding to increase the number of specialists in classrooms to support complex needs and behavioral health.
- Additional funding is essential to address the behavioral and mental health needs of infants and young children in early learning classrooms, including support for managing complex needs and disruptive behaviors in various licensed provider settings.
- Access to high-quality substitutes for licensed child care providers with a specialty in behavioral and complex needs.
- Provide enhanced training and financial incentives for all child care providers across various settings, emphasizing complex needs and behavioral health.
- Allocate funding for outreach initiatives aimed at parents, caregivers, and families to raise awareness about behavioral health and complex needs resources and programs.
- RCW 43.216.772: Enhancing Support for Children with Disabilities Across Early Childhood and School-Based Programs: Early childhood education (ECE) providers encounter significant challenges in supporting children with disabilities, particularly in bridging the gap between early intervention (0-2 years) and school-based programs for those with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). For instance, a student with a one-on-one paraprofessional in kindergarten should receive similar support in their after-school childcare program. Child care providers must have access to the necessary training, resources, and inclusion in the planning process, including data sharing and IEP development. However, there are disconnects in funding and data collection between early learning and care (administered by DCYF) and K-12 education (overseen by OSPI). To better support these children, funding structures need to be aligned, and strategies between agencies must be coordinated to ensure consistent support across all learning environments, including childcare. Addressing the current lack of services and funding is essential to creating a seamless support system that follows the child through all their educational settings.

## **Enhancing Provider Recruitment and Retention**

- Increase funding to ensure increased wages to compensate for education, experience, and competency for providers, assistant directors and directors. It supports wage equity as a retention strategy and ensures a pathway for increased wages with further education, experience, and competency for providers.
- Consider funding DCYF to conduct a retention study to understand why providers leave the ECE field.
- Consider either fully funding the Cost of Quality Care where rates would be inclusive of health care coverage or fully funding rates that achieve the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of market plus an adder for health care coverage.

## **Enhancing Professional Development for Providers**

- Provide increased funding to make all mandatory training in multiple formats (e.g., on demand and virtual), including Child Care Basics, a consistent and sustainable, program that is offered at no cost, is readily available, and is easy to access.



- Recommendations for funding to ensure professional development requirements are inclusive and ensure they are culturally and linguistically accessible and accommodate providers with learning differences or neurodivergence.
- Legislative changes to Extended Compliance Timelines for staff qualification in RCW 43.216.755.
- Increased and expanded funding to support professional development through tuition reimbursement, scholarship grants/programs, technical assistance, and coaching.

## Compensation and Engagement Strategies

- Amend the membership requirements detailed in [RCW 43.216.075](#) to adopt a more flexible approach to recruitment for ELAC seats. Instead of tying eligibility strictly to organizational affiliations and specified appointing authorities, it would be beneficial to broaden the recruitment criteria to include individuals based on their expertise in relevant fields and subject matter. This approach will ensure that DCYF and ELAC benefit from a diverse range of knowledgeable contributors who are committed to fully participating in ELAC, making the recruitment process easier and more flexible, while enhancing the early learning system.
- Fully fund DCYF to compensate early learning participants for their lived expertise/experience in alignment to the 2023-2024 session [House Bill 1541, Establishing the nothing about us without us act](#).