

# Child Care Complex Needs Fund Refinements

In August 2024, DCYF met with the Early Learning Provider Supports Subcommittee to gather feedback on both the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund and the Child Care Complex Needs Fund. The Complex Needs Fund is intended to promote inclusive, least-restrictive environments, and support providers serving children with developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs, and/or other unique needs.

DCYF gathered feedback with the intent to improve the funding process and support providers to be successful in accessing Complex Needs Funds to better serve the children in their care. As a result of this feedback and other suggestions received from Complex Needs Fund Awardees, DCYF will implement the following refinements for the 2025 Child Care Complex Needs Fund.

## Child Care Complex Needs Fund – What is Changing

### Pre-Award Technical Assistance

DCYF will implement a special pre-award technical assistance session for awardees. DCYF will provide this technical assistance session at a mutually-agreed-upon time after funding decisions are finalized. The purpose of the pre-award technical assistance is to support providers' success in managing their award and carrying out their grant activities.

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**Why:** *DCYF is committed to provider success which includes success in implementing projects funded with Complex Needs Funds. We heard from awardees that we could do a better job communicating the terms and conditions of the grant funding they received. We heard that awardees did not feel prepared when they were selected for receipt review or asked to submit quarterly status updates. Adding an extra layer of support before receiving the funding will ensure that the awardees have the tools and knowledge to manage their award, supporting their success as they carry out their grant activities. DCYF has already successfully implemented this change with the 2024-25 Early Childhood Equity Grant.*

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

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## Reduce Maximum Amount

DCYF will reduce the maximum award amount to \$50,000 for licensed, certified or certified for payment-only child care providers. Reducing the maximum amount will allow the funds to be distributed to a greater number of providers. The original maximum amount open licensed, certified, or certified-for-payment-only child care providers could request was \$100,000.

### **New Total Grant Amount providers can apply for:**

Provider Type	Minimum Amount	Maximum Amount
Open licensed, certified, or certified-for-payment-only child care providers	\$5,000	\$50,000
Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers	\$100	\$2,000

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**Why:** *By reducing the maximum award amount, DCYF will be able to award Child Care Complex Needs Funds to more providers. Providers told us they would prefer to see smaller award amounts if it means more people will receive funding.*

*DCYF recognizes the overwhelming need for complex needs supports. This change will enable DCYF to administer the funding to more providers which will directly support more children with complex needs.*

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## Spend Categories

To reduce confusion about the different spend categories and the new maximum amount, DCYF is adjusting the language about spend categories. The new language will include examples for each spend category, and maximum amounts per category. DCYF also recognizes the need for attracting new staff members to child care programs. To support this need, the staffing spend category language will specifically clarify that hiring bonuses are allowable.

### **Original Spend Categories**

1. Adding a new staff member or increasing a current staff member's hours.
2. Facility Improvements to comply with ADA requirements and/or Behavioral Needs.
3. Therapeutic Services
4. Supportive and Adaptive Materials and / or Equipment

Original spend categories did not have a funding request limit.

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**New Spend Categories**

<b>Category</b>	<b>What is included?</b>	<b>Maximum request</b>
<b>Adding new staff/increasing staff hours</b>	Funding in this category may be used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding a new staff member to support children with complex needs</li> <li>• Up to a \$5,000 hiring bonus for new staff members that support children with complex needs</li> <li>• Increasing a current staff member’s hours to support children with complex needs</li> </ul>	\$30,000
<b>Facility Improvements to comply with ADA requirements</b>	Examples of facility improvements include, but are not limited to: adding a wheelchair ramp, installing grab bars in bathrooms, widening a doorway, installing accessible playground equipment to comply with ADA requirements.	\$50,000
<b>Therapeutic Services</b>	Therapeutic Services means services, offered by skilled professionals, that focus on curative, rehabilitative, preventative or healing practices. Examples include, but are not limited to: behavioral therapy offered by a licensed behavioral specialist.	\$25,000
<b>Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment</b>	Materials and equipment that directly support children with complex needs. Examples include, but are not limited to: picture exchange communication systems, calming or sensory items, adaptive swings, adaptive chairs, eating aids.	\$25,000

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**Why:** *DCYF is committed to provider success in accessing and implementing Complex Needs Fund projects. We heard from providers that the spending categories were unclear and that it would be helpful to have examples of what kinds of purchases would fall under each category.*

*We also heard from providers and from the Provider Supports Subcommittee that “focusing funds on the one-time costs would make the funds go further” and “If you continue to use funds to cover labor, then that is not a sustainable business model”. As a middle ground, we are adding maximum amounts for each category to focus the funding more on true one-time costs and less on costs that are not sustainable.*

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## Licensed ECEAP Provider Eligibility

Licensed ECEAP providers will now be eligible to apply for the 2025 Child Care Complex Needs Fund. This means that ECEAP Contractors will use ECEAP Complex Needs Funds to support children enrolled in ECEAP slots, and licensed ECEAP sites will apply separately for funding to support children enrolled in licensed slots.

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**Why:** *Licensed ECEAP providers and Contractors let us know that this was important to them.*

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## Child Care Complex Needs Fund – What is Not Changing

### New vs Continuing Funding Requests

The Child Care Complex Needs Fund will remain available to fund new project proposals to support children with complex needs, and not to maintain existing supports established with previous Complex Needs Fund awards.

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**Why:** *We did receive feedback that providers would like to be able to “renew” their Complex Needs Fund award and receive continued funding for their previous grant activities. However, because this is a competitive opportunity and funding is not guaranteed, it would be inequitable to fund the same grants to the same providers over and over, reducing the chances for other providers to access the opportunity.*

*To be equitable to all providers when applying for this opportunity, the Child Care Complex Needs Fund will continue to fund requests for new supports only.*

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### Lump Sum vs Incremental Payments for Grants

DCYF will continue distributing Child Care Complex Needs Fund payments as one lump sum.

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**Why:** *While we have received some requests for a reimbursement-style grant rather than lump sum payment, the general consensus is that it is better to allow providers access to the funding upfront, rather than wait for them to spend the money and then seek reimbursement. This prevents a lack of funding upfront from being a barrier to providers accessing this support.*

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