

1. What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers is building a statewide system of high quality early learning by bringing families, early learning professionals, and resources together to support each child. Early Achievers is working to improve the quality of child care and early learning in Washington to ensure that:

- Early learning professionals have access to the resources and supports they need to provide quality care that promotes each child's learning and development.
- Children have access to high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.
- Families can find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing evidence-based information about facility quality.

2. How will Early Achievers improve early learning for children?

Early Achievers is unique from other quality initiatives because it was built with the specific goal of improving results for kids. The Department of Early Learning works with our partners at the University of Washington to ensure that our quality standards are based on the latest research regarding how children learn and which indicators have the greatest impact on lifelong learning and success. Research shows that children who receive high-quality care in the first five years have:

- Better math and reading skills
- Fewer behavior issues
- Higher scores on tests measuring academic achievement
- A greater likelihood of graduating from high school

3. Who can participate in Early Achievers?

All licensed and certified child care providers in Washington State are eligible to participate in Early Achievers. The Early Start Act of 2015 requires all licensed or certified child care providers who receive state funding for children ages birth to five to enroll in Early Achievers. This includes funds from:

- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)
- Seasonal Child Care (SCC)
- Homeless Child Care
- ECEAP

Additionally, providers who are participating in the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership Pilot must enroll in Early Achievers as part of their participation.

4. Is there a cost to enroll in Early Achievers?

No, there is no cost to enroll. Participation is free and all services are provided at no cost to participants. Participants who wish to make purchases to improve their facilities prior to rating may qualify for a Needs-Based Grant to offset this cost. More information about Early Achievers grants can be found on the DEL website at www.del.wa.gov/earlyachievers.

5. What does an Early Achievers quality rating level mean?

Early Achievers recognizes that quality looks different in different settings and allows facilities to earn points that reflect program strengths, philosophy, and approach to early learning. Early Achievers uses an easy-to-understand rating system to help families understand their child care provider's progress in quality improvement. At Levels 1 and 2, early learning professionals are participating in quality improvement through training and activities. Facilities that are rated Levels 3—5 have achieved a quality level of excellence through an on-site evaluation.

6. How does DEL publicize Early Achievers Quality Ratings?

Early Achievers provides information to families about child care quality in order to help them make informed choices. Early Achievers participation status, including a facility's rating level when available, is posted on DEL's Child Care Check. In addition, Child Care Aware of Washington shares Early Achievers rating levels as part of the child care referral process. The public status for facilities that have not been rated is "Participating, not yet rated."

7. What incentives and resources are available for Early Achievers participants?

Early Achievers participants have access to a wide variety of supports and incentives, including:

- Personalized technical assistance and coaching
- Training and STARS hours at no cost to the participant
- Needs-Based Grants
- Professional development scholarships
- Tiered subsidy reimbursement
- Personalized program description on Child Care Check
- Use of Early Achievers marketing and outreach materials
- Infant-Toddler Consultation
- Quality Improvement Awards for qualifying participants accepting state subsidy

8. How are Head Start and ECEAP included in Early Achievers?

Early Achievers has worked with Head Start and ECEAP programs to recognize and build upon their existing quality standards, streamline participation and reduce duplication of efforts. Washington's Early Start Act of 2015 requires all ECEAP programs to participate in Early Achievers.

9. How do I sign up?

The first step in joining Early Achievers is completing the MERIT Facility Registration. Once this is complete, the Early Achievers Registration form can be found under your Facility/Site tab. More information can be found on our website at www.del.wa.gov/earlyachievers.