2027 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Summary

Fast Facts

- The 2026-27 ECEAP CNF application opened to ECEAP Contractors in March 2026 as part of the Contractor Expansion Application. It closed in April 2026.
- After the State's partnership with the Ballmer Group, funding for ECEAP Complex Needs Fund increased. DCYF had $5.711 million available for 2026-27.
- DCYF received 51 applications.
- DCYF updated the funding formula to distribute funds more fairly among applicants. DCYF also increased the minimum and maximum award amounts.
- The 2026-27 ECEAP CNF awards funded 49 Contractors for a total of $5.711 million.
- Funding will support 15,967 ECEAP slots.
- Funding will be used for:
    - Staffing
    - Supportive and adaptive materials and equipment
    - Mental and/or behavioral health consultation
    - Adaptive curriculum
    - Professional development
    - Unique transportation needs

Background

The purpose of the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund (CNF) is to promote inclusive, least-restrictive environments, and support ECEAP contractors serving children with developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs, and/or other unique needs. The ECEAP CNF aims to reduce learning gaps for children who would otherwise be behind when they start kindergarten and would continue to fall behind in later school years.

DCYF opened the 2026-27 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund application on **March 16, 2026**, as part of the Expansion Request process. The application remained simple this year to reduce barriers for Contractors and give them more flexibility to support children with complex needs.

Contractors indicated which categories they planned to use CNF funding for. They did not need to submit a detailed spending plan or request a specific dollar amount.

The number of ECEAP CNF applications has increased each year, showing a growing need for this funding. This year was no exception. ECEAP Contractors across the state submitted **51 CNF applications**, the largest number to date. The high number of applications shows the continued need to support children with complex needs.

Processing Applications and Award Determination

The total funding available for 2026-27 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund awards increased from $4.43 million in Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) to $5.711 million in Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27).

The total amount includes $4,529,000 provided by the legislature and $1,182,778 from the Pre-K Promise Account, funded by Ballmer Group.

DCYF used the following process to determine 2026-27 ECEAP CNF awards.

Methodology

1. **Calculate Base Award**

   DCYF Divided the total CNF budget by the number of ECEAP slots served by contractors that applied for funding. This resulted in a base amount of about $357.25 per slot.

   DCYF multiplied this amount by the number of contracted slots for each applicant to calculate each contractor's base award.

2. **Set minimum and maximum awards**

   DCYF increased the minimum award, or floor, of $30,000 and the maximum award, or ceiling, of $450,000.

   These limits ensured that each contractor received at least $30,000 and no contactor received more than $450,000 as a base award, regardless of the number of slots they served.

3. **Adjust awards above the maximum**

   After applying the minimum and maximum limits, some funding remained available.

   Contractors whose base awards were capped by the $450,000 maximum were considered for additional funding for slots above that amount. These additional slots were funded at a lower per-slot rate.

4. **Redistribute remaining funds**

   DCYF recalculated the remaining funds using only the slots for contractors whose awards were not raised to reach the minimum amount or capped by the maximum amount limits.

   This allowed DCYF to distribute the remaining funds more fairly among contractors whose awards could still be adjusted.

Funding Decisions

DCYF awarded $5,711,000 to **50 ECEAP contractors**. These funds will support 15,986 ECEAP slots.

The ECEAP CNF award amounts may change from year to year. A contractor may receive more or less funding than in previous years based on:

- The total amount of CNF funding available
- The number of contractors that apply
- The number of ECEAP slots served by each applicant
- The award structure

DCYF may also change the award amounts or structure in future CNF funding rounds, including the minimum and maximum award amounts, as part of its ongoing review of the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund.

The funding may be used for:

- Staff Salary and Benefits
- Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment
- Contracted Mental/Behavioral Health Consultation
- Adaptive Curriculum
- Professional Development
- Staff Travel
- Unique Transportation Needs
- Indirect Costs

Next Steps

DCYF expects to open the 2027-28 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund in Winter 2026-27. More information about how to apply will be available later in the contract year.