ECEAP COMPLEX NEEDS FUND MANUAL

Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Original Date: November 26, 2024 | Revised Date: October 3, 2025
Early Learning Division | Approved for Distribution by Amy Russell, Early Learning Division Deputy

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This manual provides guidance and policies for the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund.

CONTENTS

ECEAP COMPLEX NEEDS FUND MANUAL 0
CONTENTS 1
Section 1: General Information 2
Purpose 2
Quick Glance: What's New? 2
Award Amounts/How Are Amounts Decided? 2
What Can the Funds Be Used For? 3
ECEAP Performance Standards 5
Section 2: Eligibility 6
Eligibility 6
Section 3: How to Apply 6
Section 4: Selection and Awards 6
Application Selection 6
Receiving Payment 6
Section 5: Post Award 7
Reporting 7
Spending Reports 7
Frequently Asked Questions 8
Pre-Award Questions 8
Award Questions 9
Post-Award/Reporting Questions 9
Attachment 1 11
Previously Funded Items – Professional Development 11
Attachment 2 12
Previously Funded Items – Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment 12
Attachment 3 13
Previously Funded Items – Adaptive Curriculum 13

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Section 1: General Information

Purpose

The goal of the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Complex Needs Fund (CNF) is to direct funding to ECEAP contractors to assist them in supporting children with complex needs. It is intended to promote inclusive, least restrictive environments and support contractors serving children with developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs, or other unique needs. The ECEAP CNF aims to reduce learning gaps for the children who would otherwise start kindergarten behind and continue to fall behind in later school years.

The ECEAP CNF may be used to help pay for adding classroom staff or mental health professionals, and/or increasing current staff's hours from part-time to full time, increasing mental health/behavioral consultation, purchasing supportive and adaptive materials and equipment, adapting curricula, providing teacher coaching, training and professional development, and offering unique transportation services that directly support children with complex needs.

Quick Glance: What's New?

- You only need to submit the monthly spending report **when you request reimbursement** for Complex Needs Funds.
- You can now lump multiple months of CNF expenses into one A19, and indicate which months are covered on the spending report.
- A19s claiming $0 on the CNF reimbursement line will be processed normally. No report required!
- Eligibility has been expanded to include new contractors and those applying to be new contractors.

Award Amounts/How Are Amounts Decided?

The ECEAP CNF award amounts can vary. DCYF cannot guarantee a contractor will be awarded more or less than they were last year.

DCYF will disburse ECEAP Complex Needs Funds as an allotment based on the number of ECEAP slots, with a minimum and maximum award amount for each contractor. These numbers are calculated annually based on the number of ECEAP CNF applicants, available funding, and other factors.

DCYF may change the award size or structure in future rounds of Complex Needs Funds as part of the ECEAP CNF refinement process.

What Can the Funds Be Used For?

You can use Complex Needs Funds for the following spending categories:

- Targeted staffing to support children with complex needs Mental Health and Behavioral Contracted Services
- Supportive and adaptive materials and equipment
- Adaptive curriculum
- Professional development to provide teacher coaching and training
- Unique transportation needs
- Staff Travel
- Indirect costs (up to 15% of total award)

Targeted Staffing

ECEAP CNF may be used for staffing costs, including salaries and benefits, for additional staff to directly support participating children with complex needs. Funding can be used to convert part-time staff to full-time staff if the increase in their hours directly supports children with complex needs. Allocating staff as supported by CNF in the Operating Budget or Staff Compensation Summary can help DCYF staff expedite review processes in some cases.

Mental Health and Behavioral Contracted Services

Contractors can use CNF dollars for additional mental/behavioral health consultations beyond what is required in the ECEAP requirements for this role. These staff must support families, staff, and children with complex needs. Examples of previously funded consultant position titles are Mental Health Consultants and Early Relational Health Consultants.

Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment

Contractors can use CNF funding to purchase supportive and adaptive materials and equipment for children with complex needs. Materials and equipment purchased can be used both in the classroom and by families at home. The Spending Reports must clearly show how purchases will meet the needs of children with complex needs. Examples include picture exchange communication systems, calming or sensory items, adaptive swings, adaptive chairs, eating aids.

Adaptive Curriculum

Additional curriculum can be purchased to create an individualized strength-based approach for children with complex needs. The adaptive curriculum must support increasing kindergarten readiness and child development. This can include teaching materials for new or existing curriculum. Funding can also be used to support individual families' needs beyond the classroom, providing resources around social-emotional support and maintaining family connection. Some examples of previously funded items would be Conscious Discipline curriculum, Play Therapy, Second Step and Second Stepchild Protection unit.

Professional Development

Contractors can use CNF funding to provide coaching and training to deliver services more effectively to children with complex needs. Allowable expenses may include staff salary to attend the training, registration, training supplies, and/or travel cost to attend training. Funding can be used to hire a professional consultant or trainer to conduct the training on site. Funding may also be used for coaching and one-on-one classroom teaching reflections. Some examples of previously funded items would be ACEs, MindUp, and Abrieto Puertas.

Unique Transportation

Contractors may use funding to fill specialized transportation needs to safely transport children with complex needs to and from school. Examples of this may include:

- Modify or purchase an ADA accessible vehicle to transport a child with complex needs to and from school. If funds are used for this, cost allocation plans must be submitted to the state.
- Transportation for a child with a unique classroom schedule.
- Transportation for a child experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: homelessness could be a child without a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence.
- Transportation for a child who resides in a rural remote area where families are the primary source for transportation needs.

The funds may not be used for standard bus travel for a child.

Staff Travel

Funding may be used for staff travel. Staff travel can include attending training or traveling to another classroom site to provide services for a child with complex needs. Staff travel can also include when staff travel to families' homes to drop off materials or provide consultation or family support services for children with complex needs.

Indirect Costs

Up to 15% of the ECEAP CNF award may be used for indirect/administrative costs. Indirect costs are costs that are necessary for your organization's operation. This may include fiscal, payroll, information technology, human resources, and other costs associated with operating and maintaining staff and workspace.

Last Resort

Last resort dollars are allowable for ECEAP children with complex needs and their families with prior approval from DCYF if no other resources or assistance are available, including but not limited to medical, dental, nutrition, mental health services, and/or concrete goods and services. The purpose is to support ECEAP children and families in an event when all other community, state, or federal resources are unavailable and having access to goods and services in an emergency will create family stability to prevent the crisis from escalating. The flexibility of the funds allows contractors in an emergency to assist ECEAP families with the basic necessities everyone deserves to live. Some examples are outlined below. Allowable expenditures for last resort may include:

- Preventing mental health crises from escalating.
- Child in pain from toothache and family needs assistance to get dental care.
- No heat in the house during winter.
- Short-term housing assistance to prevent a family from becoming homeless.
- Groceries to prevent starvation.

Prior approval is needed from DCYF ECEAP via email (dcyf.eceap@dcyf.wa.gov) before the contractor uses any CNF dollars for last resort emergencies.

ECEAP CNF may **not** be used for:

- Costs that do not show direct support to children with complex needs in the classroom.
- General facility, transportation, or operation costs.
- Wages and benefits for staff who do not provide direct care for children with complex needs Applicants may use the 15% allowable indirect costs to cover these costs.
- Replacing regular wages and benefits for existing staff that are not currently funded by CNF.
- Capital improvements and regular business expenses (heating/cooling systems, office space, phones, networks, rent, general office equipment, utilities, playground equipment, etc.) unless the applicant can show how it will directly help children with complex needs. For example, an allowable expense would be adapting a playground for wheelchair accessibility. Applicants may use the 15% allowable indirect costs to cover capital improvements and regular business expenses.
- Perishable items like food and drink, unless Last Resort funding is being used and prior approval has been granted by DCYF.
- Work charged to or paid for by any other contract or funding source.
- Finance charges or late fees incurred on purchases.
- Any religious worship, instruction, or proselytization.
- Reimbursement of purchases made outside of the contract period.
- General transportation which could include purchasing a bus or other vehicle.

ECEAP Performance Standards

DCYF ECEAP is governed by the ECEAP Performance Standards, which lay out the services and delivery requirements necessary to support Washington State's pre-kindergarten program to support children and families who are furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. The program performance standards set forth the requirements ECEAP contractors must meet to support cognitive, social, emotional, and healthy development of children from birth to age 4. ECEAP provides child-centered, individualized preschool education and health coordination services on a foundation of strengths-based family support for the specialized population we serve. The performance standards can be found here. As a condition of acceptance of a CNF award, all recipients are required to follow the ECEAP Performance Standards and their other licensing requirements.

Section 2: Eligibility

Eligibility

ECEAP Complex Needs Funds are awarded through the ECEAP contract process, and so eligibility is open to current ECEAP contractors in good fiscal standing, and also to those who are applying to become new ECEAP contractors. Submitting an application does not guarantee that an eligible applicant will receive funding. Before, during, and after the award year, as well as during the application and closing periods of ECEAP CNF, contractors must follow ECEAP Performance Standards and any applicable licensing requirements when implementing the funds.

Individual sites serving ECEAP slots are not eligible to apply on their own. These sites must work with their primary contractor to access any ECEAP CNF dollars.

Section 3: How to Apply

Applications must be completed and submitted through the ECEAP RFA process. The RFA process will be announced on the ECEAP Expansion webpage and via email.

If you need technical assistance, email dcyf.eceap@dcyf.wa.gov or contact your CQI specialist directly.

Section 4: Selection and Awards

Application Selection

DCYF will review all ECEAP CNF applications received within the application period. Applying does not guarantee an eligible applicant will receive an award. No funding will be awarded for an incomplete application.

First, applications will be reviewed for eligibility. Second, DCYF will use a formula that takes many factors into consideration when determining the amount awarded to each ECEAP contractor. Factors may include, but are not limited to total funding available, number of applications DCYF receives, number of ECEAP slots served, whether a contractor is in good fiscal standing, and other relevant considerations. If necessary, applications may undergo a prioritization process to determine which applications will receive funding. DCYF will share how the funding was calculated as part of the award notification.

CNF award notifications will be made as part of the ECEAP Contract award process.

Receiving Payment

ECEAP contractors will receive access to Complex Needs Funds in their general contract awarded on or around July 1. Complex Needs Funds will be in the contract as a separate line item that can be drawn from on a reimbursement basis. Awardees will submit spending reports and invoices to DCYF and will include CNF expenses for reimbursement. If requesting CNF reimbursement, both the invoice and spending report must be received and approved before a contractor can receive any ECEAP funds. If no ECEAP CNF reimbursement is being requested the A19 will be processed as normal. Late reports or invoices will lead to a delay in payment for all ECEAP funds. If a contractor submits an invoice and it is not approved by DCYF, the contractor must use general ECEAP funds to cover the full amount of any unapproved items on the invoice. If no reimbursement is requested at the time of the A19 submission, a spending report is not required.

Section 5: Post Award

If you are awarded ECEAP Complex Needs Funds, you must be prepared to submit spending reports to DCYF when requesting reimbursement. Complex Needs Funds must be spent between July 1 and June 30, and within the allowed spending categories. Applicants will be notified of award decisions as part of the ECEAP Contract award process, and funding will be available in the ECEAP Contract on or around July 1. ECEAP CNF should be tracked separately from your other ECEAP contract expenditures. Recipients must follow CNF guidance, ECEAP Performance Standards, and ECEAP contract requirements.

Reporting

Once funding is confirmed with awardees, DCYF ECEAP will send a reporting template for recipients to fill out via SmartSheet. It can also be found in the resource box on the ECEAP CNF website.

Data collected may be shared with DCYF staff and legislators to highlight the success of the program. Awardees will complete a spending report that focuses on quantitative data. Below are some example data points that DCYF ECEAP will require recipients to report on:

- Number of children served with the funds
- Types of activities conducted
- Types of supportive equipment purchased
- Number of staff positions supported by funds
- A description of outcomes and successes

Spending Reports

Awardees must submit Spending Reports when requesting reimbursement until they have used all the awarded funds. These reports must be completed when requesting reimbursement using a SmartSheet link provided by DCYF. The Smartsheet link can be found in the resource box on the ECEAP CNF website.

The reports must show how the money was spent within the approved categories. Additionally, the report must explain the expertise of staff and consultants, describe supportive items and equipment, and other items listed in the CNF report. Only include purchases that are from submitted CNF invoices when completing the Spending Report.

Frequently Asked Questions

Pre-Award Questions

Q: Who is eligible to apply for ECEAP Complex Needs Fund?
A: Eligibility is open to current ECEAP contractors who are in good fiscal standing and also to those who are applying to become new ECEAP contractors.

Q: Do I need to reapply each year to receive funding?
A: Yes, you must apply each year if you would like DCYF to consider your application.

Q: Is there an application for the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund?
A: Yes, the application is part of the ECEAP RFA process.

Q: Do the position qualifications need to follow ECEAP Performance Standards when hiring for a position under this award?
A: Yes.

Q: Is there another version of the application DCYF can send me so I can send application questions to our sites to fill out?
A: No, applications are submitted as part of the ECEAP RFA process and are not available separately.

Q: An applicant has zero bus service. Can the applicant use the funds to offer parents reimbursement at the state rate per mile for transporting their children to preschool?
A: No.

Q: Can the applicant use the funds for gift cards for families and children?
A: No, the funds are for children with complex needs in the classroom.

Q: What is the difference between ECEAP CNF vs Child Care CNF?
A: Child Care CNF is a competitive opportunity for licensed child care providers. A licensed site may apply separately for this opportunity. The ECEAP CNF is for ECEAP Contractors, and Contractors are responsible for disbursing funds among subcontractors and sites to serve ECEAP-enrolled children.

Q: Can the funds be used for capital improvements of heating/cooling systems, office space, phones, networks, rent, general office equipment, flooring?
A: No, but the 15% indirect allowable cost can be used to cover capital improvement costs.

Q: Do I need to answer every question in the application?
A: Yes, applicant information and each question on the application is required.

Q: I am an eligible ECEAP contractor and I applied for the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund. Am I entitled to receive an award?
A: The ECEAP Complex Needs Fund is not competitive, but the funding that has been allocated for this CNF may not be enough to fund every application. All applications that are complete and reasonably detailed will be considered.

Q: If I am awarded funding, how will I receive payment?
A: Complex Needs Funds will be in the contract as a separate line item that can be drawn from on a reimbursement basis. Awardees will submit spending reports when requesting reimbursement and invoices to DCYF and will include CNF expenses for reimbursement.

Q: Do these funds need to be spent within a certain timeframe?
A: Yes. The contractor should make every effort to spend the Complex Needs Fund award by June 30. Carryover will not be considered. Any unspent funds will be returned to DCYF.

Q: When will I find out if I am awarded the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund?
A: Funding determinations are based on many factors, including available budget and number of applications received. DCYF will make every effort to notify applicants by July 1.

Q: Can I purchase specific equipment for a student that can follow them through the school system?
A: It depends on the type of equipment proposed. Contact DCYF ECEAP before purchasing the equipment with CNF funds.

Award Questions

Q: What type of funding is the Complex Needs Fund?
A: Complex Needs Funds are state-allocated funds.

Q: What happens if my invoice is not approved?
A: ECEAP contractors will be required to use general ECEAP funds to cover the full amount of any unapproved items on the invoice.

Q: How much and how often is CNF available?
A: The ECEAP Complex Needs Fund is subject to amounts appropriated by the legislature, and is available once per year.

Q: Can funds be carried over?
A: No. Carryover funds are no longer an option for ECEAP CNF recipients.

Q: If a contractor has not done any activities for the reporting period, do they still need to complete a spending report?
A: No, spending reports are only submitted when a contractor is requesting reimbursement on their submitted A19.

Post-Award/Reporting Questions

Q: Who will the SmartSheet reporting link be sent to?
A: The SmartSheet links for the spending reports will be sent to the person who is listed as the contact on the initial ECEAP CNF application. Contractors have the opportunity to update who the spending report and ECEAP CNF communications will be sent to when filling out the SmartSheet form.

Q: Can I request a reporting extension?
A: Yes, please send your request to the ECEAP inbox (dcyf.eceap@dcyf.wa.gov) for consideration. A reporting extension will not result in delayed payments for other ECEAP funds.

Q: When are the spending reports due?
A: All reports will be submitted via SmartSheet. The spending reports are due on the 15th day of the next month when requesting reimbursement on the A19. Late reports may result in late payments for all ECEAP funds. All spending reports must be submitted by July 10, 2027. Spending reports received after July 10, 2027, may not be processed. This would lead to your general ECEAP funds being processed with no CNF reimbursement.

Q: What happens if my organization intended to request reimbursement for Complex Needs Funds, but we missed the July 10th deadline?
A: ECEAP contractors will be required to use general ECEAP funds or other funding to cover the full amount of any unapproved items on the spending report. This includes items that the contractor intended to request reimbursement for and is no longer able to due to the missed July 10 deadline.

Q: What happens if I turn in my spending report by the 15th, but it is not accepted and changes need to be made?
A: CNF dollars are sent out with your general ECEAP contract funds. This means all deliverables must be accepted before that can happen. If your spending report is not accepted and revisions are requested, it may lead to a delay in receiving all ECEAP funds. Please try to have all deliverables accepted by the 15th in order to ensure timely payment.

Q: Does the invoice total for CNF need to match the total amount on my Spending Report?
A: Yes, your invoice total for CNF should match the total of all amounts listed in your Spending Reports. Mismatched totals may result in late payment for all ECEAP Funds.

Q: Do you request CNF reimbursement when services are rendered or when they are invoiced by utilizing an external contractor? For example, Professional Development or an external Mental Health Consultant.
A: Contractors may use either approach. At this time, the ECEAP Complex Needs Fund allows reimbursement to be requested when services are rendered or when the contractor receives the invoice from the external partner. Both options are acceptable.

Attachment 1

Previously Funded Items – Professional Development

The list below are examples of items previously funded with CNF in the category Professional Development. The list is not a complete list of allowable expenses but to be used as an example. Invoices and spending reports need to clearly show that the items requested directly support children with complex needs.

- ACEs
- Building Resiliency: Returning to School in Uncertain Times
- Conscious Discipline Training
- Developing motor skills training
- Dual Language Training
- Environmental design
- Haring Center Internships/Training
- Home Visiting Essentials training
- Individualization on culturally sensitive practices
- Mobility monitoring
- PAX behavior training
- Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)
- Preschool specific GLAD training
- Pyramid Model
- Race and Equity Training
- Racial equity training
- Ready Rosie training
- Reflective Supervision
- Reflective supervision and consultation principles from the Washington Association for Infant Mental Health (WA-AIMH)
- Second Step Curriculum Training
- Specialized training on developmental disabilities and complex traumas
- Support books like Managing Emotional Mayhem for teachers to support their classroom environment
- The Development, Advocacy, Training (DAT)
- Trainer who speaks on Stress, Vicarious Trauma & Compassion Fatigue
- Training in wellness, stress management, trauma-informed care, and attachment
- Training with DCYF leadership

Attachment 2

Previously Funded Items – Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment

The list below are examples of items previously funded with CNF in the category Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment. The list is not a complete list of allowable expenses but to be used as an example. Invoices and spending reports need to clearly show that the items requested directly support children with complex needs.

- ADA accessibility improvements
- Adapting a playground for accessibility for children with complex needs.
- Baby Doll Circle Time by Conscious Discipline
- Books/workbooks
- Breathing charts/board
- Calm down charts
- Calming ball
- Calming equipment
- Communications and audio-visual equipment
- Cube chair
- Cuddle puppy
- Culturally relevant images
- Displays
- Door alarms
- Educational tool kit
- Educational video clips
- Feeling charts
- Feeling buddies to identify emotions
- Fidget toys
- Games, puzzles and books to explore feelings, emotions and self-regulation
- Games that help with cooperative play with peers
- Gel-bead friends with faces
- I love you rituals
- Lap pad
- Learning boards
- Learning packets
- Letters & numbers
- Manipulative toys
- Materials that supported the development of fine motor skills
- Masks
- Materials representative of children's heritage and culture
- Mealtime chair w/tray
- Noise Canceling headphones
- Picture communication
- Privacy nooks for quiet time
- Rifton chairs
- Safety equipment
- Social emotional tool kit
- Sensory tools
- Social/emotional tools
- Sound barriers
- Standing support
- Tiny Talker device
- Translation and interpretation materials
- Visual supports
- Weighted blanket
- Weighted shoulder wrap
- Weighted vests
- Wiggle Cushion
- Yoga mat

Attachment 3

Previously Funded Items – Adaptive Curriculum

The list below are examples of items previously funded with CNF in the category Adaptive Curriculum. The list is not a complete list of allowable expenses but to be used as an example. Invoices and spending reports need to clearly show that the items requested directly support children with complex needs.

- Art
- Therapy
- Child Find Placement
- Class Dojo
- Conscious Discipline Curriculum
- Creative Curriculum
- Creative Expression
- Culturally Relevant Curriculum
- Outdoor Social Experiences
- Play Therapy
- Second Step and Second Step Child Protection Unit
- Social Emotional Curriculum
- Zoophonics Curriculum