

## ***Pets and Animals in Early Learning Programs***

### **Slide #1 Welcome**

Welcome to this course titled, ***“Pets and Animals in Early Learning Programs”***.

This course is developed as part of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) alignment process, to prepare providers and licensors in their understanding of the “why”, the “what” and the “how” of complying with the updated Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs (referred to in each course as the Foundational Quality Standards).

### **Slide #2 Helpful Hints**

WA DCYF is pleased to present this e-Learning course! To help provide a positive learning experience for you, please take a moment to review the following “Helpful Hints” summary, detailing what you can expect from this course. A complete listing of Helpful Hints has been added to the Resources section of your learner’s screen for reference.

- If you would like to access and review the full course text, please visit the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can view, print, or download a full version of the course text that is narrated within each module. The full text will be included in each course and listed as the first resource in the Resources section of your course frame.
- The time to complete the course will depend on the course topic and the pace at which you advance through the slides.
- To help you get the most out of the course, settings are in place to prevent users from skipping ahead through the slides. You can advance through the course when the narration for each slide concludes by selecting the “Next” button, or, go back to review material already presented by selecting the “Previous” button.
- Web links and additional resources will be utilized in some of the courses to enhance your learning experience. We hope you will take time to explore them to further develop your knowledge about the topics being presented.

### **Slide #3 Introduction**

This course is designed to introduce you to the updated Washington Administrative Code or WAC, as well as outline strategies and examples of WAC compliance. Updated WACs will be detailed in each course as a reference and a full listing of the WAC is included in the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can print or download this resource at any time, either as a reference while you complete this course, or as a resource after the course is completed.

### **Slide #4 Learning Outcomes**

This course will help early learning professionals understand how to meet, assess for, and demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Foundational Quality Standards.

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

- Identify which animals or pets are allowable in an early learning program
- Describe appropriate practices in caring for animals or pets in an early learning program
- Understand the importance of cleaning up after animals to prevent the spread of illness

### **Slide #5 Guiding Principles**

As we cover the material in this course, please keep in mind the following Guiding Principles. We will revisit these at the end of the course to “check in” with you and give you an opportunity to assess your understanding and application of the course content.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

- While animals can provide valuable learning experiences and benefits for young children, they may also introduce risk of harm to children in the early learning program.
- Early learning providers must intentionally plan for the presence of pets or animals in an early learning program.
- By properly caring for and cleaning up after animals, early learning providers will limit the potential spread of illness or contamination.

### **Slide #6 Terms and Definitions**

Take a moment to review and familiarize yourself with the following terms and definitions. For your reference, a listing of these terms has been added to the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can access the list at any time by visiting the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can download the file to keep as a future reference or print as a desk guide.

**Active supervision or actively supervise** means a heightened standard of care beyond supervision. This standard requires an early learning program to see and hear the children they are responsible for during higher risk activities. The provider must be able to prevent or instantly respond to unsafe or harmful events.

**Clean or cleaning** means to remove dirt and debris from a surface by scrubbing and washing with a detergent solution and rinsing with water. This process must be accomplished before sanitizing or disinfecting a surface.

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**Disinfect** means to eliminate virtually all germs from an inanimate surface by the process of cleaning and rinsing, followed by:

(a) A chlorine bleach and water solution following the manufacturer's instructions;  
or

(b) Other disinfectant products registered with the EPA, if used strictly according to the manufacturer's label instructions including, but not limited to, quantity, time the product must be left in place, adequate time to allow the product to dry or rinsing if applicable, and appropriateness for use on the surface to be disinfected. Any disinfectant used on food contact surfaces or toys must be labeled "safe for food contact surfaces."

**Early learning professionals** are all early learning providers, child care licensing staff, and other professionals in the early learning field.

**Inaccessible to children** means a method to prevent a child from reaching, entering, using, or getting to items, areas, or materials of an early learning program.

**Infant** is a child birth through eleven months of age.

**Licensed space** means the indoor and outdoor space on the premises approved by the department for the purpose of providing licensed child care.

**Pet** means a domestic or tamed animal or bird kept for companionship or pleasure.

**Premises** means the licensed and unlicensed space at the licensed address including, but not limited to, buildings, lands, and residences.

**RCW** means Revised Code of Washington.

**Toddler** means a child twelve months through twenty-nine months of age.

**Unlicensed space** means the indoor and outdoor areas of the premises not approved by the department as licensed space that the early learning provider must make inaccessible to the children during child care hours.

**WAC** means Washington Administrative Code.

### **Slide #7 Course Introduction**

Today in the U.S., nearly 68 percent of households have a pet<sup>1</sup>. Whether a cat, dog, fish, or other pet, studies show the positive effects animals can have on people. For instance:

- The bond between people and pets can lower stress and blood pressure.
- Animals can increase the feelings of social support and improve mood<sup>2</sup>.
- Interacting with animals can increase fitness levels<sup>3</sup>.

An early learning program may choose to include animals in their program for a variety of reasons. They may find interacting with animals can help children learn gentleness, respect, and love. An early learning program may wish to facilitate children practicing responsibility as they participate in caring for the pet. They may use animals to help provide an opportunity for children to learn about nature, ecosystems, and lifecycles. Finally, early learning programs may choose to include animal interactions as a source of fun!

### **Slide #8 Course Introduction**

For many children, interacting with animals is an enjoyable and beneficial experience. However, any time a child is interacting with an animal, there are inherent risks. WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals is included in the Foundational Quality Standards to outline requirements aimed at protecting the health and safety of children in care as they interact with animals.

The section examined in this module is located in the “Environment” section of the Foundational Quality Standards, in the subsection “Health Practice”.

### **Slide #9 WAC 110-300-0225**

Every early learning program is unique, and each program may choose to include or limit the involvement of pets or animals in the early learning program. When including animals or pets in programs or activities, it is the responsibility of the early learning provider to intentionally plan for and communicate these expectations with the families they serve.

<sup>1</sup> National Institutes of Health. (February 2018). *The power of pets: health benefits of human-animal interactions*. Retrieved from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/02/power-pets>

<sup>2</sup> National Institutes of Health. (February 2018). *The power of pets: health benefits of human-animal interactions*. Retrieved from <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/02/power-pets>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (April 2019). *Healthy pets, healthy people*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/index.html>

***Pets and Animals in Early Learning Programs***

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

**(1) An early learning provider may have pets or other animals on the early learning program premises.**

**(2) If an early learning provider keeps pets or animals on the early learning program premises:**

- (a) The provider must have and follow a pet and animal policy; and**
- (b) Provide written notice to children's parents and guardians.**

Where early learning programs include animals or pets in their program, the provision of written policy provides the following benefits:

- **Providing clarity and ease of communication:** When policies are written down, there are clear expectations for the actions of early learning professionals. If early learning professionals have questions about pets or animals in the early learning program, there is a documented resource for them to review.
- **Creating accessibility of information and clear expectations for parents:** Just as clear expectations are set for early learning professionals, parents will know if, when, or how their child is interacting with an animal or pet within the early learning program. This is especially important for families where children have animal allergies or anxiety related to previous encounters with animals.
- **Onboarding and training tool:** When new early learning program staff are hired, or during ongoing training opportunities, written policy provides a structure with which to guide new staff.
- **Providing documentation that the early learning program has prepared for pets or animals:** If needed, the early learning program will have recorded documentation that they have a policy for how and which pets or animals are included in early learning program or activities.
- **Addressing the requirement for active supervision:** As noted in WAC 110-300-0345 (5) (c) (i), children must be actively supervised when interacting with pets or animals. Having a policy that explains how this heightened level of supervision will occur will illustrate the program's intent on keeping the children safe and healthy.

For example, a family whose child attends the early learning program is raising and training a guide dog. To teach children about the value of assistance animals and expose the dog to new environments, the family asks if they may visit the program with their guide dog in training. The early learning provider reviews their pet policy, which states dogs are allowed on the premises as long as parents are given at least 24 hours' notice prior to the animal being on site. Each parent received a copy of the animal policy in their parent handbook. The early learning provider agrees to allow the dog to visit the program and posts a written notice on the parent announcement board 24 hours prior to the dog's visit.

**Slide #10 WAC 110-300-0225**

Young children are considered a vulnerable population when it comes to transmission of disease or illness. This is because a young child's immune system is still developing. Young children are more likely to be exposed to germs through their direct contact with contaminated surfaces or objects, like crawling or playing on a floor or mouthing toys.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists more than 100 illnesses that can be contracted from contact with animals, including Salmonella, Cat Scratch Disease, Ringworm, or Giardia.

Young children are also vulnerable when interacting with animals because:

- **Children may be physically smaller than the animal:** For some animals, a small child signals an object to play with or dominate. Young children may be unable to protect themselves physically against unwanted contact from a larger or stronger animal.
- **Children are developing motor skills:** Because young children are still developing physical control over their bodies, they may appear to “hit” an animal when they are attempting to gently touch an animal. This may cause an animal distress or to react unpredictably.
- **Children are developing impulse control:** Young children can often act unpredictably, which may cause an animal distress. This may include a child yelling, jumping, or lunging toward an animal. Young children may also impulsively put contaminated objects in their mouth, even after being told not to.
- **Children may lack experience with animals:** Some children may not have been taught how to approach or interact with an animal. Because of this, they may unknowingly handle the animal in a way that distresses or hurts the animal. This may result in an animal feeling threatened and reacting aggressively.

**Slide #11 WAC 110-300-0225**

Considering the unique vulnerabilities of young children, early learning providers must ensure pets or other animals are physically and socially suitable for the early learning environment.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (3) Pets or other animals that have contact with children must:**
- (a) Have all required vaccinations, pursuant to local and county regulations;**
  - (b) Show no signs of illness, disease, worms, or parasites. If these symptoms appear, the pet or animal must be removed from the licensed space until appropriately treated for the condition; and**
  - (c) Be nonaggressive. If the pet or animal exhibits aggressive behavior, the pet or animal must be removed from the licensed space.**

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This subsection aligns with Standard 3.4.2.1 in *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs* (or *Caring for Our Children*), which notes “any animal present at the facility...should be trained or adapted to be with young children, in good health, show no evidence of carrying any disease, fleas or ticks, be fully immunized, and be maintained on an intestinal parasite control program.”

Consider this example, an early learning program located in a family home has a pet cat. One day, the early learning provider notices the cat hissing at one of the children. To protect the children in care and to provide a less stressful environment for the cat, the early learning provider decides to keep the cat in an upstairs bedroom, which is unlicensed space. The early learning provider provides the cat with food, water, and access to their litter box in the bedroom. After program hours, the early learning provider allows the cat access to the entire house again.

**Slide #12 Test Your Learning!**

Before we continue, let’s test your learning. Review the question and select the best response.

Subsection (3) lists three requirements for pets or animals who have contact with children in an early learning program. Which of the following is NOT one of these requirements?

- a. Show no signs of illness, disease, worms, or parasites
- b. Be approved by the department prior to having contact with children in an early learning program
- c. Have all required vaccinations, pursuant to local and county regulations
- d. Be nonaggressive

**Slide #13 WAC 110-300-0225**

An early learning program may choose from a variety of animals or pets to include in the early learning program or activities. Subsection (4) begins with reptiles and amphibians, like frogs, turtles, snakes, or lizards.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

**(4) An early learning provider must:**

**(a) Make reptiles and amphibians that are not part of the early learning program or activities inaccessible to enrolled children due to the risk of salmonella or other diseases;**

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Reptiles and amphibians carry Salmonella. While this is a normal germ present in the digestive tract of healthy reptiles and amphibians, it is a germ that can make humans very ill. Keeping reptiles and amphibians inaccessible, that is on a shelf, or in a tank or terrarium that limits a child's direct contact, will limit the spread of Salmonella.

Where reptiles or amphibians are an active part of the early learning activity, age appropriate instructions on how to engage with the animal will be necessary for young children to protect against illness. These instructions should include the importance of handwashing after interacting with an animal.

For more information on safe handling of reptiles and amphibians, including proper handwashing procedure, review the Extend Your Learning PDF located in the Resources section of your learner's screen.

**Slide #14 WAC 110-300-0225**

More than 5 million households in the U.S. have an indoor pet bird, like a parrot or cockatiel<sup>4</sup>. Raising outdoor birds, like chickens, ducks, or turkeys, is no longer limited to rural environments as many cities or counties are passing laws to allow urban animal husbandry. Given the popularity of raising birds, an early learning program may choose to incorporate birds in their environment.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (b) Require that chickens, ducks, turkeys, doves, pigeons, or other birds are caged, cooped, or penned outside early learning program space when children are in care, at a distance that prevents children from having direct access to the enclosures or waste;**
- (c) Cage indoor birds;**

Consider this example, an early learning provider is raising chickens' outdoors. They built an enclosure and chicken coop for the chickens to roam and nest. How can the early learning provider design the enclosure to prevent children from having direct access while still allowing children to see the animals?

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<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (February 2019). *Birds kept as pets*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/pets/birds.html>



To comply with this subsection and still allow the children to observe the chickens while they roam in their enclosure, the early learning provider may choose to build a small fence around the enclosure. This enables children to stand next to the enclosure, but not be able to reach down to touch the animals. Or, they may choose to surround the enclosure with plants, so the children can see into the enclosure while the plants keep them out of arms reach of the enclosure.

For more information on indoor and outdoor birds, review the Extend Your Learning PDF located in the Resources section of your learner's screen.

**Slide #15 WAC 110-300-0225**

Many pets or animals live in cages or other containers, including birds, guinea pigs, hamsters, rodents, or rabbits.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

**(d) Prevent debris from spilling out of a container or cage used for pets and animals, if applicable;**

This regulation is intended to protect children against cross contamination from animal food or waste, which is supported in Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.4.2.3. Animal food, similar to food prepared for humans to eat, can become contaminated with illness causing bacteria. Animal waste also naturally contain germs and bacteria. Where debris is spilling out of a cage, contamination caused by animal food or waste is possible.

For instance, an early learning program has a pet guinea pig in a cage. The cage is located on a table where children are able to see the guinea pig when it is not actively part of an activity. The cage is designed with a solid tray bottom to prevent debris from spilling onto the table or becoming accessible to the children.

**Slide #16 WAC 110-300-0225**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note, more than 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in people are spread from animals, including E.coli, certain strains of Influenza, and Tuberculosis<sup>5</sup>. Germs causing these illnesses may be spread by direct contact with an animal or indirectly through handling contaminated objects or surfaces. The following subsections are intended to limit the potential for cross contamination.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (e) Not allow pets and animals in the kitchen during food preparation and ensure pets and animals do not come into contact with food, food preparation, or serving areas while food is served;**
- (f) Not use a sink that is used for cleaning food or utensils to clean pet supplies;**

**Slide #17 WAC 110-300-0225**

Subsection (4) concludes:

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (g) Not allow animals in rooms or areas typically used by infants or toddlers (center early learning programs only); and**
- (h) Store pet and animal medication separate from human medication.**

As noted previously in this module, young children, especially infants and toddlers, are vulnerable to animal exposure. This requirement focuses on center early learning programs as they often serve larger group sizes, which may impact the provider's ability to intervene or protect a child from cross contamination or animal aggression.

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (May 2017). *Diseases that can spread between animals and people*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/index.html>

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For instance, in a family home early learning program with a dog, the early learning provider may choose to let the dog outside when an infant is playing on the floor.

Whether in a center early learning program or a family home early learning program, active supervision when children are engaged with pets and animals is essential to their safety. Please review the supervision requirements in WAC 110-300-0345 (5) (c) (i) as well as the definition for active supervision or actively supervise.

Finally, subsection (h) is intended to protect against medication cross contamination or accidental poisoning. Pet and animal medications must be stored separate from human medication.

**Slide #18 Test Your Learning!**

Before we continue, let's test your learning. Review the question and select the best response.

True or false?

Pets are never allowed in food preparation areas.

- True
- False

**Slide #19 WAC 110-300-0225**

Campylobacter infection is highly contagious and is considered the leading cause of bacterial gastroenteritis today. These bacteria are responsible for more than 2 million cases of bacterial gastroenteritis in the U.S. each year. While exposure may come through uncooked meats or contaminated water, it is also spread through exposure to animal waste. Subsection (5) focuses on the proper removal and disposal of animal waste to protect against the spread of illness.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

**(5) An early learning provider must require:**

- (a) Animals and pets to go to the bathroom outdoors if the animals do not have a designated indoor litter area. The designated outdoor area must be inaccessible to children in care;**
- (b) Pet containers and cages to be cleaned and disinfected at least weekly, or more often if needed;**
- (c) Litter boxes to be kept inaccessible to children and cleaned daily;**

This regulation follows guidance from Caring for Our Children, Standard 3.4.2.3.

For instance, an early learning program has a therapy dog visit every other day. The early learning program has designated the side yard for the dog to relieve themselves. The side yard is not accessible by children, as it is not designated as part of the outdoor play space.

**Slide #20 WAC 110-300-0225**

Proper disposal of animal waste will minimize the risk of infection caused by contamination.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (d) Animal waste and litter to be disposed of as soon as possible and the area disinfected;**
- (e) Animal waste to be inaccessible to children;**
- (f) Animal waste to be disposed of in a manner that prevents children from coming into contact with the waste material;**

As Standard 3.4.2.3 in Caring for Our Children states “children...should not handle or clean up any form of animal waste”. By requiring animal waste remain inaccessible to children, the risk of bacteria or germs spreading to a child are reduced.

Consider this example: an early learning provider cleans out their cat’s litter box, which is in a room inaccessible to children in care. What could happen though, if waste from the cat’s litter box is disposed of in a garbage container located in a bathroom accessible to children? In this scenario, it is possible a child may unintentionally come into contact with the waste when putting other objects into the garbage can. To limit the risk of contact, the early learning provider disposes of the litter waste in a garbage can in inaccessible outdoor space.

**Slide #21 WAC 110-300-0225**

When disposing of animal waste, it may be necessary to clean and disinfect additional surfaces or areas to limit contamination caused by germs or bacteria.

**WAC 110-300-0225 Pets and animals.**

- (g) Animal waste, including fish tank water, must be disposed of in unlicensed space or toilets or custodial sinks. Toilets and custodial sink areas must be washed, rinsed, and disinfected after disposal; and**
- (h) Indoor and outdoor play space to be cleaned and disinfected where animal or bird waste or vomit is present. This must be done as soon as possible or prior to access by children.**

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Because young children frequently put their hands in their mouth or touch their faces during play, it is important to clean and disinfect surfaces to minimize the risk of coming in contact with germs found in animal waste. This is especially true in indoor play spaces where young children, especially infants and toddlers, spend time sitting, crawling, or playing directly on the floor.

In outdoor spaces, germs may be transferred from the contaminated ground to play objects like toys, cars, or balls which are handled by children, or transferred by shoes to larger play equipment. Disinfecting areas where animal waste or vomit is present will limit the spread of germs. This is important not only for children, but also for animals who can also become infected or re-infected.

For instance, an early learning provider is surveying the outdoor play area in the morning and notices the cat has vomited in the yard. The early learning provider removes the vomit, cleans the area by flushing the area with water, then they spray a disinfectant designed to be used outdoors. Following the disinfectant's instructions, the early learning provider waits an hour before letting children in the outdoor play area.

There may also be times when an animal gets sick while children are present. An early learning provider must remove the children from the area, then clean and disinfect the area prior to the children accessing that part of the environment again.

For additional information related to cleaning and disinfecting indoor areas, including sinks or toilets, review module "Keeping it Clean, Sanitary, and Safe for Kids!"

**Slide #22 Test Your Learning!**

Before we continue, let's test your learning. Review the question and select the best response.

An early learning provider would like to add a terrarium with frogs and turtles to their early learning program. Are reptiles and amphibians allowable animals in an early learning program?

- Yes
- No

**Slide #23 Test Your Learning!**

Review the question and select the best response.

An early learning program has an indoor cat. How frequently must the early learning provider clean the cat's litter box?

- a. Twice daily
- b. Daily
- c. At least twice weekly
- d. This is not defined in WAC

**Slide #24 Test Your Learning!**

Review the question and select the best response.

An early learning program has a hamster in a cage as a class pet. Which of the following are required practices for animals in cages according to WAC 110-300-0225? Select the best response.

- a. Prevent debris from spilling out of a container or cage used for pets and animals, if applicable
- b. Pet containers and cages need to be cleaned and disinfected at least weekly, or more often if needed
- c. Animal waste to be disposed of in a manner that prevents children from coming into contact with the waste material
- d. All of the above

### **Slide #25 Guiding Principles**

This concludes the content portion of this course! Thank you for your participation!

Before this course ends, please take a moment to reflect and set personal goals related to the following Guiding Principles and ways that each of the principles relate to early learning professionals.

#### **Guiding Principles:**

- While animals can provide valuable learning experiences and benefits for young children, they may also introduce risk of harm to children in the early learning program.
- Early learning providers must intentionally plan for the presence of pets or animals in an early learning program.
- By properly caring for and cleaning up after animals, early learning providers will limit the potential spread of illness or contamination.

What take-a-ways do you have? How will you change your practices as a result of participation in this learning module?

### **Slide #26 Course Evaluation**

Please take a moment to answer the following end-of-course evaluation questions by selecting the appropriate choice.

This course improved my understanding of the course content.

- True
- False

### **Slide #27 Course Evaluation**

The information presented in this course was clearly connected to the session and Learning Outcomes.

- True
- False

### **Slide #28 Course Evaluation**

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There are opportunities for application of this course content in my role as an early learning professional.

- True
- False

**Slide #29 Course Evaluation**

I would recommend this course to others who work in the field.

- True
- False

**Slide #30 Course Conclusion**

This concludes this course. If you have questions following this session, please contact your supervisor or licensor.

We hope this course has been helpful in providing information about the WAC and how programs can meet the new standards with compliance.

Our goal is that all early learning professionals viewing this course have left with an increased understanding and knowledge of the updated WAC, and that you will be able to either assess programs for compliance or be able to maintain and demonstrate compliance.

Be sure to visit the Learning Management System to review and select additional learning modules that are part of this series.