



# Washington State Department of Early Learning

## Early Start Act Q&A



*Our Children Deserve More than the Minimum*

### What is the Early Start Act?

The Early Start Act was approved by the legislature and recently signed into law by Governor Inslee. This historic legislation invests into expanding high quality early learning for Washington's children and families, particularly in our most diverse and vulnerable communities. For child care providers, the Early Start Act focuses on supporting high quality early learning services through Early Achievers and ensures that the child care providers, especially those who serve low income families, receive all needed help and resources to sustain high quality programming.

### What is Early Achievers?

[Early Achievers](#) is the Washington State Quality Framework that helps child care providers improve the quality of their services, and gives parents seeking child care information about the quality of nearby programs.

### How does the Early Start Act Ensure High Quality Care for Children on State Assistance?

Beginning July 1, 2016, The Early Start Act requires the Department of Early Learning in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services to provide 12 months of assistance to all families that are eligible for Working Connections Child Care (state subsidy).

All childcare providers, serving non-school age children receiving state subsidy, are required to join Early Achievers by August 1, 2016. Doing so will enable the providers to immediately engage in the quality improvement activities and receive the state resources and support. Once the providers have joined Early Achievers, they are required to reach at least a level 3 rating by 2020 in order to continue serving young children on subsidy.

Providers who do not care for children age 5 or below on subsidy are not required to join Early Achievers, but are encouraged to do so.

If you are a parent who utilizes child care and does not receive state assistance, or your child is above the age of 5, your situation is not impacted.

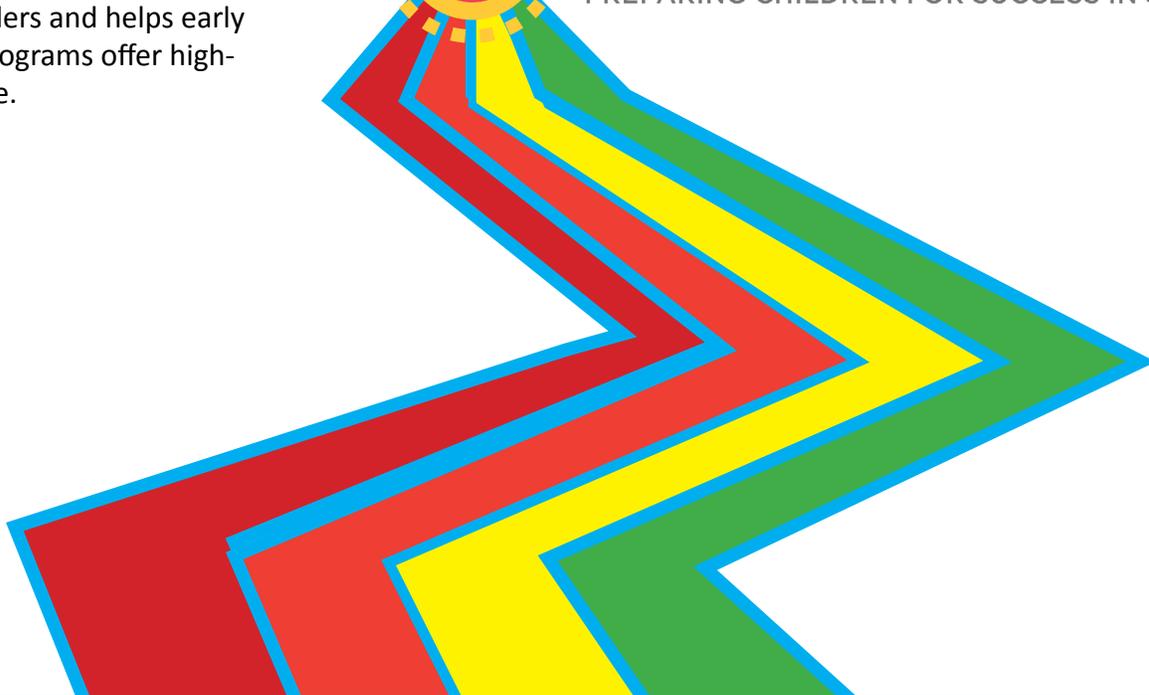
### How do I find information about child care providers, Early Achievers, and program ratings?

Child Care Aware (CCA) of Washington is the Department of Early Learning partner who works with child care providers helping them to improve the quality of their care and achieve a Quality Level of Excellence in Early Achievers. You can reach CCA by calling 1-800-446-1114 or going to [wa.childcareaware.org](http://wa.childcareaware.org). The CCA Family Center database can provide information on the quality of individual child care programs, including Early Achievers rating, and answer all of your child care questions.

Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), is voluntary for licensed child care providers and helps early learning programs offer high-quality care.



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PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL



### ECEAP



The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP, pronounced "e-cap") helps children and families get ready for kindergarten. ECEAP is funded by Washington state and is free to enrolled families. It serves three- and four-year-olds from low income families, or with developmental or environmental risk factors that could interfere with school success.

### New Providers Existing Providers



The Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 6,000 child care centers and family home child care providers in Washington. Licensed child care providers follow minimum licensing requirements set by the state to ensure children in licensed care are in safe, healthy, and nurturing places.

### Volunteers



Child care providers who are not required to participate in Early Achievers may volunteer and focus on enhancing a quality of their services.



*"First, Early Start Act maintains Early Achievers, our state's quality rating and improvement system, and makes it the quality standard for all our state's early learning programs . . . I have heard concerns from providers and parents about the mandatory requirements of the bill, which have the potential to reduce the number of licensed child care providers in the state. I share those worries — and we will do what we can to make sure it doesn't happen. That is why I am directing my staff to work to preserve our wonderful child care and early learning facilities and to take the steps necessary to ensure that we are growing the licensed care in our state, not shrinking it."*

Governor J. Inslee  
Early Start Act Signing - July, 6 2015