

The Early Start Act

The Early Start Act (ESA) was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Inslee on June 30, 2015. This historic legislation invests in expanding high quality early learning for Washington’s children and families, particularly in our most diverse and vulnerable communities. The Early Start Act dedicates resources to support high quality early learning services through Early Achievers and ensures that the child care providers, especially those who serve low income families, receive help to sustain high quality programming. The Early Start Act focuses on equity and quality of the state-wide early learning system with emphasis on the belief that quality early care and education builds the foundation for a child’s success in school and in life. Specifically:

- A high quality framework is necessary for the early care and education system in Washington;
- Low quality child care has damaging effects for children;
- the proper dosage, duration of programming, and stability of care are critical to enhancing program quality and improving child outcomes; and
- High quality programs consistently yield more positive outcomes for children, with the strongest positive impacts on the most vulnerable children.

Primary objectives of the Early Start Act are to prioritize the integration of child care and preschool in an effort to promote full day programming, reward quality and create incentives for providers to participate in a quality rating and improvement system that will also provide valuable information to parents regarding the quality of care available in their communities.

Implementation

Section 2. Early Achievers

Deliverable	Status
Licensed or certified child care centers and homes serving nonschool age children and receiving state subsidy payments must participate in EA by the required deadlines	DEL is partnering with CCA and SEIU to engage providers to the EA enrollment activities prior to July 2016.
Approved ECEAP providers receiving state-funded support must participate in EA by the required deadlines	Targeted support is organized for ECEAP contractors to meet the March 2016 deadline.
DEL and OSPI shall jointly design a plan to incorporate school age child care providers into Early Achievers	Planning in progress
Determine the Early Achievers rating cycle	Due date - March 2016

Create a single source of information for parents and caregivers to access details on a provider's Early Achievers rating level, licensing history, and other indicators of quality and safety that will help parents and caregivers make informed choices	In November 2015, all Early Achievers participation and rating information was posted on DEL's Child Care Check Website . Plus, Early Achievers participants can now add a program description—this helps families learn more about the programs.
Create a culturally relevant PD pathway for Early Achievers participants	Planning in progress
In collaboration with tribal governments, community and statewide partners, and the Early Achievers review subcommittee develop a protocol for granting EA participants an extension in meeting rating level requirement timelines outlined for the WCCC and the ECEAP	The Early Achievers Extension protocol has been developed as a part of the Annual Report 2015.
Accept national accreditation that meets the requirements of the Early Achievers rating system	Due date – July 2016
Explore the use of alternative quality assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of the federally recognized tribes in the state of Washington	Planning in progress

Section 3. Single Set of Licensing Standards

Deliverable	Status
Implement a single set of licensing and quality standards for child care, ECEAP and Early Achievers by November, 2016.	November-December 2015 Community Input Process is completed. DEL has started the standards alignment writing process, and will engage the state-wide stakeholders into the feedback process in April, 2016.

Section 5. Early Achievers - Reduction of Barriers, Low Income Providers and Programs

Deliverable	Status
In collaboration with tribal governments and community and statewide partners, implement a protocol to maximize and encourage participation in Early Achievers for culturally diverse and low-income center and family home child care providers	DEL, the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee and the Indian Policy Early Learning Committee are drafting an engagement protocol to eliminate barriers to participating in Early Achievers. This protocol will offer guidance to DEL as they set policy. This protocol will help DEL develop any alternative processes in order to make sure 100% of WCCC providers have access to Early Achievers registration before August 1, 2016.

	DEL has a newly formed Parent Advisory Group (PAG) that has parent representation from across the state. The next PAG meeting is an Early Achievers information session. DEL hopes to have their help in shaping the Early Achievers engagement protocol.
Prioritize the resources to assist providers rating at a level 2 in Early Achievers to help them reach a level 3 rating - during the first thirty months of implementation of Early Achievers	Planning in progress
<p>The protocol should address barriers to Early Achievers participation and include at a minimum the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The creation of a substitute pool 2. Development of needs-based grants for providers at level 2 3. The development of materials and assessments in a timely manner, and to the extent feasible, in the provider and family home languages 4. The development of flexibility in technical assistance and coaching structures to provide differentiated types and amounts of support to providers based on individual need and cultural context 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Negotiated with SEIU for FH providers 2. Negotiated with SEIU for FH providers 3. Planning in progress 4. Planning in progress

Sections 6-7. Working Connections Child Care

Deliverable	Status
Authorization for twelve months WCCC subsidy	Developing policies, rules and procedures in collaboration with DSHS.
Requirements and timelines for child care providers currently serving non-school age children and receiving state subsidy regarding Early Achievers participation to be eligible for a state subsidy - effective July, 2016	<p>Three goals of the 2016 DEL engagement strategies are to motivate providers to enroll in Early Achievers, to have enough Early Achievers field staff available to meet their needs, and to have a plan in place for exceptional circumstances that may prevent enrollment by August 1, 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEL, CCA of WA, DSHS and SEIU 925 are developing targeted outreach strategies to increase enrollment by contacting 100% of WCCC providers who are not yet enrolled in Early Achievers. • In February 2016, the Child Care Aware of WA Family Center will change their

	<p>messaging to families. They will let them know about the mandate and encourage families to ask the providers they screen if they are participating in Early Achievers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2016: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WCCC providers will begin receiving targeted messages will encouraging them to to enroll in Early Achievers before August 1, 2016. These messages will come from DEL, DSHS, CCA of WA and SEIU. Providers will receive emails, letters, phone calls from their licensors and targeted messages on their WCCC warrants. ○ WCCC families will receive a letter from DEL about the mandate and how to find care with an Early Achievers participant. <p>DEL is also working to provide enough orientations to meet demand exploring new and different ways to deliver the Early Achievers Orientation to make sure 100% of mandated providers have access to Early Achievers registration on or before August 1, 2016. If providers are unable to attend an orientation before August 1, 2016, because of a lack of CCA capacity, then they will be allowed to remain on subsidy for an additional 60 days in order to complete the orientation and registration.</p>
<p>Requirements and timelines for child care providers new to serving non-school age children and receiving state subsidy regarding Early Achievers participation to be eligible for a state subsidy – effective July, 2016</p>	<p>Information is posted on the DEL website to support new providers.</p>

Sections 8-12. ECEAP

Deliverable	Status
Develop a pathway for licensed or certified child care centers and homes to administer ECEAP	ECEAP is implementing a pilot with home-based providers administering ECEAP services. Also ECEAP is implementing an ECEAP Readiness pilot. Both pilots will help to develop a pathway for different type of providers to administer ECEAP.
Adopt rules requiring ECEAP employees who have access to children to submit to a fingerprint background check	DEL developed a background check unit. ECEAP providers are informed – new requirement is added to the contractual language.
Existing ECEAP providers must comply with the following requirements and timelines to be eligible to continue providing ECEAP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enroll in Early Achievers - October, 2015 ▪ Rate at a level 4 or 5 in Early Achievers - March, 2016 	Targeted support is organized for ECEAP contractors.
New ECEAP providers must complete the Early Achievers requirements and timelines to be eligible to continue providing ECEAP - effective October, 2015	Targeted support is organized for ECEAP contractors.
Collect data to determine the demand for full-day programming for ECEAP.	Data Collection methodology is in development

Sections 13. Data Collection and Evaluation

Deliverable	Status
Collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending ECEAP.	ELMS data system.
Upon completion of an electronic time and attendance record system, collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending a WCCC program.	Planning in progress.
Review available research and best practices literature on cultural competency in early learning settings. Review the K-12 components for cultural competency developed by the professional educator standards board and identify components appropriate for early learning professional development.	Planning in progress.
Provide recommendations to the appropriate committees of the legislature and ELAC on research-based cultural competency standards for early learning professional training.	Planning in progress, due July, 2016.
Conduct a longitudinal analysis examining	Planning in progress, due December, 2019

relationships between Early Achievers quality ratings levels and outcomes for children participating in subsidized early care and education programs	
<p>Provide recommendations on child attendance policies pertaining to child care and ECEAP, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allowable periods of child absences ▪ Required contact with parents or caregivers to discuss child absences and encourage regular program attendance ▪ A de-enrollment procedure when allowable child absences are exceeded ▪ 	In development

Sections 14. Contracted Childcare Slots and Vouchers

Deliverable	Status
Employ a combination of vouchers and contracted slots for the subsidized child care programs.	<p>Continue to provide full day and extended full day ECEAP services based on the contracted slots model.</p> <p>Started a collaborative state-wide implementation of the EHS Child Care partnership using the “guaranteed voucher” approach.</p>

Sections 15. Integration with Local Governments’ Efforts

Deliverable	Status
Local governments are encouraged to collaborate with DEL when establishing early learning programs for residents.	MOU with the City of Seattle Preschool Pilot
<p>Local governments may contribute funds to the department for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to build capacity and quality in local early care and education programming ▪ to reduce copayments charged to parents or caregivers 	Planning in progress

Section 16. Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Deliverable	Status
<p><u>Early Achievers Review Subcommittee (EARS)</u> ELAC shall convene an Early Achievers Review Subcommittee to provide feedback and guidance on strategies to improve the quality of instruction and environment for early learning and provide input and recommendations on the implementation and refinement of Early Achievers. The review conducted by the Subcommittee shall be a part of the annual progress report required in section 18 of this Act.</p> <p>The Subcommittee shall include representatives from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and shall include representatives from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ child care centers ▪ family child care ▪ ECEAP ▪ contractors for Early Achievers technical assistance and coaching ▪ tribal governments ▪ the organization responsible for conducting early achiever program ratings, and ▪ parents of children participating in early learning programs, including WCCC ECEAP. 	<p>Early Achievers Review Subcommittee is fully formed. The meetings calendar is established.</p>

Section 18. Annual Progress Report

Deliverable	Status
<p>Submit an annual Early Achievers Progress Report developed in collaboration with CCA and the ELAC Early Achievers Review Subcommittee to the governor and the legislature - starting December, 2015.</p>	<p>2015 Annual Report had been submitted as requested. It's available to public on the DEL's website - www.del.wa.gov/government/EarlyStartAct/Default.aspx</p>