

December 2014

Report to the Legislature

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) caseload forecast

Washington State Department of Early Learning
Office of Financial Management



Washington State Department of Early Learning

www.del.wa.gov

Introduction

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) are required by RCW 43.215.456 (6) to annually review the caseload forecasts for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), and submit recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature for phasing in additional funding to achieve statewide implementation. ECEAP becomes a statutory entitlement in school year 2018-19, per House Bill 2731, which passed in the 2010 legislative session.

The Legislature added 1,700 ECEAP enrollment slots in the 2013-15 biennium: 350 slots in school year 2013-14 and 1,350 slots in school year 2014-15, for a total of 10,091 enrollment slots in school year 2014-15. The Legislature also invested in improving quality by enhancing per-slot funding.

Currently, 26,929 children are eligible for ECEAP who are not served by ECEAP or Head Start. In the 2014-15 school year, we are serving 43 percent of the eligible population and 63 percent of the estimated caseload of children whose families would choose to participate if space was available.

Description of ECEAP

ECEAP is Washington's state-funded prekindergarten program that prepares some of the state's most vulnerable 3- and 4-year-old children for success in school and in life. DEL oversees the program which, since 1985, has focused on the well-being of the whole child by providing comprehensive nutrition, health, education and family support services to Washington's most at-risk children.

To be eligible for ECEAP, children must be 3 or 4 years old by August 31 of the school year and not simultaneously enrolled in Head Start, and meet one of these requirements:

- Qualified by their school district for special education services under RCW 28A.155.020.
- Receiving Child Protective Services under RCW 26.44.020(3) or Family Assessment Response Services under RCW 26.44.260.
- From a family with income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 2014, this is \$26,235 for a family of four. This category includes all children in foster care and all families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash grants.
- From a family that exceeds income requirements but is impacted by specific risk factors that are linked by research to school performance (for example, child has a parent who is incarcerated or impacted by substance abuse). No more than 10 percent of ECEAP children can be in this "over-income" category, and most children enrolled under this provision are from families under 130 percent of federal poverty guidelines.

Once eligibility is established, children are prioritized for enrollment in the available ECEAP slots using a weighted statewide priority point system.

Methodology

DEL and OFM use the following methodology to estimate the population of children eligible for ECEAP who are not currently served by either ECEAP or Head Start:

- The base count of 3- and 4-year-old children in Washington for each year is from the OFM state population base forecast, issued most recently in November 2014.
- The percentages of 3- and 4-year-olds in families under 110 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) is estimated by the OFM Forecasting Division using the American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (ACS PUMS) Family Income as Percentage of Federal Poverty Level data set for 2010-2013, the most recent 3-year data available.
- The number of children qualifying for special education services and from families with income greater than 110 percent FPL is estimated based on current ECEAP participation of children with these characteristics and the previous year's actual number of children on Individualized Education Plans according to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
- The number of 3- and 4- year-old children from families over 110 percent FPL and impacted by risk factors associated with educational outcomes is estimated to equal 10 percent of the estimated eligible children for each year.
- The number of ECEAP slots is determined by the Legislature. There are 10,091 slots in school year 2014-15. For the purpose of these calculations, the assumed proportions of 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds are determined based on the previous school year.
- Head Start slot counts and age distributions are retrieved from the 2013-14 Program Information Reports from Head Start grantees to the federal Office of Head Start for Region X Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native-Head Start or Migrant/Seasonal Head Start. This caseload estimate assumes that 88 percent of children enrolled in Head Start are income-eligible for ECEAP.
- It is assumed that children would participate at these rates:
 - 57 percent of families with eligible 3-year-olds would choose to enroll their children.
 - 80 percent of families with eligible 4-year-olds would choose to enroll their children.

Caseload Estimates

DEL estimates that 12,806 additional enrollment slots beyond the 2014-15 level of 10,091 are needed by state fiscal year 2019 to serve the eligible children whose families it is assumed would choose to participate. At full expansion, 57 percent of eligible 3-year-olds and 80 percent of eligible 4-year-olds (per our participation estimates) would be served. DEL recommends a gradual ramp-up, as displayed in the chart below, to support a solid foundation for program quality.

Recommended ramp-up of new slots

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Estimated new enrollment slots needed per school year	3,179	3,179	3,224	3,224
Total slots	13,270	16,449	19,673	22,897

Caseload estimates (state fiscal year 2015)

Total 3- and 4-year olds in Washington in SFY15	178,069
ECEAP Eligible 3- and 4-year olds	47,642
ECEAP Slots	10,091
Head Start Slots filled by 3- and 4-year olds ≤110% FPL	10,622
Number of ECEAP-eligible served	20,713
Percent of ECEAP-eligible served	43%
Unservd, eligible	26,929
Unservd, assumed would participate (to attain 57% eligible 3-year-olds, 80% eligible 4-year-olds)	11,963

3-year-olds in Washington	89,256
ECEAP Eligible 3-year- olds	23,643
ECEAP Slots filled by 3-year-olds	2,503
Head Start Slots filled by 3-year-olds ≤110% FPL	3,966
Number of ECEAP-eligible served	6,469
Percent of ECEAP-eligible served	27%
Unservd, eligible	17,174
Unservd, assumed would participate (57% of eligible)	7,007

4-year-olds in Washington	88,813
ECEAP Eligible 4-year- olds	23,999
ECEAP Slots filled by 4-year-old	7,588
Head Start Slots filled by 4-year-olds ≤110% FPL	6,656
Number of ECEAP-eligible served	14,244
Percent of ECEAP-eligible served	59%
Unservd, eligible	9,755
Unservd, assumed would participate (80% of eligible)	4,955

Caseload forecast (state fiscal year 2019)

Total 3- and 4-year olds in Washington in SFY19	182,569
ECEAP Eligible 3- and 4-year olds	48,848
Assumed total ECEAP Slots needed	22,897
Assumed Head Start filled by 3- and 4-year olds ≤110% FPL	10,622
Total ECEAP-eligible served	33,519
Percent of ECEAP-eligible served	69%
Percent of estimated caseload served	100%

Recommendations for ECEAP expansion

DEL recommends the following guiding principles for ECEAP expansion:

- Ramp up new enrollment slots gradually to support a solid foundation of program quality. Add:
 - 3,179 new slots in SFY 16
 - 3,179 new slots in SFY 17
 - 3,224 new slots in SFY 18
 - 3,224 new slots in SFY 19
- Conduct a competitive bid process for new contractors to award new ECEAP slots in years when we increase 1,000 or more slots.
- Fund ECEAP at a level consistent with the latest research on essential elements of high-quality preschool, which positions Washington to participate in the President’s Preschool for All Initiative and other federal funding opportunities.
 - Increase the cost per child to a minimum of \$10,000 to support a Full School Day.
- Require a mixed-delivery system that includes school districts, educational service districts, licensed child care providers, private providers, and nonprofit and for-profit organizations who can meet ECEAP requirements.
- Expand in communities where there is state-funded full-day kindergarten and low access to Head Start or ECEAP.
- Work with communities and OSPI to determine the availability and condition of potential classrooms.