

December 2012

# Report to the Legislature

---

**Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)  
caseload forecast**



**Early  
Childhood  
Education &  
Assistance  
Program**

---

Washington State Department of Early Learning

[www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap/](http://www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap/)

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington's state-funded prekindergarten program that prepares children from low-income families for success in school and in life. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) oversees the program.

Since 1985, ECEAP 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. ECEAP reaches the children most in need of these foundations for learning.

Children are prioritized for ECEAP based on income (families up to 110 percent of federal poverty level, or FPL—for a family of four this is an annual income at or below \$25,355); families not income-eligible but impacted by development risk factors (e.g., delays) or environmental risk factors (e.g., child protective services involvement); children qualifying for special education; children in foster care.

In 2010, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed House Bill 2731, which makes a preschool program based on ECEAP an entitlement for eligible children by school year 2018-19. DEL and the Office of Financial Management (OFM) are required by RCW 43.215.142 to annually review the caseload forecasts for the program and, beginning Dec. 1, 2012, and annually thereafter, report to the Governor and the Legislature with recommendations for phasing in additional funding to achieve statewide implementation in the 2018-19 school year.

### **Population estimates: A common methodology**

DEL and OFM have agreed upon a common methodology to determine population estimates and caseload forecasts for ECEAP. This methodology includes the following assumptions:

- Use the estimates in the OFM State Forecast, issued November 2011, for the base count of 3- and 4-year-old children in Washington for each year through state fiscal year (SFY) 2012.
- For SFY14, apply the American Community Survey 2010 percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds with families under 110 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to the population estimate of 3- and 4-year-olds to determine the estimate of income-eligible children.
- For SFY15-19, apply the American Community Survey 2008-2010 three-year average percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds with families under 110 percent FPL to the population estimate of 3- and 4-year-olds to determine the estimate of income-eligible children. This method of averaging the poverty rates over several years assumes improvement in the economy in the upcoming years.
- For each year, estimate an additional 10 percent of children from families over 110 percent FPL and impacted by environmental risk factors such as incarceration of parents. This is currently allowed by RCW 43.215.405 (5).
- For each year, estimate that 1.68 percent of the 3-year-old population and 2.4 percent of the 4-year-old population will be ECEAP-eligible based on qualifying for special education services and from a family with income greater than 110 percent FPL. These percents are based on current ECEAP participation and could be adjusted in future years as more data is available.
- The total unserved population would equal the number of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds who are not served by ECEAP (currently 8,391 enrollment slots) or by Region X Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native-Head Start or Migrant/Seasonal Head Start (10,600 slots).
- The estimated caseload forecast assumes that of the total unserved children:
  - 57 percent of families with 3-year-olds would choose to enroll their children.
  - 80 percent of families with 4-year-olds would choose to enroll their children.

## Access: Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable 3- and 4-year-olds

Washington ranks 31st of all states in preschool participation for 4-year-olds and 16th in access for 3-year-olds.

*How many eligible children are currently served?*

- ECEAP currently serves 8,391 eligible children.
- Head Start serves an additional 10,600 ECEAP-eligible children (plus additional children from families between 110 and 130 percent FPL).
- Combined, the programs reach 37 percent of ECEAP-eligible children.

*How many eligible children are not reached by ECEAP or Head Start?*

- In 2012, 32,422 children are eligible for ECEAP and are not served by Head Start or ECEAP.
- In 2012, there were 3,347 children on ECEAP waiting lists, including 130 homeless and 58 foster children.

*What is the estimated caseload for SFY19?*

- The total unserved, eligible population in SFY19 is 29,933 children.
- Based on participation assumptions, the estimated caseload is 11,291 additional slots to serve these children, above the FY13 ECEAP and Head Start slots.

### Current caseload estimates (SFY13)

Total 3 and 4-year-olds in WA: 175,994

- ECEAP slots: 8,391
- Head Start slots: 12,045 (of which 88 percent were filled by ECEAP eligible children)
- Eligible for ECEAP: ( $\leq 110$  percent FPL) and unserved by either ECEAP or Head Start: 32,422
- Unserved of estimated caseload: 13,135

Total 3-year-olds in WA: 87,660

- Enrolled in ECEAP: 1,024
- 3-year olds  $\leq 110$  percent FPL served by Head Start: 3,750
- Eligible for ECEAP and unserved by either ECEAP or Head Start: 20,517
- Unserved of estimated caseload: 8,533

Total 4-year-olds in WA: 88,334

- Enrolled in ECEAP: 7,367
- 4-year olds  $\leq 110$  percent FPL served by Head Start: 6,850
- Eligible for ECEAP ( $\leq 110$  percent FPL) and unserved by either ECEAP or Head Start: 11,905
- Unserved of estimated caseload: 4,602

## **General recommendations for phase-in of a high-quality early learning program**

DEL defers to the Governor's proposed state operating budget for specifics on preschool funding. In general, the department recommends the following guiding principles for phasing in a high-quality early learning program per House Bill 2731.

- Ensure quality and access. ECEAP per-slot funding to contractors (vendor rate) currently averages \$6,660. DEL quality assurance costs of \$152 per slot bring the total cost per slot to \$6,812. ECEAP contractors have not received a slot rate increase since 2007. Over the past several years, ECEAP contractors have reduced classrooms hours, days of service, professional development and transportation—all of which impact families' access to services and child outcomes. Some contractors have passed up expansion opportunities due to the vendor rate. DEL ECEAP administration is currently 2.2 percent of the ECEAP budget and has not seen an increase in recent years as the program has expanded, impacting DEL's ability to implement a sufficient approach to quality assurance and training/technical assistance.
- Maintain ECEAP access for both 3- and 4-year-olds.
  - Research shows significant gains for children who receive two years of high-quality preschool.
  - Rural and remote areas require serving both 3- and 4-year-olds to form a cost-effective class.
- Expand in a zoned approach, phasing in first in elementary school catchment areas where there is state-funded full-day kindergarten and low access to Head Start or ECEAP.
- Promote 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 the high-quality ECEAP standards.
- Complete a statewide facilities study in SFY14 to determine the availability and condition of classrooms/community sites for expansion. NOTE: Based on a November 2012 survey, current ECEAP contractors could absorb 560 slots the first year. DEL would likely need to conduct a competitive bid process in SFY13 for any additional slots, and would need additional staff capacity to coordinate the RFP and provide targeted technical assistance and capacity building to new ECEAP contractors.