

**From:** Washington State Department of Early Learning

**Subject:** ATTN Child Care Centers: Alignment

**Date:** Wednesday, February 1, 2017 2:43 PM

**This bulletin was sent to the following groups of people:** Subscribers of licensed child care centers, (1653 recipients)



Hello Partners in Early Learning,

I have heard concerns about Washington's child care "standards alignment" process and its effect on licensed child care centers, and I want to take this opportunity to provide clarity about what DEL is doing, and more importantly, what we are **NOT** doing.

- DEL will **NOT** require Bachelor's degrees for licensed child care providers. Early Achievers may give more points for more highly-educated providers, but it's not required. Current WAC and proposed WAC drafts do not require BA degrees for any child care providers and child care staff positions.
- The Early Start Act **DOES NOT** set requirements for **all providers** to participate in Early Achievers. Early Achievers will remain a voluntary program for providers who **do not take children on subsidy** through Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) or related programs.
- DEL's proposed WACs **DO** make changes to the square foot calculation to include staff. DEL is guided by the State Fire Marshall occupancy code (for centers), and Federal health and safety requirements. DEL is working on clarifying the proposed WAC language, which will support providers to be in compliance while reducing possible impact of this policy.

The standards alignment project was required by the Early Start Act (passed in 2015). The intention is to streamline multiple sets of child care and early learning

licensing requirements so that licensed family home child care settings have rules as close as possible to those in child care centers, and that our state-funded preschool program (ECEAP) has these same rules. Centralizing requirements should make health and safety requirements easier to understand and more enforceable.

One of the key outcomes of the standards alignment process will be that it is easier to create classrooms supported by mixed funding sources. Washington should have a diverse offering of early education, including providers who accept children in the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC state subsidy), ECEAP, special education and Head Start programs. **Our vision is to see all kids in high quality early learning settings, with the same rules and regulations that keep children healthy and safe, no matter the environment.**

This turns out to be a much bigger job than the legislator who wrote the Early Start Act budget (me) thought. Our original standards alignment draft did not meet some of our goals; therefore, we decided to take more time to get it right. We are still in the drafting process, and we have several more steps in the process, steps that will involve a lot of public input. Here is a link to our current WAC drafts: [Proposed WACs](#). I think you will like the final product.

Thanks!

Ross Hunter



Director, Washington State Department of Early Learning



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