

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 14, 2026

Time: 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

ELAC Executive Committee member Dr. Brian Knowles welcomed attendees and initiated introductions.

ELAC Committee Business

ELAC Executive Committee members Tanya Hutton and Dr. Brian Knowles discussed the new ELAC Office Hours and led the group in the review of meeting materials.

February 10, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Feedback Loop

State Agency Partner Updates

Regional Coalition Updates

- If you have any questions, please email the Community Engagement Team (dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov).

Early Learning Budget and Legislative Updates

DCYF Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Learning Nicole Rose and Assistant Secretary of Licensing Ruben Reeves provided an update on early learning this legislative session, including budget considerations and potential impacts on early learning programs.

DCYF Mandatory Reporter Training

Discussion

- Attendees requested updated guidance or a seminar on Child Protective Services (CPS) reporting to support providers navigating high-risk situations.
- DCYF is in the process of finalizing the 2026 Market Rate Survey and will have more information to share soon regarding response rates. The law says each region must achieve a provider response rate of at least 40% and also be greater than the response rate for the region in the survey in the prior even-numbered year to be considered valid for the purpose of informing subsidy-based rate increases.
- There are some pieces around expenses that are important for both the Market Rate Survey and Cost of Quality Care Survey. DCYF will follow up with what is required by the legislature for both surveys as well as the structure.

Action Items

- Save the Date: Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program Updates Webinars:



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

- Monday, May 4, 2026 | 6 to 7:30 p.m. | [Register Here](#)
- Tuesday, May 5, 2026 | 1 to 2:30 p.m. | [Register Here](#)
- Webinar slides will be added to the [Government Affairs Webpage](#).
- To sign up for the ECE newsletter to receive updates, visit:
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADEL/signup/32170>

Potential Next Steps

- DCYF will be coming to both ELAC and Provider Supports during implementation to discuss ways to increase provider participation in the Market Rate Survey and reduce provider administrative burdens.
- DCYF will work on scheduling an interactive presentation where providers can ask licensing staff questions about mandatory reporting.
- Please reach out to Nicole Rose (Nicole.Rose@dcyf.wa.gov) and Ruben Reeves (Ruben.Reeves@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow up questions.

ECEAP Expansion

DCYF Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Senior Administrator Kimberly Burgess-Simms provided updates about the long-term plans for ECEAP expansion.

[ECEAP Expansion of Services Webpage](#)

[Pre-K Promise Subcommittee Nomination Form](#)

[ECEAP- Statement of Work FY26](#)

Discussion

- Concerns were raised about current contractors being negatively impacted. DCYF explained that the community wide expansion planning and collaboration was a big part of the Request for Application (RFA) and will continue in our application review process. DCYF is looking for ideas to support community wide collaboration both in the short and long term, to make sure expansion is happening in a way that builds partnership across early learning providers.
- Attendees asked how can DCYF support more existing contractors in enhancing their understanding and capacity to engage in sub-contracting processes? DCYF explained that you can be an ECEAP contractor directly with DCYF, but you can also be a part of the ECEAP expansion as a subcontractor working to provide some of those direct services in partnership with the ECEAP contractor. DCYF would like to continue to build knowledge about the subcontracting process and how that can work.
- The funding from the Ballmer Group is focused on only expanding school day slots.
- Concerns were raised about children being prioritized for Transition to Kindergarten who were already qualified and getting services through ECEAP and Working Connections. DCYF is partnering with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) around this topic and anticipates continuing this work on the subcommittee.
- Concerns were raised about the state budget and how this is being paid for. DCYF acknowledged these concerns and shared that they are asking for volunteers to help support this work. DCYF does not have funds to pay for stipends, and this work would be virtual.

- Attendees requested more transparency around how the contracts are structured and the payments within them, including a breakdown of how the funds are dispersed. Having a standardized contract with ranges of rates in the different regions was also suggested.

Action Items

- To take these comments into consideration and help roll out this work equitably, DCYF will be forming a Pre-K Promise Subcommittee of ELAC to address this.
- Please share the [Pre-K Promise Subcommittee Nomination Form](#). Nominations due on May 20.

Potential Next Steps

- DCYF will be looking at rates, contracting, and subcontracting during the ECEAP expansion process.
- Please send additional feedback or questions to ECEAP@dcyf.wa.gov.

Staff Qualifications Updates

DCYF Child Care Policy Manager Brett Skinner, Staff Qualifications Coordinator Suzie Campbell, Tribal Child Care Licensing Consultant, Mindy Flett and Sheryl Fryberg with Tulalip Tribes provided an update on the Staff Qualifications Workgroup as part of [HB 1648](#).

Discussion

- DCYF will be having conversations with the workgroup regarding if out of state experience also includes international.
- Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials are accepted in both centers and child care homes. A CDA is equivalent to an initial certificate and a high school diploma.
- Attendees requested that when DCYF is asked about specific types of programs or settings that should or should not count, they need to make sure there is some sort of anti-bias and anti-racist lens or tool used when making decisions that will impact future careers of child care providers.
- Attendees asked if workgroup members have completed education and if there is still a need for the education component when a job setting provides sufficient training. DCYF explained that many of the workgroup members have graduated from programs and as an agency believes that it is one of many pathways to becoming a high-quality professional.
- Attendees requested that military training and modules be considered in these discussions. DCYF explained that this is part of the staff qualifications calculus. The military modules are currently equivalent to one of the pathways and will bring this up to the work group to discuss.
- Attendees encouraged the inclusion of programs that are part-day, license exempt pre-school in schools and the community.
- DCYF is verifying out of state tribal colleges the same way as all colleges in higher education.

Potential Next Steps

- This topic will continue to be a standing item on the ELAC agenda, providing updates and feedback opportunities throughout the process.
- Please reach out to Brett Skinner, (brett.skinner@dcyf.wa.gov), and Suzie Campbell, (suzanna.campbell@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE): DCYF, CCA of WA, OSPI and AESD

Members were informed about the work of Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment, a statewide initiative focused on informed family choice.

OSPI TK Website with CRE Resources

Discussion

- The Child Care Finder tool will help more families find high-quality child care, it has been updated to be more user-friendly
- Providers will need to opt-in to be listed on Child Care Finder. DCYF will be sending information to providers about how to participate. There is also an additional level of privacy for providers who don't want to share their street address and can list their zip code and city.
- Attendees asked how Child Care Finder intersects with DCYF Child Care Check. DCYF explained that this tool is replacing the Child Care Aware of Washington's current online search and is a compliment to DCYF's Child Care Check system. While Child Care Check mainly focuses on licensing information and violations, Child Care Finder is more geared towards direct provider to family interaction.
- Attendees suggested DCYF create a full communications/marketing plan across the ecosystem to reach the full range of families not solely the most vulnerable.
- Providers looking to expand sites requested access to the real time data from Child Care Aware to determine where the need is.

Action Items

- Information will be going out to providers on how to opt-in and participate in the new Child Care Finder website.

Potential Next Steps

- DCYF will work on scheduling a presentation from the Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA).

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

- The next ELAC Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 9, 2026.