



# Washington State Department of **CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

## **Parent Advisory Group**

### **Meeting Minutes**

July 17, 2024 -7:00pm-8:30pm

Virtual Meeting

#### **Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions**

Executive Committee members Josie Guzman, Janel Waterman and Christianna Clinton and Community Engagement Manager Emily Morgan welcomed attendees and initiated introductions.

#### **DCYF Draft Decision Package**

Senior Policy Advisory, Melissa Cheesman provided a brief overview of the draft early learning and Supports Decision Packages, overview of DCYF's role in the legislative process and information on how PAG members can share their thoughts and feedback with legislators

[Decision Package Presentation](#)

<b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is a decision package? Is this something we want to do and then you create a budget?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ It is a request for funding, but you must explain the nature of the funding and why it's needed.</li></ul></li><li>• What is policy staff and program staff?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Program staff are the subject matter experts at DCYF.</li><li>○ Policy staff are subject matter experts on the legislative process.</li><li>○ Budget staff provides the numbers that policy staff are developing.</li></ul></li><li>• This is an election year; the new governor and transition team will propose a budget which is expected to be published in early January 2025.</li><li>• DCYF can ask for anything now and then in January the budget gets pared down?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The governor decides on what to prioritize which then goes through both houses of the legislature and returned to the governor to sign or veto.</li><li>○ Do we know what the budget is going to be?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ We do, but we don't know if it's going to be approved.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• So you can't ask for more?</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ It's predetermined based on analytics and data.</li></ul></li><li>● There has been a lot of work in the early learning field and we're committed to continuing the work. There is uncertainty with the capital gains tax. Less revenue means less money to allocate to agencies, which impacts the budget.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ We don't know the budget until January?</li><li>○ We have a proposal that will come under consideration by the Governor.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Our current budget is until July 2025, and we don't know the upcoming fiscal budget (July 2025-2026).</li><li>▪ So how do you know what to ask for?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● It is based off the data collected throughout the year. Budget increases are justified by program needs.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ There's a lot of uncertainty with the upcoming elections.</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li><li>● Our population has doubled with immigration, there are a lot more kids.</li><li>● Sometimes laws are initially passed, but not enough money is allotted to support that law and so we must ask in a decision package. We still don't always get additional funding.</li><li>● Does this include funding for daycares or just pre k programs?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Both. This is for working connections benefits or subsidies (and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program- ECEAP) and for children to birth-13 or birth-19 (with special needs).</li></ul></li><li>● What is 85% of the market goal?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ We are required to set working childcare subsidy rates. We pay providers at 85% of the market rate. Every few years we are required to do a market rate survey of what rates are charged in the private market for childcare. That survey is used to assess what rates we pay providers. We are now at the end of our more recent market rates, so they should be published soon.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ When I had foster children, the rate of pay was so low, I had trouble finding child care. I offered to subsidize with my own money, and they said they could not accept.</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>● Each item of the state's budget (i.e a. environmental, b. early childhood, c. higher education) asks for a certain amount to meet the needs of the people or items they support. The state now has to figure out how to spend their 10 million bucks and help as many</li></ul>
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people/issues as possible. So just because DCYF asks for the money they need to meet the law doesn't mean that they will get it because the politicians have to allocate the money however the majority of them agree on. Every person has their priorities and will fight or more funding for the items they care about.

- Will you cover how much you're asking for?
  - These calculations are underway and might not be accurate.
    - Do you have a rough estimate?
      - We're roughly requesting \$450 million.
- Shall we ask the group if they agree with this decision proposal (slide)?
  - We're getting agreements in the chat.
- How did you come up with 6,515 slots?
  - Based on forecasting, Nicole Rose (Assistant Secretary of Early Learning) provided me with that number, and I can follow up with her.
  - Does forecasting mean data collection?
    - There's a forecast council that comprises all the data.
- I would support having childcare providers (who accept children with state pay) to be paid the same as private pay families. As a foster parent, I am asking the childcare provider to take less money for kids that often have harder behaviors. Then, I am not allowed to supplement their pay.
  - This is really good feedback. The stories of how community is impacted really help to illustrate how things are for folks.
- You provided numbers for a family of 3. What about single families and what's their budget?
  - This number is based off the [State Median Income Chart | DSHS \(wa.gov\)](#)
- I heard you mention that if your child is already receiving subsidized childcare, but you get new employment and make too much you get to continue. What about a single parent with two children who doesn't qualify, but does not have the money?
  - I think this is not only a great question but a really great conversation to have, and it should be had as often as possible especially in places where you have individuals and myself and program leads listening in. Our asks in the early learning space are really geared towards meeting what is already required by us by federal and state law. And as far as options available for changing that would also require changes to statute.
  - I feel like it might take spots for more vulnerable populations. I have a hard time getting into childcare spots in my area with state funded care there's so few places already.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ My friend called family services to get a childcare voucher when she made too much money.</li> <li>● Childcare wages are extremely low! I considered it but the wages are not for adults with kids and adult bills and responsibilities. Even a head teacher position.</li> <li>● Childcare is \$2,000+ a month for one child and people can't pay for it. People on subsidy can't find care because the providers must limit how many kids they can take because it doesn't keep their doors open. We need providers taken care of so they can stay open to offer slots and paid fair wages so kids can get care and parents can work. The biggest thing we can do is get working connection child care to cover the actual cost of care. It would help in every single area of our lives.</li> <li>● DCYF needs to do more to support nonstandard childcare hours (evening, late night hours). Parents working overnight can't find care, it isn't there.</li> <li>● You mentioned DCYF was paying based on attendance (vs. enrollment). So if I keep my child home for the day because I am off work, the provider is not paid? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Correct, we are pushing to move it towards enrollment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● DCYF should provide stipends for home education. When a parent is making a sacrifice (with their employment options / work hour times) so that the child does not have to go into childcare, and there's some program to show that the children are truly being engaged at home for early learning. The parent gets a stipend whether it be for materials / online subscription learning programs / etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thank you for that feedback. You are suggesting the state offer stipends to parents/family caregivers who stay home with a child to provide early childcare.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Follow up</b>	Please reach out to Melissa Cheesman (melissa.cheesman@dcyf.wa.gov) for any follow up questions.

**Closing Remarks/Adjourn**

<b>Next Steps/Follow Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Next Meeting: September 18<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm-8:30pm</li> </ul>
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