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# Introduction to the Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Plan

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January 2024



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



# Our Vision for Early Learning

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An integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable, high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children, birth to twelve years old to support child outcomes, school readiness, and family well-being, regardless of race or income.





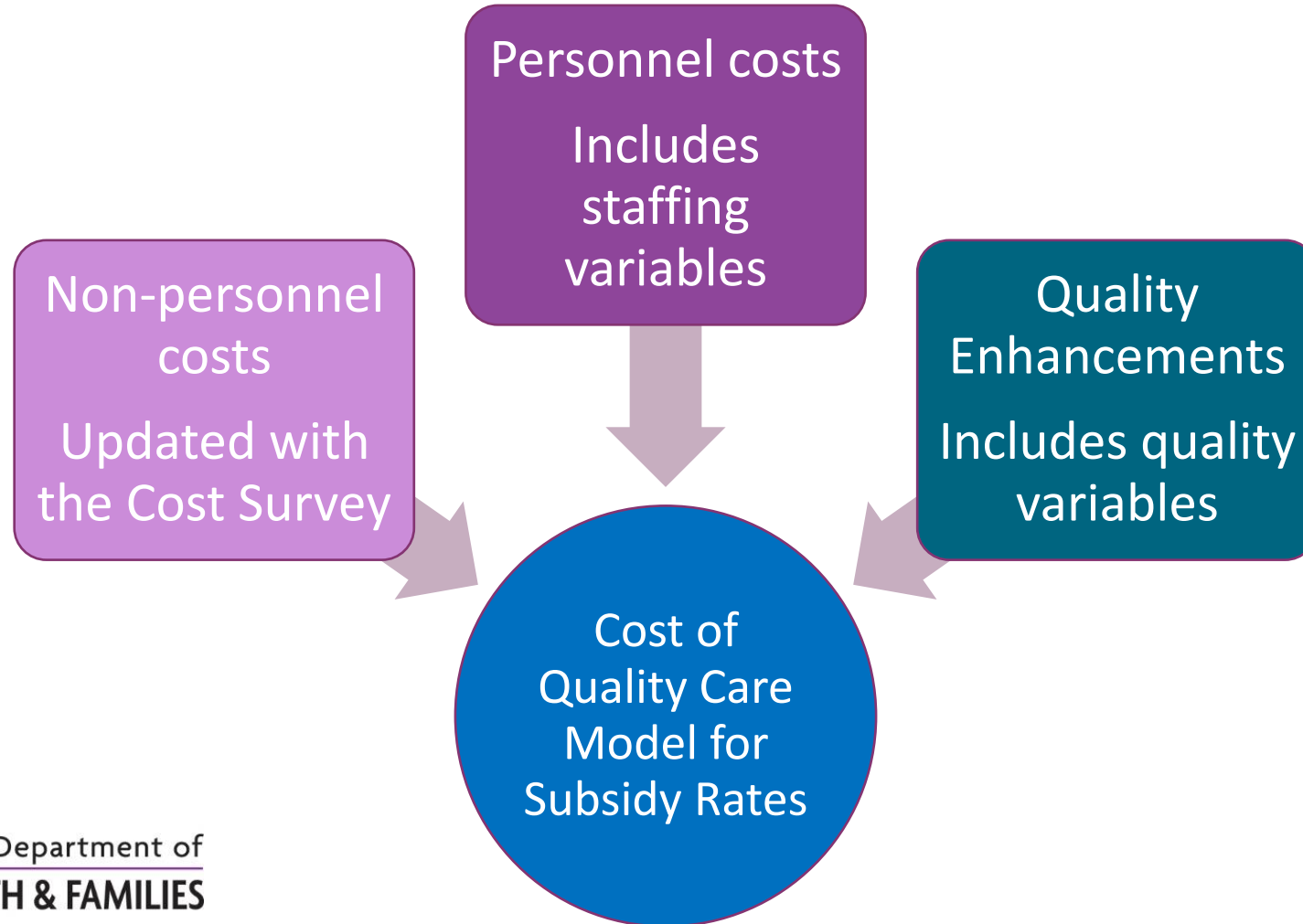


## Our Strategic Outcomes:

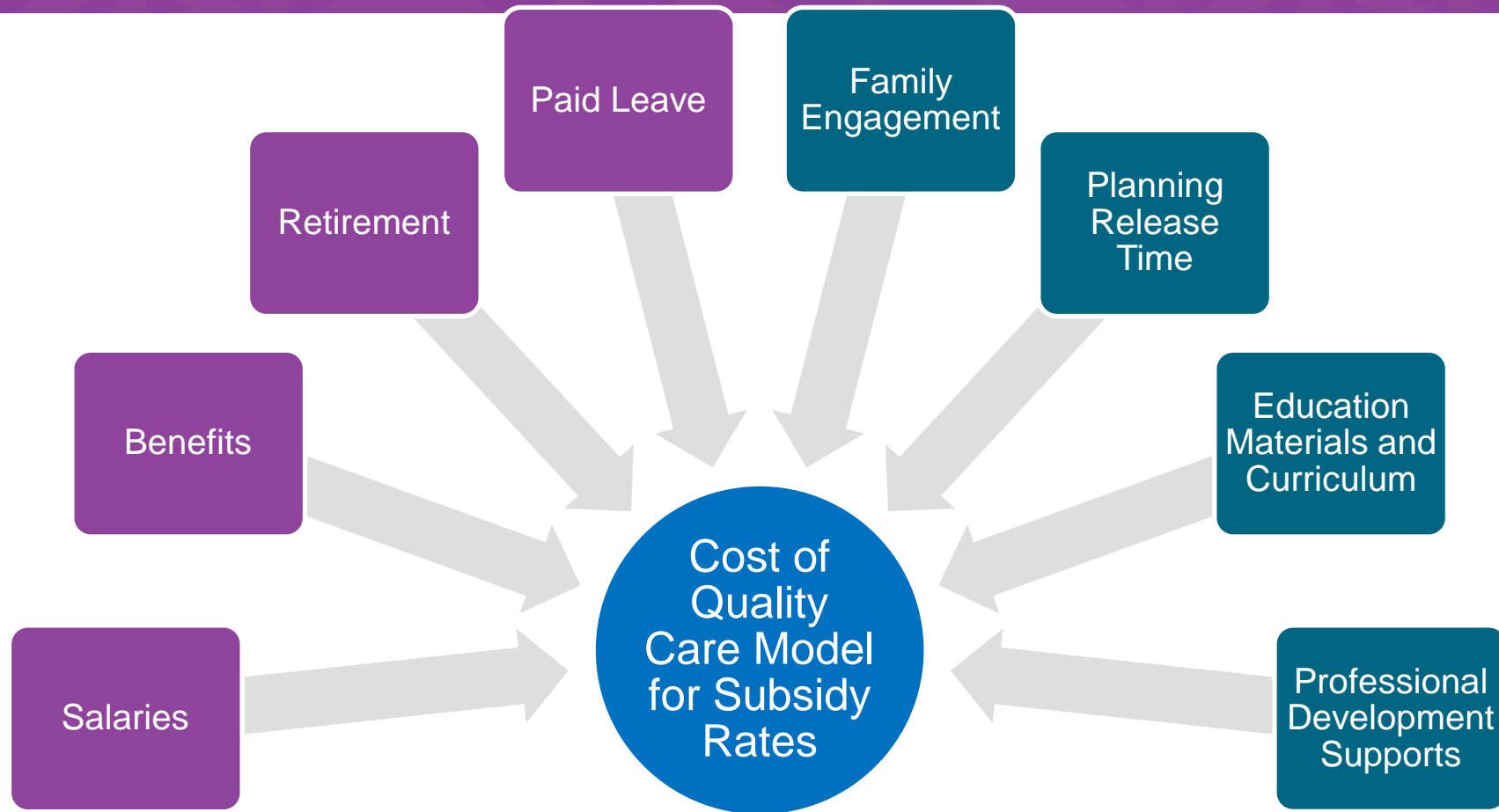
- 80 percent of Washington children to be ready for Kindergarten
- High-quality early learning available and affordable to all in Washington

Eliminate racial disproportionality and advancing racial equity in early education

# Cost of Quality Care Model



# The Eight Primary Variables that Drive The Cost of Quality



# Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) - RCW 43.216.749 and 43.216.1368

## Child care subsidy rates—Use of cost model.

(1) It is the intent of the legislature to systemically increase child care subsidy rates over time until rates are equal to the full cost of providing high quality child care.

(2) Beginning July 1, 2021, child care subsidy base rates must achieve the 85th percentile of market for licensed or certified child care providers. The state and the exclusive representative for family child care providers must enter into bargaining over the implementation of the subsidy rate increase under this subsection.

**(3)(a) The department shall build upon the work of the child care collaborative task force to develop and implement a child care cost estimate model and use the completed child care cost model to recommend subsidy rates at levels that are sufficient to compensate licensed or certified child care providers for the full costs of providing high quality child care. The department shall consider:**

**(i) Adjusting rates to reflect cost of living such as area median income, cost of living by zip code, and grouping by categories such as rural, suburban, or urban; and**

**(ii) Incorporating the rate model for nonstandard child care hours developed under section 306, chapter 199, Laws of 2021.**

(b) The department shall build upon the work of the child care collaborative task force to evaluate options to support access to affordable health care insurance coverage for licensed or certified child care providers.

(4) This section does not interfere with, impede, or in any way diminish the right of family child care providers to bargain collectively with the state through the exclusive bargaining representatives as provided for under RCW [41.56.028](#).

## Child care subsidy eligibility — expanded eligibility

(1) It is the intent of the legislature to increase working families' access to affordable, high quality child care and to support the expansion of the workforce to support businesses and the statewide economy.

(2) Beginning October 1, 2021, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is at or below 60 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:

(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.

**(3) Beginning July 1, 2025, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is above 60 percent and at or below 75 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:**

**(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and**

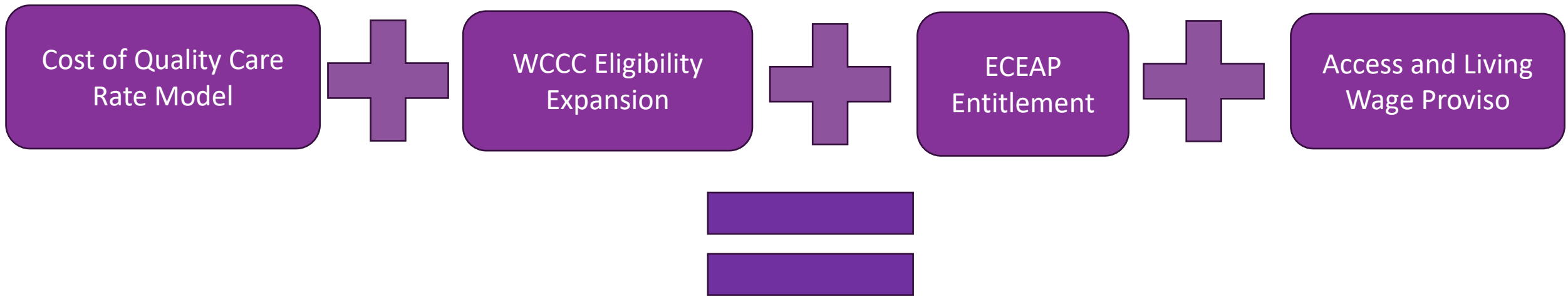
**(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.**

(4) Beginning July 1, 2027, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is above 75 percent of the state median income and is at or below 85 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:

(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.

# Adding it All Up for 2025-27 and beyond



*An integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable, high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children, birth to twelve years old.*



## Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso

The department must submit an implementation plan to expand access to Washington's mixed delivery child care system. The plan must assume that any financial contribution by families is capped at no more than seven percent of household income and that the child care workforce are provided living wages and benefits. The plan must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the legislature by June 30, 2025, and should:

- (a) Follow the intent of chapter 199, Laws of 2021 (FSKA);
- (b) Be aligned with the cost of quality care rate model;
- (c) Include timelines, costs, and statutory changes necessary for timely and effective implementation; and
- (d) Be developed through partnership with the statewide child care resource and referral organization and the largest union representing child care providers, with consultation from families.





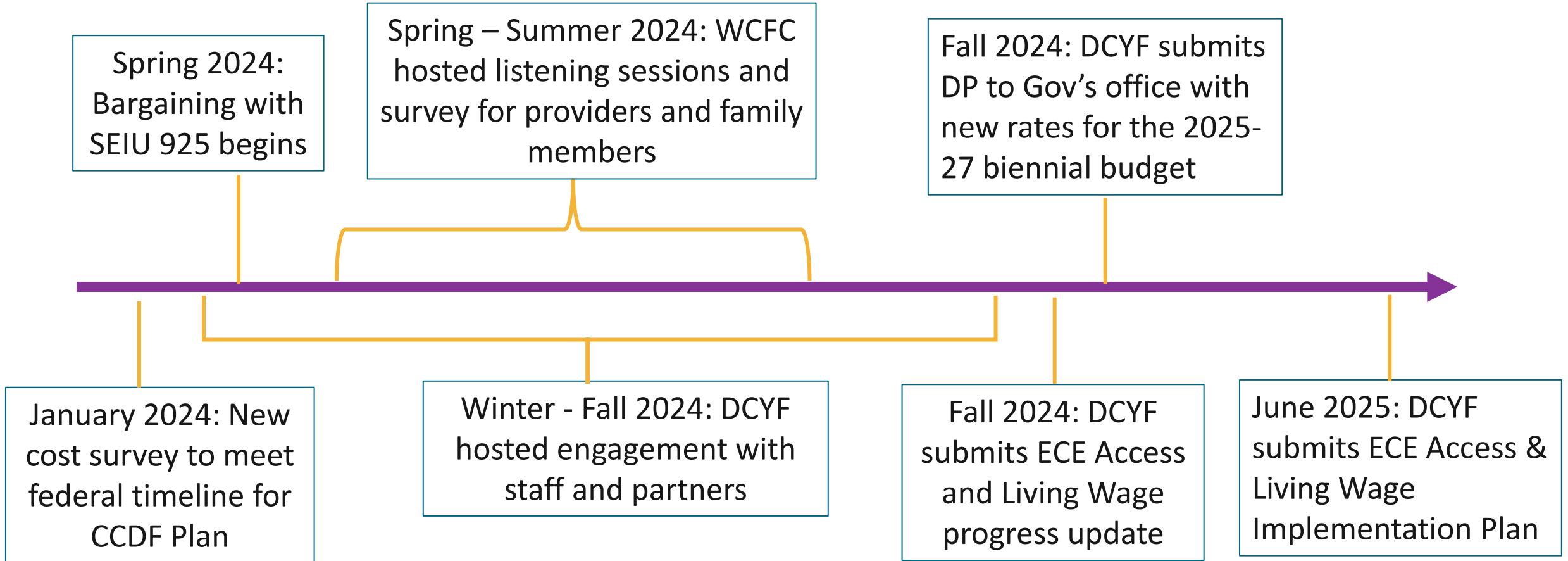
# Universal Access and Living Wage:

An integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable (no more than 7% of their income), high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children and providers are provided a living wage and benefits.

- We are building on the existing foundation to strengthen an integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable, high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children.
- We have a focus on child outcomes, school readiness, family and provider well-being and self-sufficiency.



# Timeline



# Child Care for Washington Campaign

Led by Child Care Aware of Washington



# Where We've Been



## 2022 – Supporting Provider-Driven Policy Visions

- **Early Educator Design Team**
  - 32 providers across the state
  - Supported by statewide advocacy organizations
  - Facilitated process of trust, relationship building, education, and policy design
- **Advocate organizations support**
  - Support developing an equity-focused application
  - Selecting a representative team (130+ applicants)
  - Advocating in support of the Team's policy vision
- **The process: leveraging expertise**
  - Educators provide experiences and professional expertise
  - Advocates listen; provide a workable policy platform that reflects the providers' experiences and vision



# Where We've Been



## 2023 – ECE Access and Living Wage Proviso

- **Provider-driven intersections**
  - Vision for living wages for the workforce
  - Expanding the scope to families
  - Widespread advocate support
- **Vision for the way forward**
  - Commitment to continued work with Design Team via CCA of WA
  - Access and affordability for families so that they pay no more than 7% of household income for child care

## 2023 – Cost of Quality Care Rate Model Recommendations

- **Provider Driven**
  - Design Team, CCA of WA, DCYF working together
  - DCYF using to build 2025 budget proposal

# Where We're Going



2024

- Develop policy for universal access

2025

- Run omnibus bill in the 2025 session for universal access and living wage/benefits

# How We're Developing Policy



- **Build a table of advocate partners**
- **Utilize a process of Listen + Reflect between communities and advocacy organizations**
  - Advocacy organizations to host small group stakeholder meetings to answer policy questions
  - Integrate community input into a comprehensive proposal

# The Partner Roundtable



## 10 child care advocacy organizations – 4 policy content areas:

- **Access and Affordability for families, led by**
  - MomsRising
  - OneAmerica
  - Parent Ambassadors
- **Integrated Classrooms and Systems, led by**
  - Washington State Headstart and ECEAP Association
  - WaSTEM
  - Ready Nation
- **Facilities, led by**
  - Start Early WA
- **Provider Supports and Career Pathways, led by**
  - Imagine Institute
  - Washington Communities for Children
  - Child Care Aware of Washington



# Partner Roundtable – Steps to 2025



The 10 child care advocacy organizations will:

Reflect on previous policy work – create list of unresolved policy questions needed to craft omnibus bill

Hold focus groups with constituents with lived experiences to craft answers to policy questions

Come together to put pieces together from many constituents and policy perspectives

Return to constituents to review and reflect on omnibus proposal

Advocate for community-driven omnibus proposal with lawmakers, businesses, and communities for the 2025 legislative session

Passing Omnibus Bill in 2025

★ Where We Are Today ★

DCYF will use this policy work to inform its implementation plan

# Policy Questions: Examples



- What planning, coaching, and supports do providers need to be able to support children with special needs?
- What new or increased supports do providers who are not English proficient need to be successful in meeting the existing professional development requirements?
- What new or increased supports do providers need to meet the existing licensing requirements and increase the pipeline of licensed care?

# Tribal Participation - Proposal



- IPEL forms subgroup to provide feedback and direction on policy questions – with facilitation from CCA of WA and DCYF
- IPEL subgroup representation in the Partner Roundtable
- IPEL subgroup feedback on comprehensive proposal after its drafted
- Advocacy for the omnibus bill in 2025 (when individual tribes are willing and interested)

# Early Learning Draft Theory of Change

**IF** we expand community access to affordable high-quality early care and education and continue to improve quality in these settings for children.



**THEN** all children will arrive in Kindergarten ready to learn and have the quality care they need as they transition to K-12 learning, and providers will have the resources to provide quality early care and education that meets the needs of children and families.





# Continued Engagement

Listening Sessions with DCYF



Advocacy Campaign with Child Care Aware of WA



Status Updates



1. How might we best support families in understanding and accessing the menu of options available to them?
2. How do we ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate services for children and families – from workforce development and supports, and services that families are receiving?
3. What would a better coordinated system for referring children to early care and education programs tailored to meet their specific needs look like to you?

## Example Policy Questions

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# QUESTIONS

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