



DCYF ECEAP ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Early Learning Division | Approved for distribution by Jennifer Cassarino, B-5 ECEAP Senior Administrator



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Executive Summary

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington’s state-funded pre-kindergarten program that prepares 3- and 4-year-old children from families furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. ECEAP is part of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

This report on ECEAP describes the 2023-24 school year using data from the Early Learning Management System (ELMS) covering September 2023 to June 2024. Historically, we know children who participate in ECEAP are more likely than other low-income children to be **ready for kindergarten** in the six domains assessed in WaKIDS.¹

Additionally, ECEAP addresses the assumption that children from low income families, who do not have reliable access to child care or early learning services, may be less likely to be up to date on well child exams, dental screenings, and related treatments.²³ Though there are only six months between ECEAP’s November and May **developmental assessments**, ECEAP children frequently progress towards readiness in their learning and development during this time. Additionally, their families make substantial gains in resilience and economic security through participation in ECEAP’s **Mobility Mentoring**[®] approach⁴.

Please share with the teacher that each one of their contributions has brightened our days and put a smile on [my child’s] face. It is very difficult to create a rhythm and to help especially our preschool-age daughter understand what’s happened to our world. We have taken these videos and incorporated them into our routine. It has helped with the transition! I am so grateful for all your efforts! Thank you, thank you, thank you!
– Skagit Valley Community College ECEAP parent

¹ [Early Learning Feedback Report \(SY23-24\)](#). Note: In 6 of 6 domains, 42% of lower income students and 45% of ECEAP enrolled students were ready for Kindergarten.

² [Lee et al., 2013](#)

³ [Love et al., 2002](#)

⁴ [ECEAP Mobility Mentoring: A Snapshot, 2020](#)

Introduction

ECEAP is Washington’s state-funded pre-kindergarten program that prepares 3- and 4-year-old children furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. ECEAP focuses on the well-being of the whole child by providing comprehensive education, health, and family support services to those most in need – those in poverty, experiencing traumatic situations, or both. ECEAP services include high-quality educational preschool programming, preventative health and dental care, nutritious food, and family coaching ([video](#)).

ECEAP is administered through DCYF. The [ECEAP Theory of Change](#) organizes and clearly articulates ECEAP’s goal to provide high-quality, effective, and efficient early learning services that are available to all eligible children. ECEAP and its partners achieve this goal by:

1. Providing high-quality, culturally competent services.
2. Making ECEAP available to all eligible children.
3. Building an ample supply of qualified early learning professionals.
4. Continuing to build effective, aligned, and integrated early learning programs.

[MIT’s Blueprint Labs May 2021 policy brief](#) on the long-term effects of universal preschool in Boston pointed out the following:

“As policymakers consider increased public investment in universal preschool, the research findings suggest that preschool can lead to long-term educational attainment gains through improvements in behavior. Furthermore, the observed effects across demographic groups suggest that all students are likely to benefit from universal preschool⁵.”

ECEAP’s work with communities, contractors, sovereign nations, families, and children is guided by an equity statement, co-developed with these partners:

DCYF ECEAP commits to dismantling racism and building an equitable state-funded preschool system in Washington. Increasing our understanding of and capacity to address the deep-rooted impacts of bias and racism at every level is the highest priority for our team. We embrace equity as a foundation of and driving force behind our work by listening to and learning from families, contractor staff and communities. Driven by this commitment, we develop and revise systems, policies and practices, with the goal of eliminating disparities and transforming lives.



⁵ Gray-Lobe, G, Pathak, P. & Walters, C. (May 2021). *The Long-Term Effects of Universal Preschool in Boston: Policy Brief*. MIT Department of Economics, Blueprint Labs.

For more information about ECEAP's commitment to anti-racist work, visit the [DCYF ECEAP equity webpage](#).

This report on ECEAP provides information from the 2023-24 school year.

DCYF Strategic and Racial Equity Plan

DCYF developed a [Strategic and Racial Equity Plan](#) that provides the framework for our priorities. The plan establishes six agency priorities:

1. Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity
2. Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care
3. Create successful transitions to adulthood for youth and young adults in our care
4. Create a high-quality integrated B-8 system
5. Improve quality and intention of our practice
6. Improve quality and availability of provider services

These strategic priorities are grounded in DCYF's [mission, vision, values](#), and legislative purpose. The Strategic and Racial Equity Plan helps DCYF focus on how we serve children, youth, families, and our communities as a unified whole. This framework helps to build on existing funding and services to strengthen our ability to serve families as well as to disrupt racial inequity and disproportionality in our systems.

Agency and State Coordination

To accomplish the goals set out in the theory of change, DCYF ECEAP and Early ECEAP staff coordinate with programs across DCYF, such as Early Childhood Intervention and Prevention Services Program (ECLIPSE), Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT), Early Achievers, Child Care Licensing, Professional Development, and Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators.

Additionally, DCYF ECEAP partners regularly with other state agencies. This includes transitions and integrated and inclusion pre-k work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the collaboration on facilities grants with the Department of Commerce (see more information in the DCYF Support section).

Future of ECEAP

ECEAP's ultimate outcome: High-quality, effective, efficient early learning services are available to all eligible children, with 80% of Washington children kindergarten-ready in all domains.

Fair Start for Kids Act (2021)

On May 7, 2021, Washington lawmakers passed the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA). FSKA makes child care and early childhood education more accessible and affordable for all families in Washington State. Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, a child will be eligible for ECEAP if:

- Their family income is at or below 36% of the State Median Income (SMI).
- Their family is experiencing homelessness according to the federal [McKinney-Vento Act](#).
- They have participated in any of the following programs:
 - Early Head Start
 - ESIT or other Class C developmental services
 - Early ECEAP
 - ECLIPSE
- They are eligible for Individualized Education Program (IEP) special education services under [RCW 28A.155.020](#).
- They have a family history of experiences in Indian Boarding Schools.
- Their family income is between 36% and 50% SMI and have research-based prioritization (risk) factors, as space is available.

FSKA sets ECEAP entitlement at July 2026 — that is, by July 2026, ECEAP needs to have the capacity to serve all children who are eligible for ECEAP as defined in the FSKA and associated rules. To serve these children and their families, ECEAP needs sufficient funding and support to dramatically expand the number of available spaces for children (called “slots”). Increasing ECEAP slots requires a corresponding increase in state funding for infrastructure, staffing, and program quality support.

FSKA passed with the intent of creating more accessible and affordable child care for families. The legislation expanded a variety of DCYF initiatives to support children and families such as:

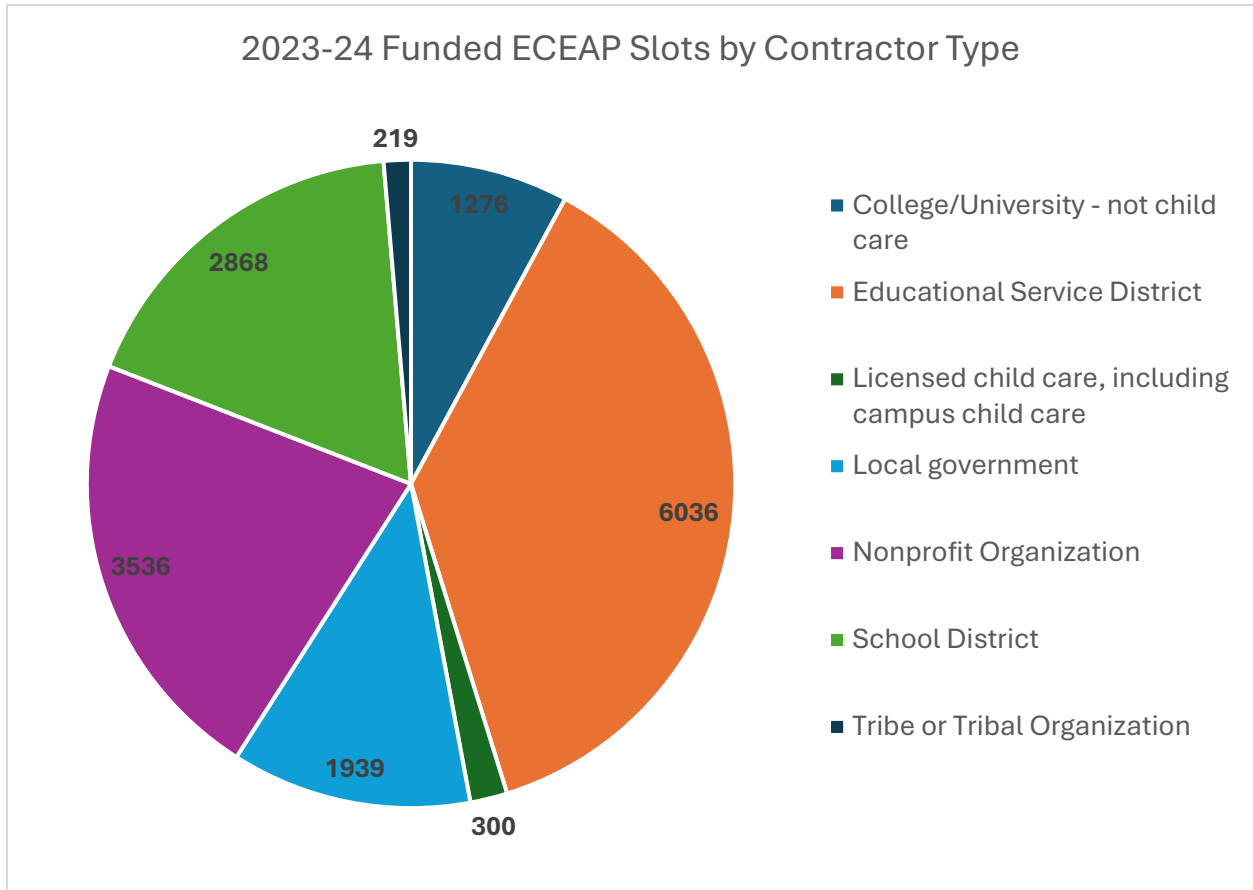
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program – Supporting Families and Providers
- ECEAP Expansion
- Supporting Child Care and Early Learning Providers
- Strengthening Prenatal to Three Supports
- Data and Accountability



FSKA also granted ECEAP funding increases through an 11.6% slot rate increase over the biennium, expansion of 500 slots in FY 22 and 750 slots in FY 23, continued investment in supporting children with complex needs due to trauma, as well as initial state funding for Early ECEAP.

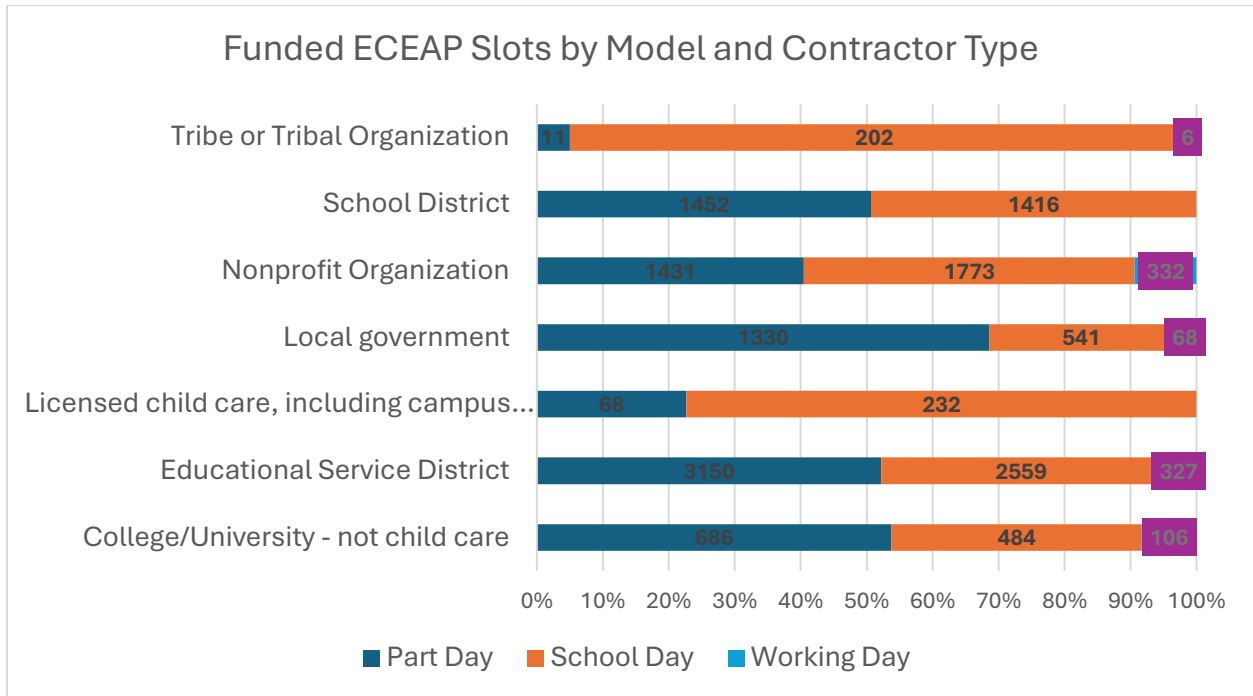
For more information about the Fair Start for Kids Act and the initiatives listed above, visit the [FSKA webpage](#).

Figure 1. 2023-2024 Funded ECEAP Slots by Contractor Type



Source: Early Learning Management System (ELMS) (SY23-24). Accessed August 2024.

Figure 2. 2023-2024 Funded ECEAP Slots by Contractor Type



Source: Early Learning Management System (ELMS) (SY23-24). Accessed August 2024.

2023-24 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund

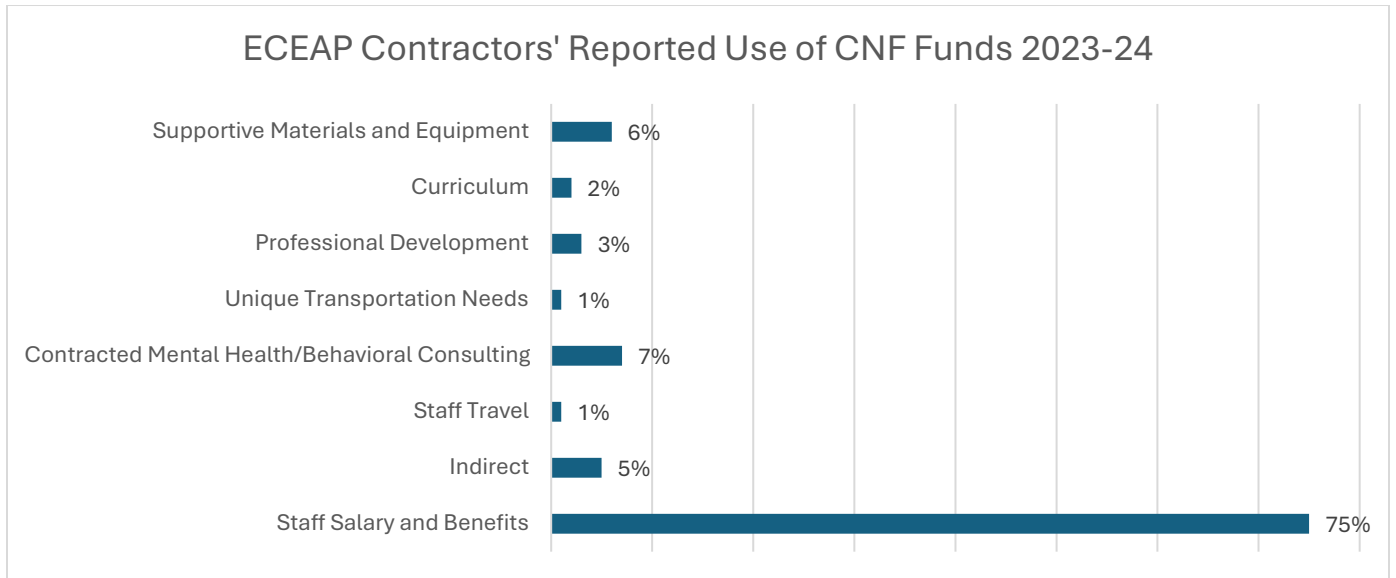
The Washington State Legislature designated ECEAP Complex Needs Fund to provide additional support in ECEAP classrooms to further decrease barriers that children with developmental delays, differing abilities, or challenging behaviors due to complex trauma may typically face. This funding supports all children during the hours they are in an ECEAP classroom. Adding this designated funding to an ECEAP classroom supplements services for children with complex needs. This additional support helps reduce the disruption of early learning supports and increases positive experiences for children, families, and staff. A little over \$6.9 million was allocated to 47 out of 63 B-5 ECEAP contractors resulting in an additional 287 contractor sites receiving support through this funding opportunity.

B-5 ECEAP Contractors used the funds for the following purposes:

- Adding staff in classrooms
- Increasing mental health/behavioral consultation
- Providing supportive and adaptive materials and equipment
- Adapting curricula
- Providing teacher coaching, training, and professional development
- Offering unique transportation services

Grantees reported using most of the funding to provide additional staffing support in the classroom.

Figure 3. SY2023-24 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Grant Recipient Fund Application



Source: ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Grantee Reports (SY23-24).

Table 1: ECEAP Complex Needs Fund supported B-5 ECEAP Children:

Children Supported	Classrooms Supported
4,986	547

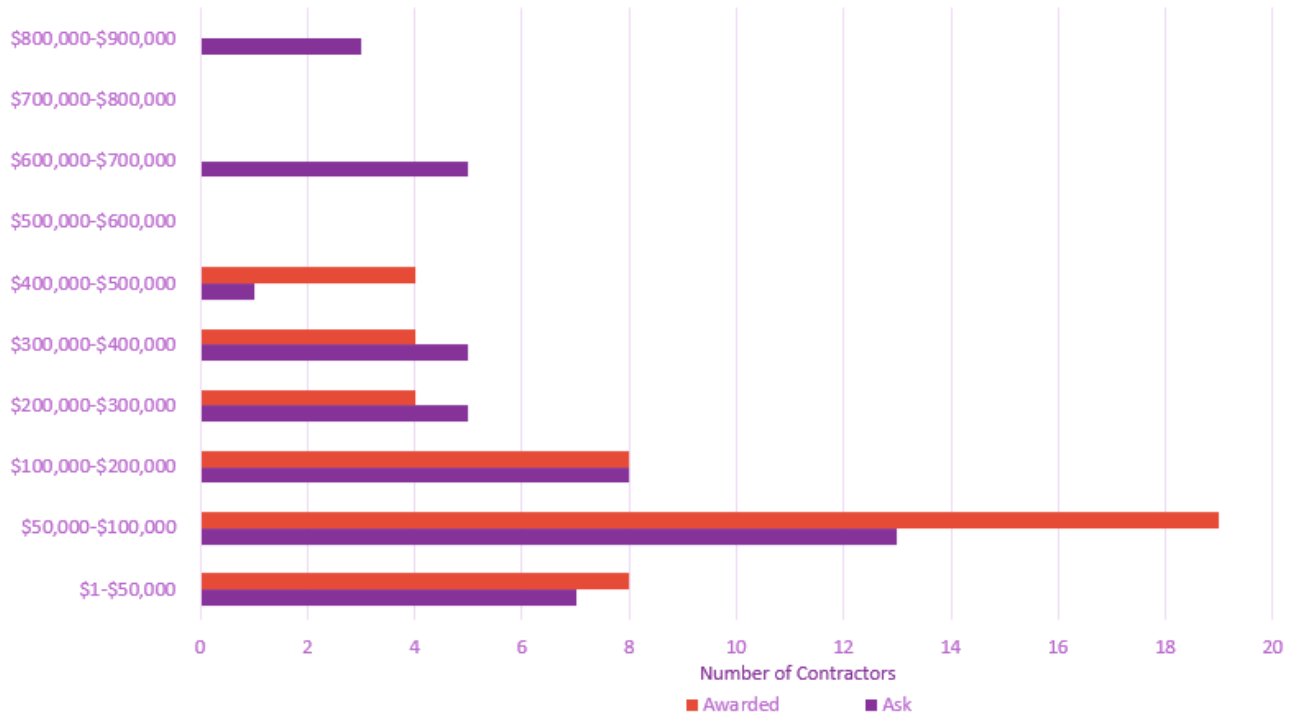
Source: ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Provider Recipients. Total classrooms and children served by provider sites. Accessed 2024.

Table 2: Child behaviors B-5 ECEAP contractors reported CNF supported:

Challenging behaviors	A child on an IEP during hours spent in an ECEAP classroom and outside of formal IEP services	The child is on an IEP and has challenging behaviors	A child experienced a complex trauma	A child with other varying abilities
466	836	414	957	1,251

Source: ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Provider Recipients. Child Demographics. Accessed 2024.

Figure 4. SY23-24 ECEAP Complex Needs Fund Contractor Awarded & Requested Funding

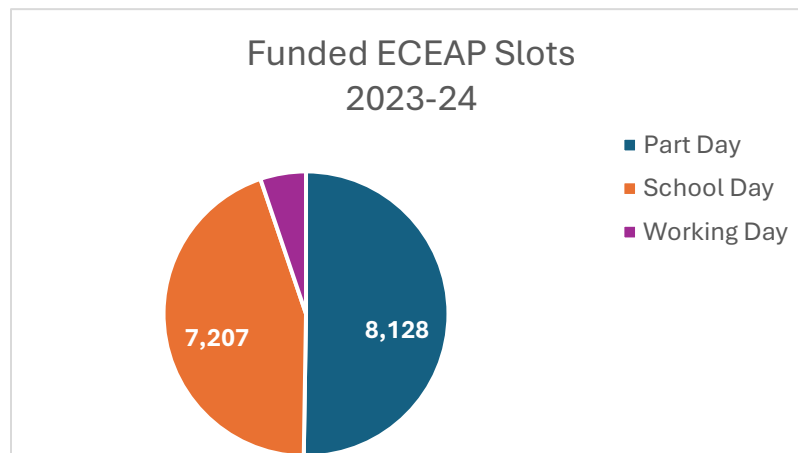


Source: ECEAP Complex Needs Fund CNF Applications (SY23-24).

ECEAP Services

In the 2023-24 school year, ECEAP slots increased by 1,254. Children were served in a total of 16,174 slots statewide.

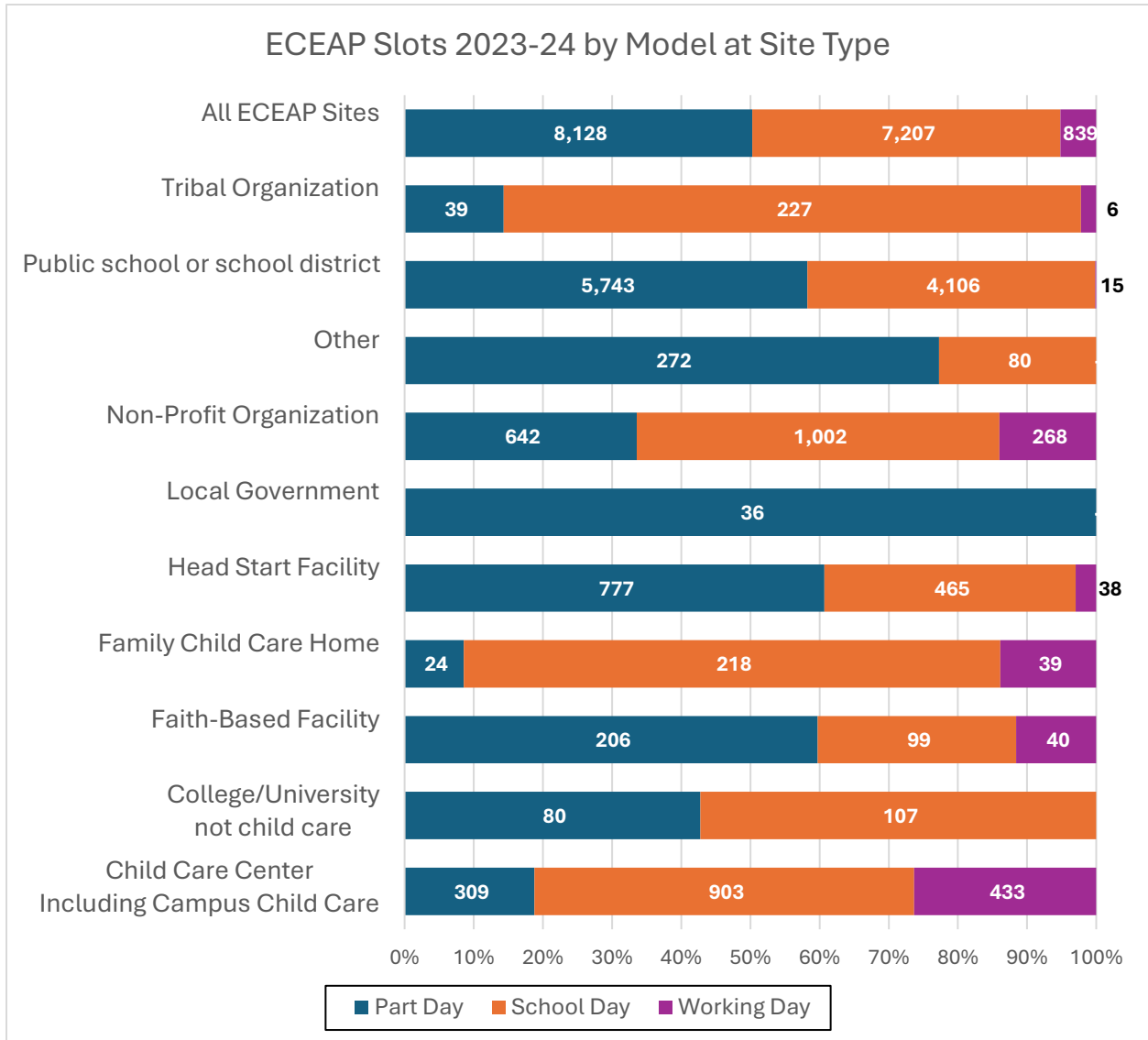
Figure 5. SY23-24: ECEAP Slots by Service Model



Source: Early Learning Management System (ELMS) (SY23-24). Accessed August 2024.

ECEAP services are provided in a variety of settings. The chart below shows the percentage of slots by the setting of ECEAP services.

Figure 6. SY23-24 ECEAP Slots by the Setting of ECEAP Services



Source: Early Learning Management System (ELMS) (SY23-24). Accessed August 2024.

Differentiated Comprehensive Services

Individualized and culturally relevant comprehensive services have been the key to ECEAP’s success since its beginning in 1985. Modeled after the federal Head Start program, ECEAP “comprehensive services” are a two-generation and team approach. “Two-generation (2Gen) approaches build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives *together*. 2Gen approaches center on the whole family to create a

legacy of educational success and economic prosperity that passes from one generation to the next.”⁶ This way each child and family has the resources and services they need to foster kindergarten readiness and improve their lives.

Early education is important, but it is not enough on its own to change the life trajectory for children in poverty or experiencing complex trauma.

DCYF recognizes that children cannot learn at their best if they are in poor health, do not have enough to eat, or if their parents are worried about where they will sleep or how they will pay bills. ECEAP begins collaborative partnerships with enrolled families by assessing each child’s development, physical health, and family well-being. Then, contractor staff partner with parents to set goals for their child and their whole family. Throughout the year, with strong community partnerships, supports are tailored to each child and family – an approach called “differentiated services.” Finally, progress is tracked and monitored at the contractor and state level.

According to the National Head Start Association’s September 2022 policy brief on [Unpacking How Comprehensive Services in Early Head Start Lead to Impacts for Children & Families](#), research suggests it is necessary to provide health, parent involvement, nutrition, and social support services to promote school readiness in children experiencing poverty.

The value of comprehensive services in ECEAP and similar programs goes beyond the impact on individual children. Economist and Nobel Prize recipient James Heckman makes a strong case that investing in comprehensive services for disadvantaged young children is in our national interest in his detailed [2017 letter](#) to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Reform: Outcomes in education, health and sociability greatly influence our nation’s economic productivity and future ... Data from economists, social scientists and medical experts conclusively shows that the answer is to invest in comprehensive early

ECEAP COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

Education – Preschool classes with a comprehensive research-based curriculum, developmental screening, and ongoing assessment of development and individualized planning to support kindergarten readiness.

Family Support – Individualized approach to enhance family resilience, stability and financial security using the [Mobility Mentoring](#)[®] approach.

Health – Ensuring each child is up to date with preventative care and screening, receiving nutritious meals, and referred for mental health services if indicated.

⁶ Aspen Institute. The 2Gen Approach, Accessed January 2025: <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/2gen-approach/>

childhood development — from birth to age five — particularly in disadvantaged children and their families.

Early ECEAP Services

In 2018, DCYF was awarded a federal Preschool Development Birth Through Five Grant (PDG B-5) from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. This initial grant provided DCYF an opportunity to conduct systems planning aimed at improving and increasing availability of high-quality early learning services and building sustainable system infrastructure.

In 2019, with federal funds from PDG B-5 2.0, Senate Bill 5437 required DCYF to “develop a plan for phased implementation of a birth to three early childhood education and assistance program pilot project,” now named **Early ECEAP**.

The federal funds were for the program years 2020-23 and designed to fund Early ECEAP as a pilot project. The pilot project provided services to 144 children and families by 10 contractors spread throughout the state. Early ECEAP continues to grow, serving 178 children in 2023-24. To learn more about Early ECEAP services, including key features and the goals of the pilot, visit the [Early ECEAP webpage](#) and the [Early ECEAP Pilot Legislative Report](#). For more details about the framework, approach, and phases of Early ECEAP Implementation, Infrastructure-building, visit the Early ECEAP webpage.

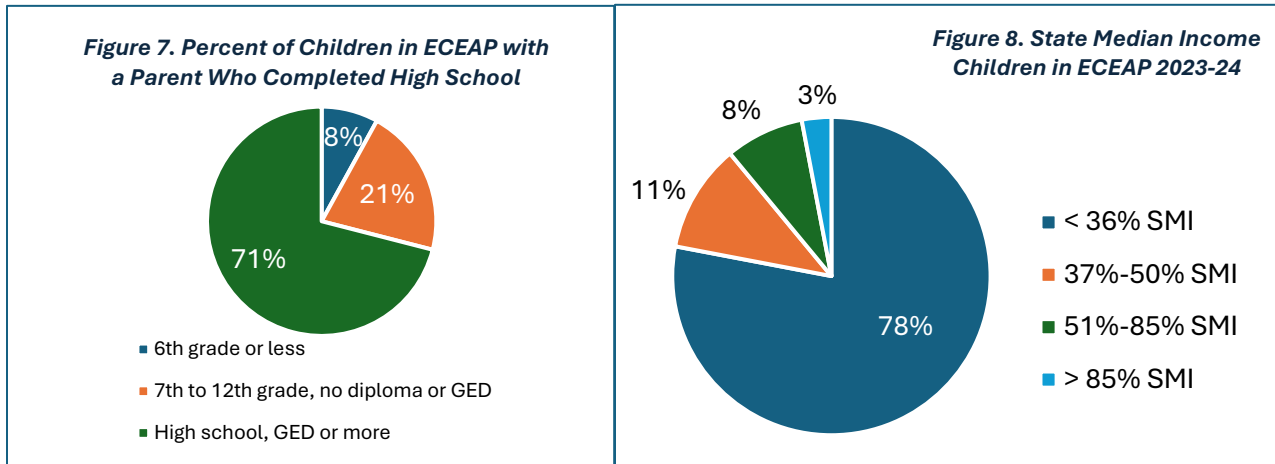
Children in ECEAP

Enrolling Washington’s Most Vulnerable Young Children

In 2023-24, ECEAP served 16,472 children in ECEAP and Early ECEAP⁷. The following section uses data retrieved from ELMS in August 2024 to describe the demographics of children cumulatively enrolled in the 2023-2024 ECEAP school year. This includes family information related to income, educational attainment, homelessness, language, and special needs.

ECEAP serves the most vulnerable children among those eligible. In the 2021-22 school year, ECEAP sites started enrolling children according to the recently passed Fair Start for Kids Act, which contained provisions related to income eligibility.

State Median Income



Most children in ECEAP are in families that struggle to make ends meet. Children are eligible for ECEAP by income alone if their family income is at or below 36% of the State Median Income (SMI). In 2023, 36% of State Median Income (SMI) was \$40,836 annually for a family of four.

In 2023-24:

- 78% of children in ECEAP were in families at or below 36% SMI.
- 11% of children in ECEAP were in families between 36% and 50% SMI.
- 88% of ECEAP families qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (up to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level).

Parent Educational Attainment

In school year 23-24, twenty-one percent of children in ECEAP have a parent who did not graduate high school or obtain a GED. Eight percent of parents did not complete 6th grade or less.

According to [Child Trends](#), children who grow up with parents who have not graduated from high school not only have fewer socioeconomic advantages but also are more likely to be born with low birth weight, have other health problems, enter school unprepared, and have limited educational and employment opportunities as adults.

Complex Trauma

Many children in ECEAP have experienced [complex trauma](#) – exposure to multiple and severe traumatic events that can disrupt child development and formation of their sense of self.

At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, 44% of ECEAP children were below their age level in social-emotional development⁸ which may reflect a history of pervasive trauma. Staff who work with ECEAP children and families have expertise in providing trauma-informed care and education to young children to alleviate the impacts of poverty and other difficult circumstances. This approach produces child development and learning outcomes which would not otherwise be expected in the population ECEAP serves.

In 2023-24, ECEAP served:

- 122 children who were expelled from other early learning settings due to behavior
- 1,365 children with current or previous child protective service involvement
- 1,876 children experiencing homelessness
- 894 children with involvement in foster or kinship care. *Note: This is an unduplicated count of children with involvement in foster care or kinship care and includes children adopted after foster/kinship care or after living in an orphanage in another country.*
- 262 children who changed guardianship during the ECEAP year
- 801 children with an incarcerated parent
- 1,492 children with a household substance abuse issue
- 1,861 children in a household that had experienced domestic violence

Focus on Homelessness

Children who are experiencing homelessness – lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence – are prioritized for ECEAP enrollment. ECEAP helps mitigate negative impacts on their development, learning, and health.

In 2023-24:

- 11.4% of ECEAP children were homeless during the school year.
- Another 3.8% were homeless in the 12 months prior to enrollment.

The under-identification of children experiencing homelessness has been a long-standing issue, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the onset of the pandemic, this under-identification has only worsened.⁹ The most recent report on early childhood homelessness in Washington was released in 2021, using data from 2018-19.

- 9% of the 37,623 children under 6 reported experiencing homelessness in Washington were in ECEAP, Early Head Start, Head Start, or McKinney-Vento funded Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in 2019.

⁸ TSGold Fall 2019 Assessment (SY19-20). Social Emotional Domain.

⁹ SchoolHouse Connection & Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan (2020). *Lost in the Masked Shuffle & Virtual Void: Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Amidst the Pandemic*. <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/imported-files/Lost-in-the-Masked-Shuffle-and-Virtual-Void.pdf>

- A person in the U.S. is most likely to experience homelessness¹⁰ in their first year of life. A person is next most likely to experience homelessness at ages 1 to 5.
- According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in 2022 an additional 31% of Washington families with children face a high housing cost burden, with housing consuming one-third or more of their income. The rate is higher among low-income families, at 68%¹¹. Low-income families in this situation are unlikely to be able to meet other basic needs such as food, clothing, and medical care.

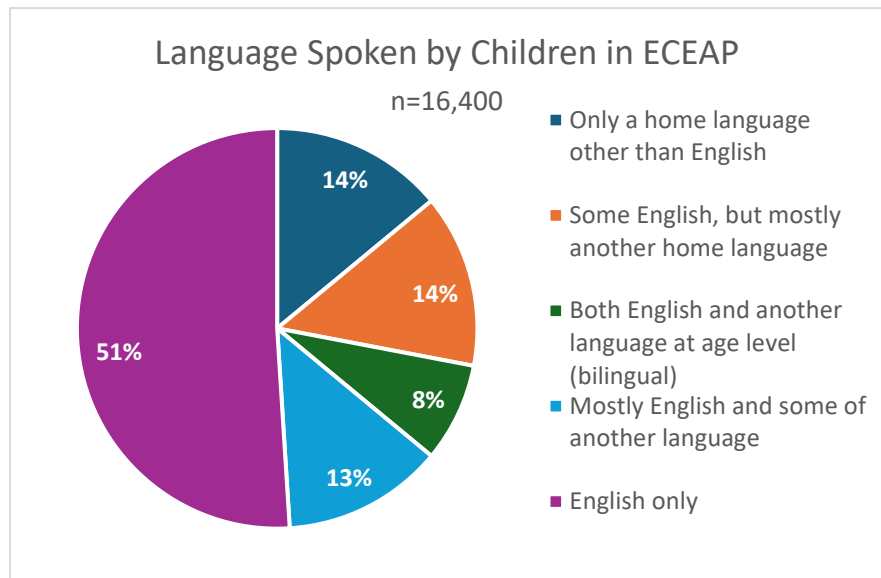
Primary Languages

ECEAP started collecting data about children’s home languages in the 2019-20 school year. This year’s report is the first year of data for all children attending ECEAP.

There are more than 30 languages spoken by the families ECEAP is engaging with. Some children begin ECEAP speaking English fluently and others are learning English while they continue to develop in their first language or languages.

DCYF continues to build resources and supports to help ECEAP providers successfully include multiple language learners in our preschool classes as well as provide culturally and linguistically relevant family support.

Figure 9. SY23-24 Languages Spoken by Children in ECEAP



Child Race and Ethnicity

Note: The count of Washington’s children by race and ethnicity utilizes the 2023 OFM [Small Area Demographics Estimates](#) at the state level, ages 0-4.

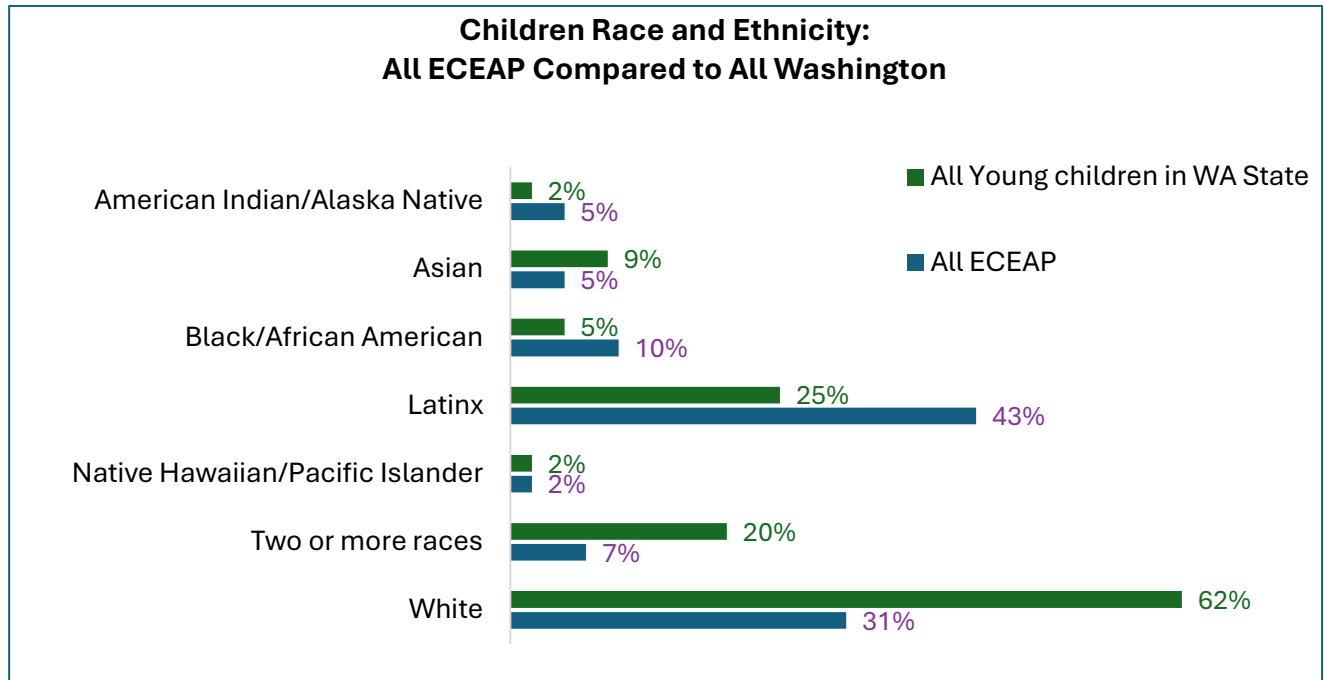
In 2020, the US Census changed its data collection and reporting race for American Indian and Alaskan Native. Under the new methodology, people can choose “American Indian and Alaskan Native” as well as

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (October 2016). Family Options Study 3-Year Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Family-Options-Study-Full-Report.pdf>

¹¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Data Center (2022). Children living in households with a high housing cost burden in Washington. Accessed January 2025.

other racial categories. This increased the national count from 5.2 million to 9.6 million. ECEAP numbers reflect a similar update.

Figure 10. SY23-24 Child Race & Ethnicity



Young children in racial and ethnic groups vulnerable to the opportunity gap and furthest from opportunity are a larger percent of the children ECEAP serves than they are of the overall Washington state population. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Expanding access to early learning supports, Early Intervention (EI), and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs can lead to substantial cost savings.¹² EI and ECSE programs provide vital services that support positive outcomes in early childhood and reduce later disparities in IEP status.¹³

Children with IEPs are eligible for ECEAP regardless of family income, though they are prioritized for enrollment in available slots based on income and other factors. In the 2023-24 school year, 17% of ECEAP children had an IEP:

- 1,516 children were on an IEP prior to enrollment in ECEAP

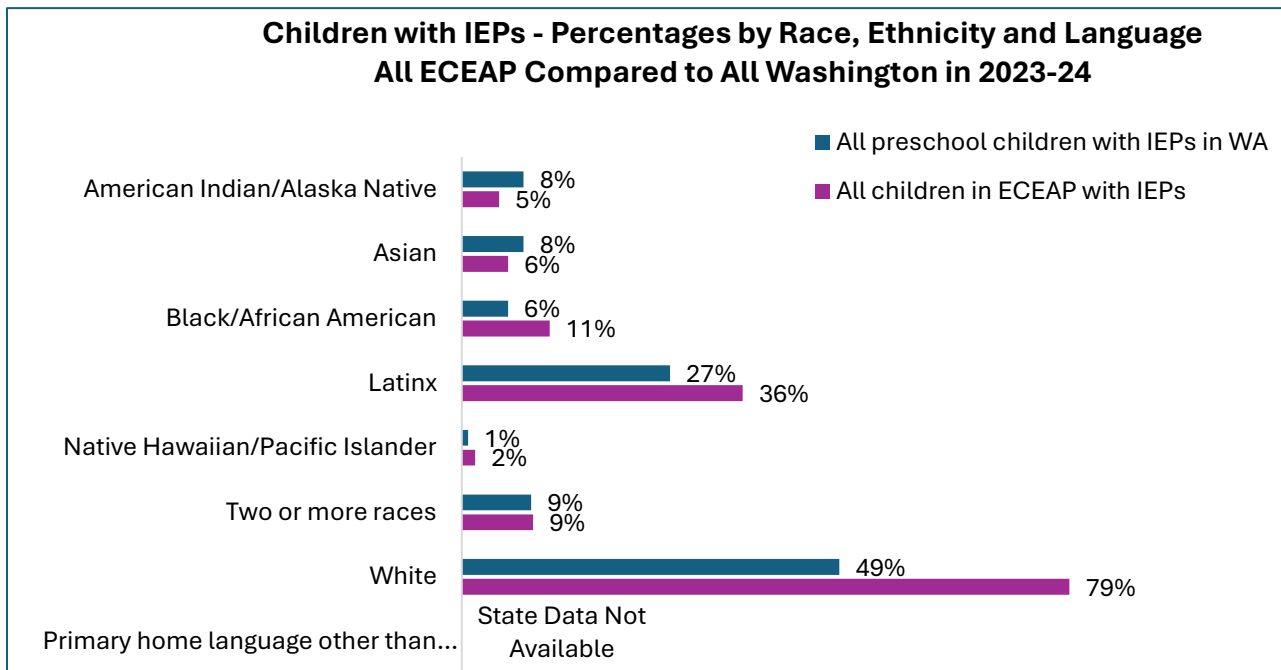
¹² Muschkin, C. G., Ladd, H. F., & Dodge, K. A. (2015). Impact of North Carolina’s early childhood initiatives on special education placements in third grade. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(4), 478-500. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1084495>

¹³ Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2012). Are minority children disproportionately represented in early intervention and early childhood special education?. *Educational Researcher*, 41(9), 339-351. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ987213>

- 346 children were referred for evaluation in ECEAP
- 2,865 children in ECEAP were on an IEP at some time during the school year

In school year 2022-2023, ECEAP served 25% of the 9,652 three and four-year olds children with IEPs in Washington.¹⁴The percentages of children with IEPs are higher in ECEAP compared to total population of children who are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, White, Black, speak a primary home language other than English, and have an IEP.

Figure 11. SY23-24 Children with IEPs ECEAP compared to Washington State



The percentages in ECEAP compared to the rest of the state are lower for Asian, Latinx, of two or more races, and American Indian/Alaska Native.

Child Development and Learning

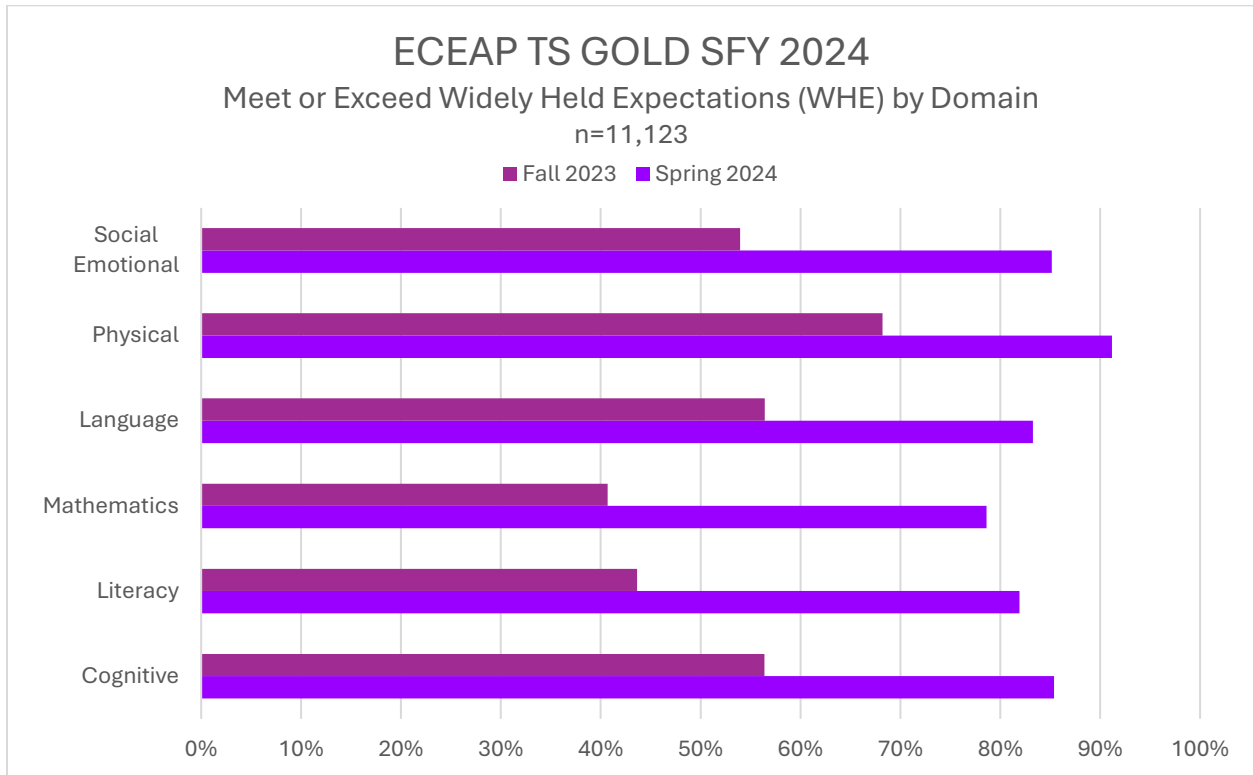
Using the TS Gold Assessment, teachers in ECEAP classrooms observe children in the context of everyday activities and natural settings over time, record their observations and record them in 36 objectives under 6 domains, plus two more for children who are multiple-language learners. Teachers use this observation assessment data to plan curricula and individualize instructional supports and child guidance. DCYF uses the data to determine areas of focus and statewide

¹⁴ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) (SY22-23). IDEA Part B, November 2022 Child Count. [ire_cc_2022_23_state_summary.xlsx](#)

training.

The chart below compares fall 2023 and spring 2024 Teaching Strategies GOLD® results for the more than 11,000 3- and 4-year-old children who were present for both assessment checkpoints in at least one domain.

Figure 12. Teaching Strategies GOLD® results (fall 2023 and spring 2024)



The greatest gains are in Literacy and Math, with 44% and 41% of ECEAP children achieving at age level in the fall, and 82% and 79% reaching or exceeding their age level by spring.

The percentage of children achieving ‘widely held expectations’ for their age in 5 or 6 out of 6 domains was 14% in the fall and 58% in the spring, more than 4 times as many.

This is notable, especially since 79% are in families at or below 36% of the State Median Income (SMI), 27% were on individualized education programs (IEPs) for development delays or disabilities, and 7% were in families with high levels of complex trauma, such as but not limited to:

- Substance abuse
- Domestic violence
- Loss of a parent or primary caregiver due to death, abandonment, or deportation

- Incarcerated parent/guardian
- Involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS) or Indian Child Welfare (ICW)

For more information, see [Research Foundation: Teaching Strategies GOLD® Assessment System](#).

Teaching Strategies GOLD®

Children in ECEAP are assessed quarterly to track their early literacy and math skills as well as their cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional development using Teaching Strategies GOLD® Birth to Third Grade. This is a valid, reliable, and seamless assessment system that meets the assessment standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of State Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

ECEAP teachers receive mandatory Inter-Rater Reliability training to ensure that the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment is used consistently for all children in ECEAP. Teachers observe children in the context of everyday activities and natural settings over time, record their observations and use them to rate 36 objectives, plus two more for children learning English. Teachers use the data to plan curricula and individualize instructional supports and child guidance. DCYF uses the data to determine areas of focus and statewide training.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® Inter-Rater Reliability

The accuracy of ECEAP child assessment data used on the Child Development and Learning pages above depends on teachers' abilities to observe and evaluate children's behavior. Teaching Strategies GOLD® has taken steps to check and enhance the accuracy of teachers' assessment ratings through a process that leads to inter-rater reliability (IRR) certification.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year:

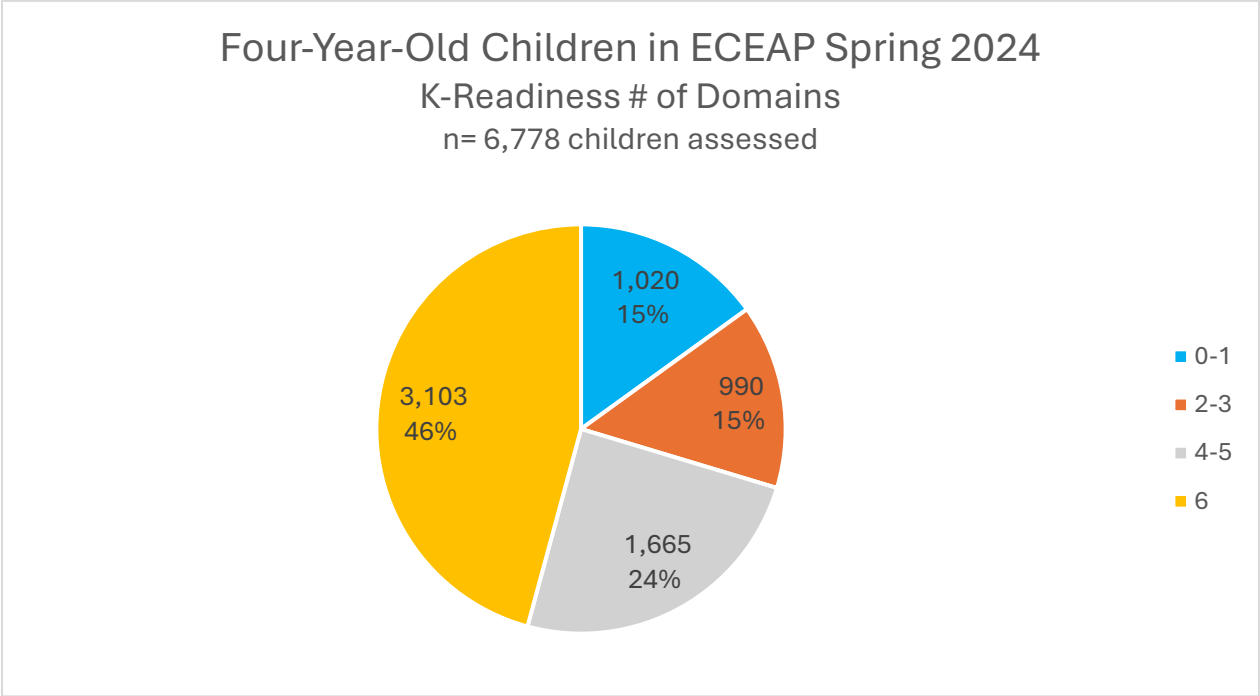
- 97% of more than 630 lead teachers had current Teaching Strategies GOLD® IRR certification.
- Only 3 teachers had an expired IRR certification more than three years old and must recertify.
- Only 16 teachers were recently hired and not yet required to complete certification.
- Only 1% of lead teachers were overdue.

Because accurate use of Teaching Strategies GOLD® is critical for DCYF's data-driven decision making, DCYF added IRR certification as a performance-based contract (PBC) measure for 2019-20. When the "[Stay Home - Stay Healthy](#)" order was issued and teachers were adapting to providing remote lessons and pursue professional development remotely, they were able to engage with IRR training. The IRR certification process was already virtual, and teachers could

focus on the testing. This, coupled with the added PBC measure, increased the percentage of teachers with current IRR certification.

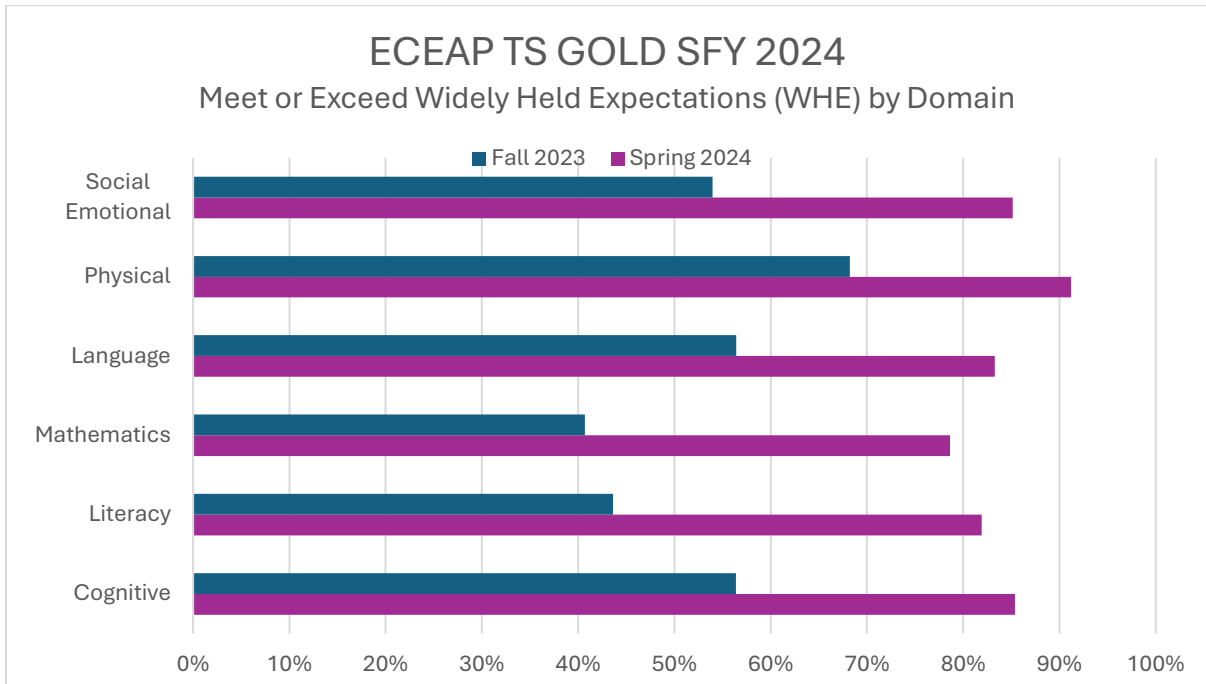
Kindergarten Readiness at the End of ECEAP

Figure 13. Kindergarten Readiness Numbers by Domain



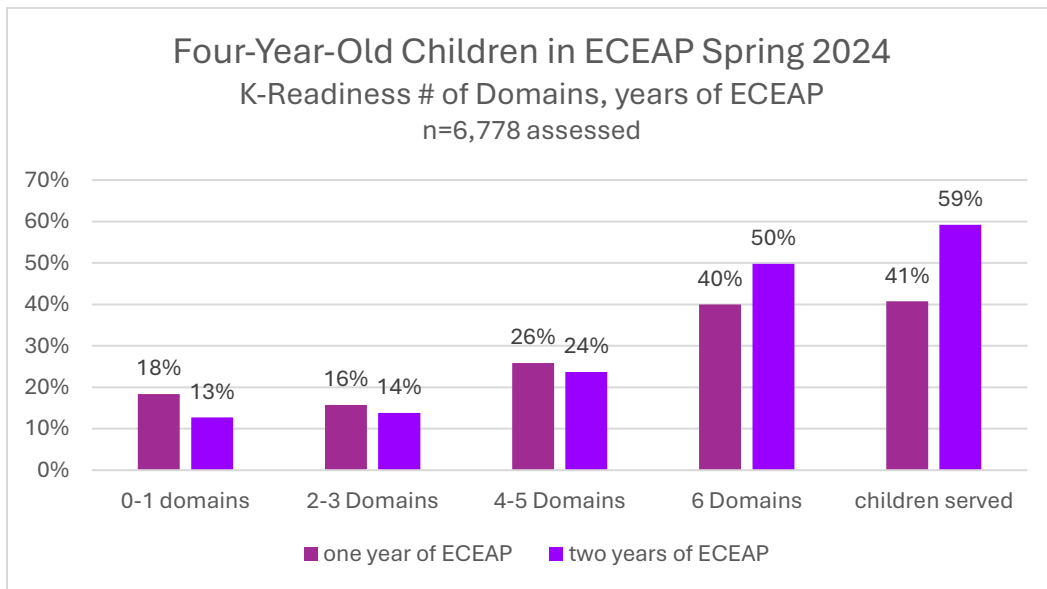
When children begin ECEAP, their Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment results are most likely to be the lowest in Literacy and Mathematics. These are also the areas where children made the greatest gains during their time in ECEAP.

Figure 14. Meet or Exceeds Widely Held Expectations (WHE) Percentages by Domain



Children who attend ECEAP for two years are more likely to be ready for Kindergarten in each developmental domain. The largest gains in the second year are in the pre-academic areas of Literacy and Mathematics.

Figure 15. Kindergarten Readiness Numbers by Domain and Years in ECEAP

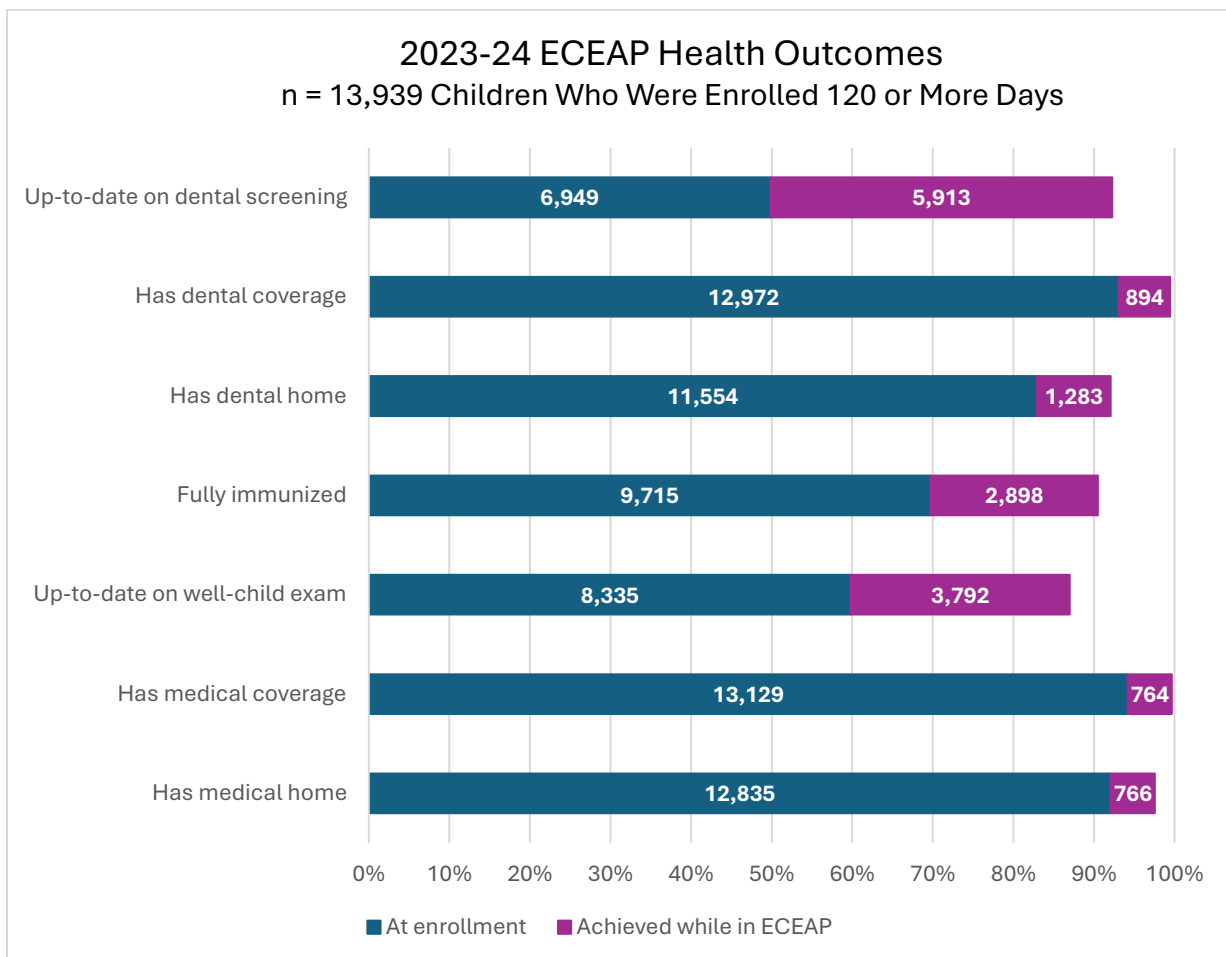


Child Health

When children are healthy, they have the capacity to learn. This is especially important for children living in families experiencing poverty or trauma. ECEAP improves children’s access to health care by ensuring each child has medical and dental coverage as well as a medical and dental home where they are seen over time. ECEAP children receive vision, hearing, and height/weight screenings, most often at their ECEAP site.

ECEAP staff follow up with families to ensure children receive further diagnosis or treatment when indicated. By tracking each child’s health care needs, this component of ECEAP services is individualized.

Figure 16. 2023-24 ECEAP Health Outcomes



In School Year (SY) 2023-24:

- 854 children in ECEAP (5.2%) had chronic health conditions.
- 599 had special health care needs requiring staff to work with parents and health care providers to develop a written individual health plan that can follow the child to Kindergarten.
- 299 children received vision care as a result of ECEAP screening.
- 59 children received hearing care as a result of ECEAP screening.

ECEAP Family Engagement

Family engagement is an essential component of ECEAP comprehensive services, in support of children’s health, development, and school readiness. ECEAP staff partner with parents and guardians regarding their child’s individualized learning and their family’s unique needs and goals. ECEAP also provides opportunities for parents and guardians to volunteer in the classroom and participate in parent education and parent leadership development activities.

This approach aligns with the [Epstein’s framework of parent involvement](#), which recommends six types of parent involvement that should be addressed to support comprehensive partnerships between families and educational programs. These include:

- **Parenting:** Early learning programs provide information about parenting and child development, including health, nutrition, and developmental milestones,
- **Communicating:** Early learning programs provide information about programs and services and communicate about children’s progress,
- **Volunteering:** Early learning programs seek opportunities to include families in the classroom through recruiting, training, and providing volunteer opportunities,
- **Learning at home:** Schools help families create educational opportunities for children in the home and support their child’s learning at school,
- **Decision-making:** Schools provide opportunities for families to take on leadership roles in schools and participate in decision-making processes, and
- **Community collaboration:** Schools coordinate with community organizations to provide resources and services to families.



When I enrolled two of my children in ECEAP, I met my family support person who was very helpful. She told me about the Parent Policy Council and went with me to the orientation. At first, I was hesitant – I hadn't really been involved in things. From there, I joined the parent panel for negotiated rulemaking for Washington State early learning programs. We did nearly two years of work on safe sleep. That was life-changing for me. I lost one of my daughters to SIDS so I'm passionate about safety. Using my voice and sharing it with others was part of my self-growth and healing. I've had so many opportunities – I presented Senator Patty Murray with an award; I became a Parent Ambassador, and I just accepted an invitation for a racial equity think tank. I would not have had these huge milestones without the support of ECEAP. The parents and staff lift you up, make you feel like you are somebody. They care about every single parent that comes through that door. Not even five years ago, I was homeless with six kids and my daughter had just passed away. I never would have imagined where I am today. I advocate not only for myself but for other parents. I want them to know that if their needs aren't met or if they are treated unfairly, they have a voice they can use. – ECEAP Parent

Read more about one former parent who now supports current ECEAP parents as a family support specialist at an ECEAP site [here](#).

DCYF ECEAP Parents and Families Voice (PFV)

Part of ECEAP's ongoing family partnership processes includes staff and parent relationships, feedback from families at ECEAP sites, local community committees, health committees, and policy council. At the state level, DCYF actively listens to and learns from ECEAP parents and families regarding statewide ECEAP issues, to support ECEAP continuous quality improvement related to systems, approaches, structures, and policies.



The DCYF ECEAP team listened and responded to feedback from the ECEAP Steering Committee Parent Advisory Representatives in 2021. The group recommended having a more targeted

ECEAP parent/family voice at the state level. In 2022 the DCYF ECEAP Parents and Families Voice (PFV) was created, with a total of 5 representatives. This group now has a total of 20 parents and family volunteers from across the state with diverse representation, including region, race, ethnicity, culture, language, disability, gender, and family structure.



The DCYF ECEAP PFV is comprised of parents and families who are:

- Leaders in the communities where they live
- Members of the ECEAP Policy Council members, Washington

State Association of Head Start and ECEAP Parent Ambassadors, and/or Child care committee members

- Parents and families who are dual language, Tribal, receiving IEP services
- Fathers



The DCYF ECEAP PFV supports the implementation of equitable and culturally relevant practices - ECEAP standards ensure meaningful family engagement, strengthening community partnerships, resulting in stronger child and family outcomes.



PFV representatives provide input, advice, opinions, questions, concerns, suggestions and recommendations on issues that may affect

DCYF ECEAP service delivery and support ECEAP decision making on policies and procedures. They have committed members that put in hours to review sections ECEAP Performance Standards, and some other ECEAP tools used statewide.

The parent perspective has enabled the DCYF ECEAP team to make collaborative and informed decisions. DCYF has managed to incorporate and integrate PFV feedback into ECEAP services to improve quality and access to ECEAP.

Between 2021 and 2024, PFV representatives have provided feedback and input on the following:

- Request for Application
- ECEAP Family Input Survey
- Performance Based Contracting
- ECEAP Enrollment

“I contacted them myself to find out if we were eligible since my son was on an IEP. I left an initial message, and the enrollment team contacted me. After going through various questions and providing our information we were accepted based on my son's IEP”. - Maura Baker, DCYF ECEAP PFV representative

Mobility Mentoring®

Mobility Mentoring® aims to address the extreme stresses of economic challenge by helping parents improve focus, planning, and decision-making. It is designed to help people achieve future-oriented goals, despite the immediate challenges related to poverty.

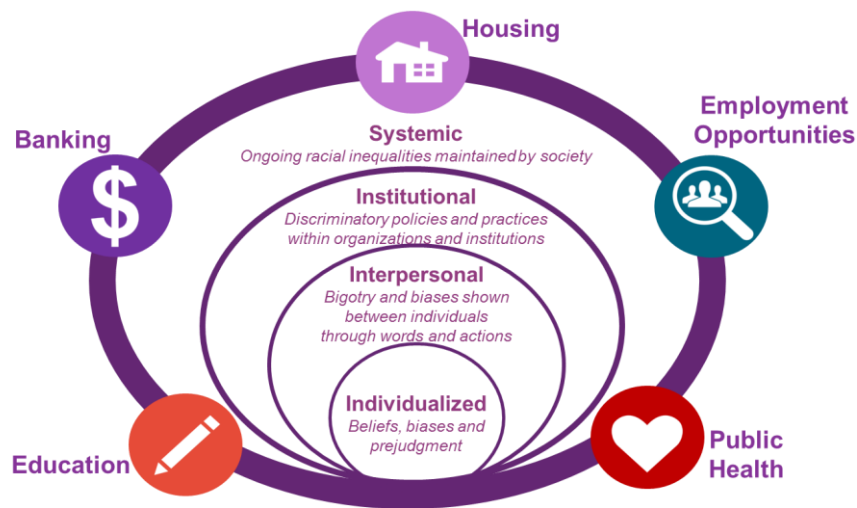
ECEAP uses the Mobility Mentoring® approach because it counters cognitive and behavioral challenges rooted in economic challenges, trauma, and social bias. The journey to family stability and well-being is like crossing a bridge: traveling from where you are now, going to where you want to be. The DCYF Bridge to Child and Family Self-Reliance is held up by five significant pillars, all interrelated, all equally important:

- Family Stability

- Well-Being
- Financial Management
- Education and Training
- Employment and Career Management

The Bridge to Child and Family Self Reliance (the Bridge) is a tool used to set individualized specific goals informed by the family’s cultural values. Mobility Mentoring® was designed to understand that individuals approach this journey with differing experiences, strengths, challenges, and dreams for their future.

Figure 17. Spheres of Systemic Racism or Systems Thinking and Race



ECEAP Family Support Staff (FSS) train to become Mobility Mentoring® coaches. FSS partner with families to help them acquire resources and skills and to sustain behavior changes. Using the Bridge to frame a deliberate one-on-one partnership between families and staff, families set goals based on their assessment of the five pillars.

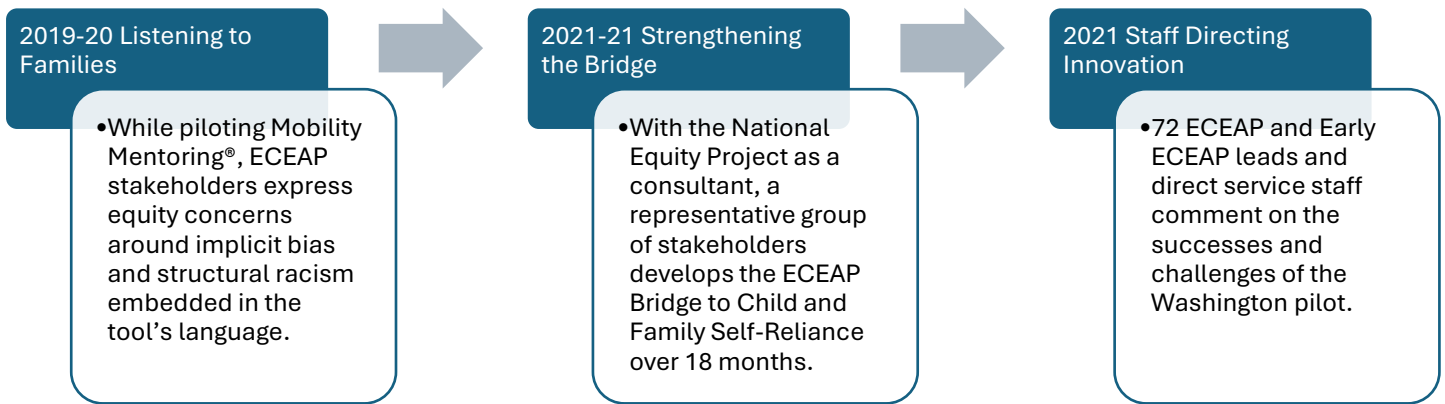
Centering Equity in Family Support

ECEAP contractors shared concerns about the racial and cultural responsiveness of the implementation of Mobility Mentoring®. In response, DCYF implemented two workgroups, beginning in March 2019.

One of these workgroups brought together tribal early learning leaders (including tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors) to learn about the implementation of Mobility Mentoring® in the context of tribal culture and values, including specific concerns identified by tribal providers. In partnership with DCYF's Office of Tribal Relations, DCYF staff convened tribal workgroup meetings. With additional support from the [National Equity Project](#), input was

gathered, and implemented into an updated Bridge to Self-Sufficiency that is now more inclusive of tribal culture and values.

The second workgroup included non-tribal ECEAP contractors who expressed an interest in sharing their ideas and concerns about the racial and cultural responsiveness of ECEAP’s Mobility Mentoring® implementation. Both groups met regularly in 2019 to achieve a clear understanding of concerns and issues expressed by the field and determine solutions. This would ensure that ECEAP contractors have the tools and resources they need to implement anti-bias responsive approaches to family support services in the program.



Response to Liberatory Design Challenges

Training Materials	The Bridge	Evaluation
Address implicit bias and structural racism.	Embrace strengths-based, equitable language.	Provide opportunities for parent input on Mobility Mentoring® tools.

Training Materials

The Tribal and Equity Workgroups created materials to supplement the Empath Mobility Mentoring® Foundations training curriculum to explore deeper into topics such as implicit bias and institutional and systemic racism.

The workgroups felt it was essential to define what has marginalized communities within the core pillars for centuries — practices like redlining in housing and predatory lending in banking. An additional 90-minute reflection session was added to the course to discuss beliefs, bias, and racism.

Evaluation

Annually, ECEAP surveys parents to receive feedback about the comprehensive services provided to themselves and their children's experiences during the school year. As a result of the Equity and Tribal Workgroups, the traditional survey was revised and renamed the Family Input Survey. It asks caregivers if their knowledge and resource awareness increased around each pillar of the bridge.

These visuals show families' perception of their increase in services and resources before they began ECEAP and after completing a year of ECEAP services. Despite the relentless barriers COVID-19 presented, families set goals and made meaningful progress toward achieving them.

Figure 17. SY23-24 Family Input Survey Results

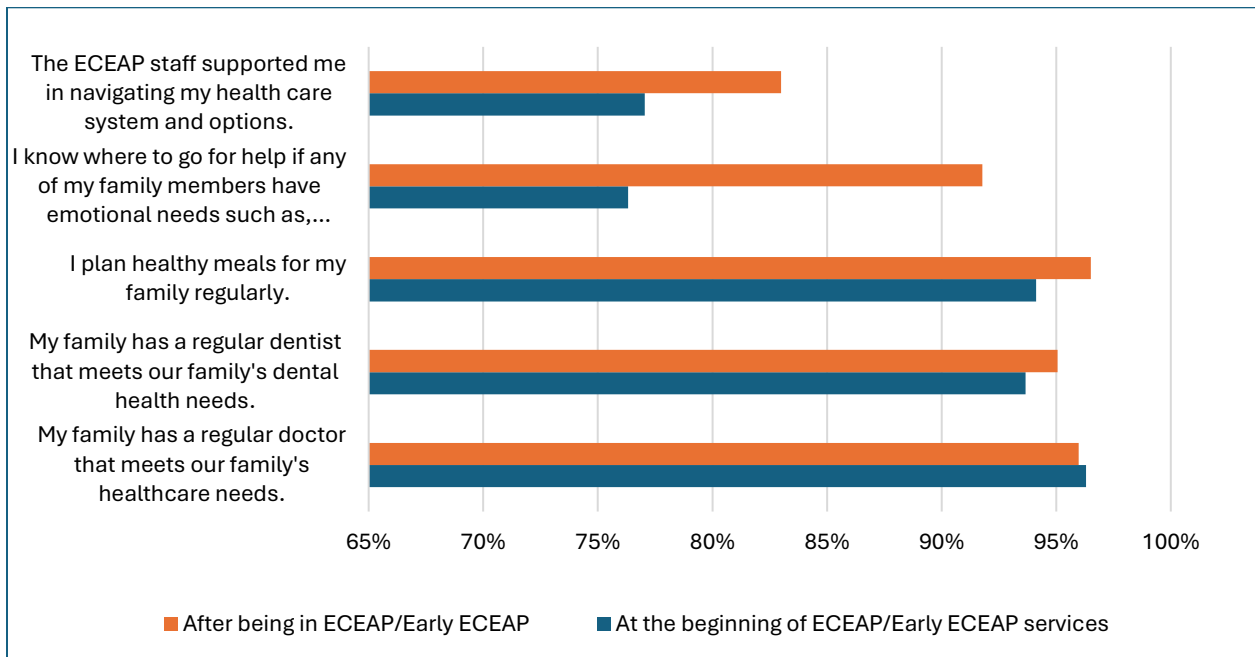
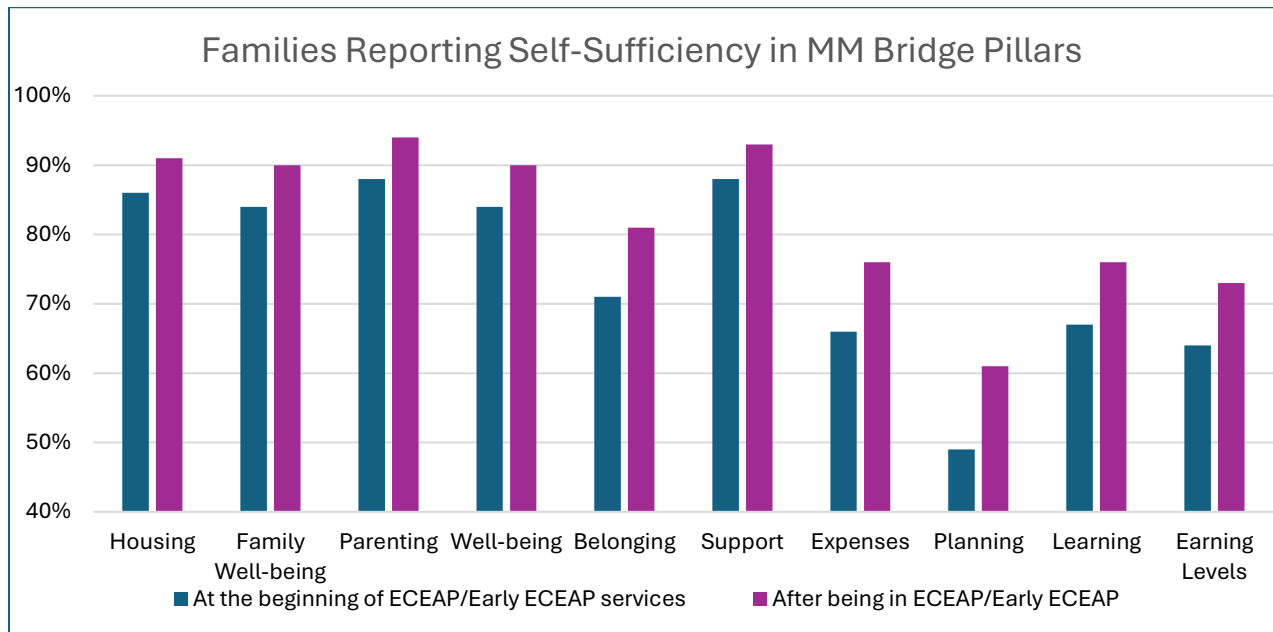


Figure 18. SY23-24 Families Reporting Self-Sufficiency in MM Bridge Pillars



Impact

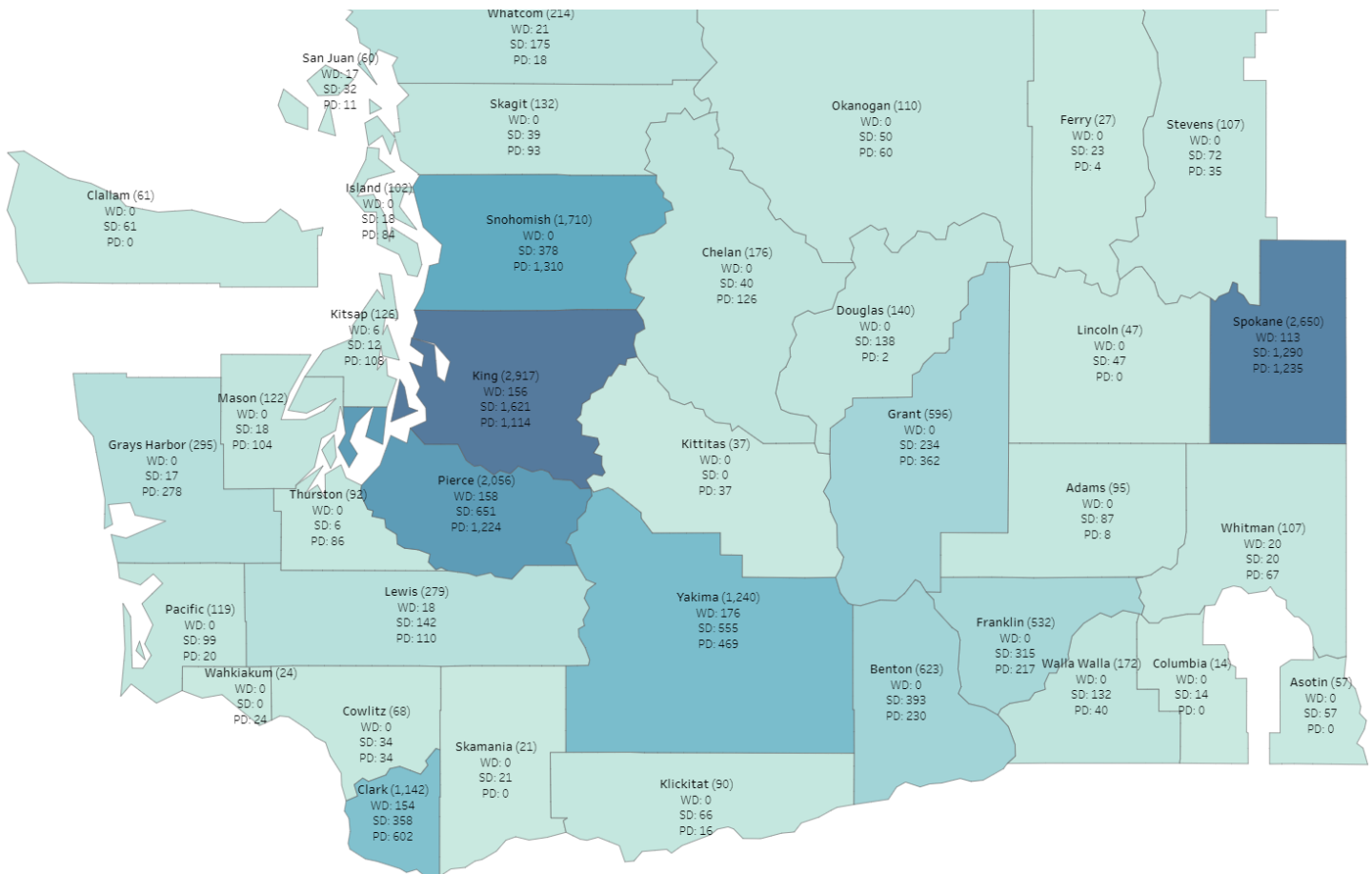
In a 2021 study ([Pediatrics](#)), ECEAP enrolled children whose adult family members engaged in Mobility Mentoring® showed **gains in two of six Teaching Strategies GOLD® Dimensions**, in comparison to families who did not¹⁵.

ECEAP Contractors

The map below is a visual guide to where ECEAP slots are distributed across Washington State by county, with the darker blue indicating higher concentration of ECEAP services. ECEAP services are in all counties except for Jefferson (which has Head Start services), Pend Oreille, and Garfield. You can access the most up to date data by visiting the [ECEAP Site Locator](#). Here you can search by school district, county, Legislative districts and zip code.

¹⁵ Homer, C. J., Winning, A., & Cummings, K. (2022). A coaching model to promote economic mobility and child developmental outcomes. *Pediatrics*, 149(1). <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9647933/>

Figure 20. ECEAP Services by County



Early Achievers

Note: Data collection was paused in March 2020 by the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order due to COVID-19. The Early Achievers Quality Recognition process was revised to utilize a virtual data collection process. Quality recognition activities resumed in 2022, and while some ECEAP sites now have a finalized recognition level, several ECEAP sites are currently completing necessary components to finalize their recognition level.

Since 2015, ECEAP sites have been required to participate in Early Achievers, Washington’s early learning quality rating and improvement system, and to achieve a rating of level 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

The Early Achievers framework ensures children’s access to high-quality early learning settings, informs parents to help them find quality early care and education, and supports early learning professionals to provide quality care and learning.

Early Achievers ratings are based on on-site observation of the early learning environment, teacher-child interactions, curriculum, staff support, family engagement and partnerships, staff professionalism, and child outcomes.

At the end of the 2023-24 school year, 46% of the 389 ECEAP sites were rated at Level 4 or 5. For context, less than 7% of licensed child care centers and family child care homes in Washington are rated at these levels. Excluding ECEAP, this number falls to 2.4%
In 2023-24:

- Five ECEAP sites were rated Level 5 “Excelling in High Quality.” Only six early learning sites in Washington, including child care, have this top-quality rating.
 - Two of the 4 ECEAP sites are operated by school districts.
 - Two of the 4 ECEAP sites are operated by community organizations.
 - One of the ECEAP sites rated Level 5 is Kaleidoscope Forest School Outdoor Preschool.
- 219 ECEAP sites were rated Level 4 “Thriving in High Quality.”
- 27 ECEAP sites were rated Level 3+, a rating introduced recently to support sites progressing to Level 4.
- 36 ECEAP sites were rated Level 3 “Demonstrating High Quality.” Some are child care sites where the ECEAP rooms were certified as meeting ECEAP quality thresholds in Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®).
- Four ECEAP sites were centers beginning the Early Achievers process at Level 2 “Committing to High Quality.”
- 138 ECEAP sites were new or not yet rated.

Components of the Early Achievers Quality Recognition Cycle include:

- Program Profile
- Video Highlights
- Records Review
- Additional components: Accreditation, Video Highlights, School-Age Video Highlights
- Professional Development

Figure 21. Early Achievers Quality Recognition Cycle



Tribal ECEAP

DCYF has been working with tribal sovereign nations in Washington over the last several years on creating a tribal pathway that removes barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP in their communities. DCYF responded to requests by tribes by making changes to the ECEAP Request for Application (RFA) process and to enrollment requirements. DCYF also created a [tribal ECEAP webpage](#) to increase access to information for tribal ECEAP sites.

In the fall of 2020, DCYF resumed holding regular tribal workgroups to continue to gather feedback from tribes about what still needs to be done to remove barriers. This input informed the [Tribal ECEAP Pathway Recommendations to the Legislature](#). RFA processes, contracts, and Performance Standards were updated to include tribally inclusive language. Currently, DCYF is developing trainings specifically for tribal programs and trainings for non-tribal programs that serve tribal families or who subcontract with tribal sovereign nations.

Overview of Recommendations

DCYF made the following recommendations in response to requests from tribes with the goal of removing barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP resulting in more tribal children in Washington being served by tribal providers. When tribal children are served within their communities their outcomes are stronger, which ultimately reduces the opportunity gap for tribal children.

Specific Recommended Changes

- Increase eligibility for programs run by tribal sovereign nations and for tribal children who attend ECEAP at non-tribal sites.
- Update the Early Learning Management System (ELMS) to reduce duplicate reporting in multiple data systems.
- Create a Tribal Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist position when there are at least six to eight tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.
- Slot stability for tribes.
- Tribal slot set-aside.
- Reduce duplicate monitoring between external entities reviewing tribal programming.
- Fund tribal ECEAP at a rate that covers programming being subsidized by tribes.
- Fund culture and language education.
- Increase access to early learning tribal-specific resources and supports overall.

New Funding Model

- Explore the possibility of creating early learning tribal compacts for tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.

Training for Non-Tribal ECEAP

- Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Curriculum training to resume October 2024. A new ECEAP Tribal Specialist was hired.
- Government-to-Government training. One Government-to-Government training was delivered in the spring of 2024 in addition to trainings offered by DCYF under a contract with Gordon James. Another training will be scheduled by ECEAP Tribal Specialist in November 2024.
- Ongoing tribal-focused equity training and technical assistance.

ECEAP Workforce



The challenges of the early care and education (ECE) workforce were prevalent even before COVID-19 and as recovery from the pandemic continued, ECEAP Contractors still faced those same barriers. Trying to procure well-prepared staff, to meet ECEAP rapid expansion needs, was met with increased staffing shortages and retention issues. Having enough staff to meet classroom requirements often became a daily juggling act taking away capacity from other duties. ECEAP requires lead teachers to have an associate or higher degree with related content.

Assistant teachers must have the equivalent of 12 credits of early childhood education. Family support staff are also required to meet qualifications through degree or certificate options.

We have hired lead teachers and assistant teachers, so many are on PDPs. Finding qualified staff is a challenge. -ECEAP Contractor Staff

Support staff were forced to step into the classroom to sub limiting the opportunities to do recruitment. -ECEAP FCC Contractor Staff

We've faced a pandemic, enrollment challenges, minimal access to substitutes, multiple shifts, and constant change, and we continue to remain standing to do the hard work. -ECEAP Director

Growing a diverse workforce that represents ECEAP families and children continues to be a priority for ECEAP expansion. For the ECEAP lead and assistant teachers who were active in 2023-24 and for whom we have data in MERIT, DCYF compared race and ethnicity to ECEAP children. Based on this and comparison to other demographics in this report, system efforts should focus on recruiting staff who are AIAN, Black, Latinx, and bilingual, especially in Spanish/English.

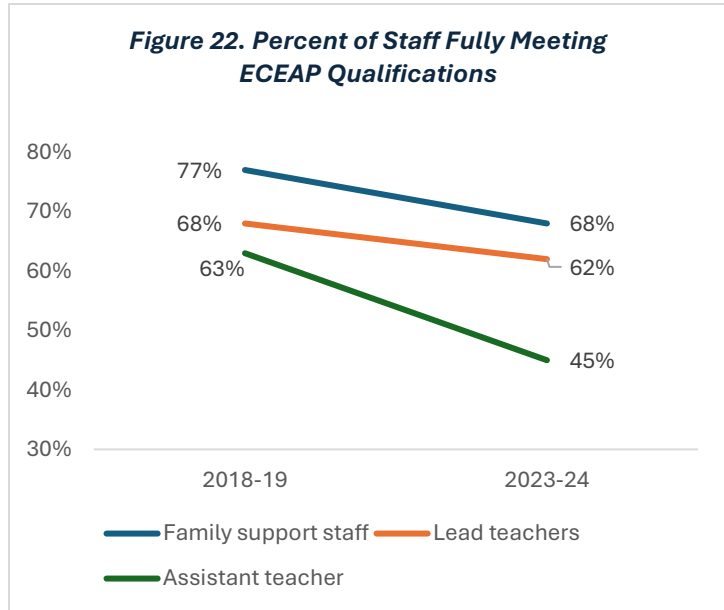
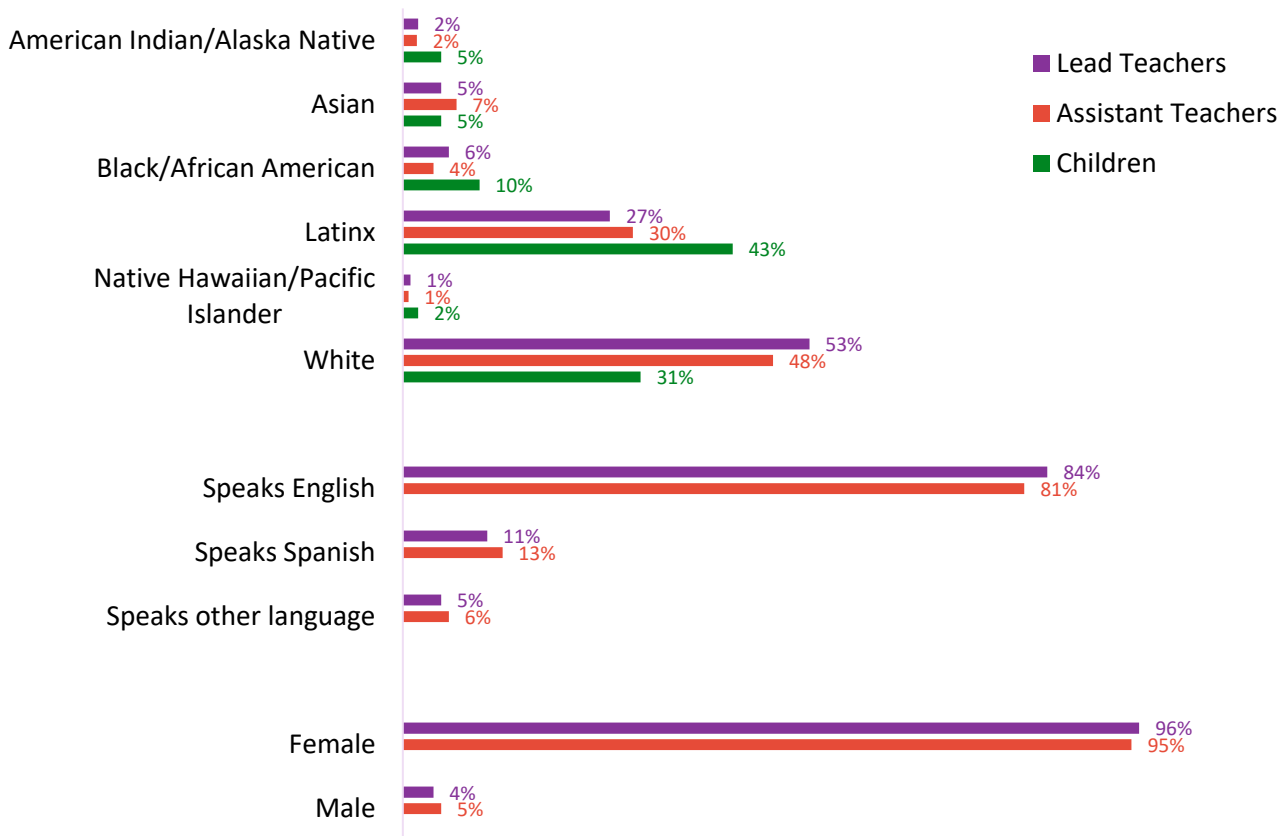


Figure 22. Percentages of ECEAP Staff and Children by Race and Ethnicity & Percentages ECEAP Staff Primary Language and Gender



n = 848 ECEAP lead teachers, 755 assistant teachers, 16400 ECEAP children.

For teachers, the option to select “Two or more races” was not available, while 7 percent of children were reported in this category. Teachers had an option of “other” race category. To enable easier reading, these categories were not included in this chart.

DCYF Support for ECEAP Services

The DCYF ECEAP team consists of 33 staff. The staff are divided into five teams supporting ECEAP contractors and sites across the state as we work toward entitlement:

- Readiness, Innovation and Capacity team (RICAP)
- Continuous Quality Improvement team (CQI)
- Data team
- Operations team
- Management team

Of the 33 staff on the DCYF ECEAP team, 25 have experience working in the early learning field (early childhood education or ECE) or have implemented comprehensive pre-k programming. Many staff working in ECEAP — in the field or at DCYF — are former Head Start and/or ECEAP parents. Those who do not have early learning experience have specialized experience vital to ECEAP’s work. ECEAP’s collaborative decision-making ensures that staff with comprehensive ECE experience contribute to decisions ensuring integrity and accuracy. The DCYF ECEAP team prioritizes developing open and honest working relationships to support their ability to challenge and question one another.

DCYF ECEAP implements robust Quality Assurance (QA), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Data Management Functions from the time a potential contractor expresses interest in providing ECEAP and then through their experience as an ECEAP contractor through annual and multi-year improvement learning loops.

DCYF ECEAP Integrated Team Functions	Leads To	System and Structural Confidence	Outcomes
CQI Functions QA Functions Data Management Functions	Stronger, more aware contractors and sites that can quickly implement required services and then provide the level of service required.	Confidence in the service delivery of each contractor. Ongoing partnership with contractors for co-design of model and services.	Overall trust in the system. Satisfied staff, developing their practice in classrooms and with families.

DCYF ECEAP Integrated Team Functions	Leads To	System and Structural Confidence	Outcomes
	<p>Process for programs to view the standards as baseline for quality and adaptable based on the needs of children and families.</p> <p>Annual revision processes are engaged. Open communication, clarifications, and timely follow through ensure internal communication system.</p> <p>Reflection and learning with and from contractors' experiences.</p> <p>Possible quality indicators emerging from contractors.</p> <p>Individualized supports for each contractor. Internal learning and infrastructure building.</p> <p>Test as we go; build in reflection and planning.</p> <p>Ensuring compliance with standards and needs is functional.</p>	<p>Emergence for future planning.</p> <p>Well defined quality.</p> <p>Space in the system for innovation and exceeding quality indicators.</p> <p>Contractors reporting of trust and transparency in system and staff.</p>	<p>Parents and caregivers leading transitions for their children.</p> <p>Parents feel more confident as first and best teacher.</p> <p>Children are fully acknowledged and affirmed in their identity and ready for what is next in educational journey.</p>

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

The DCYF ECEAP team has robust and continually refined CQI processes, work done in partnership with ECEAP contractors statewide. These have led to a range of positive outcomes in learning, physical health, and family resilience. ECEAP CQI Specialists monitor contractors for compliance with over 150 performance standards and contract provisions through data review, evaluation of deliverables, monthly phone conversations, and on-site visits whenever safely possible.

During this reporting period:

- ECEAP contractors were fully aligned with 95% of program requirements.
- The strongest areas were program administration, education, and family support.
- The requirements most frequently needing attention were:
 - Staff qualifications, which reflect known workforce issues. By the end of the year, 83% of assistant teachers and 89% of lead teachers and family support staff were fully qualified or on an approved professional development plan.
 - Maintaining full enrollment, which is a factor of ECEAP's rapid expansion. Within 30 days of class start dates, 73% of classes were full versus 79% in 2017-18.
- ECEAP contractors were successful in enrolling the state's most vulnerable young children, based on ECEAP's priority point system.

Facilities Work with the Department of Commerce

In 2016, DCYF developed a [Facilities Needs Assessment for ECEAP Expansion](#), which identified insufficient early learning facilities to support ECEAP expansion to entitlement. In 2017, legislators passed [House Bill 1777](#) which created the [Early Learning Facilities \(ELF\) grant program, intended](#) to respond to the significant and critical need for additional early learning facilities. These facilities are needed to meet the state's commitment to provide high quality early learning opportunities to low-income children and to provide access to [ECEAP](#) for all eligible children by the 2023 (which was later moved 2026 -2027 academic year). The ELF grant leverages local and private resources to enable current and prospective ECEAP contractors and [Working Connections child care](#) providers to expand, remodel, or construct early learning facilities and classrooms. This will support state-funded early learning opportunities for low-income children and help the state achieve its goal of ensuring all children are prepared to enter kindergarten.

The [Department of Commerce](#) and DCYF collaboratively implement the ELF grant program. The Department of Commerce oversees the grant and loan administration, application process and monitoring of ELF grantees. DCYF works with partners to review licensing standards. This engagement helps eliminate potential barriers to licensing while ensuring the health and safety of children in early learning programs. DCYF also provides technical assistance to ELF applicants

to ensure the process is clear and that eligible organizations meet the licensing standards at preapproval and at project completion.

Through continuous needs assessment efforts, in 2020, DCYF and Western Washington University (WWU) conducted a study which estimates that 47,765 new early learning spaces (12,482 for ECEAP and 35,283 for WCCC) are needed by 2026 to make high-quality early learning available to all eligible children. The study also estimates that approximately 1,883 new early learning facilities will be needed, including new constructions, renovation of existing facilities to add space, and/or the expansion of existing facilities and acquisitions. There is high demand for child care and early learning in Washington, but even when the slots are available, there is still need for high-quality facilities. The ELF grant program bridges the supply gap by addressing the facilities need. Since the ELF grant was launched, Washington has invested more than \$180 million.

Over 422 ELF projects and more than 17,409 early learning spaces for ECEAP/WCCC were created in over 54 counties. Eligible organization projects were created in a variety of spaces:

- 97 in ECEAP/ WCCC spaces
- 1,209 spaces in 17 School Districts
- 1,431 spaces through 25 Direct appropriations projects created
- 8,281 spaces and 16 pre - Design and pre – Development for projects readiness through 267 State and Federal Minor Renovation project created

The ELF grant has positively impacted ECEAP expansion efforts as current ECEAP contractors, sub-contractors, sites have accessed the ELF grant. Also, 5 of ECEAP tribal contractors and sub-contractors (out of 7) have accessed the ELF grant. The ELF grant also provides grants to organizations intending to become ECEAP/WCC providers. Additionally, some ECEAP contractors have access the Washington Early Learning Loan (WELL) fund.

The increased need to maintain licensing standards around health and safety necessitated the formation of an ELF Health and Safety Minor Renovation-only round. In 2024, the Department of Commerce awarded \$7 million in grants to 64 licensed early learning providers across the state for making minor renovations such as updated playground equipment, sanitation spaces, fencing, HVAC upgrades, and light fixtures. This will increase high quality early learning environments and children’s safety.