



## DCYF ECEAP ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES REPORT 2024



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

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## Introduction

### Legislative Mandate

[Second Substitute House Bill 1550](#) requires the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to make administrative changes to better align the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) with state-funded early learning programs serving 3- to 5-year-old children offered by school districts, charter schools authorized under RCW 28A.710.080(2), and state-Tribal education compact schools. This report describes changes DCYF plans through a phased approach. DCYF's phased approach includes changes in the 2024-25 school year and beyond.

This report draws on the value of alignment and integration of state funded early learning programs to provide high quality early learning experiences for all Washington's children. These recommendations are aligned with the DCYF Priorities for Early Learning and informed by ECEAP Champions conversations with school district leadership, Exemplar Site studies that demonstrate integration and partnership with Transition to Kindergarten, Community Learning Events, conversations with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), ongoing ECEAP Contractor Director feedback, and ECEAP monitoring continuous quality improvement practices.

### Commitment to Equity

As part of DCYF's commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization, eliminating racial disproportionalities, and advancing racial equity across DCYF programming and systems, this report includes recommendations that build equitable access for historically marginalized and underserved groups and fosters informed family choice as a critical tenet of equity in a mixed-delivery early learning system.

### Mixed Delivery System Overview

Sites providing ECEAP services are overseen by ECEAP Contractors. There are 63 different contracting organizations that provide ECEAP services under a signed contract with DCYF.

ECEAP Services occur in a statewide mixed-delivery system (Figure 1). Almost half of ECEAP services are provided by community organizations. The majority of ECEAP sites are license-exempt public schools (53%). An even larger percentage of slots are placed at those sites in public schools (61% of all ECEAP slots). As the cost of providing services continues to rise, using existing classroom space, such as that in public schools, can make ECEAP more affordable for contractors who want to serve their communities. There's already a strong partnership in place to do exactly that.

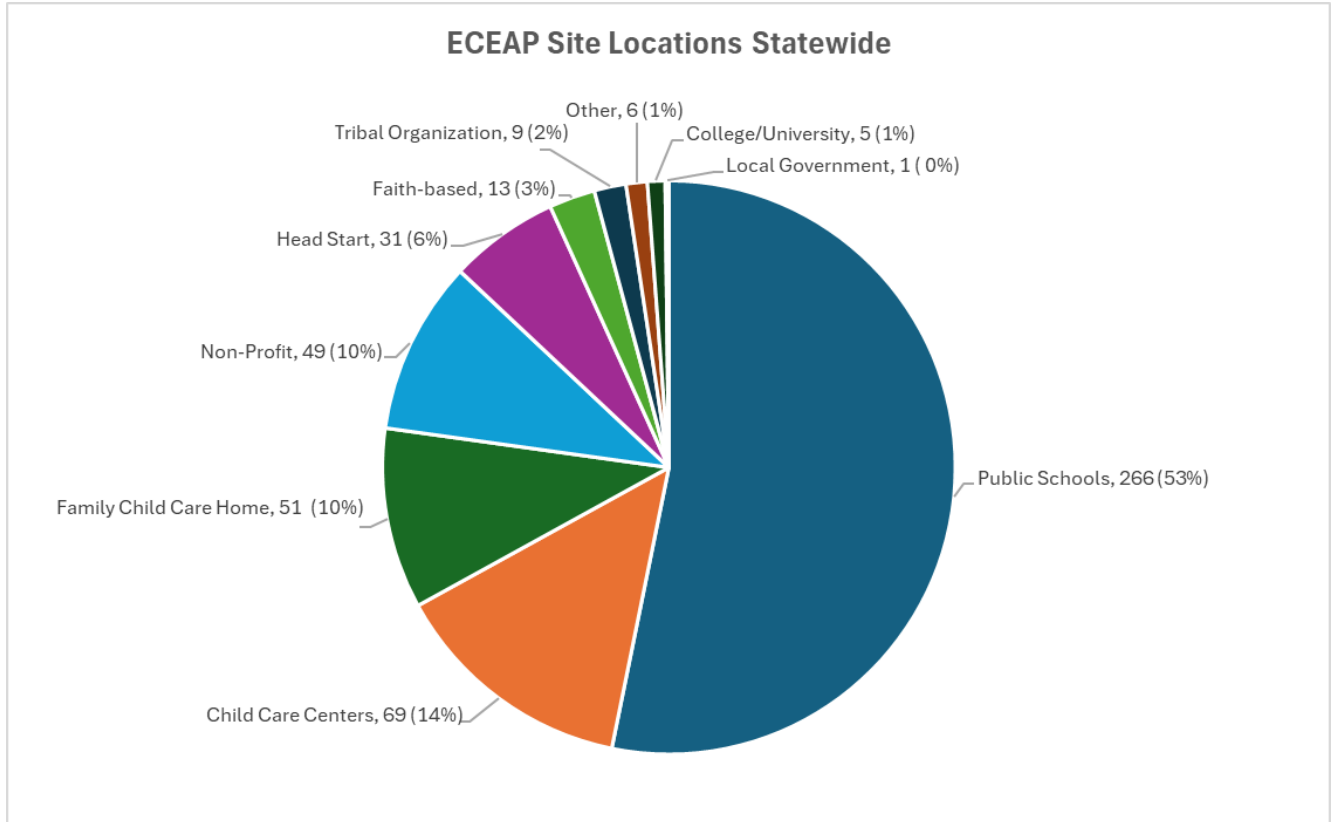


Figure 1: ECEAP site locations as of October 2024, ELMS

- ECEAP serves children in **177 school districts**.
  - ECEAP in school district buildings: **266 sites**.
- School districts who are ECEAP Contractors: **16 school districts**.
- ECEAP children served in school districts: **9,573 (59%) children as of October 2024**.
- School districts with TK: **146 school districts**.
- Students in TK: **5,805 children as of June 2024**.
- School districts with both ECEAP and TK: **72**

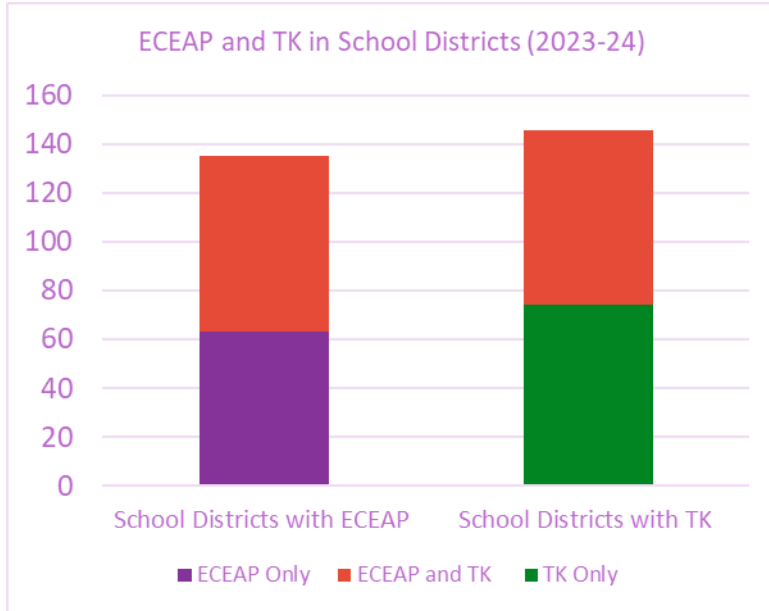


Figure 2: Transition to Kindergarten data shared with DCYF as of February 2024

## Implementation and Compliance

### Phase 1: Changes Implemented in FY23 and FY24

#### ECEAP Health Services

In the 2022-23 School year, DCYF removed the requirements for staff to conduct height and weight screening on all ECEAP children.

- Heights and weights are collected by the child’s physician during routine well child exams.
- Efficiencies include increased staff time ensuring families are connected to a medical provider and on schedule for routine preventive care.

Additionally in 2022-23, DCYF removed a barrier for ECEAP contractors by allowing verification of medical and dental exams rather than requiring a printed copy only.

- Implementing this change increased options for contractors to meet this requirement.

In school year 2023-24, DCYF clarified requirements around toothbrushing and meal-time practices to allow for flexibility and adaptation to meet the individual needs of children in care. Publications were developed to educate staff and families about these practices, illustrate learning opportunities through these activities, and offer a concise explanation of the requirements for implementation.

- [Toothbrushing in ECEAP](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Somali](#)
- [Family Style Meals](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Somali](#)

## ECEAP Education Services

### *Alternative Attendance Plan (FY24)*

**Alternative Attendance Plans (AAPs)** are time-limited plans that ensure continued comprehensive services for a B-5 ECEAP child. The goal is to serve the child and family, both in the ECEAP classroom and through education, family, and health services. This means any instruction and experiences the child misses due to their absence is provided for with the AAP when the child is unable to attend the full class time, or is temporarily unavailable for the regular daily schedule. For more details on AAPs, please see [B-5 ECEAP Performance Standard IC-16](#).

- DCYF built AAPs directly into the Early Learning Management System (ELMS) for FY24. This created efficiencies by reducing the time and burden for contractors who now submit the request for an AAP in ELMS. It created efficiency for DCYF ECEAP staff to review and approve directly in ELMS.

### *Updates to Annual ECEAP Family Satisfaction Survey (FY24)*

- Moved to a new format that allows families improved access via phone, tablet, or computer.
- Estimated time to complete the survey decreased from 10 minutes to 4 minutes.
- Aligned the order of questions across the languages provided for easier data analysis.
- Contractors will have access to their own raw data for review and use in their program.

### *Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE) Website Launch (FY24)*

The CRE website is co-branded to reflect the collaborative efforts between DCYF and OSPI. For more information about CRE, visit the [CRE website](#), launched July 2024.

Several regions across Washington have developed systems of CRE in collaboration with early learning partners. A single, centralized intake process to determine placement identifies eligibility for comprehensive services, access to TK, location, and family choice to support the best fit for each child.

- [Valley School District](#) provides year-round, licensed child care on a K-8 school campus, including WCCC, TK, ECEAP, and tuition-based through braided funding. With their early learning center on a K-8 campus, Valley's ECEAP, TK and Developmental PreK are in the same classroom – all aligned to ECEAP Performance Standards. They provide coordinated enrollment by entering all children first into ELMS to determine if they qualify for ECEAP. This allows for differentiation of services in an inclusive setting with ECEAP, TK, and/or Developmental PreK.
- [College Place School District](#) provides ECEAP and Developmental PreK in the same classroom. School districts are responsible for providing Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) through inclusion requirements and individualized services. ECEAP

provides a structure to support access to special services in classrooms with typically developing peers.

- South Bend School District's early learning programs are 100% inclusive. Complex Needs Funds provided a mental health generalist through ECEAP. Integrating programs allowed South Bend schools to hire certificated teachers in their ECEAP classrooms.
- Central Valley School District's early learning programs are fully inclusive. Beginning with PICT grants through OSPI and extending this work through the LEAP model, all children who come to preschool at Central Valley receive comprehensive services. Central Valley demonstrates that allowing children on IEPs to be eligible for ECEAP advances equitable access.

In 2024, DCYF received funding for seven CRE positions. Two positions within DCYF, and five positions within Child Care Aware of Washington, were established to develop a team focused on CRE to broaden this work within communities and across the state.

*Changes to the ECEAP Expansion Application (FY 24)*

For the 2024 Request for Application (RFA), DCYF implemented the following:

- Removed the requirement for new contractor applicants to apply for a minimum of 75 slots. Instead, applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate infrastructure and capacity to implement ECEAP in the following ways:
  - **Key ECEAP roles**
    - Includes Director/FCC Owner, Health/Nutrition Coordination Staff, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Staff, ELMS Administrator, Transportation staff, Food Service staff, Custodial staff. Existing or to-be-hired staff with ample time dedicated to ECEAP in relation to number of slots. Education levels are appropriate for roles.
  - **Organizational Chart**
    - Includes ECEAP roles, additional staff to be hired if applicable, clear lines of authority, names, and titles of staff. (The organizational structure is sufficient to provide ECEAP services to fidelity).
  - **Contracting Capacity**
    - Five or more years experience contracting/managing grants for similar early learning, social service, or related client services.
  - **Disclosure of improvement plans**
    - Applicant has over 5 years experience with contracting and has no outstanding compliance issues.
  - **Family Input**
    - Applicant clearly describes family engagement process, including the number of families, family contributions to the ECEAP contractor

application, involvement of MLL families, and methods used to promote family involvement.

- This practice will continue for future ECEAP contractor applications.
- For the 2024 RFA, DCYF combined, simplified, and streamlined the application to include PreK ECEAP, B-3 ECEAP, ECLIPSE, and Complex Needs Funding into one process.
- For the 2025-26 RFA, we have customized the application by provider type, reducing the burden of application for school districts and other government organizations.

## Phase 2: FY25

### Alignment of GOLD® Checkpoint Dates with WaKIDS

GOLD® is the observation-based, whole-child, formative assessment tool used by DCYF ECEAP to help teachers identify each child’s abilities, track progress, and plan appropriate learning experiences. ECEAP teachers complete quarterly assessments of each child in GOLD® by established checkpoint dates.

DCYF partnered with OSPI to align GOLD® checkpoint dates for fall and winter with the OSPI checkpoint dates for WaKIDS whole-child assessment. OSPI aligned the November WaKIDS checkpoint date with the DCYF GOLD checkpoint and DCYF aligned the Winter GOLD checkpoint with the March WaKIDS checkpoint. The aligned checkpoint dates create continuity for programs implementing both ECEAP and TK, reduce confusion, and further streamlines the flow of work for teaching staff completing the assessments.

- November 15 (FY25) ECEAP GOLD®/TK WaKIDS
- March 15 (FY25) ECEAP GOLD®/TK WaKIDS

Additionally, all ECEAP programs complete a Spring GOLD® checkpoint by June 15 and year-round ECEAP programs complete a Summer GOLD® checkpoint by August 15, annually.

### Child Record Request

DCYF included an annual child record request process in their scope of work with Teaching Strategies. This allows for the prior year’s checkpoint data to be transferred from the DCYF SmartTeach™ license to the WaKIDS SmartTeach™ license, so that kindergarten teachers (and administrators) can view the previous year’s checkpoint data for:

- Children who attended ECEAP in the previous school year who will be 5 years old by August 31, AND
- Who have completed the Spring checkpoint.

The previous ECEAP checkpoint data can be viewed via the [Individual Child Report](#) and via the [Transferred Record](#) button in a kindergarten teacher’s “Class Details” view. More information can be found in the [WaKIDS Implementation Guide for District Assessment Coordinators](#) on page 15.



### Performance Standards Changes (FY25)

For the 2024-25 school year, DCYF made revisions to the ECEAP Performance Standards. Changes in standards included reduction in overall requirements for contractors, removal of duplicative monitoring practices, and elimination of redundancies.

2024-25 B-5 ECEAP Performance Standards revision highlights include:

- Extends enrollment deadlines from 30 to 45 days.
- Fully integrates B-5 ECEAP Performance Standards into one document.
- Removes requirement for a separate Health Services Advisory Committee.
- Streamlines and removes duplicative requirements in the Environments section.

### Eligibility Verification at the State

DCYF has identified short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies that could be implemented beginning fall 2024 through ECEAP entitlement in 2026. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

### Phase 3 and Beyond

DCYF continues to explore ways to improve integration and alignment of state-funded early learning programs in a variety of settings. DCYF plans to work on the following efficiencies during 2025 with future implementation.

Efficiencies include:

- Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment: beginning implementation.
- Explore additional revisions to B-5 ECEAP Performance Standards:
  - Community Assessment: explore opportunities to reduce the burden for contractors and provide increased technical assistance on options in communities to gather and analyze data.
  - Parent Education Opportunities: clarify expectations in B-5 ECEAP Performance Standards and provide increased technical assistance to contractors to build understanding of requirements.
- Explore alternative contracting and payment structures for ECEAP Entitlement to determine operational and financial feasibility and impacts to contractors through Workgroup input.
- Explore cost allocation requirements to allow contractors to layer or braid funding with more ease for blended classroom models.
- Consider holding slots for high priority children and families that come in throughout the year across the state. Prior to entitlement, contractors may keep up to 10% of their slots unfilled at a full comprehensive service rate for eligible, high priority children and families who attempt to enroll later in the year. Any never-filled slots for high needs

children that are left open past 150 days of the start of the program may be moved to an Administration, Enrollment, Staff Development rate (as listed on the A-19).

- High priority children are those prioritized per [WAC 110-425-0085](#) includes:
  - Children and families experiencing homelessness
  - Children and families involved in child welfare systems, including Tribal child welfare
  - Children in foster care and kinship care
  - Children with IEPs/IFSPs

This proposal was suggested by ECEAP Contractors, including several school district partners.

#### Increase access to ECEAP in high cost of living and rural communities

- Consider aligning ECEAP requirements with Head Start to determine which incomes to count, to account for high housing costs.
  - Recently approved [Head Start Performance Standards](#) include reductions to family gross income for eligibility purposes when housing costs exceed 30% of the family’s gross income.
  - DCYF will make any approved changes to B-5 ECEAP Performance Standards for 2025-26.
- Removing child support received from income counted in calculation.
- To better align with TK eligibility, adding “no previous early learning experience” as a priority factor tied to school success for eligibility.

#### Early Achievers Efficiencies and Considerations

##### *Explore Options to Incentivize New Providers to Take on ECEAP*

- Explore changing the DCYF business rules for pathway calculation in Early Achievers.
  - This calculation is used to identify:
    - Which organization provides coaching supports to the site, and
    - Eligibility for Early Achievers incentives for subsidy providers with ECEAP.
- Explore Revision to Early Achievers
  - This revised system includes a newly validated assessment, The Quality Interactions in Child Care (QUIC) Tool, for reviewing the quality of teacher child interactions and best practices in early learning environments. This tool, and the revised Early Achievers process, demonstrate strong alignment with the Washington Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP). Going forward, further efforts can focus on how to leverage this revised system and explore additional alignment between Early Achievers and TPEP.

##### *Inclusive Classrooms*

Children eligible for ECEAP are then prioritized for enrollment based on research-based risk factors including if they have a diagnosed developmental delay or special need, are experiencing homelessness, CPS involvement, and exposure to domestic violence and/or

substance abuse. Post-pandemic, ECEAP contractors are reporting a higher number of children with IEPs or complex needs. For example, in 2018-19, 11.7%<sup>1</sup> of children enrolled in ECEAP were on an IEP anytime during the school year.

In 2023-24, 17.4%<sup>2</sup> of children were on an IEP anytime during the school year. This represents an increase of over 1,000 children on IEPs served by ECEAP. Contractors reported challenges they experience balancing classrooms to ensure an appropriate number of typically developing peers. To support this growing need, DCYF plans to:

- Explore ways to create more flexibility to meet the increasing needs of children with complex needs in ECEAP classrooms.
  - Identify ways to balance classrooms and staffing to ensure least restrictive environments.
    - Potential ELMS enhancements to include a system for tracking and balancing children with individualized and complex needs within groups.
    - Explore ways to balance classrooms serving high numbers of children with complex needs beyond identified developmental and special needs.
  - Consider adjusting classroom ratios and class sizes to better meet children's individual needs.

#### *Service Model Flexibility to Meet Family Need*

DCYF is committed to offering School Day services as the ECEAP entitlement model for most families. While most services at entitlement will be modeled to be School Day, DCYF also recognizes the need for some ECEAP-eligible families to have a different model to meet their family or children's needs.

- To align with [Transition to Kindergarten](#) programming, ECEAP will offer flexibility with Part Day services available for some children.
  - DCYF will make plans to align with [WAC 392-425-045\(2\)](#), which makes allowances for a child to attend part-time/partial-day on an individual basis.

#### Model of Service for Integrated Classrooms

##### *Differentiated and Individualized Comprehensive Services*

DCYF provides [individualized comprehensive education, health and family support services](#) for all ECEAP children and families. DCYF differentiates [family support and health coordination services](#) based on child and family needs identified through:

- Initial application and priority factors using information indicated by the family, initial Mobility Mentoring® family support conversations with families, developmental screening, ongoing assessment, and family choice.

<sup>1</sup> Early Learning Management System (ELMS) Child Demographics Report for 2018-19 using cumulative enrollment.

<sup>2</sup> Early Learning Management System (ELMS) Child Demographics Report for 2023-24 using cumulative enrollment.

- Family identification: any ECEAP-funded family that identifies a need for intensive services, or that opts out of family support services, will receive individualized services.

ECEAP Comprehensive Services:

Comprehensive services are a cornerstone of ECEAP and required by law in [RCW 43.216.505\(3\)](#). “Comprehensive” means an assistance program that focuses on the needs of the child and includes education, health, and family support services. There are non-negotiable, required services all ECEAP students and families are entitled to. Providers are encouraged to create flexible options to meet the needs of enrolled families.

Differentiated and Individualized Services include:

- All children enrolled in an integrated classroom regardless of funding source (TK, Developmental PreK, ECEAP, private pay) receive education and nutrition services.
- All ECEAP children and families receive the minimum family support and health services and all non-ECEAP children may receive family support and health services as identified.
  - **Example 1:** An integrated (ECEAP, TK, Dev. PreK) program provides all enrolled children and families the minimum ECEAP family support and health coordination services. Families have the option to decline.
  - **Example 2:** An integrated (ECEAP, TK, Dev. PreK) program provides all ECEAP children and families the minimum ECEAP family support and health coordination services. All non-ECEAP children and families may receive family support and health coordination services as identified. Families have the option to decline.
- All enrolled children and families have access to additional individualized supports as identified (such as more intensive family support, health, and/or ECLIPSE).

#### *Fostering Efficiencies Across the State: Exemplar Programming*

School district and early learning leaders across Washington recognize the need for a range of early learning opportunities to serve all children and families. Leaders stress the importance of building authentic relationships and partnerships across their communities to sustain our mixed-delivery early learning system. The result of these partnerships streamlines collaboration across programs and creates efficiencies that lead to greater access to high-quality early care and education for young children and their families.

The following are examples of school districts implementing ECEAP Comprehensive Services, meeting existing ECEAP standards. Full case-studies are available on the [Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment website](#). Some of the sites featured below were also part of the [Review of High-Quality Practices at Nine Sites for the Early Childhood and Assistance Program](#).

*Relationships and Partnerships*

- Everett Public Schools has developed strong partnerships with providers to coordinate with early learning programs in their community.
- Moses Lake School District worked closely with their teachers' union to address challenges to providing ECEAP in the district.
- West Valley School District in Yakima employs an Early Learning Coordinator as the initial point of contact for families.

*Layered or Braided Funding*

- Marysville School District provides push-in special education services to identified children attending ECEAP through braided funding, which provides for a teacher, a paraeducator and push-in SLP and Special Educations supports in the classroom.
- In some rural school districts in ESD 123's catchment area, ECEAP, Developmental PreK, and TK are combined.
- Selah School District utilizes braided funding to offer inclusive services in all preschool classrooms.

## Conclusion

The changes DCYF has identified in response to [Second Substitute House Bill 1550](#) draw on the value of alignment and integration of state funded early learning programs to provide high quality early learning experiences for all Washington's children. The administrative changes implemented for the 2024-25 school year and those planned for the coming years are aligned with the DCYF priorities for early learning and work to create equitable, high-quality early learning experiences for children across Washington's mixed-delivery system.