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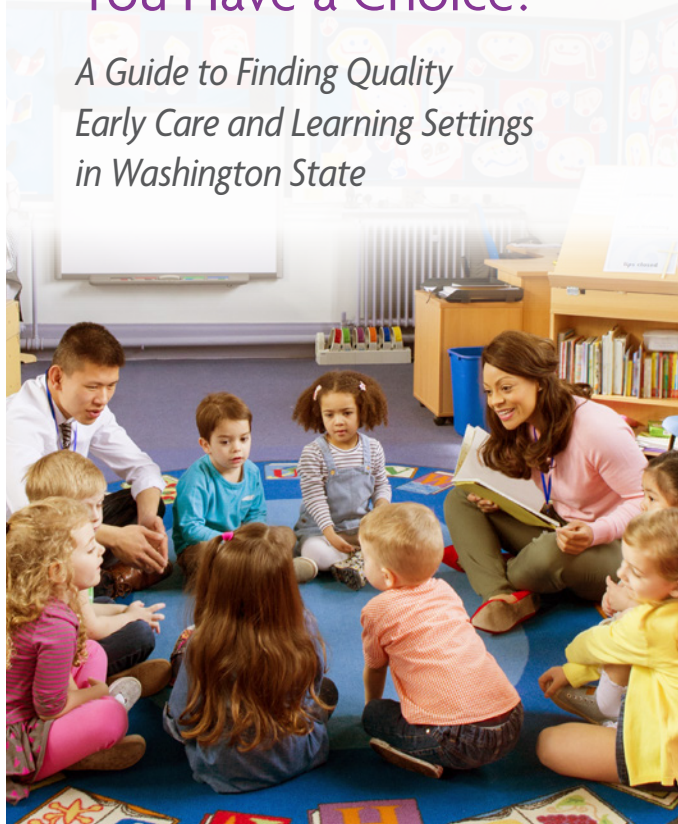
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## You Have a Choice!

*A Guide to Finding Quality Early Care and Learning Settings in Washington State*



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

## What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers is a framework for improving the quality of child care and early learning settings to ensure that:

- **Children** gain high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.
- **Families** find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing unbiased information about facility quality.
- **Early Learning Professionals** have access to the resources and supports they need to provide quality care that supports each child's learning and development.

By participating in Early Achievers, child care providers demonstrate a commitment to improving quality of care to children so you can feel confident about your child care choice.

Participation is free for providers so there is no additional cost to families.

To learn more about Early Achievers, go to [www.dcyf.wa.gov/early-achievers](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/early-achievers).



Early Achievers provides evidence-based information about the quality of early learning programs through an easy-to-understand rating system.

- Providers working on or rated **Level 2** are “participating in quality improvement” through professional learning opportunities.
- Providers rated **Level 3-5** have achieved a “quality level of excellence” through an on-site evaluation. They work with a coach to make continuous quality improvements.

View providers' Early Achievers participation status at [www.findchildcarewa.org](http://www.findchildcarewa.org).

**LEVEL 5: 91-100 points**  
*Excelling in High Quality*

**LEVEL 4: 70-90 points**  
*Thriving in High Quality*

**LEVEL 3+: 50-69 points**  
*Demonstrating High Quality*

**LEVEL 3: 30-49 points**  
*Commitment to High Quality*

**LEVEL 2:**  
*Professional Growth and Management*

**LEVEL 1:**  
*Licensed Child Care – the Foundation of Quality*



## Why should I choose licensed child care for my child?

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) licenses more than 5,000 child care facilities in Washington. Licensed child care facilities follow state licensing rules to make sure children are in safe and healthy environments that support child development.

To find licensed child care in your community, contact Child Care Aware of Washington at 1-800-446-1114 or visit [www.childcareawarewa.org](http://www.childcareawarewa.org).

Check the status of your licensed child care provider on Child Care Check. Go to [www.findchildcarewa.org](http://www.findchildcarewa.org).

## Choosing Child Care

What is important to you and your family when choosing an early learning program? It may help to take this with you when you visit sites. Remember to ask if they are participating in Early Achievers!

### Is the environment safe and healthy?

- Are there enough staff members to give attention to all the children?
- Are there locks on the door to keep strangers out and children in?
- Does the outdoor play area seem safe?
- Are toys and equipment safe and age appropriate?
- Is there an emergency plan for contacting families?

### What will my child experience during the day?

- Are there planned activities to help my child learn?
- Are rest times based on the needs of each child?
- Are families' cultures respected in activities and celebrations?
- Will my child have time every day to run, catch, climb and throw?
- Are books available to children in their own languages and for different ages?

### What policies will affect my child's interactions with others?

- Do staff set limits that are reasonable, clear, consistent and age-appropriate?
- Do staff use calm voices and redirect children to other activities if there is a problem?
- What happens when children hit, bite or bully?
- How does the program engage families?
- Am I encouraged to spend time as a guest for lunch or as a volunteer?
- How will I hear about my child's day?
- Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?

### Will my child thrive here?

- Are different cultures, ethnicities and abilities valued?
- Do staff encourage creativity and age-appropriate independence?
- Will the same people take care of my child regularly?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Do staff hold and cuddle infants and toddlers often, including while feeding?
- Will my child have fun here?

## What is Child Care Subsidy?

Child Care Subsidy Programs help families pay for quality child care through Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) or Seasonal Child Care (SCC).

**Working Connections Child Care:** helps families with low-income pay for child care while they work or meet WorkFirst participation requirements. DCYF pays a portion of the cost of child care for qualified families with an eligible provider. Parents pay a copayment to their provider each month.

**Seasonal Child Care:** provides safe, licensed child care while parents work in agricultural settings. Eligible families are seasonally employed in agricultural work, live in designated counties and are not receiving TANF benefits.

**Child Welfare Child Care (CWCC):** helps children who have received child protective services, child welfare services or services through a family assessment response in the last six months to receive safe, high-quality, no-cost child care services.

DCYF may be able to pay your family, friends, or neighbor to provide care for your child. For more information go to: [www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/ffn](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/ffn).



## Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible for child care subsidy, the following is required:

- Children needing subsidized care must be U.S. citizens or legal residents.
- The family must live in Washington State.
- Family income must be at or below 60% of the state median income (SMI) at initial application or 65% of SMI at reapplication.
- Parents or guardians must participate in an approved activity such as employment, self-employment, TANF/WorkFirst activities, BFET activities, or some education activities.
- Parent or guardian must complete a CCSP application and provide necessary verification to DCYF.

To apply for child care subsidy, contact DCYF Child Care Subsidy Contact Center at 1-844-626-8687 or apply online through Washington Connection at [www.washingtonconnection.org](http://www.washingtonconnection.org).

To learn more about choosing child care and assistance with child care costs, visit [www.dcyf.wa.gov/early-achievers](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/early-achievers).