

# Early Achievers Quality Improvement Awards

## OVERVIEW

Quality Improvement (QI) Awards are paid to qualifying Early Achievers participants that have a finalized Quality Level and serve children receiving state child care subsidies. QI Awards recognize achievement and support early learning programs to implement quality improvement goals. The Early Start Act (RCW 43.216.085) states that providers must serve children receiving state child care subsidies to be eligible for QI Awards. For more information, go to <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=43.216.085>.



## Purpose of Award Funds

QI Awards are intended to be used to reach quality improvement goals outlined on approved Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) and must align with the Early Achievers Quality Standards. Level 2 QI Awards for family home child care providers may be used toward activities that support remedial activities and reaching a Quality Level 3.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AWARD AMOUNTS

QI Awards are distributed annually according to quality level and provider type. Award amounts are shown in Figures 1 and 2 below:

Figure 1: Child Care Center Quality Improvement Award Amounts

Level 3  
**\$5,000**

Level 3+  
**\$5,000**

Level 4  
**\$7,500**

Level 5  
**\$9,000**

Figure 2: Family Home Child Care Quality Improvement Award Amounts

Level 2  
**\$1,000**

Level 3  
**\$2,750**

Level 3+  
**\$2,750**

Level 4  
**\$3,000**

Level 5  
**\$3,250**



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

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### How do I qualify for a QI Award?

To be eligible to receive QI Awards, early learning programs must:

- Be actively participating in Early Achievers and have a current Quality Level 3 or higher. Family home child care providers who are a Quality Level 2 or higher may qualify for QI Awards.
- Serve an enrollment population of which at least 5% of total licensed capacity consists of non-school-age children receiving state or other qualifying child care subsidies.

### Which subsidies count toward the 5% calculation?

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), Seasonal Child Care (SCC), Homeless Child Care (HCC), and Child Welfare subsidies for non-school-age children are all included in the percentage calculation. Child care subsidies funded by Medicaid, municipalities, colleges or universities, local school districts, military, or federally recognized tribal organizations may also be included in the calculation. They must be submitted by the provider by emailing [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov).

If your facility received subsidy payments from sources other than WCCC, SCC, HCC, and Child Welfare, please email [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov) to:

1. Confirm that the subsidy program is approved by DCYF.
2. Send in official documentation that details the number of subsidy children served per month over the calculation period. Official documentation may be subject to invoice statements, attendance logs, or reports pulled from an official database that includes the children's date of birth. Certain information such as the names of children and parents, addresses, or telephone numbers should remain private and not be included in any documentation sent to DCYF.

### What do I need to do to receive my QI Award?

You will need to submit your subsidy invoices as usual, ensuring that all invoices from the award period are submitted within 30 days of your quality level release date. Eligibility will be automatically calculated annually 31 days after the quality level release date. Before receiving your award, you must also register as a vendor of Washington State by filling out a Statewide Payee Registration and W-9 form, which are found at <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/licensed-provider/vendor-number>. If you think you are already registered with the state or need to confirm your billing information is up to date to prevent a hold on your award, you will need to contact the DCYF Statewide Vendor Registration help desk by emailing [dcyf.statewidevendorregistration@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:dcyf.statewidevendorregistration@dcyf.wa.gov).

### What if my program doesn't operate year-round?

Any month in which children were served is included in the percentage calculation. You must be closed for the entire month to have it excluded from the calculation.

### Will subsidies for school-age children be counted toward the 5%?

Subsidies for school-age children are not included in the percentage calculation.\* School-age is defined as children ages 5 and up who attend kindergarten or grade school and all children ages 7 and up, regardless of school enrollment.

### What if my licensed capacity varies month to month?

If there are changes to your total licensed capacity, DCYF will use the average capacity during the months the facility served children.

\*. Through negotiations with SEIU 925, both school-age and non-school-age children receiving subsidies are considered when calculating the 5% subsidy requirement for family home child care providers.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

### **I re-submitted for an updated Quality Level and received a Quality Level 3, but my QI Award is lower than expected. Why didn't I receive the full Quality Level 3 amount?**

QI Awards are distributed on an annual basis. Early learning programs that re-submit to a higher level and have already received a QI Award for the year will receive payment for the difference between their former and current quality levels after their updated quality level is released. You will receive the full award amount on your next annual calculation, as long as you meet the eligibility requirements above. If the updated quality level is released 31 days or less before your annual assessment, you will receive the full payment for your new quality level at the time of your annual assessment.

### **How will I find out if I will receive a QI Award or not?**

Providers with a finalized quality level will receive an email from DCYF approximately 31 calendar days after their quality level release date containing the calculation results and whether or not they can expect to receive a QI Award.

### **I didn't submit all of my invoices before the calculation was made. Can I send them in now?**

The calculation is based on all invoices and must be received by DCYF before the percentage is determined 31 days following the quality level release date. Once the calculation is completed, no adjustments will be made for additional invoices from the calculation period.

### **I received an email stating that I did not qualify for a QI Award, and I believe there was an error. What should I do?**

DCYF calculations are based on subsidy invoices submitted to DCYF for the 12 full months preceding the participant's quality level release date. If you have submitted WCCC, SCC, or Child Welfare invoices for this time before the calculation and believe that these invoices were not included in your percentage calculation, please contact DCYF to ensure that all invoices are properly credited to your account.

*Providers receiving payments from subsidy programs other than WCCC, SCC, or Child Welfare should contact DCYF at [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov) if they believe there is a calculation error.*



### **When will I receive my QI Award funds?**

QI Awards will be distributed approximately 60 days after the facility's quality level release date. The percentage is recalculated annually 31 days after the anniversary of your quality level release date.

### **I didn't qualify for a QI Award this year. Can I get one next year?**

Your eligibility may change from year to year. The percentage is recalculated annually 31 days after the anniversary of your quality level release date.

### **What can I spend my QI Award on?**

QI Awards are intended to be used toward the achievement of goals outlined on approved Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) and must align with the Early Achievers Quality Standards. Level 2 QI Awards for family home child care providers may be used toward activities that support reaching quality level 3. You can find more information about allowable uses for award funds in the Early Achievers Operating Guidelines available online at [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/ea/OperatingGuidelines.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/ea/OperatingGuidelines.pdf). If you are unsure about an expense, you may email the QRIS inbox at [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov).

### **My license was temporarily closed at the time of my annual assessment, but I have since reopened.**

#### **Will DCYF rerun my calculation?**

If you receive notification that you did not receive a QI Award assessment because your license was closed and you have since reopened, please email the QRIS inbox at [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov).

### **My program has permanently closed. What should I do with my remaining QI Award?**

Programs that have permanently closed their business license are no longer considered licensed providers or active Early Achievers participants and must return all unspent funds to DCYF upon permanent license closure. Please email the QRIS inbox at [QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov) for further instructions.

## SAMPLE 5% CALCULATIONS

### Sample Child Care Center Calculation

The following tables illustrate what this calculation might look like for a typical child care center. In this example, the facility has a licensed capacity of 25 and serves only non-school-age children on a nine-month school calendar. The first table shows the 12-month award period based on a quality level release date of Aug. 15, 2016.

Month of Service	Number of Children on Subsidy Served Based on Submitted Invoices
August 2015	Closed
September 2015	5
October 2015	5
November 2015	4
December 2015	4
January 2016	0
February 2016	3
March 2016	4
April 2016	4
May 2016	5
June 2016	Closed
July 2016	Closed
<b>Annual Total</b>	<b>34</b>

To determine the center's percentage, the annual total (34) is divided by the number of months the center served children (9) to receive the average number of children receiving subsidy each month (3.77). The average number of children receiving subsidy is divided by the center's average total licensed capacity of 25 for a percentage of 15%, as demonstrated in the second table below:

Total number of children on subsidy served in the last 12 months	Number of months open in the previous 12 months	Average number served per month (34/9)	Average total licensed capacity	Percentage of children on subsidy (3.77/25)
34	9	3.77	25	15%

Based on the final percentage, which is higher than the minimum 5%, this facility is eligible for a QI Award.

### Sample Family Home Child Care Calculation

The following table shows the number of children served each month by a family home child care provider serving families with seasonal employment. In this example, the provider has a total licensed capacity of six children but only serves children during part of the year. The provider must be closed for the entire month to have the month excluded from the calculation.

Month of Service	Number of Children on Subsidy Served Based on Submitted Invoices
August 2015	1
September 2015	2
October 2015	2
November 2015	2
December 2015	Closed
January 2016	Closed
February 2016	Closed
March 2016	Closed
April 2016	0
May 2016	1
June 2016	1
July 2016	1
<b>Annual Total</b>	<b>10</b>

The number of children on subsidy the provider served each month are added together for a total of 10. This total is then divided by the number of months the provider served children (8) to receive the average number of children receiving subsidy each month (1.25). The average number of children receiving subsidy is divided by the center's average total licensed capacity of six for a percentage of 20.8%, as demonstrated in the second table below:

Total number of children on subsidy served in the last 12 months	Number of months open in the previous 12 months	Average number served per month (10/8)	Average total licensed capacity	Percentage of children on subsidy (1.25/6)
10	8	1.25	6	20.8%

Based on the final percentage, which is higher than the minimum 5%, this facility is eligible for a QI Award.