

Early Start Act FAQs for Providers

Washington State's Pathway to Equity and Quality in Early Learning

What Does the Early Start Act do?

The Early Start Act invests nearly \$100 million into Washington's child care and early learning system, with the goal to provide high-quality early learning to all of Washington's children. This historic legislation sustains Early Achievers, provides additional supports to Early Achievers participants, ensures continuity of care for children on Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and much more. It also aims to ensure that all children age 5 and below on WCC receive high-quality care by requiring providers who serve these children to join Early Achievers.

I have not joined Early Achievers. What does the Early Start Act require me to do?

If you do not serve young children on subsidy, you are not impacted by the Early Start Act. You are not required to join Early Achievers.

If you do serve children age 5 or below on subsidy, you are required to join Early Achievers by August 1, 2016. Doing so will enable you to immediately receive higher reimbursement rates for every young child on subsidy you serve, in addition to the supports mentioned below. Half of all licensed child care providers in our state have already joined! Once you have joined, you will be required to complete Early Achievers level 2 activities by August 1, 2017, and reach a level 3 rating by 2020. As of the end of June 2015, Early Achievers participants have taken about 10.5 months to complete Level 2, and 78% of rated programs achieved at least Level 3 on their first try.

The Early Start Act also entitles families who are eligible for Working Connections Child Care to receive a full 12 months of care once they are authorized, beginning July 1, 2016. This means they will not have to get reauthorized during that year, even if their income and/or working situations change.



I have already joined Early Achievers. What does the Early Start Act require me to do?

The Early Start Act being approved and funded in the maintenance level of the budget ensures that your supports will be there for you now and in the future. This means Early Achievers cannot be de-funded without changing the law.

Also, you will now receive additional services aimed at supporting you in meeting the timelines articulated above. The Early Start Act requires the state to provide to Early Achievers participants (in addition to their current supports) need-based grants, access to a substitute pool, more translated materials, a pathway for educators to obtain their high school diploma or GED (including scholarships), and remediation extensions for programs who do not reach Level 3 by 2020.

Details regarding these supports will be released as DEL moves forward implementing them all.



Early Start Act FAQs for Providers

Washington State's Pathway to Equity and Quality in Early Learning

I am interested in opening a new child care program. What does the Early Start Act require me to do?

If you do not plan on serving children age 5 or below on subsidy, you just have to follow the current process to get licensed. **If you do want to serve young children on subsidy, you are now required to enroll in Early Achievers within 30 days of receiving your initial subsidy payment from the state.** Once you have enrolled, you are required to complete Level 2 activities within 12 months, and achieve a Level 3 rating within 30 months of enrollment in Early Achievers. You will be eligible to receive all Early Achievers supports and awards.

What else does the Early Start Act accomplish?

- Requires periodic review of Early Achievers quality standards to ensure that they are culturally inclusive and effective.
- Requires periodic review of the impact that the Early Start Act has on the ability of low income and/or vulnerable families to access child care. These review committees will include external stakeholders, including providers and parents.
- Enables federally recognized tribes to enter into inter-local agreements with DEL that protect their sovereignty while they participate in Early Achievers.
- Requires DEL, in collaboration with CCA and others, to submit annual Early Achievers progress reports to the legislature.
- Requires DEL to create a single source of information for families seeking child care that is inclusive of licensing history, indicators of quality, and enables facilities to provide a brief description of their program.
- Requires DEL, by November 1, 2015, to share Early Achievers rating numerical levels with families seeking child care.
- Requires DEL to create a single set of licensing standards for child care and ECEAP programs that ensures basic health and safety standards while relying on Early Achievers to address quality issues.
- Requires DEL to create a pathway for licensed child care centers and homes to administer ECEAP slots.
- Requires DEL and OSPI to work together to make Early Achievers available for providers who serve school-aged children.
- Requires DEL to provide Early Achievers rating credit to accredited programs in areas where DEL has concluded that their standards meet or exceed Early Achievers standards. Credit will be approved once the accrediting body has submitted their standards to DEL for review.
 - The state will conduct data collection and evaluation to ensure children on Working Connections are benefitting from Early Achievers. No additional data collection or assessment activities in child care programs will be required by this effort.

