

Early Start Act FAQs for Parents

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

What is the Early Start Act?

The Early Start Act was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Inslee in Summer 2015. This historic legislation invests nearly \$100 million in expanding high-quality early learning for Washington's children, particularly our most vulnerable children. For child care, the Early Start Act expands high-quality care through Early Achievers, and ensures that low income families receive stable child care.

What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers helps child care providers improve the quality of their care, and gives parents seeking child care information about the quality of nearby programs. Early Achievers supports child care providers by giving them cash grants, professional development, on-site coaching, scholarships and higher reimbursement rates for children on state assistance. After a provider receives these supports and makes improvements to meet their goals, the University of Washington assesses the quality of the program and assigns a 1-5 rating to the facility.

The Early Start Act requires the state to share individual provider ratings with families seeking child care, so families can learn more about a program's quality. **Half of all licensed child care providers in WA are participating in Early Achievers, improving the quality of early learning for more than 75,000 children!**

I am a parent who receives child care assistance through Working Connections Child Care. How is my authorization impacted by the Early Start Act?

First and foremost, beginning July 1, 2016, you will be entitled to stable child care. The Early Start Act requires the Department of Social and Health Services to provide 12 months of assistance to all families that are eligible for WCCC. You do not need to be reauthorized until a full year after you are deemed eligible, even if your income and/or working situation changes.

Second, the Early Start Act ensures that all children on state assistance will receive high-quality care. If your child is age 5 or below and on subsidy, your provider is required to join Early Achievers by August 1, 2016. Doing so will enable them to immediately receive increased reimbursement rates for your child and every other young child on subsidy in your program, in addition to the professional development supports mentioned above. Once your provider has joined, they need to reach at least a Level 3 rating by 2020 in order to continue serving young children on subsidy.

Providers who do not care for children age 5 or below on subsidy are not required to join Early Achievers, but are encouraged to do so. If you are a parent of a child in child care and do not receive state assistance, you can expect no changes as a result of the Early Start Act.



How do I find information about child care providers, Early Achievers and program ratings?

Contact the Child Care Aware of WA Family Center at 1-800-446-1114 and wa.childcareaware.org. The Family Center can provide information on the quality of individual child care programs, including Early Achievers ratings, and answer all of your child care questions.