

RCW 43.216.749 Child care subsidy rates—Use of cost model. (1)

It is the intent of the legislature to systemically increase child care subsidy rates over time until rates are equal to the full cost of providing high quality child care.

(2) Beginning July 1, 2021, child care subsidy base rates must achieve the 85th percentile of market for licensed or certified child care providers. The state and the exclusive representative for family child care providers must enter into bargaining over the implementation of the subsidy rate increase under this subsection.

(3) (a) The department shall build upon the work of the child care collaborative task force to develop and implement a child care cost estimate model and use the completed child care cost model to recommend subsidy rates at levels that are sufficient to compensate licensed or certified child care providers for the full costs of providing high quality child care. The department shall consider:

(i) Adjusting rates to reflect cost of living such as area median income, cost of living by zip code, and grouping by categories such as rural, suburban, or urban; and

(ii) Incorporating the rate model for nonstandard child care hours developed under section 306, chapter 199, Laws of 2021.

(b) The department shall build upon the work of the child care collaborative task force to evaluate options to support access to affordable health care insurance coverage for licensed or certified child care providers.

(4) This section does not interfere with, impede, or in any way diminish the right of family child care providers to bargain collectively with the state through the exclusive bargaining representatives as provided for under RCW 41.56.028. [2021 c 199 § 301; 2019 c 368 § 7.]

Effective date—2021 c 199 §§ 201, 202, 301, 309, and 504: See note following RCW 43.216.1368.

Short title—Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2021 c 199: See notes following RCW 43.216.770.

Findings—Intent—2019 c 368: "(1) The legislature finds that child care is a sector that is critical to the vitality and economic security of our state and communities and families, and that families in Washington face significant barriers to accessing and affording high quality child care. The legislature finds that Washington's committed caregivers and state investments and advancements in our quality rating and improvement system ensure that quality, culturally relevant child care supports children's healthy development and prepares them for success in school and in life. The legislature recognizes that provider diversity and cultural relevance are fundamental components of quality, and that parent choice is a priority throughout the state's early learning system.

(2) The legislature finds that the cost of quality child care is unaffordable for many families and state support is needed to ensure that all children and families in Washington can access safe, enriching child care.

(3) The legislature recognizes that expanding access to quality child care requires preparing the market of child care providers to meet existing and expanded demand. The legislature finds that the market of child care providers is shrinking, that child care deserts

are expanding, and that fewer providers are offering services to working connections child care subsidy recipients. The legislature additionally finds that child care providers are unable to recruit and retain a qualified workforce; that wages in the industry remain among the lowest of all professions, at or near minimum wage; and that the relationship between a child and a qualified caregiver is of paramount importance to parents and, according to a rapidly accumulating body of brain science, is foundational to supporting healthy development.

(4) Further, while the system awaits systemic change, the legislature finds that steps must be taken to begin to preserve and expand access to child care for child care subsidy recipients, stabilize the child care industry, and reduce turnover in the workforce.

(5) Therefore, the legislature intends to promote high quality child care from diverse providers that is accessible and affordable to all families of Washington's children ages birth to twelve." [2019 c 368 § 1.]

Short title—2019 c 368: "This act may be known and cited as the Washington child care access now act." [2019 c 368 § 9.]