
Early Learning Programs Overview

*House Human Services, Youth, and Early
Learning Committee
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Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES





DCYF Strategic Outcomes:

- 80 percent of Washington children ready for Kindergarten
- High-quality early learning available and affordable to all in Washington
- Eliminate racial disproportionality and advancing racial equity in early education

Early Learning Theory of Change

IF we expand community access to affordable high-quality early care and education and continue to improve quality in these settings for children.



THEN all children will arrive in Kindergarten ready to learn and have the quality care they need as they transition to K-12 learning, and providers will have the resources to provide quality early care and education that meets the needs of children and families.



Washington's Child Care and Early Learning Landscape



Child Care and Early Learning Universe

Settings



Family Homes

- Children served in a residential home
- Ages 0-12
- Up to 12 children (Waiver allowed)



Centers

- Children served in commercially zoned setting
- Ages 0-12
- Capacity based on sq. ft.



Outdoor

- Children served outdoors in public land
- Ages 4 -12
- Capacity based on sq. ft.



Schools

- Children served in district school settings
- Ages 0-12
- Capacity based on sq. ft.

Program Elements

Licensed child care: Foundational quality standards **ensure safe, healthy, and nurturing environments**. Serves children birth through age 12.

Early Achievers: Washington's **quality rating and recognition system**. Providers are licensed and eligible to receive subsidy through Working Connections Child Care. Private pay providers may also participate. Serves children birth through age 5.

Working Connections Child Care: Washington's **child care subsidy program**, helping low-income families pay for child care. Providers must be licensed or certified. Eligibility up through age 12.

ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program): **Washington's state-funded pre-kindergarten** program for 3- and 4-year-old children from families furthest from opportunity with a 9 out of 10 NIEER quality rating.

Head Start: Federally funded preschool program for 3- and 4-year-old children from families furthest from opportunity.

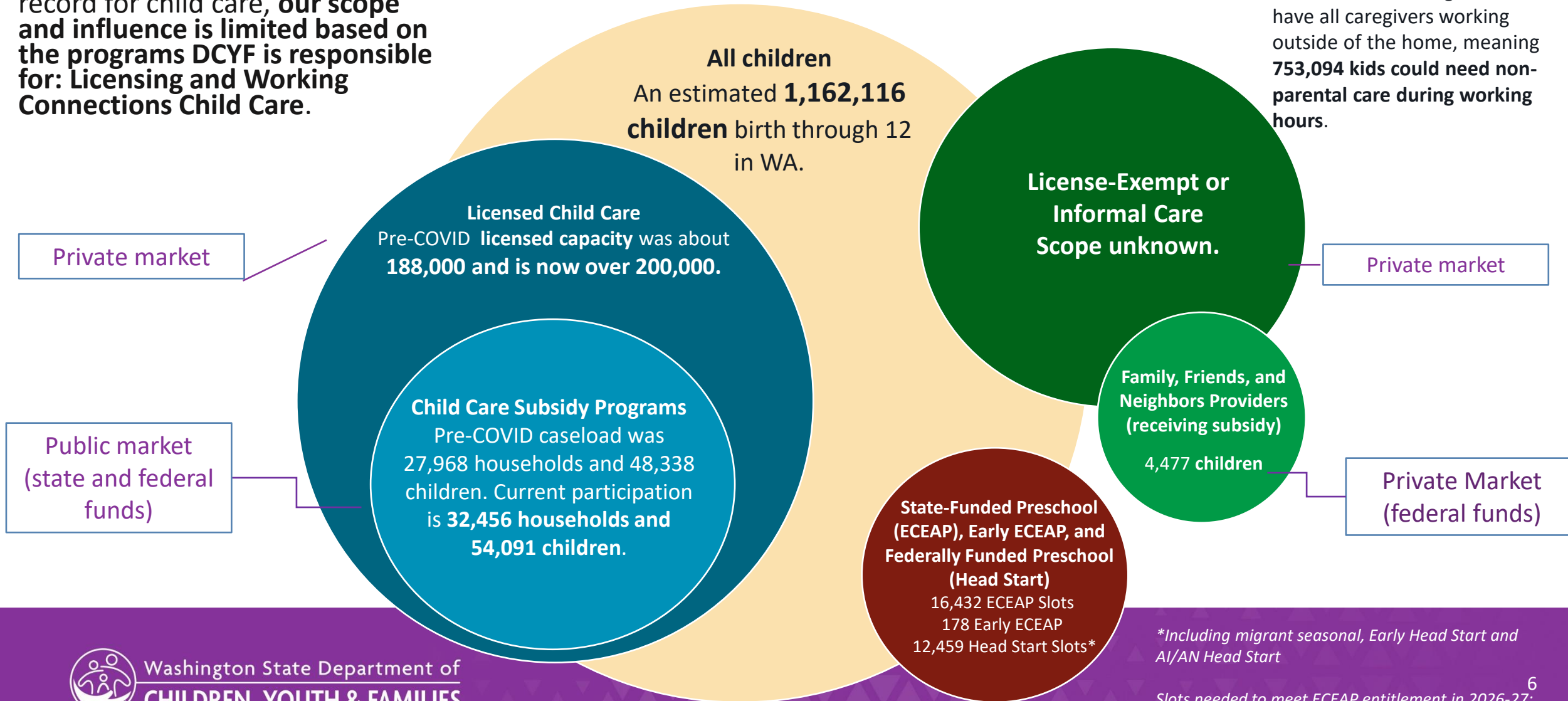
Developmental PreK: Separate schools or classroom intended for preschool aged children (3-5 years) with IEPs that offer specially designed instruction across a variety of domains and developmental needs (cognition, social emotional/behavior, fine/gross motor, communication, adaptive, etc.)

Transitional Kindergarten: A program for children, below the age of five, who do not have access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to kindergarten.

Universe of Early Care and Education in WA and DCYF's Role

While DCYF is the state agency of record for child care, **our scope and influence is limited based on the programs DCYF is responsible for: Licensing and Working Connections Child Care.**

An estimated 64% of children under 13 in Washington State have all caregivers working outside of the home, meaning **753,094 kids could need non-parental care during working hours.**



**Including migrant seasonal, Early Head Start and AI/AN Head Start*

Federal Funding and Oversight

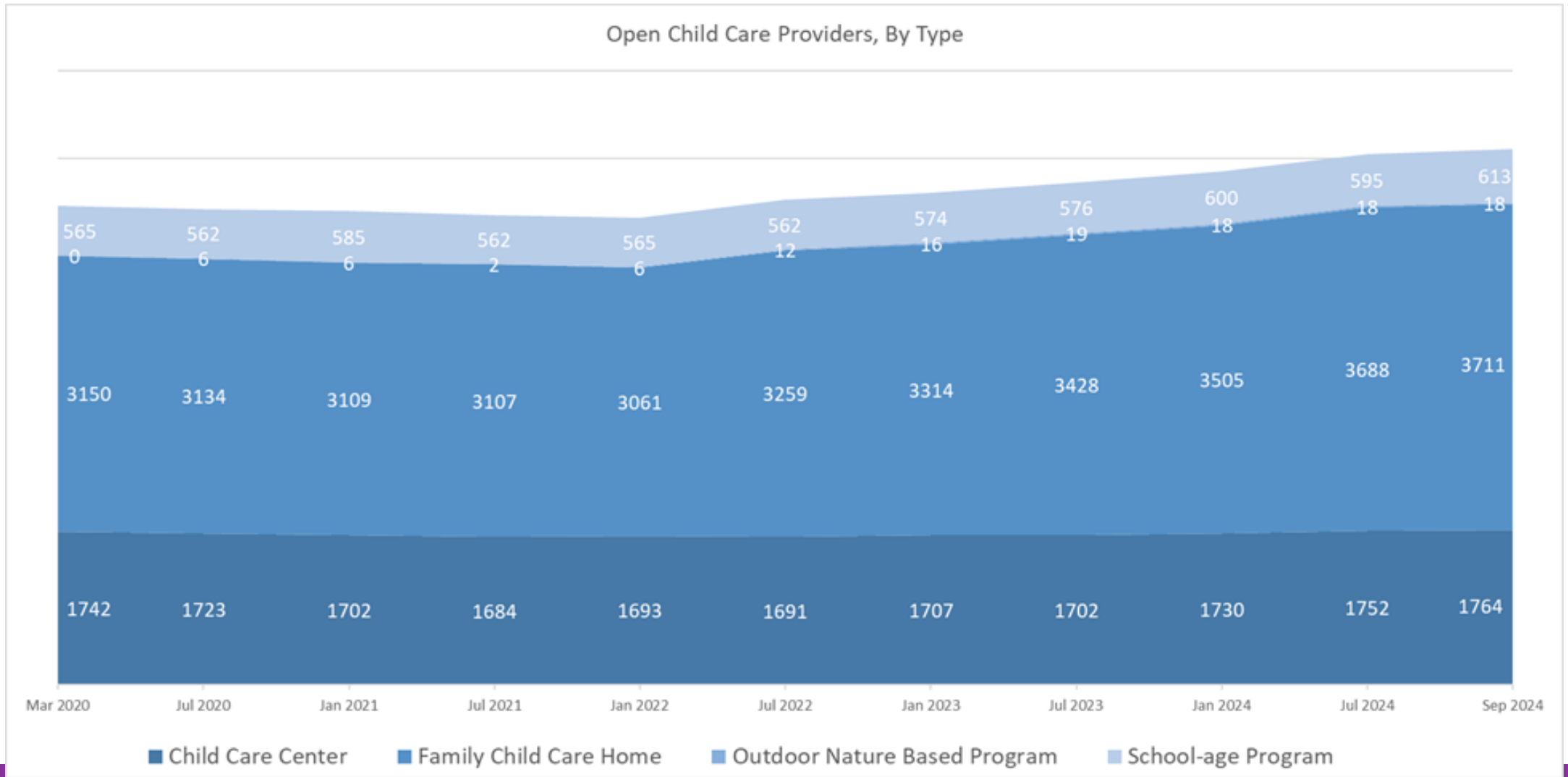
- Federal oversight, rules and expectations to receive the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG or CCDF) funds; overseen by Federal Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care (OCC).
- States develop and submit a CCDF Plan to articulate how expectations and rules are met.
- Rules include family access (subsidy), health and safety standards (licensing), and quality and professional development activities (provider supports).
- Funding allocation for states is determined by the following:
Population under 5 and under 13 from the Census Bureau; Free and Reduced Price School Lunch Program participation from the Department of Agriculture; and Per Capita Income from the Department of Commerce



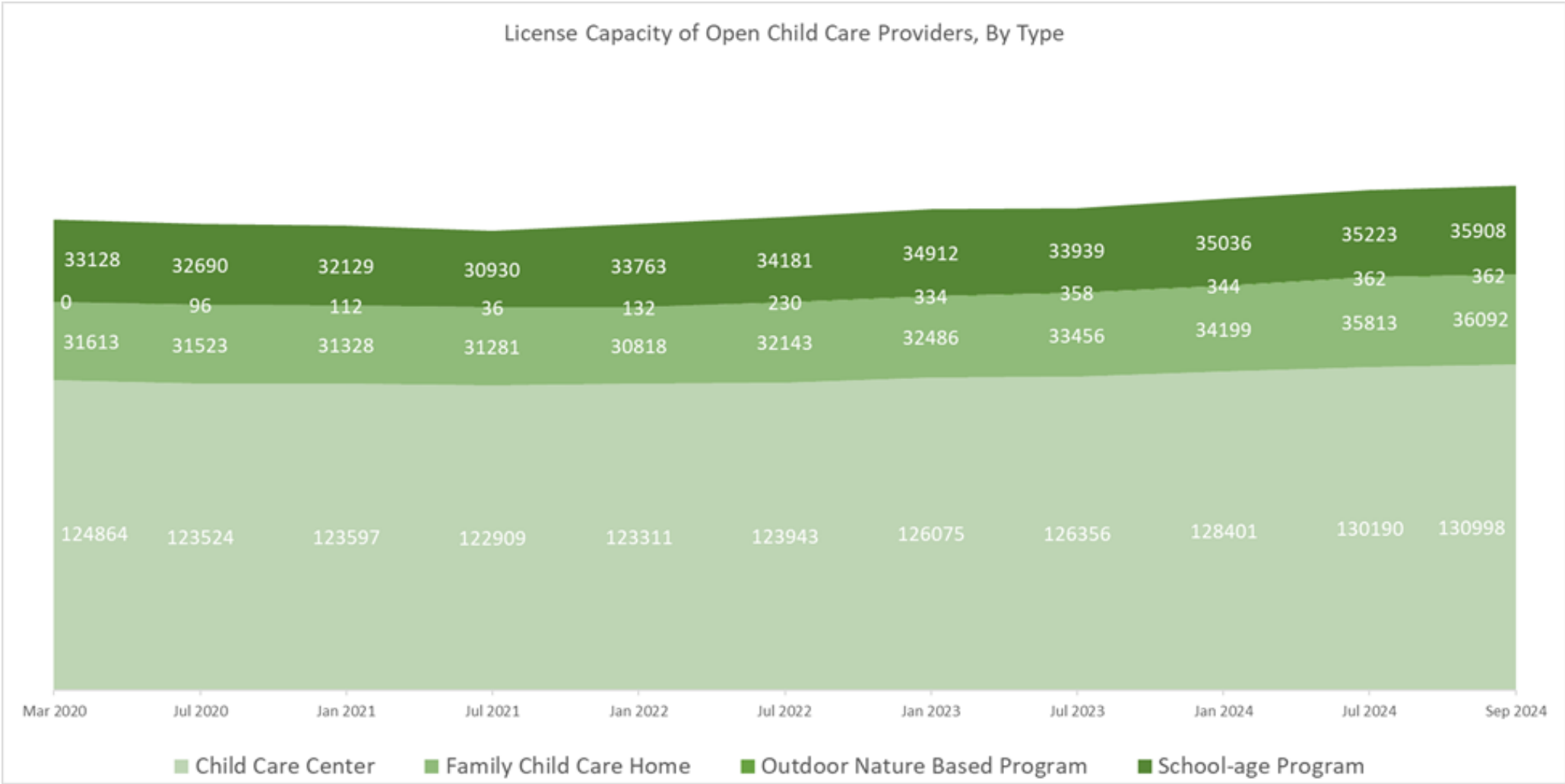
What is Licensing

- DCYF licenses approximately 6,000 early learning programs and school-age sites in the state of Washington.
- Licensed early learning providers follow foundational quality standards, the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), set by the state to ensure children in licensed care are in safe, healthy, and nurturing environments.
- Regulatory framework that set the standards for child care that is licensed or certified by DCYF:
 - [RCW 43.216.010: Definitions. \(wa.gov\)](#) – defines who must be licensed
 - [RCW 43.216.250: Secretary's licensing duties. \(wa.gov\)](#) – outlines the Secretaries duties
 - [Title 110 WAC:](#)
 - Family Home and Center WAC is 110-300
 - School-Age WAC is 110-301
 - Outdoor Nature-Based WAC is 110-302
- Licensing rules are aligned with the Early Achievers quality standards per [RCW 43.216.255](#)

Statewide Licensed Providers



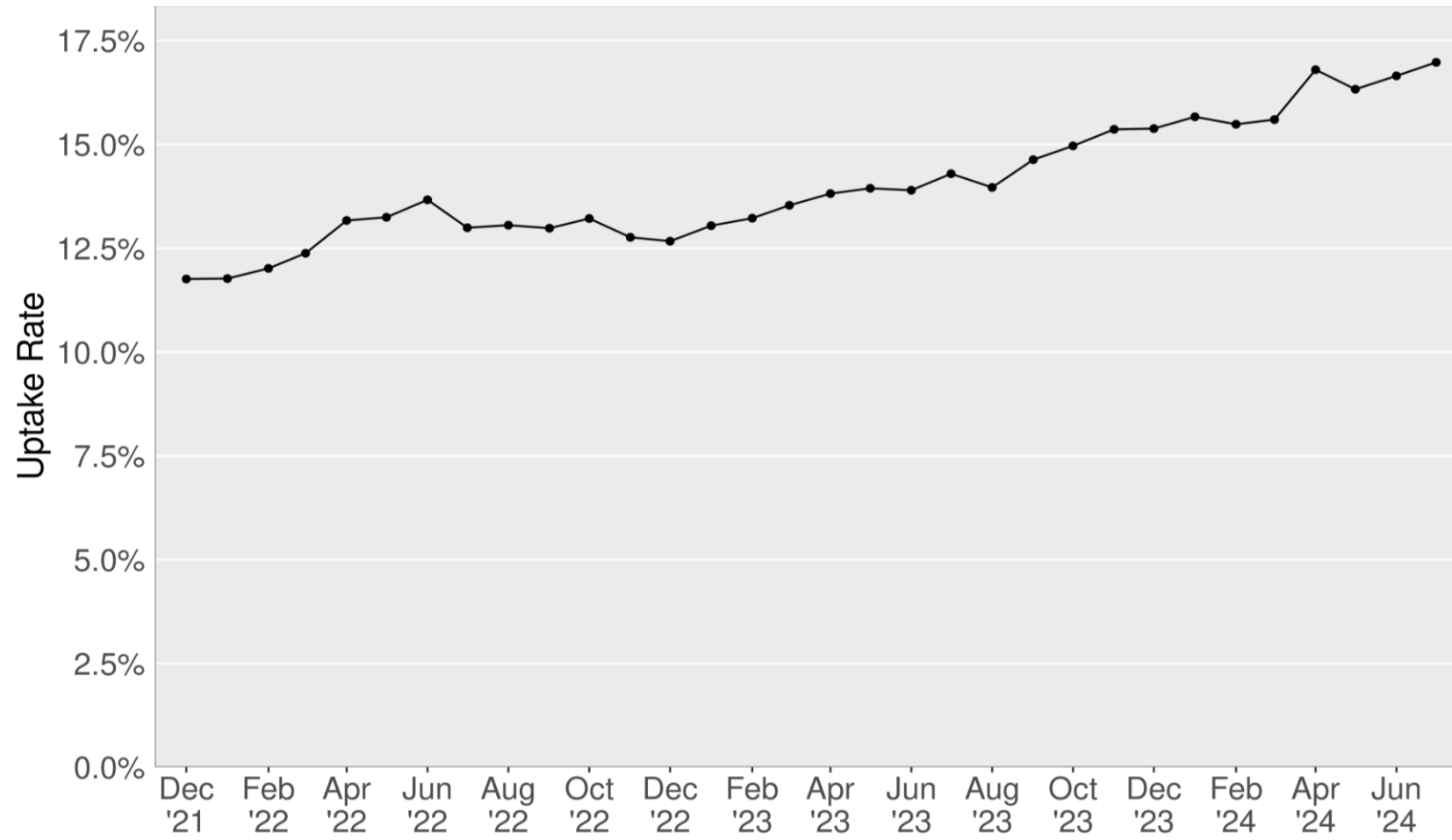
Statewide Licensed Capacity



Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Overview

- **Goal:** Provide families with financial assistance to support equitable access to high-quality child care to support child outcomes
- **Current participation:**
 - About 50,000 children are using WCCC to access care from 28,000 families
- **Families** up to 60% state median income (SMI) are eligible for WCCC
 - Up to \$5,507 per month or \$66,084 per year for a family of three
- Average family benefit is ~\$2,025 per month, paid to the provider
- The average cost to the family is \$65 (average copay) but no more than \$215.

Statewide Subsidy Utilization



What is the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)?

Prepares Washington's 3- and 4-year-old children who are furthest from opportunity for success in school and life.

Provides individualized education, family support, health and nutrition services for the specialized population we serve.

- Increases social-emotional, physical, and pre-academic skills
- Ensures each child receives medical and dental screenings and care
- Helps families move toward self-sufficiency and builds their capacity to support their children's success



ECEAP Class Models

Part Day

- Minimum of three hours per day
- 30 weeks per year
- 360 hours per year
- \$9,835 per slot, per year

School Day

- Average of six hours per day
- At least four days per week
- 1,000 hours per year
- \$15,683 per slot, per year*

Working Day

- 10 hours per day
- Five days per week
- Year round – at least 2,370 hours per year
- \$23,411 per slot, per year*

2024-25 ECEAP Funded Slots

Program Model	# Slots	% Slots
Part Day	6,293	38%
School Day	9,223	56%
Working Day	916	6%
Total	16,432	100%

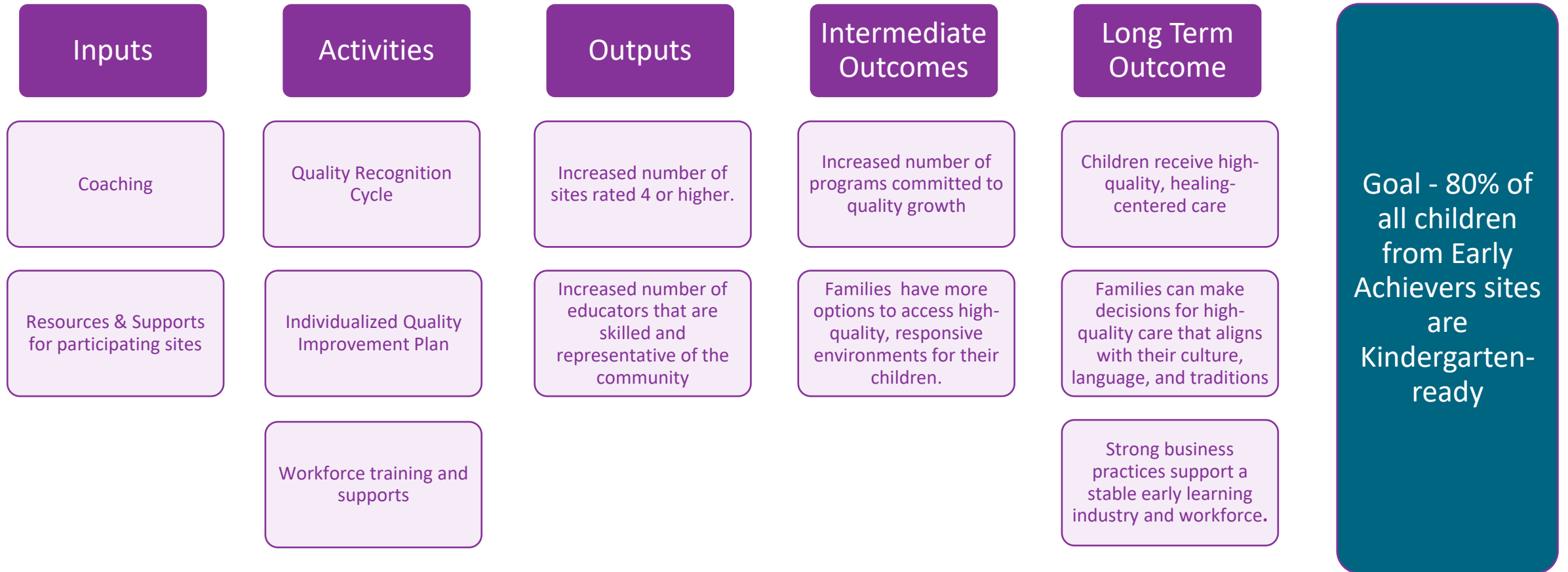
*indicates statewide average, regional rates vary

Early Achievers is Washington's QRIS.

- A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a framework for increasing observable quality in child care settings.
- Early Achievers participation for subsidy child care providers was mandated by the Early Start Act of 2015.
- Early Achievers standards are part of a continuum of quality, from licensing through ECEAP requirements.



Early Achievers Logic Model



Supports for Early Achievers Participants

Coaching

Tiered
Reimbursement
and Dual Language
Rate Enhancement

Professional
Development

Scholarships

Needs Based
Grants & Quality
Improvement
Awards

Shared Services

Birth to 3 Quality
Initiative

Substitute Pool

Infant and Early
Childhood Mental
Health
Consultation



Participation & Ratings Page

This dashboard page illustrates a "snapshot" of Early Achievers participation and the distribution of EA Quality Ratings by Early Start Act timeline and provider facility type. Click the "Notes" button for more information about ESA Provider Timelines. Select a bar segment from the "Providers by Participating and Rating Status" to filter the "Participating Providers by Rating" chart. You can select multiple categories by holding "CTRL" as you select bar segments.

ESA Provider Type

- ECEAP
- Subsidy
- ECEAP + Licensed
- Not State Funded

Facility Type

- (All)
- Center-Based EL Site
- Home-Based EL Site

Participation & Rating Status

- (All)
- Not Participating
- Participating, Not Rated
- Participating, Rated

Participation & Rating

- Participating, Rated
- Participating, Not Rated

Notes

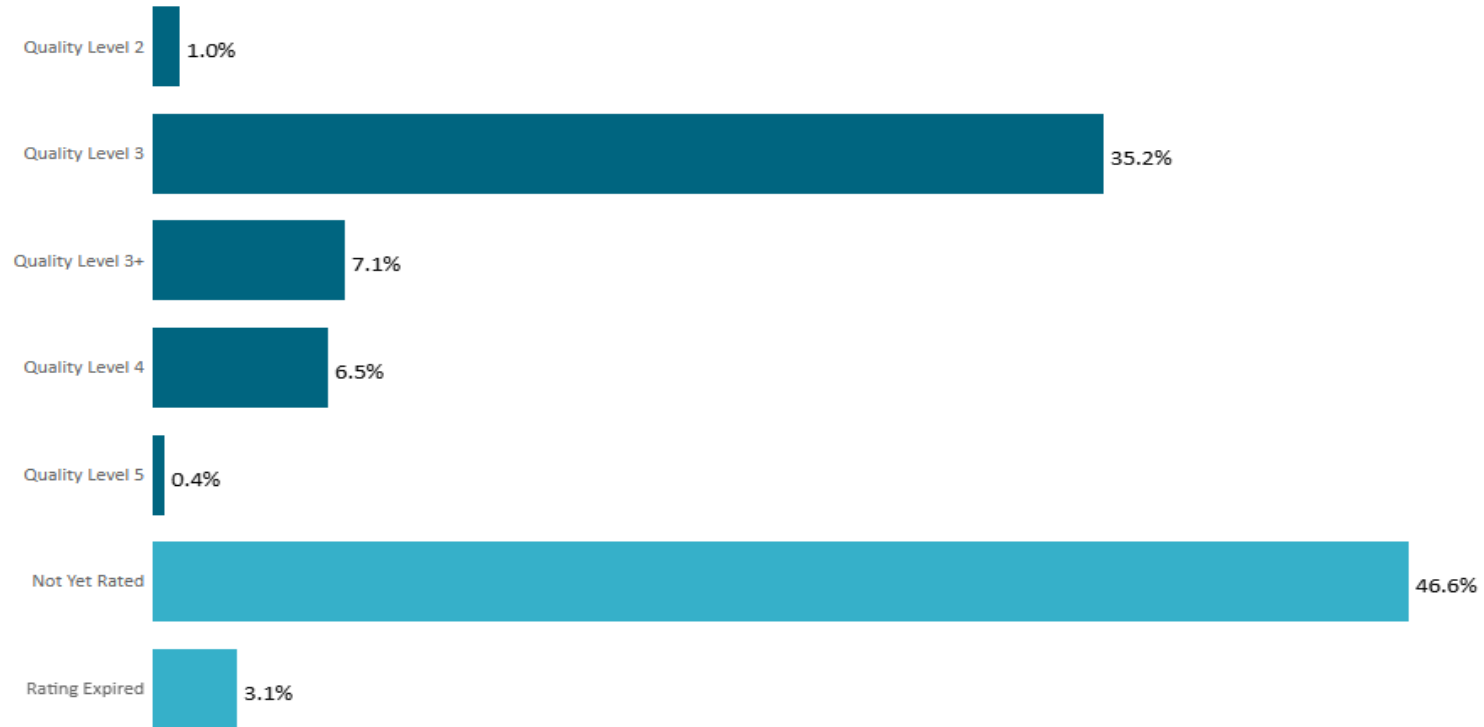
Map Page

Data as of 12/28/2024

Selected Provider Count



Providers by Participating and Rating Status
Click a segment of the bar chart below to filter the "Participating Providers by Rating" chart



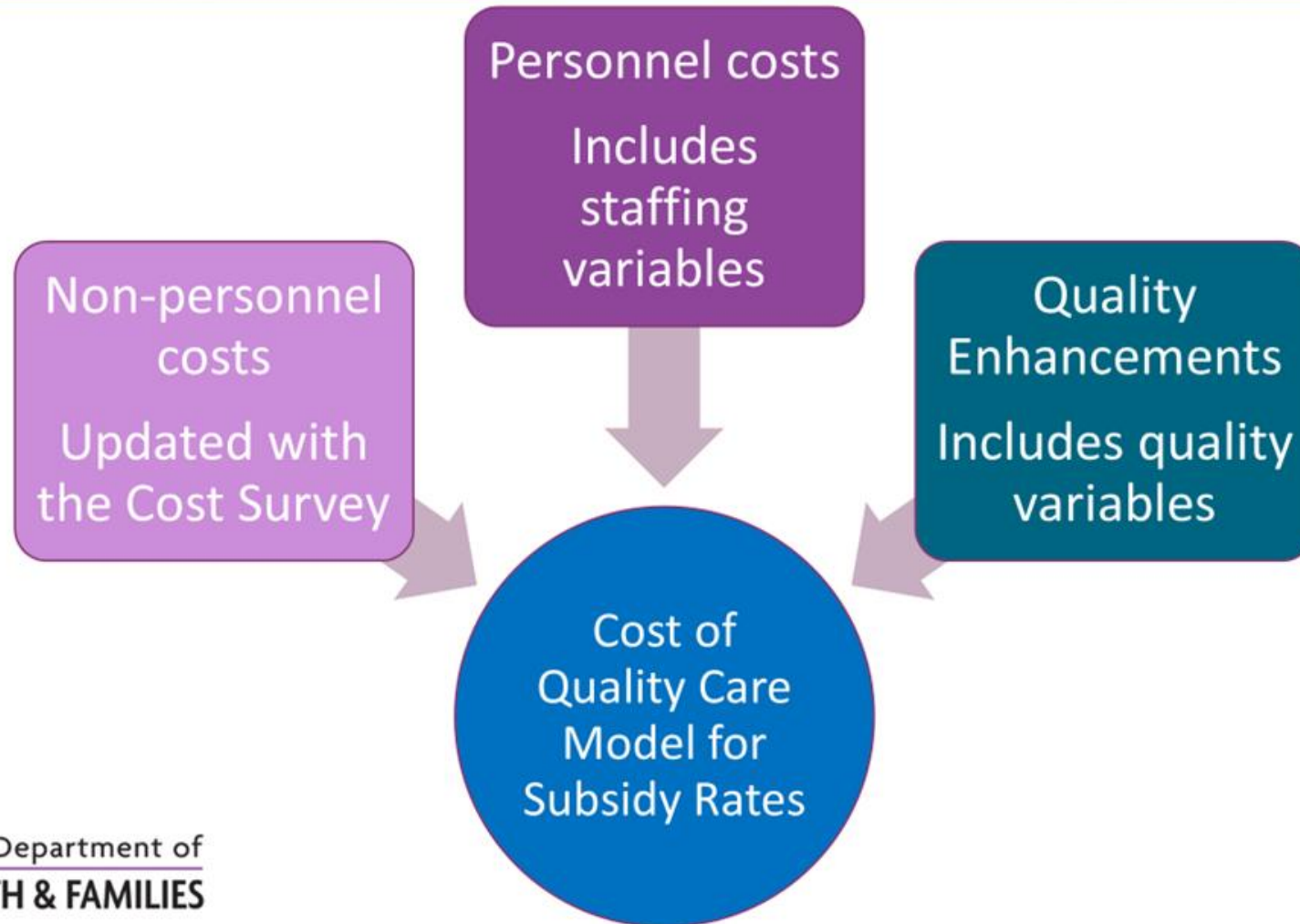
What's Next for Early Learning in Washington State

An integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable (no more than 7% of their income), high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children and providers are provided a living wage and benefits.

- We are building on the existing foundation to strengthen an integrated, mixed-delivery system of affordable, high-quality early care and education for ALL of Washington's children.
- We have a focus on child outcomes, school readiness, family and provider well-being and self-sufficiency.
- Providers have the skills and training to be successful and are paid a living wage with benefits.



Cost of Quality Care Model



THANK YOU

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Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

A photograph of a white rectangular card with the words "Thank you" written in a blue, cursive script. The card is placed on top of a brown, textured envelope. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Thank you

Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA) - RCW 43.216.749 and 43.216.1368

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](#).

Child care subsidy eligibility — expanded eligibility

(1) It is the intent of the legislature to increase working families' access to affordable, high quality child care and to support the expansion of the workforce to support businesses and the statewide economy.

(2) Beginning October 1, 2021, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is at or below 60 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:

(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.

(3) Beginning July 1, 2025, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is above 60 percent and at or below 75 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:

(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.

(4) Beginning July 1, 2027, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, a family is eligible for working connections child care when the household's annual income is above 75 percent of the state median income and is at or below 85 percent of the state median income adjusted for family size and:

(a) The child receiving care is: (i) Less than 13 years of age; or (ii) less than 19 years of age and has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(b) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.



Federal Requirements for Quality

The Child Care Development Block Grant requires lead agencies (DCYF) to expend funds from each fiscal year's allotment on quality activities pursuant to Child Care Services ([98.50\(b\)](#)).

(1) Professional development

(2) Improving upon the development or implementation of the early learning and development guidelines and Provide technical assistance to [eligible child care providers](#) in order to enhance the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development and overall well-being of participating children;

(3) Tiered quality rating and improvement system for child care [providers](#) and services;

(4) Improving the supply and quality of child care [programs](#) and services child care licensing regulations or early learning and development guidelines;

(5) Establishing or expanding a statewide system of child care resource and referral services;

(6) Facilitating compliance for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with licensing standards;

(7) Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care [programs](#) and services offered, including evaluating how such [programs](#) positively impact children;

(8) Supporting child care [providers](#) in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation by a national accrediting body with demonstrated, valid, and reliable program standards of high-quality;

(9) Supporting [Lead Agency](#) or local efforts to develop or adopt high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development;

(10) Carrying out other activities, including implementing consumer education provisions to improve the quality of child care services provided.

§ 98.53 Activities to improve the quality of child care.

State and Federal Requirements for Quality

In order to receive funding from the Child Care Development Block Grant each biennium, DCYF must follow certain guidelines.

(b) Of the aggregate amount of funds expended by a [State](#) or Territory (i.e., Discretionary, Mandatory, and Federal and [State](#) share of Matching funds):

(1) No less than seven percent in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, eight percent in fiscal years 2018 and 2019, and **nine percent** in fiscal year 2020 and each succeeding fiscal year **shall be used for activities designed to improve the quality of child care services and increase parental options for, and access to, high-quality child care as described at [§ 98.53](#)**; and

(2) No less than three percent in fiscal year 2017 and each succeeding fiscal year shall be used to carry out activities at [§ 98.53\(a\)\(4\)](#) as **such activities relate to the quality of care for infants and toddlers.**

In 2015, the Legislature passed the Early Start Act, mandating participation for early learning programs that receive state funds through Working Connections Child Care Subsidies and/or ECEAP funding. The participation and rating expectations are outlined in [RCW 43.216.085](#).

[§ 98.50 Child care services.](#)



Quality Activities

As Outlined in the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

- 1. Professional development**
- 2. Technical assistance (coaching)**
- 3. Quality rating and improvement system**
4. Improving the supply and quality of infant/toddler child care
5. Statewide system of child care resource and referral services;
6. Facilitating compliance with inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with licensing standards;
- 7. Evaluating and assessing quality and effectiveness of child care programs**
8. Supporting child care providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation
- 9. High-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development;**
10. Carrying out other activities, including implementing consumer education provisions to improve the quality of child care services provided.

§ 98.53 Activities to improve the quality of child care.