



Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2025 – 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Welcome and Introductions

DCYF Community Engagement Manager, Marlene White, welcomed attendees and introductions were completed via chat.

Executive Session

Members voted on a co-chair for the advisory body’s Executive Committee and provided feedback for the 2025 Draft FSKA Recommendations report.

- [ELAC Charter](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there guidance coming down or a Governor’s directive around advisory groups? Anything that might impact ELAC? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We currently don’t have any information about that. ELAC is written in RCW so the law would need to change for anything to change with ELAC. We will let the group know if anything is going to change. • Could Washington Childcare Center Association have the authority to appoint a seat like the coalition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes. The organization that holds a seat elects their primary and alternate delegate.
Next Steps/Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELAC member Andrea Carrillo serving in the Washington State Women's Commission was elected to serve on the ELAC Executive Committee. • Please reach out to the Community Engagement team (dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions or if you are interested in serving as a co-chair on the Executive Committee.

Review of Meeting Materials

DCYF Community Engagement Manager, Marlene White led the group in the review of meeting materials.

- [December 3, 2024, Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Feedback Loop](#)
- [State Agency/Partner Updates](#)
- [Regional Coalition Updates](#)
- [Enrollment and Prospective Based Pay Feedback and Responses](#)

Discussion	<p>State Agency/Partner Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know that child care complex needs funds can be used to add staff or increase staff hours. Do the staff supported by these funds receive any training? If so, where and how are they receiving this support? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This would be up to the individual provider. There is not training associated with receiving complex needs funds. ○ There is training offered at no cost to any childcare provider, not just those receiving complex needs funding awards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additionally, DCYF is partnering with the UW Haring Center to offer training that supports child care workers serving children with complex needs. All trainings are free to providers and are held remotely via
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	<p>Zoom. Trainings are available in English, Spanish, and Somali. See flyer for topics and dates (English Spanish Somali).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are ECEAP sub-contractors able to apply independently this round for complex needs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If you are licensed ECEAP, yes you can apply. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thank you for changing that because that was a huge barrier for me and my facility. • What about exempted licensure providers (federal/Tribal)? Would they still be eligible for the complex needs funding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Yes; if you are certified for payment only tribal providers there has been no change to that eligibility. Tribal providers are still able to apply for a complex needs fund award. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would military providers be eligible as well as? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, licensed or certified providers are eligible. <p><i>Enrollment and Prospective Based Pay Feedback and Responses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerning: "Families: Impact on children during transition between providers" I see that DCYF acknowledges the impact on the family when the child is suspended or when child care is terminated. However, is anything being done? Are there any services (mental health or otherwise) or resources to help aid with transitions like these? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If a family needs to move and they're receiving subsidy, we really try to connect them with Child Care Aware so that they can find another provider as soon as possible.
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Early Learning Legislative Update

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Early Learning, Nicole Rose and Government Affairs Policy Advisor, Courtney Parker provided an update on early learning legislation.

- [Government Affairs | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)
- [January 9 DCYF 2025-27 Biennial Budget Meeting Slides](#)
- [January 9 DCYF 2025-27 Biennial Budget Meeting Recording](#)

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the Trump DEI ban effect the New CCDF Requirements Package? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are continuing to watch things at the federal and state levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are we looking at changing the way we word things because of the current federal climate? Specifically, the DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, Washington still has a strong commitment to eliminating racial disproportionality and advancing racial equity. • Regarding HB 1128, it seems like it would be more effective to have a module within our 30-hour Basics that trains employees on rights and responsibilities in a childcare setting. I think having another board tell us what our rights and responsibilities are is an overreach and I think mandating safe sleep every year is ridiculous. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are sharing some information today but not our position on any bills. We are in a different space as it relates to that as an agency now and just welcome you all to connect with your legislators and others to share your input and feedback about what you would like to see happen with these. • Will DCYF be signing in as PRO/CON or providing pro or con testimony on any of these? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCYF will be providing testimony but will not be signing in pro or con. • In the past, the house bills that don't have a senate companion bill usually don't make it. Can one of you share out which bills you feel may or may not make it based on legislative feedback the DCYF team has received to date?
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We don't have that information yet, we should know a lot more after February 28th. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can that information be shared with ELAC? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, we can do that. • Based on the newly elected Governor Ferguson's proposals, it seems like there's a lot of emphasis on K-12. Do you know if there are any reductions or planned reductions to our child care providers? And if so, what is DCYF hearing about that as an agency? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Every state agency is required to do a six percent budget reduction exercise except for K-12, Washington State Patrol, and Public Safety. We will be submitting that information to OFM this week. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will that information be made public? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not sure what OFM will be made public. • I would just reiterate that as agencies go through their proposed reductions, ultimately the legislature will make decisions on any of the funding pieces. Governor Ferguson has also talked a bit about childcare and some of his priorities as well. As we can share more information, we absolutely will. • Concerning HB 1282: Are there any new regulations or standards implemented by DCYF or the government that require higher coverage limits, leading to insurance hikes or the possibilities of hikes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This bill has many pieces that do not touch on costs or premiums and are focused on transparency. The last element is around liability insurance review to be done by DCYF (undefined) to determine if liability insurance coverage limits are still sufficient with inflation and today's costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If an increase takes place, will DCYF provide guidance on ways to mitigate risks and potentially lower insurance premiums for childcare providers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This bill doesn't really give a clear definition of what it all means and what it all entails. But I imagine if that's on the table, that would be a big part of the conversation. • In the Governor's priorities pillars, while childcare isn't mentioned in the Education section, it is mentioned several times in the affordability section. • Is the department willing to work with childcare providers about listing positives on the licensing history inspection reports instead of only listing things we've been cited for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are working on some possible solutions and will also meet with our new Insurance Commissioner as well. We are very aware that this is an issue across all the providers in Washington State and are looking into it.
<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please reach out to Courtney Parker (courtney.parker@dcyf.wa.gov) and Nicole Rose (nicole.rose@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.

Licensing Updates

DCYF Assistant Secretary of Licensing Division, Ruben Reeves and Child Care Deputy Senior Administrator, Debbie Groff provided an update about the Community Child Care Conversations, formerly known as the 'Forums'.

<p>Discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Licensing and Early Learning Divisions will be publishing a report next month with findings and action items from the 2024 meetings. • Virtual meetings are being scheduled for 2025 and information will be shared soon with providers.
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Next Steps/Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please reach out to the Community Engagement team (dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.
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Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso

DCYF’s Early Care and Education Access Project Manager Diana Stokes, Federal Initiatives and Collaboration Senior Administrator Matt Judge and Child Care Subsidy Program Administrator Jason Ramynke provided a progress update on the Early Care and Education Access and Living Wage Proviso.

Discussion	<p><i>Early Care and Education Facilities Exploration Project</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the timeline on the Exploration Project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The work is going to be happening over the next 18 months and we were hoping that a member of ELAC would be willing to join a workgroup to support the facilities project. If you are interested in volunteering to be a part of the Early Care and Education Facilities Exploration Project please fill out the Workgroup Member Recruitment Survey by Friday, February 14. I’m concerned about the current federal situation. Will anything happening at the federal level affect this work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have been in touch with the new leadership at the Office of Childcare and Head Start but we do not have any formal guidance yet about what’s in store for the Childcare Development Fund or Preschool Development Grant. We are just proceeding on the assumption that our grant statues remain the same until we get new guidance. <p><i>Create a child care guarantee for all Washington families within Washington’s mixed-delivery system.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you expand on what the proposed reduced co-payments would look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we look at a family of four making about \$200,000, their copayment would be \$600. If that same family made \$458,000 a year, their copayment would be \$1,400. And anyone under that wouldn’t have a co-pay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think this would really benefit families. It would also allow providers to have more subsidized families. A lot of families are not utilizing subsidies because they have a stigma. This would alleviate that stigma. It would look like the State is trying to be proactive for all families because all children deserve a safe, wonderful place to be. From the provider’s side, if the true cost of care is the subsidy rate, then this is more of a positive impact. Any thought to the unintended consequences for providers who are not part of Early Achievers? Will that requirement be removed to accept these newly funded families? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCYF is considering this, and will work to build in and get additional feedback on this. There are certain aspects in the proviso work that we are assuming will not change. There are requirements in state law that providers need to participate and move through Early Achievers to receive subsidy payments. As well as licensing standards and some of the other system pieces that that have always been a part of the framework. Can you share what the fiscal note will be for both options?! Shouldn’t the aspirational 7% goal be separated from the wage increase goal for early learning staff? We want to help families but we also want to be able to pay staff more. What’s the logic behind combining these programs?
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- Today we're just looking at family eligibility income and what a family copay would be. We're not quite getting into the impacts to staff wages. We haven't gotten to the fiscal note and what the potential cost for these is just yet. That'll be very dependent on the state of childcare subsidy specifically at the end of legislative session.
- In the implementation plan, our recommendations will have some costs associated so there's modeling still being done of what that will look like. We recognize that this will take investments that will happen over time so we're looking at the scalability based on investments. But this information is just focused on families are paying no more than that 7% copayment.
- If Early Achievers will still be a requirement, have you thought about the need for more coaches? If you're going to expand this program, we need to retain coaches, and they also deserve a livable wage so there's less turnover.
 - We are considering the expansion of Early Achievers coaches in the infrastructure supports.
- I understand that the implementation plan will be shared with legislators in June. Is there any input being shared now on current bills such as SB5500 which includes paying on the cost of care model?
 - We're paying close attention to the direction that the legislature will head. That, said, the proviso language is the proviso language and that hasn't changed. It calls for us to provide an implementation plan that would move us toward living wage and benefits for providers as well as no family paying more than 7%. The timelines are certainly impacted by what we're seeing develop in the legislature. But that's a moving situation as we speak, so we're all learning as we go.

Support inclusion of children with special needs

- The current process needs more collaboration with providers. However, the process takes too long. Once you do get the rate approved, that child could be moved to another center. Special Needs is a big term and there are varying degrees. We need to be clear on disability versus behavior because if we make it too broad it could lose its power.
 - Do you think there are more than two levels to account for?
 - I think all of us providers would say, children with IEPs should be eligible because they need to be in care. But we need different resources for children that need medical support. That's a whole different classification. There are different variations but overall it is not an easy process to get approved and it should not be this difficult.
- I would respectfully encourage automated approval for children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP - ages 3-21) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP - ages 0-3).
 - Children with IEPs or IFSPs, already meet state and federal definitions of disability and need for specialized instruction or disability and/or developmental delay.
- Are we requiring a doctor's note to confirm a child's disability? Or is it something that you'll take the word of a provider or a letter from a consultant? There is an equity piece to consider because not everyone is going to have equal access to doctors to provide that information.
 - A doctor is needed to confirm. One of the main holdups right now is when we need some medical verification. If a child has an IEP or an IFSP, we usually can get a copy of that very quickly. It's for those other children where we need that medical documentation that there's a gap. It sounds like there's some support



	<p>around having provider documentation for lower rate levels so we're going to take that feedback for future eligibility requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will you consider Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) and some other developmental screenings that could show similar things to an IEP? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, those are good recommendations. • I would caution using ASQ and to really look at who's administrating it. It's used in a variety of circumstances where sometimes it will look like there's really a problem but there really isn't. There's minor information that parents need to improve scores on that, so I would hate to use something that then would backfire on you in the long run. • Is there an option for a streamlined approach to eligibility? If a child has been expelled from multiple places, they could be automatically eligible because history has proven they need an extra level of support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I think that is part of that discussion around automatic eligibility for Working Connections Childcare. If a child is receiving childcare from our Protective Services Division there is a referral at some point in time to Working Connections where there's some categorical eligibility. I think there's pathways in the future that could lead to automatic eligibility. If that's something that's supported, we can note that as well. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some kids have a history with DCYF so I would think that they would just come into care with that higher level without providers needing to document it because the agency already has their history. • Have you ever thought about having special needs attached to a facility rather than an individual child? Sometimes a behavioral therapist is needed for multiple kids. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The special needs eligibility and Working Connections is tied to the child and that is based on requirements for our Federal funding and our CCDF plan. We'd have to explore different ways of supporting providers with those additional services. Just to really focus on special needs being tied back to the child and the family and the child's eligibility.
<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please reach out to Diana Stokes (diana.stokes@dcyf.wa.gov), Matt Judge (matt.judge@dcyf.wa.gov), or Jason Ramynke (Jason.ramynke@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow up questions.

Closing Remarks/Adjourn

<p>Next Steps/Follow Up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our next meeting will be Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and we'll review the draft 2025 FSKA Recommendations. • The next ELAC Public Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 1, 2025.
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Members in Attendance:

April Messenger, Astrid Newell, Carlina Brown-Banks, Cheryl Smith, Claudette Lindquist, Danielle Rasmussen, Debbie Carlsen, Debbie Ham, Deeann Puffert, Dr. Brian Knowles, Hanna Bruning, Heidi Scott, Isis Lara Fernandez, Jaymie McLaughlin, Jen Sandvig, Kathy Carman, Lois Martin, Lola Moses, Michelle Perez, Nancy Spurgeon, Olivia Burley, Ryan Guzman, Shereese Rhodes, Tafra Jones, Valerie Arnold, Victoria Hilt.

Members Absent:

Alexandra Martin-Truesdell, Ami Magisos, Andrea (Dre) Carrillo, Brittany Hartikainen, Colleen Condon, Julie Rolling, Luz Gomez, Mary Rulewicz, Million Shiferaw, Muriel Herrera-Velasquez, Patti Bailey, Representative Mari Leavitt, Representative Travis Couture, Ruba Ayub, Samantha Bowen, Senator Claire Wilson, Valisa Smith, Waylon Ballew.