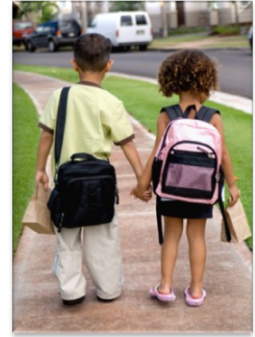


Update from the Department of Early Learning January 2011

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On behalf of the Department of Early Learning team, happy new year! 2011 will be a year of incredible progress on behalf of children and families in Washington. In the spirit of the new year, here are my resolutions for DEL in 2011 (notice that the success of every one of these resolutions depends upon strong partnerships):

- Review and update the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* to ensure they reflect communities around the state and align with K-3 academic requirements.
- Work with our partners on the WorkFirst subcabinet to deliver recommendations to the Governor on how to redesign WorkFirst as a sustainable, research-based program that supports families on the path to self-sufficiency (including child care subsidy policies).
- Work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify resources and a plan to continue the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) beyond this pilot school year.
- Enhance and expand Seeds to Success, our state's quality rating and improvement system, based on lessons learned from the field test with our partners at Thrive by Five Washington.
- Support Thrive in their launch of the "Love.Talk.Play." parent awareness campaign.
- Continue our efforts to evolve child care licensing by: putting out for public comment and adopting updated family home child care licensing rules; reviewing our school-age rules based on recommendations from School's Out Washington; and using electronic licensing forms during field visits.
- Build upon the great work of the Professional Development Consortium by adding new features to our online registry (MERIT) and exploring ways to strengthen our professional development system for early care and education professionals.
- Strengthen the roles and responsibilities of our Early Learning Advisory Council.
- And do all of this work—and more—keeping the goal of school readiness for all children at the forefront of our decisions and actions.



It's going to be a busy year, to be sure! Most of what you see above is captured in the one-year action plan for the Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership, which will be posted online this month at www.del.wa.gov/plan. This is the document that spells out which strategies DEL, Thrive and OSPI are going to tackle from the Early Learning Plan in 2011.

We at DEL are grateful to have excellent partners in this work. Let's get started!

—*Bette Hyde, Director*

Governor proposes state Department of Education

On Jan. 5, Gov. Chris Gregoire unveiled her proposal to create a more student-centered education system by housing early learning, K-12 and higher education functions within one state Department of Education. Gov. Gregoire will introduce a bill this legislative session. For now, the policy brief is online at

www.governor.wa.gov/priorities/budget/p20_system.pdf

We at DEL are proud of our work as a stand-alone agency—and the Governor is, too. As DEL Director Bette Hyde said in a statement: "This is a big opportunity for students and families in our state. We in state government have spent a lot of time coordinating and planning. But now we need to spend more time 'doing'—focused on children. Our Governor recognizes that our state early learning system is among the best in the nation. DEL would bring ideas and energy to a state Department of Education about how to get on the right track from the moment a child is born."

We at DEL look forward to seeing details, and will continue to share information as it is available.

Child Care Check improvements go live

DEL has launched updates to Child Care Check, the online tool that parents and others can use to find information on a child care provider's licensing history. Child Care Check offers information about all 7,500 licensed providers in our state, including how long they've been licensed, how many children they can care for, and whether they have any valid licensing complaints.



Go to www.del.wa.gov/check to see the improved Child Care Check, which includes these new features:

- Users now can search for a list of providers based on zip code radius and type of facility (previously, Child Care Check required the user to input a provider's name).
- Users can search for a family home child care provider based on the provider's business name (if the provider has a business name other than his/her own name).
- Information about whether a valid licensing complaint was self-referred by the provider. Providers are required to report any serious incidents in their facility to DEL. Parents and others can now see whether providers are the ones who reported an incident that resulted in a valid licensing complaint.

Child Care Check is just one tool families can use to find child care in their community. Families can first find licensed child care options by contacting the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (www.childcarenet.org), then using Child Care Check to look at child care providers' licensing history.

DEL's *You Have a Choice! A Guide to Finding Quality Child Care* offers more information on how to find care that's right for your family. Find it online at:

www.del.wa.gov/publications/development/docs/ChoosingChildCare.pdf

Upcoming early learning events...

January 10—2011 legislative session begins

January 11—Governor Chris Gregoire's State of the State Address

January 15—DEL report due to Legislature on child care licensing

January 15—Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) report due to the Legislature



Child care subsidy updates

Changes to Working Connections, Seasonal subsidy programs

Additional reductions are being made to the WorkFirst budget (which includes child care subsidies) to balance it for the current fiscal year (which ends June 30, 2011) and the 2011-2013 biennium. This is in addition to \$51 million in cuts to WorkFirst announced last August, which at that time included moving from 200 to 175 percent federal poverty level for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidies eligibility.

These new reductions are needed in part because assumed emergency Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding was not appropriated by the federal government, and in part because of increased caseloads.

Here is what the new reductions mean for WCCC:

- Beginning Feb. 1, families who are seeking authorization for WCCC subsidies will have to be receiving TANF. That means they will need to be at or below 82 percent of federal poverty level (FPL). For a family of three, that is \$1,251 per month. (*We are working with DSHS to determine if families have to be receiving TANF benefits or simply eligible for them.*)
- Once authorized, families will remain eligible until they go above 175 percent FPL. Families already on WCCC may stay on until they reach 175 percent FPL.
- Co-pays for families at Tier 2 (82 to 137.5 percent FPL) and Tier 3 (137.5 to 175 percent FPL) will be \$10 more per month.

As part of the August 2010 cuts, on Jan. 1, anyone receiving WCCC subsidies who is above 175 percent FPL will no longer receive the benefit. The 1,112 families affected by this, and the child care providers who serve them, have been notified. All the WorkFirst reductions will be posted online at www.dshs.wa.gov/TANFimpacts.shtml

Also, DEL has suspended the Seasonal Child Care subsidy program through the end of the state fiscal year (which ends June 30, 2011). All budgeted funding for seasonal subsidies has been spent for the year. All families and providers currently using the Seasonal Child Care subsidy program have been notified, and were given information on how they might find other support.

We at DEL know that these are tough messages for families and providers. We must keep working to come out of this economic situation stronger than before, and smarter about leveraging every available resource. DEL is participating in an effort to put forward to Gov. Chris Gregoire a set of recommendations around redesigning WorkFirst, and will share more information about that when it is available.

DOH seeks input on CHILD Profile website

The Department of Health is asking visitors to the state CHILD Profile website to share input on how well the site informs parents, providers and partners. Visit www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/childprofile/ between now and Jan. 15 to take the short survey. CHILD Profile is Washington's health promotion and immunization registry system, which helps ensure children in Washington get preventive health care. DEL partners with DOH to mail copies of our "You Have a Choice! A Guide to Finding Quality Child Care in Washington State" brochure to all new parents in the state.



Professional development report submitted to Governor, Legislature


Consortium makes recommendations on building strong statewide PD system

The state's Professional Development Consortium on Dec. 30 submitted a report required in House Bill 1943, passed in the 2009 legislative session. The report outlines current professional development opportunities for early care and education professionals in Washington, and recommends ways to build a stronger system that supports those working with children in offering high-quality care.

The recommendations include:

- Increasing minimum educational requirements for licensed child care providers and staff.
- Adopting the *Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education* and *Washington State Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals* as the state's foundation for all professional development policies, practices, strategies and initiatives.
- Ensuring trainers meet minimum trainer education and experience.
- Establishing and funding a robust evaluation system for trainings offered to early childhood and child and youth development professionals.
- Ensuring infant/toddler-specific curricula and training for all early learning providers, as well as licensing staff.

Read the full report online at www.del.wa.gov/government/legislature/reports.aspx



We at the DEL State Office love to display artwork created by children in Washington! Right now, we have self-portraits from a group of budding artists in a local Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) classroom. Does your early learning program have artwork you would like to share? Please e-mail communications@del.wa.gov

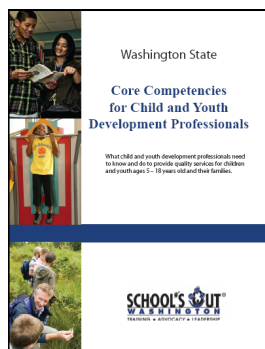
Infant Toddler System project update

DEL and its partners are creating 10 new infant toddler regions to bring consultation work closer to local communities' needs. The 10 regional contractors are now working on their strategic planning and assessments of needs, which are due to DEL this month. Visit www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/infant/ to see the list of contractors.

Existing contracts for child care health consultation services expired Dec. 31, 2010, and new agreements are expected to go into effect spring or summer 2011. Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requiring monthly nurse consultation in infant rooms is still in effect for licensed child care centers. Local health departments can provide advice about how to locate qualified consultants.

School-age core competencies to be mailed this month

Licensed school-age centers will be receiving copies of the new *Core Competencies for Child and Youth Development Professionals* later this month.



This document is the companion to the early care version mailed to all licensed providers last fall. The early care version addresses caregivers and teachers working with children birth through age 8; and the child and youth version addresses professionals working with children ages 5 to 18.

For more information, visit www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/development/core.aspx

Message about new federal crib standards sent to licensed providers

At the end of December, DEL used our new licensed child care provider e-mail listserv to distribute a message about the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's vote to ban the sale of drop-side cribs and approve new mandatory standards. Licensed child care providers, hotels, motels, and other public facilities providing cribs to the public will have until December 2012 to replace cribs that do not meet the new requirements.

For more information, visit CPSC's crib information center at: www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html.

If you are a licensed provider and did not receive the e-mail, check with your licensor to determine what e-mail address we have on file for you.

Fingerprint and background check news

On February 1, DEL will begin a new electronic fingerprint process with a business called L-1 Enrollment Services to reduce time and errors. Applicants will no longer submit fingerprint cards and associated fees to DEL. The licensee will pay for the applicants fingerprint by:

- E-check from saving or checking account
- Credit or debit card
- L-1 Enrollment Services preapproved escrow account

Watch for a new background check form online and in DEL offices this month that will help DEL with this transition. For more information, visit www.del.wa.gov/requirements/new/background.aspx