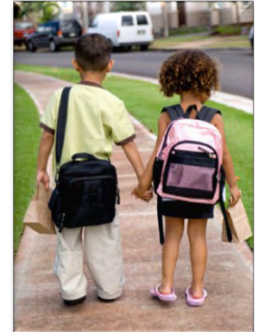


Update from the Department of Early Learning March 2011

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Legislative session continues, with many bills moving forward that would affect DEL and the early learning community. We are keeping an eye on bills that would:

- Create a state Department of Education (SB 5639)
- Create a portable background check for child care employees (HB 1903 and SB 5714)
- Create a non-expiring child care license (HB 1756 and SB 5625)
- Allow drop-in child care for employees in certain facilities (SB 5172)
- Adopt the Core Competencies as the state framework for defining what those who care for and teach young children should know and be able to do (SB 5715)
- Strengthen the penalties for offering unlicensed child care (SB 5504)
- Create a statewide education council (HB 1849)
- Change the membership of the Early Learning Advisory Council (HB 1491 and SB 5389)
- Allow DEL and the Department of Social and Health Services to share certain background check information (HB 1419 and SB 5426)
- Allow state entities to exempt certain information about children in early learning settings from public disclosure (HB 1293 and SB 5314)
- Require DEL to make recommendations on tying subsidy to quality care indicators (HB 1364)
- Require DEL to make rules around child care in publicly owned or operated buildings (HB 1776)
- Require teachers in state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms to use the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) starting in the 2012-2013 school year (HB 1510, SB 5427)



Read more on the Government Relations section of our website at www.del.wa.gov/government

The Legislature also has passed an early action supplemental budget that addresses some of the budget shortfall for the current state fiscal year (which ends June 30, 2011). That budget reduces funding for the Career and Wage Ladder, Seasonal Child Care subsidy administration, the early learning program study required under Senate Bill 6759, and agency administration. Go to <http://fiscal.wa.gov/budgets.aspx> to find a summary of the supplemental changes.

Finally, I want to welcome Linda Shea to DEL as our new chief financial officer. Linda joins us this month after Debra Wilhelmi retires with more than 30 years of state service under her belt. Linda has worked for several state agencies, most recently the Office of the Secretary of State as deputy director for corporations and charities. Linda told us that one of her goals was to work on behalf of young children. DEL and Linda are a perfect fit!

—*Bette Hyde, Director*

Working Connections Child Care waiting list begins March 1

Additional information is now online about co-pay changes, field trip fees, how the list will work

As a result of the current budget situation, the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program now has a waiting list for families. Beginning March 1, families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits and families of children with special needs will receive priority access to WCCC. Remaining families with incomes at 175 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG) or less will receive child care benefits on a "first come, first served" basis until the program reaches a limit of 35,200 families.

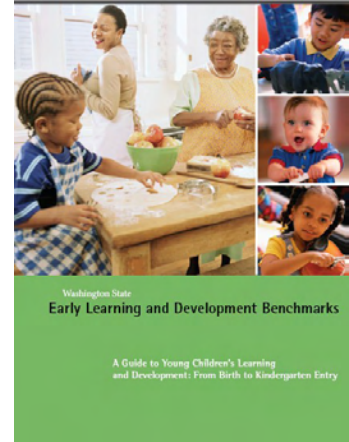
The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will keep a waiting list of potentially eligible families who apply. Families will be notified by mail when there are openings in the child care program, and they will have 10 days to complete the application process.

Continued on page 2

Benchmarks workgroup agrees to new version, increased cultural relevance

Existing document will continue to be used; cornerstone of new tool

On Feb. 17 and 18, a workgroup met to outline the process for revising the *Early Learning and Development Benchmarks*. The workgroup includes representatives from DEL, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Thrive by Five Washington, and partners from around the state including child care, Head Start and ECEAP, parents, K-12 staff, experts on children with disabilities, and Tribes. First created in 2005, the Benchmarks are a research-based tool to support parents, early learning educators and caregivers in understanding what young children may know and do at different ages. The Benchmarks document was intended to be revisited every five years to ensure consistency with current research and best practices and the needs of Washington.



The workgroup agreed to changes to the Benchmarks to promote multicultural inclusion and relevance. The existing document will serve as a core resource in designing the new version, along with other relevant documents such as the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and state K-12 standards. The workgroup will meet again in about a month to develop principles for the updated Benchmarks.

Visit www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks/ to learn more about the Benchmarks.

“Working Connections” continued from page 1

Families who currently receive WCCC benefits remain income eligible until their monthly incomes exceed 175 percent of the FPG. The copayment increases previously announced for Feb. 1 and March 1 remain the same.

We do not yet have information about how many families will be on the waiting list and for how long. Families will be admitted on a monthly basis based on the program’s capacity and budget.

Visit: www.del.wa.gov/care/help/connections.aspx for more information.

DEL staff to begin using electronic licensing forms

Licensed child care providers may notice DEL staff holding a new piece of technology on-site over the next two months. Our staff will be training on how to use these tablet computers, which will help licensing staff streamline forms, checklists, and regulations to be able to spend more quality time observing and providing technical assistance to licensees.

Electronic records also will allow DEL to better analyze our work for consistency and make data-driven decisions. There many opportunities for cost-saving: less printing, less staff travel to submit and pick-up forms at a DEL office, and less time entering data into duplicate forms.

Be sure to ask your licensor about this new technology if you have questions!

Infant/toddler regions attend statewide meeting

The 10 regional groups helping build a statewide infant/toddler system met last month in SeaTac to hear information on research, data decision-making and federal priorities to inform the regions' work. The groups have collected data, assessed their communities' needs, and identified their priority strategies to make the biggest impact on quality of care for infants and toddlers.

Over the next three months, these regional groups will be establishing standards around what qualifies someone to be an infant/toddler consultant and protocols for how they will operate. They also will set outcomes to help measure whether our state is improving the quality of care for infants and toddlers, both for individual child care providers and the statewide system.

Interdisciplinary infant/toddler consultation services will begin this spring. For more information about the regional work, visit www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/infant/

Want to learn more about national research and interdisciplinary consultation? The National Infant Toddler Child Care Initiative at Zero to Three in partnership with the federal Child Care Bureau, recently published a paper on the latest research and work in the nation, as well as three curriculum modules for states to use to guide their interdisciplinary consultations services and systems.

http://nitcci.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/resources/consultation_brief.pdf

New fingerprint scan success story

New automated process resulting in fewer errors; shorter wait times for applicants

Since Feb. 1, DEL has been using a new automated fingerprint process for criminal background checks. Anyone who has lived in Washington for less than three years must undergo a fingerprint criminal history background check to work in child care. DEL moved from "ink and roll" fingerprints to an automated fingerprint scan done one of 28 L-1 Enrollment Services sites statewide.

L-1 estimates moving to automated scans will help reduce the reject rate to about 8 percent from 30 percent.

As of Feb. 25, 76 fingerprints were successfully processed, according to L-1. Here's one story we heard from a provider:

Just wanted you all to know that my first time through the new fingerprint process was a complete delight! Here is the timeline of events:



*2/8/11 mailed in background authorization
2/10/11 received my fingerprint appointment form and called L-1
2/11/11 new hire went for printing
2/18/11 received background clearance!*

10 days beginning to end!

Washington receives Quality Rating and Improvement System support, recognition

Washington received funding for a specialized parent leadership meeting in March to help further develop the family and community partnerships component of Seeds to Success, our state's pilot child care quality rating and improvement system. Through a contribution from the National Alliance for Children's Trust and Prevention Funds and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Washington parent leaders will spend two days in Seattle to target priorities identified by parents and families.



Washington also was selected as one of 10 states to assist with a national QRIS Benchmarks project. The federal Office of Child Care is defining indicators that will help states understand best practices for QRIS.

Washington will help test these national standards to be used as others states build their systems, and Washington will get technical assistance to ensure that our indicators are aligned with the national framework.

If you have five minutes...

Seattle and King County Public Health posted a new edition of a child care handbook to help providers promote positive behavior in children. You can check it out at:

www.kingcounty.gov/health/childcare

New materials have been added to the Autism Outreach Project free lending library. The lending library is open to all parents, professionals, educators and others who may be interested.

See a complete list of materials at

www.nwescd.org/autism



Upcoming early learning events...

March 14— Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) meeting, www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/

March 28 — Temporary layoff day for DEL employees

May 4-6 — Infant and Early Childhood Conference in Tacoma, www.ieccwa.org

May 16-18 — Trainer & Educator Conference 2011 in Lake Chelan, www.educationaltrainingpartners.org

