

Update from the Department of Early Learning October 2011

Director's note

We are nearing the finish line of what has been a true race! Our state's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application is due to the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on Oct. 19. Once it has been delivered, we will post a summary of what is included in Washington's application. That will be available at www.del.wa.gov/government/racetotop.



I want to thank all of the partners who have helped in this effort by gathering data, drafting letters of support and helping shape the application.

If you have not yet had a chance to review the draft early learning guidelines and provide your input, you still have time! It is important that as many voices as possible are heard in this process to review and redesign the state guidelines. See page 4 of this newsletter for more information.

Finally, I hope to see you on Oct. 6 in Olympia, when we celebrate a very special milestone with some very special guests. See the invitation below. Please join me!

Bette Hyde, Director

Help us celebrate ECEAP's 25th anniversary!

Help us celebrate 25 years of growing our future with the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)! Join DEL and several special guest speakers for a reception.

When: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 6

Where: State Capitol Building, Columbia Room

Children welcome!



Thank you to our sponsors: Washington Association of Head Start and ECEAP, Thrive by Five Washington, Lakeshore Learning Materials, Kaplan and Occasions.

DEL, DSHS take action to help ensure accountability in subsidy program

DEL and the Department of Social and Health Services have outlined their actions to help ensure proper use of the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy program, in response to a Sept. 21 report from the State Auditor's Office.

WCCC helps low-income families pay for child care while they work, look for work or attend job training as required by WorkFirst. It is administered jointly by DSHS and DEL.

The audit found that lack of access to child care attendance records could result in overpayments and questionable payments to providers who participate in the WCCC.

DSHS and DEL are working to help ensure these dollars are being used wisely:

- DSHS and DEL are working to recover more than \$426,000 in overpayments from 19 providers identified in the audit. We also are reviewing at least 10 more providers for possible criminal action.
- DSHS is hiring criminal investigators and pursuing legal authority to obtain child care attendance records (currently only DEL has that authority).
- DEL is hiring new auditors to help identify fraud or misuse of funds.
- DEL and DSHS are preparing joint recommendations for moving to an electronic subsidized child care attendance system, which will be submitted to the Legislature by Dec. 31. This could reduce unintended errors and intentional fraud in subsidy billing and payment.
- DSHS will lead a joint workgroup to review existing policies and procedures for reporting, evaluating and resolving suspected fraud and improper payments to child care providers.
- DEL has creating [a new webpage](#)—with a prominent link on DEL's home page—with information about how to report suspected child care subsidy fraud.

The full report is available on the State Auditor's website:

www.sao.wa.gov/AuditReports/AuditReportFiles/ar1006484.pdf

If you suspect subsidy fraud

DEL takes fraud very seriously. If you suspect that a parent or a child care provider is misusing child care subsidy benefits, please contact the Department of Social & Health Services' Office of Fraud and Accountability (OFA).

Online: <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/dshsroot/fraud/index.asp>

By mail: DSHS Welfare Fraud; P.O. Box 45817; Olympia, Washington 98504-5817

Welfare Fraud Hotline: 1-800-562-6906

FAX: (360) 664-0032, Attention: HOTLINE

When you report possible fraud, OFA will need specific information, such as names, phone numbers and other details in order to investigate the fraud allegation. You may make your report anonymously.

Learn more about the fraud investigation process online at www.dshs.wa.gov/fraud/

DEL submits proposed agency budget reductions

The September revenue forecast for Washington state government showed revenue down by more than \$1.4 billion for the 2011-13 biennium. State agencies have submitted proposals to cut 5 and 10 percent out of their state general fund budget as part of the 2012 supplemental budget process. Find agency proposals online at www.ofm.wa.gov/reductions/2011/

The Legislature will consider these proposal when it convenes a special session beginning Nov. 28.

At DEL, our focus when proposing budget reductions is on improving efficiency and preserving direct services to children and families to the extent possible. That includes the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), home visiting services and the Medicaid Treatment Child Care programs.

DEL proposed reductions to:

- Agency administration
- Child care resource and referral services
- Seasonal child care subsidy administrative costs
- Homeless child care subsidies
- Support for the DEL Parent Advisory Group
- Reach Out and Read Washington

Subsidy study now available

A new report on the impact of allowing families 12-month authorization for child care subsidies is now online.

DEL contracted with the Washington State University Social & Economic Sciences Research Center to conduct the study, which was required in House Bill 3141, passed in 2010.

Most families are authorized for six months at a time for subsidies. But HB 3141 allowed families with children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start or the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program to be authorized for 12 months. Parents said this allowed for more stability in their child care arrangement and better supported their child's development.

The study also suggests that moving to 12-month authorizations for more families could save some administrative costs.

[Click here to read the full report](#), or visit www.del.wa.gov/publications/research.

Upcoming early learning events

Oct. 17—Early Learning Advisory Council meeting
www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac

Oct. 27 to 29—Washington Association for the Education of Young Children 35th Annual Conference
www.waeyc.org/conference.htm



Getting to know the Early Learning Advisory Council

The Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) meets regularly to provide input and recommendations to DEL so that strategies and actions are well-informed and broadly supported by parents, child care providers, health/safety experts and interested members of the public.

This month, we are featuring ELAC co-chair and family home child care provider Sue Winn.



ELAC Co-Chair
Sue Winn

What was your first job?

Summertime babysitter

What drew you to the early learning world?

Love of children

As a member on ELAC, how do you hope to influence a stronger early learning system for Washington?

I hope to raise quality for children and to allow providers to earn a living

Who has had the most influence in your life, and why?

My Dad. He was always on my side, but made me take responsibility for my actions.

What is your favorite childhood memory?

Camping, I loved being outdoors,

How do you spend your free time?

What free time?

What have you done for a child lately?

I love and care for children every day in my family child care.

Learn more about ELAC and Washington State's Early Learning Plan by visiting www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac.



Reminder! Share your input on the early learning guidelines

You have until Oct. 27 to share your input on the draft state early learning guidelines. Visit www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks to learn more about the guidelines redesign and share your comments.

Nonexpiring child care license update

Child care providers must submit their nonexpiring license documents to DEL **30 days prior to the anniversary date of the license**. The required documents include:

- Annual licensing fees.
- Declaration of compliance
- Background check information

Information about nonexpiring licenses will be sent to the provider 90 days prior to the license anniversary date, to help ensure there is plenty of time for the provider and DEL licensors to work together.

Remember: By law, a child care license expires if the provider does not meet the annual requirements for maintaining a nonexpiring license. If the license expires, the provider will need to submit a new license application and wait up to 90 days for DEL to process the license and inspect the facility.

Providers can find out more online at www.del.wa.gov/requirements/info/ and should talk with their DEL licensor if they have any questions about nonexpiring child care licenses.



Washington home visiting update

Washington has secured formula funding for federal fiscal year 2011 for the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program. This \$1.8 million grant will allow us to continue our home visiting efforts and expand to two counties: Clallam and Pend Oreille. This is in addition to South King, Yakima, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

Our state applied for but did not receive a competitive grant in FFY11, which would have brought an additional \$6 million to \$9 million to our state's home visiting efforts.

Home visiting is a key strategy in the Washington State Early Learning Plan. Trained professionals visit families with information and support related to children's healthy development. The visits can happen during pregnancy and through the first years of life. Evidence shows this home-based support leads to children being born healthier and being less likely to suffer from abuse and neglect, and are better prepared for success in school and life.

Learn more about home visiting in Washington at www.del.wa.gov/visiting.