

2011 Legislative Session Early Learning Highlights

The 2011 Legislature adjourned on May 25. Governor Chris Gregoire and the Legislature clearly prioritized our state's youngest learners. As a result of the 2011 legislative session, our state is taking significant steps forward in implementing our [10-year Early Learning Plan](#) and creating a true early learning system.

Washington's early learning community is working together better than it ever has before, and these great partnerships at all levels have helped us do MORE for young children in our state during a very difficult session.

Key early learning highlights from the 2011 legislative session include:

Portable background checks

([House Bill 1903](#), sponsored by Rep. Tina Orwall)

- Creates a portable background check registry by July 1, 2012.
- Child care employees in licensed facilities will have a three-year "portable" clearance card, which they can use to work in more than one facility during those three years.
- Improves safety by requiring new background check applicants to do a fingerprint check starting July 1, 2012. (Currently, only people who have lived in Washington fewer than three years must undergo the fingerprint check as part of the background check process.)

Non-expiring child care licenses

([Senate Bill 5625](#), sponsored by Sen. Nick Harper)

- Key recommendation in DEL's January 2011 "[Child Care Licensing in Washington](#)" report to the Legislature.
- Authorizes DEL to begin using a non-expiring child care license in July 2011.
- Helps streamline monitoring visits, so there is not a full renewal visit every three years.
- Licensors still will monitor family homes at least once every 18 months, and centers at least once every 12 months.
- To qualify for a non-expiring license, providers must be "in good standing" and meet certain requirements.

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

([Senate Bill 5427](#), sponsored by Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe)

- Moves forward with our state's kindergarten readiness process (the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, or WaKIDS).
- Supports student success by bringing parents, early learning professionals and teachers together and gathering meaningful data about children.
- Schools with state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms can use WaKIDS on a voluntary basis during the 2011-2012 school year, and must use it beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. Schools that participated in the 2010-2011 WaKIDS pilot may participate. Other schools may choose to participate.
- The bill directs DEL and OSPI to conduct a fairness and bias review of the assessment process before implementing WaKIDS.

Adverse childhood experiences

([House Bill 1965](#), sponsored by Rep. Ruth Kagi)

- Transfers the early learning functions of the Council for Children and Families to DEL on July 1, 2012.
- The secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services and the director of DEL are asked to participate in the development of a nongovernmental private-public initiative focused on preventing and mitigating the effects of adverse childhood experiences.



2011 Legislative Session Early Learning Highlights, continued

Unlicensed child care

([Senate Bill 5504](#), sponsored by Sen. Tracey Eide)

- Doubles the civil penalty DEL can assess for providing unlicensed child care in a family home to \$150 per day. Center penalties remain at \$250 per day.
- Requires DEL to post online information about unlicensed providers who have not moved forward on the path to licensure within 30 days of being notified by DEL that it must be licensed.

WorkFirst program

([Senate Bill 5921](#), sponsored by Sen. Mike Carrell)

- Allows volunteer work at a parents' child care or preschool to count toward approved work activities.
- Requires anyone who applies for child care subsidies to also seek child support enforcement services unless there is good cause not to.
- Creates an Office of Fraud and Accountability at DSHS.
- Requires DEL in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to deliver recommendations to the Legislature by December 31, 2011, for how to move to electronic attendance records for child care subsidies.

Other early learning bills:

- [SB 5389](#)—Changes the membership of the Early Learning Advisory Council to allow for broader community representation and allow DEL to draw down federal state advisory council grant funding.
- [HB 1419](#)—Allows DEL and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to share the results of federal fingerprint-based background checks, rather than requiring individuals to undergo the process for both DEL and DSHS if they are applying for purposes in addition to working in licensed child care.
- [Senate Bill 5172](#)—Allows parents or legal guardians to use unregulated drop-in child care for up to two hours per day while working on-site, if the facility is operated by a nonprofit entity that also operates a licensed child care program at that facility or at another facility.
- [House Bill 1776](#)—Directs DEL to consult with the state fire marshal to address health and safety requirements for child care programs that serve school-age children and are operated in buildings that contain public or private schools that safely serve children during times in which school is in session. DEL will consider this issue as we review and update the school-age WACs this year.

2011-2013 state operating budget:

- State-funded full-day kindergarten provided for about 20 percent of students.
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program slot increased using federal Child Care and Development Fund.
- Child care license annual fees increased (\$30 for family homes; \$125 base rate for centers and school-age programs, with a \$12 per-child capacity for all children after the first 12).
- Medicaid Treatment Child Care program transferred to DEL.
- Career and Wage Ladder program eliminated.
- State funding provided for:
 - WaKIDS
 - Child care resource & referral services (core services as well as culturally relevant supports for parents, family and other caregivers)
 - Home visiting services through the Home Visiting Services Account
 - Reach Out and Read

