

**Child Care and Development Fund Plan
Attachment 2.2
Public Input**

Section 2.2 of the draft CCDF plan requires that public hearings be held so that the public has an “opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under the plan.” DEL provided the required public hearing process and also provided two additional venues to provide public input. The opportunities for public comment included:

- Public Hearings
- Internet Survey
- E-mail Comments

Public Hearings

On April 6, 2009, DEL posted a notice of public hearing through a press release to statewide media outlets. In addition, information about the public hearings was posted to the DEL Web site and was sent out on the DEL news listserv.

Two public hearings were held. The first one was in Moses Lake at Big Bend Community College on May 4, 2009. The second one was in Kent at the DEL office on May 5, 2009. The draft plan was made available prior to the hearings on the DEL web site.

At the Moses Lake hearing, three individuals came to present testimony. Although only three people showed up for the hearing, the conversation was lively and very positive. The three participants stayed for 90 minutes to discuss a wide range of topics. Below is a brief synopsis of comments made at the public hearing:

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R):** There was praise for the amount of resources offered through the CCR&R. It was noted that they did not provide enough services in communities, especially for children with social and emotional behavioral issues. There was some concern that the services at the CCR&R were “one-size fits all” and that more diversity in service approach was needed.
- **Mental Health Consultation:** There was concern that the mental health consultation grant did not address the full range of social and emotional problems that some children faced, especially for children who have faced trauma in their lives. It was discussed that instead of a “special contract” a fully developed mental health consultation system was needed to address the many behavioral issues that are brought into the child care setting.

- **Quality Activities:** Under this broad category, it was noted that more federal funding needed to get directly to child care centers. It was felt by some in the group that too much money was spent on contracts and administrative overhead.
- **STARS Registry:** There was agreement that the State Training and Registry System (STARS) was not working well. The issue was identified in terms of the quality of training provided to child care providers. There was concern noted that in some cases providers are “jumping through hoops” and repeating classes they have already taken.
- **Career and Wage:** The three participants in the Moses Lake hearing all spoke about the need to institutionalize the Career and Wage Ladder.
- **Apprenticeship Program:** One participant noted that the Apprenticeship Program should be added into the CCDF plan.
- **Nurse Consultant:** There was universal praise for the nurse consultant program based on excellent follow-up services, quality phone contacts and site-specific visits.
- **Criminal Background Checks:** The draft version of the CCDF plan posted on the web before the hearings still contained improvements to the criminal background check process. Due to the state budget cuts, some of these improvement activities have since been removed. In the public hearing, the group praised DEL’s inclusion of criminal background check improvements. It was noted that oftentimes potential providers were waiting much too long for background checks be cleared by DEL.

At the Kent public hearing, ten individuals came to present testimony. There was a lively and positive discussion about the draft CCDF plan. The public comments from this meeting are summarized below:

- **Quality Rating and Improvement System:** There were comments that DEL should make a quality rating system a top priority based on the benefit to both providers and parents who are seeking quality child care.
- **Subsidies:** There were many comments about subsidies. Some stated that the subsidy call center was not working well. This comment was also presented at the Moses Lake hearing. It was noted that there were long waits before actually talking to a person at the call center. Providers stated that they had to track subsidies and that was very time consuming for them. There was a concern that the call centers should ask the providers more about the families, and that the providers understand much of the misuse around subsidies.

The Kent group noted that the subsidy rate is too low. They were also concerned that parents lose their subsidies or the co-pay is increased once they find better paying jobs. There was a

discussion that the WCCC program is “education-focused,” while ECEAP and Head Start are more “child-focused.” Everyone needs to come together to devise a new subsidy system.

- **Family, Friends and Neighbor Care (FFN):** A significant number of children are in FFN care and that this number is increasing and improvement efforts should be considered by DEL.
- **Children being served:** There was some concern that certain regions of the state, such as King County, are facing shortages in child care services. After-school and infant care settings are in limited supply. The Homeless Child Care subsidy program was praised as a much-needed program especially for victims of domestic violence. DEL was encouraged to put more resources into child care recruitment in areas facing child care provider shortages.
- **Licensed Child Care Information System (LCCIS):** There was general agreement that the DEL information technology system that supports LCCIS should be improved to allow for an interface with the CCR&R database. Improvements to the current LCCIS are part of the overall draft CCDF Plan.
- **Provider Training:** At the Kent hearing the topic of provider training was also brought up as a concern. Potential providers should be trained prior to working with children – not within their first six months of employment. Coaching is an excellent way to receive training and a quality rating and improvement system or the CCR&R can offer such coaching. It was again stated that training on behavioral issues is critical and lacking from the current training curriculum. A system needs to be developed that includes an “educational baseline” for home and center providers.
- **Licensing Issues:** DEL licensors need consistency on interpretation of Washington Administrative Code (WAC). There was concern that some staff in child care settings do not have access to the internet and do not know about DEL.
- **Emergency Planning:** There was a suggestion that a broad group of stakeholders be brought together to develop the required emergency preparedness disaster plan.

Online Survey

Close to 600 people provided input on the CCDF plan through an internet survey posted on the DEL web site during March and April 2009. The survey was available in English and Spanish and took about 15 minutes to complete. The survey was announced through the agency listserv and in the monthly DEL stakeholder newsletter. Schools, non-governmental organizations, advocates, tribes, service providers, parents, providers and others were encouraged to complete the survey.

When asked about what’s working well, many respondents expressed appreciation for existing resources including DEL, child care subsidies, public health consultation, CCR&R, Schools-Out

Consortium, WAEYC, STARS, Building Bridges and other college programs, Washington Scholarships, the Career and Wage Ladder and ECEAP.

Consistent themes included the importance of:

- Supporting parents and caregivers through information, training and child care subsidies
- Improving the child care subsidy system by increased provider reimbursement rates, extended family eligibility and affordable co-pays
- Increasing the availability of affordable, high quality education that allows workers to progress from less formal training to degree and certificate programs
- Improving the STARS registry, quality across trainers and more advanced training
- Providing additional training and professional development opportunities focused on addressing challenging behaviors and social and emotional development of children
- Linking increased teacher training, education, and program quality to improved worker wages
- Meeting the needs of infants and toddlers, school-age children and children with special needs

In summary, respondents' comments bolster the proposed programs for ongoing support in the draft plan. The responses also reinforce DEL's ongoing work with partners to develop an outcomes-based early learning system that provides high quality early learning opportunities for young children and families. This includes efforts to:

- Improve the child care subsidy system
- Create a coordinated professional development system
- Help parents and providers address healthy social and emotional development
- Provide incentives for improved worker wages and child care quality
- Increase availability of quality child care alternatives for very young children and children with special needs.

E-mail Comments

DEL received six letters by e-mail. Two of the email responses ask that we continue to support before and afterschool care providers and the supports that they receive through School's Out Washington.

One responder was very concerned about the low subsidy rates for child care undermining the provision of quality care.

The last three letters were longer and covered a variety of topics. The first letter encouraged DEL to integrate the protective factor framework for child care, especially with services for children birth to three, ECEAP, and professional development standards. It also mentioned that protective factors would strengthen the health and safety section of the plan. It suggested that we also mention the Strengthening Families project.

The second letter was also concerned with the subsidy rate and quality care. The writer also wanted the subsidy authorization period extended to 12 months, and the family, friends and neighbor caregiver's information and supports included as a central service. Finally, the writer suggested that home visiting professionals be included in the planning work of the Professional Development Consortium.

The third letter offered several comments regarding around adding language about partnerships and the early learning systems work that is being done in the state. The writer made some suggestions for language about the plan for early childhood program coordination and the professional development consortium. The writer also made recommendations about improving child care provider salaries and articulation agreements. The primary focus was to include the organization's activities into the plan.