



2010 Summary of New Early Learning Laws

Several major early learning bills were passed and signed by the Governor during the 2010 session through the hard work and persistence of ECEAP and Head Start parents, staff directors and friends. Here is a summary of what passed.

2731-ECEAP Entitlement

This bill protects ECEAP funding and slowly phases in funding to serve all eligible children by the 2018-2019 program year. Some of the key highlights of the bill are the following:

- ECEAP funding cannot be cut below the 2009-2011 budget levels
- ECEAP programs must receive at least the same amount of funding in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 and serve the same number of children
- Beginning in the 2013-2014 additional funding must be provided to programs to serve additional children until the 2018-2019 program year when all eligible children must be served
- Eligible children includes both 3 and 4 year olds
- On a space available basis the program may allow enrollment of children who are not otherwise eligible by assessing a fee
- The first phase of the program shall be implemented utilizing the program standards and eligibility criteria in ECEAP
- During the phase in period DEL may revise the program standards and components of the program as needed
- Phase in begins in school districts providing all day kindergarten
- Children with disabilities are categorically eligible for ECEAP

6759-Early Learning Planning

Beginning April 1, 2010 OSPI with assistance from DEL shall convene a work group to develop a comprehensive plan for a voluntary program of early learning. A progress report is due on July 1, 2011 to the QEC and ELAC and the final report is due to the QEC and ELAC by November 1, 2011. The final report shall be submitted to the legislature by the Quality Education Council by January 1, 2012. Prior to submitting the report the QEC must seek input from the Early Learning Advisory Council. Key elements of the plan include the following:

- An examination of the opportunities and barriers to moving forward with an early learning program under basic education, the development of a statutory entitlement program, or a constitutionally protected entitlement program

- The work group shall make recommendations on the following key areas as well:
 - Criteria for eligible children
 - Program standards (including hours, teacher qualifications, transportation, direct services)
 - Performance Measures
 - Criteria for eligible providers
 - Approved, certified, or licensed by DEL
 - Public/Private/Sectarian/Nonsectarian
 - Governance responsibilities between OSPI and DEL
 - Funding needed to make this happen
 - A timeline for implementation
 - ECEAP's role in the new program
- The work group shall also look review early learning programs within our state, including ECEAP, Head Start, and other programs
- The work group shall be made up of the following people at a minimum:
 - One representative from DEL, one rep from OSPI, one rep from Thrive by Five Washington, and one rep from the Attorney General's Office
 - Two members of the Early Learning Advisory Council
 - Additional stakeholders with expertise in early learning appointed by ELAC
- The bill also makes some minor changes to ELAC in terms of the number of people serving on the Council and its role

2867-Birth to 3 Planning

The bill requires DEL in collaboration with Thrive by Five and ELAC to put together a birth to 3 plan and make recommendations to the legislature and Governor by December 1, 2010. Here's what must be considered in the plan:

To develop a comprehensive birth to three plan to provide education and support through a continuum of options including, but not limited to, services such as: home visiting, quality initiatives for infant and toddler child care subsidies; quality improvements for family home and center-based child care programs serving infants and toddlers; professional development; early literacy programs; and informal supports for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.

The plan must also include recommended appropriate funding levels.

3141-Child Care Subsidy Reform

The bill changes the authorization period for families enrolled in ECEAP, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs and receiving working connections child care to 12 months. Families would only have to go through a reauthorization if their circumstances change (still to be determined). This change is effective July 2010. The bill also asks DEL in collaboration with DSHS to report on the following areas by September 1, 2011:

- How this change improved the stability of care for children;

- Program costs;
- Administrative savings;
- Recommendations for expanding the 12 month authorization for additional populations of children

Important Dates

2010

- April 1, 2010 - OSPI with assistance from DEL establishes a work group to make recommendations on a voluntary early learning plan
- December 1, 2010 - DEL's Birth to Three Plan is due to Governor and Legislature

2011

- July 1, 2011 - OSPI's first progress report on the development of a voluntary early learning program is due to the QEC and the Early Learning Advisory Council
- November 1, 2011 - OSPI's final report is finished and submitted to the QEC and Early Learning Advisory Council
- January 1, 2012 - QEC submits final report on voluntary early learning plan to legislature

2011-2012 Program Year/2012-2013

- ECEAP funding cannot be cut below 2009-2011 budget levels.

2013-2014 Program Year

- Funding to serve all children eligible for ECEAP must start being phased in. Phase in begins with school districts with all day kindergarten.

2018-2019

- Funding to serve all eligible children must be provided to ECEAP programs.