



## ECEAP ANNUAL REPORT, 2019-2021



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

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## Executive Summary

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington’s state-funded pre-kindergarten program that prepares 3- and 4-year-old children from families furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. ECEAP is part of the Early Learning Division of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

This report on ECEAP provides information from 2019-20 and 2020-21. The COVID-19 pandemic led to gaps in regular data collection and thus DCYF ECEAP combined two years in this report. This report is annual in most years.

Historically, we know children who participate in ECEAP are more likely than other low-income children to be:

- **Ready for kindergarten** in the six domains assessed in WaKIDS.
- **Up-to-date** on well-child exams, dental screenings, and related treatment.

Though there are only six months between ECEAP’s November and May **developmental assessments**, ECEAP children make much more than six months of progress in their learning and development during this time. Additionally, their families make substantial gains in resilience and economic security through participation in ECEAP’s **Mobility Mentoring**® approach.

Gov. Inslee’s **Stay Home, Stay Healthy** order on March 23, 2020, designated ECEAP sites essential services during COVID-19. ECEAP providers, with deep connections to their communities, responded to a variety of needs and supported families and communities with compassion and expertise. Evidence of the range of supportive services was diverse, extraordinary, and continues to grow. ECEAP’s commitment to continuing education and to the well-being of children, families, and their communities during the prolonged COVID-19 crisis continues to have profound and lasting effects.

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*Please share with the teacher that each one of their contributions has brightened our days and put a smile on [my child’s] face. It is very difficult to create a rhythm and to help especially our preschool-age daughter understand what’s happened to our world. We have taken these videos and incorporated them into our routine. It has helped with the transition! I am so grateful for all your efforts! Thank you, thank you, thank you!*

– Skagit Valley Community College ECEAP parent

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## Introduction

ECEAP is Washington’s state-funded pre-kindergarten program that prepares 3- and 4-year-old children furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. ECEAP focuses on the well-being of the whole child by providing comprehensive education, health, and family support services to those most in need – those in poverty, experiencing traumatic situations, or both. ECEAP services include high-quality educational preschool programming, preventative health and dental care, nutritious food, and family coaching (**video**).

ECEAP is administered through DCYF. The **ECEAP Theory of Change** organized and clearly articulated ECEAP’s goal to provide high-quality, effective, and efficient early learning services that are available to all eligible children. ECEAP and its partners will achieve this goal by:

1. Providing high-quality, culturally competent services.
2. Making ECEAP available to all eligible children.
3. Building an ample supply of qualified early learning professionals.

4. Continuing to build effective, aligned, and integrated early learning programs.

A May 2021 policy brief on the long term effects of universal preschool in Boston pointed out the following: As policymakers consider increased public investment in universal preschool, the research findings suggest that preschool can lead to long-term educational attainment gains through improvements in behavior. Furthermore, the observed effects across demographic groups suggest that all students are likely to benefit from universal preschool ([MIT](#)).

ECEAP’s work with communities, contractors, sovereign nations, families, and children is guided by an equity statement, co-developed with these partners:

DCYF ECEAP commits to dismantling racism and building an equitable state-funded preschool system in Washington. Increasing our understanding of and capacity to address the deep-rooted impacts of bias and racism at every level is the highest priority for our team. We embrace equity as a foundation of and driving force behind our work by listening to and learning from families, contractor staff and communities. Driven by this commitment, we develop and revise systems, policies and practices, with the goal of eliminating disparities and transforming lives.

For more information about ECEAP’s commitment to anti-racist work, visit the DCYF ECEAP [equity](#) webpage.

This report on ECEAP provides information from 2019-20 and 2020-21. The COVID-19 pandemic led to gaps in regular data collection and thus DCYF ECEAP decided to combine two years in this report. In most years, this report is annual.

### DCYF Strategic and Racial Equity Plan

DCYF developed a [Strategic and Racial Equity Plan](#) that provides the framework for our priorities. The plan establishes six agency priorities:

1. Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity.
2. Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care.
3. Create successful transitions to adulthood for youth and young adults in our care.
4. Create a high-quality integrated B-8 system.
5. Improve quality and intention of our practice.
6. Improve quality and availability of provider services.

These strategic priorities are grounded in DCYF’s [mission, vision, values](#), and legislative purpose.

The Strategic and Racial Equity Plan helps DCYF focus on how we serve children, youth, families, and our communities as a unified whole. This framework helps to build on existing funding and services to strengthen our ability to serve families as well as to disrupt racial inequity and disproportionality in our systems.



## FRAMING THE FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY

DCYF is committed to Washington’s children and youth growing up safe, healthy, and thriving. As part of this effort, DCYF ECEAP is committed to reaching the goal of 90% of children are ready for kindergarten, with race and income no longer predictors of readiness.

Focusing on differences between race and ethnicity groups may be seen as adopting a deficit-based perspective. This can be problematic because it can perpetuate deficit based thinking and fails to acknowledge strengths that are not reflected in standardized metrics. At the same time, organizing outcomes by race and ethnicity can help highlight the extent of inequity. We must confront the highly inequitable state of education in this country.

This is the time, more than ever, to fundamentally reshape how opportunities and resources are allocated and deploy supports where they are most needed, now and into the future.

### Agency and State Coordination

To accomplish the goals set out in the theory of change, DCYF ECEAP and Early ECEAP staff coordinate with programs across DCYF, such as Early Childhood Intervention and Prevention Services Program (ECLIPSE), Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT), Early Achievers, Child Care Licensing, Professional Development, and Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators. Additionally, DCYF ECEAP partners regularly with other state agencies. This includes transitions and integrated and inclusion pre-k work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the collaboration on facilities grants with the Department of Commerce (see more information in the DCYF Support section).

### Future of ECEAP

ECEAP’s ultimate outcome: High-quality, effective, efficient early learning services are available to all eligible children, with 90% of Washington children kindergarten-ready in all domains.

### Fair Start for Kids Act (2021)

On May 7, 2021, Washington lawmakers passed the Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA). FSKA makes child care and early childhood education more accessible and affordable for all families in Washington State. Beginning in the 2022-23 school year, a child will be eligible for ECEAP if:

- Their family income is at or below 36% of the State Median Income (SMI).
- Their family is experiencing homelessness according to the federal [McKinney-Vento Act](#).
- They have participated in any of the following programs:
  - Early Head Start
  - ESIT or other Class C developmental services
  - Early ECEAP
  - ECLIPSE
- They are eligible for Individualized Education Program (IEP) special education services under [RCW 28A.155.020](#).

- They have a family history of experiences in Indian Boarding Schools.
- Their family income is between 36% and 50% SMI and have research-based prioritization (risk) factors, as space is available.

FSKA sets ECEAP entitlement at July 2026 — that is, by July 2026, ECEAP needs to have the capacity to serve all children who are eligible for ECEAP as defined in the FSKA and associated rules. To serve these children and their families, ECEAP needs funding and support sufficient to expand the number of available spaces for children (called “slots”) dramatically. Increasing ECEAP slots requires a corresponding increase in state funding to the program for infrastructure, staffing, and program quality support.

FSKA passed with the intent of creating more accessible and affordable child care for families. The legislation expanded a variety of DCYF programs to support children and families through the following initiatives:

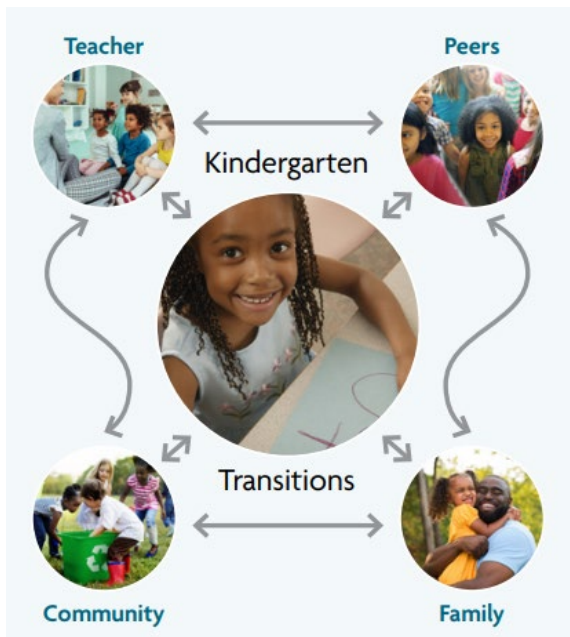
- Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) Program – Supporting Families and Providers
- ECEAP Expansion Pre-K Services
- Supporting Child Care and Early Learning Providers
- Strengthening Prenatal to Three Supports
- Data and Accountability



FSKA also granted ECEAP funding increases through an 11.6% slot rate increase over the biennium, expansion of 500 slot in FY 22 and 750 slots in FY 23, continued investment in supporting children with complex needs due to trauma, as well as initial state funding for Early ECEAP.

For more information about the Fair Start for Kids Act and the initiatives listed above, visit <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/about/government-affairs/fair-start-for-kids-act>.

### Strengthening Early Learning Transitions through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG)



The Strengthening Early Learning Transitions collaboration of DCYF and OSPI began with a shared vision:

*Effective transitions create continuity in the growth and development of children and the cultivation of relationships that begin at birth and extend long into a child’s life. Successful transitions are a process that include the child, family, early care and education providers, pre-K and school district staff, and the larger community.*

An important finding of the initial study of transitions practices in Washington included the challenge of identifying family voice in transitions. This critical component of effective transitions, notably absent in initial research, posed a clear priority for the remainder of the Strengthening Transitions work. The PDG transitions leadership team began working with trusted partners to develop a series of listening sessions to lift up family voice,

leadership, and advocacy in transitions. In May 2021, the PDG Transitions team established a series of meetings with a group of family members who are former Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA) Parent Ambassadors. These Family Voice Leaders meet with PDG ECEAP and OSPI staff monthly to plan and design listening session formats and protocols to learn about the birth through kindergarten transition experiences of families across Washington, particularly families from historically marginalized and underserved populations. Read the Strengthening Early Learning Transitions [evaluative brief](#) to learn more.

## Cost Study

In the winter of 2020, DCYF embarked on a cost study process to analyze the actual spending of ECEAP contractors statewide. The study was initiated by [House Bill 1391](#), which directed DCYF to make recommendations related to differential slot rates for ECEAP taking into consideration variations by geographic region, contractor type, child risk factors, and teacher credentials.

Based on the findings of this phase of the ECEAP Cost Study, current ECEAP reimbursement rates do not reflect variations in cost across geographic locations, program types, and settings. Specifically, the study recommended significant increases in rates for part-day and school-day ECEAP slots. Part-day and school-day rates that are paid to contractors are not sufficient to cover the costs of providing ECEAP services. Many contractors fill gaps by using other funding. This stress on contractors and gaps in funding may lead to difficulties in expanding to meet ECEAP entitlement and could lead to variations in quality across the program based on contractor resources.

DCYF is currently in the process of creating a second phase of the cost study to build a foundational cost model and use additional data collection and analysis to fine tune the model. Some anticipated areas to focus on in Phase 2 include:

- Working-Day Slots
- Staffing and Benefits
- Other Fiscal Challenges
- Community Input

For DCYF ECEAP, stakeholder engagement is a key tenet to the robust CQI processes embedded in programming. Stakeholder engagement embeds equity-based decision-making and community voice in the process to ensure impact in the communities ECEAP serves. DCYF is committed to the next phase of the cost study increasing and adding a more equity-based lens and approach in consultation with external evaluators and ECEAP contractors.

See Appendix B for a more complete description and information about the first phase of the ECEAP Cost Study.

## Complex Needs Funding

During the 2020 Legislative Session, ECEAP was awarded \$2.2 million in additional funding to support children with complex needs. A child with complex needs is one who experiences developmental delays, disabilities, or challenging behaviors due to complex trauma. In the classroom, this could look like a child who regularly runs from the classroom, harms themselves or others, or requires intensive communication supports or physical assistance to move between areas of the classroom. The funding guidelines allow grant dollars to be spent on things such as:

- Adding part-time staffing in the class.
- Increasing mental health/behavioral consulting.

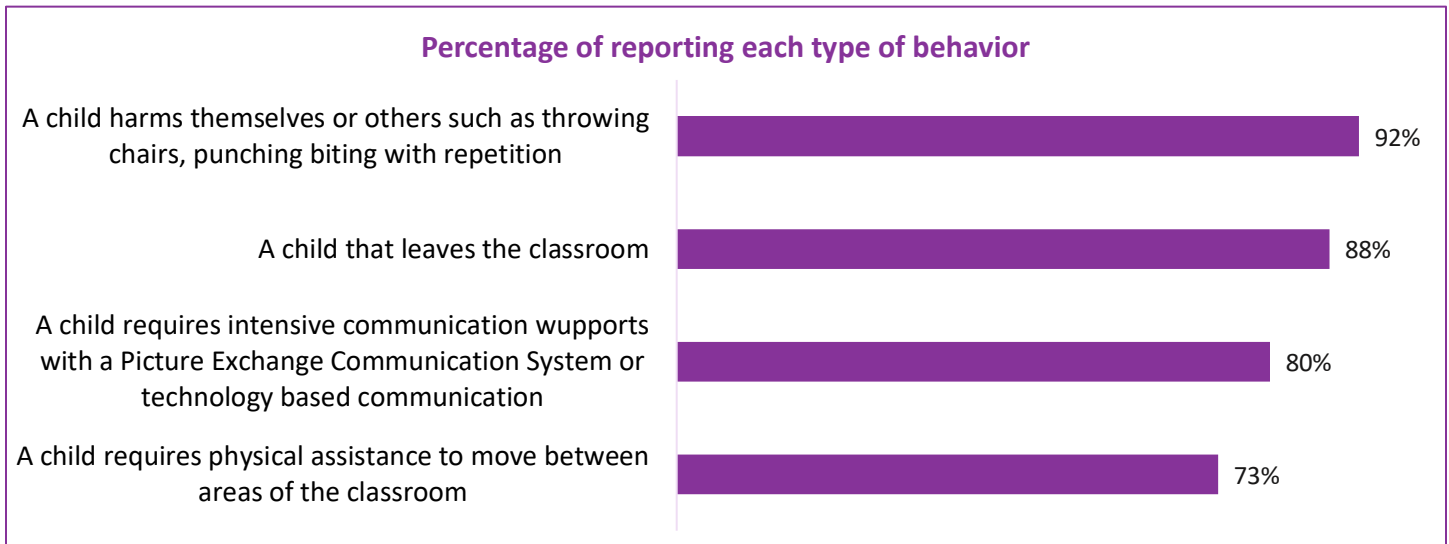
- Providing supportive and adaptive materials and equipment.
- Adapting curriculum.
- Providing teacher coaching and training.
- Filling unique transportation needs.

In 2020-21, ECEAP contractors asked for more than \$3.9 million to support children with complex needs. ECEAP distributed funds through a grant process to ensure an equitable and efficient process to ensure all ECEAP contractors who applied were awarded at least some portion of the funding they asked for. The table below shows the amount of funding requested from the applications.

**Table 1: Funding Requested and Awarded to Support Children with Complex Needs, by Funding Tier**

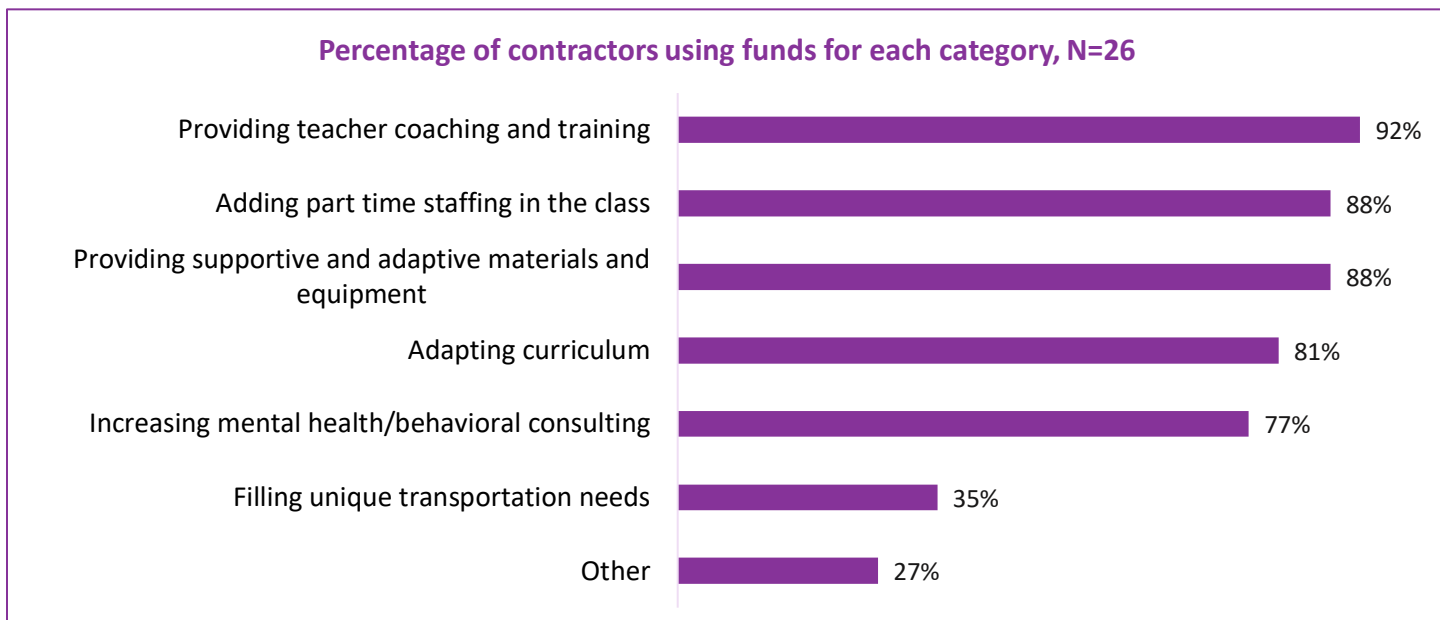
Tier	Funds Requested	Amount Funded	Difference
Tier 1 (\$10K-\$100K)	\$921,183	\$921,183	-
Tier 2 (\$142K-\$300K)	\$1,893,915	\$800,000	-\$1,093,915
Tier 3 (\$350K and above)	\$1,099,352	\$478,818	-\$620,534
Total	\$3,914,449	\$2,200,000	-\$1,714,449

Contractors reported that children in their classrooms demonstrate the following developmental delays, disabilities, or challenging behaviors due to complex trauma.





Contractors submitted grant applications describing how the funds would be used. A majority of the funding proposed was used to provide additional staffing supports in the classroom, along with increasing mental health supports.



## ECEAP Services

### Differentiated Comprehensive Services

*Evidence on why comprehensive services matter*

Individualized and culturally-relevant comprehensive services have been the key to ECEAP’s success since its beginning in 1985. Modeled after the federal Head Start program, ECEAP “comprehensive services” are a 2Gen and team approach. “Two-generation (2Gen) approaches build family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives *together*. 2Gen approaches center on the whole family to create a legacy of educational success and economic prosperity that passes from one generation to the next” ([Aspen Institute](#)). This way each child and family has the resources and services they need to foster kindergarten readiness and improve their lives.

Early education is important, but it is not enough to change the life trajectory for children in poverty or experiencing complex trauma.

DCYF recognizes that children cannot learn at their best if they are in poor health, do not have enough to eat, or if their parents are worried about where they will sleep or how they will pay bills. ECEAP begins

### ECEAP COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES

**Education** – Preschool classes with a comprehensive research-based curriculum, developmental screening, ongoing assessment of development and individualized planning to support kindergarten readiness.

**Family Support** – Individualized approach to enhance family resilience, stability and financial security using the [Mobility Mentoring](#)® approach.

**Health** – Ensuring each child is up-to-date with preventative care and screening, receiving nutritious meals and referred for mental health services if indicated.

collaborative partnerships with enrolled families by assessing each child’s development, physical health, and family well-being. Then, contractor staff partner with parents to set goals for their child and their whole family. Throughout the year, with strong community partnerships, supports are tailored to each child and family – an approach called “differentiated services.”

ECEAP is not a one-size-fits-all program; only the children who need help learning to cut with scissors or the families who need help finding a dentist for the child or better housing for themselves receive that differentiated assistance. Finally, child and family progress is tracked and monitored at the contractor and state level.

According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) policy brief on [Head Start Comprehensive Services](#), research suggests it is necessary to provide health, parent involvement, nutrition and social support services to promote school readiness in children experiencing poverty:

The value of comprehensive services in ECEAP and similar programs goes beyond the impact on individual children. Economist and Nobel Prize recipient James Heckman makes a strong case that investing in comprehensive services for disadvantaged young children is in our national interest in his detailed [2017 letter](#) to the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Reform: Outcomes in education, health and sociability greatly influence our nation’s economic productivity and future ... Data from economists, social scientists and medical experts conclusively shows that the answer is to invest in comprehensive early childhood development — from birth to age five — particularly in disadvantaged children and their families.

## Early ECEAP Services

In 2018, DCYF was awarded a federal Preschool Development Birth Through Five Grant (PDG B-5) from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. This initial grant provided DCYF an opportunity to conduct systems planning aimed at improving and increasing availability of high-quality early learning services and building sustainable system infrastructure.

In 2019, with federal funds from PDG B-5 2.0, Senate Bill 5437 required DCYF to “develop a plan for phased implementation of a birth to three early childhood education and assistance program pilot project,” now named **Early ECEAP**.

The federal funds are for the program years 2020-23 and are designed to fund Early ECEAP as a pilot project. The pilot project will provide services to 144 children and families by 10 contractors spread throughout the state.

To learn more about Early ECEAP services, including key features and the goals of the pilot, visit the [Early ECEAP page](#) on the DCYF website and the [Early ECEAP Pilot Legislative Report](#). For more detail about the framework, approach, and phases of Early ECEAP Implementation, Infrastructure-building, see Appendix C.

## Services during COVID-19

ECEAP Contractors continued to serve children and families furthest from opportunity statewide by providing extended whole-child learning opportunities and critical comprehensive services through COVID-19, including unprecedented summer services. As a result, families and children stayed enrolled in ECEAP while sheltering in place and quarantining at home. This allowed those who had the ability to stay home to ensure their safety as well as the safety of others. For more examples of ECEAP contractor efforts, please visit the DCYF ECEAP webpage and follow the links in the Services During COVID-19 section.

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*The partnerships being built, the community support, and the value that the teaching staff and family support staff are providing to parents has been exciting to witness. If ever there was evidence that the work we do has value, it is now. – ECEAP Staff*

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Following Washington State Department of Health (DOH) guidance, all ECEAP sites were required to provide **Modified or Non-Traditional Remote Services (NTRS)**, though a small percentage of ECEAP sites also offered ongoing in-person classroom services, where they could safely do so, especially in support of essential workers. Individual contractors, responding to the needs of their community, determined the manner and type of modified and remote services locally with guidance from DCYF ECEAP. These services included interactive learning opportunities and lessons families could access on their own schedules, food pick-up, and connections to other community resources (see more detailed description below). This resulted in ECEAP contractor staff providing innovative, high-quality, responsive, and rigorous learning and supports while also staying safe at home.

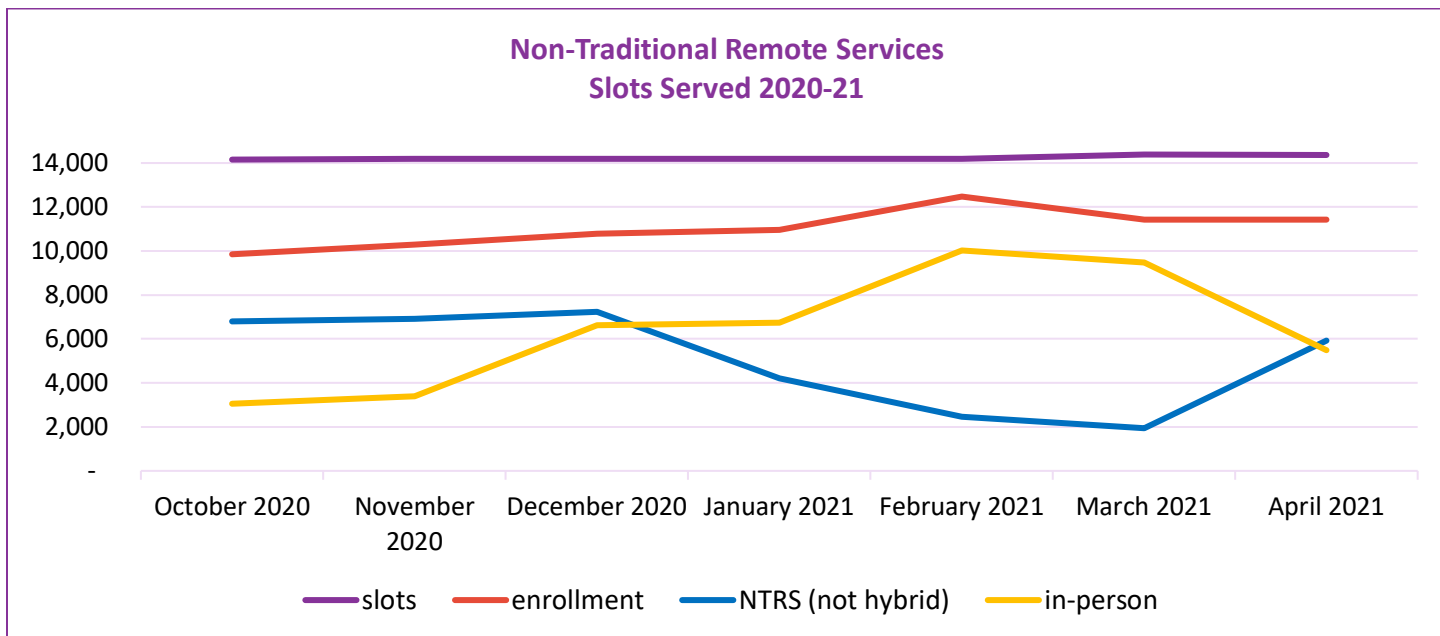
## ECEAP DURING COVID-19 – NON-TRADITIONAL/MODIFIED SERVICES

ECEAP contractors immediately started implementing modified services for enrolled families who could or needed to stay home with their children when state-funded pre-K classroom-based services paused due to COVID -19.

When classrooms closed or daily participation significantly dropped, ECEAP contractors responded by immediately implementing essential supports for families. As these modified services grew for ECEAP families, DCYF ECEAP began to see some commonalities from contractor to contractor. ECEAP sites provide vital services in the areas of Education, Family Support and Partnerships, Health, Food and Nutrition, and Professional Development. They ensure that services continue for ECEAP children and families furthest from opportunity across the state during the COVID-19 pandemic and through recovery.

For an overview of these vital services and supports, see the overview [here](#).

ECEAP contractors built upon the strengths-based approaches embedded in their work and the foundational tenet that families are their children’s first and most important teachers. ECEAP providers developed tools, strategies, and activities that were accessible to families and extended the learning that children experienced in the classroom prior to the pandemic. Families shared that these continued modified and remote service options met some of their greatest needs and felt like a lifeline during unprecedented and uncertain times.



*This program has gone above and beyond in communicating with us throughout this crisis. They provided online resources and materials for their enrolled children as well and it is very much appreciated. – ECEAP Parent*

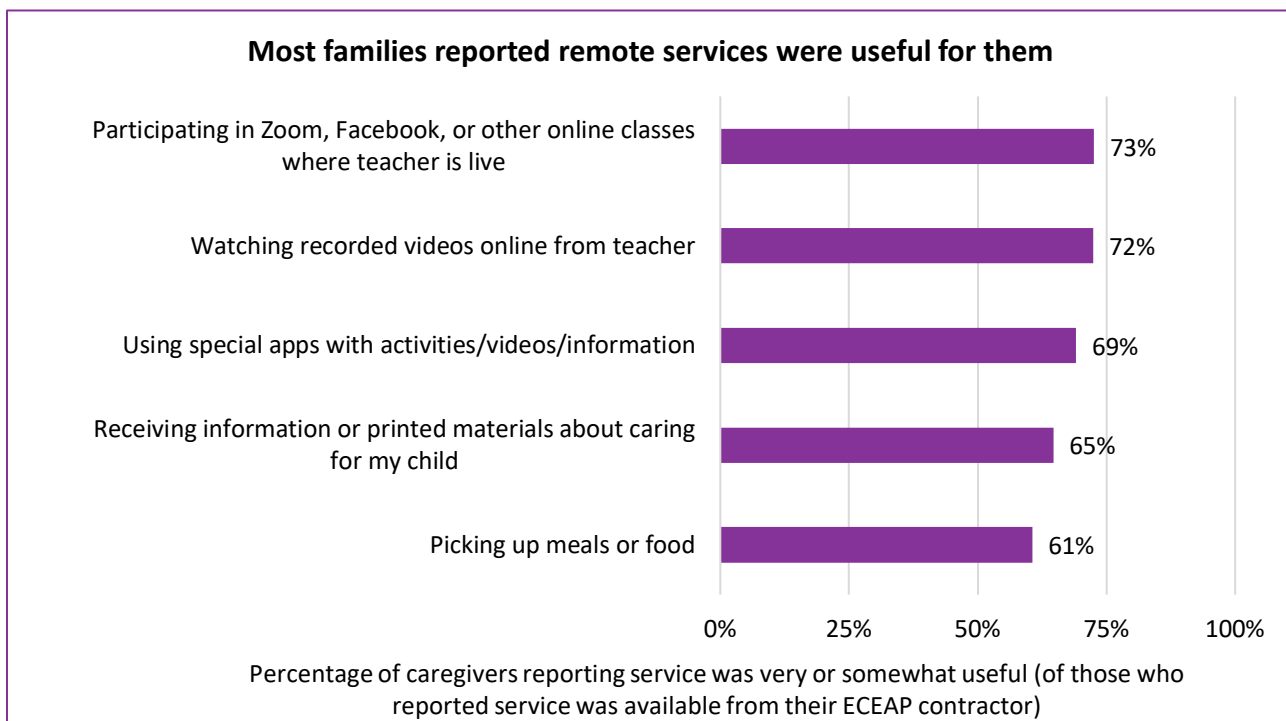
### COVID-19 Family Survey

DCYF ECEAP conducted a family survey May 29 through August 17, 2020, to better understand the challenges facing ECEAP families and learn how remote and modified services were being used and perceived. Of the 337 respondents, 96% with a child in ECEAP reported that their ECEAP site provided remote or online services during the pandemic. The purpose of the COVID-19 family survey was to gain insight about families’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and find ways to better support them.

More than 80% of respondents said that their site offered services such as picking up meals or food; having activities, worksheets, meals, or food dropped off; receiving information or printed materials about caring for their child; participating in Zoom, Facebook, or other online classes where teacher is live; watching recorded videos online from teacher; and using special apps with activities/videos/information. More than half of respondents – 55% – reported that their site offered supplies (such as diapers, wipes, or toilet paper).

Of those respondents who reported remote service was offered, between 61-73% said the service was very or somewhat useful for them. In particular, almost three-quarters of respondents said that live or recorded videos from the teacher were useful, implying that these remote learning resources were likely used by a majority of ECEAP families. Additionally, 61% said that picking up meals or food was useful, indicating that ECEAP served as an important source of nutrition for families during the pandemic.

*[The ECEAP program] has been exceptional in their handling of this crisis. Staff is amazing and [Ready Rosie] is awesome. – ECEAP Parent, Identified as an Essential Worker*



DCYF ECEAP asked survey respondents to describe how remote or online services have been helpful for their family. Of the 380 responses, 68% were positive, 17% were negative, 11% were both positive and negative, and the remaining 4% reported they did not use the services. Comments about what worked best for families focused on:

- How real-time interactions with ECEAP staff helped families work through issues with their children
- How helpful educational resources and videos were.
- The importance of continuing learning at home.
- Feeling connected to ECEAP staff for them and their children.

Comments about what could be improved or was difficult included remarks about:

- How remote school was not a substitute for in-person services.
- Challenges with technology.
- Concerns with remote learning for young children.
- Challenges in supporting children and working from home simultaneously.

These comments are in line with obstacles to accessing remote or online services reported by caregivers and parents, with 54 (19%) of 286 respondents citing lack of time as an obstacle and 11% citing lack of internet or devices.

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*I got ideas for activities to do with my child. I felt connected to people while being isolated. I felt cared for. My child appreciated the connections. – ECEAP Parent*

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### Data Collection and ECEAP Outcomes in Pandemic Times

Data collection across ECEAP changed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. ECEAP data systems were not built to track services outside of the classroom. Instead, the DCYF ECEAP team built data collection tools to

gather information about how contractors and sites were maintaining comprehensive ECEAP services for families despite social distancing and other regulatory requirements. We talked with contractors and worked with sites to gather as much information as we could to make sure families and leadership got what they needed to keep going.

The 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years look different from any years ECEAP and the families of Washington State have seen. During the pandemic, ECEAP services didn't stop, programming evolved to support families as their needs, and infection rates continued to change.

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*It has been extremely difficult to keep two 4-year-olds engaged, however, we work with them about 2-3 hours a day and they seem to be retaining a lot of information. The packets their teacher has made have been extremely helpful in keeping them engaged.* – ECEAP Parent, Identified as Employed, High-Risk, and Essential Worker

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Similarly, ECEAP data looks different than ever before. The goal of this ECEAP Annual Outcomes Report is to reflect the hard work done by ECEAP staff – from the field all the way to the DCYF ECEAP administrative team – to support families across Washington as they struggled with the unprecedented and ongoing challenge and trauma of a national disaster in the form of a worldwide pandemic.

## DCYF ECEAP ANTICIPATES ACADEMIC LEARNING LOSS DUE TO PANDEMIC

*Unprecedented times mean there is little research to rely on for determining evidence-based practices and approaches to supporting families. However, we can look at other events that had deep impact on families and learn from them. For example, in a 2020 study, school heads and academic leaders whose schools received students as soon as they returned to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina were interviewed. They stated that children returned on average more than two years below grade level, some much more. Losses were most dramatic in mathematics (Hill, 2020).*

*Similarly, A U.S. study sampling five million students in Grades 3-7 projected that students were likely to return in fall 2020 with approximately 63-68% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year and with 37-50% of the learning gains in math. For 3rd grade specifically, they found that students are likely to return in fall with approximately 66% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year and with 50% of the learning gains in math. However, they estimate that losing ground during the COVID-19 school closures would not be universal, with the top third of students potentially making gains in reading (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).*

### The COVID-19 Pandemic Has Increased Trauma and Stress for Children and Families

ECEAP families are the furthest from economic opportunity in Washington State, which means they typically have less access to health care – including mental health care – and fewer supports available to them when instability strikes. The COVID-19 pandemic brought instability to families on a scale we may never fully fathom, affecting BIPOC and poor families the most.<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) asserts that “inequities in the social determinants of health, such as poverty and healthcare access, affecting these groups are interrelated and influence a wide range of health and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.”<sup>2</sup>

The incidence of child abuse increased during the pandemic (Kolver et al., 2020).<sup>3</sup> Food insecurity has also increased. In April 2020, 35% of U.S. households with children reported food insecurity, compared to about 15% in 2018. These rates are higher for BIPOC families, with Black and Latinx households twice as likely to be food insecure compared to white households.

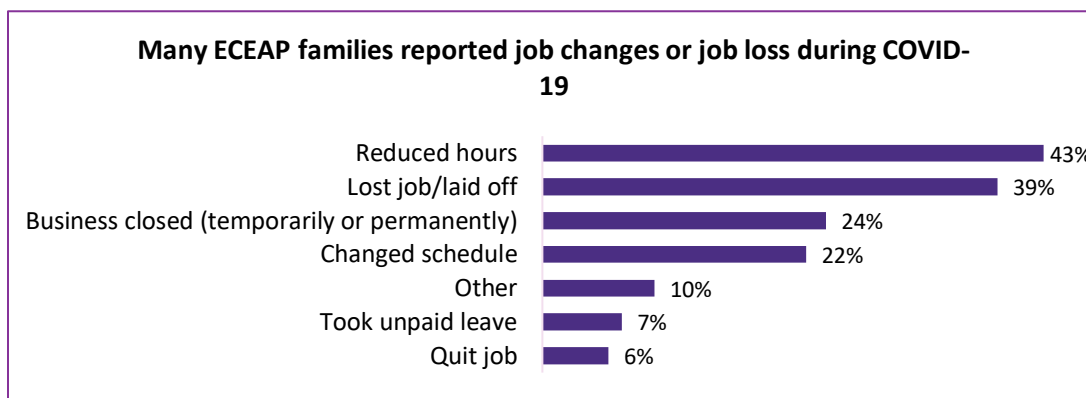
Chronic or toxic stress – which can be damaging to young children’s brain development – also increased during the pandemic. Adult caregivers of young children are experiencing higher levels of stress due to financial hardships. Adult emotional distress materializes as emotional distress in their children. BIPOC families are hit hardest by financial hardships, and thus more likely to experience emotional distress. The chain of stress unfolds over time. When a family reported financial hardship in one week, reported emotional distress in adults the next, and emotional distress in their children the week after that.

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*ECEAP has gone above and beyond to keep my grandchild engaged and I appreciate the effort and time put into the videos and website for his class. – ECEAP Parent, Identified as Employed, High-Risk, and Essential Worker*

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Evidence from the ECEAP COVID-19 family survey indicates 60% of respondents reported they or family members experienced a change in work situation – such as losing their job – or experienced loss of income due to the pandemic. Nearly 40% of 296 respondents reported job loss, 43% reported reduced hours, and 24% reported an employer closed (either permanently or temporarily). Of the respondents, 44% reported needing to adjust their work schedules, take leave (paid or unpaid), or quit their jobs to care for their children during the pandemic. These rates are higher for American Indian/Alaska Native respondents (52%) and Latinx respondents (51%).



<sup>1</sup> [Tracking the COVID-19 Recession’s Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships.](#)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Social Determinants of Health](#), 2020.

<sup>3</sup> [Increased Proportion of Physical Child Abuse Injuries at a Level I Pediatric Trauma Center during the Covid-19 Pandemic.](#)

These increases in trauma and stress indicate that ECEAP outcomes are likely to be lower in 2020/21 and for years to come as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. DCYF ECEAP and ECEAP contractors continued to support family and child well-being and child academic outcomes to help buffer the negative influences of the pandemic.

### Summer ECEAP Services

ECEAP Family Support Summer Services was established through emergency CARES Act dollars allotted to DCYF by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) in 2020 to support families and ensure families stayed connected to vital resources during the pandemic and through private donor funding during the summer of 2021.

Summer ECEAP programs provided continued whole-child learning and enhanced family well-being.

- The summer ECEAP program served more than 9,000 children for July and August 2020. The program resulted in family stabilization, purchasing technology to connect and support families, increased and strengthened relationships between ECEAP family support staff and families.
- ECEAP family support staff provided families with resources that addressed their needs such as unemployment, housing, food, and access to health care, child care, and other several related resources.
- The program also provided new and innovative ways to interact and connect with families that will be useful even after the pandemic.



Summer ECEAP family support activities included but were not limited to:

- Funding for 360 family support staff to provide summer services.
- Provide personalized protective equipment to ECEAP staff and families.
- ECEAP lead teachers to create education packet for ECEAP children.
- Facilitation and funded postage to increase coordination and networking with families.
- Provided cleaning supplies for ECEAP sites and families.
- Provided technological needs such as cell phones, cell phone plans, laptops, and hot spots to support connectivity needs for staff and families.

ECEAP contractor and family support teams across Washington reported the benefits of summer ECEAP:

- The program gave families hope and the opportunity for children to continue learning with full support from their families, teachers, and the family support team.
- The program provided educational and health, safety, and emergency aid to vulnerable population. Families felt some relief to have contact with a trusted ECEAP staff member.
- ECEAP staff were able to provide consistency and continuity for children and families to build resilience.
- The provision of resources during the challenging moment kept families strong and hopeful.
- Families appreciated having a connection and ideas to support ongoing school readiness.
- Families felt the physical presence and appreciated ECEAP staff when they dropped off food and activities; families wanted to spend time talking outside.



- Summer Family Support Services reduced stress in family unit, minimized isolation because it provided the physical, social, and emotional support to families.
- ECEAP staff supported and bridged the gap between school years, enhancing kindergarten readiness and beyond.
- Families successfully developed daily schedules for their children that include time for regular learning activities, make believe play, exercise, reading, and meals.

## Children in ECEAP

### Enrolling Washington’s Most Vulnerable Young Children

ECEAP serves the most vulnerable children among those eligible. In 2019-20, there were 14,000 ECEAP slots (or classroom spaces) for children. With 11% of slots turning over during the year as families moved or their needs changed, a total of 15,598 children were enrolled and are reflected in the data for 2019-20 in this section. In 2020-21, a total of 13,120 children were enrolled and are reflected in the data for 2020-21 in this section.

### Federal Poverty Level

In the 2021-22 school year, ECEAP sites started enrolling children according to the recently passed Fair Start for Kids Act. This change will be reflected in future reports.

Most children in ECEAP are in families that struggle to make ends meet. Children are eligible for ECEAP by income alone if their family income is at or below 110% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which was \$28,325 annually for a family of four in 2019 and \$28,820 annually for 2020.

In 2019-20:

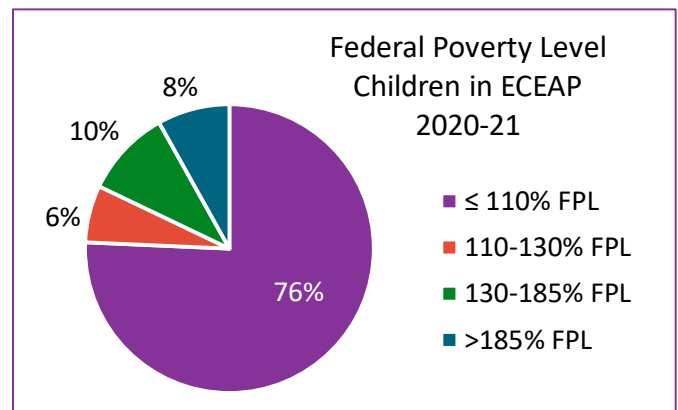
- 81% of ECEAP children were in families at or below 110% FPL.
- 33% of ECEAP children were below half of FPL (\$13,805 annually for a family of four).
- 95% of ECEAP families qualified for school free or reduced-price lunch.

In 2020-21:

- 76% of ECEAP children were in families at or below 110% FPL.
- 32% of ECEAP children were below half of FPL (\$14,410 annually for a family of four).
- 92% of ECEAP families qualify for school free or reduced-price lunch.

### ECEAP DURING COVID-19, ENROLLMENT

ECEAP served children and families throughout the pandemic. Despite families’ feelings of stress about the pandemic and all of the accompanying problems it brought, ECEAP enrollment steadily increased throughout the year in 2020-21. In 2018-19, enrollment was only down 5% after Gov. Inslee’s Stay Home, Stay Safe order. This is a testament to the extraordinary efforts of ECEAP contractors and their staff to serve and support families in their communities.



### Parent Educational Attainment

Thirty-three percent of ECEAP children have a parent who did not graduate high school or obtain a GED.

According to [Child Trends](#), children who grow up with parents who have not graduated from high school not only have fewer socioeconomic advantages but also are more likely to be born with low birth weight, have other health problems, enter school unprepared, and have limited educational and employment opportunities as adults.

Many studies tie low parental education to children's educational and behavioral outcomes, however [recent research](#) views parents' level of education as part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables influencing children's school outcomes.

Child outcomes may be mitigated by parents' educational expectations and level of involvement in children's education, variables – influenced by ECEAP's design. Racial and ethnic [disparities in parental education](#) persist, reflecting continued societal barriers to opportunity for some groups.

### Complex Trauma

Many children in ECEAP have experienced [complex trauma](#) – exposure to multiple and severe traumatic events that can disrupt child development and formation of their sense of self.

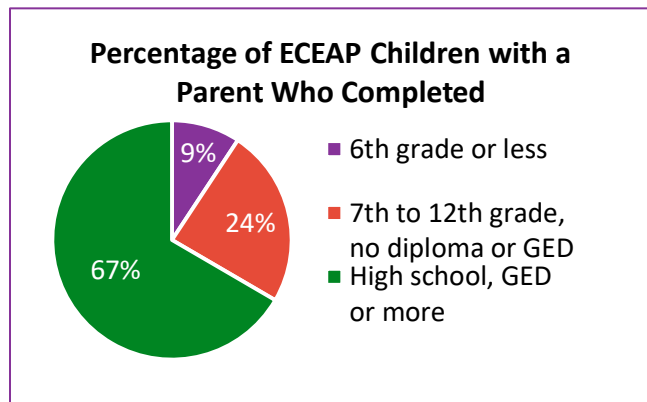
At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, 44% of ECEAP children were below their age level in social-emotional development which may reflect a history of pervasive trauma. Staff who work with ECEAP children and families have expertise in providing trauma-informed care and education to young children to alleviate the impacts of poverty and other difficult circumstances. This approach produces child development and learning outcomes which would not otherwise be expected in the population ECEAP serves.

In 2019-2020, ECEAP served:

- 150 children who were expelled from other early learning settings due to behavior.
- 1,735 children with current or previous child protective service involvement.
- 1,500 children experiencing homelessness.
- 938 children in foster or kinship care.
- 276 children who changed guardianship during the ECEAP year.
- 804 children with an incarcerated parent.
- 1,590 children with a household substance abuse issue.
- 2,068 children in a household that had experienced domestic violence.

In 2020-21, ECEAP served:

- 120 children who were expelled from other early learning settings due to behavior.
- 1,464 children with current or previous child protective service involvement.
- 1,093 children experiencing homelessness.
- 783 children in foster or kinship care.
- 250 children who changed guardianship during the ECEAP year.
- 613 children with an incarcerated parent.
- 1,359 children with a household substance abuse issue.
- 1,673 children in a household that had experienced domestic violence.



### Focus on Homelessness

Children who are experiencing **homelessness** – lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence – are prioritized for ECEAP enrollment. ECEAP helps mitigate negative impacts on their development, learning, and health.

In 2019-20:

- 9.6% (1 in 10) of ECEAP children were homeless during the school year.
- Another 4.8% (1 in 20) were homeless in the 12 months prior to enrollment.

In 2020-21:

- 8.3% of ECEAP children were homeless during the school year.
- Another 3.9% were homeless in the 12 months prior to enrollment.

The under-identification of children experiencing homelessness has been a long-standing issue, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the onset of the pandemic, this under-identification has only worsened ([link](#)). The most recent report on **early childhood homelessness in Washington** was released in 2019, using data from 2016-17.

- 11% of the 39,641 young children experiencing homelessness in Washington were in ECEAP, Early Head Start, Head Start, or school district programs.
- A person in the U.S. is **most likely to experience homelessness** in their first year of life. A person is next most likely to experience homelessness at ages 1 to 5.
- Almost half of the **children in shelters** are under age 6. Even more are sharing housing with others due to economic hardship.
- An additional 31% of Washington families with children face a **high housing burden**, with housing consuming one-third or more of their income. Low-income families in this situation are unlikely to be able to meet other basic needs such as food, clothing, and medical care.
- Homelessness rates in for families in Washington with children (under the age of 18) increased by 20% from 2019 to 2020. (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021).
  - In 2020, Seattle/King County had the fourth highest rates of family homelessness across major cities in the United States.
  - Rural Washington had the second highest rates of family homelessness compared to other rural areas.

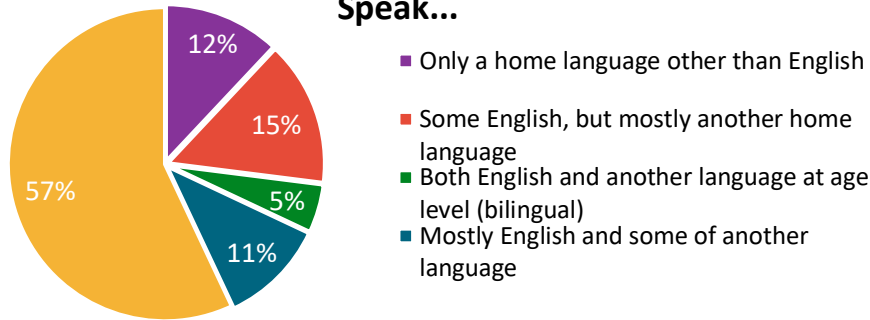
### Primary Languages

In 2019-20, ECEAP started collecting data about the home language of children attending ECEAP. This year's report is the first year of data for all children attending ECEAP.

Children in ECEAP speak more than 40 languages in their homes. Some begin ECEAP speaking English fluently and others are learning English while they continue to develop in their first language.

DCYF continues to build resources and supports to help ECEAP providers successfully include dual language learners in our preschool classes as well as provide culturally and linguistically relevant family support.

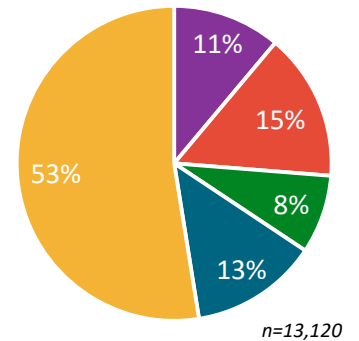
**Children Who Began ECEAP in 2019-2020\*  
Speak...**



n=15,246 children who started ECEAP in the 2019-2020 school year.

This question wasn't asked regarding children who started earlier and returned to ECEAP in 2018-19

**2020-21**



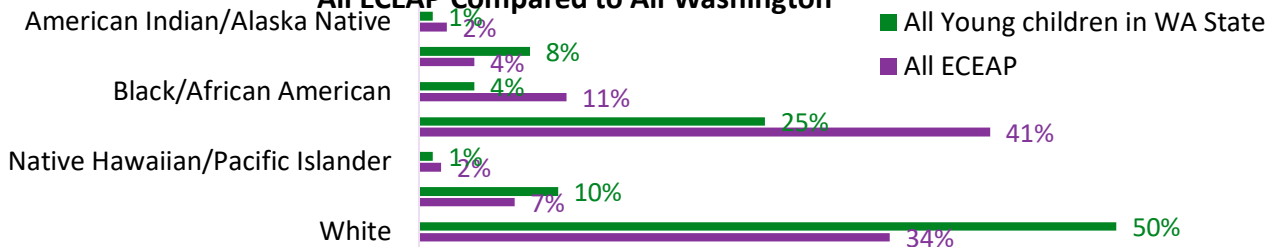
n=13,120

**Child Race and Ethnicity**

ECEAP serves higher percentages of young children in racial and ethnic groups vulnerable to the opportunity gap than in the general population.

**Percentage of Children by Race and Ethnicity:**

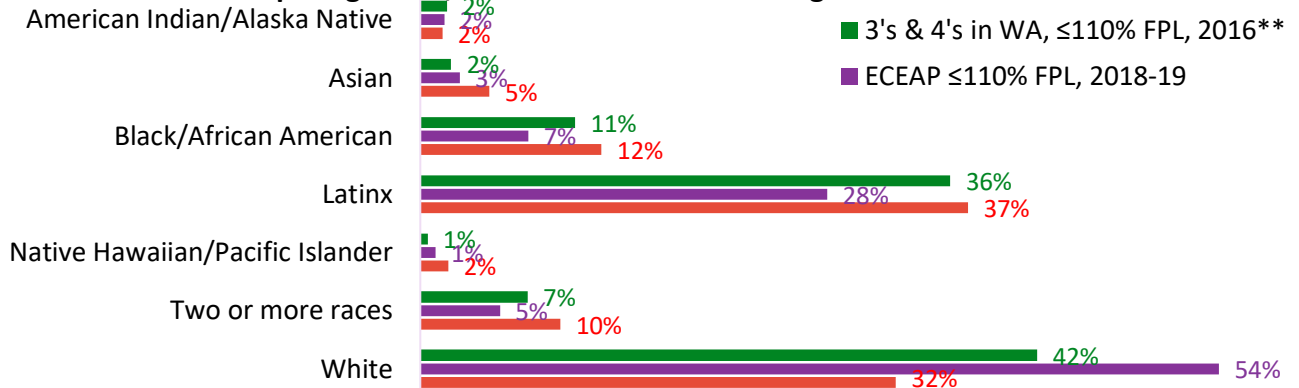
**All ECEAP Compared to All Washington**



ECEAP serves a smaller percentage of Black and Latinx children at or below 110% of the poverty level, and a larger percentage of white children than the state's population in these income and age groups.

**Percentage of Children ≤110% FPL by Race and Ethnicity:**

**Comparing ECEAP, Head Start and All Washington Children**



Each child is counted only once. Children in the Latinx group (formally Hispanic/Latino) are not counted in the racial categories. Data source for WA comparisons: Census Bureau, ACS 2016 1-year PUMS.

The Head Start sample is 9,999 children reported in the 2018-19 PIR: 80% at or below 100% FPL, 7% between 100-130% FPL and 7% above 130% FPL. This does not include American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start.

### Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Expanding access to early learning supports, early Intervention (EI), and early childhood special education (ECSE) programs can lead to substantial cost savings.<sup>4</sup> EI and ECSE programs provide vital services that support positive outcomes in early childhood and reduce later disparities in IEP status.<sup>5</sup>

Children with IEPs are eligible for ECEAP regardless of family income, though they are prioritized for enrollment in available slots based on income and other factors.

In the 2019-20 school year, 11.8% of ECEAP children had an IEP:

- 991 children were on an IEP prior to enrollment in ECEAP
- 645 children were referred for evaluation in ECEAP
- 1,838 children in ECEAP were on an IEP at some time during the school year

In the 2020-21 school year, 13.7% of ECEAP children had an IEP:

- 997 children were on an IEP prior to enrollment in ECEAP
- 387 children were referred for evaluation in ECEAP
- 1,794 children in ECEAP were on an IEP at some time during the school year

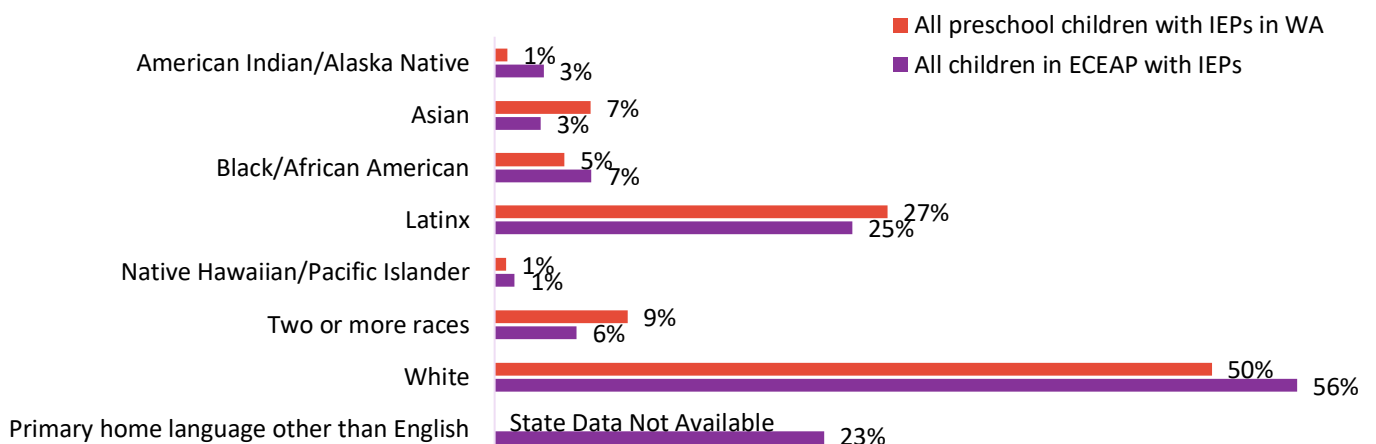
ECEAP served 14.4% of preschool-aged children with IEPs in Washington. The percentages of children with IEPs are higher in ECEAP compared to settings across the state for children who are American Indian/Alaska Native, white, Black, or speak a primary home language other than English.

These percentages in ECEAP compared to the rest of the state are lower for Asian, Latinx, of two or more races, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

### ECEAP DURING COVID-19, CHILDREN WITH IEPs

Children in ECEAP continued to access IEP services during the COVID-19 pandemic. On the COVID-19 family survey, about 65% of respondents with a child with an IEP (of 79 total respondents) reported that they were able to continue accessing IEP services during this time.

**Children with IEPs - Percentages by Race, Ethnicity and Language  
All ECEAP Compared to All Washington in 2020-21**



<sup>4</sup> Muschkin, C. G., Ladd, H. F., & Dodge, K. A. (2015). Impact of North Carolina’s early childhood initiatives on special education placements in third grade. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(4), 478-500. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1084495>

<sup>5</sup> Morgan, P. L., Farkas, G., Hillemeier, M. M., & Maczuga, S. (2012). Are minority children disproportionately represented in early intervention and early childhood special education?. *Educational Researcher*, 41(9), 339-351. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ987213>

## Child Development and Learning

### Teaching Strategies GOLD®

Children in ECEAP are assessed quarterly to track their early literacy and math skills as well as their cognitive, language, physical, and social-emotional development using Teaching Strategies GOLD® Birth to Third Grade. This is a valid, reliable, and seamless assessment system that meets the assessment standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of State Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

ECEAP teachers receive mandatory Inter-Rater Reliability training to ensure that the Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment is used consistently for all children in ECEAP. Teachers observe children in the context of everyday activities and natural settings over time, record their observations and use them to rate 36 objectives, plus two more for children learning the English language. Teachers use the data to plan curricula and individualize instructional supports and child guidance. DCYF uses the data to determine areas of focus and statewide training.

In the spring of 2020, based on feedback from ECEAP contractors, DCYF ECEAP made the difficult decision to waive the Spring Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment requirement. As contractors and families scrambled to support children and change from classroom-based services to home-based services nearly overnight, the burden of this data collection was determined to be untenable.

All ECEAP providers were allowed to continue collecting assessments if they chose. Any assessments that were completed were entered into the Teaching Strategies GOLD data system. In the fall of 2019, 10,803 assessments were collected for children attending ECEAP. In the spring of 2020, 1,269 assessments were collected. Comparisons across this group cannot be called representative of child outcomes, given the small number of spring 2020 assessments collected.

OSPI made the decision to not collect WaKids data in the fall of 2020. The following student assessment measures were not created or made available because of no or limited data:

- 2019-20 Assessment
- 2019-20 Student Growth
- 2019-20 English Learner Assessment
- 2020-21 Kindergarten Readiness<sup>6</sup>

In 2020-21, aggregate data were not compiled, and individual student record data were not released for public records requests. OSPI found fall 2020 WaKids data unusually and systematically incomplete:

1. For objectives that are more difficult to observe/assess remotely, data is around 85% complete (usually over 99%)

### ECEAP DURING COVID-19, ASSESSMENTS

DCYF ECEAP plans to include Kindergarten Readiness in upcoming ECEAP Annual Outcomes Reports. However, these data were not yet available. As DCYF ECEAP, ECEAP providers, and our partners across the state figure out the best way to support families' growth and learning, we look forward to returning to robust reporting for child education outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> [COVID-19 Impacts Data](#)

- Nearly a quarter of students have at least one incomplete area out of the six possible (typically 3% missing an area for incompleteness)

Statewide data was too incomplete to present a valid representation of student development and readiness among the statewide population of Kindergarten students.

### Teaching Strategies GOLD® Inter-Rater Reliability

The accuracy of ECEAP child assessment data used on the Child Development and Learning pages above depends on teachers' abilities to observe and evaluate children's behavior. Teaching Strategies GOLD® has taken steps to check and enhance the accuracy of teachers' assessment ratings through a process that leads to inter-rater reliability (IRR) certification.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year:

- 97% of lead teachers had current Teaching Strategies GOLD® IRR certification
- Only 3 teachers had an expired IRR certification more than three years old and must recertify
- Only 16 teachers were recently hired and not yet required to complete certification
- 1% of lead teachers were overdue

Because accurate use of Teaching Strategies GOLD® is critical for DCYF's data-driven decision making, DCYF added IRR certification as a performance-based contract measure for 2019-20. When the "Stay Home Stay Safe" order was issued and teachers were adapting to providing remote lessons and pursue professional development remotely, they were able to engage with IRR training. The IRR certification process was already virtual, and teachers could focus on the testing. This, coupled with the added PBC measure, increased the percentage of teachers with current IRR certification.

## Child Health

### Medical Health

ECEAP improves children's access to health care. Early intervention and access to health care can reduce the impacts of exposure to environmental stressors for young children. This is particularly important during times of increased stress and social isolation.<sup>7</sup> In early childhood, health and wellness outcomes are supported by having a medical home and maintaining the recommended schedule for well child visits.

Children with a medical home are more likely to experience better health, and engage in health-promoting behaviors.<sup>8</sup> For children with special health care needs, a medical home is associated with reduced hospitalization and emergency department visits.<sup>9</sup>

## ECEAP DURING COVID-19, CHILD HEALTH

Healthy children learn better. This is especially important for children living in families experiencing poverty and other complex trauma. Adversity in childhood can have lifelong consequences for health, wellness, and academic success. Many of these stressors were exacerbated by COVID-19. The supports provided by ECEAP were particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a dramatic reduction in use of primary and preventive health services for children, especially for children over the age of 3, and children enrolled in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

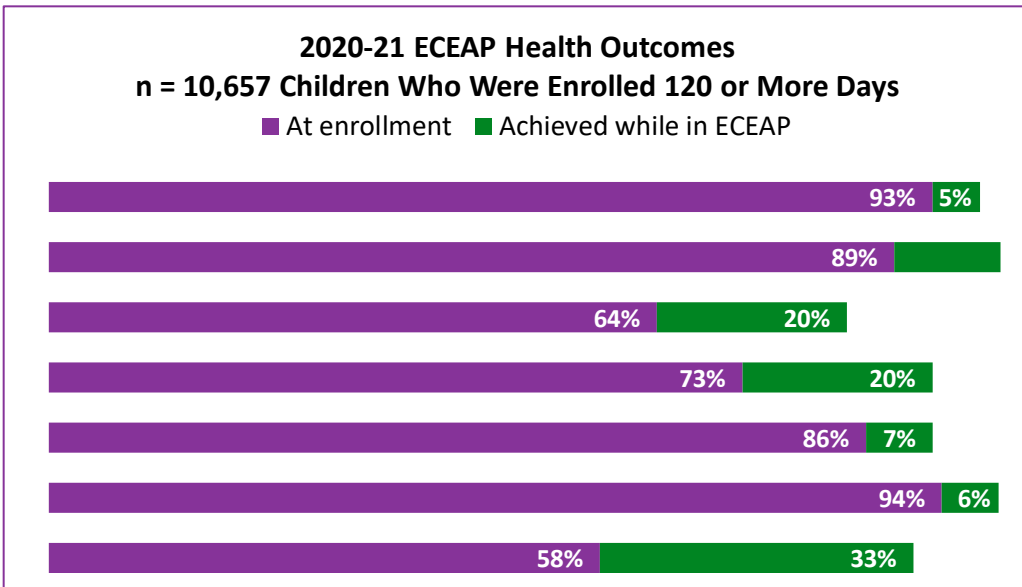
<sup>7</sup> Development and Lifelong Health Are Deeply Intertwined Working Paper No. 15. Harvard University. [https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/wp15\\_health\\_FINALv2.pdf](https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/wp15_health_FINALv2.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Long, W. E., Bauchner, H., Sege, R. D., Cabral, H. J., & Garg, A. (2012). The value of the medical home for children without special health care needs. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), 87-98. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/129/1/87.short>

<sup>9</sup> Christakis, D. A., Mell, L., Koepsell, T. D., Zimmerman, F. J., & Connell, F. A. (2001). Association of lower continuity of care with

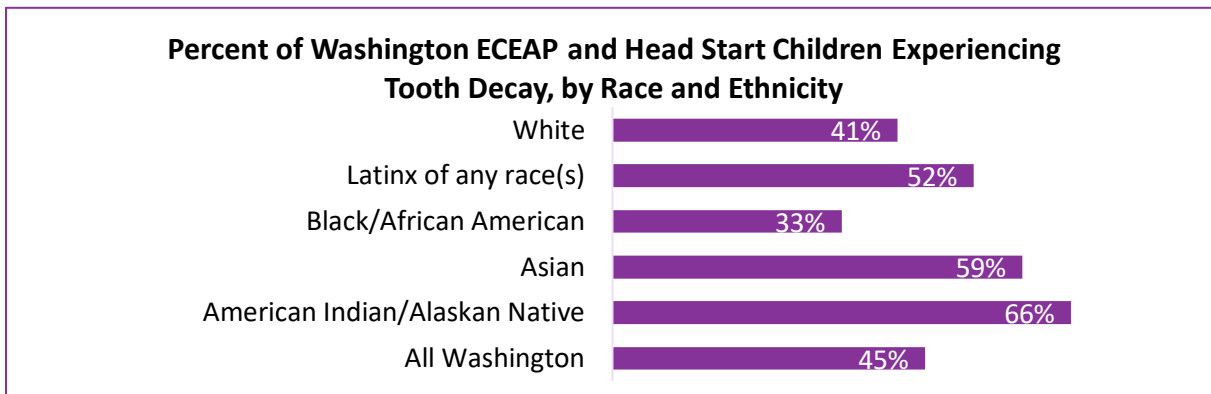
Regular access to health care services ensures preventive care, screenings, and referral for early intervention, early childhood special education and other services, vaccination, family supports, and prevention of or intervention in abuse and neglect.<sup>10</sup>

ECEAP supports child health by ensuring each child has medical and dental coverage as well as a medical and dental home. ECEAP children receive vision, hearing, and height/weight screenings, most often at their ECEAP center. ECEAP staff follow up with families to ensure children receive further diagnosis or treatment with health care providers when indicated. By tracking each child’s health care needs, individualized services occur.



**Dental Health**

**Early childhood dental caries** (cavities) are five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever. In particular, they disproportionately affect poor children and some children of color, impacting their school attendance. The chart below displays rates of tooth decay in children attending ECEAP and Head Start, according to the 2015-16 Washington State Department of Health Smile Survey, the most recent data available.



Greater risk of emergency department use and hospitalization in children. Pediatrics, 107(3), 524-529.

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/107/3/524.short>

<sup>10</sup> Center for Translational Neuroscience, (2020). Health (Still) Interrupted: Pandemic Continues to Disrupt Young Children’s Healthcare Visits. University of Oregon. <https://medium.com/rapid-ec-project/health-still-interrupted-pandemic-continues-to-disrupt-young-childrens-healthcare-visits-e252126b76b8>



## ECEAP Family Engagement

Family engagement is an essential component of ECEAP comprehensive services, in support of children’s health, development, and school readiness. ECEAP staff partner with parents and guardians regarding their child’s individualized learning and their family’s unique needs and goals. ECEAP also provides opportunities for parents and guardians to volunteer in the classroom and participate in parent education and parent leadership development activities.

This approach aligns with the Epstein’s framework of parent involvement, which recommends six types of parent involvement that should be addressed to support comprehensive partnerships between families and educational programs. These include:

- Parenting: Early learning programs provide information about parenting and child development, including health, nutrition, and developmental milestones,
- Communicating: Early learning programs provide information about programs and services and communicate about children’s progress,
- Volunteering: Early learning programs seek opportunities to include families in the classroom through recruiting, training, and providing volunteer opportunities,
- Learning at home: Schools help families create educational opportunities for children in the home and support their children’s learning at school,
- Decision-making: Schools provide opportunities for families to take on leadership roles in schools and participate in decision-making processes, and
- Community collaboration: Schools coordinate with community organizations to provide resources and services to families.

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*When I enrolled two of my children in ECEAP, I met my family support person who was very helpful. She told me about Parent Policy Council and went with me to the orientation. At first I was hesitant – I hadn’t really been involved in things. From there, I joined the parent panel for negotiated rulemaking for Washington State early learning programs. We did nearly two years of work on safe sleep. That was life-changing for me. I lost one of my daughters to SIDS so I’m passionate about safety. Using my voice and sharing it with others was part of my self-growth and healing. I’ve had so many opportunities – I presented Senator Patty Murray with an award, I became a Parent Ambassador and I just accepted an invitation for a racial equity think tank. I would not have had these huge milestones without the support of ECEAP. The parents and staff lift you up, make you feel like you are somebody. They care about every single parent that comes through that door. Not even five years ago, I was homeless with six kids and my daughter had just passed away. I never would have imagined where I am today. I advocate not only for myself but for other parents. I want them to know that if their needs aren’t met or if they are treated unfairly, they have a voice they can use. – ECEAP Parent*

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Read more about one former parent who now supports current ECEAP parents as a family support specialist at an ECEAP site [here](#).

In 2019-20 during the COVID-19 pandemic, ECEAP adapted to the needs of families. ECEAP contractors began immediately implementing [modified services](#) for enrolled families who were able or needed to stay home

with their children when state-funded Pre-K classroom services closed due to COVID -19. This family support and partnership included:

- Sharing information, connecting and sending materials home to families on multiple topics
- Ordering supplies in bulk for families for pick up or porch drop off
- Providing resources for families
- Ongoing check ins
- Gift cards and vouchers for household and family needs



At a time when families were struggling to meet basic needs, family support services became even more essential – many times Family Support Staff acted as a lifeline for parents.

**Parent Quote:** *“With the support of my Family Support Specialist, I was able to apply for the COVID-19 Relief Fund, without the funds, I wouldn’t be able to pay my rent.”* (ECEAP Family, Clark County, WA)

**Staff quote:** *“Families know that someone cares about them. Children know that they are not forgotten. The support families are receiving is helping to mitigate the hopelessness that many who are without a lot of resources are feeling.”*

In addition, DCYF supported ECEAP programs’ efforts to meet family needs through increased communication with ECEAP Directors, individualized program support provided by DCYF ECEAP Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Specialists, and the launching of a Basecamp platform specifically for ECEAP Teachers and Education Staff. DCYF also provided specialized funding for ECEAP programs to continue their essential services to children and families beyond the academic year and into summer 2020, when family support was particularly crucial.

### Mobility Mentoring®

Mobility Mentoring® aims to address the extreme stresses of economic challenge by helping parents improve focus, planning, and decision-making. It is designed to help people achieve future-oriented goals, despite the immediate challenges related to poverty.

ECEAP uses the Mobility Mentoring® approach because it counters cognitive and behavioral challenges rooted in economic challenges, trauma, and social bias. The journey to family stability and well-being is like crossing a bridge: traveling from where you are now, going to where you want to be. The DCYF Bridge to Child and Family Self-Reliance is held up by five significant pillars, all interrelated, all equally important:

- Family Stability
- Well-Being
- Financial Management
- Education and Training
- Employment and Career Management

The Bridge to Child and Family Self Reliance (the Bridge) is a tool used to set individualized specific goals informed by the family’s cultural values. Mobility Mentoring® was designed to understand that individuals come to this journey with differing experiences, strengths, challenges, and dreams for their future.

ECEAP Family Support Staff (FSS) train to become Mobility Mentoring® coaches. FSS partner with families to help them acquire resources and skills and to sustain behavior changes. Using the Bridge to frame a deliberate one-on-one partnership between families and staff, families set goals based on their assessment of the five pillars.

### Centering Equity in Family Support

ECEAP contractors shared concerns about the racial and cultural responsiveness of the implementation of Mobility Mentoring®. In response, ECEAP implemented two workgroups, beginning in March 2019.

One of these workgroups brought together tribal early learning leaders (including tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors) to learn about the implementation of Mobility Mentoring® in the context of tribal culture and values, including specific concerns identified by tribal providers. In partnership with DCYF's Office of Tribal Relations DCYF staff worked to convene tribal workgroup meetings. With additional support from the [National Equity Project](#), input was gathered, and implemented into an updated Bridge to Self-Sufficiency that is now more inclusive of tribal culture and values.

The second workgroup included non-tribal ECEAP contractors who expressed an interest in sharing their ideas and concerns about the racial and cultural responsiveness of ECEAP’s Mobility Mentoring® implementation. Both groups met regularly in 2019 to achieve a clear understanding of concerns and issues expressed by the field and how to work in partnership to determine solutions that ensure ECEAP contractors have the tools and resources they need to implement anti-bias responsive approaches to family support services in the program.

### ECEAP DURING COVID-19, FAMILY SUPPORT

ECEAP FSS were some of the first to provide resources to meet these challenges by offering:

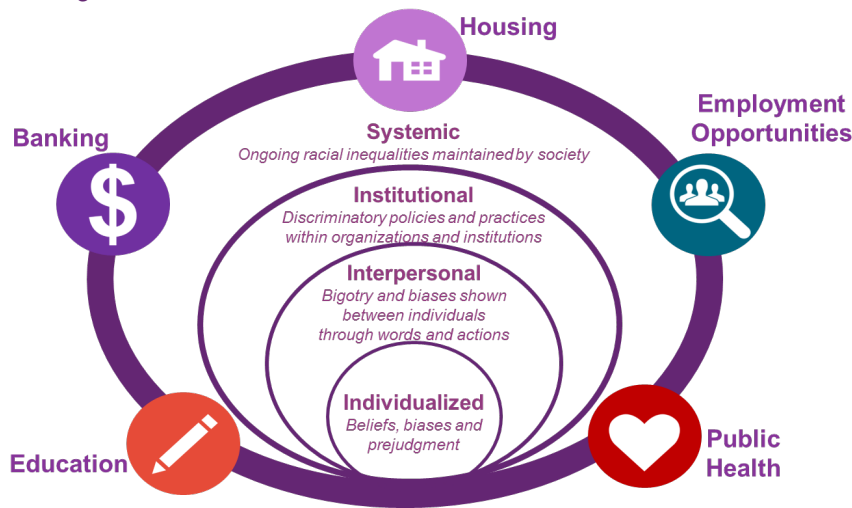
- Additional support in the social and emotional well-being of the child and family
- Cell phone and internet resources
- Emergent employment and unemployment resources
- Emergency School Meals Program
- A framework for increasing family stability
- Supports that are tailored and individualized for every family
- The tools, support, and information families need to keep children’s school readiness progressing
- Guidance about and information on the Coronavirus Tax Relief and Economic Impact Payment



**Response to Liberatory Design Challenges**

Training Materials	The Bridge	Evaluation
Address implicit bias and structural racism.	Embrace strengths-based, equitable language.	Provide opportunities for parent input on MM tools.

*Training Materials*



The Tribal and Equity Workgroups created material to supplement the Empath Mobility Mentoring® Foundations training curriculum to explore deeper into topics such as implicit bias and institutional and systemic racism.

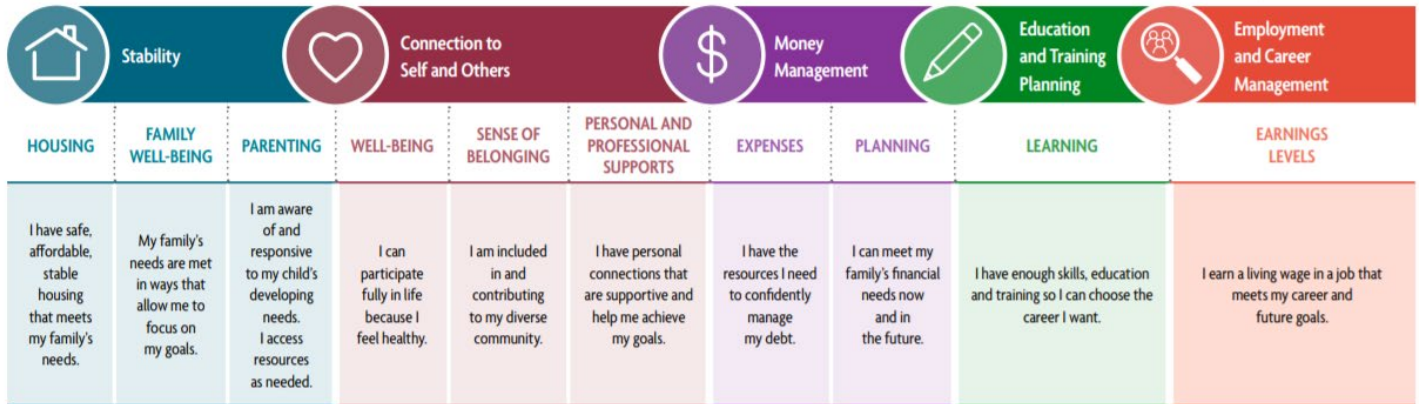
The workgroups felt it was essential to define what has marginalized communities within the core pillars for centuries — practices like redlining in housing and predatory lending in banking. An additional 90-minute reflection session was added to the course to discuss beliefs, bias, and racism.

*The Bridge*

DCYF ECEAP is deeply grateful for the countless hours that contractor staff and families took to provide input and guidance to make this tool support the diverse communities in Washington State. As a result of these workgroups, ECEAP began piloting a new Bridge to Self-Reliance in 2020-21.

Everyone's journey to Self-Reliance is different. During this school year ECEAP staff will partner with you to:

- Set individualized, specific goals - informed by your cultural values - to help you move toward self-reliance.
- Prioritize what is most important for you and your family now and in the future.
- Recognize your strengths and follow your lead when setting goals.
- Connect with resources that will support your journey.
- Celebrate your successes!



What ECEAP Family Support Staff had to say about the new bridge:

*"The new bridge was much more open-ended to let families determine their own definition of success and not putting them in a pre-determined box."*

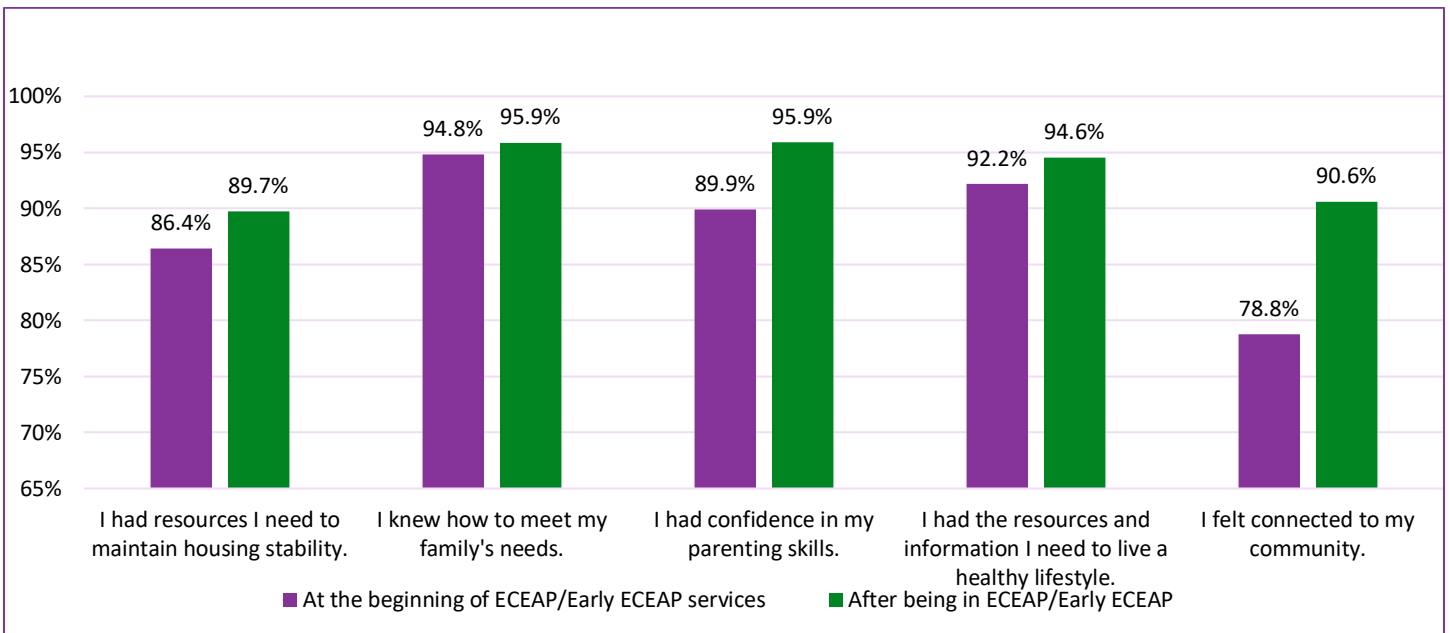
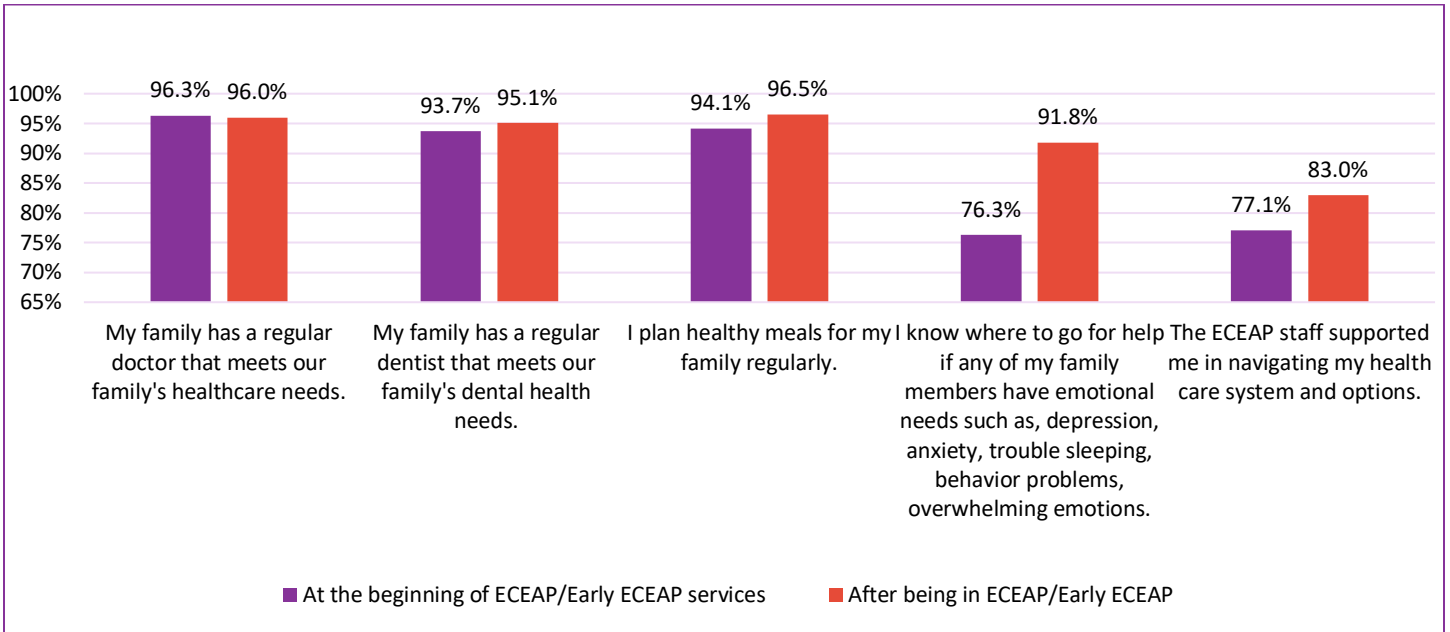
*"I really like that it does not ask how much they make, and...the employment pillar where some families aren't self-sufficient but are comfortable and thankful for what they make and can pick how they feel."*

*"I shared [with families] that none of the categories are fixed and that everyone has high and low areas, myself included."*

*Evaluation*

Annually, ECEAP surveys parents to receive feedback about the provided comprehensive services to themselves and their children's experiences during the school year. As a result of the Equity and Tribal workgroup, the traditional survey was revised and renamed the Family Input Survey. It asks caregivers if their knowledge and resource awareness increased around each pillar of the bridge.

These visuals show families' perception of their increase in services and resources before they began ECEAP and after completing a year of ECEAP services. Despite the relentless barriers COVID-19 presented, families set goals and made meaningful progress toward achieving them.



### DOES MOBILITY MENTORING® MAKE AN IMPACT?



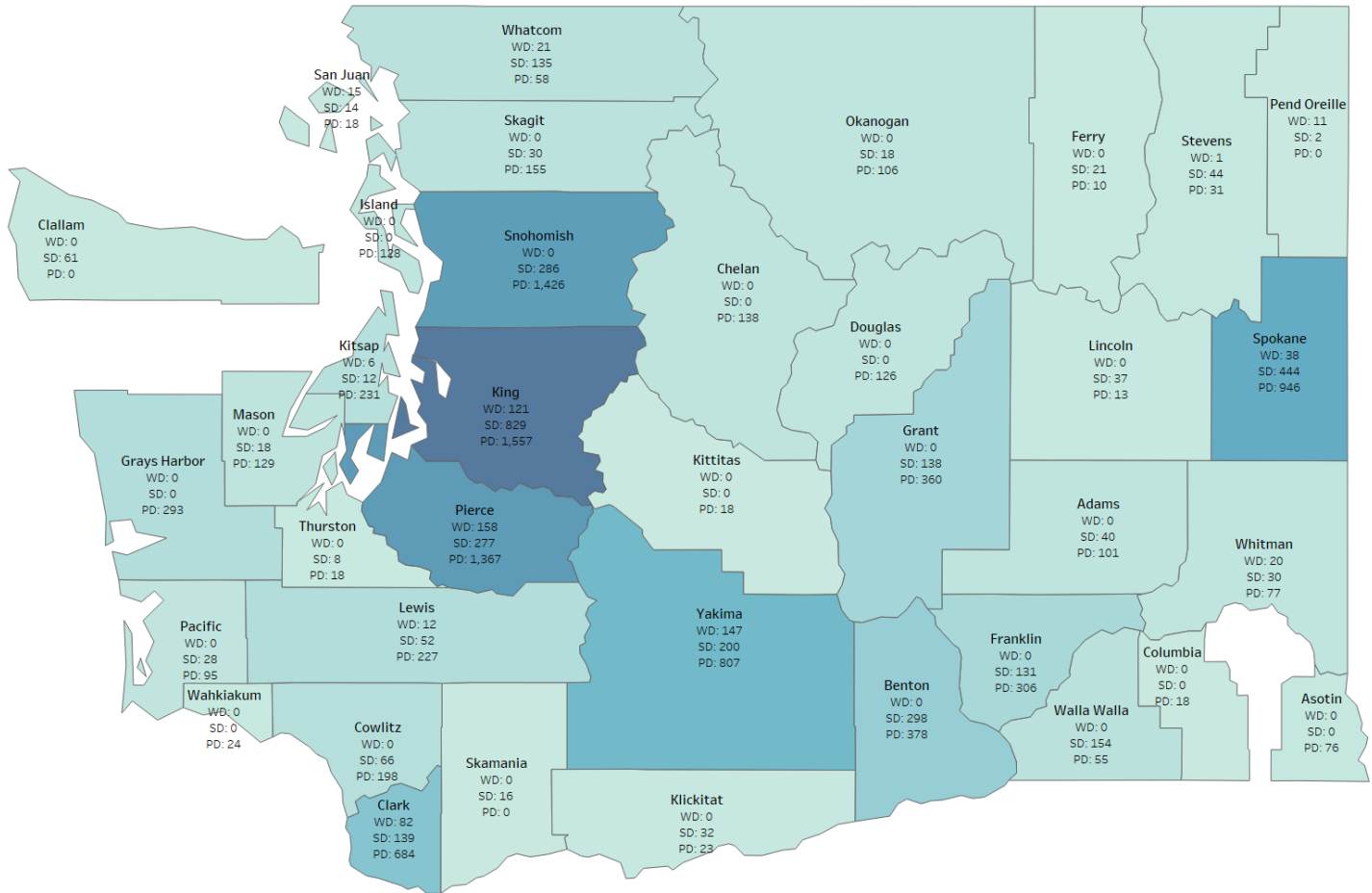
In a recent study published in *Pediatrics*,<sup>1</sup> ECEAP enrolled children whose adult family members engaged in Mobility Mentoring® showed **gains in two of six Teaching Strategies GOLD® Dimensions**, in comparison to families who did not. For more information, go to <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-018473>

1. Homer, C.J., Winning, A., & Cummings, K. (2022). A coaching model to promote economic mobility and child developmental outcomes. *Pediatrics*, 149(1). doi: 10.1542/peds.2020-018473

Learn more at [DCYF Mobility Mentoring®](#).

## ECEAP Contractors

The map below is a visual guide to where ECEAP slots are distributed across Washington State. They are broken down by slot model or type: Part Day (PD), Working Day (WD), and School Day (SD) slots. The map breaks down ECEAP services by county. ECEAP services are located in all counties except for Jefferson (which has Head Start services) and Garfield. You can learn more about ECEAP services by Legislative districts [here](#).



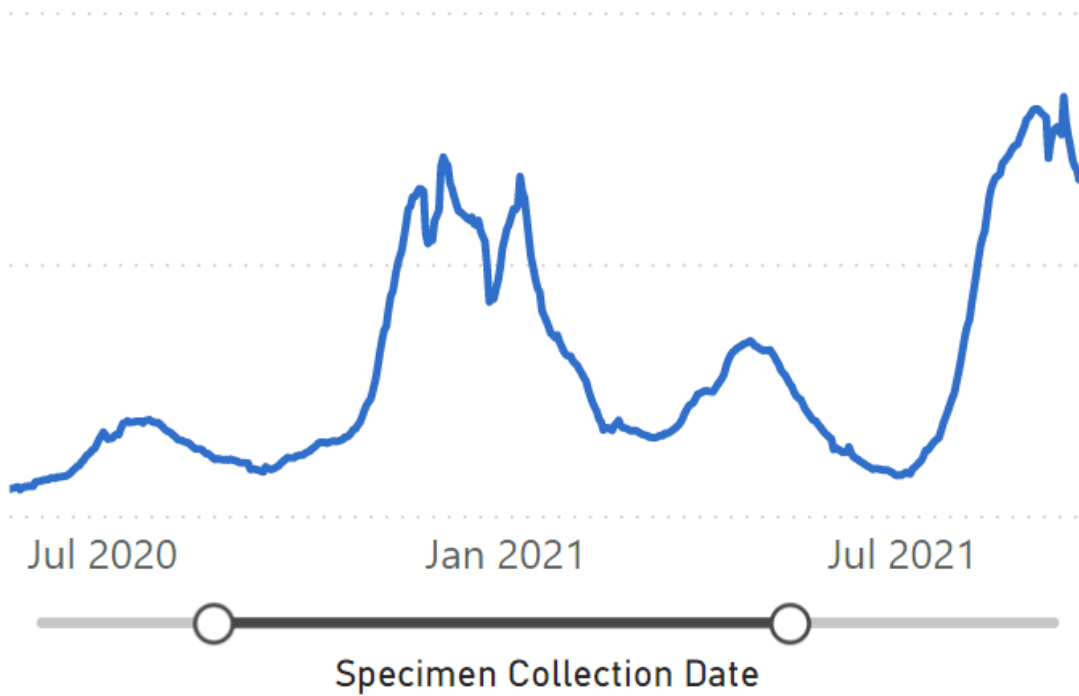
## Contractors during COVID-19

Contractors faced recruitment challenges as families felt overwhelmed by the pandemic’s impact on employment, access to services, and lack of in-person contact. In-person recruitment is key to reaching families to enroll in ECEAP. Staffing challenges continue through the time of this report’s release as families grapple with finding the childcare they need to return to work. Additional safety protocols put further burdens on sites and families.

Despite this all of this, ECEAP contractors persisted. They found ways to reach families and provide services and support. ECEAP sites switched to providing non-traditional Remote Services (NTRS) quickly, connecting children and families to supports.

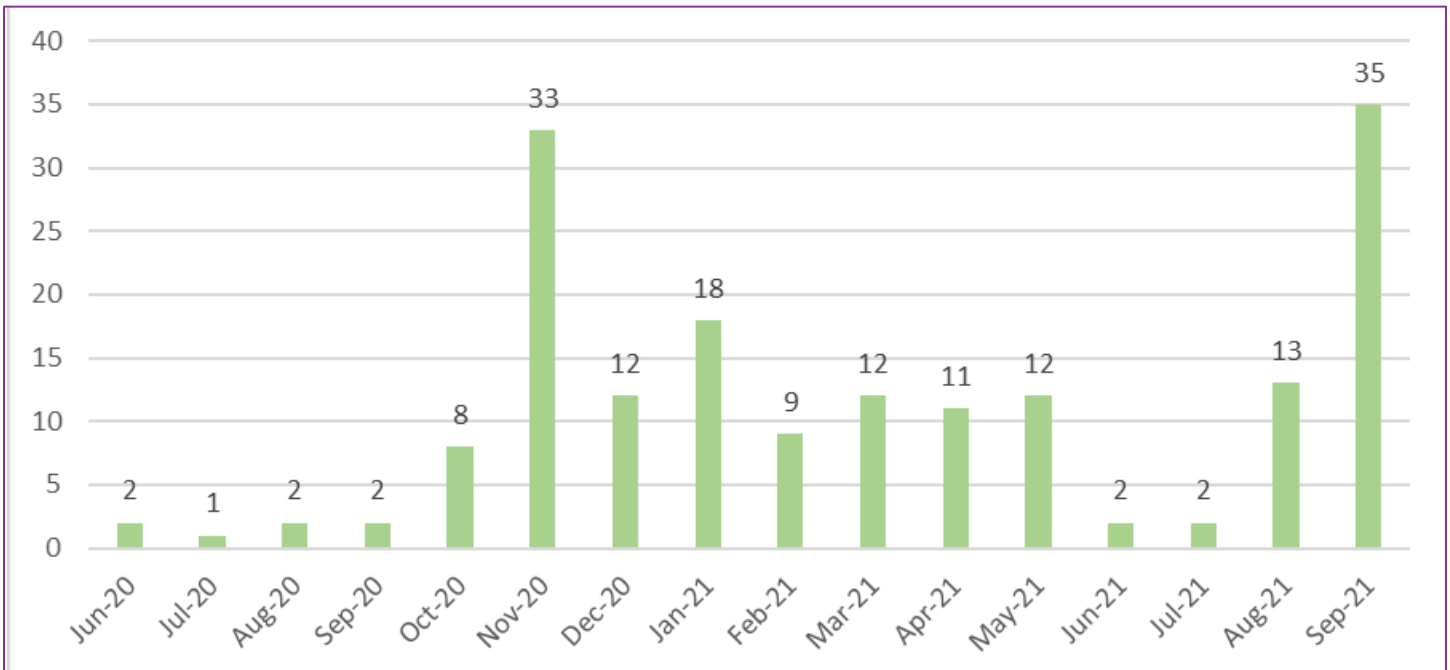
The first image below is the epidemiological curve for the rate of COVID-19 cases statewide from the DOH website for June 2020 through September 2021. The second image is the count of ECEAP classrooms that closed classrooms for in-person services during the same time period. The similarity between the shapes of these charts is striking. As cases surged statewide, so did the need to close classrooms for in-person services.

Trend in Seven-Day Rate of New COVID-19 Cases Per 100,000 Population



Data source: WA DOH COVID dashboard

Onsite Service Closures Due to COVID-19

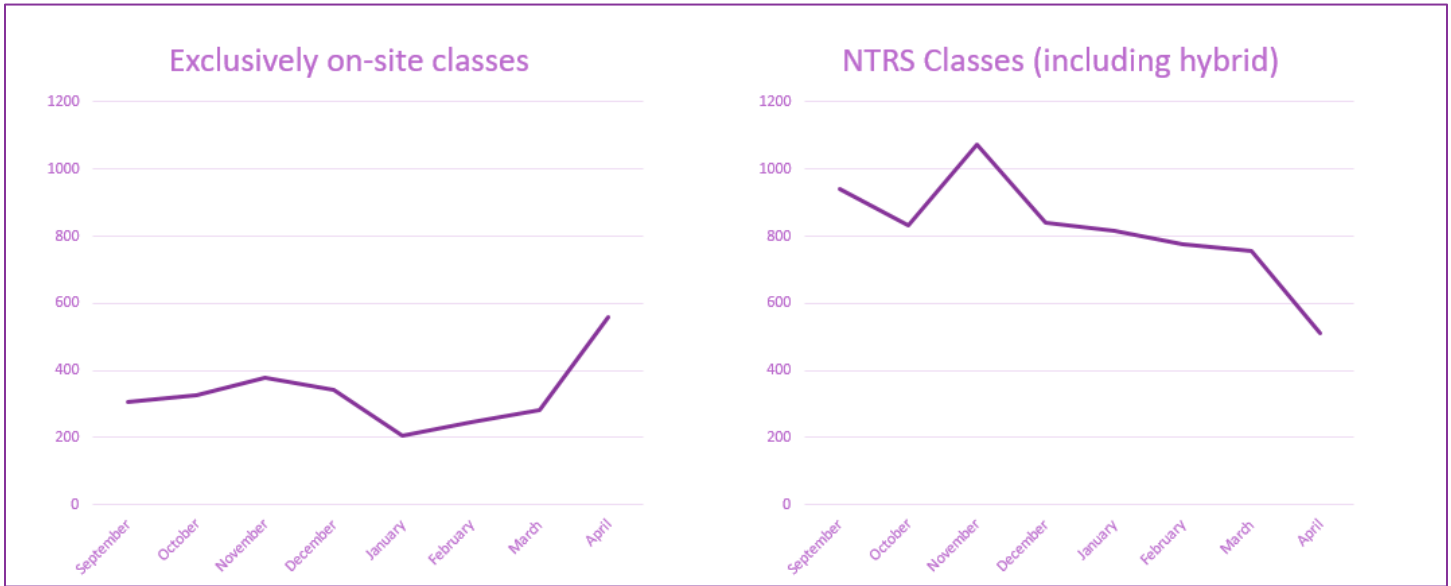


Data source: ECEAP contractor reports to DCYF ECEAP

The graphs below show the trend in on-site and NTRS at ECEAP sites statewide from September 2020 through April 2021. As case numbers declined in the spring of 2021, the number of in-person classes rose.



ECEAP Education Services, September 2020 – April 2021



**Early Achievers**

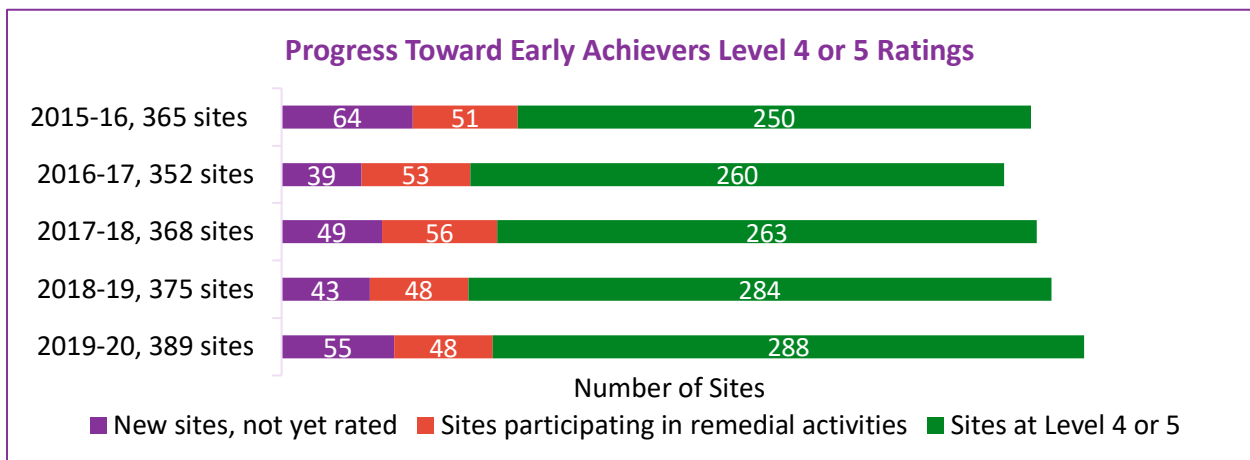
*COVID-19 note: Data collection was paused in March 2020 by the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order due to COVID-19. Early Achievers ratings had not resumed at the time of this report.*

Since 2015, ECEAP sites have been required to participate in Early Achievers, Washington’s early learning quality rating and improvement system, and to achieve a rating of level 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

The Early Achievers framework ensures children’s access to high-quality early learning settings, informs parents to help them find quality child care, and supports early learning professionals to provide quality care and learning.

Early Achievers ratings are based on on-site observation of the early learning environment, teacher-child interactions, curriculum, staff support, family engagement and partnerships, staff professionalism, and child outcomes.

At the end of the 2019-20 school year, 74% of the 389 ECEAP sites were **rated at Level 4 or 5**. For context, barely more than 2% of licensed child care centers and family child care homes in Washington State are rated at these levels.



In 2019-20:

- Two ECEAP sites were rated Level 5 “Excelling in High Quality.” Only four early learning sites in Washington, including child care, have this top quality rating. Both of the Level 5 ECEAP sites are operated by school districts under the leadership of Snohomish County Human Services.
- 308 ECEAP sites were rated Level 4 “Thriving in High Quality.”
- 19 ECEAP sites were rated Level 3+, a rating introduced recently to support sites progressing to Level 4.
- 11 ECEAP sites were rated Level 3 “Demonstrating High Quality.” Some are child care sites where the ECEAP rooms are certified as meeting ECEAP quality thresholds in Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®).
- Five ECEAP sites were centers beginning the Early Achievers process at Level 2 “Committing to High Quality.”
- 41 ECEAP sites were new and not yet rated.

ERS and CLASS were used until data collection was paused due to COVID-19. Both tools are now retired in the Early Achievers system due to the inability to do in-person data collection as a result of COVID-19.

One component of Early Achievers was the **Classroom Assessment Scoring System** (CLASS®), an observational tool focused on teacher-children interactions and linked to child outcomes. In recent analyses, ECEAP sites were strongest in classroom Emotional Climate, essential to set the stage for children’s social and academic development. The areas with the most room to grow were in the Instructional Support domain regarding concept development and quality of feedback.

Another component of Early Achievers was the **Environmental Rating Scale** (ERS®), a comprehensive assessment of process quality in classrooms, which was more predictive of child outcomes than structural indicators such as staff-to-child ratio or group size. Each item on the ERS had well-defined criteria to rate the item between 1 (inadequate practices) and 7 (excellent practices). The items were combined into six subscales.

## Tribal ECEAP

DCYF ECEAP has been working with Washington State tribal sovereign nations over the last several years on creating a tribal pathway that removes barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP in their communities. DCYF ECEAP responded to requests by tribes by making changes to the ECEAP RFA process and to enrollment requirements. DCYF ECEAP also created a **tribal ECEAP webpage** to increase access to information for tribal ECEAP sites.

In the spring of 2020, DCYF ECEAP resumed holding regular tribal workgroups to continue to gather feedback from tribes about what still needs to be done to remove barriers. This input informed the **Tribal ECEAP Pathway Recommendations to the Legislature**. RFA processes, Contract, and Performance Standards were update to include tribally inclusive language. Currently, DCYF ECEAP is developing trainings specifically for tribal programs and trainings for non-tribal programs that serve tribal families or who subcontract with tribal sovereign nations.

## Overview of Recommendations

DCYF made the following recommendations in response to requests from tribes with the goal of removing barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP resulting in more tribal children in Washington being served by tribal providers. When tribal children are served within their communities their outcomes are stronger, which ultimately reduces the opportunity gap for tribal children.

*Specific Recommended Changes*

- Increase eligibility for programs run by tribal sovereign nations and for tribal children who attend ECEAP at non-tribal sites.
- Update the Early Learning Management system to reduce duplicate reporting in multiple data systems.
- Create a Tribal Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist position when there are at least six to eight tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.
- Slot stability for tribes.
- Tribal slot set-aside.
- Reduce duplicate monitoring between external entities reviewing tribal programming.
- Fund tribal ECEAP at a rate that covers programming being subsidized by tribes.
- Fund culture and language education.
- Increase access overall to early learning tribal-specific resources and supports.

*New Funding Model*

- Explore the possibility of creating early learning tribal compacts for tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.

*Training for Non-Tribal ECEAP*

- Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Curriculum training.
- Government-to-Government training.
- Ongoing tribal-focused equity training and technical assistance.

**ECEAP Workforce**

One of the challenges related to rapid ECEAP expansion is procuring well-prepared staff. Early childhood education programs face staffing challenges across the country, with around 50% of settings experiencing teacher turnover,<sup>11</sup> and 86% of child care centers in Washington experiencing a staffing shortage.<sup>12</sup> These challenges have increased since the beginning of the pandemic, as educators faced increased costs, exposure to illness, and experienced secondary trauma in their work supporting children and families.<sup>13</sup>

ECEAP requires lead teachers to have an associate or higher degree with related content. Family support staff must have an associate or higher degree with related

<sup>11</sup> Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/ReportFINAL.pdf>

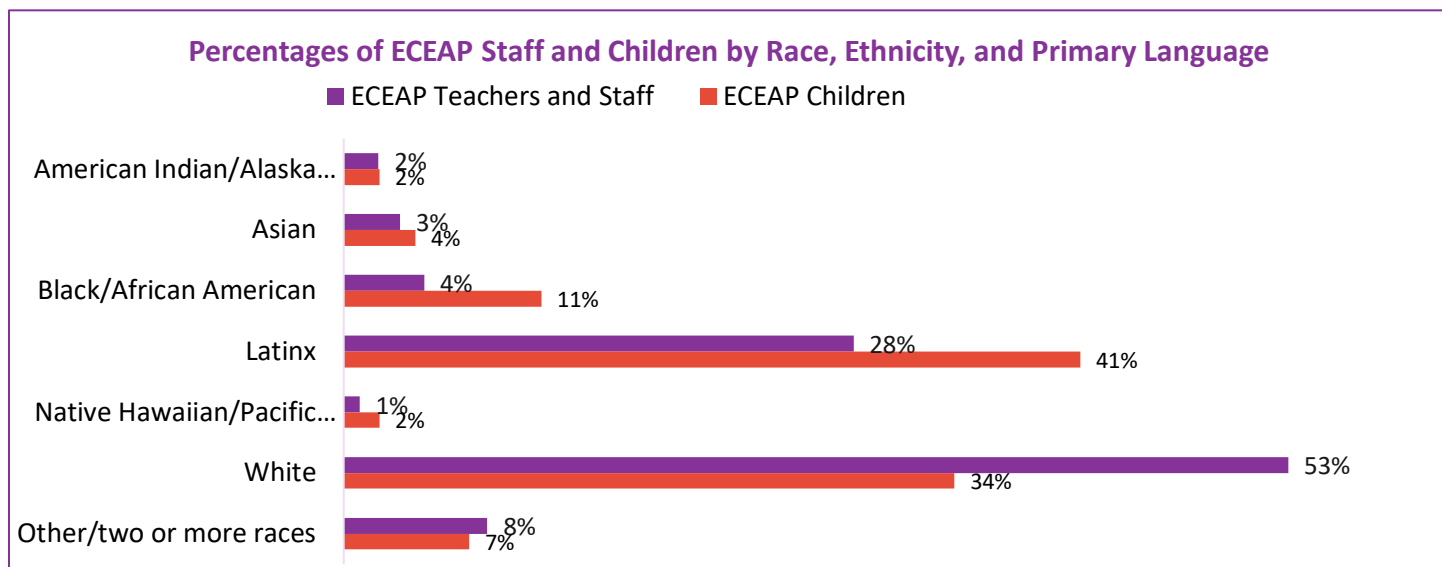
<sup>12</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2021). State Survey Data: Child Care at a Time of Progress and Peril. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-74/naeyc\\_state\\_survey\\_data\\_august\\_2021.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/user-74/naeyc_state_survey_data_august_2021.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020). Am I Next? Sacrificing to Stay Open, Child Care Providers Face a Bleak Future Without Relief. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc\\_policy\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_december\\_survey\\_data.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/naeyc_policy_crisis_coronavirus_december_survey_data.pdf)

Nagasawa, M. (2020). Who will care for the early care and education workforce? COVID-19 and the need to support early childhood educators' emotional well-being. New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute. [https://www.wcstonefnd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ECEC\\_Mental\\_Health.pdf](https://www.wcstonefnd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ECEC_Mental_Health.pdf)

content or a comprehensive related program certificate. Assistant teachers must have the equivalent of 12 credits of early childhood education. Between the 2011-12 school year and the 2019-20 school year, the number of ECEAP staff increased by 76%, while percentages of staff that are fully qualified decreased.

Pay parity for early childhood education professionals has a direct impact on ECEAP staff qualification levels and turnover rates. For many staff, COVID-19 affected plans for becoming fully qualified for their positions. Staff had to quickly adjust to online courses or wait until classes and programs became available again.



*n = 729 ECEAP lead teachers, 715 assistant teachers, 450 family support staff (FSS), 13,120 children in ECEAP. For teachers and family support staff, the option to select “Two or more races” was not available, while 7% of children were reported in this category. Around 8% of teachers and family support staff were in the “other or not specified” race category, while no children were reported as such. To enable easier reading, these categories were not included in this chart. Therefore, the race and ethnicity totals do not equal 100%.*

Working toward a diverse workforce that represents ECEAP families and children is another key issue with ECEAP expansion. For the ECEAP lead teachers, assistant teachers, and family support staff who were active in 2020-21 and for whom we have data in MERIT, we compared race, ethnicity, gender, and primary language to ECEAP children. Overall, children in ECEAP are more often reported Latinx and Black/African American whereas ECEAP staff are more often reported as white. These data are from 2019-20 and are very similar to the MERIT data from 2018-19.

ECEAP also strives to recruit staff who speak the languages of children and families served by ECEAP. However, ECEAP staff still speak English at higher rates than children (85% of ECEAP teachers and staff in comparison to 69% of children), and speak Spanish and other languages at lower rates compared to ECEAP children (Spanish: 11% of ECEAP teachers and staff vs. 23% of children; other languages: 3% of ECEAP teachers and staff vs. 8% of children). Based on this, our system efforts should focus on recruiting staff who are Black, Latinx, male, and bilingual especially in Spanish/English.

Across categories of ECEAP staff, there is variation in the levels of diversity. Lead teachers are more often white compared to assistant teachers and family support staff. In contrast, family support staff are more often Latinx or Black/African American compared to assistant teachers and lead teachers. Family support staff are most likely to speak English (91%) compared to Lead Teachers (85%) and Assistant Teachers (80%). These data are from 2019-20 but are similar to the MERIT data from 2018-19.

## Workforce during COVID-19

Early Childhood Education workers provide essential supports for families during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> The variation of expectations and support within the broader education system highlighted the imbalance of supports between k-12 and early learning professionals.<sup>15</sup> As the K-12 school system went virtual, many ECEAP sites remained in-person to serve their communities. In some cases, this was a necessity to stay afloat. If services were not provided, it was unclear if they had guaranteed funding from the state. Sites struggled to find the essential supplies they needed to safely operate and maintain social distance, all while trying to support staff who faced illness and uncertainty.<sup>16</sup>

Education, family support, and health services remained priority, but often as one of the few comprehensive support systems outside of the home, staff took on the emotional needs from both children and families they served. As families became overwhelmed, teachers and family support specialists stepped in to provide overall connection, coping, and stress-management support. The compassion fatigue, or secondary traumatic stress,<sup>17</sup> and burnout compounded the collective trauma staff already faced. As a result, previously existing staff turnover and shortage issues have surged. Years of pay parity issues had already fractured the early learning system and made resiliency that much harder in such demanding times. ECEAP contractors report even more staff seeking jobs in other industries that are offering opportunities to earn higher wages in entry-level positions. This aligns with recent U.S. jobs data show that the child-care sector about 10% smaller than prior to the pandemic, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The dedication and hard work that ECEAP staff showed throughout the pandemic was clear to the communities served. They became a lifeline, stepping up to build new frameworks for supporting families. Read more about how ECEAP supported families across Washington [here](#). One of many examples, in June 2021, South Bend Early Learning Center received a [Road to Recovery award](#) from their community for the work, service, and support they provided throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

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*This truly is the team. We are down 6.5 staff from last year – two of which, both lead teachers, resigned this year, mid-year. We've faced a pandemic, enrollment challenges, minimal access to substitutes, multiple shifts, and constant change, and we continue to remain standing to do the hard work. To say it has been a challenging year would be an egregious understatement, but we are making it. – ECEAP Director, Amy Nelson*

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<sup>14</sup> (2020) WA Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/WA%20Essential%20Critical%20Infrastructure%20Workers%20%28Final%29.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Shapiro, E. (2021). Why Child Care Staff Had to Show Up While Teachers Worked Remotely.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/19/nyregion/child-care-teachers-schools-covid.html>

<sup>16</sup> Child Care Aware of Washington. (2021). Investments in Washington's Child Care System Needed to Prevent Worsening Child Care Crisis <https://childcareawarewa.org/2020/05/27/investments-in-washingtons-child-care-system-needed-to-prevent-worsening-child-care-crisis/>

<sup>17</sup> National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Secondary Traumatic Stress Committee. (2011). Secondary traumatic stress: A fact sheet for child-serving professionals. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.

[https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary\\_traumatic\\_stress\\_child\\_serving\\_professionals.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/secondary_traumatic_stress_child_serving_professionals.pdf)

## DCYF Support for ECEAP Services

The DCYF ECEAP team consists of 33 staff. The staff are divided into five teams supporting ECEAP contractors and sites across the state as we work toward entitlement:

- Readiness, Innovation and Capacity team (RICAP)
- Continuous Quality Improvement team (CQI)
- Data team
- Operations team
- Management team

Of the 33 staff on the DCYF ECEAP team, 25 have experience working in the early learning field (early childhood education or ECE) or have implemented comprehensive pre-k programming. Most staff working in ECEAP — in the field or at DCYF — are former Head Start and/or ECEAP parents. Those who do not have early learning experience have specialized experience vital to ECEAP’s work. ECEAP’s collaborative decision-making ensures that staff with comprehensive ECE experience contribute to decisions ensuring integrity and accuracy. We prioritize developing open and honest working relationships to support our ability to challenge and question one another.

DCYF ECEAP implements robust Quality Assurance (QA), Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Data Management Functions from the time a potential contractor expresses interest in providing ECEAP and then through their experience as an ECEAP contractor through annual and multi-year improvement learning loops.

DCYF ECEAP Integrated Team Functions	Leads To	System and Structural Confidence	Outcomes
<p><b>CQI Functions</b></p> <p><b>QA Functions</b></p> <p><b>Data Management Functions</b></p>	<p>Stronger, more aware contractors and sites that can quickly implement required services and then provide the level of service required.</p> <p>Process for programs to view the standards as baseline for quality and adaptable based on the needs of children and families.</p> <p>Annual revision processes are engaged. Open communication, clarifications, and timely follow through ensure internal communication system.</p>	<p>Confidence in the service delivery of each contractor.</p> <p>Ongoing partnership with contractors for co-design of model and services.</p> <p>Emergence for future planning.</p> <p>Well defined quality.</p> <p>Space in the system for innovation and exceeding quality indicators.</p>	<p><b>Overall trust in the system.</b></p> <p><b>Satisfied staff, developing their practice in classrooms and with families.</b></p> <p><b>Parents leading transitions for their children.</b></p> <p><b>Parents feel more confident as first and best teacher.</b></p> <p><b>Children fully acknowledged and affirmed in their identity and ready for</b></p>

	<p>Reflection and Learning with and from contractors' experiences.</p> <p>Possible quality indicators emerging from contractors.</p> <p>Individualized supports for each contractor. Internal learning and infrastructure building.</p> <p>Test as we go...build in reflection and planning.</p> <p>Ensuring compliance with standards and needs is functional.</p>	<p>Contractors reporting of trust and transparency in system and staff.</p>	<p><b>what is next in educational journey.</b></p>
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### Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

DCYF ECEAP has robust and continually refined CQI processes, work done in partnership with ECEAP contractors statewide. These have led to a range of positive outcomes in learning growth, physical health, and family resilience. ECEAP CQI Specialists monitor contractors for compliance with more than 150 performance standards through data review, evaluation of deliverables, monthly phone conversations, and on-site visits whenever safely possible.

During this reporting period:

- Spring 2020 and 2021 monitoring were completed virtually due to COVID-19. All scheduled monitoring was completed by mid-June.
- ECEAP contractors were fully aligned with 97% of program requirements, up from 92%.
- The strongest areas were program administration, education, and family support.
- The requirements most frequently needing attention were:
  - Staff qualifications, which reflects known workforce issues. By the end of the year, 83% of assistant teachers and 89% of lead teachers and family support staff were fully qualified or on an approved professional development plan.
  - Maintaining full enrollment, which is a factor of ECEAP's rapid expansion. Within 30 days of class start dates, 73% of classes were full versus 79% in 2017-18.
- ECEAP contractors were successful in enrolling the state's most vulnerable young children, based on ECEAP's priority point system.

### Facilities Work with Commerce

DCYF conducted the Facility Needs Assessment for ECEAP Expansion in 2017. The assessment identified insufficient early learning facilities to support ECEAP expansion to entitlement. There is high demand for child

care and early learning in Washington State, but even when the slots are available, there is still need for high-quality facilities. The Early Learning Facilities (**ELF**) grant program bridges the supply gap by addressing the facilities need.

Project Category	ECEAP Spaces Created	WCCC Spaces Created	Total Spaces Created
<b>Major Construction and Renovation</b>	2,381	472	<b>2,853</b>
<b>Minor Renovation</b>	146	94	<b>240</b>
<b>Pre-Design: 10 Projects</b> <small>Planning doesn't directly create space</small>	-	-	-
<b>School District</b>	407	323	<b>730</b>
<b>Direct Appropriations</b>	1,019	274	<b>1,293</b>
<b>All Projects</b>	<b>3,953</b>	<b>1,163</b>	<b>5,116</b>

The Early Learning Facilities program supports Washington’s commitment of developing additional high-quality early learning opportunities for children from low-income households. In 2017, House Bill 1777 passed to address the need for early learning facilities. The **Department of Commerce** and DCYF collaboratively implement the ELF program. The Department of Commerce oversees the grant and loan administration, application process and monitoring of ELF grantees. DCYF works with stakeholders to review licensing standards. This engagement helps eliminate potential barriers to licensing while ensuring the health and safety of children in early learning programs. DCYF also provides technical assistance to ELF applicants to ensure the process is clear and that eligible organizations meet the licensing standards at preapproval and at project completion.

Between 2017-20, ELF created 5,216 spaces and created capacity for ECEAP and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) to serve more children and families across the state when slots become available. The 2021-23 Capital budget provided more state funding for the ELF: \$23.911 million for ELF grants, \$956,440 to DCYF for technical assistance to ELF applicants, and \$7.5 million for the Washington Early Learning Loan (WELL) fund.