

RCW 43.216.515 Eligible providers—State-funded support—Requirements—Data collection—Pathways to early childhood education and assistance program. (1) Approved early childhood education and assistance programs shall receive state-funded support through the department. Public or private organizations including, but not limited to, school districts, educational service districts, community and technical colleges, local governments, or nonprofit organizations, are eligible to participate as providers of the state early childhood education and assistance program.

(2) Funds obtained by providers through voluntary grants or contributions from individuals, agencies, corporations, or organizations may be used to expand or enhance preschool programs so long as program standards established by the department are maintained.

(3) Persons applying to conduct the early childhood education and assistance program shall identify targeted groups and the number of children to be served, program components, the qualifications of instructional and special staff, the source and amount of grants or contributions from sources other than state funds, facilities and equipment support, and transportation and personal care arrangements.

(4) A new early childhood education and assistance program provider must complete the requirements in this subsection to be eligible to receive state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program:

(a) Enroll in the early achievers program within thirty days of the start date of the early childhood education and assistance program contract;

(b) (i) Except as provided in (b) (ii) of this subsection, rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program within twenty-four months of enrollment. If an early childhood education and assistance program provider rates below a level 4 within twenty-four months of enrollment, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and must rate at or request to be rated at a level 4 or 5 within twelve months of beginning remedial activities.

(ii) Licensed or certified child care centers, family home providers, and outdoor nature-based child care providers that administer an early childhood education and assistance program shall rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program within twenty-four months of the start date of the early childhood education and assistance program contract. If an early childhood education and assistance program provider rates below a level 4 within twenty-four months, the provider must complete remedial activities with the department, and must rate at or request to be rated at a level 4 or 5 within twelve months of beginning remedial activities.

(5) (a) If an early childhood education and assistance program provider has successfully completed all of the required early achievers program activities and is waiting to be rated by the deadline provided in this section, the provider may continue to participate in the early achievers program as an approved early childhood education and assistance program provider and receive state subsidy pending the successful completion of a level 4 or 5 rating.

(b) To avoid disruption, the department may allow for early childhood education and assistance program providers who have rated below a level 4 after completion of the twelve-month remedial period to continue to provide services until the current school year is finished.

(c) (i) If the early childhood education and assistance program provider described under subsection (4) (b) (i) or (ii) of this section does not rate or request to be rated at a level 4 or 5 following the remedial period, the provider is not eligible to receive state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program under this section.

(ii) If the early childhood education and assistance program provider described under subsection (4) (b) (i) or (ii) of this section does not rate at a level 4 or 5 when the rating is released following the remedial period, the provider is not eligible to receive state-funded support under the early childhood education and assistance program under this section.

(6) (a) When an early childhood education and assistance program in good standing changes classroom locations to a comparable or improved space within the same facility, or to a comparable or improved outdoor location for an outdoor nature-based child care, a rerating is not required outside of the regular rerating and renewal cycle.

(b) When an early childhood education and assistance program in good standing moves to a new facility, or to a new outdoor location for an outdoor nature-based child care, the provider must notify the department of the move within six months of changing locations in order to retain their existing rating. The early achievers program must conduct an observational visit to ensure the new classroom space is of comparable or improved environmental quality. If a provider fails to notify the department within six months of a move, the early achievers rating must be changed from the posted rated level to "Participating, Not Yet Rated" and the provider will cease to receive tiered reimbursement incentives until a new rating is completed.

(7) The department shall collect data periodically to determine the demand for full-day programming for early childhood education and assistance program providers. The department shall analyze this demand by geographic region and shall include the findings in the annual report required under RCW 43.216.089.

(8) The department shall develop multiple pathways for licensed or certified child care centers and homes to administer an early childhood education and assistance program. The pathways shall include an accommodation for these providers to rate at a level 4 or 5 in the early achievers program according to the timelines and standards established in subsection (4) (b) (ii) of this section. The department must consider using the intermediate level that is between level 3 and level 4 as described in RCW 43.216.085, incentives, and front-end funding in order to encourage providers to participate in the pathway. [2021 c 304 s 19; 2020 c 321 s 1; 2019 c 369 s 3; 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 9; 1994 c 166 s 5; 1988 c 174 s 4; 1985 c 418 s 4. Formerly RCW 43.215.415, 28A.215.130, 28A.34A.040.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 369: See note following RCW 43.216.091.

Finding—Intent—2015 3rd sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.216.085.

Effective date—1994 c 166: See note following RCW 43.216.500.

Findings—1994 c 166; 1988 c 174: See note following RCW 43.216.505.