

**RCW 43.216.555 Early learning program—Voluntary preschool opportunities—Program standards—Prioritizing programs—Rules.** (1) An early learning program to provide voluntary preschool opportunities for children ages three to five years old who are not age-eligible for kindergarten shall be implemented according to the funding and implementation plan in RCW 43.216.556. The program must offer a comprehensive program of early childhood education and family support, including parental involvement and health information, screening, and referral services, based on family need. Participation in the program is voluntary. On a space available basis, the program may allow enrollment of children who are not otherwise eligible by assessing a fee.

(2) The program shall be implemented by utilizing the program standards and eligibility criteria in the early childhood education and assistance program in RCW 43.216.500 through 43.216.550.

(3) (a) The program implementation in this section shall prioritize early childhood education and assistance programs located in low-income neighborhoods within high-need geographical areas.

(b) Following the priority in (a) of this subsection, preference shall be given to programs meeting at least one of the following characteristics:

(i) Programs offering an extended day program for early care and education;

(ii) Programs offering services to children diagnosed with a special need; or

(iii) Programs offering services to children involved in the child welfare system.

(4) The secretary shall adopt rules for the following program components, as appropriate and necessary during the phased implementation of the program, consistent with early achievers program standards established in RCW 43.216.085:

(a) Minimum program standards;

(b) Approval of program providers; and

(c) Accountability and adherence to performance standards.

(5) The department has administrative responsibility for:

(a) Approving and contracting with providers according to rules developed by the secretary under this section;

(b) In partnership with school districts, monitoring program quality and assuring the program is responsive to the needs of eligible children;

(c) Assuring that program providers work cooperatively with school districts to coordinate the transition from preschool to kindergarten so that children and their families are well-prepared and supported; and

(d) Providing technical assistance to contracted providers.

[2019 c 408 s 9; 2018 c 155 s 4; 2018 c 58 s 34; 2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 s 11; 2010 c 231 s 3. Formerly RCW 43.215.455, 43.215.141.]

**Findings—Intent—2019 c 408:** See note following RCW 43.216.512.

**Effective date—Findings—Intent—2018 c 155:** See notes following RCW 43.216.512.

**Effective date—2018 c 58:** See note following RCW 28A.655.080.

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