

RCW 43.216.577 Prenatal to three family engagement strategy.

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department shall administer a prenatal to three family engagement strategy to support expectant parents, babies and toddlers from birth to three years of age, and their caregivers.

(2) Components of the prenatal to three family engagement strategy must include supports and services to improve maternal and infant health outcomes, reduce and mitigate trauma, promote attachment and other social-emotional assets, strengthen parenting skills, and provide early supports to help maximize healthy and robust childhood development and reduce isolation. Services and supports may include:

(a) In-home parent skill-based programs and training established in RCW 43.216.130;

(b) Facilitated play and learn groups;

(c) Parent peer-support groups, including groups designed for families with children with complex needs; families whose primary home language is not English; incarcerated parents; families coping with substance use disorder or mental health support needs; black, indigenous, and families of color; or other specific needs; and

(d) Other prenatal to age three programs and services.

(3) Continuity of services for babies and toddlers are important for early childhood brain development. Therefore, the services and supports described in this section may be made available to biological parents, foster parents, kinship care providers, and other family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. [2021 c 199 s 402.]

Findings—Intent—2021 c 199 ss 402-405: "(1) The legislature finds that parental relationships and healthy interactions in the first few years of life help shape the development of babies' and toddlers' brains and bodies. Eighty percent of the brain is developed by the age of three and parents are a child's first teachers.

(2) The legislature finds that the federal family first prevention services act (P.L. 115-123) offers the state the opportunity to leverage federal funding for certain programs, including in-home parent skill-based programs, substance use disorder support, and mental health interventions. Culturally relevant, evidence-based programs that may qualify for these federal funds are limited. Therefore, state support may be necessary to serve traditionally underrepresented communities and increase positive engagement from parents and caregivers of children from before birth to age three.

(3) The legislature finds that small teacher-child ratios for infant and toddler care, as well as the existence of child care deserts with low levels of access to care for the birth to three age group, contribute to higher expenses for providers and families with babies and young children.

(4) Therefore, the legislature intends to expand parent and family education and support, incentivize the provision of infant and toddler care, and make early therapeutic and preventative services more readily available to families and young children." [2021 c 199 s 401.]

Short title—Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2021 c 199: See notes following RCW 43.216.770.