

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5595

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning child care reform.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Billig, Litzow, Darneille, Fain, Hargrove, McAuliffe, Harper, Nelson, Hobbs, Mullet, Frockt, Cleveland, Rolfes, Kohl-Welles, Shin, Kline and Conway).

**Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** The Working Connections Child Care Program (WCCC) provides subsidies to child care providers serving families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. Subsidy payments go directly to child care providers. Families make a co-payment to receive child care while they work or receive training for work. Co-pays for WCCC are currently \$15 for families with income between 0 and 82 percent of the federal poverty line; \$65 for income between 82 and 137.5 percent of the federal poverty line; and \$65 plus a multiplier of one-half for every dollar of income over 137.5 percent of the federal poverty line. A person receiving WCCC while receiving training for work is generally limited to basic education or vocational training.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) has the authority to establish and implement policies in WCCC. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has the responsibility for verifying a family's eligibility to receive WCCC subsidies.

In 2007, the Legislature required DEL to establish a voluntary quality rating and improvement system applicable to licensed or certified child care centers and homes, and early education programs. In response, DEL worked with the University of Washington to develop the Early Achievers program. Early Achievers establishes a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning settings. All WCCC providers have the option of participating in Early Achievers.

In 2010, the Legislature required DEL to coordinate with DSHS and contract with an independent consultant to evaluate and recommend the optimum system for the eligibility determination process. The evaluation was to include an analysis of lean management

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

processes that, if adopted, could improve the cost effectiveness and delivery of eligibility determination. The Aclara Group delivered its report to DEL on October 31, 2012.

**Summary:** When providing services to parents applying for or receiving WCCC, DEL must provide training to department employees on professionalism. Further, DSHS must:

- return all calls from parents receiving benefits within 2 business days;
- develop a process by which parents can submit required forms and information electronically by June 30, 2015;
- notify providers and parents 10 days before the loss of benefits; and
- provide parents with a document explaining the services they are eligible for, how they can appeal adverse decisions, and the parents' responsibilities in obtaining and maintaining eligibility for WCCC.

A legislative task force on child care improvement is established. Membership is prescribed, including legislative representation. Staff support shall be provided by Senate Committee Services and the House Office of Program Research. The task force must provide a report and recommendations to the legislature no later than December 31, 2013 addressing the following issues:

- creation of a tiered reimbursement model;
- development of recommendations and an implementation plan for expansion of the early childhood education and assistance program;
- development of recommendations for market rate reimbursement; and
- development of recommendations for a further graduation of the copay scale to eliminate the cliff that occurs at subsidy cut off.

The Legislature finds that the recommendations in the Aclara Group report will result in streamlining the child care system to improve access and customer service and should be followed. By December 1, 2013, DEL and DSHS must:

- eliminate the current custody/visitation policy and design a flexible subsidy system;
- create broad authorization categories to account for minor changes in parents' work schedules;
- establish rules to specify that parents who receive WCCC and participate in 110 hours or more of approved work or related activities are eligible for full-time child care services; and
- clarify and simplify the requirement to count child support as income.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	47	2	
House	58	38	(House amended)
House	58	39	(House receded/amended)
Senate	38	7	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 28, 2013.