
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

HB 1574

Brief Description: Increasing eligibility for child care and early learning programs for homeless and other vulnerable children.

Sponsors: Representatives Callan, Eslick, Senn, Caldier, Frame, Dolan, Fey, Wylie, Lovick, Thai, Shewmake, Valdez, Bergquist, Stanford, Doglio, Reeves, Robinson, Cody, Goodman, Lekanoff, Kloba, Slatter, Davis and Macri.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes categorical eligibility for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program for homeless children.
- Requires 12-month authorizations for Working Connections Child Care for homeless children.

Hearing Date: 1/29/19

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Working Connections Child Care.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is a federally and state-funded program that offers subsidies to childcare providers serving families with an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline. The parent must be engaged in work or in approved work activities unless the family has received child welfare, child protective, or family assessment response (FAR) services in the previous six months. A consumer eligible at the time of application to the WCCC program may receive up to 12 months of subsidized child care and may not be deemed ineligible during the 12-month period due to a change in the family's circumstances.

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.

Families experiencing homelessness have a four-month grace period to provide verification of participation in approved work activities.

The WCCC is partially funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The CCDF rules allow states to designate certain vulnerable populations as "in need of protective services." Work and income requirements may be waived for these populations. Washington's definition of protective services includes families who are homeless during the designated four-month grace period, children who are homeless because of a disaster, children receiving FAR services, and children in the parental control of a non-needy relative (NNR). An NNR is an adult relative caring for an eligible child in the absence of a biological, adoptive, or stepparent.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is the designated lead agency for administration of the CCDF program and sets policy for the WCCC. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) determines eligibility for the WCCC and authorizes the amount of care a consumer may receive. Effective July 1, 2019, all duties related to the WCCC will transfer from the DSHS to the DCYF.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program for three- and four year-olds. A child is eligible for the state-supported ECEAP who is eligible for special education due to a disability or is from a family with an income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level. Up to 10 percent of the total enrollment in the state-supported program may consist of children who are eligible based on other criteria adopted in rule by the DCYF. Priority for enrollment must be given to children from families with the lowest income, children in foster care, or to eligible families with multiple needs.

State funding for the ECEAP is phased in yearly, and eligible children may be admitted to the extent the state provides funds for the program. Full statewide implementation is required by the 2022-23 school year, when any eligible child will be entitled to enroll in the state-supported ECEAP.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) requires states and public school districts to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to public education. The McKinney-Vento defines a homeless child or youth as one lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Summary of Bill:

A child who is homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento is categorically eligible for the ECEAP.

The DCYF must designate homeless children as a vulnerable population in need of protective services pursuant to federal CCDF rules. Children who are homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento must be allowed eligibility and 12-month authorizations for the WCCC.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.