
Children, Youth & Families Committee

HB 1278

Brief Description: Suspending certain licensing requirements for child care providers.

Sponsors: Representatives Dent, Eslick, Sutherland, Chandler, Jacobsen, Chase and Barkis.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Suspends all professional development and higher education licensing requirements for child care providers between July 1, 2021, and September 30, 2025.
- Suspends child care licensing fees from July 1, 2021, through September 30, 2025.

Hearing Date: 1/28/21

Staff: Lena Brodsky (786-7192).

Background:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care licensing and is responsible for maintaining a set of core competencies for child care and early learning providers.

The DCYF administers a quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs called Early Achievers (EA). Providers accepting state subsidy and caring for non-school age children are required to participate in the EA program and meet certain rating levels by statutory deadlines. The DCYF has adopted core competencies for early learning providers that describe the standards of knowledge and skills for early learning professionals required for child care licensure.

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

Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning.

In 2018 the DCYF adopted new foundational quality standards for early learning that updated licensing standards for child care and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The licensing standards are required to provide minimum health and safety standards for child care and preschool programs, rely on the standards established by the EA program to address quality issues, take into account the separate needs of family care providers and child care centers, and promote the continued safety of child care centers.

Early learning providers must meet certain education requirements or the equivalent. Education requirements include earning an initial, short, or full state Early Childhood Education Certificate (ECE) for most positions.

Private schools that operate early learning programs and do not receive state subsidy payments must be subject only to the health and safety licensing standards. Additionally, the state, and any agency on its behalf, may not restrict or dictate any specific educational or other programs for early learning programs, except for programs receiving state subsidy payments.

Child Care Providers - Community-based Training Pathway.

In 2020 the Legislature required the DCYF to implement by July 1, 2021, a noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway for licensed child care providers to meet professional education requirements associated with child care licensure. The community-based training pathway must align with early learning core competencies, include culturally relevant practices, and be made available:

- at low cost to providers and at prices comparable to the cost of similar community-based trainings, not to exceed \$250 per person;
- in multiple languages; and
- in an accessible manner for providers in rural and urban settings.

The DCYF must allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2026, to comply with licensing rules that require a provider to hold an ECE initial or short certificate or complete community-based trainings.

License Fees.

Fees are required to obtain a child care license. The Secretary of the DCYF (secretary) may waive the fees when, in the secretary's discretion, the fees would not be in the best interest of public health and safety, or when the fees would be to the financial disadvantage of the state.

Summary of Bill:

Between July 1, 2021, and September 30, 2025, the DCYF must suspend all professional development and higher education licensing requirements for child care providers. The DCYF must adopt rules to implement the suspension that clearly identify the specific health or safety standard supported by the affiliated licensing requirement.

Community-based Training Pathway.

The requirement for the DCYF to implement a noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway for licensed child care providers to meet professional education requirements associated with child care licensure is moved to September 1, 2022. Providers should be consulted on the community-based training pathway curriculum content to ensure the field has the skills and real-world knowledge on how to efficiently lead a classroom.

The community-based training pathway must be made available to providers in multiple languages via diverse access tracks at no additional cost to providers whose first language is not English.

The DCYF must allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2028, not 2026, to comply with licensing rules that require a provider to hold an ECE initial or short certificate or complete community-based trainings.

Child Care Licensing.

The DCYF's adopted core competencies for early learning providers are no longer incorporated into child care licensing.

The DCYF's licensing standards must no longer rely on the standards established in the EA program. Family day care providers and child day care centers that operate early learning programs and not receiving state subsidy payments must be subject only to the health and safety licensing standards.

The secretary must waive all fees required to obtain a license from July 1, 2021, through September 30, 2025. The DCYF must evaluate licensing fees and their burden on providers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2021.

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