

RCW 43.216.143 Working connections child care program—

Contracted child care slots and vouchers. (1) The department may employ a combination of vouchers and contracted slots for the subsidized child care programs in *RCW 43.215.135. Child care vouchers preserve parental choice. Child care contracted slots promote access to continuous quality care for children, provide parents and caregivers stable child care that supports employment, and allow providers to have predictable funding. Any contracted slots the department may create under this section must meet the requirements in subsections (2) through (6) of this section.

(2) Only child care providers who participate in the early achievers program and rate at a level 3, 4, or 5 are eligible to be awarded a contracted slot.

(3) (a) The department is required to use data to calculate a set number of targeted contracted slots. In calculating the number, the department must take into account a balance of family home and center child care programs and the overall geographic distribution of child care programs in the state and the distribution of slots between ages zero and five.

(b) The targeted contracted slots are reserved for programs meeting both of the following conditions:

(i) Programs in low-income neighborhoods; and

(ii) Programs that consist of at least fifty percent of children receiving subsidy pursuant to *RCW 43.215.135.

(c) Until August 1, 2017, the department shall assure an even distribution of contracted slots for children birth to age five.

(4) The department shall award the remaining contracted slots via a competitive process and prioritize child care programs with at least one of the following characteristics:

(a) Programs located in a high-need geographic area;

(b) Programs partnering with elementary schools to offer transitional planning and support to children as they advance to kindergarten;

(c) Programs serving children involved in the child welfare system; or

(d) Programs serving children diagnosed with a special need.

(5) The department shall pay a provider for each contracted slot, unless a contracted slot is not used for thirty days.

(6) The department shall include the number of contracted slots that use both early childhood education and assistance program funding and working connections child care program funding in the annual report to the legislature required under *RCW 43.215.102. [2015 3rd sp.s. c 7 § 14. Formerly RCW 43.215.137.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 43.215.135 and 43.215.102 were recodified as RCW 43.216.135 and 43.216.089, respectively, pursuant to 2017 3rd sp.s. c 6 § 821, effective July 1, 2018.

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