

**RCW 43.216.514 Enrollment priority.** (1) (a) The department shall prioritize children for enrollment in the early childhood education and assistance program who are eligible pursuant to RCW 43.216.505.

(b) A child who is eligible at the time of enrollment in the early childhood education and assistance program maintains program eligibility until the child begins kindergarten.

(2) As space is available, children may be included in the early childhood education and assistance program pursuant to RCW 43.216.512. [2021 c 199 § 507; 2020 c 343 § 3; 2019 c 408 § 7; 2018 c 155 § 3.]

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

**Short title—2020 c 343:** "This act may be known and cited as the rural child care access act." [2020 c 343 § 1.]

**Findings—Intent—2020 c 343:** "(1) The legislature finds that many rural communities face child care and early learning supply shortages due to factors that include geographic isolation and fewer providers. These shortages contribute to economic challenges in the child care market, undermining child care affordability for families and threatening the viability of child care businesses. Families deserve access to a full range of child care and early learning choices and providers need stable funding that is essential to meet high quality standards.

(2) The legislature further finds that while federal child care and development fund rules allow child care subsidy rates to exceed private pay rates in order to pay for quality care and health and safety requirements, state rules require child care subsidy rates to be lower than a provider's private pay rate with limited exceptions. This limitation has the effect of forcing child care providers to raise private pay rates when state subsidy rates go up, resulting in families who do not qualify for subsidy leaving licensed care because it has become unaffordable.

(3) Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to implement policies to relieve providers and families by streamlining child care access, balancing subsidy requirements, and supporting the needs of rural communities." [2020 c 343 § 2.]

**Findings—Intent—2019 c 408:** See note following RCW 43.216.512.

**Effective date—Findings—Intent—2018 c 155:** See notes following RCW 43.216.512.