

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6483

As Passed House:
March 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to rating requirements for child care providers.

Brief Description: Concerning rating requirements for child care providers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C. and Nguyen; by request of Department of Children, Youth and Families).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/26/20, 2/27/20 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/20, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Extends the timeframe for Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) providers to complete remedial activities in the Early Achievers (EA) program.
- Allows providers accepting a child care subsidy and ECEAP providers to continue receiving subsidy payments while completing EA remedial activities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

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.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is the state's voluntary preschool program. Three and 4 year olds from families with incomes at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for the ECEAP. Children eligible for special education or who have certain risk factors are also eligible to enroll, regardless of income. Additional children may be enrolled as space is available.

Early Achievers.

Early Achievers (EA) is the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) administers the EA program. The quality of care is assigned a rating on a scale of 1–5. Participation in the EA program is mandatory for providers serving non-school-age children and accepting a child care subsidy or providing the ECEAP.

Providers must meet certain rating levels by specified statutory deadlines. An ECEAP provider must rate at a level 4 or level 5 within 24 months of enrollment in the EA program or the start of the ECEAP contract. Any provider accepting a child care subsidy was required to rate or request to be rated at level 3 or higher in EA by December 31, 2019.

If a provider does not meet the rating deadline, the provider must complete remedial activities and rate at the required level or higher within a certain timeframe in order to continue to be eligible to accept a state subsidy. For a provider accepting a child care subsidy, this time frame is 12 months. For an ECEAP provider, this time frame is six months.

Miscellaneous.

The DCYF must complete two reports that include recommendations related to rates, copayments, and eligibility for the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and ECEAP programs. An initial progress report is due to the Governor and the Legislature by July 1, 2020, and a final report is due July 1, 2021.

Summary of Bill:

Providers in the ECEAP who do not meet EA rating deadlines must complete remedial activities and must rate at or request to be rated at a level 4 or 5 within 12 months, instead of six months, of beginning the remedial activities. If the ECEAP provider does not meet this requirement, the provider is no longer eligible to receive state-funded support under the ECEAP.

Providers accepting a child care subsidy and ECEAP providers may receive subsidy payments while they are completing required remedial activities.

A technical correction is made to the expiration date of the section related to the ECEAP and WCCC reports. The due date for the initial progress report is extended from July 1 to September 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill updates the EA requirements to align the ECEAP with the WCCC to allow providers to have 12 months to complete remedial activities. This also allows ECEAP and WCCC providers to receive state subsidies while they are completing remedial activities. Providers must have the opportunity to improve their craft while providing care for children. Providers can address children's learning and development needs while improving their practices. Healthier and more capable children are healthier and more capable adults later in life. This bill clarifies policies enacted last year based on recommendations from the Joint Select Committee on the EA Program.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Wilson, prime sponsor; and Allison Krutsinger, Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.