

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1648

---

---

**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Early Learning & Human Services

**Title:** An act relating to child care provider qualifications.

**Brief Description:** Modifying child care provider qualifications.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dent, Eslick, Burnett, Penner, Jacobsen and Graham.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/4/25, 2/18/25 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Extends the timeline for child care providers to complete staff qualification requirements to at least August 1, 2032, or five years from the date of hire, whichever is later.
- Provides that five years of unbroken work experience in licensed child care qualifies as a demonstration of experience-based competency in fulfillment of staff qualification requirements, and prohibits the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) from requiring providers to have completed annual in-service trainings in order to demonstrate experience-based competency.
- Requires the DCYF to convene a stakeholder group to assist in identifying strategies to improve staff qualification requirements and verification processes and report to the Legislature by December 1, 2026.

---

### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.  
Signed by 11 members: Representatives Bergquist, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Eslick,

---

*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.*

Ranking Minority Member; Burnett, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bernbaum, Dent, Goodman, Hill, Ortiz-Self, Penner and Taylor.

**Staff:** Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

**Background:**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) regulates child care entities. The DCYF has adopted core competencies for child care providers that describe the standards of knowledge and skills required to provide quality care and education to children and their families. The DCYF licensing requirements related to staff qualifications generally require child care providers to earn educational credentials to demonstrate their knowledge of core competencies. However, providers in certain roles may alternatively fulfill staff qualification requirements through the legislatively directed community-based training pathway or the experience-based competency pathway created in agency rules.

Additionally, providers with at least 12 months of cumulative employment must complete 10 hours of annual in-service training. There are several options for in-service training, including completion of college coursework related to core competencies.

Provider Education Requirements.

Child care providers must meet certain education requirements or the equivalent by August 1, 2026, or within five years of the provider's date of hire if hired after August 1, 2019. Providers serving the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) must meet education requirements at the time of hire. Education requirements include earning an initial, short, or state Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate for most positions, which requires completion of college credits in core competency areas. To earn an initial ECE certificate requires 12 college credits; the short ECE certificate requires 20 credits (the initial certificate plus eight additional credits); and the state ECE certificate requires 47 credits (the short certificate plus 27 additional credits). There are additional in-service professional development requirements for continuing education delivered or approved by the DCYF to maintain staff standards and qualifications while employed as a child care provider.

Community-Based Training Pathway.

Legislation enacted in 2021 required the DCYF to create a noncredit-bearing, community-based training pathway for licensed child care providers to meet professional education requirements as an alternative to ECE credentials. The community-based training pathway must align with early learning core competencies, include culturally relevant practices, and be made available: (1) at low cost to providers, not to exceed \$250 per person; (2) in multiple languages; and (3) in an accessible manner for providers in rural and urban settings. The DCYF implemented the community-based training pathway in 2022 as the Provider Access to a Community Equivalent program (PACE). The PACE alternative requires the following instruction: (1) 30 hours in child care basics; (2) 20 hours in

enhancing the quality of early learning; (3) 40 hours of additional in-service training; and (4) 30 hours of on-the-job learning. Part 1 and Part 2 of the PACE alternative are currently available and offer an equivalent to the ECE initial certificate. Additional components that will offer an equivalent to the ECE short certificate are still under development.

#### Experience-Based Competency Pathway.

Rules adopted by the DCYF offer a third pathway to meet staff qualification requirements. Child care providers in specified roles who have a cumulative seven years of experience and meet other criteria are able to meet licensing requirements without ECE certification. To fulfill requirements through this option, a provider must have all of the following:

- seven years of cumulative experience working in a licensed facility by August 1, 2026;
- maintained compliance with all health and safety trainings and child care basics trainings; and
- active employment in a qualifying job role. For family home providers, qualifying roles are licensee, lead teacher, or assistant teacher; for child care centers, qualifying roles are center lead teacher or assistant teacher.

There are certain provider roles requiring an ECE state certificate that may not fulfill staff qualification requirements through experience-based competency or the community-based training pathway, including center directors, assistant directors, and program supervisors. The alternative pathways are also not an option for providers serving the ECEAP program.

---

#### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must allow licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2032, or five years from the date of hire if hired on or after the effective date of the bill, whichever is later, to complete any of the following in fulfillment of staff qualification requirements: (1) Early Childhood Education (ECE) credential requirements; (2) the community-based training pathway; or (3) the experience-based competency demonstration with a cumulative five years of experience working in a licensed child care without a break in service. The DCYF may not require licensed child care providers to complete annual in-service training requirements in order to complete experience-based competency. Additionally, the DCYF must adopt policies that allow temporary breaks related to parental leave, personal illness, attending to family illness or emergency, or similar circumstances to not constitute a break in service.

The DCYF must convene a stakeholder group to assist in identifying strategies to improve early learning and school-age staff qualification requirements and verification processes including, but not limited to, identifying measures to streamline and clarify relevant administrative rules and policies, defining criteria and methods by which to honor equivalent out-of-state education and training, and identifying options to offer the community-based training pathway in an online format.

The stakeholder group must include family home and child care center providers, including at least one provider from a child care center that is part of a national chain or has 10 or more sites. It must also include representation from the following organizations:

- the statewide child care resource and referral network;
- a community-based training organization that provides training to licensed family day care providers;
- a statewide organization that represents the interests of family day care providers;
- a statewide organization that represents the interests of licensed child day care centers;
- the statewide out-of-school time intermediary organization;
- an organization that represents the interests of refugee and immigrant communities;
- a bilingual child care provider whose first language is not English;
- an organization that advocates for early learning;
- an organization representing private and independent schools; and
- the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

The DCYF must report to the Legislature by December 1, 2026, on strategies identified by the stakeholder group and the DCYF's plans and timelines under which to carry out those strategies. The DCYF must make efforts to minimize the cost of convening the stakeholder group, such as holding meetings in a virtual format if possible.

#### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute allows licensed child care providers until at least August 1, 2032, or five years from the date of hire, whichever is later, to earn required Early Childhood Education credentials, complete community-based pathway trainings, or demonstrate experience-based competency (as compared with a deadline of August 1, 2026, or five years from date of hire, as in current law; and August 1, 2032, 10 years from full implementation of the community-based training pathway, or 10 years from date of hire if hired on or after August 1, 2033, in the underlying bill).

The substitute additionally establishes that a provider has demonstrated experience-based competency after having worked in a licensed child care setting without a break in service for at least five years, as compared with current agency rules requiring seven cumulative years by August 1, 2026, and requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to adopt policies to allow for temporary breaks for parental leave, personal illness, attending to family illness or emergency, or similar circumstances.

The substitute also requires the DCYF to convene a stakeholder group to assist in identifying strategies to improve early learning and school-age staff qualification requirements and verification processes and report to the Legislature with recommendations and implementation plans by December 1, 2026.

Finally, the substitute removes the provision that would have reset the implementation date for the community-based training pathway from July 1, 2021, to August 1, 2025, as well as the provision requiring the community-based training pathway to be made available in an online format. Instead, the DCYF-convened stakeholder group must identify options for offering the community-based training pathway in an online format.

---

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The state is experiencing a widespread child care desert. This bill is about removing barriers and keeping child care providers in business. The child care industry is the backbone of the state's economy and it is in crisis, due in large part to regulatory barriers. Difficulty finding child care affects parents' ability to work and leads to lost revenue. This bill will remove barriers by improving access to training and extending timelines to complete provider qualification requirements.

Job-embedded experience is valuable. Some providers have rich experience in teaching and a high level of capability but are unwilling to go back to school. Some of these providers are teaching younger providers who have Early Childhood Education credentials. These experienced providers should be able to stay in their positions, rather than having to go back to school and pay for classes they could teach themselves. Children taught by teachers without degrees are going on to be highly successful in high school. Even when providers would like to attend school, it is difficult to take classes in addition to a full-time job and taking care of family. Providers often rely on public assistance, so it is necessary to have a low-cost option that is available in rural areas. The current community-based training pathway does not work, and the bill will require the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to update it.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Tom Dent, prime sponsor; Dana Christiansen, Childcare provider, Tree Hill; Sarah Clark, Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce; Angelia Hicks-Maxie, TTDC; Susan Brown, Kids Co., Greater Seattle Child Care Business Coalition, and Washington Childcare Centers Assn; and Laura Murphey, Taylor Tots Childcare Center Inc.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.