

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2317

Chapter 54, Laws of 2026

69th Legislature
2026 Regular Session

CHILD CARE LICENSING—EXEMPTION—EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND HEAD START PROGRAMS

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 11, 2026

Passed by the House February 11, 2026
Yeas 96 Nays 0

LAURIE JINKINS

**Speaker of the House of
Representatives**

Passed by the Senate March 4, 2026
Yeas 48 Nays 0

DENNY HECK

President of the Senate

Approved March 14, 2026 12:03 PM

BOB FERGUSON

Governor of the State of Washington

CERTIFICATE

I, Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2317** as passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BERNARD DEAN

Chief Clerk

FILED

March 16, 2026

**Secretary of State
State of Washington**

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2317

Passed Legislature - 2026 Regular Session

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Eslick, Callan, Abbarno, Berry, Ryu, Dufault, Paul, Nance, Zahn, Doglio, Dent, Macri, Fosse, Bergquist, Thai, and Bernbaum

Prefiled 01/07/26. Read first time 01/12/26. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to early learning program licensing requirements;
2 and amending RCW 43.216.010.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 43.216.010 and 2025 c 181 s 1 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter
7 unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

8 (1) "Agency" means any person, firm, partnership, association,
9 corporation, or facility that provides child care and early learning
10 services outside a child's own home and includes the following
11 irrespective of whether there is compensation to the agency:

12 (a) "Child day care center" and "child care center" mean an
13 agency that regularly provides early childhood education and early
14 learning services for a group of children for periods of less than 24
15 hours;

16 (b) "Early learning" includes but is not limited to programs and
17 services for child care; state, federal, private, and nonprofit
18 preschool; child care subsidies; child care resource and referral;
19 parental education and support; and training and professional
20 development for early learning professionals;

1 (c) "Family day care provider" and "family home provider" mean a
2 child care provider who regularly provides early childhood education
3 and early learning services for not more than 12 children at any
4 given time in the provider's home in the family living quarters
5 except as provided in RCW 43.216.692 and subsection (2) (~~(m)~~) (n) of
6 this section;

7 (d) "Nongovernmental private-public partnership" means an entity
8 registered as a nonprofit corporation in Washington state with a
9 primary focus on early learning, school readiness, and parental
10 support, and an ability to raise a minimum of \$5,000,000 in
11 contributions;

12 (e) "Outdoor nature-based child care" means an agency or an
13 agency-offered program that:

14 (i) Enrolls preschool or school-age children;

15 (ii) Provides early learning services to the enrolled children in
16 an outdoor natural space approved by the department for not less than
17 four hours per day or fifty percent of the daily program hours,
18 whichever is less; and

19 (iii) Teaches a nature-based curriculum to enrolled children;

20 (f) "Service provider" means the entity that operates a community
21 facility.

22 (2) "Agency" does not include the following:

23 (a) Persons related to the child in the following ways:

24 (i) Any blood relative, including those of half-blood, and
25 including first cousins, nephews or nieces, and persons of preceding
26 generations as denoted by prefixes of grand, great, or great-great;

27 (ii) Stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister;

28 (iii) A person who legally adopts a child or the child's parent
29 as well as the natural and other legally adopted children of such
30 persons, and other relatives of the adoptive parents in accordance
31 with state law; or

32 (iv) Spouses of any persons named in (a)(i), (ii), or (iii) of
33 this subsection, even after the marriage is terminated;

34 (b) Persons who are legal guardians of the child;

35 (c) Persons who care for a neighbor's or friend's child or
36 children, with or without compensation, where the person providing
37 care for periods of less than 24 hours does not conduct such activity
38 on an ongoing, regularly scheduled basis for the purpose of engaging
39 in business, which includes, but is not limited to, advertising such
40 care;

1 (d) Parents on a mutually cooperative basis exchange care of one
2 another's children;

3 (e) Nursery schools that are engaged primarily in early childhood
4 education with preschool children and in which no child is enrolled
5 on a regular basis for more than four hours per day;

6 (f) Schools, including boarding schools, that are engaged
7 primarily in education, operate on a definite school year schedule,
8 follow a stated academic curriculum, and accept only school age
9 children;

10 (g) Seasonal camps. For purposes of this chapter, "seasonal camp"
11 means a program that:

12 (i) Operates for three months or less within a period of twelve
13 consecutive months;

14 (ii) Is engaged primarily in recreational or educational
15 activities conducted on a closely supervised basis; and

16 (iii) Is owned by any person, organization, association, or
17 corporation, or is operated by a federal, state, county, or municipal
18 government;

19 (h) Facilities providing child care for periods of less than 24
20 hours when a parent or legal guardian of the child remains on the
21 premises of the facility for the purpose of participating in:

22 (i) Activities other than employment; or

23 (ii) Employment of up to two hours per day when the facility is
24 operated by a nonprofit entity that also operates a licensed child
25 care program at the same facility in another location or at another
26 facility;

27 (i) Any entity that provides recreational or educational
28 programming for school age children only and the entity meets all of
29 the following requirements:

30 (i) The entity utilizes a drop-in model for programming, where
31 children are able to attend during any or all program hours without a
32 formal reservation;

33 (ii) The entity does not assume responsibility in lieu of the
34 parent, unless for coordinated transportation;

35 (iii) The entity is a local affiliate of a national nonprofit;
36 and

37 (iv) The entity is in compliance with all safety and quality
38 standards set by the associated national agency;

39 (j) A school-day early childhood education and assistance program
40 or head start program that is located in a public school building or

1 community or technical college building, or on the premises of a
2 public school or community or technical college;

3 (k) A program operated by any unit of local, state, or federal
4 government;

5 ~~((k))~~ (l) A program located within the boundaries of a
6 federally recognized Indian reservation, licensed by the Indian
7 tribe;

8 ~~((l))~~ (m) A program located on a federal military reservation,
9 except where the military authorities request that such agency be
10 subject to the licensing requirements of this chapter;

11 ~~((m))~~ (n) A family home provider located in the surrounding
12 metropolitan area of a federal military reservation and is overseen
13 and currently certified by a federal military service; or

14 ~~((n))~~ (o) A program that offers early learning and support
15 services, such as parent education, and does not provide child care
16 services on a regular basis.

17 (3) "Applicant" means a person who requests or seeks employment
18 in an agency.

19 (4) "Certificate of parental improvement" means a certificate
20 issued under RCW 74.13.720 to an individual who has a founded finding
21 of physical abuse or negligent treatment or maltreatment, or a court
22 finding that the individual's child was dependent as a result of a
23 finding that the individual abused or neglected their child pursuant
24 to RCW 13.34.030(6)(b).

25 (5) "Conviction information" means criminal history record
26 information relating to an incident which has led to a conviction or
27 other disposition adverse to the applicant.

28 (6) "Department" means the department of children, youth, and
29 families.

30 (7) "Early achievers" means a program that improves the quality
31 of early learning programs and supports and rewards providers for
32 their participation.

33 (8) "Early childhood education and assistance program contractor"
34 means an organization that provides early childhood education and
35 assistance program services under a signed contract with the
36 department.

37 (9) "Early childhood education and assistance program provider"
38 means an organization that provides site level, direct, and high
39 quality early childhood education and assistance program services

1 under the direction of an early childhood education and assistance
2 program contractor.

3 (10) "Education data center" means the education data center
4 established in RCW 43.41.400, commonly referred to as the education
5 research and data center.

6 (11) "Employer" means a person or business that engages the
7 services of one or more people, especially for wages or salary to
8 work in an agency.

9 (12) "Enforcement action" means denial, suspension, revocation,
10 modification, or nonrenewal of a license pursuant to RCW
11 43.216.325(1) or assessment of civil monetary penalties pursuant to
12 RCW 43.216.325(3).

13 (13) "Extended day program" means an early childhood education
14 and assistance program that offers early learning education for at
15 least 10 hours per day, a minimum of 2,000 hours per year, at least
16 four days per week, and operates year-round.

17 (14) "Family resource and referral linkage system" means a system
18 that connects families to resources, services, and programs for which
19 families are eligible and uses a database that is developed and
20 maintained in partnership with communities, health care providers,
21 and early learning providers.

22 (15) "Family resource center" means a unified single point of
23 entry where families, individuals, children, and youth in communities
24 can obtain information, an assessment of needs, referral to, or
25 direct delivery of family services in a manner that is welcoming and
26 strength-based.

27 (a) A family resource center is designed to meet the needs,
28 cultures, and interests of the communities that the family resource
29 center serves.

30 (b) Family services may be delivered directly to a family at the
31 family resource center by family resource center staff or by
32 providers who contract with or have provider agreements with the
33 family resource center. Any family resource center that provides
34 family services shall comply with applicable state and federal laws
35 and regulations regarding the delivery of such family services,
36 unless required waivers or exemptions have been granted by the
37 appropriate governing body.

38 (c) Each family resource center shall have one or more family
39 advocates who screen and assess a family's needs and strengths. If
40 requested by the family, the family advocate shall assist the family

1 with setting its own goals and, together with the family, develop a
2 written plan to pursue the family's goals in working towards a
3 greater level of self-reliance or in attaining self-sufficiency.

4 (16) "Full day program" means an early childhood education and
5 assistance program that offers early learning education for a minimum
6 of 1,000 hours per year.

7 (17) "Inspection report" means a written or digital record or
8 report created by the department that identifies or describes
9 licensing violations or conditions within an agency. An inspection
10 report does not include a child care facility licensing compliance
11 agreement as defined in RCW 43.216.395.

12 (18) "Low-income child care provider" means a person who
13 administers a child care program that consists of at least 80 percent
14 of children receiving working connections child care subsidy.

15 (19) "Low-income neighborhood" means a district or community
16 where more than 20 percent of households are below the federal
17 poverty level.

18 (20) "Negative action" means a court order, court judgment, or an
19 adverse action taken by an agency, in any state, federal, tribal, or
20 foreign jurisdiction, which results in a finding against the
21 applicant reasonably related to the individual's character,
22 suitability, and competence to care for or have unsupervised access
23 to children in child care. This may include, but is not limited to:

24 (a) A decision issued by an administrative law judge;

25 (b) A final determination, decision, or finding made by an agency
26 following an investigation;

27 (c) An adverse agency action, including termination, revocation,
28 or denial of a license or certification, or if pending adverse agency
29 action, the voluntary surrender of a license, certification, or
30 contract in lieu of the adverse action;

31 (d) A revocation, denial, or restriction placed on any
32 professional license; or

33 (e) A final decision of a disciplinary board.

34 (21) "Nonconviction information" means arrest, founded
35 allegations of child abuse, or neglect pursuant to chapter 26.44 RCW,
36 or other negative action adverse to the applicant.

37 (22) "Nonschool age child" means a child who is age six years or
38 younger and who is not enrolled in a public or private school.

39 (23) "Part day program" means an early childhood education and
40 assistance program that offers early learning education for at least

1 two and one-half hours per class session, at least 320 hours per
2 year, for a minimum of 30 weeks per year.

3 (24) "Private school" means a private school approved by the
4 state under chapter 28A.195 RCW.

5 (25) "Probationary license" means a license issued as a
6 disciplinary measure to an agency that has previously been issued a
7 full license but is out of compliance with licensing standards.

8 (26) "Requirement" means any rule, regulation, or standard of
9 care to be maintained by an agency.

10 (27) "School age child" means a child who is five years of age
11 through 12 years of age and is attending a public or private school
12 or is receiving home-based instruction under chapter 28A.200 RCW.

13 (28) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department.

14 (29) "Washington state preschool program" means an education
15 program for children three-to-five years of age who have not yet
16 entered kindergarten, such as the early childhood education and
17 assistance program.

Passed by the House February 11, 2026.

Passed by the Senate March 4, 2026.

Approved by the Governor March 14, 2026.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 16, 2026.

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