

Excerpt from Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

Lessons from Implementation of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in States



Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

Awards and State Profiles

Total Annual Partnership Awards to All Grantees

State	Federal FY 2015-2019 Round 1 Grants ^A	Federal FY 2017-2021 Round 2 Grants ^B	Federal FY 2019- 2023 Round 3 Grants ^C
ALABAMA	\$ 8.3 million	\$ 2.2 million	\$10.5 million
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$ 0.9 million	\$ 3.0 million	\$ 7.6 million
GEORGIA	\$16.2 million	\$ 2.1 million	\$20.1 million
LOUISIANA	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 5.2 million	\$15.5 million
MARYLAND	\$ 3.4 million	\$ 0	\$ 4.5 million
OKLAHOMA*	\$11.8 million	\$ 7.8 million	\$24.3 million
WASHINGTON	\$ 8.4 million	\$ 4.1 million	\$13.3 million

Note:

Round 1 Grants – In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Congress allocated \$500 million for the first round of EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants. ACF awarded the grants for this first round to state and local agencies in winter 2014. Grantees must reapply for these awards every five years.

Round 2 Grants – Congress allocated an additional \$135 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants in FY 2016. ACF awarded the grants for this second round of funding in winter 2017.

Round 3 Grants – Congress allocated a combined \$165 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants between FY 2018 and FY 2019. ACF awarded the grants in spring 2019. Spring 2019 awards also included grant renewals for state and local agencies that had received Round 1 awards in winter 2014.

Endnote:

A Calculated by the author based on information on the federal fiscal year 2014 awards, found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/eed/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships/grant-awardees>.

B Calculated based on data from the Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System, available at <https://taggs.hhs.gov>.

C Data provided by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via email on August 16, 2019.

* Oklahoma funding amounts include grants to two tribal EHS-CC Partnerships grantees.

To see the full report, please visit: www.theOunce.org/Partnerships

Providers reported that parents seemed less stressed about losing their child care arrangement and children exhibited fewer challenging behaviors because their care was more stable and predictable because of Washington's Department of Early Learning's layered funding pilot and policy changes.

Washington Profile

Washington's Story

At the time the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships were launched, Washington's Department of Early Learning (DEL) had oversight and responsibility for child care subsidy, licensing and quality initiatives, as well as housing the Head Start State Collaboration Office. DEL also managed the state preschool program – Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP) – which is modeled on the federal Head Start program and follows most of its standards. In 2015, the Early Start Act became law. It implemented key aspects of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization, and required DEL to better align state quality and program standards. In 2017, these functions became part of a new cabinet level Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the lead agency whose vision is to ensure that “Washington state's children and youth grow up safe and healthy – thriving physically, emotionally and academically, nurtured by family and community.”

After reviewing the 2014 Partnerships Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), DEL leaders joined with other state early childhood organizations to form a Consortium on High Quality Infant Toddler Care that would encourage and support state groups to apply in order to expand access to care. The Gates Foundation, located in Washington, provided resources to support the Consortium's formation and its initial work. Members included the state child care resource and referral agency, an early childhood focused public private organization called Thrive Washington,

and the WA State Association of Head Start and ECEAP, representing both federal grantees and providers in the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP).

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) awarded seven Partnerships grants in Washington, including one grant to the Nisqually Indian Tribe. DEL wanted to be helpful to grantees that planned to layer EHS funding for quality enhancements onto the child care subsidy payments that the child care partners received through DEL. State leaders wanted to learn what policy changes and payment levels would be sufficient to support the cost of quality called for by Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS). They were also willing to try to mirror how payment policies worked “in the private child care market” so that providers could rely on regular payments, and children would have continuity of care.

DEL implemented several child care subsidy policy changes for the partners of the state grantees that were later implemented statewide following the federal reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the passage of Washington's Early Start Act. DEL allowed Partnerships providers to layer full child care subsidy (at the rate for infants regardless of child age, at the average regional rate, or the rate for the provider's region, if it was higher) and EHS funding. Children served by Partnerships programs who were eligible for a state child care subsidy received longer (12 month) eligibility periods.



Washington Federal Award

\$8.4 million

Federal FY 2015-2019
Round 1 Grants

\$4.1 million

Federal FY 2017-2021
Round 2 Grants

\$13.3 million

Federal FY 2019- 2023
Round 3 Grants

“Washington state’s children and youth grow up safe and healthy — thriving physically, emotionally and academically, nurtured by family and community.”

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

DEL also paid these child care providers based on how many children were enrolled in a month rather than based on daily attendance. Paying by enrollment stabilizes revenue intake for child care providers and can be especially helpful for those caring for children under three, as they are often out sick. DEL provided training to Partnerships staff to be able to accurately determine family eligibility for subsidy.

DEL conducted focus groups with providers to find out what impact the layered funding pilot and policy changes had, and providers reported that parents seemed less stressed about losing their child care arrangement and children exhibited fewer challenging behaviors because their care was more stable and predictable. What’s more, providers were able to raise salaries, in some cases to as much as \$18 an hour (from \$15), for Partnerships teachers, thereby increasing morale and reducing teacher turnover in the centers.

Partnerships grantees had 18 months to ensure all partners met HSPPS, including that all lead teachers had at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) degree, met group size and ratio requirements, and promoted continuity of participation in the program from birth to age 3. To support providers, DEL drew on multiple components of the early childhood system. For example, state licensing rules differed from these standards in several ways, so the state sought to provide greater flexibility to ensure Washington’s Partnerships grantees were successful. DEL waived licensing rules that would require children to move into the next age grouping once they reached 29 months old to align with the HSPPS, which promote serving children in EHS until they reach 36 months. In addition, DEL made participation in the

state Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) a condition of subsidy payments to grantees, thereby connecting child care programs in Partnerships to coaching supports to raise quality, as well as extending the focus on quality to other classrooms in the center, not just those paid for by Partnerships dollars.

DCYF officials said having Partnerships grantees in the state “raised awareness of best practices, such as using evidence-based infant and toddler curriculum and assessments, in centers that participated and the system as a whole.” Administrators continue to meet regularly with Partnerships grantees, which has promoted better relationships between DCYF and Washington’s Partnerships grantees. In addition, federal leadership on the Partnerships and the CCDBG reauthorization promoted a more family- and provider-friendly approach in the state subsidy system and added weight to DEL’s proposals to state legislators to make changes to the subsidy system to promote continuity, such as moving to 12 month eligibility periods. The Partnerships showed that child care partners had the capacity to meet high program standards. This became important later when the Legislature mandated that the state preschool program, which is modeled on Head Start, increase its reach by the 2022-23 school year, at which any eligible child is entitled to enroll in the program. Based on the Partnerships experience, DCYF plans to include child care centers and family child care homes as high-quality preschool providers. The Early Start Act mandated more aligned standards, so that state licensing, QRIS, and ECEAP standards build on each other to support child care programs and teachers’ pathways to increasing quality and qualifications.

What Were Washington's Strategies?

Leveraged multiple funding sources and state systems to support program success and quality.

- Awarded the highest subsidy provider payment rate possible for children consistently from birth to three who were in the Partnerships and allowed partners to layer the EHS grant dollars.
- Dedicated time of staff within the state early learning agency to train grantees on how to meet state eligibility requirements for child care assistance.
- Extended existing quality supports available to QRIS participants to child care partners.

Supported continuous access to infant and toddler child care for working families earning low incomes.

- Lengthened the period of eligibility to 12 months or more for children in Partnerships to support continuity of care, regardless of changes in parental work status.
- Offered a three-month grace period of extended subsidy after 12 months if family income rose beyond state eligibility levels.
- Paid child care providers based on child enrollment rather than daily attendance.

Raised the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.

- Required child care partners receiving child care subsidy to pay for Partnerships children to also participate in the state QRIS and attain at least a Level Three rating.
- Provided QRIS coaches to support Partnerships sites to model best practices and support attainment of QRIS quality standards.

Built a higher education pathway for the infant and toddler workforce.

- Developed "stackable credentials" by working in partnership with community colleges for teachers to attain a Short Certificate in early childhood education with a specialization in infant and toddler care. This Short Certificate meets the CDA requirement and is part of a pathway leading to an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Teachers could access scholarships to pay tuition via the QRIS to augment what Partnerships grantees could make available.

Piloted reforms that could be taken statewide to improve care for many more babies and toddlers.

- Tested a "layered funding" pilot so child care partners could use the new federal grants to raise quality and salaries for teachers and continue to receive a full child care subsidy. After positive evaluation results the state expanded this strategy.

USEFUL LINKS AND CITATIONS

Washington State Administrative Code regarding the Partnerships: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=110-15>

Washington State Early Start Act: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/about/government-community/legislative-federal-relations/early-start-act>

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The Ounce of Prevention Fund (the Ounce) gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest-quality care and education from birth to age five. The Ounce envisions a world in which high-quality early learning opportunities beginning at birth are an integral part of our nation's education system. With commitment to quality as our guiding principle, the Ounce works at the intersection of practice, policy and research and forges public-private partnerships. Over the last 30 years, the Ounce has developed an effective approach to advancing knowledge, testing ideas in real-world settings, advocating for policy change, engaging champions and training practitioners and leaders.