

Start Early Washington recognizes the Legislature faces an extraordinarily challenging year ahead given the state's significant budget deficit.

This budget crisis coincides with a time when too many families with young children are experiencing extreme hardship, ranging from the devastating impacts associated with federal cuts to programs like Medicaid and SNAP; the still unknown effects of December storms; and the challenge of navigating a complex service delivery system. **In these difficult times, it is more important than ever that access and funding for vital programs like voluntary home visiting be preserved.**

Unfortunately, Governor Ferguson's proposed supplemental reduces funding in the Home Visiting Services Account by \$2.3 million State General Fund.

This proposed reduction comes on top of an annual \$1.5 million State General Fund cut made by the Legislature last year due to a fund balance in the Home Visiting Services Account. It is important to recognize this fund balance does not reflect the reality on the ground for families or for home visiting programs. **In short, Families Need and Want Home Visiting - and Home Visiting Programs Stand Ready to Deliver.**

According to information provided by DCYF, most home visiting programs are carrying waitlists.

- For SFY 26 Quarter 1 2026 (July 1 to September 30, 2025), of the 43 Home Visiting providers, 23 (52%) reported having active waiting lists; the remaining 20 contracts did not.
- Because home visiting is a multi-year commitment, not all programs maintain a wait list, so these numbers are just a point-in-time count, and do not necessarily reflect true demand.
- Additionally, because waiting lists are fluid and shift frequently throughout the year, home visiting providers who currently have no waiting list may have one in previous or following quarters.
- Of the 23 home visiting providers who responded positively to having a waiting list, they reported the following numbers:
 - a) Total statewide currently on waiting lists: 502
 - b) Average number on waiting lists: 22
 - c) One program had 98 families on their waitlist
 - d) Programs in Central WA report the highest # of families on the Waitlist followed by programs serving the Olympic Peninsula and South Sound.

With families statewide experiencing extreme hardship and home visiting programs delivering proven results from reduced incidents of child abuse and neglect to improved child and maternal health outcomes, we call upon the Legislature to preserve the state's current \$12.85 million annual State General Fund home visiting investment.

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