Washington State Department of
Early Learning

Child Care Licensing in Washington:
A report to the Washington State Legislature

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Kids' Potential, Our Purpose

Introduction

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 7,500 child care centers and family home child care providers around Washington, who care for up to 180,000 children from 1 month to 12 years old. DEL sets standards for licensed child care providers to ensure safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environments for children in licensed care.

DEL licensors work to help licensed child care providers offer the best programs possible. The responsibilities of DEL's 120 licensing staff include:

- Offering orientation workshops around the state for those interested in getting a child care license
- Providing guidance throughout the application process and ensuring application packets are complete
- Processing background checks to ensure staff in licensed facility meet the requirements needed to care for children
- Inspecting and monitoring licensed facilities to ensure they meet safety and health standards (once every 12 months for centers and once every 18 months for family homes)
- Offering technical assistance to providers when information and resources are needed to support quality care settings
- Responding to complaints about licensed child care
- Taking corrective action as necessary
- Representing the state by taking part in local early learning initiatives, such as community coalitions

Working with providers, licensors identify strengths in the child care setting, and offer information and resources when improvements are needed. DEL's licensing work is federally funded by the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) block grant through the U.S. Health and Human Services Department Administration for Children and Families.

The 2010 State Supplemental Operating Budget (Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6444) directed DEL to develop a plan by Jan. 15, 2011, for how the agency can improve our child care licensing practices. The budget language states:

"The legislature notes that the department of early learning is developing a plan for improving child care licensing and is consulting, as practicable, with parents, licensed child care providers, and stakeholders from the child care community. The plan shall outline the processes and specify the resources necessary for improvements such as continuing licenses, child care licensing technology, and weighted child care regulations, including development of risk-based decision making models and inclusive, evidence-based rule making. The department shall submit to the appropriate committees of the legislature a plan by January 15, 2011."

While our child care licensing and monitoring work can be improved, we believe that we have a strong foundation on which to build:

- Data from the 2008 Market Rate Survey (which DEL conducts every two years as the state's lead agency for the federal CCDF) show that the majority of licensed child care providers are satisfied with their licensors, and feel comfortable working with their licensors to ensure they offer safe, healthy care.[1]

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[1] DEL *2008 Child Care Survey*

- The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies ranks Washington's child care licensing rules and oversight as among the top 10 in the nation, for both centers and family home child care (third in the nation for family homes[2] and ninth for centers[3]).
- DEL met or exceeded two of our Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) measures for child care licensing in fourth quarter of 2010 (on-time monitoring visits, and timely responses to complaints in licensed child care). We are working with our partners at the Department of Social and Health Services on the third GMAP measure, which is for licensing complaints that include an allegation of abuse or neglect that must be investigated.

Even so, DEL recognizes the benefits of continuously improving the quality of our child care licensing and monitoring work. Such improvements will result in increased efficiency for the agency, enhanced relationships among licensors and licensees, and ultimately, improved child care quality for children in Washington.

In developing this plan for improving child care licensing in Washington, DEL consulted with parents, child care providers, DEL licensing staff, and early learning advocates. We reached out to all licensed providers and all DEL staff through an online "licensing reboot" website and series of surveys (www.del.wa.gov/reboot). We convened a work group that met five times via phone and in person throughout 2010 and included representation from the Legislature, the Service Employees International Union 925, providers and parents.

In addition to gathering this input from within our state, DEL also relied upon widely accepted licensing practices across the nation, and additional documents to inform this plan, including:

- October 2007 –Office of Financial Management: Loss Prevention Review Team Report[4]
- National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) 2005 Child Care Licensing Study Final Report[5]
- NARA 2007 Child Care Licensing Study Final Report[6]
- NARA 2007 Workload Study and Analysis Final Report[7]
- NARA 2008 Child Care Licensing Study Final Report[8]

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[2] National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (2010) *Leaving Children to Chance: NACCRRA's Ranking of State Standards and Oversight of Small Family Child Care Homes. http://www.naccrra.org/policy/state_licensing/#we_can*

[3] National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (2009) *We Can Do Better, NACCRRA's Ranking of State Child Care Standards and Oversight. http://www.naccrra.org/policy/state_licensing/#we_can*

[4] Washington State Office of Financial Management (2007) *Loss Prevention Review Team: Report to the Director of the Office of Financial Management; Department of Social and Health Services; Economic Services Administration; Division of Child Care and Early Learning; Incident of January 2004.* http://www.ofm.wa.gov/rmd/lprt/reports.asp

[5] National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (2006). *The 2005 Child Care Licensing Study Final Report.* Conyers, GA: NARA. http://nara.affiniscape.com/associations/4734/files/2005%20Licensing%20Study%20Final%20Report_Web.pdf

[6] National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (2009). *The 2007 Child Care Licensing Study Final Report.* Conyers, GA: NARA. http://www.naralicensing.org/associations/4734/files/2007%20Licensing%20Study_full_report.pdf

[7] National Association for Regulatory Administration (2007). *The Workload Study and Analysis Report.* Conyers, GA: NARA. http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/research/docs/NARA_Report_2007.pdf

[8] National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (2008), *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Survey*, Conyers, GA: NARA. http://www.naralicensing.org/associations/4734/files/1005_2008_Child%20Care%20Licensing%20Study_Full_Report.pdf

The recommendations for improving child care licensing in Washington are grounded in these principles:[9]

- Making fair, balanced, and consistent data-driven and evidence-based decisions
- Using innovation to support a better way to do the work
- Increasing the transparency and availability of information for parents and the citizens of Washington
- Strengthening partnerships with providers and others, recognizing we can't do it alone
- Using health and safety as the basis for child care licensing, and building upon that to evolve licensed child care settings into nurturing places with quality *early learning* environments

The plan builds upon the strengths in the current system, while focusing on opportunities for improvements in the future. DEL has already started some of these improvements and is looking forward to realizing the other improvements in this plan.

Why is Child Care Licensing Important?

According to DEL's 2008 Parent Needs Assessment, about half of all children in Washington under age 6 are in child care outside their homes for at least part of their week. (Population estimates from 2005 show about 487,484 children birth through 5 living in Washington.) Thirty percent of children are in center-based care (including preschools) and 5 percent of children are in family home child care.

With so many children in child care settings around our state, we must work to ensure that child care settings in Washington support healthy child development. That means settings that are safe, offer nurturing and stable relationships, and provide linguistically, physically and cognitively rich environments.

According to Dr. Richard Fiene, Associate Professor of Human Development & Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University Harrisburg and a leading expert on measuring quality in licensed child care, "Quality child care is achieved by both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches…licensing provides the threshold for quality below which no program should be permitted to operate."**[10]**

The child care that is available today—both in Washington and around the nation—is characterized by marked variation in quality. Many licensed child care settings offer safe, healthy, high-quality care that promotes healthy child development. Unfortunately, some settings offer un-stimulating, and sometimes even unsafe settings[11]. The latest brain research has given us a much clearer picture of how children learn and grow in their early years. During the early years of life, the brain is forming connections that are the architecture for a lifetime of skills and potential.

High-quality child care helps ensure healthy physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development. A strong child care licensing system establishes the very critical foundation of quality child care programs.

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[9] DEL and SRI International, *2008 Parent Needs Assessment*

[10] Fiene, Richard, Ph.D. *Licensing Measurement*. The Pennsylvania State University, 2005.

[11] National Research Council. (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.* J. P. Shonkoff and D. A. Phillips, eds. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Improving child care licensing in Washington: A 10-year plan for our state

Following is DEL's plan for improving child care licensing in our state. Because of the necessary resources to implement some of these strategies, it is estimated that this plan would take 10 years to implement fully.

I. *Allow non-expiring licenses*

Currently, all licensed child care providers must reapply for licensure every three years (RCW 43.215.260). RCW 43.25.280 allows for the issuance of an initial license until such time that the licensee can demonstrate and meet all requirements under the applicable Washington Administrative Code (WAC). The initial license is issued for six months; a total of four initial licenses can be issued during a two-year period.

Relicensing is a time-consuming process that involves much paperwork for both licensor and provider, and culminates in a relicensing visit that can last several hours.

In a non-expiring licensing model, all licensed child care providers would receive a non-expiring license once the provider meets all the Washington licensing standards and achieves full licensure. This would reduce the administrative paperwork burden on both the child care provider and DEL. Any time saved by DEL staff would then be used for maintaining our GMAP measures and offering more extensive technical assistance and support to licensed providers, as well as time spent observing interactions and the quality of the program.

It is important to note that this move would not decrease the current base level of monitoring (18-month monitoring cycle for homes and 12-month monitoring cycle for centers). Moving to non-expiring licenses would establish the foundation for moving forward with additional projects, including enhanced differential monitoring and risk/strength based decision making models, as data systems and analysis progress.

Based upon 2008 data[12], 12 states offer non-expiring licenses to some or all child care facility-types licensed in those states.

State	Child Care Center	Small Family Child Care Homes	Large/Group Family Child Care Homes
Arkansas	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	NC
California	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring
Colorado	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring

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[12] National Association for Regulatory Administration and National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (2008), *The 2008 Child Care Licensing Survey*, Conyers, GA: NARA. http://www.naralicensing.org/associations/4734/files/1005_2008_Child%20Care%20Licensing%20Study_Full_Report.pdf

State	Child Care Center	Small Family Child Care Homes	Large/Group Family Child Care Homes
Georgia	Non-Expiring	Annual Renewal	Non-Expiring
Kansas	Non-Expiring	Annual Renewal	Non-Expiring
Maryland*	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	NC
North Carolina	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	NC
Nebraska	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring
State	**Child Care Center**	**Small Family Child Care Homes**	**Large/Group Family Child Care Homes**
Oklahoma	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring
South Dakota	Non-Expiring	NL	Non-Expiring
Texas	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring
Wisconsin	Non-Expiring	Non-Expiring	NC
Total	12 states	9 states	8 states
Washington	**3-year renewal**	**3-year renewal**	**3-year renewal**

Notes:
NC – Not Counted
NL – Not Licensed

Maryland: At time of first licensure, a home or center is licensed for 2 years. After that initial 2-year period, the facility is eligible to receive a non-expiring license.
Wisconsin: Licenses are continued every 2 years, but are considered non-expiring.

Resources necessary to implement non-expiring licenses

A move to non-expiring licenses could be accomplished with minimal fiscal impact to DEL. DEL would seek a change to RCW to include language that makes a full license non-expiring, so long as a provider meets the following requirements on an annual basis as established from the date of initial licensure:

1) Pay the annual licensing fee
2) Submit a declaration to DEL indicating the intent to continue to operate a child care, and if not in operation, similarly inform DEL that the child care is no longer in operation
3) Submit a declaration of compliance with all licensing rules
4) Submit background check applications at a frequency established by DEL

Failure to meet these requirements would cause the license to expire, and the provider would be required to submit a new application.

II.   *Invest in child care licensing technology*

To meet our child care licensing data needs, DEL relies upon FamLink, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Child Welfare Information System (child protective services, foster care, and adoption, etc). DEL pays DSHS an average of $25,000 per month for access to FamLink. Our licensing staff use FamLink to store notes from monitoring visits, licensing complaint inspection reports and other data.

However, because FamLink was not designed to accommodate the needs of an early learning system, DEL continues to use paper files for much of our child care licensing work. This means our agency lacks the ability to readily pull child care licensing data for internal *or* external use.

DEL has completed two significant studies regarding early learning information system needs. The first was the ELIS Feasibility Study completed in June of 2007. The second study was completed through the support of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant in the summer of 2008. DEL has requested state funding for an early learning information system, but has not to date received funding. We have continued to investigate alternative technology solutions to:

- Support a more mobile and efficient licensing staff
- Yield data that inform agency decision-making
- Yield data that inform parents, families, and other external stakeholders about licensed child care

DEL researched current child care information systems used around the nation, and discovered that most of the system used in Indiana was developed using federal CCDF funding, and therefore was available to Washington royalty-free through an agreement with Indiana. DEL obtained a copy of the royalty-free data architecture in 2009.

The Indiana system has modules developed specifically for: child care licensing; family, friend, neighbor care; electronic licensing forms; quality rating systems; and child care subsidy intake, eligibility, and payment systems. The system is designed to maintain and track data on all licensed and certified child care providers, as well as manage inspections and complaints according to individual program rules and statutes. Through electronic licensing forms, licensors in Indiana are able to electronically submit data from the field, including pictures, digital signatures, and notes collected in the field. The automated data process provides immediate feedback to the provider, eliminates handwritten inspection reports, and allows the state to analyze licensing inspection data.

DEL reprioritized our federal CCDF funds to pilot electronic licensing forms (ELF) at the end of 2009. We are in the process of fully implementing ELF, which we anticipate will be in full use by all licensing staff in spring 2011. DEL will be making use of a "light" version of the Indiana-developed database in order to capture and use the data. (a light version of the database is the basic architecture without the expanded functionality). With full implementation of their database and electronic licensing forms, Indiana reported an estimated 26 percent increase in licensing efficiency.

Resources necessary to implement electronic licensing forms

DEL has identified federal dollars to implement electronic licensing forms; however, there will be ongoing maintenance costs. DEL will seek funding to customize the Indiana modules for use in Washington. Upon identification of funding, DEL would continue to develop a full child care licensing database. Funding levels would be determined based upon the development sequence and implementation of each module. The next logical step would be to expand the child care licensing database from a "light" to a full version – coordinating with existing data management, as well as with planning for the grant project in progress regarding the ECEAP data system. Approximate costs for the next expansion are $750,000. Full implementation, including maintenance, is estimated to be $750,000 - $1,000,000.

III. *Move to weighted regulations (including risk-based decision making models)*

Weighted licensing regulations assign different rules a weighted "value" associated with a level of potential risk. These weights are used to determine the level of risk present in a licensed child care setting. While every child care licensing regulation is designed to provide some level of protection to children, not all regulations—if violated—present the same level of risk to children.

Fiene's *The Thirteen Indicators of Quality Child Care*, last updated in 2002, explains the development of weighted regulations and the use of monitoring indicators. This work has been instrumental in the development of state child care regulations around the nation, as has been the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care publication of *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care* and the companion, *Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children.* While many states—including Washington—have used a research-based approach to writing licensing rules, only a few have moved to using weighted regulations.

A weighted regulations system would:

- Enable a licensing monitoring system that is based, in part, on a history of regulation violations and the severity level (weight) associated with each violation.
- Establish a risk matrix. Weighted regulations assign a risk (or weight) to each individual licensing regulation. This weight is based on "best-available" research, including the use of Fiene and *Caring for Our Children*.
- Assist in licensing enforcement actions. A weighted regulation system provides valuable information to licensing staff to use when determining licensing actions. By examining the relative weight of licensing violations, coupled with the history of past violations and their consequences, DEL can improve policy and procedure to assist licensing staff in making consistent licensing enforcement action decisions.
- Create consistency in licensing decisions. As practice evolves under weighted regulations, the weights associated with a given violation will help inform licensors as to appropriate levels of licensing action.
- Help communicate to parents, providers, and other stakeholders those regulations that are critical to health and safety: By weighting child care regulations, parents and others can become aware of those regulations that are seen as crucial to health and safety; providers are able to make modifications and become increasingly educated and aware of those elements in the child care setting that directly lead to health and safety.

Creating weighted regulations requires evaluating each regulation against a specific set of standards, or research. The challenge is determining the weight of each regulation. There is not an established child care risk matrix that directly correlates to licensing regulation. As noted above, Fiene and his colleagues have established some guidelines from which to start, in *Thirteen Indicators of Quality Child Care*. However, Fiene's work does not prescribe weights to these 13 indicators; they are all treated equally in terms of risk. Therefore, the biggest challenge for DEL in creating weighted regulations would be the process of assigning value to each of the various child care regulations—what is each regulation's relative risk to health and safety?

A research-based approach to weighting regulations in Washington would require the following steps:

- Gather data about complaints and compliance for a period of one year.
- Conduct detailed statistical package analysis, with the data guiding the weight assigned to each rule. (A less desirable alternative would be to assign arbitrary risk levels for each child care regulation.)
- Update all three sets of child care rules (family home, school-age and center), and then develop a matrix with all three rules and begin assigning a weight using a five-point scale. Ideally, the weighting of a regulation would be based [in part] upon the licensing compliance data and analysis of that data around new regulations. In the absence of such research and developed data analysis, initially the weight of a given regulation could be based on the work of Fiene, *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards for Out-of-Home Child Care,* and *Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children.*
- Provide time for focus groups with parents, providers and other stakeholders, followed by more formal public comment opportunities.

Risk/Strength Based Assessment and Decision Making Models: An approach to regulatory decision making in which decisions are made based on the results of strengths and risk analysis integrated into the child care checklists and other DEL tools.

These types of tools are supported by weighted licensing standards and support more consistent and transparent decision making. Monitoring checklists would allow for differential response using evidence-based weighted regulations. Using a differential checklist based on the risk modeling would allow a licensor to monitor a child care facility more consistently while still addressing major areas of risk. An example: if a child care facility fails to meet several major risks areas on an abbreviated monitoring checklist, a comprehensive checklist would then be required to be completed.

Future DEL developed checklists would include self-assessment tools that will ask licensed providers to identify their early learning strengths and skills. In addition to those checklists DEL uses for monitoring, these new checklists and self assessment tools will help licensed providers develop ideas for building on their strengths and skills.

IV. *Explore differential (enhanced) monitoring*

Differential monitoring is an evidence-based method of assigning a risk/strength factor to the individual licensee, based on compliance, weighted licensing standards, and licensing history. This determines the monitoring level of a facility needed in a given time period. There will always be a minimal level of monitoring, and implementation of differential monitoring system would depend upon DEL successfully implementing a data system, a strengths and risk model, and weighted licensing standards to inform decision making regarding level of monitoring.

Recent discussions with other states at a U.S. Administration for Children and Families conference suggested that the states who had experience with or had researched differential monitoring (where there is reduced monitoring) were moving away from that practice in favor of a minimum threshold for monitoring visits. Discussions suggested that DEL should look to enhanced differential monitoring, where a minimum threshold of monitoring occurs – but enhanced monitoring could be targeted on low-performing sites. An empirical study in Vermont[13] demonstrated that those sites receiving fewer monitoring visits resulted in reduced levels of compliance with licensing standards…and those who received more visits had higher levels of compliance. Differential monitoring can flow from a well-designed set of weighted regulations and are a natural progression for child care licensing in Washington after weighted regulations are developed and implemented.

Resources necessary to implement weighted regulations, risk/strength assessment and decision making model

Moving to weighted regulations would require a data system that allowed DEL to collect and analyze data around compliance rates with licensing rules. Each regulation violation would need to be entered into a database for future data analysis. Over time, DEL would analyze the frequency of violations, the frequency and severity of complaint intakes and their resolutions, and the overall response by DEL licensors. This information would help us evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the weighted regulation. Over time, the weight assigned to a particular regulation could be modified to reflect actual experience from the field.

The weighted regulations and risk/strength assessment and decision making models both require a comprehensive data system and a minimum amount of data from which to begin to analyze statistical relationships. Information gathered from consultation during regional roundtable and national conferences suggests that one year of data is the bare minimum from which to begin the analysis of statistical relationships.

DEL currently has a small section of policy staff who are responsible for licensing policy and practice, subsidy policies, agency legislation requests and rule making, contract and collective bargaining management, and response to legislative inquiries. DEL lacks staff to perform complex statistical modeling, once a sufficient amount of data around compliance and complaints can be developed. Beyond the above identified resources necessary to support child care licensing technology, DEL would require one to two staff members capable of developing and maintaining complex statistical modeling for child

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[13] Gormley, Jr., W.T. (1995) *Everybody's Children – Child Care As a Public Problem.* Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution

care licensing. (Approximately $131,000 per FTE per year and a minimum of one year to develop the weighted model, once a resource has been established for the data system.)

V.   *Ensure inclusive, evidence-based rule making processes*

Washington has three sets of rules for licensed child care, covering three unique settings: family homes, centers, and school-age programs. While there are differences, there are areas of overlap between the three sets of rules. DEL is in the process of finalizing updated family home child care rules developed through a formal Negotiated Rule Making process involving DEL and the SEIU. The school-age program rules have been examined by an independent group of providers and stakeholders, with recommendations delivered to DEL at the end of July 2010, with plans to begin rule development mid-2011.

After these two sets of rules are revised, DEL will then begin review of child care center rules, most likely beginning with an invitation to provide input in early 2011, and drafts of revised rules following in 2012.)

Scheduled full revisions of child care regulations should go through an inclusive and evidence-based rule making process, using lessons learned from past and current review processes. The family child care rules have been undergoing a full revision making use of a negotiated rule making process. The school-age rules have undergone a similar process. The future rule making for DEL will be child-centered, fair to providers, evidence-based, and written in clear plain talk.

Resources necessary for improvements

While DEL staff maintain child care licensing standards as part of their regularly assigned duties, the process of engaging in inclusive and evidence-based rule making can be both time consuming and has increased costs related primarily to travel, meeting spaces, and other activities related to gathering appropriate levels of feedback and input from parents, providers, and the community. Appropriate levels of resources are key to maintaining an increased level of community feedback and involvement in not only child care licensing, but in early learning in general. Such outreach and communication activities cost approximately $200,000 or more annually for DEL operations.

Additional DEL Initiatives

Background Checks

Current law, RCW 43.215.005 requires background checks of applicants for employment in any child care facility licensed or regulated by DEL.

Right now, a child care staff member must undergo a background check every time he or she moves to a new program. While this provides a greater degree of scrutiny through additional background checks, DEL would like to explore creating a transferable background check certificate, which staff could use when moving among child care programs or working as a substitute. The benefit of this type of system would include reduced cost to the child care providers and greater licensor efficiencies by reducing the number of times an individual must be checked when moving from one child care job to another. DEL anticipates that moving to an updated method of background checks would require additional resources

for information technology changes and support, as well as staffing to maintain a registry of cleared individuals.

DEL is in the final phases of working with the Washington State Patrol, the Department of Social & Health Services, and a state contractor (L-1 Enrollment Services) to implement the use of electronic fingerprinting. DEL has been informed that the system will be ready for implementation in mid-January 2011 and anticipates that the system will be in active use beginning February 1, 2011.

Professional development for licensors and providers

DEL Licensing Professionals

DEL has continued to build upon and strengthen the current training curriculum for licensing professionals that address their early childhood and education and regulatory role. As licensors promote safe, healthy environments, this also promotes healthy child development and where children can learn, have fun, and prepare for kindergarten. An online, module-based system of learning has been developed specific to Washington as one approach to training and on-going professional development of child care licensors. DEL licensors have also been enrolled in and are completing the National Association for Regulatory Administration curriculum that will ultimately lead to a professional core knowledge credential later in 2011.

Pre-Service Training for Licensed Child Care Providers

DEL is exploring developing a comprehensive pre-service curriculum to better prepare licensed child care and early learning professionals to operate and provide a safe, healthy environments that promotes healthy child development and learning opportunities. Development and delivery of pre-service training would depend on adequate funding, or a fee for service model, and could rely upon online learning and/or the network of community colleges for delivery and academic consistency. Involvement of the higher education system in pre-service training may also work to improve education opportunities for developing early learning professionals – the resulting outcome being positive for children. This would include a more supportive, comprehensive, and consistent delivery method for child care licensing orientations, which will include online modules with quizzes, development of child care guidebooks, and other resources. Current work has begun in preparing a One Science module that emphasizes the current brain development of early childhood and how caregivers can support positive development.

Coordination with the Professional Development Consortium (PDC)
DEL will continue to coordinate and integrate the child care licensing standards or WACs with the work and recommendations of the Professional Development Consortium to the Washington State Legislature. The Professional Development Consortium has completed its work and has submitted a report to the 2011 Legislature.

Coordination with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Work

Based upon information received from the federal Office of Child Care, there will be an increased emphasis on quality and the relationship to child care licensing in the future CCDF plan. This emphasis will include stronger policies and accountability, annual goal setting and reporting, and stronger fiscal integrity, along with a focus on quality activities that serve to improve licensed and certified child care. The strength of any QRIS model in Washington will depend upon the level of communication and

coordination between the DEL licensor, the QRIS coaches/mentors, and the child care providers. Child care licensing standards are the foundation of quality and provide a strong start for improvement.