

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



Gov. Inslee proposes major investments to strengthen state early learning system

Brain science tells us that strong bonds and learning-focused experiences early in life are essential for a child's healthy development. Unfortunately, across our state, many young children face challenges that have long-term implications for their well-being. In fact, fewer than half our children are kindergarten-ready by age 5.

Gov. Inslee's 2019–21 operating and capital budgets invest in comprehensive early learning services that will ensure children (regardless of race, family income and/or disability) receive the support necessary to enter kindergarten prepared and well-positioned for success in school and life.

[For more information, see governor's policy brief.](#)



Gov. Inslee's birth-to-5 early learning system

Investing in a comprehensive early learning initiative is a key focus in Inslee's 2019–21 budgets. Along with other early learning investments, the governor's capital and operating budgets include a combined \$173 million to:

- Provide **universal home visiting and universal newborn assessments** to all families in Washington. In these programs, specialized nurses conduct in-home assessments on all families who request the service with newborns between 3 and 12 weeks of age. The nurse will provide up to six home visits and determine if additional resources and supports are needed. An additional 2,951 families will receive intensive home visiting services that assist families for one to three years. This more than doubles the number of families receiving state-funded intensive home visiting services today.
- Create a **statewide early learning referral system** linking families to services in their community. The system will give home visiting nurses, parents, caregivers, medical professionals and early learning educators ready access to a centralized resource for all early learning services in their area.
- Make progress toward **Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program entitlement** by adding 2,385 slots (an 18 percent increase), raising provider payment rates and funding quality improvements such as coaching, technical assistance and scholarships for teachers. The majority of new slots will be full-day; a 6 percent rate increase for ECEAP contractors is included.
- Set up a new **affordable preschool program** with wraparound family support services for 1,907 children. Families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level will have access to high-quality, state-funded preschool. Aligning the income limit with the state's subsidized child care program requirements maximizes the opportunity to serve children while their parents work full time, extended hours or nontraditional work hours.
- Build **142 classrooms for ECEAP** and preschool. Capital grants will be made available through the competitive Early Learning Facilities program for eligible contractors to construct new ECEAP and preschool classrooms.
- Set up a three-year **Early ECEAP** pilot project modeled after the federal Early Head Start program for 154 children ages birth to 3 in families with income below 110 percent of the federal poverty level. The model blends home visiting services and age-appropriate curriculum in a classroom setting.
- Construct a state-of-the-art **capitol campus child care center** with the capacity to enroll 148 children. Priority will be given to state employees and low-income families. The child care center will serve as a business model for employee-supported child care and a training site for state preschool licensing staff.

This new and enriched early learning continuum ensures that families receive foundational supports to successfully prepare children for kindergarten and closes the opportunity gap for vulnerable and low-income children. These investments also prevent the need for expensive interventions later in life by improving social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, educational, economic and health outcomes in adulthood.