

You Have a Choice!

A Guide to Finding Quality
Early Care and Learning
Settings in Washington State



Quality Matters!



Washington State Department of
Early Learning

Why should I choose licensed child care for my child?

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 7,000 child care providers in Washington. Licensed child care facilities follow state licensing rules to make sure children are in safe and healthy environments.

Licensed providers:

- ◆ Get health and safety checks to ensure their facilities are safe for children.
- ◆ Have child development training.
- ◆ Have first aid and CPR training.
- ◆ Undergo criminal background checks for anyone who has contact with children.

Child Care Check is another resource to help families select child care and early learning programs. Visit www.del.wa.gov/check to view detailed information about a program's licensing history, basic staffing information, program philosophy, and quality level in Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system.



Choosing child care

What is important to you and your family when choosing an early learning program: Cost? Hours? Quality of care? It may help to take this with you when you visit sites. Pick the questions that are most important to you, and ask about them during your visit. Don't forget to ask if they are participating in Early Achievers!

Is the environment safe and healthy?

- Are there enough staff members to give attention to all the children?
- Are toys and equipment safe and age-appropriate?
- Are staff trained in CPR and first aid?
- Do children and staff wash hands often?
- Are there regular fire drills?
- Does the outdoor play area seem safe?
- Are there locks on the door to keep strangers out and children in?
- Are there rules for when a child becomes ill?
- How often are diapers changed?
- Is there an emergency plan for contacting families?

What will my child experience during the day?

- Are there planned activities that help my child learn?
- Will my child have time every day to run, catch, climb and throw?
- Do children have time to play on their own and can they get to toys and activities?
- Is TV and computer time limited?
- Is rest time based on the needs of each child?
- Are there plenty of books for children?
- Are books available to children in their own languages and for different ages?
- Are families' cultures respected in activities and celebrations?
- What are the rules about food brought from home?

What policies will impact my child's interactions with others?

- Do staff set limits that are reasonable, clear, consistent and age-appropriate?
- Do staff use calm voices and redirect children to other activities if there's a problem?
- What happens when children hit, bite or bully?

How does the program engage families?

- Am I encouraged to spend time as a guest for lunch or as a volunteer?
- How will I hear about my child's day?
- Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?

Will my child thrive here?

- Are different cultures, ethnicities and abilities valued?
- Do staff smile at, talk and play with, and listen to children?
- Do staff encourage creativity and age-appropriate independence?
- Do staff hold and cuddle infants and toddlers often, including while feeding?
- Will the same people take care of my child regularly?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Is this setting bright, pleasant and happy?
- Will my child have fun here?



Kids' Potential, Our Purpose!

What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers is a framework for improving observable quality in child care and early learning settings to help:

- ◆ **Parents** find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing unbiased information about facility quality.
- ◆ **Children** gain high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and beyond.
- ◆ **Early Learning Professionals** have access to the resources and supports they need to provide quality care that supports each child's learning and development.

By participating in Early Achievers, child care providers demonstrate a commitment to improving quality of care to children so you can feel confident about your child care choice.

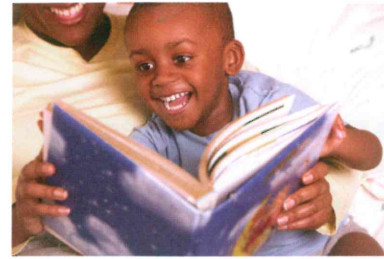
Participation is free for providers so there is no additional cost to families.



Early Achievers provides evidence-based information about the quality of early learning programs through an easy-to-understand rating system.

- ◆ Providers working on or rated **Level 2** are “participating in quality improvement” through training and activities.
- ◆ Providers rated **Level 3-5** have achieved a “quality level of excellence” through an on-site evaluation.

View providers' Early Achievers participation status at www.del.wa.gov/check.



To find licensed child care in your community, contact Child Care Aware of Washington:

1-800-446-1114

www.childcareaware.org

Check the status of your licensed provider on Child Care Check:

www.del.wa.gov/check

Learn more about Early Achievers

www.del.wa.gov/early-achievers

Learn more about choosing child care and assistance with child care costs:

www.del.wa.gov/parents-family/licensed-child-care



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