



# Department of Early Learning Review

## Proposed Final Report

Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee

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## JLARC Mandate from 2006 Legislation Creating the Department (2SHB 2964)



Several topics grouped into three parts:

### **Part One**

DEL's Performance in Five Specific Areas

### **Part Two**

Program Improvement and Monitoring

- Recommendations to Improve DEL's Controls  
and Monitoring

### **Part Three**

Affordability and Availability of Subsidized  
Child Care

## DEL is Responsible for Regulating Two Settings Where Children Receive Care



Background

### Licensed Child Care

- DEL licenses and monitors over 7,600 child care facilities

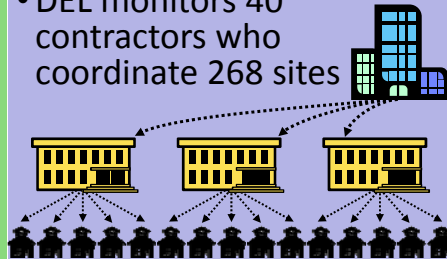


- Capacity to care for more than 180,000 children (0-13 years old)

### ECEAP

(Early Childhood Education Assistance Program)  
State-Funded Preschool

- DEL monitors 40 contractors who coordinate 268 sites



- Provided to more than 8,000 eligible children (3-4 years old)

## Legislation Directed DEL to Undertake New Early Learning Activities



Background

- Work with partners to improve child care and early learning.
- Work with other agencies on the state's child care subsidy program for low-income families.



## Part One

# DEL's Performance in Five Specific Areas

## Performance in Five Specific Areas



1. DEL is providing information to parents.
2. DEL is providing opportunities for parent involvement.
3. DEL participates in private-public partnership.
4. DEL has created the necessary administrative structure to support the transferred programs –  
However, there has not been substantial progress integrating these programs.
5. Administrative expenditures increased from \$1.8 M (1.2% of total expenditures) in FY 06 to \$8.5 M (4.5%) in FY 09.



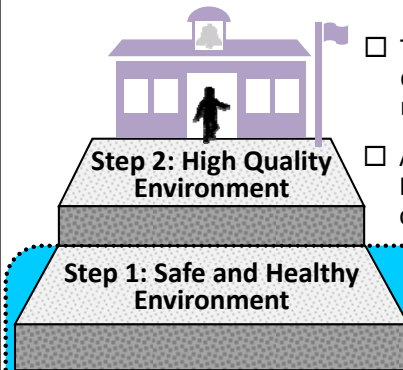
## Part Two

# Program Improvement and Monitoring

## JLARC Review of Improvement Focused on Health and Safety Standards



**Goal: Children Ready for School**



- There is no adopted statewide assessment to determine the extent to which children are ready for school.
- An effort is underway to develop a Quality Rating and Improvement System to assess quality, but this is still a work in progress.
- The state has a set of minimum health and safety standards for licensed child care facilities, and ECEAP standards include standards for health and safety.
- Both sets of standards were in place prior to the creation of DEL.

## DEL Monitors Health and Safety Standards Differently



### Licensed Child Care

DEL uses a paper checklist to assess all facilities.

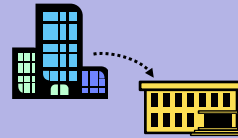


- Monitoring data was available.

### ECEAP

(Early Childhood Education Assistance Program)  
State-Funded Preschool

DEL assesses contractors' compliance, not individual sites.



- No comparable monitoring data was available.

## DEL Does Not Aggregate Monitoring Data from Checklists



- JLARC sampled checklist data for 17 comparable health and safety standards. Results showed:
  - Low rate of full compliance with standards, 13% of facilities complied with all 17 standards (2008).
  - Some coding on the checklist was ambiguous, compliance was not clear.
  - 18% of facilities were noncompliant with attendance records assessed on the checklist (2008), which is required for providers accepting subsidy payments.

## JLARC has 6 Recommendations to Improve DEL's Controls and Monitoring



### DEL Should:

### Responses & Comments:

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| #1 | Consistently monitor ECEAP and child care using a checklist tool. | <b>DEL partially concurs.</b><br>DEL notes plan to review common requirements.                             |
| #2 | Aggregate and analyze data from checklist.                        | <b>DEL partially concurs.</b><br>DEL notes plan to collect electronic child care licensing data this year. |
| #3 | Adjust the checklist to make coding unambiguous.                  | <b>DEL partially concurs.</b><br>DEL notes plan to improve coding via electronic data.                     |

## JLARC has 6 Recommendations to Improve DEL's Controls and Monitoring



### DEL Should:

### Responses & Comments:

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| #4 | Revise policy on schedule for monitoring to take into account compliance data.  | <b>DEL partially concurs.</b><br>DEL notes plan to review this approach. |
| #5 | Establish policy to direct DEL resources for technical assistance and training. | <b>DEL concurs.</b>  |
| #6 | Alert DSHS of possible inappropriate child care subsidy payments.               | <b>DEL concurs.</b>  |

## JLARC Provided Opportunity for OFM and DSHS to Provide Comment



- Both OFM and DSHS responded that they did not have comments on this report.

### Part Three

## Affordability and Availability of Subsidized Child Care



## Washington Provides Low-Income Parents with Subsidized Child Care



- DEL works with other agencies to set eligibility criteria, payment levels to providers, and co-payments that families must pay.
- **Affordability:** Co-pays for 90% of families are within the suggested federal benchmark.
- **Availability:** Child care is available in aggregate, but can vary based on a number of factors (e.g., age of child, region).
  - No state waiting lists.



## Summary & Auditor Comments



## Summary of DEL Review



|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Part One</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No substantial progress with integration of programs.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Part Two</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation of quality and school readiness not possible at this time.</li><li>• Full compliance with all health and safety standards was low (13% of facilities).</li><li>• Recommendations to improve DEL's management and controls for monitoring.</li></ul> |
| <b>Part Three</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Subsidized child care is affordable for most families; and availability depends on a variety of factors.</li></ul>   |

## Auditor Comments to DEL's Additional Statements



- **Administrative Efficiency:**
  - DEL stated that FY 06 administrative expenditures used in the report were incomplete.
  - JLARC used information developed by OFM, required by statute, to make fiscal data comparable over time. OFM coordinated this effort with DEL and other involved agencies.
  - OFM submitted FY 06 cost information to LEAP, available to the Legislature and public.

## Auditor Comments to DEL's Additional Statements



- Parent Education and Outreach:
  - Preliminary report stated most publications only available in English.
  - JLARC has updated the proposed final report noting additional parent publications are also available in Spanish.
  - This update was based on information supplied by DEL subsequent to publishing our report.
  - Unfortunately, this information had not been provided previously by DEL in their technical review comments.

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