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| The Early Start Act mandated that DEL update the child care licensing rules so that the early learning system has a unified set of foundational health, safety and child development regulations that are easy to understand and align with other requirements by providers in the field. (RCW 43.215.201)DEL is taking a transparent, methodical, and inclusive approach to this legislatively-mandated process.  The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 updated the federal child care law, placing an emphasis on quality child care. There are new requirements related to children’s health and safety. The implementing regulations specify that lead agencies (which, in Washington, mean the Department of Early Learning) can rely on Caring for Our Children Basics (http:// www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/caringfor-our-children-basics) for any minimum standards required by the federal law and regulations. (See Fed Register https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-09-30/pdf/2016-22986.pdf Page 67484 last column) The regulations go on to state, “Lead Agencies are encouraged, however, to go beyond these baseline standards to develop a comprehensive and robust set of health and safety standards that cover additional areas related to program design, caregiver safety, and child developmental needs, using the full Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards guidelines.” (Id.) This is precisely what the Department of Early Learning has done in these proposed regulations in addition to proposing regulations that directly implement the federal requirements.  This section has two core provisions: family support self-assessment and family partnership and communication. These regulations set requirements for providers’ communications with parents to partner in their child’s care. This section also describes expectations for program self-assessment in the area of family support. | | | | | | |
| **Family support self-assessment** | | | | | **HS/ECEAP/EHS Team Comments** | |
| **Family Home WAC** | **Center WAC** | | **Proposed WAC** | | **Satisfactory/Minor/Major revisions; Concerns; Suggested AlternateLanguage** | **Conflicts with ECEAP, Head Start, Schools District Standards and Practices** |
| No current WAC | No current WAC | | **170-300-0080**  **Family support self-assessment.**   1. An early learning provider must assess their program within six months of being licensed, or within six months of the date this section becomes effective, to identify ways to support the families of enrolled children. A provider must complete the Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment, or an equivalent assessment, applicable to the early learning program type (center or family home).Weight #1 2. An early learning provider must keep certificates of completion from the programs listed above in their facility records, and the certificates must be reviewable by the department. Weight #1 | |  |  |
| **Justification:**  This proposed regulation addresses a family support self-assessment. Partnering with and understanding families are important to the work of early learning providers, and central to the priorities of the Department of Early Learning. The Child Care and Development Block Grant regulations require that Washington share information about research and best practices concerning children’s development [and] meaningful parent and family engagement. See Section 98.33(b)(1)(iv). These proposed regulations require early learning providers to identify how they will support families of enrolled children. Further, in the instructions for the required federal child care plan (found in the state’s federal Child Care or CCDF Plan, at Section 2, Promote Family Engagement through Outreach and Consumer Education, there is clarifying information about the importance of family engagement, which includes the following information: “Parents are their children's most important teacher and advocate. State and Territory child care systems interact with parents in multiple ways, therefore presenting many opportunities to engage and inform families. Child care providers can serve as convenient and trusted sources of information for parents and family members on child development and community supports and services. State/Territory and local child care assistance systems should be designed to promote seamless linkages to useful information and other child- and family-services, such as during subsidy intake and redetermination processes and when parents utilize child care resource and referral or QRIS agencies. Outreach and consumer education is an ongoing process and is expected to cover the entire age span covered by CCDF from birth through age 12. The CCDBG Act of 2014 includes key purposes that address the role of parents as child care consumers who need information to make informed choices regarding the services that best suit their needs. A new purpose of CCDBG is to "promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings." States and Territories have the opportunity to consider how information can be provided to parents through the child care assistance system, partner agencies, and child care sites that will support their role as their children's teacher and advocate.” Washington has elected to include a focus on family engagement as part of the licensing baseline, recognizing the importance of working thoughtfully with the families.  This is further reinforced by the Washington Early Learning Guidelines, Washington State Early Learning Development Guidelines Birth through 3rd Grade (2012) which provides “Learning starts with families and communities. Families are their child’s first, most important and life-long teachers. They are also responsible for their children 24 hours a day, seven days a week, no matter what, until the children grow up. Parents and families care about their children and look for ways to support their healthy growth. This can be hard work! Parents embed their children in a web of relatives, friends and social networks. This community offers safety, opportunities, learning and support. Family and community traditions, languages and activities are the foundation for children’s learning and development. Children build their identities from the people, communities and places in their lives. Over time the web of support expands to include caregivers, child care professionals, teachers, health care providers, librarians and others who serve children and families.” | | | | | | |
| **Family partnerships and communication** | | | | |  |  |
| **Family Home WAC** | | **Center WAC** | | **Proposed WAC** | **Satisfactory/Minor/Major revisions; Concerns; Suggested Alternate Language** | **Conflicts with ECEAP, Head Start, Schools District Standards and Practices** |
| WAC 170-296A-2375Parent/guardian policies (handbook). The licensee’s written parent/guardian policies (handbook) must include:   1. Hours of operation including closures and vacations;   (2) Information on how children’s records are kept current, including immunization records;  (3) Enrollment and disenrollment process;  (4) Parent/guardian access to their child during child care hours;  (5) Program philosophy (the licensee’s view of child learning and development);  (6) Typical daily schedule, including food and rest periods. See WAC [170-296A-6550](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-6550);  (7) Communication plan with parents/guardians including:  (a) How the parent or guardian may contact the licensee with questions or concerns; and  (b) How the licensee will communicate the child’s progress with the parent or guardian at least twice a year;  I How the licensee will support parents regarding parenting;  (8) Written plan for any child’s specific needs if applicable. See WAC [170-296A-0050](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-0050);  (9) Fees and payment plans;  (10) Religious activities and how the parent’s or guardian’s specific religious preferences are addressed;  (11) How holidays are recognized in the program;  (12) Confidentiality policy including when information may be shared. See WAC [170-296A-2025](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-2025);  (13) Items that the licensee requires the parent or guardian to provide;  (14) Guidance and discipline policy. See WAC [170-296A-6050](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-6050);  (15) If applicable, infant/toddler care including infant safe sleep practices, feeding, diapering and toilet training;  (16) Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. See WAC [170-296A-6275](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-6275);  (17) Food service practices. See WAC [170-296A-7125](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-7125) through [170-296A-7200](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-7200), and [170-296A-7500](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-7500) through [170-296A-7650](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-7650);  (18) Off-site field trips requirements. See WAC [170-296A-2450](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-2450);  (19) Transportation requirements. See WAC [170-296A-6475](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-6475);  (20) Staffing plan. See WAC [170-296A-5600](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-5600) and [170-296A-5775](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-5775);  (21) Access to licensee’s and staff training and professional development records;  (22) Pet policies. See WAC [170-296A-4800](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-4800);  (23) Health care and emergency preparedness policies including:  (a) Emergency preparedness and evacuation plans. See WAC [170-296A-2825](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-2825);  (b) Injury or medical emergency response and reporting. See WAC [170-296A-3575](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3575), [170-296A-3600](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3600), and [170-296A-2275](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-2275);  I Medication management including storage and giving medications. See WAC [170-296A-3325](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3325);  (d) Exclusion/removal policy of ill persons. See WAC [170-296A-3210](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3210);  I Reporting of notifiable conditions to public health;  (f) Immunization tracking. See WAC [170-296A-3250](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3250); and  (g) Infection control methods, including:  (i) Handwashing (WAC [170-296A-3625](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3625)) and, if applicable, hand sanitizers (WAC [170-296A-3650](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3650)); and  (ii) Cleaning and sanitizing, or cleaning and disinfecting procedures including the methods and products used. See WAC [170-296A-3850](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3850) through [170-296A-3925](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-3925) and definitions in WAC [170-296A-0010](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-0010);  (24) Napping/sleeping;  (25) No smoking policy consistent with WAC [170-296A-4050](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-4050);  (26) Drug and alcohol policy consistent with WAC [170-296A-4025](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-4025);  (27) If applicable, guns and weapons storage. See WAC [170-296A-4725](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-4725); and  (28) If applicable, overnight care requirements. See WAC [170-296A-6850](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=170-296A-6850). | | WAC 170-295-2080What must I communicate to parents? 1) You must have written documentation signed by the parent in each child’s file that you have:  (a) Explained to the parent the centers policies and procedures;  (b) Discussed the centers philosophy, program and facilities;  (c) Advised the parent of the child’s progress and issues relating to the child’s care and individual practices concerning the child’s special needs; and  (d) Encouraged parent participation in center activities.  (2) You must also give the parent the following written policy and procedure information:  (a) Enrollment and admission requirements;  (b) The fee and payment plan;  (c) A typical activity schedule, including hours of operation;  (d) Meals and snacks served, including guidelines on food brought from the child’s home;  (e) Permission for free access by the child’s parent to all center areas used by the child;  (f) Signing in and signing out requirements;  (g) Child abuse reporting law requirements;  (h) Behavior management and discipline;  (i) Nondiscrimination statement;  (j) Religious and cultural activities, if any;  (k) Transportation and field trip arrangements;  (l) Practices concerning an ill child;  (m) Medication management;  (n) Medical emergencies;  (o) Disaster preparedness plans; and  (p) If licensed for the care of an infant or toddler:  (i) Diapering;  (ii) Toilet training; and  (iii) Feeding. | | **170-300-0085**  **Family partnerships and communication.**   1. An early learning provider must communicate with families to identify individual children’s developmental goals. Weight #1      1. An early learning provider must attempt to collaborate with each child's family, upon enrollment and annually thereafter, to obtain information about a child’s developmental, behavioral, health, linguistic, cultural, social, and other relevant information. Weight #4      1. An early learning provider must determine how the program can best accommodate each child's individual characteristics, strengths, and needs. To do this, the provider must utilize the information in subsection (2) of this section and seek input from family members and staff familiar with a child's behavior, developmental, and learning patterns. Weight #1 2. An early learning provider must: 3. Attempt to discuss with parents or guardians information including, but not limited to:    1. A child’s strength in areas of development, health issues, special needs, and other concerns;    2. Family routines or events, approaches to parenting, family beliefs, culture, language, and child rearing practices;    3. Internal transitions within the early learning program and transitions to external services or programs, as necessary;    4. Collaboration between the provider and the parent or guardian in behavior management; and    5. A child’s progress, at least two times per year. 4. Communicate verbally or in writing:    1. Changes in drop-off and pickup arrangements as needed; and    2. Daily activities. 5. Communicate the importance of regular attendance for child; 6. Give parents or guardians contact information for questions or concerns; 7. Give families opportunities to share their language and culture in the early learning program; 8. Arrange a confidential time and space for individual conversations regarding children, as needed; and 9. Allow parents or guardians access to their child during normal hours of operation, except as excluded by a court order.   Weight #5 |  |  |
| **Justification:**  The proposed regulation enhances communication and collaboration with families by 1) obtaining information about a child’s developmental, behavioral, health, linguistic, cultural, social, and other relevant information; 2) accommodating each child's individual characteristics, strengths, and needs using information from family members; 3) discussing with families a child’s internal and external transitions; 4) discussing with families the importance of regular attendance; 5) providing families with opportunities to share their culture; and 6) arranging confidential space when discussing children.  *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition*, references the importance of partnering with families to learn more about each child’s development from the viewpoint of the family, and to understand family culture and context. See 2.3.2 Regular Communication  STANDARD 2.3.2.1: Parent/Guardian Conferences. The regulations now provide for opportunities to learn from families (170.300.0085(2), (3), and (4)) consistent with *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edit*ion. As noted by *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition,* “Encouraging parents’/guardians’ communication is simple, inexpensive, and beneficial.” See 2.3.2.3 Support Services for Parents/Guardians, Rationale. These proposed regulations address efforts to communicate with parents about transitions, whether inside the early learning program or to a different program (170.300.0085(4)(a)(iii); sharing the importance of regular attendance (170.300.0085(4)(c); and providing confidential space and time for conversations about children, as needed (170.300.0085(4)(e). *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition* provides a section addressing the importance of transition to new programs, and discussions about this with families as part of 9.2.2 Transitions, STANDARD 9.2.2.1: Planning for Child’s Transition to New Services. Attendance is added as a discussion point with parents because of the advantages regular attendance brings in realizing the child development benefits from the early learning program, and allowing for confidential space for individual conversations about children is respectful of family, child and program privacy.  We further note that the federal regulations for CCDF, at Section 98.33(b)(1)(iv) requires the state’s lead agency to disseminate information about “Research and best practices concerning children’s development, meaningful parent and family engagement.” The proposed regulation is consistent with the federal intention, which is also found in the purpose of the law, which includes “to promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in care settings.”<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ186/pdf/PLAW-113publ186.pdf>, SEC. 658A. SHORT TITLE AND PURPOSES, (b)(3). This is also seen in the federal guidance for the state’s CCDF plan. In the section addressing Family engagement through outreach and consumer education, the federal government states, at page 36 of Washington’s plan, “Child care providers can serve as convenient and trusted sources of information for parents and family members on child development and community supports and services.”  In addition to the support noted above, Washington’s Early Learning and Development Guidelines Birth through 3rd Grade  2012 underscore the premise of this proposed revision, stating (page 13) “The Guidelines’ intent is to build bridges between families, birth through age 5 caregivers/educators, K-12 educators, and other professionals serving children.” The proposal seeks to assist in implementation of this premise.  In a series of 23 meetings in 2016, 467 stakeholders shared their feedback on a set of proposed licensing standards drafts, representing all types of early learning providers and a wide variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, refugee and immigrant, income, and linguistic communities. The communities represented in the meetings included, but are not limited to: Native American, African-American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Yakama Nation, East African, Filipino, Spanish-speaking, Somali-speaking, Oromo-speaking and Russian-speaking. The participants had a favorable response to the approach to family engagement proposed in these regulations “Participants reacted positively to the intent of these standards – seeking and using insights about the needs of children and families, as well as promoting the center as the gathering space for families that it is.” Thrive report, page 13. | | | | | | |