

Early Learning Policy Update

Directors Retreat 2018

Thanks for joining us for this year's WSA Head Start and ECEAP Directors Retreat! So excited you are here with us for what will be a rich and rewarding dialogue. We wanted to provide you with a very short summary of the four key things happening at the federal and state levels to be on the lookout for.

Federal Update

This year we are excited to have Tommy Sheridan, the National Head Start Association's Government Affairs Director joining us. He will be providing you a more comprehensive update on Thursday morning.

1. Head Start Funding. By now you already know the great news that Head Start received a significant increase of more than \$600 million for fiscal year 2018. These funds are to be used for expanding Early Head Start (and child care partnerships), increasing duration, and a small amount for a cost of living increase for staff. As soon as the final budget got signed into law, however, the next round of budget battles started. And so far we are off to a good start! Both the House and Senate Labor HHS appropriations subcommittees have completed their work. Head Start did fairly well taking into consideration the top line budget numbers Congress is working with and the current political environment. On the House side the committee provided us with a modest boost of \$50 million and over on the Senate side a \$250 million increase (remember Senator Murray is the ranking Democrat on Senate Labor HHS). A final budget won't be voted on until after the November election.
2. Opioid Funding. The National Head Start Association is seeking a \$200 million investment in Head Start to support families impacted by the opioid addiction crisis. NHTA put together a terrific paper highlighting innovative programming and making some specific recommendations. It is in your packets.
3. Dr. Deborah Bergeron. There is a new Office of Head Start Director, Dr. Deborah Bergeron. She has extensive background as an elementary and high school teacher and administrator. She is looking to come out and visit local programs.
4. Immigration. Immigration is still a flash point as you have been reading about in the media. Issues like what will count towards a public charge (right now Head Start is not included, but a rule will be out soon), what will happen to the Dreamers, the separation of children and families at the border, and the continuing aggressive tactics of ICE has created some real challenges within the Head Start community. We will stay involved on this issues and give you opportunities to weigh in as needed.

State Update

1. ECEAP Expansion. We are still working with our coalition partners and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to come up with a strong proposal. Right now we are looking to add more children at an even faster clip than the entitlement date of 2021-2022, obtain at least a 10 percent cost per child increase to support staffing, expand our facilities fund, and finally expand eligibility (this means both categorical eligibility for tribal, homeless, and kinship families and going to 130% of the federal poverty level up from 110%).
2. Department of Children, Youth, and Families. July 1st the Department of Children, Youth, and Families was opened for business. The new Department will change the way we do our work in some important ways, but mostly we will need to find ways to better link our early learning system with our partners within the child welfare system. Our Association has taken the lead in creating an early learning child welfare table where advocates and partners can learn and share with each other.
3. Child Care. This upcoming legislative session will tackle a myriad of issues related to child care. This includes increasing child care rates, expanding access for various populations including student parents and homeless children, and restoring funding to Early Achievers. We are also likely to face continuing conversations about how to effectively align child care licensing standards, what do we add or lessen within Early Achievers, and in general whether the state is under or overregulating providers.
4. Governor Inslee's Pre-K Proposal. Over the past few months the Governor and the staff at the Department of Children, Youth, and Families have been working to craft a preschool proposal that will move us towards the goal of getting 90% of Washington's children ready for kindergarten. While we are unsure of how this will play out it is likely we will see something that begins to answer the question: how do we as a state provide high quality early education to folks caught in the middle—having too little dollars to afford care on their own but making too much to receive government assistance? Regardless of the outcome of the legislative session there is a good possibility that an effort to put something on the ballot for either 2019 or 2020 could surface.