

Children and Families of Incarcerated Parents Policy and Service Review

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING

Identified Service Need	Current Policies and Services to Address Need	Current Barriers or Gaps	Initial recommendations to meet need
<p>Technical support and leadership to state agencies and the taskforce in identifying ways to ensure policies and programs are supportive of children and meet their needs during the time the parent is incarcerated; and that the safety of the child(ren) is paramount in all efforts to help offenders build relationships with their children.</p>	<p>The DEL authorizing legislation RCW 43.215.005 states that “parents are their children’s first and most important teachers and decision makers.”</p> <p>With that as a guiding principle, DEL strives to support all children and their families in healthy child development and opportunities for school and life success regardless of the care setting or life situations children and their parents or caregivers are in.</p> <p>DEL has expertise in including parent voice, and is uniquely positioned to demonstrate and model ways to bring consumer parents and families to the center of agency policy and program development.</p>	<p>Funding and dedicated staffing.</p>	<p>Pursue funding to fully meet legislative mandates. DEL submitted a decision package addressing the need for funding and dedicated staffing to fully meet the legislative mandates.</p> <p>Work closely with state agencies and local service providers to ensure that the safety of the child(ren) and their non-incarcerated parent or caregiver remains paramount.</p> <p>Support taskforce efforts to be fully inclusive of current and formerly incarcerated parents, as well as non-incarcerated parents and caregivers of their children in the work of the taskforce.</p>
<p>Representation of children and families impacted by incarceration in DEL policy and program development.</p>	<p>RCW 43.215.020 (3) The department shall include parents and legal guardians in the development of policies and program decisions affecting their children.</p> <p>DEL has an advisory group of consumer parents that is expanding membership.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Include a family member or caregiver of a child with an incarcerated parent in DEL’s Parent Advisory Group.</p> <p>Access families affected by incarceration for specific input on policies and programs.</p>
<p>Specialized parent education and support classes for parents and caregivers of children affected by incarceration.</p>	<p>RCW 43.215.020 (2): (b) Make early learning resources available to parents and caregivers; (d) Administer child care and early learning programs.</p>	<p>Funding and dedicated staffing to manage a competitive RFP process and the subsequent contract management and technical assistance work.</p>	<p>Partner with and fund community service providers to deliver specialized parenting education and support services that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a child’s healthy development and life and early learning success • Respects and supports the interests and needs of the family and caregivers during a parent’s incarceration.

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Information, resources and supports to child care providers, parents, caregivers, and families impacted by incarceration.	RCW 43.215.020 (2)(b) Make early learning resources available to parents and caregivers.	Funding and dedicated staffing.	Develop tools and materials for distribution and provide up-to-date information, resources, and training opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECEAP and WA Head Start providers. • Licensed child care providers. • Informal care providers (FFN, licensed exempt). • Parents, caregivers, general public.
Child-friendly visitation rooms, practices, and policies within incarcerated settings that promote normal child development and healthy family interactions.	RCW 43.215.065 (1)(b) The director shall adopt policies that support the children of incarcerated parents and meet their needs with the goal of facilitating normal child development, while reducing intergenerational incarceration.	Funding and dedicated staffing.	Provide technical assistance to support DOC in developing and maintaining child-friendly visitation settings, practices, and policies.
Resources and information for preschool teachers, staff, and K-12 teachers working within the public school system.	RCW 43.215.005 (3) (e): Promote linkages and alignment between early learning programs and elementary schools and support the transition of children and families from prekindergarten environments to kindergarten. RCW 43.215.020 (2) (h): Collaborate with the K-12 school system at the state and local levels to ensure appropriate connections and smooth transitions between early learning and K-12 programs.	Funding and dedicated staffing.	Coordinate with OSPI to provide training and support for preschool providers, teachers, and staff that interact with children and families of incarcerated parents.
Thorough assessment of the adequacy and availability of DEL policies and programs targeting children impacted by a parent's incarceration.	43.215.065(1)(a) The director of the department of early learning shall review current department policies and assess the adequacy and availability of programs targeted at persons who receive assistance who are the children and families of a person who is incarcerated in a department of corrections facility. Great attention shall be focused on programs and policies affecting foster youth who have a parent who is incarcerated.	Funding and dedicated staffing.	Coordinate with DSHS to identify the population served through Working Connections Child Care subsidies. (These clients are tracked through the SSPS payment system in DSHS.) Conduct cross-team assessment within DEL of all assistance programs and services. Review all WACs and policies to determine which may impact children and families of incarcerated parents.

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<p>Current information and data on recipients of assistance who are also the children and families of parents incarcerated in DOC facilities.</p>	<p>RCW 43.215.065 (2) The director shall conduct the following activities to assist in implementing the requirements of subsection (1) of this section: (a) Gather information and data on the recipients of assistance who are the children and families of inmates incarcerated in department of corrections facilities</p>	<p>Funding and dedicated staffing.</p> <p>Licensed child care centers and homes are private businesses and choose whom they serve and do not collect demographics data on the consumers they provide services for.</p> <p>The federal Head Start program does collect information on children with an incarcerated parent, but Head Start directors believe this is underreported by parents and caregivers.</p> <p>The state ECEAP program currently does not collect this data point, but are working on a revised data collection tool.</p> <p>Data on recipients of the Working Connections Child Care subsidy is housed in DSHS and connected to their SSPS payment system.</p>	<p>Conduct cross-team assessment within DEL of all assistance programs and services and the data they collect.</p> <p>Work with the ECEAP team at DEL to include the data point in their child enrollment form.</p> <p>Coordinate with the Head Start State Collaboration Office in elevating the importance of identifying and serving this population.</p>