FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA
WASHINGTON

FACTSHEET

Access to High-Quality Early Learning Can Reduce Crime

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Washington's voluntary, high-quality preschool program, serves the state's most vulnerable 3- and 4-year-olds. As a result of the 2021 Fair Start for Kids Act, children are now eligible for ECEAP if they have special needs, their family has risk factors such as homelessness or domestic violence, or their family income is 36 to 50 percent of the State Median Income (in 2022, that was $33,152 for a family of three[1]). ECEAP focuses on the whole child, providing comprehensive services, as well as family support.[2]

Sixty-two percent of Washington children under age 5 have parents who work outside the home, but many of the children are not in high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs.[3] Some of the state's most vulnerable children are unenrolled in any ECE program, with ECEAP serving just ten percent of 4-year-olds and six percent of 3-year-olds.[4] For the 2022-23 year, there are 15,596 ECEAP slots available across the state. However, the need for more access remains, particularly for working families who need access to the school-day and extended day slots.[5]

2023 Priorities for ECEAP

We seek continued legislative support for increasing access to ECEAP by ensuring the per child rate covers the cost of quality, expanding **slots** so the program can serve more children across the state, and enough learning **space** to meet the demand.

ECEAP helps insure school readiness

High-quality preschool can improve early academic and social-emotional skills, ensuring children furthest from opportunity are ready for kindergarten and beyond.[6] There are also longer-term effects: students who participated in ECEAP scored significantly higher in third- to fifth-grade math and reading, compared to their peers who had not participated in the program.[7]

ECEAP participation can potentially cut crime

High-quality ECE has been found to reduce the risk of future criminal activity. A 2021 MIT study of the Boston preschool program found that enrollees were less likely to have been incarcerated in a juvenile facility during high school, compared to non-enrollees.[8] Similarly, two longitudinal studies of other high-quality preschool programs, following children for

nearly 40 years, found that children who had not attended high-quality ECE were more likely to engage in crime in adulthood. In one study, children who did not attend a high quality preschool were five times more likely to be chronic offenders by age 27.[8] In the other study, those who did not attend were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.[10]

For additional information, contact Washington State Fight Crime Invest in Kids Lead:

Jeff Hansen
p: 571.532.9544
e: jhansen@fightcrime.org

ECEAP Serves the Most Vulnerable Children

73%
Live in homes with incomes less than 110% below the poverty level

9.5%
were involved with Child Protective Services

11%
have Individualized Education Plans

31.5%
have a parent who does not have a diploma or GED

10%
were from a household with a substance abuse issue

8%
were homeless during the school year

1 https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/ECEAPStateMedianIncomeChart.pdf
2 https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/eceap
3 https://datacenter.kidscount.org/
4 https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Washington_YB2021.pdf
5 https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/ECEAP_Contractor_slots_models_funding.pdf
6 https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pam.21734 ; http://nieer.org/research-report/201311apples205th20grade-pdf
7 http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1576/Wsipp_Outcome-Evaluation-of-Washington-States-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Assistance-Program_Report.pdf
8 https://blueprintcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Blueprint-Labs-Discussion-Paper-2021.4-Gray-Lobe-Pathak-and-Walters.pdf
9 http://www.highscope.org/file/research/perryproject/specialsummary_rev2011_02_2.pdf
10 http://www.cehd.umn.edu/icd/research/cls/cbaexecsum4.html

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids
Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites membership organizations, including law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, and business executives, that promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

6746 Division Ave NW / Seattle, WA 98117 / 206.375.6081

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