

Extension Protocol for Early Achievers

Overview

The Early Achievers Extension allows participants who receive subsidy payments and/or provide Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) services to request a one-time, six-month extension to their timeline requirements. The extension does not provide relief of the 30-month timeline expectation for tiered reimbursement outlined in **RCW 43.216.710**.

Timeline Requirements

Timeline requirements vary for each provider based on the source of state funding. Providers may request an extension of up to 12 months before their quality level milestone or during remedial activities.

Figure 1: Timeline for Providers that Receive State Subsidy Payments

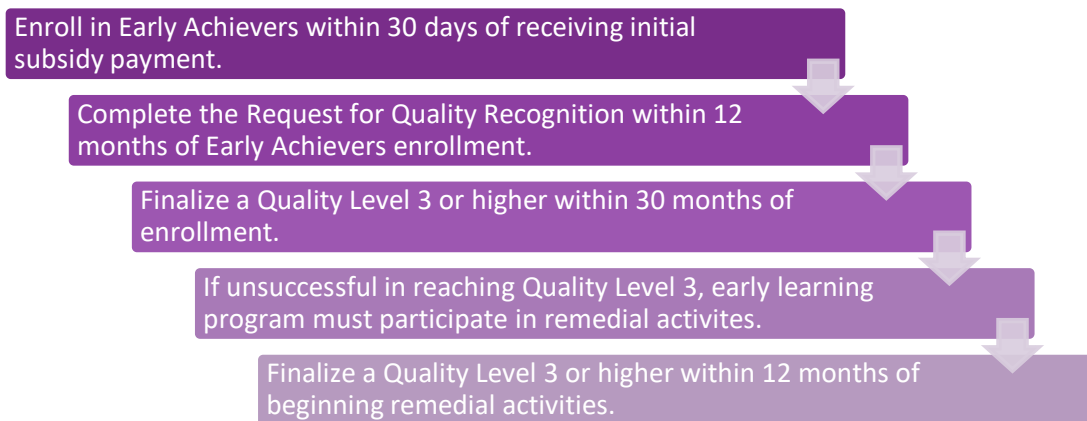
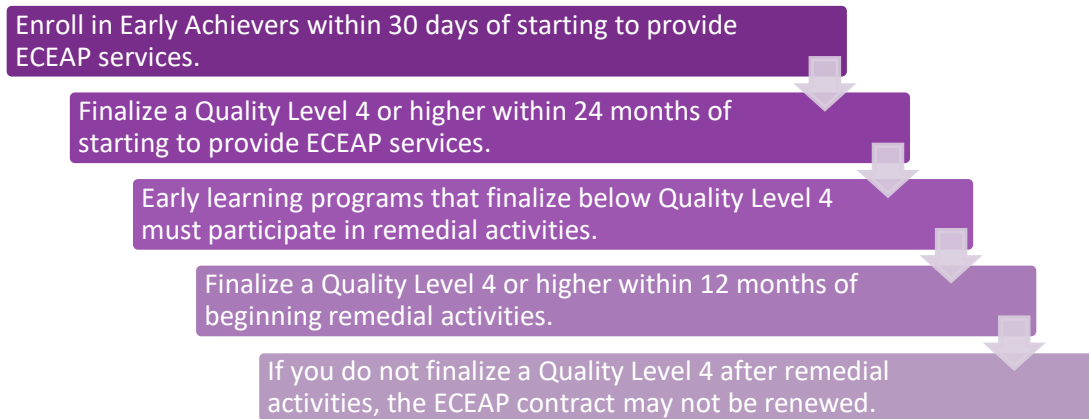


Figure 2: Timeline for Early Learning Programs that Offer ECEAP Services



Criteria for Extension Eligibility

Early learning providers who want to request an extension of the quality level milestone must:

- Submit the Early Achievers Extension Application (**English | Spanish | Somali**) before the Quality Level/remedial milestone date.
- Be in full compliance with all licensing and ECEAP/Early ECEAP requirements, if applicable.
- Meet all prior Early Achievers requirements, including enrollment and completion of the Early Achievers Request for Quality Recognition.
- Meet active participation requirements. The full definition of active participation is found in the Early Achievers Participant Operating Guidelines (**English | Spanish | Somali**).
- Experience verifiable exceptional circumstances (see definition below).

Providers who do not wish to use their one-time extension can request a deferment, which moves you to the bottom of the quality recognition queue, due to exceptional circumstances once per quality recognition cycle. Please contact your Cultivate Learning Community Liaison for more information.

Definition of “Exceptional Circumstances”

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) will only grant extensions if an early learning provider can demonstrate an “exceptional circumstance” that allows additional time prior to finalizing a quality level. These exceptional circumstances include:

- Leadership changes onsite — director, assistant director or program supervisor.
- Organizational leadership changes — Tribal Council membership or other agency leads.
- High staff turnover in a child care center, Head Start or ECEAP program — more than 30% of lead staff, as defined in MERIT, have changed within the past three months (this is limited to staff who work with children in the birth to 5-year-old age range).
- Staff turnover in family home child care — family home child care assistant or lead staff have changed within the past three months.
- Natural disaster or accidental damage to the facility that requires professional repair.
- Community defined events, subsistence lifestyles, seasonal issues — such as ceremony, canoe journey.

- The facility is engaged in a grievance process with DCYF, Child Care Aware of Washington or other entity providing Early Achievers supports.
- Reallocation of Head Start or ECEAP slots that may impact quality recognition procedures.
- Extended illness of the director, family home child care provider or a lead teacher.
- Less than three children between birth and 5 years old per early learning environment are enrolled in a child care center.
- Less than one child between birth and 5 years old per early learning environment are enrolled in a family child care.
- Death or other tragedy that has a significant impact on the program staff or families.
- Other exceptional circumstances, reviewed case by case.
 - In these situations, the facility must provide documentation that demonstrates a need for an extension. This documentation will be reviewed by an Exception/Extension panel to determine if the circumstances warrant an extension. The panel will include staff from DCYF and Child Care Aware of Washington and a member of the Provider Supports Subcommittee.

Process for Requesting an Extension

Providers must be in compliance with all timeline requirements at the time they submit the Early Achievers Extension Application form. The application must include the following information:

- Reason for requesting an extension.
- Summary of Early Achievers participation and quality improvement activities.
- Documentation to verify the request (e.g., doctors' letters, termination letters, etc.)

DCYF Early Achievers staff will review all extension requests and approve if it meets the predetermined criteria listed on the application. If the provider's exceptional circumstance is not on the predetermined list, a DCYF panel will review your request. The panel includes a DCYF QRIS staff member, CCA of WA staff member, and a member of the Provider Supports Subcommittee and/or the Early Achievers Values and Processes Workgroup. The panel will review the request and supporting evidence to determine if the provider qualifies for an extension. An email from the QRIS inbox will state if DCYF granted or denied the request for an extension and will include information on next steps.