



Extension Protocol for Early Achievers

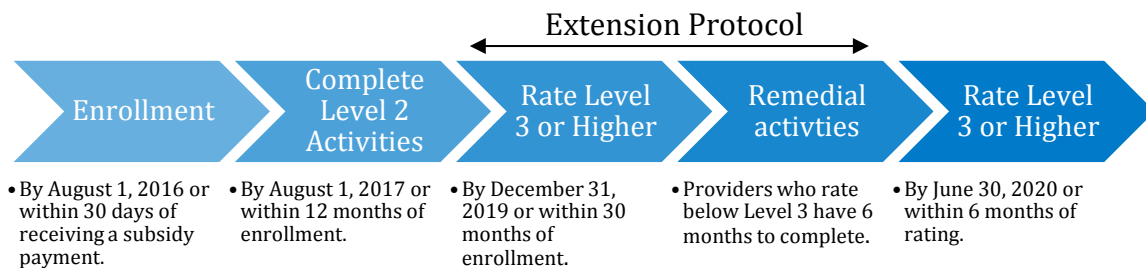
Overview

The Early Start Act of 2015 established Early Achievers participation timelines for all early learning providers that accept state funds. Under these timelines, providers that are unable to rate the required level by the rating deadline will no longer be eligible to accept state child care subsidy or ECEAP funding. The Early Achievers Extension Protocol allows participants who have completed Level 2 activities to request a one-time six month extension to the Early Start Act rating requirements for “exceptional circumstances”.

Timeline Requirements

Timeline requirements vary based on the pathway and source of state funding for each facility. Participants may request an extension up to 12 months before their rating deadline or during remedial activities, if necessary.

Timeline for Licensed and Certified for Payment Only Facilities



Criteria for Extension Eligibility

Early learning providers that wish to request an extension to the rating deadline must meet the following criteria:

- Compliance with all licensing requirements and ECEAP requirements, if applicable.
- Have met all prior Early Achievers timeline requirements.
- Must meet minimum participation requirements in rating preparation activities, such as training and technical assistance.
- Have experienced exceptional circumstances that can be verified.

Definition of “Exceptional Circumstances”

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) will only grant extension requests if an early learning provider can demonstrate an “exceptional circumstance” that warrants additional time prior to rating. These exceptional circumstances include:

- Leadership changes onsite—such as director, assistant director or program supervisor.
- Organizational leadership changes—such as changes in 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 6 months (this is limited to staff who work with children in the birth to 5 years age range).
- Natural disaster or accidental damage to the facility that requires professional repair.



- Staff turnover in Family Home Child Care-- family child care assistant or lead staff have changed within the past 3 months.
- Community defined events/subsistence lifestyles/seasonal issues—such as ceremony, canoe journey.
- The facility is engaged in a grievance process with DEL, Child Care Aware of Washington or other entity providing Early Achievers supports.
- Reallocation of Head Start or ECEAP slots that may impact data collection 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 are enrolled (more than three children between birth and 5 years old are required to complete data collection).
- 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 protocol panel to determine if the circumstances warrant an extension.
 - The panel will include staff from DEL and Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) and a member of the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee.

Process for Requesting an Extension

Participants may request an extension up to 12 months before their rating deadline or during remedial activities, if necessary. All extensions will be granted for six months; however participants can choose to move forward with rating before their extension expires. Providers must request an extension in writing with the following information:

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

All extension requests will be reviewed by DEL. Those that meet the defined criteria will be approved. Any requests for an extension that do not meet the defined categories for eligibility will be submitted to an Extension/Exception protocol panel for review. This panel will have a DEL staff member, CCA of WA staff member and Early Achievers Review Subcommittee member. They will review the evidence and determine if the program qualifies for an extension.

Requests for extension can be emailed to the QRIS inbox at qris@del.wa.gov, or mailed US Post to QRIS Extension Request, c/o DEL--Early Achievers, PO Box 40970, Olympia, WA 98504-0970.

Once requests are reviewed, programs will be notified by an email from the QRIS inbox or mailed by US Postal mail stating if their request for extension was granted or denied as well as information about any next steps.

Extension Protocol for ECEAP Providers and Contractors

ECEAP and Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Providers with timeline requirements are also eligible for extensions and will follow the same protocol as licensed child care facilities.