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policy

IDEAS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH IDD

Funding Fix – Early Supports for Infants & Toddlers

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Who is working on this issue?

Kinding, Pierce County Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board, Association of County Human Services, The Arc of King County, Early Childhood Development Association of Washington

Advocacy areas

Early learning/O-5 supports

What is the problem you are trying to solve?

- Early support providers can't bill for the first month of services

Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) helps young children with delays and disabilities be active and successful.

The model is intensive, with services generally delivered in the home, on a one-on-one basis.

Unfortunately, it is an underfunded system with providers unable to pay competitive rates. Compounding this, because of a glitch in state law, providers can't bill for the first month of services, which is often the most expensive. For many providers, this translates to a 10% annual cut.



What is your proposed solution?

- Fix the billing issue by revising RCW 43.216.580 to allow billing for all children served in a given month. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) has requested this change.

In the longer term, increase the multiplier used to determine funding levels to ensure ESIT providers can stay competitive and continue to provide quality support. In 2023, the state increased funding for special education services for children ages 3 to 21, but failed to make needed investments in the ESIT program, which serves children 0 to 3.

Why is this a good solution?



ESIT promotes lifelong well-being. As universal screening continues and more children are identified for support, it is important to ensure services are in place to help with toddlers' movement, communication, and more. Research shows early supports improve health and education outcomes for children with delays and disabilities and reduce costs later on.

Actual numbers covered. The short-term technical fix means providers will be paid for the actual number of children served in a month, not an estimate based on prior months. It will help stabilize ESIT providers across the state and ensure families with young children with developmental delays and disabilities have access to the high-quality supports they need.

Long-term benefit. The longer-term fix will be important to ensure ESIT providers can pay competitive rates relative to school districts. With inflation, the cost of services and specialized equipment has outpaced funding. This leaves providers facing major financial and staffing challenges, with some limiting expensive, in-person services.

Two services, connected. Both ESIT and special education services are mandated by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and work together to support children's development and well-being. ESIT serves children 0-3 and is overseen by DCYF. Special education services serve children 3 to 21 and are overseen by local school districts and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. As the state fixes funding gaps in special education, we need to make sure younger children aren't left behind and that the programs complement each other. Quality supports in the 0-3 years can lesson the need for special education services in preschool and K-12 and reduce later costs for school districts.

What is the fiscal impact?

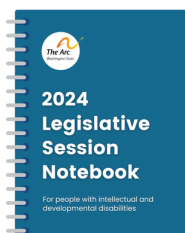
DCYF estimates the technical fix to the billing cycle will cost the state \$4.2 million per year. Please see [The Economics of Early Childhood Investments](#) for long-term fiscal benefits

Is there a bill number?

[HB 1916](#) and [SB 5399](#) - Concerning funding for the early support for infants and toddlers program

Is there a legislator working on this issue?

Rep. Tana Senn, 41st LD, tana.senn@leg.wa.gov; and Sen. Noel Frame, 36th LD, noel.frame@leg.wa.gov



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