

Funding Fix for Early Supports

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Who is working on this issue?

The Arc of King County, ESIT providers

Advocacy areas

Early learning/0-5 supports

The problem we are solving:

- Without adequate funding, providers of early supports for infants and toddlers (ESIT) struggle to retain therapists and meet community need.

These services help young children ages 0 to 3 with delays and disabilities be active and successful. They help children reach milestones like walking, talking, eating, playing, and learning and they set a foundation for lifelong development.

The model is intensive, with services generally delivered in the home, on a one-on-one basis. Services include speech, occupational and other therapies, as well as family education.

Unfortunately, it is an underfunded system with providers unable to pay competitive rates. This limits access and delays support.



Our proposed solution:

- Fix an oversight and re-link ESIT funding to the multiplier used to fund special education preschool services.

Early supports for infants and toddlers and special education services were both created by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and both offer essential support for kids with disabilities.

Historically, ESIT and special education preschool services used the same multiplier in their funding formulas. Several years ago, ESIT moved into the Department of Children, Youth, and Families and that link was broken. When funding for preschool services for kids with disabilities was last increased, ESIT was left behind. We want to relink them and stabilize ESIT.

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 service costs later on.

Fixes an oversight. The adjustment bumps ESIT funding to the level it would have been if it hadn't moved out of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and ensures that when the state next adjusts special education funding, it also adjusts ESIT.

Long-term benefit. Re-linking the multipliers will help 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?	Is there a bill number?	Is there a legislator working on this issue?
\$6 million annually to boost the multiplier from 1.15% to 2%.	Not yet.	Not yet.