



EVALUATION OF WASHINGTON STATE'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) was established in 1985.¹ ECEAP provides educational as well as related family support, health, and nutrition services to preschool-aged children from low-income families.²

The 2013 Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct a study of early childhood education, including the following:

- Retrospective evaluation of ECEAP;
- Review of research evidence; and
- Return-on-investment analysis.³

Retrospective Evaluation of ECEAP. A retrospective evaluation assesses program impacts using previously collected data. WSIPP's evaluation will examine outcomes of children who have participated in the program compared with children who did not participate. The law directs WSIPP to examine short- and long-term educational and social outcomes of children, such as kindergarten readiness, behavior, and test scores, as well as parent characteristics, to the extent data are available.

Review of Research Evidence. WSIPP will conduct a systematic meta-analysis of rigorous evaluations of early education programs from throughout the United States and elsewhere. To the extent the information is reported in previously published evaluations, this analysis will examine the impact of program components including program fiscal support, staff salaries, staff retention, education level of staff, full-day programming, half-day programming, classroom size, and family support services. The retrospective evaluation will also examine these components, if the data are available.

Return-on-Investment Analysis. A return-on-investment analysis compares the long-term benefits measured in an outcome evaluation with the program's costs. The analysis requires estimation of the monetary value of program benefits and the cost of providing the program. WSIPP will use its standard benefit-cost model to estimate returns on early childhood education investments.⁴

The study is due to the legislature by December 15, 2014.

About WSIPP. The Washington State Institute for Public Policy is a nonpartisan research organization that conducts public policy research at the request of the Washington State legislature. WSIPP's multidisciplinary staff has degrees in economics, public policy, public health, agriculture, and related fields. WSIPP is strongly committed to the core values of quality and objectivity.

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¹ RCW 43.215.400

² Low-income families are defined as having incomes below 110% of the federal poverty level.

³ C16 L13.

⁴ Lee, S., Aos, S., Drake, E., Pennucci, A., Miller, M., & Anderson, L. (2012). *Return on investment: Evidence-based options to improve statewide outcomes* (April 2012 Update). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Document No. 12-04-1201.