



# TRIBAL ECEAP PATHWAY RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



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**CONTENTS**

Executive Summary..... 1

DCYF Mission, Vision, and Values ..... 2

ECEAP Commitments to Equity..... 2

Introduction ..... 3

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) ..... 4

History of Tribal ECEAP Work ..... 4

Tribal Children and Kindergarten Readiness ..... 6

Washington Sovereign Nations..... 7

    Strength of Tribal Communities ..... 7

    Historical Struggles that Continue to Contribute to Tribal Child and Family Outcomes Today ..... 8

Continued Barriers for Tribes in Providing ECEAP ..... 10

    Eligibility ..... 10

    Duplicate Data Entry ..... 11

    Current Funding Structures..... 11

    Duplicate Monitoring by External Entities Reviewing Tribal Programming..... 11

    Insufficient Per Child Slot Rate ..... 11

    Culture and Language Preservation and Revitalization ..... 12

    Increased Access to Early Learning Tribal Specific Resources and Supports ..... 12

Solutions..... 12

    Recommended Changes to The Current DCYF ECEAP Requirements..... 13

    Changes to the DCYF ECEAP Funding Structure ..... 14

    Requirements for Non-Tribal Programs..... 15

Conclusion..... 15

Appendix A: Timeline of DCYF ECEAP Tribal Pathway Work ..... 16

Appendix B: Project Timeline..... 17

## Executive Summary

This report was written in compliance with Senate Bill 5437 Section 6, to explore the development of a Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Tribal Pathway that meets the needs of Tribal Sovereign Nations in providing ECEAP in their communities and decreasing the opportunity gap for tribal children. This report explores the great strength of tribal communities as well as the trauma that tribal people have experienced since colonization.

After extensive communication with Tribal Sovereign Nations over the past several years, DCYF ECEAP has identified barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP, such as income limits, a slot rate that requires tribes to heavily subsidize ECEAP programming, duplicate reporting, fluctuating slot numbers resulting in the need to return slots to the state and funds that are not sufficient to provide culture and language instruction and preservation, or the full set of current ECEAP requirements without tribal subsidization.

DCYF ECEAP recommends nine changes to the current ECEAP structure for tribal contractors and subcontractors and one recommendation for a new funding model. DCYF ECEAP also recommends new training requirements for non-tribal programs that subcontract with an early learning tribal program or serve tribal children.

## Overview of Recommendations

The following recommendations are in response to requests from tribes with the goal of removing barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP and to reduce the opportunity gap for tribal children.

### Changes to Current ECEAP Structure

- Categorical eligibility for programs run by Tribal Sovereign Nations and for tribal children who attend ECEAP at non-tribal sites.
- Updates to the Early Learning Management system to reduce duplicate reporting in multiple data systems.
- Creation of a Tribal Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist position when there are at least six to eight tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.
- Slot stability for tribes.
- Tribal slot set-aside.
- Reducing duplicate monitoring between external entities reviewing tribal programming.
- Funding tribal ECEAP at a rate that covers programming being subsidized by tribes.
- Funding for culture and language education.
- Increased access overall to early learning tribal-specific resources and supports.

### New Funding Model

- Exploring the possibility of creating early learning tribal compacts for tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors.

### Training for Non-Tribal ECEAP

- Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Curriculum training.
- Government-to-Government training.
- Ongoing tribal-focused equity training and technical assistance.

These recommendations will increase the number of tribal children who have access to ECEAP administered by Tribal Sovereign Nations and will improve the support for tribal students wherever they attend ECEAP.

## **DCYF Mission, Vision, and Values**

### **Mission**

Protect children and strengthen families so they flourish.

### **Vision**

All Washington’s children and youth grow up safe and healthy – thriving physically, emotionally, and educationally, nurtured by family and community.

### **Values**

Inclusion ▪ Respect ▪ Integrity ▪ Compassion ▪ Transparency

## **ECEAP Commitments to Equity**

### **DCYF ECEAP Equity Statement**

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) commits to dismantling racism and building an equitable, state-funded preschool system in Washington. Increasing our understanding of and capacity to address the deep-rooted impacts of bias and racism at every level is the highest priority for the ECEAP team. ECEAP embraces equity as a foundation of and driving force behind the work by listening to and learning from families, contractor staff, and communities. Driven by this commitment, the ECEAP team develops and revises systems, policies, and practices with the goal of eliminating disparities and transforming lives.

### **Tribal ECEAP Statement**

DCYF ECEAP acknowledges and respects our government-to-government relationship with Tribal Sovereign Nation contractors and sub-contractors. DCYF ECEAP also acknowledges the historical trauma that tribal people have experienced since colonization, particularly in institutional settings.

Tribal Nations have an inherent sovereign right over how to educate their children in a culturally relevant manner. DCYF ECEAP is honored to support tribes in caring for and providing high-quality learning for their youngest learners. The ECEAP team is committed to building strong relationships with Tribal Sovereign Nations and strives to support them in implementing high-quality early learning approaches that are reflective of each nation’s culture and values.

## Introduction

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*Indian education dates back to a time when all children were identified as gifted and talented. Each child had a skill and ability that would contribute to the health and vitality of the community. Everyone in the community was expected and trained to be a teacher to identify and cultivate these skills and abilities. The elders were entrusted to oversee this sacred act of knowledge being shared. That is our vision for Indian education today.<sup>1</sup>*

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This report was written to share the benefits for tribal children who attend tribally-run, high-quality early childhood education programs and how DCYF ECEAP can support Tribal Sovereign Nations in meeting their goals of culture and language revitalization. DCYF ECEAP is honored to support tribes in building pre-kindergarten programs that prepare children for school and life. DCYF ECEAP is committed to honoring the government-to-government relationships with Tribal Sovereign Nations and supporting tribes in creating programs for their youngest learners that continue the healing that tribal communities want for their people.

This report was written with the input and support from Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations. We would like to thank the following people for their guidance and feedback about the creation of a Tribal ECEAP Pathway:

- Indian Policy Early Learning (IPEL) Delegates
- Bernie Thomas, Lummi Nation
- Sally Brownfield, Squaxin Island Tribe
- Sheryl Fryberg, Tulalip Tribes
- Kathryn Yates, Chief Leschi Schools
- Gordon James, Squaxin Island Tribe
- Lisa Russel, Kalispel Tribe of Indians
- Nigel Lawrence, Suquamish Tribe
- Tanya Burns, Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Michael Vendiola, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Cherry Myers, Lummi Nation
- Tara Evans, Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Tleena Ives, DCYF Office of Tribal Relations

This report explores what modifications are needed in DCYF and in ECEAP to meet the needs of Tribal Sovereign Nations in response to Senate Bill 5437 Section 6, and to reduce the opportunity gap for tribal children.

## Legislation

Senate Bill 5437 Section 6.

(1) The department of children, youth, and families must consult with the state's federally recognized tribes as described in chapter 43.376 RCW to explore creating a pathway or funding stream within the early childhood education and assistance program to address the unique characteristics of tribal nations in order to substantially close the opportunity gap for tribal children.

(2) By December 1, 2020, the department of children, youth, and families must report related recommendations to the legislature that may include the modification of early childhood education and assistance program eligibility criteria and performance standards.

(3) This section expires December 31, 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> ChiXapkaid (Michael Pavel), Susan Rae Banks-Joseph, Ella Inglebret, Laurie "Laliij" McCubbin, Jason Sievers, Lisa Bruna, Selena Galaviz, Adisa Anderson, Elizabeth Egan, Sally Brownfield, Mariko Lockhart, Gary Grogan, Noel Sanyal (2008) *From Where the Sun Rises: Addressing the Educational Achievement of Native Americans in Washington State*. Available at: <https://education.wsu.edu/documents/2015/08/native-american-achievement-gap-report.pdf/>



## Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

ECEAP is Washington’s pre-kindergarten program that prepares 3- and 4-year-old children furthest from opportunity for success in school and in life. DCYF oversees the program. ECEAP is a significant school readiness and secondary prevention strategy in advancing DCYF’s mission and strategic priorities. A two-generation approach grounded in evidence, ECEAP provides high-quality, critical support to families in economic stability and family resilience. ECEAP’s whole child and family approach is aligned with nationally researched programs that have shown exceptional returns on investment. The strong outcomes for children include an **8 out of 10 National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)** quality rating and strong **5th grade outcomes** for participating children. These outcomes include higher passing rates in reading tests (23%) and math tests (16%) compared to similar nonparticipants. Additionally, students’ test scores are nearly twice the average effect of early childhood education (ECE) programs in other states, and shows that ECEAP is most effective at reaching the most vulnerable children and families among those eligible.

### ECEAP is Effective at:

- Increasing children’s social-emotional, physical, and pre-academic skills.
- Ensuring that each child receives medical, dental, vision, hearing, and mental health care needed to start school healthy.
- Helping families move toward self-sufficiency and building their capacity to support their children’s success.

These outstanding outcomes occur with the children and families who are most frequently denied educational justice and access to safe and affordable housing and livelihoods. Of children served, 82% are at or below 110% of the federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$28,820 for a family of four, and 87% of ECEAP children are eligible for free lunch with 94% eligible for free and reduced lunch. Additionally, 66% of children receiving ECEAP services are children of color

During the 2019-20 school year, ECEAP served 14,000 children at 389 locations across Washington. DCYF administers ECEAP through 54 contracts with school districts, educational service districts, community colleges, local governments, tribal organizations, child care centers and homes, and non-profits.

## History of Tribal ECEAP Work

DCYF ECEAP tribal work began in 2017 as part of the ongoing DCYF ECEAP expansion and equity work. Feedback from stakeholder groups related to expansion resulted in DCYF ECEAP determining that a variety of pathway work must be implemented to create pathways that would result in increased expansion readiness and lead to serving more children from diverse backgrounds. As the DCYF ECEAP team looked at the educational outcomes data for tribal children in our state, it became clear that an ECEAP Tribal Pathway must be prioritized to meet the DCYF goal that 90% of children are ready for kindergarten, with race and income no longer predictors of readiness.

DCYF ECEAP believes that tribal children should have the opportunity to attend an early learning program that is run by a Tribal Sovereign Nation. There are 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington, but in the 2016-17 school year there were only eight tribes that provided ECEAP in their communities along with one non-profit that runs a tribal language immersion school. Two additional tribes began providing ECEAP in the 2019-20 school year. Of the tribal children who attended ECEAP in the 2019-20 school year, 23% attended at a tribal ECEAP site.

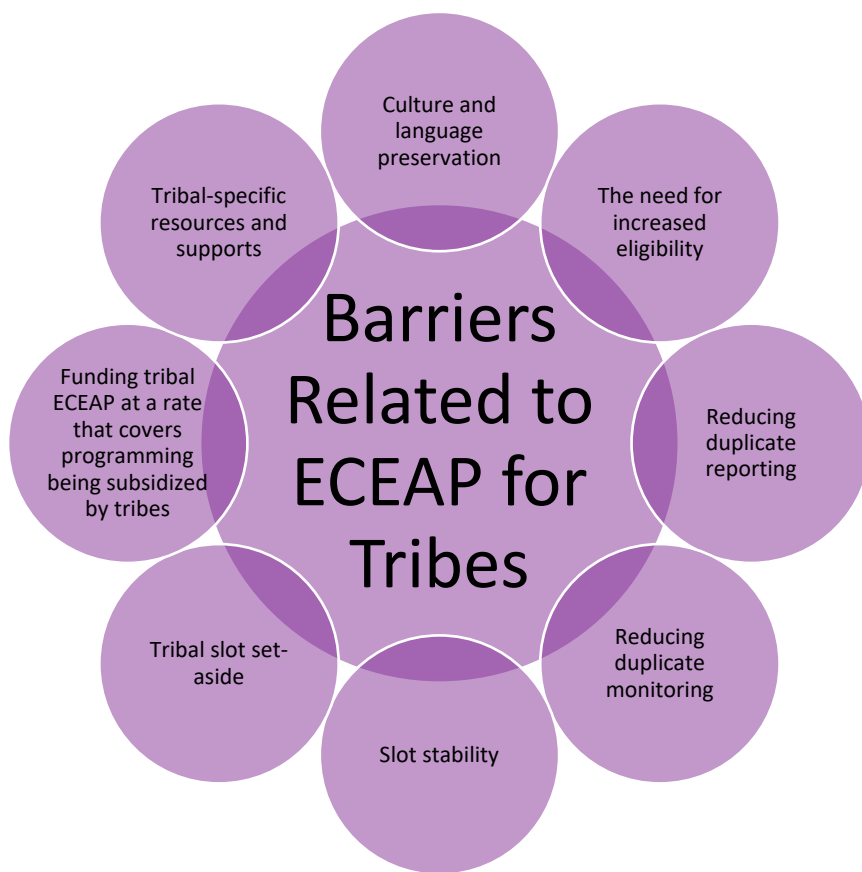
In November 2017, DCYF brought the idea of a Tribal ECEAP Pathway to the Indian Policy Early Learning (IPEL) Committee to gather feedback about the need for increasing access to high-quality early learning in tribal communities and to better determine what was standing in the way of tribes contracting or subcontracting for ECEAP.

IPEL delegates shared that there is a need for ECEAP in their communities but that there are barriers for tribes to contract to provide ECEAP. DCYF ECEAP identified both short and long term changes that would need to be made to increase the number of tribes who contract for ECEAP. IPEL created a Tribal ECEAP Subcommittee Workgroup to continue the conversation about creating a Tribal ECEAP Pathway.

The Tribal ECEAP Workgroup began meeting in February 2018. The Tribal Workgroup continues to meet and gather feedback about changes that were made and what still needs to be done to increase the number of tribal ECEAP sites. The Tribal Workgroup also focuses on learning from tribes about their priorities for their youngest learners and about the importance of culture and tribal language in tribal early learning programs.

DCYF ECEAP worked with tribal ECEAP providers to begin updates to the ECEAP performance standards and the first changes were put into place in the 2020-21 school year. DCYF ECEAP will continue to work with tribes to make additional updates to ECEAP performance standards that will support more tribal ECEAP participation.

### What DCYF ECEAP Heard



## How DCYF ECEAP Responded

Changes Made to the DCYF ECEAP Request for Application (RFA) Process	DCYF ECEAP Tribal Specialist	Increased Access to Information and Resources	Equity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include tribally funded comprehensive birth to 5 early learning slots in the 75 slot minimum needed to be an ECEAP contractor.</li> <li>• Recognizing Tribal Sovereign Nations in using their community assessment data to show the number of children who are eligible for ECEAP in their community instead of using state data.</li> <li>• Providing tribally specific RFA webinars to ensure that tribes have the information needed to complete the RFA.</li> <li>• All RFA applicants consult with native sovereign nations when applying for slots within the boundaries of a federally recognized tribe. This is reviewed as part of the RFA scoring process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DCYF ECEAP Tribal Specialist started in October 2019 to lead DCYF ECEAP tribal work including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of ECEAP Tribal Pathway.</li> <li>• Training and technical assistance for tribal programs and non-tribal programs that serve tribal children.</li> <li>• Tribal workgroup.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Updates to policies, performance standards, and contract in response to request from tribes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a tribal tab on the ECEAP webpage in May 2020. The tab includes information and resources for tribal programs and non-tribal programs who serve tribal children in ECEAP.</li> <li>• Tribal specific trainings for tribal programs:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative Curriculum</li> <li>• Incorporating language and culture in the classroom</li> <li>• Since Time Immemorial</li> </ul> </li> <li>• For non-tribal programs:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government to Government</li> <li>• Since Time Immemorial</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DCYF ECEAP is building capacity to offer the following tribal specific trainings:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership training</li> <li>• Positive Indian Parenting</li> <li>• Equity training and technical assistance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the DCYF ECEAP performance standards.</li> <li>• Creation of a tribal equity statement.</li> <li>• Changes to the Mobility Mentoring family support approach to increase cultural appropriateness.</li> </ul>

While DCYF ECEAP began to make some changes that removed barriers to tribal ECEAP participation, there are other barriers that require legislation and additional funding to change. Removing the barriers outlined in this report will have a huge impact on tribal children being able to attend culturally appropriate early learning settings where they can build a strong foundation for future learning.

## Tribal Children and Kindergarten Readiness

In the 2019-20 school year, 34.6% of tribal children were ready for kindergarten in all six WaKIDS areas of development while 57.5% of white children were kindergarten ready. Tribal children also score lower on standardized assessments in elementary and secondary school.<sup>2</sup>

2018-19 School Year Assessments	3rd, 8th, and 10th Grades: English	3rd, 8th, and 10th Grades: Math	5th, 8th, and 11th Grades: Science
American Indian/Alaskan Native	31.2%	22.4%	24.0%
White	67.0%	55.7%	54.4%

These outcomes point to the need for high-quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for tribal children that prepare children for future education and life.

<sup>2</sup> Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Available at: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>.



In Washington, 4.3% of the population is affiliated with at least one federally recognized tribe.<sup>3</sup> Tribal people are often under counted in government data because they are placed in mixed race or two or more races categories. DCYF is addressing this concern agencywide by recently adopting a standard for racial/ethnic data reporting that calls for reporting a multiracial American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) category either separately or included in a larger AI/AN category, rather than collapsing into a generic multiracial category. In 2018, there were an estimated 277,513 children age 3 to 5 in Washington, including approximately 10,586 AI/AN children.<sup>4</sup> In the 2019-20 school year, ECEAP served 714 tribal children and in the 2017-18 school year, Head Start served 1,174 tribal children in Washington. Thus, approximately 17.8% of tribal children in the state attend either ECEAP or Head start. In the 2019-20 school year, tribal ECEAP sites had a combined 259 ECEAP slots and because of the current DCYF ECEAP priority point system these slots can be filled with either tribal or non-tribal children.

Washington State Caseload Forecast Council estimates that more than 50% of the children who are eligible for ECEAP will attend the program in the coming year.<sup>5</sup> Increasing the number of ECEAP slots administered by Tribal Sovereign Nations will help to assure that children can be served by their tribe or another tribe when possible. Providing training for non-tribal ECEAP sites will help prepare the site to meet the needs of tribal children who do not attend a program run by a tribe.

## Washington Sovereign Nations

### Strength of Tribal Communities

Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations had complex political and social structures long before colonization that continue to this day. Tribal peoples have lived and thrived on the land that is now known as Washington since time immemorial, despite colonization. Tribal Nations have incredible resilience based in strong family ties, culture, and tradition.

Tribal Sovereign Nations are interconnected communities that value group goals over individual success. Family ties in tribal communities are tightly knit, making large networks of people immediate family. Large families give tribal children the support of parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. All of the adults who are close to a child have the same responsibility to raise the child as biological parents.

Tribal Sovereign Nations continue to practice culture and traditions that colonizers attempted to take away. Tribal communities have many cultural activities that vary widely with the many different nations in Washington, but here are some examples:

- First salmon ceremony honors the salmon that are so important to the first inhabitants of this land
- Sla-hal or bone game is a popular traditional game
- Beading and leatherwork
- Sweat lodge
- Gathering and harvesting are important to tribal peoples. Bark, roots, and other fibers are gathered for weaving hats, baskets, and other items. Food and medicine are gathered to use throughout the year
- Hunting and fishing

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018). Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/tribal/tribes-organizations-health/tribes/state-population.html>.

<sup>4</sup> The American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) five-year estimates. (2018). AI/AN (American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races). Available at: <https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/search?ds=ACSPUMS5Y2018&cv=AGEP,RACAIAN&rv=ucgid&wt=PWGTP&g=0400000US53>.

<sup>5</sup> Caseload Forecast Council. Available at: [http://www.cfc.wa.gov/Education\\_ECEAP.html](http://www.cfc.wa.gov/Education_ECEAP.html).

- Powwows are traditional gatherings that include singing and dancing
- Canoe races are held using small canoes that were traditionally used as war canoes
- Large family canoes or traveling canoes are used for the canoe journey that is held each summer. Canoe families travel by canoe and by land to different hosts each year for a week of sharing culture, songs, dances, and stories. Canoe journey ends with a large potlatch with the host thanking the attendees

Tribal peoples have continued their spiritual practices that were outlawed as part of the Indian reservation system. It was not until 1978 that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed that gave tribal people the legal right to practice their religion.<sup>6</sup>

These are just some of the cultural practices that are celebrated in tribal communities. Tribal communities have continued to practice their culture even through attempts by the government to eradicate their culture and knowledge.

### **Historical Struggles that Continue to Contribute to Tribal Child and Family Outcomes Today**

Historical trauma expands across generations and it accumulates over time.<sup>7</sup> Tribal peoples have experienced horrific trauma since contact with European colonizers and trauma continues to this day. The U.S. government created many policies with the goal of genocide of tribal peoples.

Tribal Sovereign Nations were forced to leave their land and move to reservations where their culture and religion were outlawed. Reservations often did not have enough food or water to sustain the people who were forced to live there and they were threatened with violence or death if they left to gather supplies or return to their homeland.

Indian boarding schools began in the early 1800s, and by 1926 83% of tribal children were forced to attend these schools.<sup>8</sup> Children in Indian boarding schools were separated from their families and not allowed to speak their language or practice their culture. Children were physically, emotionally, spiritually, and sexually abused by boarding school staff. Children were kept at Indian boarding schools and were often not allowed to see their families. Many tribal children did not survive boarding schools.

General Pratt started the first Indian boarding school which was run like a military institution. Indian boarding schools in Washington were modeled after the boarding school that General Pratt started. Indian boarding schools were created with the goal of stripping tribal people of their culture and forcing them to assimilate into white society. Because of beliefs such as:

“A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.” – Gen. Richard Henry Pratt

As boarding schools were closing, the Indian adoption era began. In the 1950s through the early 1970s, tribal children were forcibly removed from their community to be adopted by white families. Children did not have

<sup>6</sup> Native American Rights Fund (1979). Available at: <https://www.narf.org/nill/documents/nlr/nlr5-1.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Eduardo Duran, Bonnie Duran, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, And Susan Yellow Horse-Davis (1998). *Healing the American Indian Soul Wound*. Available at: <https://icmglt.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/21-Healing-the-American-Indian-Soul-Wound-.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. Available at: <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/education/us-indian-boarding-school-history/>.

any contact with their biological families after these forced adoptions and records were often not kept making it extremely difficult for children to reconnect with family and their community later in life.

In the 1970s, while the Indian adoption era was slowing down, 25-35% of tribal children were taken from their families and placed in foster care and 85% were placed outside of their families even when family members were willing and able to care for the children.<sup>9</sup> Children were removed from their families for cultural practices that did not put children at risk. After the Indian Child Welfare Act passed in 1978, the number of tribal children in foster care decreased, but today there are still disproportionately large numbers of tribal children in foster care. Tribal families are more likely to be referred to the child welfare system, more likely to have a CPS investigation, more likely to have children removed from the family, children are less likely to be placed with family, and children remain in care longer than other races.<sup>10</sup>

Tribal people have survived genocide and now the vast majority of tribal children attend public schools that are run by the dominate culture and teach one worldview that ignores indigenous knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Tribal children are significantly under counted in the public education system making it difficult to ensure that tribal children are getting the services that they need and can result in treaty rights being violated.<sup>12</sup>

Tribal people experience systematic oppression in all areas of life. One example of this is that the U.S. government has a treaty obligation to provide health care to tribal people, however, Indian Health Service is severely underfunded.<sup>13</sup> The lack of access to adequate health care in Indian country has contributed to tribal people having disproportionately high rates of illness, disease, and a shorter life expectancy when compared with other races.<sup>14</sup> A health disproportionality that is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Washington State Department of Health reports that AI/AN are 1% of the state population and 2% of the COVID-19 cases, which is the third highest rate of infection of any race, and 3% of the deaths the highest rate of death of any race.<sup>15</sup> Even so, these numbers are likely a significant undercount of COVID-19 cases in tribal communities because tribal people are very likely to be miscategorized as another race or placed in a mixed race category.<sup>16</sup>

Tribal communities currently experience significant trauma in relation to the criminal justice system. Police kill tribal people at higher rates than any other race.<sup>17</sup> Although data gathered about incarcerated tribal people is inconsistent, tribal people are at least twice as likely to be incarcerated than white peers.<sup>18</sup> The loss of life and

<sup>9</sup> About ICWA, Available at: <https://www.nicwa.org/about-icwa/>

<sup>10</sup> J. Christopher Graham, Ph.D. (2019). *Washington State DCYF Racial Disparity Indices Report*. Available at: [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Washington\\_State\\_DCYF\\_Racial\\_Disparity\\_Indices\\_Report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Washington_State_DCYF_Racial_Disparity_Indices_Report_2018.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> CHiXapkaid (Dr. Michael Pavel), Zoe Higheagle Strong, and Jill Dolata. *Dear Children: Preferred Preparation for Native Early Childhood Educators*. Available at: [https://thrivewa.org/wp-content/uploads/Dear\\_Children\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://thrivewa.org/wp-content/uploads/Dear_Children_Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Phyllis Ault and Laura John. 2017. *Obscured Identities: Improving the Accuracy of Identification of American Indian and Alaska Native Students*. Available at: <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/obscured-identities.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Donald Warne and Linda Bane Frizzell (2014). *American Indian Health Policy: Historical Trends and Contemporary Issues*. Available at: <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301682>.

<sup>14</sup> Indian Health Service (2019). Available at: <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/disparities/>.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Health (2020). Available at: <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19>.

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Nagle (2020). *Native Americans being left out of US coronavirus data and labelled as 'other'*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/24/us-native-americans-left-out-coronavirus-data>.

<sup>17</sup> Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. Available at: <http://www.cjci.org/news/8113>.

<sup>18</sup> Prison Policy Institute. Available at: [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/04/22/native/#:~:text=Prisons%3A%20In%202016%2C%2019%2C790%20Native,Prisoner%20Statistics%20\(NPS\)%20series](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/04/22/native/#:~:text=Prisons%3A%20In%202016%2C%2019%2C790%20Native,Prisoner%20Statistics%20(NPS)%20series).

mass incarceration of tribal people continues to bring loss and grief to communities that are already coping with trauma from hundreds of years of colonization.

Tribal people have layers of trauma from loss of culture, language, land, and traditional ways of life along with the pain of losing community members to illness, addiction, and violence that are a result of the unresolved grief that tribal people experience because of systematic racism. Tribal people grieve for the loss of the larger family network described above as well as the loss of culture. Because of forced assimilation, tribal people have not been able to grieve the many losses they experience. Traditional practices, storytelling, and ceremony can start the process of healing from unresolved trauma.<sup>19</sup>

Children who attend tribally-run early learning programs and their families have the opportunity to benefit from the healing of culture and traditional practices.

Despite these and many other traumas that tribal people have endured, they continue to fight to protect their culture, sovereignty, and treaty rights. Tribes have retained their sovereign rights since time immemorial. Sovereignty was not given to tribes by the government, instead the government recognizes tribes rights as self-governing nations within the U.S.<sup>20</sup> Tribal Sovereign Nations in Washington continue to fight to protect their way of living and to protect their people.

High-quality early learning programs have positive impacts on children’s physical health, mental health, and well-being throughout life.<sup>21</sup> DCYF ECEAP’s comprehensive services gives families opportunities to build upon their strengths and prepare their children for success. Tribal Sovereign Nations are best equipped to deliver these services to tribal children and families through comprehensive programs such as ECEAP. Outcomes for tribal children could become even stronger when they participate in tribal ECEAP programming that more completely meets the needs of tribal nations. Increased acknowledgement of sovereignty and the adoption of the recommendations included in this report will show a commitment by the state to honor the sovereignty of tribal nations.

## Continued Barriers for Tribes in Providing ECEAP

While workgroup participants appreciated the changes DCYF ECEAP was able to make, they also indicated additional changes must be made to continue to decrease barriers for tribes who would prefer to serve their tribal children through ECEAP services. Barriers that need resolution include:

### Eligibility

- With increased well-paying job opportunities through thriving tribes, many tribal families now have income levels over 110 % FPL, which is \$28,820 for a family of four.
- Tribal children and families who would benefit from ECEAP services because of the historic and current trauma and educational injustices that tribal people experience are often unwilling to share the risk factors, for historical reasons outlined in this document, they may have with a state-funded program. If families are over-income and don’t have an identified risk factor, they’re ineligible for ECEAP.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Ph.D. and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, Ph.D. *The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief* (1998). Available at: [https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider205/journal\\_files/vol8/8\\_2\\_1998\\_60\\_yellowhorsebraveheart.pdf?sfvrsn=e65fe2b9\\_2](https://coloradosph.cuanschutz.edu/docs/librariesprovider205/journal_files/vol8/8_2_1998_60_yellowhorsebraveheart.pdf?sfvrsn=e65fe2b9_2).

<sup>20</sup> National Congress of American Indians. Available at: <http://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/tribal-governance>.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Department of Education. *Policy Statement to Support the Alignment of Health and Early Learning Systems*. <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/07/health-early-learning-statement.pdf>.

## Duplicate Data Entry

- Tribes are required to enter information into different data management systems for Head Start and ECEAP funded slots. Staff who provide Head Start and ECEAP have to learn two separate systems and enter data into both systems. At least one program has staff enter information for all children into the Head Start system and they have staff assigned to copy the information for ECEAP children into the ECEAP system. Having two data management systems uses time and resources that are already in short supply in underfunded programs.

## Current Funding Structures

- A barrier that impacts tribes' ability to provide ECEAP in their community is the funding structure that requires tribes to return unused ECEAP slots to DCYF to be redistributed to other contractors.
- Tribal Sovereign Nations have shared that they are not able to provide ECEAP with fluctuating slot numbers each year because they are not able to plan for the funding they will receive.

## Duplicate Monitoring by External Entities Reviewing Tribal Programming

- Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations have told DCYF ECEAP that a barrier for them to provide ECEAP is the duplicate monitoring requirements that tribal ECEAP providers are required to do. ECEAP providers may have monitoring visits from:
  - ECEAP, Head Start, Early Achievers, state or tribal child care licensing, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, National Association for the Education of Young Children, local or tribal health department, fire department, Indian Health Service, Child Care Development Fund, Bureau of Indian Education Part C, Indian Health Service Home Visiting, Washington State Home Visiting, and tribal government.

## Insufficient Per Child Slot Rate

- Tribes continue to report that the slot rate that they receive as ECEAP contractors and subcontractors is not enough to provide all of the services required in ECEAP.
- Tribal Sovereign Nations significantly financially supplement the provided ECEAP funds to provide all of the required ECEAP services. This creates an inequitable system where only tribes that have the financial resources to supplement ECEAP funding are able to provide ECEAP in their communities.
- One tribal ECEAP subcontractor shared that the funds they receive for their ECEAP classroom pays for salary and benefits for two lead teachers and one assistant teacher with a little left over for classroom supplies. The tribe subsidizes the ECEAP funds for salary and benefits for one assistant teacher and four part-time teacher aids, training, travel, utilities, vehicle expenses, fuel charges, postage, shipping, dues, subscriptions, lease expense non-capital, office supplies, phones, and food service.
- There are 28 Head Start grantees in Washington with a total of 7,659 slots. Head Start slot rate ranges from \$10,669 to \$19,130 for base funding for operations that does not include additional funds for training and technical assistance. Head Start does not fund grantees based on the program model such as part day, school day, or working day. Head Start has cost of living increases most years which becomes part of the base funding. Head Start programs have the opportunity to apply for two types of quality improvement funding. The first type of quality improvement funding is available to all grantees and it becomes part of the base funding although this is an infrequent occurrence. The second type of Head Start quality improvement funding is for one time requests that do not become part of the ongoing funding. One-time quality improvement funding is generally for health and safety needs, such as playground improvements, additional buses, renovations, replacing HVACs, etc. ECEAP slot rate ranges between \$8,237 to \$17,656. ECEAP does not have cost of living increases, ongoing, or one-time



quality improvement funding. ECEAP and Head Start funding models are different, making them difficult to compare, but the higher funding level that Head Start programs receive enable the program to better provide all of the required services without subsidizing the funding from other sources.

### Culture and Language Preservation and Revitalization

- Culture and language are top priorities for tribal early learning programs. The current ECEAP slot rate does not provide enough funds for Tribal Sovereign Nation ECEAP sites to provide culture and tribal language instruction in their classrooms, thus creating a barrier for tribes to provide ECEAP.
- Because of the history of boarding schools in this country where tribal children were severely punished for speaking their language, tribal languages in Washington are on the brink of extinction. Many tribal ECEAP teachers do not speak the tribal language themselves. Tribal ECEAP sites have to hire instructors in addition to classroom teaching staff to provide language instruction to the children without additional funding. It is unrealistic to expect a language instructor who does not have experience or a degree in early childhood education to be counted as one of the classroom teachers. This is especially true if the language instructor is an elder who may not have the energy to keep up with managing a classroom of young learners.
- There are many benefits for children who learn their tribal language such as a deeper connection to culture and a greater understanding of things that cannot be translated to English. Learning tribal language is a step toward healing from trauma and generations of unresolved grief. There are many educational benefits for children who are bilingual. For example, they have better working memory, better executive functioning, are more flexible thinkers, and are better able to see other people's perspectives than children who speak only one language.<sup>22</sup>
- The AI/AN Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey found that nearly all parents of children who attend AI/AN Head Start report that it is important for their child to learn a tribal language.<sup>23</sup>

### Increased Access to Early Learning Tribal Specific Resources and Supports

- Tribal ECEAP providers have requested supports for their programs, such as creating learning communities for tribal providers, opportunities for tribal providers to gather to learn together and share ideas, and for trainings that are tailored to the needs of tribes. Tribes have requested training and technical assistance on how to incorporate culture and language into curriculum.

### Solutions

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples article 14 states that Indigenous people have the right to control their own educational systems that fit with their traditional methods of teaching, to provide education in their own language, and when possible children living outside of their community should have access to education in their own language and culture.<sup>24</sup>

Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations are the best suited to provide early education to tribal children where they can receive academic skills that are based in culture that can meet the needs of the whole child. Tribal teachers, culturally responsive curriculum, tribal language, and traditional teaching methods all have positive

<sup>22</sup> Zero to Three. Available at: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1780-bilingual-from-birth>.

<sup>23</sup> Meryl Yoches Barofsky, Laura Hoard, and the AI/AN FACES 2015 Workgroup. (2015) *Region XI American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start: A Portrait of Children and Families*. Available at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/region-xi-american-indian-and-alaska-native-head-start-portrait-children-and-families>.

<sup>24</sup> *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007). Available at: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf).



impacts on the success of tribal children.<sup>25</sup> ECEAP sites that are run by Tribal Sovereign Nations are able to meet the needs of tribal children to receive a culturally based education.

In consultation with Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations, DCYF ECEAP identified recommendations of changes to DCYF ECEAP that will lead to high-quality culturally appropriate comprehensive early learning being available to more tribal children and their families. These recommendations include changes within the current ECEAP funding structure, supports for tribal programs, a new funding model, and training for non-tribal ECEAP providers.

## **Recommended Changes to the Current DCYF ECEAP Requirements**

### **Categorical Eligibility for Programs Run by Tribal Sovereign Nations and for Tribal Children Who Attend ECEAP at Non-Tribal Sites**

Washington tribes have requested that tribal children be categorically eligible for ECEAP. The current ECEAP income limit of 110% FPL creates a situation where many tribal children and families who would benefit from ECEAP are not eligible because of family income. Tribal programs would create a priority point system that meets the needs of their community and enables them to enroll the children in their community who would benefit from ECEAP. DCYF ECEAP will work with Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations to create enrollment requirements for tribal children who attend ECEAP in non-tribal settings.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study found a direct link between childhood trauma and negative health and social outcomes later in life. ACEs research has shown high-quality early childhood education that includes family engagement, home visiting, and social-emotional learning are protective factors for negative outcomes from trauma.<sup>26</sup> Because these are all elements of ECEAP Tribal Sovereign Nations should be supported in providing ECEAP services to all of their children who would benefit from the program as part of efforts by tribes to help their communities heal from the genocide they experienced at the hands of federal and state leaders who were supposed to protect them.

### **Updates to The Early Learning Management System to Reduce Duplicate Reporting**

Funding to update the DCYF ECEAP Early Learning Management System (ELMS) to reduce duplicate reporting requirements would remove a barrier that is preventing some tribes from providing ECEAP in their communities. Building a Head Start component into ELMS and having DCYF ECEAP staff to maintain the Head Start component will remove a large barrier for tribes in providing ECEAP. This is a system-wide issue impacting programs across the state – not only tribal ECEAP programs.

Seven IT positions will be needed to build the Head Start component into ELMS. Creating a Head Start Tribal component will give DCYF a broad picture of the early learning landscape and outcomes which will fill gaps that DCYF faces in reporting. One staff position will be needed to maintain the ELMS Head Start component.

### **Reducing Duplicate Monitoring**

DCYF ECEAP engaged in alignment efforts over the past several years with child care licensing and Early Achievers which has significantly reduced duplicate monitoring within DCYF programming. For programs that

<sup>25</sup> CHiXapkaid (Dr. Michael Pavel), Zoe Higheagle Strong, and Jill Dolata. *Dear Children: Preferred Preparation for Native Early Childhood Educators*. Available at: [https://thrivewa.org/wp-content/uploads/Dear\\_Children\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](https://thrivewa.org/wp-content/uploads/Dear_Children_Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Available at: [https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/fastfact.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fchildabuseandneglect%2Faces%2Ffastfact.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/fastfact.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fviolenceprevention%2Fchildabuseandneglect%2Faces%2Ffastfact.html).

provide both ECEAP and Head Start, DCYF ECEAP is in the process of aligning with Head Start so that DCYF ECEAP does not monitor for things that Head Start reviews.

DCYF ECEAP will work with tribal ECEAP providers to do similar alignment work to reduce monitoring for items that are reviewed by other agencies. DCYF ECEAP will also work with Sovereign Nations to create a system where tribes can provide documentation of successful monitoring by agencies that have not been part of alignment efforts that can meet some of the DCYF ECEAP monitoring requirements.

### **Creation of A Tribal Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist Position**

Funding for a dedicated Tribal Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Specialist position to lead monitoring of Tribal Sovereign Nations when there are at least six to eight tribal ECEAP contractors and subcontractors will remove a barrier for Sovereign Nations in providing ECEAP. Having a CQI specialist who has experience with tribal sovereignty and tribal early learning will show a commitment to respecting Sovereign Nations. Having an experienced Tribal CQI Specialist will reduce the burden for tribes of teaching each new assigned CQI about their tribal culture and government. Head Start has tribal monitoring teams comprised of people who have experience working in tribal communities which has made a positive difference in the monitoring process for tribal Head Start programs.

### **Slot Stability for Tribes**

DCYF ECEAP is working to create a system similar to the federal Head Start model that will increase slot stability and remove a barrier to tribes in providing ECEAP. Additionally, this would also result in being able to more easily enable tribes to complete more robust long range planning with ECEAP funding and programming.

Contractors will be notified of being under-enrolled if they are below enrollment targets for more than four consecutive months and the contractor will develop a plan with DCYF to reach full enrollment. If the program remains under-enrolled after 12 months, the program may have a reduction of slots or funding.

### **Tribal Slot Set Aside**

Keeping a set aside of slots at the state level that tribes can request on a yearly basis if they have unserved eligible children in their community will help ensure that tribal children can be served by a tribe.

### **Funding Tribal ECEAP at The Rate Recommended in The Slot Rate Study**

Funding tribal ECEAP providers at the rate recommended in the ECEAP rate study will ensure that all tribes can contract for ECEAP, not just the tribes that have funding from other sources to subsidize ECEAP funding to provide all of the required ECEAP services. Fully funding the program is necessary for ECEAP to be financially sustainable for tribes. The DCYF ECEAP rate study is currently underway.

### **Increased Access to Early Learning Tribal Specific Resources and Supports**

The DCYF ECEAP Tribal Specialist can now provide training for tribes on Creative Curriculum and incorporating culture and language into the classroom. DCYF ECEAP will setup learning communities for tribal programs around tribal language education and other topics as requested by tribes.

## **Changes to the DCYF ECEAP Funding Structure**

### **Creation of Early Learning Tribal Compacts**

DCYF ECEAP is exploring the possibility of creating tribal early learning compacts which will enable tribes who want to provide ECEAP with a higher level of flexibility the ability to do so while meeting tribal, state, and federal regulations in ways that follow the culture and traditions of the tribe. The proposed tribal early learning compacts will be modeled after the K-12 tribal education compacts and would make Washington a leader in the nation for responsive and culturally relevant tribal pre-k programming in tribal settings.

## Requirements for Non-Tribal Programs

### Training for Non-Tribal Programs

The history of forced relocation of tribal people and the systemic racism that creates a lack of resources in Indian country has contributed to many tribal families living away from their communities and in urban areas. In the 2019-20 school year, 77% of tribal children in ECEAP were served by a non-tribal ECEAP program. Requiring non-tribal programs to attend training to learn about tribal communities and tribal sovereignty will help prepare programs to better meet the needs of tribal children as well as teach all children about the original inhabitants of this land in a respectful and accurate manner.

Requiring training for non-tribal ECEAP contractors that serve tribal children and families will help to ensure that tribal children are getting the services that meet their needs even if they do not attend a tribal ECEAP site.

Requiring non-tribal contractors serving tribal children to have teachers, family support, and management staff attend “Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Training” and “Government to Government Training” will help non-tribal programs meet the needs of tribal children. These trainings will also support the programs in teaching all children about tribal sovereignty. All ECEAP contractors should be encouraged to attend both “Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Training” and “Government to Government Training” even if they do not serve tribal children so they are prepared to teach all of the children they serve about Washington Tribal Sovereign Nations.

Non-tribal ECEAP providers should make efforts to learn about the culture of tribal children who attend their programs. This could include talking with the child’s family, looking for resources created by the child’s tribe to use in the classroom, and contacting the child’s tribe to learn more about the child’s culture.

DCYF ECEAP is in the process of creating a policy that will require non-tribal contractors that subcontract with tribes to attend training provided by DCYF ECEAP to learn about contracting with a Tribal Sovereign Nation as opposed to other types of contractors. The policy will also require these contractors to attend “Since Time Immemorial Early Learning Training” and “Government to Government Training” provided by DCYF.

## Conclusion

Tribal Sovereign Nations are best able to provide education for their youngest learners. Removing barriers for tribes to provide ECEAP will create opportunities for more tribal children to attend ECEAP at a culturally based program that is best able to meet their needs.

Structural and systematic racism have continued to hinder tribal families’ abilities to move closer to opportunity. DCYF ECEAP can support tribes in addressing the effects of trauma and racism by creating a system where tribes can serve all of their young children in high-quality, culturally-based pre-kindergarten programs regardless of family income. DCYF ECEAP can support tribal families who live away from their community by providing training for non-tribal ECEAP providers who serve tribal children.

Tribal Sovereign Nations are healing from historical trauma by using culture and traditional knowledge. Tribal children benefit from learning their culture starting at a young age and Washington can support tribes in providing their young children with a culturally-based education by honoring the requests of Tribal Sovereign Nations to remove barriers in providing ECEAP.

## Appendix A: Timeline of DCYF ECEAP Tribal Pathway Work

### 2017

- **November:** Began talking with IPEL about tribal pathway.

### 2018

- **February:** Tribal Pathway Workgroup.
- **April:** Tribal Pathway Workgroup.
- **May:** Tribal Pathway Workgroup.
- **June:** Tribal Pathway Workgroup.
- **October:** Changes to RFA to Meet Needs of Tribes.
- **November:** Tribal RFA Webinar.
- **December:** IPEL Presentation.

### 2019

- **April:** Mobility Mentoring Tribal Workgroup.
- **May:** Mobility Mentoring Tribal Workgroup.
- **June:** Mobility Mentoring Tribal Workgroup.
- **July:** Government to Government Training for Entire DCYF ECEAP Team.
- **October:** Tribal Specialist Started.
- **November:** IPEL Presentation.
- **December:** Tribal Specific RFA webinar.

### 2020

- **January:** Tribal Specific RFA webinar.
- **February:** DCYF ECEAP Visit to Kalispel ECEAP, Spokane Tribe ECEAP, and Salish School ECEAP.
- **March:** DCYF ECEAP Visit to Sauk-Suiattle ECEAP and Lummi ECEAP. Quarterly DCYF ECEAP and DCYF Tribal Relations Meetings Began. Tribal Specialist completed Lead Learn Excel training and is in the process of becoming a trainer.
- **May:** DCYF ECEAP Virtual Visit to Chief Leschi ECEAP. Tribal Workgroup. Tribal ECEAP Webpage created. IPEL Presentation. Tribal Specialist trained to lead Creative Curriculum trainings.
- **June:** Changes to ECEAP Requirements. Quarterly ECEAP and Tribal Relations Meeting. Tribal Workgroup. IPEL Presentation. Enrollment Requirement Changes for Tribal Sovereign Nations
- **July:** Tribal Workgroup.
- **August:** Tribal Workgroup. Tribal Specialist trained in providing Since Time Immemorial Early Learning training.
- **September:** IPEL Presentation.

## Appendix B: Project Timeline

### Year One

- Categorical eligibility for current tribal providers.
- Explore with tribes the number of expansion slots needed.
- Survey tribes about early learning language program needs.
- Begin update to ELMS to create a Head Start component.
- Review duplicate monitoring.
- Create policy that recognizes tribes in good standing ability to keep unfilled slots.
- Create policy and contract for early learning compacts.
- Training for non-tribal ECEAP providers begins.
- Training for tribal programs begins.

### Year Two

- Expansion RFA for tribal programs.
- Create a tribal slot set aside.
- Create certificate of monitoring.
- Increase slot rate to the level recommended in the slot rate study.
- Tribal language funding starts.
- Tribal early learning compacts begin.

### Year Three

- New Tribal CQI starts.
- Tribal expansion slots begin with categorical eligibility.