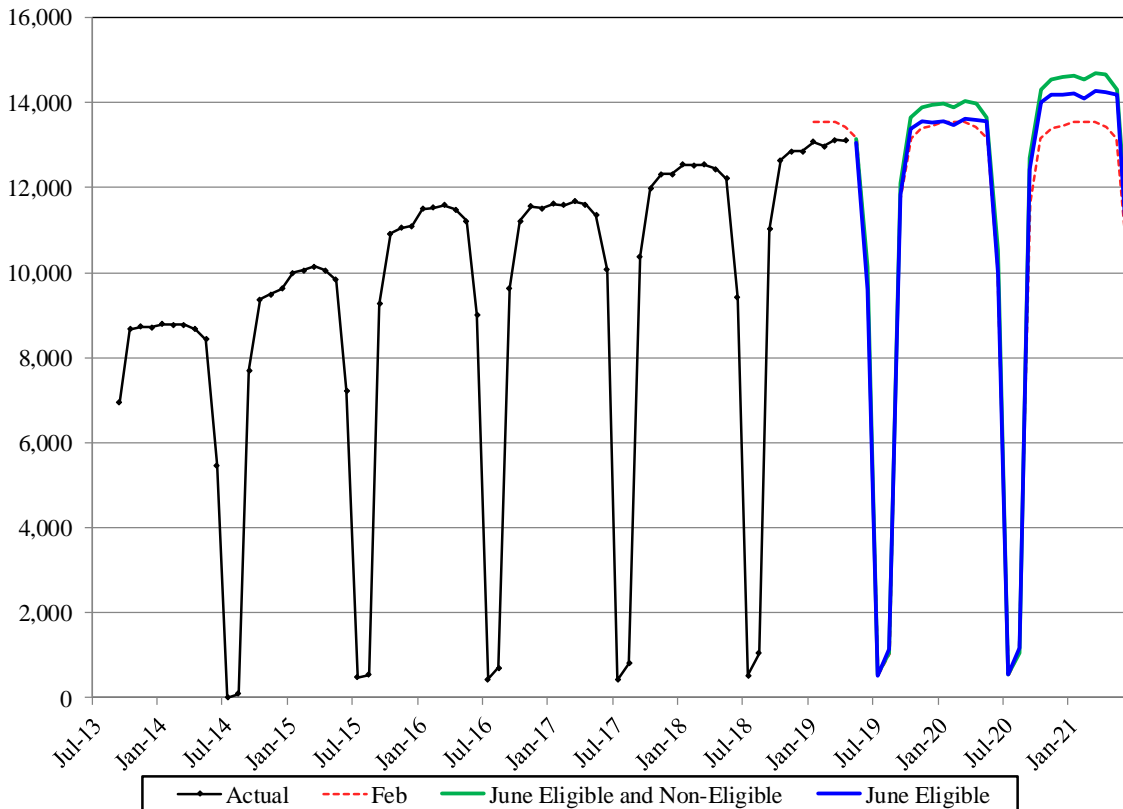


**Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program
(Academic Year Enrollment)**



The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides comprehensive nutrition, health, education, and family support services to eligible children between the ages of three and five years old who are not eligible for Kindergarten to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system. ECEAP enrollment is forecast as total annual enrollment calculated as a ten-month average to more accurately reflect that the majority of enrollment occurs during the standard school year. Per statute, children who participate in Head Start are not eligible for ECEAP and, as a result, are not included in the forecast.

Forecast Comparisons (Academic Year Averages)

Fiscal Year	Feb-19 Forecast	Jun-19 Forecast	Feb to Jun Difference	Percent Difference
2019	12,950	12,586	-364	-2.8%
2020	13,056	13,173	117	0.9%
2021	13,056	13,794	737	5.6%

While ECEAP is scheduled to become an entitlement program during the 2022-23 school year, currently the level of enrollment is determined by the number of slots available through

legislative appropriations. In the budget enacted during the 2015 Legislative Session, a total of 11,691 slots were funded for the 2015-17 Biennium. For FYs 2018 and 2019, the number of funded slots is 12,491 and 13,491, respectively.

There are three types of ECEAP slots available to participants:

- **Partial Day:** A minimum of 2.5 hours per day over a nine month period of time;
- **Full School Day:** 5.5 to 6.5 hours per day through the regular school year; and
- **Extended Day:** at least 10 hours per day for five days per week throughout a calendar year.

Tracking the Current Forecast

	Feb-19 Forecast	Actual	Variance	Percent Variance
Jan-19	13,545	13,073	-472	-3.5%
Feb-19	13,531	12,971	-560	-4.1%
Mar-19	13,540	13,120	-420	-3.1%
Apr-19	13,429	13,105	-324	-2.4%

Eligible ECEAP Participants by Academic Year

Academic Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Age 3 & 4 Population	182,807	185,086	187,896	188,446
Estimated ECEAP Eligible Population	34,629	32,842	33,438	33,296
Estimated ECEAP Eligible Participants	18,462	17,208	17,604	17,552
Eligibles as % of Age 3 & 4 Population	19%	18%	18%	18%
Participants as % of Eligible Population	53%	52%	53%	53%

During the 2019-21 Biennium, it is anticipated that approximately 18 percent of the population aged 3 and 4 are eligible to participate in ECEAP. Of those who are eligible, it is estimated that roughly 53 percent will choose to participate.

The effect of rising state minimum wage is accounted for in the forecast. Per literature review, it is assumed that a 10% increase in minimum wage will result in a 1.5% reduction of the population eligible for the ECEAP program.

Academic Year Caseload Change

	Academic Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
Actual	2014-15	9,356		
	2015-16	10,965	1,609	17.2%
	2016-17	11,294	329	3.0%
	2017-18	11,989	695	6.2%
Forecast	2018-19	12,586	597	5.0%
	2019-20	13,173	587	4.7%
	2020-21	13,794	621	4.7%

Because the ECEAP caseload won't become an entitlement caseload until the 2022-23 school year, the increase of enrollment since the inception of this program has been driven by the number of slots funded through legislative appropriations. Most recently, the Legislature added 800 additional ECEAP slots in FY 2018 and 1,000 ECEAP slots in FY 2019. During the 2019 session, the legislature increased the total number of slots by 509 and 662 for FY 2020 and 2021, respectively.

ECEAP eligibility is primarily based on a child's age and family income. Prior to July 2018, children may also be eligible under rules adopted by the DEL (now DCYF) if the number of such children is no more than 10 percent of enrollment in the program. SSB 6419 of 2018 expanded the 10 percent limit to 25 percent. However, these additional children are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement caseload. Since September 2018, DCYF has been serving an average of about 350 such kids per month. These children were inadvertently included in the February forecast, but are removed in the June forecast.

The additionally funded slots in FY 2020 and 2021 are the driver for the higher June forecast for those years.

Risks to the Forecast

Risks to the ECEAP forecast are moderate. Because total enrollment is limited to the number of slots available, the caseload will continue to change in concert with legislative appropriations. However, once the program becomes an entitlement in 2022-23, the actual caseload will be sensitive to the number of those who are income eligible and the patterns of participation.