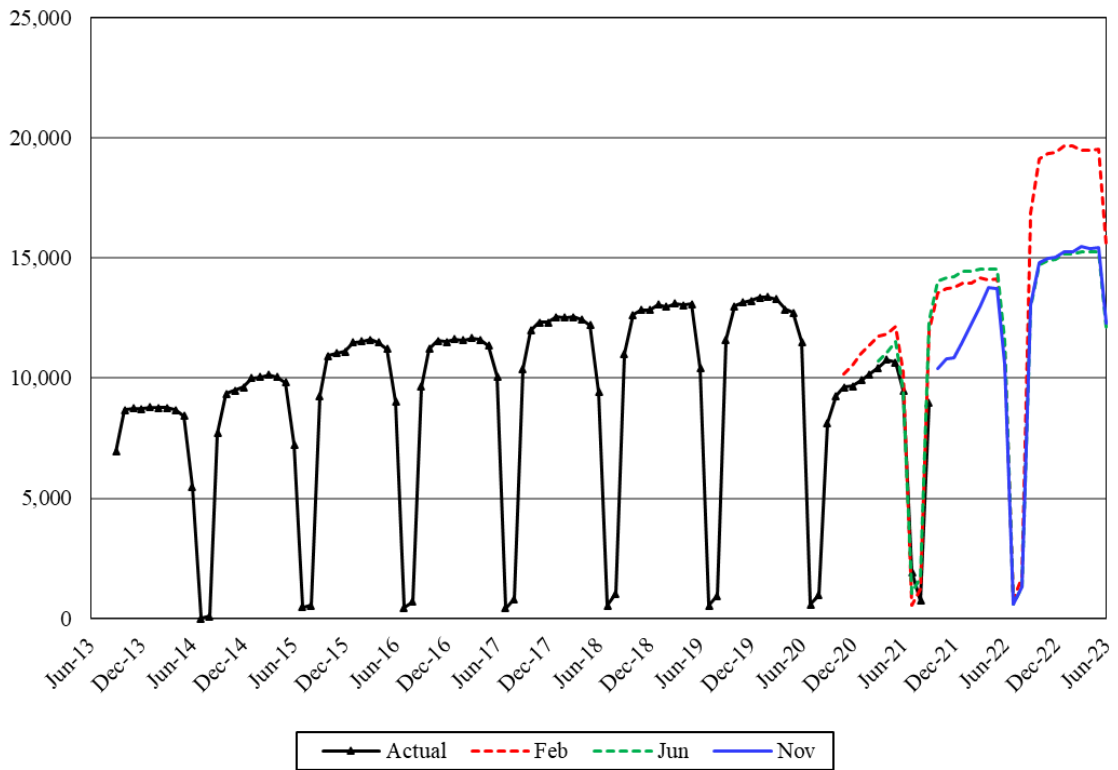


Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program



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 (Fiscal Year Averages)

Fiscal Year	Feb-21 Forecast	Jun-21 Forecast	Nov-21 Forecast	Feb to Nov Difference	Percent Difference	Jun to Nov Difference	Percent Difference
2022	13,626	14,161	11,847	-1,778	-13.1%	-2,313	-16.3%
2023	19,054	14,763	14,890	-4,164	-21.9%	126	0.9%

The November 2021 forecast is, on average, 2,971 cases or 18.2 percent lower than the February forecast, and 1,094 or 7.6 percent lower than the June forecast for the 2021-23 Biennium.

Tracking the Current Forecast

	Jun-21 Forecast	Actual	Variance	Percent Variance
Mar-21	10,689	10,419	-270	-2.5%
Apr-21	11,078	10,763	-315	-2.8%
May-21	11,539	10,662	-877	-7.6%
Jun-21	9,499	9,476	-23	-0.2%
Jul-21	1,043	1,941	898	86.0%
Aug-21	1,726	731	-995	-57.6%
Sep-21	12,368	8,972	-3,396	-27.5%

Actuals are tracking, on average, 711 cases or 8.6 percent lower than the June 2021 forecast.

ECEAP eligibility is primarily based on a child’s age and family income. Children otherwise ineligible may also participate under rules adopted by DCYF, provided that the number of such children is no more than 25 percent of enrollment in the program. During the 2020-2021 school year, the program served an average of about 729 such children per month. These children are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement caseload and are not counted in this forecast.

The June forecast assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would abate, and the caseload would begin to return to historical patterns beginning in July 2021; however, a resurgence of infections has again disrupted the ECEAP program. While higher than September 2020 enrollment, the September 2021 caseload is 22.7 percent lower than the September 2019 caseload. This forecast assumes that the caseload will increase gradually over the rest of the 2021-2022 school year as it did in 2020-2021 and return to historical levels, adjusted for increases in the number of enrollment slots funded by the legislature, in the 2022-2023 school year.

Fiscal Year Caseload Change

	Academic Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
<i>Actual</i>	2013-2014	8,196		
	2014-2015	9,356	1,160	14.2%
	2015-2016	10,965	1,610	17.2%
	2016-2017	11,294	329	3.0%
	2017-2018	11,989	695	6.2%
	2018-2019	12,660	671	5.6%
	2019-2020	12,955	295	2.3%
	2020-2021	9,964	-2,991	-23.1%
<i>Forecast</i>	2021-2022	11,847	1,884	18.9%
	2022-2023	14,890	3,042	25.7%

Risks to the Forecast

Risks to this forecast are high. ECEAP participation was low throughout the 2020-2021 school year and has been low for the start of the 2021-2022 school year. The pace of recovery will be influenced the progress achieved in limiting COVID-19 case counts in the community and by opportunities for younger children to receive COVID-19 vaccines.