



The Ohio Early Learning Content Standards (mathematics, social studies and science) courses were delivered to 947 participants. Twenty-one faculty members at 14 higher education institutions served as the course instructors.

In addition, ODE supports the Ohio Resource Center Early Childhood Instructional (ORC) Web site. This online service provides teachers with lesson plans that are reviewed by a panel of content experts. As of March 2007, the Web site had received more than 200,000 hits with an average of 16,700 hits per week. ODE continues to work with the ORC to provide workshops to teachers and administrators in the use of the Web site.

Finally, a teacher leader project was initiated to help ELI programs develop program capacity for offering selected professional development opportunities and to coach teachers in research based practices. Twenty-nine teacher-leaders met monthly to learn about the importance of coaching teachers in newly learned skills. These teacher-leaders in turn worked with 136 classroom teachers, reaching 2,929 children.

Family Engagement:

ODE provides parents and family members with information and guidance about Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards through a variety of avenues. Each ELI site received the *Learning and Growing Together* CD. This resource provides parents with helpful information about the content standards and examples of ways to support learning through routine family activities such as going grocery shopping, taking trips in the car, and getting ready for bed.



Communication is Critical refers to the importance of program leadership and accountability for results. In order to assist programs in meeting their goals, ODE connected with ELI contracted agencies in the following ways:

A total of 16 ODE consultants provided technical assistance for all aspects of the program requirements, meeting with local leadership, providing specialize professional development (i.e. curriculum alignment) and reviewing the contracted agency continuous improvement plan and corrective actions when necessary. Each consultant provided an average of 134 contact hours to each of their contracted agencies.

An individual contracted by ODE reviewed and verified the data and documentation (i.e. teacher credentials; health and developmental screenings; GGG data; child and teacher files). In addition, ODE offered intensive technical assistance by an external entity to selected ELI programs that could benefit from the service.

The requirement for accountability and communication has ended up being an opportunity to build a positive relationship with the teachers - it's opened this regular communication line. Regarding data, the reports we send to ODE - it's a lot to keep track of, but it has really given us a lot of information on our performance that tells us a lot about what we're doing right, what we need to improve, etc.
- Jackie Plantner,
Horizon Activities
Centers

All ELI contracted agencies received an onsite visit for a review of program data. In addition, visits were made to an additional 200 classrooms. The results of these visits and consultant reports indicated that of the total number of contracted agencies (102), 31 had no findings (in any program area) and 71 had findings requiring corrective action plans and/or follow-up procedures.

The primary areas of findings were: inability to meet the required hours for professional development (20 hours per year); health and developmental screenings not completed within the 60 days of enrollment; and in 12 locations, teachers were not able to demonstrate actions or activities required to meet the individual needs of some of the children in their classrooms.

Contracted agencies reported that teacher turnover and lack of qualified substitute teachers played a role in the inability of teachers completing the required number of hours of professional development. In addition, some agencies indicated a lack of opportunities as their inability in meeting the requirement.

Eleven contracted agencies were identified by ODE consultants as needing intensive technical assistance due to systems-related issues (i.e. not meeting health and developmental timelines for a significant number of children; lack of a referral and follow-up system; inaccurate or incomplete submission of required data). An additional 17 contracted agencies emerged as needing support for selected program elements (i.e. assistance in the alignment of curriculum; development of an agency professional development plan). Of the total number of contracted agencies identified as needing support, only 10 requested additional support.





The ELI Authorization and Fiscal Process

When the ELI program began in July 2005, families who desired services were required to be eligible under Title IV-A of the federal Social Security Act with family income not greater than 185 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), an income of approximately \$29,000 per year for a family of three. The child's caretaker or caretakers had to be employed or meeting the requirements of an Ohio Works First (OWF) self-sufficiency plan. The child could also be a recipient of OWF child-only cash assistance. In addition, a co-payment was assigned to families above 165 percent FPL.

Subsequent policy changes were made in order to improve the continuity of a child's early education experience and to increase the number of eligible children.

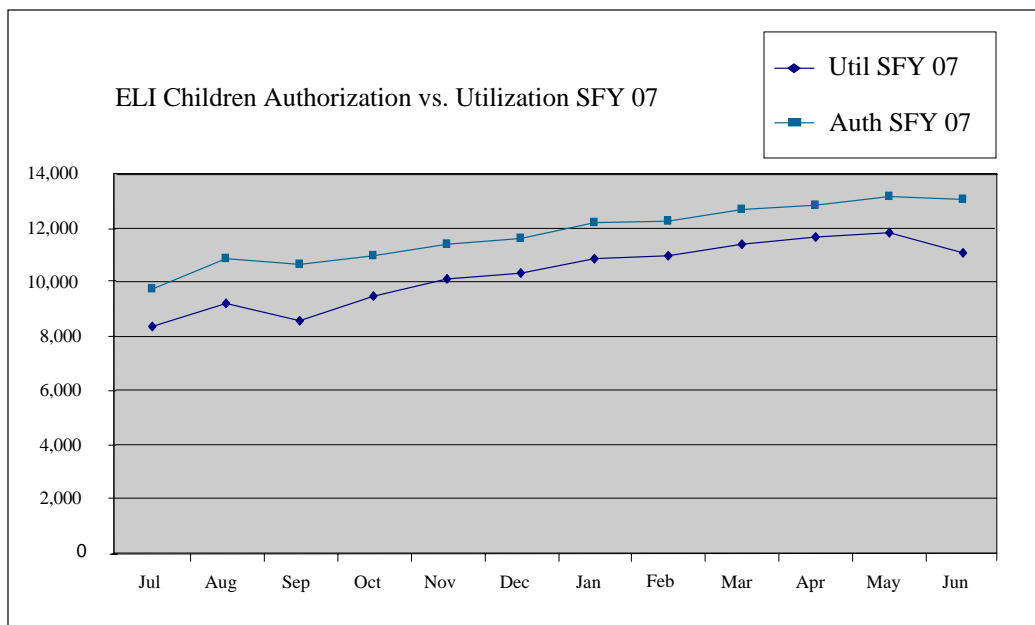
- September 2005 - Allowed payment to providers for up to 25 absent days per child in a 12-month period.
- November 2005 - Eligibility expanded to allow a single caretaker to be engaged in one hour per week of paid employment.
- January 2006 - Removed contiguous county requirement to allow ELI contracted agencies to serve children in counties not contiguous to the county in which the contracted agency is located.



Authorization and Utilization of Services

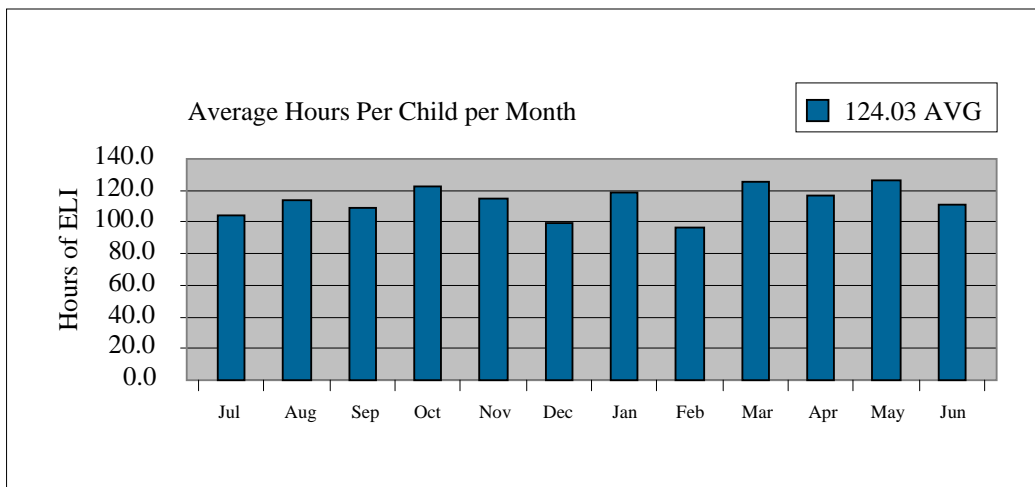
The goal of the ELI program for SFY 07 was to serve 12,000 children in full-day, full-year services. The average monthly utilization for SFY 07 was 9,398 children. Utilization rates increased over the course of the fiscal year from a low of 8,340 to a high of 11,826. An average of 83 percent of authorized children (24,129) used ELI services.

Authorization and Utilization for SFY 07



Average Hours of ELI Services

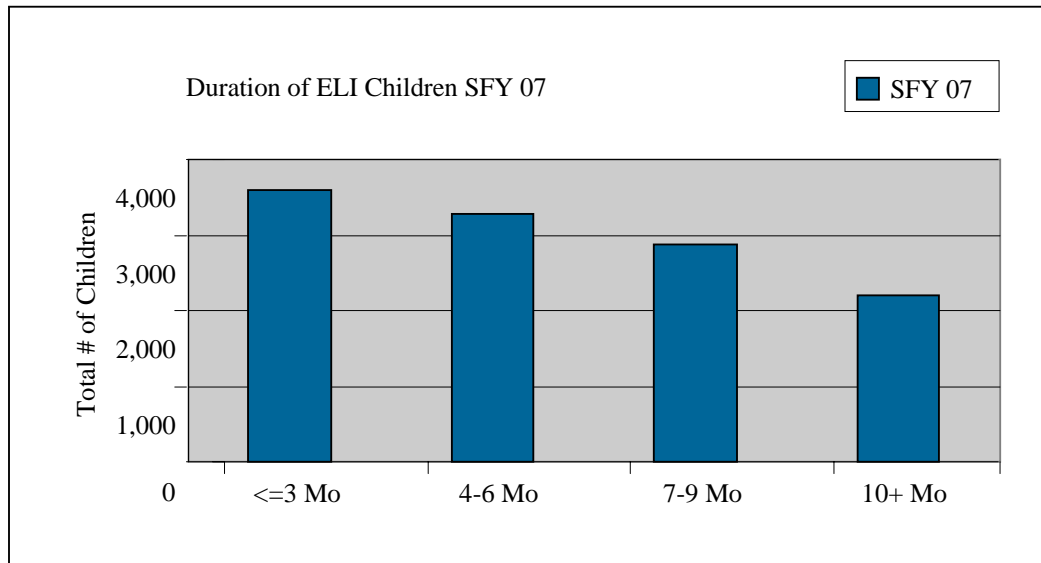
Children served in ELI averaged 124.03 hours per month or 30 hours per week. The lowest monthly average was 96.4 hours in February and the highest was 181.33 hours in May.





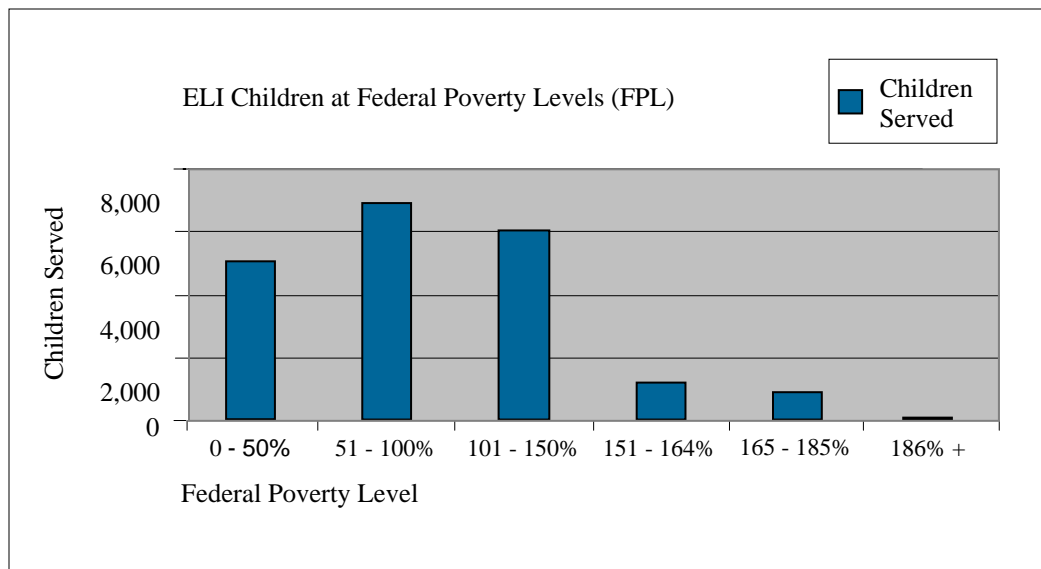
Months of Service

Of the children served in SFY 07, 24 percent were in the program for seven months or longer and 18 percent attended for 10 months or longer. Based on community needs assessments, some ELI agencies scheduled part-day programs through the school year and some offered full-day, full-year programs.



Federal Poverty Levels (FPL) for Families Served

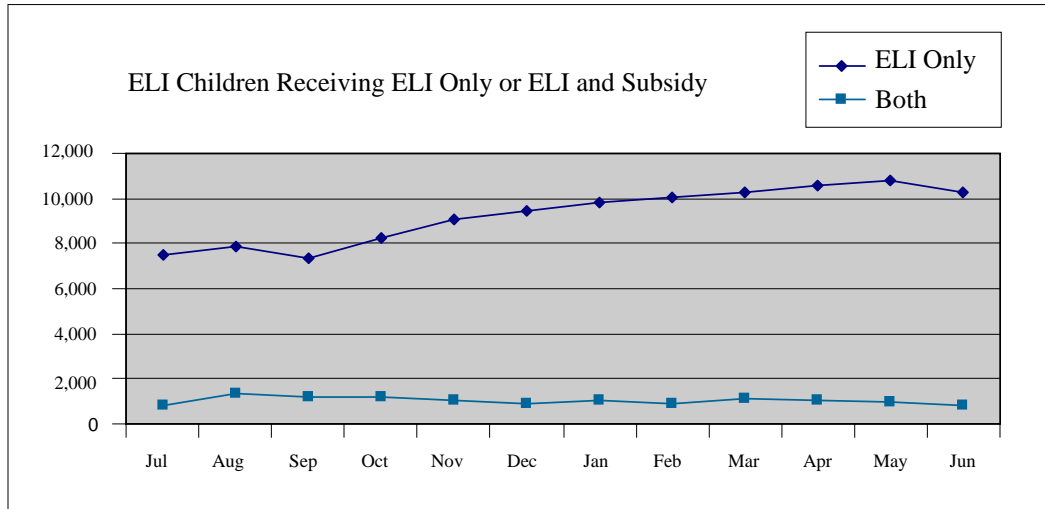
Of children receiving ELI services, 11,879 children were of families below 100 percent FPL; 6,024 were below 150 percent FPL; and 2,124 were from families above 150 percent FPL.



From the family's perspective, ELI families understand and appreciate that this is a school readiness program that will help the child succeed in kindergarten.
 - Linda Jenner,
 Hamilton County Head Start

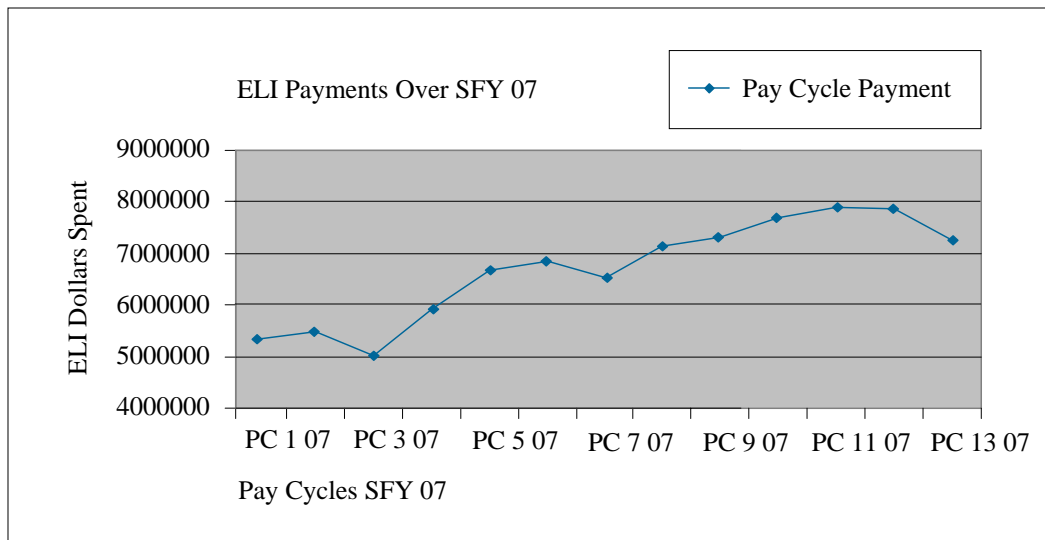
Children Receiving ELI or ELI and Subsidized Child Care

During SFY 07, the average number of children receiving ELI services only was 9,280 per month. The monthly average of ELI children who also receive subsidized child care was 1,040. The average percent of children utilizing both ELI and subsidized child care was 11.2 percent. The use of ELI and subsidized child care decreased from a high of 16.9 percent to a low of 7.8 percent, due to a policy change that prevented the use of child care between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. for a child that was enrolled in ELI.



Reimbursement for ELI Services

One hundred and two (102) ELI contracted agencies served children in SFY 07 and received more than \$87,000,433 in ELI attendance dollars. Fifty-one of the contracted agencies used 70 percent or more of their allocated attendance dollars. Bonus payments of \$4,706,750 were awarded to ELI agencies that met the requirements for professional development and monitoring activities.





Contract Monitoring

During SFY 07, ODJFS ELI contract consultants conducted monitoring of all 102 ELI contracted agencies. The monitoring was conducted to assess compliance with Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules, policies, regulations and the terms and conditions of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI) contract. Monitoring activities consisted of onsite desk reviews of expenditures, attendance records and co-payment information. The monitoring results revealed some opportunities for improvement specifically related to the accuracy and maintenance of attendance records and the recording of co-payments. ODJFS ELI contract consultants provided technical assistance and sought corrective action plans from 43 contracted agencies where warranted.

Looking Forward to SFY 2008

Effective July 2008, Governor Strickland enacted two major policy changes that were advocated by stakeholders:

- families who meet income eligibility standards are no longer required to demonstrate work status and;
- once a child is enrolled for ELI services, the child has continuous eligibility for ELI for 12 months.

It is anticipated that these policy changes will result in more children having uninterrupted access to ELI education and comprehensive services. In addition, the procedure for provider reimbursement was revised. It is now calculated on a pay-cycle monthly basis, which will enable programs to better access full-time rates for billing purposes.

Anecdotally, ELI contracted agencies report that the work is hard, but rewarding. Through the required data elements for ELI, programs are seeing results. Many are beginning to realize the importance of data collection and its use for continuous improvement. While ELI programs reported that writing an ELI plan and meeting the required timeframes for review were time consuming, the outcome was beneficial to the local leadership teams.

While the data submitted indicate progress, the ODE and ODJFS staff realize that there is more that needs to be accomplished by both contracted agency leadership and through contracted sub-providers to assure that all personnel associated with ELI are receiving the information and guidance needed to be successful.

Although all ELI contracted agencies are demonstrating progress in meeting the goals as outlined in their Early Learning Program plan, there is concern about the relationship between the contracted agencies and their ability to meet the needs of contracted sub-providers. In addition, much like the children they serve, self-operated and contracted sub-providers are developing into programs that meet a school readiness agenda at different rates.

*Just promise that it
will continue on!*

- Deb Lloyd,

*Community Action of
Wayne/Medina Cos.*

ELI Advisory Committee SFY 2007

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