Pennsylvania
Department of Education

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Statute, Regulations and Guidelines

Effective November 22, 2024

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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Statutory Authority:

Act 45 of 2007 (24 PS § 15-1511-D(B)) established the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) program as a competitive grant program to expand pre-kindergarten opportunities for eligible students throughout the commonwealth. The Act authorizes the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to promulgate regulations and establish guidelines and

standards necessary to implement PA PKC. The regulations that were promulgated can be found at Part 405 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code.

PA PKC serves children who are at least three years of age and younger than the entry age for kindergarten and must be provided free of charge. Grants are awarded through a competitive grant process to school districts, Head Start programs, licensed nursery schools, child care centers and group child care homes that are at least a STAR 3 under the Keystone STARS quality rating system established by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and third-party entities that carry out the administrative and fiduciary provisions of PA PKC but not operate a classroom funded by the grant. The PA PKC programs must target enrollment to children who are most at risk of school failure, which is defined as living in households below 300 percent of the federal poverty rate, are English Language Learners (ELL) or are at risk due to community factors, academic difficulties, or economic disadvantages. Grant recipients shall verify income and family size before enrolling students. Children with identifiable disabilities or developmental delays may be included in the program and shall be served in inclusive environments in which they constitute no more than 20 percent of the initial enrollment at the start of the program year.

Grant funds may not be placed in a reserve account or used for administrative purposes. They may only fund programs that provide no fewer than 180 days of pre-kindergarten services, include a minimum of 2.5 hours of instructional services in half-day programs and a minimum of 5 hours of instructional services for full-day programs. PA PKC providers may have a delayed start-up in the first year of their participation in the program and offer fewer than 180 days of instructional services upon approval by PDE. Classroom size is restricted to no more than 20 students (with 17 students preferred as in the State Board of Education regulations in Chapter 4 (relating to academic standards and assessment) of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code with two adult staff—a teacher certified in early childhood education, and a teacher aide who meets one or more of the following: completion of two full years of postsecondary study, holds a child development associate's credential or an associate's degree or higher, or passed a rigorous formal state or local assessment demonstrating knowledge. Continuing professional development must be provided to both teachers and teacher aides. In addition, teachers shall complete an induction program, undergo evaluations, and apply for Level II Certification under the State Board of Education regulations in Chapter 49 (relating to certification of professional personnel) of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code.

In planning programs, providers shall coordinate and collaborate with Early Intervention and Head Start agencies, school districts, community groups and other area providers of pre-kindergarten services. In particular, grantees should coordinate the availability of services with other Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) programs which have waiting lists. Grantees operating in partnerships with other entities shall have written partnership agreements explaining how they will operate. Providers shall have plans for family engagement, transition of students to kindergarten, immunizations, and emergency response.

PA PKC curriculum must be aligned with the early learning standards established by PDE, and grantees and their provider partners shall perform other duties under applicable regulations and standards, including assessment of student progress and the classroom environment. Eligible students may not be included in school district calculations for average daily membership for the purpose of fund reimbursements under Article XXV of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P. S. §§ 25-2501—25-2599.3).

PDE has promulgated regulations and established guidelines that address the process through which eligible providers may apply for grant funds, allowable and required uses of the funds, per-student funding levels and the criteria for identifying approved providers. PDE will also identify student and program assessments to be used by approved providers, encourage the development and maintenance of community coordination and partnerships, and perform other functions necessary to carry out PA PKC, including the monitoring of approved providers.

Format of this document

This document contains the regulatory requirements for grantees of the PA Pre-K Counts program, along with the policies that provide guidance and clarification on the implementation of the regulations. The regulatory language is presented as it is articulated within 22 Pa. Code Chapter 405. In most cases guidance and clarifications are provided immediately after the related regulation. In cases where the guidance and clarifications are substantial, information is provided and referenced in either a supplemental resource or an appendix. All information within this document should be considered program policy.

Additional resources for program administration can be found within the PA PKC portal. Lead and partner agencies must gain access to the PA PKC portal to access important information including policy announcements, communications, resources, and templates related to program operations. To access the portal, contact your assigned Preschool Program Specialist (PPS) with the names and emails of any grant-related staff who need access. Once names and emails are processed, the identified individual will receive an electronic link inviting them to the portal. This link should be retained and/or bookmarked for continual access to the portal.

RULES and REGULATIONS, [22 PA. CODE § 405] Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts

General Provisions

§ 405.1. Purpose.

This chapter establishes rules and procedures for implementing the Program created to provide expanded access to high quality prekindergarten experiences for eligible students.

Guidance and Clarifications

No Further Clarification Required.

§ 405.2. Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Act—Article XV-D (b) of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. §§ 15- 1511-D—15-1516-D), added by the act of July 20, 2007 (P.L. 278, No. 45).
Approved provider—An eligible provider that has been approved by the Department to offer prekindergarten under the act.
At-risk child—A child who is at risk of educational failure because of poverty, economic disadvantages, limited English proficiency, academic difficulties, or individual or community factors.
CDA—Child Development Associate Credential.
Department—The Department of Education of the Commonwealth.
Eligible applicant—Any of the following entities:

(i) A school district.
(ii) A Head Start program.
(iii) A nursery school licensed under the Private Academic Schools Act (24 P.S. §§ 6701—6721).
(iv) A regulated child day care center or a group day care home that is designated a STAR 3, or higher under the Keystone STARS quality rating system established by the Department of Public Welfare, as of the beginning of the 2009-2010 program year.
(v) A third-party entity that will carry out fiduciary and other lead agency responsibilities for entities eligible to operate program classrooms.

Eligible provider—An eligible provider as defined in section 1511-D of the act (24 P.S. § 15-1511-D). A child day care center or group day care home must have been designated a STAR 3, or higher under the Keystone STARS quality rating system established by the Department of Public Welfare as of the beginning of the 2009-2010 program year.
Eligible student—An eligible student as defined in the section 1511-D of the act.
Grant—An award of funds by the Department for the purposes of carrying out the Program.
Identified developmental delay or disability—As used in this chapter, a child who has a written Individualized Education Program under Chapter 14 (relating to special education services and programs) and the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (20 U.S.C.A. §§ 1400—1419).
Lead agency—An entity that submits an application for funding and will undertake reporting, record-keeping, compliance, and fiduciary responsibilities for the members of a partnership under the grant.
Location—The site, place, or address where Program services are provided.
Partner—One, or more, entities that are in a formal relationship with a lead agency to provide Program services using grant funds and that have signed a written partnership agreement.
Partnership agreement—The written document that specifies the roles and responsibilities of all entities in the partnership established to provide Program services using grant funds.
Program—The PA Pre-K Counts Program established under the act.

Program year—The school year during which Program services are delivered to children enrolled in the program.
Teacher—The primary teacher in the classroom who is responsible for the instruction of children and meets the requirements in § 405.44 (relating to staffing and professional development).
Teacher aide—A paraprofessional who provides instructional support to students, including those who do one or more of the following:

(i) Provide one-on-one tutoring if tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher.
(ii) Assist with classroom management, by organizing instructional materials.
(iii) Provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory.
(iv) Conduct parental involvement activities.
(v) Provide instructional support in a library or media center.
(vi) Act as a translator.
(vii) Provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of the primary teacher.

Guidance and Clarifications
An approved or eligible provider refers specifically to eligible service provider types. Any location serving PKC students must meet one of the approved provider types.

§ 405.3. General rules.

(a) Program services shall be provided free of charge.
(b) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent families with children who participate in the Program and are willing and able to pay part or all of the cost of the participation, from doing so. Approved and eligible providers and lead agencies are prohibited from soliciting costs from families.
(c) A student participating in the Program may not be included in the average daily membership or adjusted average daily membership of an approved provider school district for the purpose of reimbursement under Article XXV of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. §§ 25-2501—25-2599.3).
(d) Programs must be open to children with identified developmental delays or disabilities, or both, and provide inclusive environments for these children.
(e) Approved providers may enroll eligible students who reside outside of the providers' usual attendance area, but all eligible children must be residents of this commonwealth.
(f) Program grant funds are to be used for providing services and programs to age-eligible students as described in § 405.21 (relating to targeting children to be served). Program classes may include children supported by alternative funding sources, including Early Intervention, Head Start, school district or other public funds. In addition, those other funding sources may be used to support a student in a Program outside the age requirements or the 2-year time limitation.
(g) Approved providers shall verify the income and family size of all children participating in the Program prior to enrollment pursuant to Program announcements issued by the Department.

(h) Program providers shall be provided with Program announcements issued by the Department to provide guidance and direction regarding application, implementation and reporting requirements.
(i) The Department will administer the Program consistent with the statutory authorization.

Guidance and Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may not charge families any fees during the established program hours and must assure that all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children attend for free, including any meals and field trips.

Nutritious meals and snacks must be provided by the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program at appropriate times during the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts day. A half day program must offer, at a minimum, one meal each day. Full day programs must offer both a snack and a meal. No fees may be charged for any snack or meal. Additional information on meals and snacks can be found in #001: Meals and Snacks in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Classrooms.

Providers may not charge a concurrent fee to any other program for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funded child during the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts portion of the day.

Pursuant to the 2- year time limitation for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts participation, children enrolled in PA PKC must have turned three years of age by the kindergarten cut-off date for the district of residency.

Once a child is age-eligible to attend kindergarten in the public school district of residence they are no longer eligible for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding.

Those children eligible for kindergarten whose parents elect to keep their child in pre-kindergarten for an additional year may be placed in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom provided alternate funding sources are used and the child is not included in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts enrollment. This applies to a kindergarten-eligible child who is participating in the Early Intervention program.

There are two primary eligibility requirements that all children must meet to be considered eligible for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts; children must be age and income eligible for the program. Local programs may define additional eligibility requirements through an approved enrollment prioritization plan, but at a minimum age and income must be met.

All children who participate in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts must be income eligible. Families whose income is at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible. Income verification is required for every child.

Grantees must verify a family's low-income status before final enrollment is completed by collecting documentation of income that confirms the reported annual gross income noted

during the initial stages of the enrollment process. The verification of family size and income must be documented through a staff person's signature and kept on file. Acceptable documentation to determine eligibility can be found in #002: Income and Family Size Verification Guidance.

Approved income eligibility is valid for the entire time the child is enrolled in the program. It does not need to be re-assessed annually.

Documentation of this requirement must be kept on file at the program using secure storage methods. These records, while confidential, are subject to audit and review.

Grantees will need to use the current poverty guidelines established for the current school year for enrollment decisions and income verification.

Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) is the Departments of Human Services and Education's initiative to combine the state's early learning programs under a single management information system. PELICAN serves as the authoritative contact list for the program. Notices and announcements and other communications are dispersed based on email addresses pulled from this source. Providers are expected to update contact information in PELICAN monthly.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts agencies and partners will have a minimum of one formal compliance review visit annually. Preschool program specialists will utilize the Program Review Instrument (PRI) and other supporting documents to identify areas of strength and areas of needed focus to assure full compliance with Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts regulations and policies. Additional information on program review and monitoring can be found in #003: Program Review and Monitoring.

Competitive Application Procedures

§ 405.11. Eligible Provider.

An eligible provider may apply for a grant alone or in combination with other eligible providers as a joint applicant, in which case the entity that applies for the grant shall be the lead agency in a partnership, as defined in § 405.2 (relating to definitions).

Guidance and Clarifications

The following entities may operate Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms.

1. School districts;
2. Licensed nursery schools;
3. Head Start grantees; and
4. Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes that maintain a STAR 3 rating or higher under the Keystone STARS Program.

A third-party entity may apply for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding and administer the lead agency responsibilities for entities that are eligible to provide the classroom services under the categories listed above.

Provider eligibility must be maintained throughout the entire grant period.

§ 405.12. Proposal Submission.

(a) The Department will announce through its website when competitive grant applications are to be submitted to the Department, specifying the submission deadline.
(b) To be considered for a grant award, an applicant shall meet the deadline for submission of all information by the dates announced in the request for applications.

Guidance and Clarifications

Competitive grant application announcements are posted at PA PKC How to Apply, announced through Penn*Link (to LEAs) and through the Early Education e-news. Subscribe to the PA Early Ed News.

The eGrants Grants Management platform is the system typically used for application submission for PKC competitive grants. This is a system separate from the PELICAN system. To access eGrants, applicants must use MyPDESuite. This is a web portal that enables users to access various PDE data collection applications including eGrants and the Financial Accounting Information System (FAI). Download Information on how to access MyPDESuite for various PDE data collection applications including eGrants.

§ 405.13. Grant Agreements.

(a) After an eligible provider has been approved, the provider or lead agency shall enter into a grant agreement with the Department. Grant agreements must contain, at a minimum, a work statement and budget.
(b) Grantees shall contact the Department for guidance if a change needs to be made to the scope of work or the budget contained in the grant agreement.

Guidance and Clarifications

Competitive Grants:

Competitive grants are awarded for one year, with an established number of subsequent years of continuation grants if funding is available. Preschool Program Specialists (PPS) will notify their assigned programs each year of the timeline for opening continuation grants and budgets, as well as the final due date. OCDEL reserves the right to deny any continuation grant and budget that was not preapproved. Timely submissions for continuation grants are expected.

Continuation Grants:

The PELICAN system is used for the continuation grant process.

There are several potential types of Continuation Grant applicants as described below:

Continuation Grants with No Changes:

This category includes:

- Single applicants that are requesting the same number of half-day and/or full day Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts slots and the same level of funding as was awarded in the previous fiscal year.
- It also includes joint/partnership applicants with no changes in the partners, the total number and type of slots requested, or in the site or location that a particular partner plans to use for its Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classes, or in the number and type of slots (half-day and full-day) for each partner. The total funding, number and type of slots remain the same as in the previous fiscal year. There is no change in any of the partners in this category of continuation application nor a change in the funding level requested. There may, however, be changes in specific line items in the budget that show how the funds are to be used, including the level of pass-through funds provided to each partner, but not in the number or type of slots each pass through recipient is to receive.

Continuation Grants with Changes:

There are several types of Continuation Grants with Changes.

a. Requests by single applicants to change the number and type of slots (half-day and full-day) they will provide, but not the level of funding. This includes partnerships or joint applicants proposing to change the number and types of slots requested for any of the partners in a partnership, but not the total funds requested.

b. Requests to change the distribution of half-day and/or full-day slots among various locations and/or partners and their locations.

c. Requests for fewer slots and funding by a single applicant or a joint applicant, including a joint applicant that is requesting funds for a partnership that is dropping one or more partner. If a partner is not planning to be an ongoing part of a partnership, whether by its own volition or for any other reason, the slots and per child funding provided to that partner through the lead agency revert to OCDEL. The slots and their funding do not belong to the partnership or the lead agency. Nor do the slots belong to the departing partner to continue as a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provider either on its own or as part of another partnership.

d. Requests for a change in the location of one or more classroom.

e. Requests for a change in one or more partner (adding a partner, dropping a partner, or both).

f. Changes in overall funding and slot allocations due to under enrollment. OCDEL may reduce a lead agency grant during the continuation grant process to a level that aligns with historical enrollment percentages. OCDEL may also increase a lead agency's grant during the continuation grant process to provide additional funding and slot allocations.

Consolidation Grants:
Two or more lead agencies may consolidate their program under one lead agency, designating the other as a partner. The funds requested for a Continuation Grant for the consolidated lead agencies may not exceed the sum of the grants to the lead agencies when they were individual or separate grantees in the previous fiscal year. Lead agencies that wish to consolidate should contact their preschool program specialist as soon as possible for directions on how to consolidate.

§ 405.14. Annual Community Needs Assessment.

Applicants for Program funding shall conduct an annual assessment of community needs for Pre-K services as part of the application process for continuation, expansion, or new grant funds.

Guidance and Clarifications
Lead agencies and their partners must update their needs assessment annually to fulfill regulatory requirement for continuation applications. A new needs assessment must be conducted in years when a competitive rebid grant process occurs.

Program Planning

§ 405.21. Targeting children to be served.

The Department will instruct applicants to target their program enrollment to children who are most at risk, consistent with the description in the program guidance of targeting services to children most at risk, if it is likely that the funds appropriated for the upcoming program year will be less than the funds required to serve all eligible children in this commonwealth. The Department will also instruct approved providers to engage in outreach and partnership with Child Care Works, Head Start, and other appropriate programs of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning to inform Programs and families that they serve about the availability of the Program and to coordinate with these programs particularly when there are waiting lists.

Guidance and Clarifications
Eligible Children:
Age and income are the two primary eligibility requirements that all children must meet to be considered for enrollment in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Additional considerations for enrollment include children who have limited English proficiency, are experiencing poverty, live in marginalized communities, experience social or academic difficulties, have a diagnosed or suspected disability. Additional guidance on enrollment prioritization plans can be found in #004: Enrollment Prioritization Plan Guidance.

Children living in families with income at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for enrollment in Pennsylvania Pre-K counts.

Outreach:

Grantees must establish and maintain collaborative, non-competitive, relationships with other local early learning programs (including other Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts grantees, Head Start, Early Learning Resource Centers (child care subsidy), and Early Intervention Programs) to ensure children on waiting lists can participate in the program which best meets family needs. This requires grantees to understand the early learning program options in their service area.

Providers are encouraged to use the COMPASS search option to identify early learning providers in their service area. In addition, providers are encouraged to update their provider profile within PELICAN Provider Self Service to ensure up to date and accurate program information is available to families interested in services.

§ 405.22. Maximizing Resources.

Approved providers shall use Program grant funds to supplement, not to supplant, public funds from any other source that are used to serve otherwise eligible students, including, but not limited to, Accountability Block Grant funds, local funds, or federal or state Head Start funds for Programs provided in the same geographic area.

However, this requirement does not prohibit combining funding sources for support of a single Program if additional eligible students are served and all of the Program standards are met by the program supported with the combined resources.

Guidance and Clarifications

Please note: The Accountability Block Grant referenced in the regulatory language above was renamed the Ready to Learn Block Grant.

Children who are enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts may be co-enrolled in other programs, including Child Care Works, federal or state Head Start, or private pay options.

Providers that receive multiple funding streams (e.g., Head Start funding or Child Care Works) should develop strategies to braid, layer, or leverage multiple resources to provide wraparound services to children who may need a longer day and/or a longer program year. Those providers who participate in the Child Care Works subsidy program may continue to do so. Note that for those children/families who are participating in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and receive Child Care Works subsidy, the Child Care Works eligibility regulations provide for the child to typically remain in subsidy as well as Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts throughout the course of the child's participation in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers and Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) are required to work together to coordinate services for those Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children who are also enrolled in wrap-around child care. At the start of the program year, PKC programs must communicate their PKC enrollments information to the ELRC to avoid dual enrollment of CCW and PKC unless appropriate. Monthly thereon, programs must update the ELRC with any changes to PKC enrollment (new enrollments and withdrawals)

to keep this information current. Contact your Preschool Program Specialist (PPS) with questions.

Head Start programs may participate in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts as well. To assure full use of Head Start funds, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must commit to avoid enrolling children in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts who are already served in a Head Start program or eligible to participate in Head Start. The purpose of this requirement is to avoid an impact on enrollments in Head Start such that federal Head Start resources or the state Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program resources would be supplanted.

Head Start eligible families may have unique needs that are best supported by a program that is designed specially to meet those needs and offers a broad array of services, as does Head Start. However, families with children eligible for Head Start may prefer to enroll them in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, rather than Head Start. The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program may enroll Head Start eligible students at the parent's request but should document:

1) The date(s) Head Start eligibility was shared with parents, and
2) The signature of parent(s) documenting their request for enrollment in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program.

The goal is to have cooperation rather than competition between Head Start and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in enrollment of students.

§ 405.23. Disallowance of Duplicate Funding.

Program funds may not be used to provide the same service for a child already receiving that service funded by another resource.

Guidance and Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding is the sole source of funding during the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts instructional day. Providers may utilize alternative funding for those Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children who are enrolled in additional programs such as Head Start and child care for the hours that extend beyond the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts day.

§ 405.24. Enrollment.

Each approved provider shall develop and implement a plan for securing full enrollment throughout the program year, except as follows:

(1) When a student leaves the Program after the start of the program year, the provider shall have up to 20 instructional days to fill the vacancy, after which time the Department may request the return of funds or reduce future payments for the vacated and unfilled slot in the amount of funds, relative to the remaining instructional days of the Program for that program year, unless the vacancy occurs within 21 instructional days of the last day of class.

(2) If an enrolled child has ten or more unexcused absences, the provider shall take appropriate steps to address attendance, up to and including dismissal of the child

from the program. The department may request the return of funds or reduce future payments to Programs that have not taken appropriate steps to overcome unexcused absences.

(3) Provider policies regarding unexcused absences and the number allowed must be written and provided to parents, families, or guardians of enrolled children and to the Department.

(4) An approved provider may not deny a student admission to the Program by reason of the student's disability.

Guidance and Clarifications

Per Act 35 of 2023 (Act 35), effective April 1, 2024, section 1517-D of the School Code requires an approved provider to report the following information to OCDEL:

- Notice and information on an eligible student enrolled in a program-funded slot in the approved provider's program within 15 days of enrollment, and
- Notice and information on an eligible student's removal from enrollment in a program-funded slot in an approved provider's program within 15 days from the removal of enrollment.

State law requires the Pennsylvania Department of Education to report this information quarterly the General Assembly.

Full enrollment is defined as a lead agency maintaining 90% or higher overall enrollment. Full enrollment, as demonstrated by PELICAN enrollment statistics, must be achieved by September 1 of each year, and always maintained. A child will not be counted by OCDEL as enrolled if the child is not entered into PELICAN.

Children are considered "enrolled" when there is mutual understanding between parent or guardian and the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program that the child has been accepted into the program and will begin attending on a specified future date. In addition, an intake meeting between parent and school has been completed, the necessary information has been gathered and the child has been identified as a candidate for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts slot.

Programs should make efforts to enroll children using their "legal" name. Programs should not refuse enrollment to children of parents who do not wish to provide "legal" name.

Outreach efforts throughout the community to locate and enroll children whose families are at 300 percent or below the federal poverty guidelines are an ongoing requirement for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

Through collaborative efforts with other community providers, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may be able to reduce the waiting lists in the county Head Start program or Child Care Works subsidy programs by establishing a system of reciprocal referrals.

A selection and prioritization strategy must be developed that first looks at 300 percent or below of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, then other risk factors such as limited English proficiency, teen parents, and lack of fixed, safe housing. Children with disabilities may receive at-risk prioritization in PKC programs as part of a provider's enrollment strategies if the child meets all eligibility requirements, as well as the attendance requirements for the PKC program. Services for eligible students may not be denied solely based on disability. Additional guidance on enrollment prioritization plans can be found in #004: Enrollment Prioritization Plan Guidance.

Providers have 20 instructional days to fill vacated slots. Vacancies lasting more than 20 days should be reported to the preschool program specialist. Maintaining a waiting list will ensure slots are filled immediately. Providers must include an accurate enrollment start date in PELICAN when entering a child's enrollment within 15 days of enrollment. Programs must also enter accurate end dates in PELICAN within 15 days of a child's removal from the program, along with an accurate reason for ending enrollment.

Attendance:

Providers must monitor attendance and establish a means to maintain attendance information so that it is available upon request of the Department. The PELICAN system may be used for this purpose; however, attendance data reporting within the PELICAN system will not be required. Students enrolled in a Pennsylvania PKC classroom must attend five days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year for the full length of the day, either 2.5 hours/half day or 5 hours/full day. Chronic, unexcused absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis and could result in reduced funding. These situations require ongoing support from the Pennsylvania PKC provider and may result in the child's dismissal from the program.

Written provider policies regarding attendance and notification expectations for when a child is absent must be provided to parents, guardians and PDE. A parent or family handbook is an effective means of defining program procedures and policies and sharing that information with families. The Attendance Policy should be included within the handbook and/ or provided in some other manner in writing. Additional guidance on Enrollment, Attendance and Vacancies can be found in #005: Enrollment, Vacancies, and Attendance.

Program Coordination and Collaboration

§ 405.31. Coordination and Collaboration with Agencies Providing Services to Young Children.

(a) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with the local agencies providing Early Intervention services to infants and toddlers to ensure a smooth transition for children and families that have been receiving services from Early Intervention.

(b) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with the local agencies providing Early Intervention services to preschool age children to ensure the following:

(1) A smooth transition for children and families that have been receiving services from Early Intervention.

(2) Coordination of any continued Early Intervention services the child will receive while enrolled in the Program.

(3) Awareness of the available Early Intervention services for children enrolled in the Program who have not been identified as in need of Early Intervention services but who may be eligible for the services, and the capacity to provide appropriate information to parents and make appropriate referrals for Early Intervention evaluations and services.

(c) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with the Child Care Information Services agency in their area to coordinate services and benefits received by families and to achieve enrollment in the Program of children who are most at risk and in need of services.

(d) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with programs that provide child care for participating children so that transportation arrangements, emergency contacts and other necessary information are shared and so that the needs of families whose children are enrolled in the Program are met.

(e) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with Head Start agencies.

(f) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with school districts in those areas from which they are enrolling children in the Program to develop and implement plans for a smooth transition for children who will leave the Program to be enrolled in the school districts' K-12 program; to ensure alignment of curriculum and standards between the Program and the K-12 school district program; and to consolidate activities, such as professional development, to the extent practicable, to the advantage of both programs and creation of greater efficiencies.

(g) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with the local community groups that engage the public in issues related to early childhood education.

(h) Approved providers shall coordinate and collaborate with other Program sites in their county on activities such as professional development, family outreach and child enrollment strategies, to the extent practicable to the advantage of all of the Programs and creation of greater efficiencies.

Guidance and Clarifications

Early Intervention

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs are inclusive, high-quality early childhood educational programs. For PKC children receiving Early Intervention services, the PKC Program is their general education setting. The defining features of inclusion is access, participation, and supports. PKC children receiving supports and services from local Early Intervention providers shall receive services in the same learning environments as their nondisabled peers.

Supports and services for children receiving Early Intervention are determined through the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education

Program (IEP). The IFSP/IEP is developed by the family and a team of early childhood professionals based on information gathered through assessments, observations of the child, information from the family and other individuals involved in the child's development. Pre-K Counts staff are integral partners and must be involved with the planning and coordination of Early Intervention services through attendance at plan meetings or through providing input into the development of the IFSP/IEP.

Early Intervention staff and Pre-K Counts staff will work together to embed strategies into the typical routines and activities within the program to promote the child's development and participation. Pre-K Counts program procedures will ensure a collaborative relationship with Early Invention providers to assure children receiving specialized services are able to do so within the Pre-K Counts program.

Pre-K Counts, in collaboration with Infant and Toddler Early Intervention programs, will develop procedures for the transition of children and families who are exploring Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts as an early childhood learning opportunity. Procedures will ensure planning will begin at least six months prior to the child's third birthday and collaborative efforts will be used to support the child and family's transition process. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers are integral in identifying children who may be eligible or in need of Early Intervention services. PA PKC should make family referrals to Early Intervention when appropriate and secure parental consent for the referral. It is the intent that children receiving Early Intervention services must participate in the full range of opportunities available to all children within the PKC program, including attendance five days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year for the full length of the day, either 2.5 hours/half day or 5 hours/full day. A temporary modified schedule may be approved by OCDEL on a case-by-case basis, with the goal of moving toward full program participation. Requests should be made in collaboration with Early Intervention, the provider, the family, and the Preschool Program Specialist. Providers should consult directly with the Preschool Program Specialist when drafting a request. The Preschool Program Specialist, if in support of the request, will submit the request for consideration by the Department. Providers should be aware that in cases where a modified schedule is approved, funding may be reduced.

The ELRCs serve as the Child Care Information Services agency. For more information on ELRCs, visit: Early Learning Resource Centers (pa.gov).

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must document all collaboration efforts. Programs are encouraged to operationalize collaborative efforts through written, formal agreements, which should be reviewed and/or updated at least annually.

Transition from Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs into kindergarten shall support a child's individual and family needs during the transfer of services (share adaptations and best practices) for a successful transition.

§ 405.32. Partnerships.

Partnerships of eligible providers must have a signed partnership agreement. The agreement shall be submitted to and approved by the Department. The partnership agreement must delineate how the entities that comprise the partnership will carry out their roles and responsibilities within the Program, including: communication, decision-making, reporting, monitoring of program requirements, recordkeeping, and fiduciary matters.

Guidance and Clarifications

As applied to Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, a "partnership" is an agreed upon formal relationship between a lead agency and eligible Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom providers, or partners, in which partnership members work together to provide high quality pre-kindergarten in a specific geographic area. For purposes of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, the word "partner" is used exclusively to mean an eligible provider that is providing a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom and is receiving funding for operational expenses which must include, at minimum, pass-through dollars for the hiring of lead teachers as employees of the partnering agency. This would not include an entity that is merely providing space for the classroom (rental agreement).

There must be established formal partnership agreements between a lead agency (grantee) and each of its partnering agencies. The formal agreement should be legally binding. In addition to the roles and responsibilities noted in the regulation above, the agreement must include detail relevant to partnerships from the lead agency contract and the instances and protocols for dissolving the partnership.

Program and Classroom Requirements

§ 405.41. School Term.

Programs shall offer a minimum of 180 days of developmentally appropriate instructional practices and activities for students.

(1) In the first year of operation as a provider, if the provider is unable to start up immediately at the beginning of the program year, the provider may serve children for fewer than 180 days, but in no case fewer than 160 days.

(2) Days may not be counted as days of developmentally appropriate practices and activities when the Program is closed, and time may not be counted as time spent on developmentally appropriate practices and activities for an activity to which admission is charged.

Guidance and Clarifications

Program Year

All continuing grantees are required to operate for a minimum of 180 instructional days per program year, and school cancellations must be made up to assure the full number of days of operation. It is advisable to include a few extra days of operation in the school calendar to anticipate weather-related closures.

Programs planning to use approved Flexible Instruction Plans (FIPs) (formerly referred to as Remote Learning Plans) to count days students engage in remote learning as instructional days need to do the following:

- Update and/or develop FIPs.
    - Plans must be developed with staff and family input and be approved by the programs' governing board or administrative body/person.
    - A partner agency must submit their FIPs to the lead agency for approval prior to any implementation.
    - Lead agencies must submit plans to the Preschool Program Specialists (PPS) for approval prior to any initiation of the plans.
- **AFTER** the FIP has been approved by the lead agency's governing board or administrative person/body and the PPS, the lead agency and partners must submit the Emergency Instructional Time (EIT) template to OCDEL at RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov.
    - The EIT template is located on the PA Key Intranet.
- Inform staff and families of the approved FIP by adding language to Emergency Preparedness Plans and to Family policies (e.g., family handbook).
    - Providers should review program attendance policies (PA PKC § 405.24. Enrollment and Supplemental Resource #005) and remind families of the program's attendance policies, including but not limited to what counts as an excused absence and how attendance will be tracked in instances of remote learning.
- Inform PPS within 24 hours of an initiated FIP during the school year.
- Track usage of initiated FIPs during the school year.
    - Programs should be able to produce reporting on instances of use to OCDEL, if requested.

For more details on FIP, see #019 Flexible Instruction Plan (FIP).

§ 405.42. Program Day and Developmentally Appropriate Instructional Practices and Activities.

Instructional time for students shall be time in the program devoted to developmentally appropriate instructional practices and activities provided as an integral part of the Program under the direction of qualified employees.

(1) The following practices and activities, as described in the early learning standards in § 4.20 (relating to pre-kindergarten education), count towards instructional time:

(i) Classroom instruction

(ii) Orientation of children during regular school hours to the Program, Program setting, and Program routines conducted:

(iii) Meals and snack-time, as long as they are integral parts of the curriculum facilitated by the lead teacher and used for student learning experiences

(iv) Play-time, including outdoor and indoor play or child directed activities as long as they are an integral part of the instructional day, facilitated by the lead teacher and used for student learning.
(v) Time spent at the library, and in art, music, or physical education.
(vi) Opening exercises that engage children, including opening circle time, in preparation for the day.
(vii) School, group, or class educational trips to which admission is not charged to students or parents and provided that a teacher accompanies the students.
(viii) Student services, such as guidance and counseling services, psychological services, speech pathology and audiology services, and student health services.
(ix) Civil defense, fire, bus evacuation and similar drills.
(x) Early dismissal and delayed opening only when due to inclement weather.

(2) Time spent in transportation, professional development and parent/teacher conferences does not count as instructional time.

Guidance and Clarifications

Length of Day:

There are two ways that Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts can be structured:

1. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may operate as half-day programs. These half-day programs must provide a minimum of 2.5 hour per day of instructional services or activities, for a minimum of 180 days per year.

2. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may operate as full-day programs for a minimum of 5 hours per day of instructional services or activities, for a minimum of 180 days per year.

Grantees are advised to plan for a minimum of an extra half hour in their schedule for arrival and departure time to ensure that children receive either the full 2.5 or 5 hours of instructional time that is intended. Naptime does not count as instructional time. Teachers and teacher aides will need to be scheduled and paid salary for a minimum of ½ hour a day beyond the scheduled time for the students to allow for planning and preparation time.

Instructional activities only count toward "instructional time" when children are with appropriately certified staff and include the following:

- Time spent at the library, and in art, music or physical education constitutes "instructional time" if facilitated by the regular teacher or area specialists.
- An early dismissal so that a part of the day may be spent in parent/teacher conferences does not count as a full day of instruction.
- Additional guidance on defining instructional time can be found in #006 Definition of Instructional Time.

Programs wishing to use approved Flexible Instruction Plans (FIPs) to count days students engage in remote learning as instructional time need to do the following:

- Update and/or develop Flexible Instruction Plans (FIPs), (formerly referred to as Remote Learning Plans)
    - Plans need to be developed with staff and family input and be approved by the programs' governing board, or administrative body/person.
- Partner Agencies must submit plans to lead agencies for approval prior to any initiation of the plans. Lead agencies must submit plans to Preschool Program Specialists (PPS) for approval prior to any initiation of the plans.
- Lead Agencies and Partner must submit the "Emergency Instructional Time" template to The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) via email to RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov.
    - Submission must take place **AFTER** the FIP has been approved by the lead agency's governing board or administrative person/body and the PPS. Do not submit prior to the approval.
    - The template can be found in the PA Key Intranet.
- Inform staff, and families of the approved FIP by adding language to Emergency Preparedness Plans, and Family policies (e.g., family handbook).
    - Providers should review program attendance policies (PA PKC § 405.24. Enrollment and Supplemental Resource #005; HSSAP HSPS 1302.16 Attendance) and remind families of the programs attendance policies, including but not limited to what counts as an excused absence, and how attendance will be tracked in instances of remote learning.
- Inform PPS within 24 hours of an initiated FIP during the school year.
- Track usage of initiated FIPs during the school year.
    - Programs should be able to produce reporting on instances of use to OCDEL, if requested.

For more details on Flexible Instruction Planning see #019 Flexible Instruction Plan (FIP).

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funds may only be used to support activities and for materials and program content that are secular in nature.

§ 405.43. Class Size and Student/Staffing Ratio.

(a) Program class enrollments are limited to at most 20 students with at least one teacher and one aide in the classroom, however, for high quality programming a maximum of 17 students is recommended.
(b) If a Program class has ten or fewer students, there shall be one teacher in the classroom and an aide must be available onsite to assist the teacher as needed.
(c) Whenever the enrollment in a class exceeds 20, the class shall be divided into two classes so that each class individually does not exceed 20 students. Each class must be properly staffed and, if space is to be shared, that space must be divided by a barrier that adequately separates the spaces for instructional purposes.

Guidance and Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs must have a student/teacher ratio of no more than 20 students for one teacher and one teacher aide in a classroom, that is, two adults in a classroom for every 20 students. Programs of high quality ordinarily have a student/teacher ratio of no more than 17 students for one teacher and one teacher aide in a classroom or two adults for every 17 students. This requirement is consistent with State Board of Education regulations (22 Pa. Code §4.20 (6)). If the classroom has 10 or fewer 3- and 4-year-olds, it must have one lead teacher and a secondary person available in the facility. The secondary person must meet the requirements for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teacher's aide.

Any number of children in a classroom above 20 constitutes a second classroom. Classrooms that share space must provide physical barriers that denote the separation of the classrooms. Each space must meet the student/teacher ratio and have the appropriately qualified staff.

Programs are expected to follow the spacing requirements of their eligible provider type.

§ 405.44. Staffing and Professional Development.

(a) Teachers of eligible students supported by Program funding shall meet the following requirements:

(1) In school districts, teachers shall have early childhood education certification.

(2) In Head Start and child care programs, teachers shall possess a minimum of an associate's degree in early childhood education or child development.

(3) In licensed nursery school programs, teachers shall have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, 18 credits from an institution of higher education in early childhood education and a private academic teaching or temporary approval certificate.

(4) By December 31, 2011, all teachers in Program classrooms shall have early childhood education certification.

(b) Teacher aides in any classroom of eligible students supported by Program funding shall meet one of the following criteria:

(1) Completion of at least 2 years of full-time postsecondary study or the equivalent.

(2) Possession of an associate's degree or higher.

(3) Ability to meet a rigorous standard of quality and demonstration of knowledge through a formal state or local academic assessment or possession by the teacher aide of a Child Development Associate's (CDA) certificate.

(4) Teacher aides who work solely as translators shall have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and do not have to meet any of the other requirements of paragraphs (1)—(3).

(c) A lead teacher in the Program, including those in community-based settings, including outdoor and indoor play or child directed activities with an Instructional Level I certificate shall convert the certificate to an Instructional Level II certificate within 6 years from the time of initial service as an Instructional Level I teacher in the Program. Teachers holding an Instructional Level I early childhood certificate may count their time working in a

Program community-based program toward the 3 years of required experience necessary before converting the certificate to an Instructional Level II certificate, in accordance with the requirements of the Department, including a year's participation in a Department approved teacher induction plan, six semiannual evaluations and the Department specified continuing professional development credits.
(d) Program teachers shall undertake continuous professional development as specified by the Department and, at a minimum, meet the requirements of sections 1205.1—1205.5 of the Public School Code of 1949 (24 P.S. §§ 12-1205.1—121205.5).
(e) Program teacher aides shall take a minimum of 24 hours of continuous professional development as specified by the Department, and in early childhood education and development, each year.

Guidance and Clarifications

All lead teachers who are hired for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms must have Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Instructional certification for early childhood education at the start of the school year.

Lead agencies must assure that partner sites' lead teachers possess Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Instructional certification for early childhood education at the start of the school year.

A teacher aide is required in all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms that exceed 10 students. All aides must meet one of the following criteria:

- Possession of a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for preschool. Aides who have completed all requirements of the CDA credential and have submitted their application to the Council of Professional Recognition and are awaiting their formal assessment by the council may apply for a time-limited waiver.
- Completion of at least two years of postsecondary study with a minimum of 60 college credits; or
- Possession of an associate degree or higher; or
- Ability to meet a rigorous standard of quality and demonstration of knowledge in and the ability to assist a teacher in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics. This rigorous standard of quality includes a demonstration of competence in basic literacy skills, the ability to speak and write Standard English, and the ability to provide instruction of pre-kindergarten students in the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and abilities described in the Early Learning Standards. Demonstration of this knowledge and ability can be accomplished through a formal state or local academic assessment or by the teacher aide having a Child Development Associate's credential.

Teacher aides who work solely as translators must have a secondary diploma or its equivalent, and do not have to meet any of the other requirements of (a) through (c) above.

Recruitment and Retention:

Effective recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers provide consistent teaching staff in programs. Consistent staffing is critical to obtaining and maintaining high quality pre-kindergarten programs. All submitted PA PKC program budgets should include provisions for competitive lead teacher and aide salaries and benefits. As part of the review of program budgets, PA PKC program and fiscal staff will continue to review the recommended percentages outlined in the line-item budget. PA PKC programs must include detailed and accurate line-item justifications as outlined in the PA-PKC-Fiscal-Supplement-2020.01.pdf (pcdn.co). Program and fiscal staff will pay close attention to the following during their review:

- Compensation amounts for direct service staff. The recommended starting PA PKC teacher wage is $45,000/school year (180 days) or $33.33/hour (180 days/7.5 hours per day) or the comparable public school district starting teacher salary, in cases where the comparable public school district teacher salary is higher than this amount.
- Provided benefits for direct service staff.

Additional guidance on staff recruitment and retention can be found in #007 Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan.

Professional Development:

All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teachers must maintain Act 48 credits pursuant to the requirements of keeping their Instructional Certification active. In addition, all teachers must attend the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Core Series of Professional Development. Staff responsible for supervising and supporting teaching staff also are strongly encouraged to take the Core Series trainings. Within the first two years of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts participation, the following sessions are required:

1. Assessment: Beyond the Basics of Observation and Data Utilization;
2. Linking Standards, Curriculum Framework and Assessment; and
3. Application of Act 13 of 2020: Evaluation of Educator Effectiveness for Teaching in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms[1]

All core series trainings can be scheduled through the PA Key Professional Development (PD) registry.

OCDEL-approved evaluators who have completed the Application of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms training and are currently conducting observations for PA Pre-K Counts certified teachers must take the required course "Act 13 of 2020: Updates to the Evaluation of Educator Effectiveness for Teaching in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms". The course is available through the PA Key PD Registry.

[1] Act 13 of 2020 (Act 13) revised the Act 82 Educator Effectiveness process used to evaluate professional employees working for Pre-K to 12 educational entities across Pennsylvania. Effective 2021-2022, the revised rating system applies to classroom teachers, non-teaching professionals, and principals as defined in Act 13.

In addition to the Core Series training, staff responsible for the implementation of curriculum and assessments should participate in training related to the chosen curriculum and assessment tools to assure fidelity. See § 405.45. Curriculum and § 405.46. Assessment for further clarification.

PA PKC programs must also integrate trauma-informed approaches into program curriculum and ensure personnel who have direct contact with children have professional development in trauma-informed approaches. For more information on this requirement, see Appendix D: PKC 22-#002 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Trauma-Informed Resources.

Beginning SY 2023-2024, PA PKC programs must assure lead teachers receive Act 48 training on Structured Literacy, Professional Ethics, and Common Ground Framework competencies within 3 years (before SY 2026-2027).

> Programs have the flexibility to use any training which covers the topics of Structured Literacy, Professional Ethics, and Common Ground and meets the needs and requirements of their program type.
>
> Structured literacy training must be Act 48 approved and must include the following four components:
>
> - Evidence-based intervention practices on structured literacy;
> - Explicit and systematic instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness;
> - The alphabetic principle, decoding and encoding, fluency, and vocabulary; and
> - Reading comprehension and building content knowledge.
>
> OCDEL offers an Act 48 course titled "Overview of Structured Literacy for the Pre-Kindergarten Educator." This course is available within the PA Key PD Registry.
>
> The SAS PD Center offers an Act 48 course related to structured literacy as an option to meet this requirement:
>
> Structured Literacy is a 10-hour Act 48 course that examines the research that supports this approach, identifies the key features and content of Structured Literacy, and examines/aligns current instructional practices.
>
> The SAS PD Center also offers an Act 48 course related to Professional Ethics which could be used for Induction (see 22 Pa. Code § 405.64) and continuing education requirements.

Professional development for teacher aides must include at least 24 hours of continuing professional education each year. Acceptable professional development includes instruction eligible for Act 48, continuing education credits, college credits, or hours taught by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services-certified Pennsylvania Quality Assurance

System instructors based on the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood and the Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators At least 50 percent or 12 hours should be specific to early childhood education.

Under the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) and Educator Discipline Act, all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts personnel and anyone who has direct contact with children are considered mandated reporters. The changes require that all school entities and independent contractors of school entities provide child abuse recognition and reporter training to all employees, including contracted substitute teachers, who have direct contact with children. Mandated reporters are required to make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at The Child Welfare Portal or by calling 1-800-932-0313. The Commonwealth has established a dedicated website to provide information about these changes. The webpage features: Questions and Answers, options for Mandated Reporter trainings, clarification about Clearances and other relevant information. All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts staff who have direct contact with a child must attend a professional development event on mandated reporting. For training for mandated reporters, visit Keep Kids Safe.

Lead teachers in a community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts setting that have Instructional Level I Certificates must convert and maintain their certificate to an Instructional II Certificate within six years from the time of initial service as an Instructional Level I teacher in the program, beginning with and counting 2007 as the first year in the six-year window. Teachers holding an Instructional Level I early childhood certificate may count their time working in a community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program toward the three years of successful teaching experience necessary before converting the certificate to an Instructional Level II Certificate, in accordance with the requirements of PDE. These requirements also include participation in an Office of Child Development and Early Learning approved Teacher Induction Plan, six bi-annual satisfactory evaluations and completion of 24 post baccalaureate credits. Additional information on this requirement can be found in #008: Early Childhood Education and Teacher Certification: Frequently Asked Questions, #009: Tracking Activity for Moving ECE Level I Certification to Level II Certification, #010: Teacher Certification Evaluation in Community-Based Programs, and #011: Teacher Induction for Community-Based Providers.

Teacher and teacher aide substitutes must be placed in classrooms whenever there is staff absence to assure the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts student/teacher ratio. Every effort must be made to assure substitutes meet the qualification requirements of the position they are filling. In short-term substitute situations (less than 90 days), at a minimum, the lead teacher substitute must hold a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field. In cases where a long-term substitute is required (more than 90 days), long-term lead teacher substitutes must meet the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teacher qualifications.

Updates to 22 Pa. Code Chapter 49 became effective April 22, 2023. The revised regulations add PA PKC as eligible providers, as defined in 22 Pa. Code §405.2 (relating to definitions) and

as entities to which the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) may issue an Emergency, day-to-day (Type 06) or long-term (Type 01 or 04) Permit. Eligible providers can now request these permits from PDE to address lead teacher staffing needs for PKC program teachers. For more information see Appendix F: PKC 22-#004 Emergency Teacher Certification Permits.

§ 405.45. Curriculum.

(a) The curriculum used in any classroom that includes a child who is enrolled in the Program must be standards-based.
(b) The curriculum used in the Program must be determined by the Department to be aligned with the Early Learning Standards established by the Department.

Guidance and Clarifications

A listing of approved curriculum is available at Approved Curriculum Information. The listed curriculum models have been determined to align with the 2014 Pre-Kindergarten Early Learning Standards.

Download copies of the Early Learning Standards at Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

When a program is considering the use of a curriculum that has not yet been aligned with Early Learning Standards, the publisher should be contacted to complete and submit an alignment review to RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov. All requested alignments will be reviewed, and if they meet the Office of Child Development and Early Learning framework, will be posted on the PDE website. Programs that use a locally designed curriculum must demonstrate alignment with the Early Learning Standards prior to the use in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Locally designed curriculum alignments must be submitted to RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov for review and approval to assure alignment. A template for submission is available within the PA PKC portal.

At a minimum, lead teachers should be trained in the selected curriculum to assure fidelity to its implementation within PKC classrooms. It is encouraged that teacher aides also receive training in the curriculum.

PA PKC programs must also integrate trauma-informed approaches into program curriculum and ensure personnel who have direct contact with children have professional development in trauma-informed approaches. For more information on this requirement, see Appendix D: PKC 22-#002 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Trauma-Informed Resources.

§ 405.46. Assessment.

Approved providers shall:

(1) Assess eligible students with a minimum frequency determined by the Department using an assessment tool approved by the Department.
(2) Participate in Department conducted training in the use of the assessment tool as prescribed by the Department.

(3) Report aggregate assessment information to the Department for purposes of Program monitoring, evaluation, reporting child outcomes and accountability in a manner and with a frequency and schedule determined by the Department.
(4) Participate in a Department conducted assessment of the Program learning environment and attend the training in the use of the environmental self-assessment tool as prescribed by the Department.

Guidance and Clarifications

Comprehensive Assessment:

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must complete a developmental screening on all children within 45 calendar days of the child's first day in the classroom setting. This evidence-based, reliable, and valid screening instrument should be used as a first step in identifying potential delays and children who need to be referred for further evaluation. OCDEL recommends the use of the *Ages & Stages* [ASQ and ASQ-SE]. Developmental screening processes that occur up to 90 days prior to entry in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom fulfill this requirement.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must ensure all children have the opportunity to receive the recommended vision, hearing, and health screenings. To meet this requirement, programs should at minimum:

- Communicate to families about the importance of early screening;
- Collect evidence from families regarding screenings that have occurred within 180 days of the recommended screening timeframes;
- In cases where screenings have not occurred, provide timely opportunities for enrolled children to receive screenings. These screenings may be conducted by the providers or an outside agency including a physician; and
- Communicate with families about screening results and support follow up as needed.

At no time should a child be denied access to PKC programming or be disenrolled if recommended screenings are not up to date. Additional guidance on required screenings can be found in #012 Comprehensive Screening.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers will select and use an assessment tool from the available tools approved by PDE to assess and monitor a child's developmental progress. Student assessments guide instructional practice, professional development and technical assistance to programs and provide a method for reporting all progress of children participating in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program. To ensure the collection of reliable data, staff responsible for implementation of the chosen assessment tool must be adequately trained in the effective use of the tool. A listing of approved assessment tools is available at Approved Child Assessment Information. The listed assessment tools have been determined to align with the 2014 Pre-Kindergarten Early Learning Standards.

When a program is considering the use of an assessment tool that has not yet been aligned with Early Learning Standards, the publisher should be contacted to complete and submit

an alignment review to RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov. All requested alignments will be reviewed, and if they meet the Office of Child Development and Early Learning framework, will be posted on the PA Key website. Programs may not use a locally designed assessment tool to meet this requirement. Templates for alignment can be requested by contacting RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must monitor child outcomes information and establish a means to maintain outcomes information so that it is available upon request of the Department. Data gathering from families, the education team and research-based assessment instruments should be combined to obtain the information needed to assess and report children's progress.

Grantees should develop procedures for sharing assessment information with parents as defined in the Partnerships for Learning Key Learning Area of the Learning Standards for Early Childhood. Parents can partner with their Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers to help ensure the best outcomes for their children.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs must select and use an assessment tool from the tools approved by PDE to assess and monitor program learning environment (classrooms). Programs may submit to have additional tools added to the approved listing. Classroom internal assessments, performed by trained personnel, must be completed annually in all PA PKC classrooms. An external assessment shall be conducted annually in at least one PA PKC classroom of the provider. The external assessor will be trained in the assessment tool used for the external assessment. Results of the environmental assessments must be used by the program to determine program needs as part of a continuous quality improvement plan. When required by the Department, additional assessments shall be conducted by an external assessor assigned by the Department.

Lead teachers must attend training on the use of the chosen program assessment tool within the first six months of employment in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom. The PA Key Professional Development System supports a variety of environmental assessment professional development. To learn what is currently available, programs should reference the Pennsylvania Professional Development Registry. Programs choosing to use other approved program assessments are responsible for ensuring staff receive training on use of the tool. Additional information on this requirement can be found in #013: Assessment of Learning Environment.

§ 405.47. Parent Involvement.

Approved providers shall develop and implement a plan for involvement and input of parents, families and guardians of children enrolled in the program to inform them of program goals, instructional strategies, and the progress of their children and to involve them in supportive activities designed to help ensure their child's success.

Guidance and Clarifications

Family engagement (termed in statute as parental involvement) is an important element that contributes to the success of the program and the children receiving its services. Family engagement requires vigilant planning and understanding of the diverse situation and needs of families and their children. Providers must use Pennsylvania's Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework in the development and implementation of the parent engagement plan.

The six standards found within the Pennsylvania's Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework provide elements to consider in development of a plan for family involvement:

- Standard 1- Connect families to community resources that support their goals, interests, and needs.
- Standard 2 - Build partnerships with families that are strengths-based, authentic, reciprocal, and respectful.
- Standard 3 - Partner with families to identify information, resources, and strategies to support them in their roles as teachers, models, encouragers, monitors, leaders, and advocates as they support their child's learning and development.
- Standard 4 - Provide intentional opportunities for families to connect and engage with each other.
- Standard 5 - Support families as they develop their leadership and advocacy skills.
- Standard 6 - Build partnerships with families during times of transition.

Providers submit their plans to their Preschool Program Specialist, and providers will be offered on-going technical assistance to ensure effective and meaningful family engagement is included within programs.

§ 405.48. Program Transition Planning.

(a) Approved providers shall develop and implement plans designed to ensure a smooth and supportive transition for children entering the program from the setting from which they are coming, including the home, Early Intervention services, Early Head Start or child care.

(b) Approved providers shall develop and implement plans to ensure a smooth and supportive transition for children leaving the Program to enter kindergarten and the K-12 school environment.

Guidance and Clarifications

Transitions for young children from one setting to another are critical times in their lives. The planning and development of relationships with the individuals, programs and organizations that may be involved in a child's life as that child moves from one setting to another takes time, but is time well spent. This planning and developing of relationships needs to be conducted with care and sensitivity to the child, the family, and the programs and agencies involved.

1. Transition into pre-kindergarten programming involves coordinating with families, and with the agencies/programs/classrooms serving infants and toddlers.

2. Transition between pre-kindergarten programs involves coordination with the agencies that provide these services.
3. Transition plans must be developed for those children preparing to enter kindergarten programs.

The Transition Best Practices Rubric and Transition Tool Kit is available to all early learning practitioners as a resource to assist in developing effective transition strategies.

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning, in partnership with the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, has developed the Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory (PA KEI) as a comprehensive, standards-based measure of children's skills as they enter kindergarten. Information on the KEI can be found at PA KEI Landing Page. Although the KEI is conducted by the kindergarten teacher, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs can benefit from collaborating with schools and districts that implement PA KEI and are encouraged to recruit school and districts to participate in the KEI.

§ 405.49. Immunizations.

Approved providers shall meet the immunization requirements that pertain to their provider type; for school districts and licensed nursery schools see 28 Pa. Code §§ 23.81—23.87 (relating to immunization); for child care centers and group child care homes see 28 Pa. Code § 27.77 (relating to immunization requirements for children in child care group settings); and for Head Start agencies see 45 CFR 1304.20 (relating to child health and development services), the federal Head Start Performance Standards.

Guidance and Clarifications

All providers of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funded programs must meet the immunization requirements for their provider type:

• School districts and licensed nursery schools – See 28 Pa. Code § 23.81-87 which implements section 13031 of the Public School Code (24 P.S. § 1303a);
• Child care centers and group child care homes – See 28 Pa. Code § 27.77; and
• Head Start agencies – See 45 CFR § 1304.20, the federal Head Start Performance Standards.

These requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Within 60 days of a child's first day of attendance in the program, the provider shall obtain a record establishing that the child has received the vaccinations recommended by the American Committee on Immunization Practices; or receipt from a parent or guardian of a child of a written objection to the child being vaccinated on religious grounds or a physician verified medical reason of a temporary or permanent nature explaining why the child is not to be vaccinated

2. Providers must exclude children from group activities for an additional 30 days who are not vaccinated due to a temporary medical condition, unless they have received written

confirmation from a physician, or state or local health department of vaccination, or continuation of the medical condition. A new verification is required every 30 days, or the child may not be readmitted to the setting until the requirements are met.

§ 405.50. Emergency Response Plans.

Approved providers shall develop, implement, review, and revise annually as necessary, a comprehensive disaster and emergency response plan that meets the guidelines of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. See resources at Planning and Preparedness.

Guidance and Clarifications

Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan

Each Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program provider must adopt and implement a comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan.

The plan must be developed in cooperation with the local Emergency Management Agency and be consistent with the guidelines developed by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and other pertinent state requirements.

The plan must be reviewed annually and modified as necessary. A copy of the plan must be provided to the county emergency management agency. If the applicant does not already have such a plan in place, one must be developed. Staff must be trained in the program's emergency response plans annually or whenever a change occurs.

§ 405.51. Inclusive Environments.

A Program classroom should reflect the naturally occurring ratio of students with and without developmental delays and disabilities in the area served by the approved provider and should not contain more than 20 percent of students who have been identified by the start of the program year as having a developmental delay or disability. However, in attempting to promote inclusion in this way, approved providers may not deny students admission to a classroom based on their disability or delay.

Guidance and Clarifications

The practice of enrolling children with developmental delays in typical environments is often referred to as inclusion. For a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom to be an inclusive early childhood setting, it may not have an enrollment that is predominantly children participating in Early Intervention. An inclusive early childhood setting is no more than 20 percent of the classroom's initial enrollment being children diagnosed with developmental delays or disabilities and having either an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) prior to entering Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

After the start of the program year, additional children may be identified as needing Early Intervention services and ultimately receiving an IEP or IFSP, bringing the percentage of children in the classroom having identified developmental delays or disabilities higher than 20 percent. This increase in the percentage after the start of the program year is allowed.

PKC Providers must comply with the OCDEL Inclusion Policy Statement and Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement.

For more information on Collaboration with Early Intervention, see #014: Collaboration with Early Intervention.

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provider might be the first to identify a child for referral to Early Intervention for screening, evaluation, and eligibility determination. PA PKC providers must coordinate enrollment strategies with "Child Find." Federal and state law mandates require Early Intervention programs conduct outreach to identify all those children who may be eligible for or in need of Early Intervention services.

Recordkeeping, Reporting and Attendance at Department Sponsored Meetings and Trainings

§ 405.61. Program Reporting.

Approved providers shall provide reports as requested by the Department and in the manner and at times as prescribed by the Department, including, but not limited to, expenditure reports, reconciliation of cash reports, enrollment, attendance, demographic information, and child outcomes.

Guidance and Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must submit documentation of program implementation through multiple sources: Early Learning Network, Financial Accounting Information System (FAI system), and submission of written program plans. Additional Information on reporting can be found in #015: Reporting and Data Requirements, #016: Continuous Quality Improvement Planning, and #017: Fiscal Reporting and Deadlines.

§ 405.62. Recordkeeping.

Approved providers shall maintain all records pertinent to the program, including, but not limited to, financial, statistical, property, changes in Keystone STARS status, child care certificate, nursery school license, teacher evaluations and recommendations, and any other supporting documentation, for a period of at least 7 years from the date of submission of their final closeout report, or until all audits are complete and findings have been completely resolved, whichever occurs last.

Guidance and Clarifications

Providers must maintain all pertinent records for a minimum of seven years (or until all unresolved issues have been addressed). This includes but is not limited to all documents related to operating requirements, child records, teacher evaluations, and all other supporting documents. In addition, grantees are also expected to maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence in sufficient detail to support all claims against the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding.

§ 405.63. Attendance at Department Sponsored Meetings and Trainings.

Approved providers shall attend any mandatory meetings and training sessions arranged by the Department.

Guidance and Clarifications

All approved providers are expected to attend all mandatory meetings and trainings. This includes, but is not limited to, monthly partner and annual regional meetings, annual state-wide conferences, and any additional professional development sessions required by the Department.

§ 405.64. Teacher Induction Plans and Evaluations.

Approved providers shall facilitate activities that teachers must undertake to advance their certification from Instructional Level I to Instructional Level II.

(1) Providers shall implement a teacher induction program that meets the requirements of 22 Pa. Code §§ 49.16 and 49.83 (relating to approval of induction plans; and Instructional II) and implementing Department guidelines and that has been approved by the Department and facilitates the involvement of teachers in the Program.

(2) Providers shall conduct or make available to teachers holding Level I teaching certificates semiannual evaluations as are necessary for Level I certificate holders to be recommended for a Level II teaching certificate.

Guidance and Clarifications

Professional Development:

Lead teachers in community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts settings that have Instructional Level I Certificates are required to convert to and maintain an Instructional II Certificate within six years from the time of initial service as an Instructional Level I teacher in the program.

Teachers holding an Instructional Level I early childhood Certificate must count their time working in a community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program toward the three years of successful teaching experience necessary before converting the certificate to an Instructional Level II Certificate, in accordance with the requirements of PDE. These requirements also include participation in an Office of Child Development and Early Learning approved Teacher Induction Plan, six bi-annual evaluations and completion of 24 post-baccalaureate credits. Additional information on this requirement can be found in #008: Early Childhood Education and Teacher Certification: Frequently Asked Questions, #009: Tracking Activity for Moving ECE Level I Certification to Level II Certification, #010: Teacher Certification Evaluation in Community-Based Programs, and #011: Teacher Induction for Community-Based Providers.

Integration of professional development on Professional Ethics, and the Common Ground Framework will be required within program Induction plans beginning SY 2024-2025. More information will be provided as PDE develops communications and updates Induction guidelines.

Teacher aides must attend at least 24 hours of continuing professional education each year. Acceptable professional development includes instruction eligible for Act 48, continuing education credits, college credits, or hours taught by Pennsylvania Department of Human Services certified Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS) instructors based on the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood (available on the Early Childhood section of PDE's website) and the Pennsylvania Core Knowledge Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (available on the PA Keys website).

Grantee Fiscal Responsibilities

§ 405.71. Segregation of Funds.

An approved provider that receives grant funds under the Program shall maintain a separate account in its budget to facilitate monitoring and auditing of the use of the grant funds. If the approved provider is a school district, the school district may not place grant funds in a reserve account.

Guidance and Clarifications

All funds provided by PDE for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program must, at a minimum, be segregated from other funds using a general ledger or other acceptable accounting practices.

All funded Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies and partner agencies will be required to meet Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts audit requirements. Additional information on the requirements can be found at #018: Audit Requirements.

§ 405.72. Grant Awards.

(a)Grants shall be awarded by the Department to approved providers on a per-child basis, in an amount set by the Department, for each eligible student served by an approved provider.
(b)The amount of grant funds provided per-student may not exceed the cost of administering the approved provider's prekindergarten program.

Guidance and Clarifications

Funds will be available for both half-day and full-day programs at a cost per child determined by the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Per child amounts must be fully justified in the grant application and will not be awarded unless fully justified.

To support families and promote consistent child attendance, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may use grant funds to offer enrolled students transportation to the program.

§ 405.73. Use of Funds.

(a)Funds may only be used for the costs associated with providing Program services to eligible students enrolled in the Program.
(b)Funds may not be used for administrative or indirect costs.

Guidance and Clarifications

Programs must adhere to the guidance provided within the PA Pre-K Counts Fiscal Supplement when creating or revising program budgets.

Supplemental Resources

#001: Meals and Snacks in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Classrooms

Nutritious meals and snacks must be provided by the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program at appropriate times during the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts day. A half-day program must offer, at a minimum, one meal each day. Full day programs must offer both a snack and a meal.

Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts targets at-risk children who may experience food insecurity and poor nutrition. It is desirable to offer them a healthy meal no matter how short the day. Effective teachers make mealtime a learning time broadly, and teach about healthy eating habits, so there is no loss of "instructional time."

Whenever feasible, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers should access federal food reimbursement programs. The PDE Division of Food and Nutrition can provide information and guidance about these programs.

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts meal may be either breakfast or lunch, depending on the time of operational day. Half day programs may offer the required meal at an appropriate time during the day based upon the hours of program operation. However, if offered during a "snack time" the meal must contain the recommended meal components of a snack as provided by a recognized authority in nutrition such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Providers should follow the most recent, age-appropriate nutritional requirements for meals from a recognized authority such as the USDA CACFP.

If participating in the CACFP, each parent should be strongly encouraged to complete the income information section of the CACFP form for free and reduced meal reimbursement. If a parent refuses to fully complete the form, the provider can be reimbursed under the "paid" reimbursement claim for that child. CACFP forms should be kept on file at the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program.

No child may be forced to eat the prepared meal or snack; however, it must be offered.

Food may not be withheld for any reason including discipline.

No fees may be charged for any snack or meal.

Children shall be allowed second helpings if food is left over from a snack or meal.

To the extent possible, information provided by family members concerning a child's eating habits, preferences, or special needs regarding food must be considered in planning meals. A family member may prefer to provide an occasional meal or snack. While this is

allowable, providers should work with families to ensure that meals offered by the provider meet families' expectations, when possible. For a meal/snack to be reimbursable under the CACFP, a parent/guardian may not provide more than one creditable meal/snack component. The only exception is when a child has a documented disability, supported by a written statement from a State licensed healthcare professional. Providers should consult the PDE Division of Food and Nutrition at RA-CACFP@pa.gov for guidance on accommodating children with disabilities under CACFP.

Alternative foods for children who are allergic to the prepared meal or snack must be offered. Providers should consult the PDE Division of Food and Nutrition at RA-CACFP@pa.gov for guidance on accommodating allergies and disabilities in CACFP.

Foods and beverages that have little nutritional value (e.g., sweets, salty snack foods, soft drinks/soda/powdered drink mixes, etc.) should not be served to children. Only milk, milk substitutes that are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk, and 100% full fruit and vegetable juices are reimbursable beverages in the CACFP meal pattern. Water must be offered throughout the day to children.

Families who offer to share snacks or treats should be encouraged to provide healthy and nutritious snacks. If non-nutritious sweets such as cakes are offered, a nutritious alternative must be provided in addition to the celebratory treat. Grain-based desserts are not creditable grains in CACFP and should not be a planned component for meals and/or snacks.

Children should be encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and be encouraged to choose nutrient dense foods based on age-appropriate nutrition requirements of a recognized authority. Resources are provided below.

Educational activities and information for families that focus on nutrition and healthy eating for preschoolers are recommended as part of the program's family engagement activities.

Providers should make every effort to offer meals that meet the nutritional and cultural needs of children in their programs. Integrating traditional dishes, fruits, vegetables, and other components that are representative of the culture of enrolled children and families provides opportunities for authentic inclusion and gives children and their families a sense of place familiarity and belonging.

Resources

Pennsylvania Department of Education: Division of Food and Nutrition Services

USDA Food and Nutrition Service: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP Handbooks

School Lunch Program

Nutrition Education for CACFP

PA Farm to School

PA WIC

#002: Income and Family Size Verification Guidance

Income Verification Guidance:

The following are included when verifying income:

- Earned income from all sources including gross wages from work, cash, and in-kind payments received by an individual in exchange for services and net income from self-employment.
- Unearned income including cash and contributions received by an individual for which the individual does not perform a service such as: alimony; child support; military family allotments (excluding service-connected disability benefits; see exclusions below) or other regular support from an absent family member; pensions; public assistance (including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Security Insurance, Emergency Assistance money payments and non-Federally Funded General Assistance or General Relief money payments); and dividends, interest, net income, net royalties and periodic receipts from estates or trusts.
- Unearned benefits received periodically by an individual, such as unemployment compensation, workman's compensation, gambling or lottery winnings, or retirement benefits.

Income Deductions:

The following are deducted when determining family income:

- Voluntary or court-ordered child support or child support paid by the parent or caretaker or family member to a present or former spouse not residing in the same household.
- A medical expense not reimbursed through medical insurance that exceeds 10 percent of the family gross monthly income.

Income Exclusions:

The following are excluded when determining family income:

- Employment earnings of an individual who is an emancipated minor.
- Tax refunds, including earned income tax credits.
- Withdrawals of bank, credit union or brokerage deposits or money borrowed.
- Loans or grants, such as scholarships or income from federal student aid or participation in work-study program.
- Payments to volunteers in service to America, such as Americorps or Foster Grandparent programs.
- Any foster care payments by a foster care placement agency, including payments to permanent legal custodians or adoption assistance payments by county children and youth agency.
- A veteran's service-connected disability benefit payments as stated in, Act 27 of 2024 amended Title 51 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes (Military).
    - A veterans' service-connected disability benefit payment or unspent veterans' service-connected disability payments may not be included as income for any Commonwealth program that evaluates income as a condition of eligibility.

- Benefit payments provided to an unmarried surviving spouse upon the death of a veteran for any compensation or payment the unmarried surviving spouse is entitled to receive, may not be included as income.

Whose Income is Counted:

- The parent or caretaker of the child.
- The parent or caretaker's spouse, if living in the home.
- Children's, excluding a child's earned income.
- Others residing with the child, in instances when these persons are counted toward family size.

Time Period:

The period of time for income verification is the 12 months immediately before the month in which the application or reapplication for enrollment of a child is made, or for the calendar year immediately before the calendar year in which the application or reapplication is made.

Verification of Income:

- Acceptable verification of **earned income** from employment includes pay stubs reflecting earnings, W-2 forms, the IRS form used for reporting tips, a written employer statement of anticipated earnings or other document that establishes the parent's or caretaker's anticipated earnings from employment.
- Acceptable verification from **self-employment** includes tax returns, business records or other documents establishing profit from self-employment.
- Acceptable verification of **unearned income** includes a copy of a current benefit check, an award letter that designates the amount of a grant or benefit, such as a letter from the Social Security Administration stating the amount of the social security benefit, a bank statement, a court order, or other document or database report that establishes the amount of unearned income.
- A signed, written statement explaining how the family's basic needs are met may be accepted when a family indicates that they do not have any income or are being supported by someone living outside the household. If a family receives or pays child support, the eligibility agency shall verify the amount of support received or paid by the family by documents from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Family Size

The number of people in the house to be counted for the purposes of reporting "family size" include the child or children for whom Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is being requested and the following individuals who live with that child or children in the same household:

- Parent of the child. The parent is the biological or adoptive mother or father, stepmother or stepfather, caretaker or spouse who exercises care and control over the child requesting Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.
- A biological, adoptive, unrelated, or foster child or stepchild of the parent or caretaker who is under 18 years of age and not emancipated.

- A child who is 18 years of age or older but under 22 years of age who is enrolled in high school, a general educational development program, or a post-secondary program leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate and who is wholly or partially dependent on the income of the parent or caretaker or spouse of the parent or caretaker.
- Others supported by the income of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child enrolling or participating in the program. If counted toward family size, any applicable income of these persons must also be counted for eligibility purposes.

  Special consideration: A family size value of one (1) with an income of $0 is entered when a foster child is applying for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

#003: Program Review and Monitoring

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies and partners will have a minimum of one formal compliance review visit annually. Preschool Program Specialists will utilize the *Program Review Instrument* (PRI) and other supporting documents to identify areas of strength and areas of needed focus to assure full compliance with the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts regulations and policies. A minimum acceptable score of 86 percent of the total points on the PRI must be documented annually.

Clarifications

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers have a fundamental set of requirements that have been established to guide program design. These requirements are detailed within this document.

Ongoing participation in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is reliant on a provider's successful implementation of the program as detailed within this document. It is anticipated that both lead agencies and partners are familiar with the requirements of the program including updates or revisions that may occur annually. Lead agencies and partners should assure they are referencing the most recent version of *The Pennsylvania Statute, Regulations, and Guidance* document.

A variety of sources of evidence will be assessed annually to assure compliance with Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts regulations. These sources include, but are not limited to, ongoing Preschool Program Specialist interactions with grantees, the Program Review Instrument, the Best Practices Rubric, the Instructional Observation Checklist, Continuous Quality Improvement Plans, and information entered in the PELICAN data system.

A differentiated monitoring model will be applied to programs with a history of fully meeting program requirements, with no major programmatic changes. The use of a differentiated monitoring model will be at the discretion of the program's assigned Preschool Program Specialist.

Program Review Instrument

The *Program Review Instrument* (PRI) includes a review of each of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts regulations and policies for compliance.

The elements within the PRI are reviewed and assessed on a varying percentage scale as follows:

- Fully Meets = 100 percent-95 percent of total points
- Partially Meets = 94.9 percent-86 percent of total points
- Does Not Meet= 85.9 percent- 0 percent of total points

Scores from the immediate prior year's PRI will be used during competitive and continuation grant cycles to determine levels of compliance with program regulations for current grantees. Points are then assigned to the performance score section of the application.

Best Practice Inventory

The Best Practice Inventory describes a teacher's implementation of classroom practices that are based on the guiding principles and content within the Learning Standards for Early Childhood.

The first three sections of the rubric will be utilized in each classroom that is visited. These sections are: Lesson Planning, Instruction, and Ongoing Assessment. This information provides a consistent framework across Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers for the review of effective classroom instruction. Results will be summarized, and the Preschool Program Specialists will incorporate this information into the PRI and encourage the results to be included in the program's Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

The Best Practices Rubric is NOT meant as a teacher evaluation and will be used solely as a source of evidence that indicates areas of strength and/or areas for considered enhancement.

Some classrooms may be asked to pilot a more complete classroom review using the full Best Practices Rubric or additional sections within. Preschool Program Specialists will contact administrators to determine their interest in the use of the tool as a strategy to identify and implement additional technical assistance.

Instructional Observation Checklist

The Instructional Observation Checklist is a multi-page tool that focuses more deeply on lesson planning, the environment, instruction, and professionalism. The Checklist is **not** an assessment, but is intended to provide teachers with additional, higher-level feedback.

It is designed to be utilized in classrooms which have achieved a level of success with the Classroom Observation Checklist. The items included are designed to be observable, and to support best practices and intentionality and are applicable to the classroom staff collectively, as this is not intended to be a teacher evaluation.

This tool also may be used in whole or in part.

Continuous Quality Improvement Plans

Continuous Quality Improvement Plans will be developed for all grantees. Plans of correction within the CQI plan will be established for providers who are not meeting program requirements. Plans of Correction will be developed in collaboration with the Preschool Program Specialist and will detail specific regulations not being met, action plans for correction, timelines for correction, and personnel responsible for corrections. The CQI plan will also include a section for recognizing excellence and promoting innovation. The requirements for Continuous Quality Improvement Planning are explained in #016: Continuous Quality Improvement Planning.

PELICAN/ Early Learning Network (ELN)Data Entry

Ongoing updates of specified information in PELICAN Early Learning Network (ELN) data system are mandated requirements for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers. The Preschool Program Specialists will monitor the data entry process for each program to ensure information is accurate and complete, and submitted within the designated timeframes. Additional information on the PELICAN Early Learning Network (ELN) data system can be found in PELICAN.

Procedures for the Monitoring Site Visit

Preschool Program Specialists utilize a PRI to determine a provider's compliance. The PRI reviews multiple sources of evidence that indicate exemplary areas as well as those areas that need additional effort to assure compliance.

A PRI will be completed annually for each Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agency and partner. The Preschool Program Specialist, through on-going interaction with grantees, evidence review, and site visits (at least two annually) will gather information to inform the PRI. Preschool Program Specialists will work with the program administrators to schedule a convenient date for an initial program visit during the beginning months of a program year. Preschool Program Specialists will also provide dates to reserve a week for a PRI visit that will occur between January and May. Agencies should expect their PRI visit to occur during this reserved week. Specialists will confirm the visit date at least two weeks prior to the visit. Administrators and other key staff must make themselves available during the scheduled formal PRI visit. Lead agencies should be prepared to accurately reflect a partner's performance as well as their own during PRI visits.

Administrators of the program must participate in this site visit which will include a review of the PRI document, the specialist's findings through classroom observation, and an interview or discussion to better understand the way in which the program complies and monitors its compliance.

A list of documents that should be available will be sent to each provider prior to the visit.

#004: Enrollment Prioritization Plan Guidance

Enrollment of children into the PA PKC program **must** be un-biased, equitable, transparent and follow the program's statutory and regulatory requirements. Age and family income that is 300 percent or below the federal poverty guideline is the primary eligibility factor required for a child's participation in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Enrollment for children should be prioritized by developing a selection process to consider additional risk factors. Risk factors are selected for enrolled children within the PELICAN system. Each program, based on their community needs, should consider prioritizing enrollments for:

Preschooler with an Individualized Education Program (IEP):
Defined as a child who is currently enrolled in the Early Intervention program with an active IEP. Verification includes a copy of the IEP or other source of documentation from the parent or the Early Intervention agency.

Migratory (non-immigrant) seasonal student:
Defined as a child who has moved from one school district to another to accompany or join a parent or guardian who is a migratory agriculture worker or fisher within the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in qualifying agricultural or fishing work, including agri-related businesses such as meat or vegetable processing, or work in nurseries such as Christmas and evergreen tree farming.

English language learner:
Defined as a child whose first language is not English and who is in the process of learning English. Ask these two questions, as established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to determine if a child qualifies as an English language learner:

- What is/was the child's first language?
- Does the child speak a language other than English? (Do not include languages learned in school)

Homeless:
Families experiencing housing instability may be reluctant to share their housing status or may not understand that their situation meets the criteria identified by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Enrollment in high-quality early learning programs provide additional stability for families and children meeting these criteria.

To improve outreach, prioritization, and enrollment of this population, programs should consider the language used when discussing this risk factor with families. The following criteria can be used to guide conversations with families about their living circumstances.

If any of the situations below apply, the family is eligible under McKinney-Vento. Additional guidance is available from the National Center for Homeless Education.

- If the family is staying with others, was this a result of a loss of housing, economic hardship or other similar reason?
- Is the family living in a shelter? (Includes youth, emergency, transitional living, domestic violence, etc.)

- Is the family living in a motel, hotel, or campground?
- Is the family staying in a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings?
- Is the family living in cars, parks, public places, abandoned buildings, transportation stations, or similar settings?
- Is the family living in substandard (limited or no utilities, unsafe conditions, etc.) housing?
- Has the child been abandoned, in a hospital, or awaiting foster care placement?

Child in or part of family in Child Welfare System:
Defined as a child who is a foster child, a kinship care child, or receiving Children and Youth Services.

Child's family or living structure:
Defined as a child with a single parent, divorced parents, or with relatives as guardians.

Child receiving behavioral supports:
Defined as a child who is referred to Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts from an appropriately credentialed health or mental health provider (not employed by the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program) or a child who is receiving mental health treatment. Additional verification beyond the interview is required.

Teen parent:
Defined as a mother or father who was under the age of 18 when the child was born.

Incarcerated Parent:
Defined as a child for whom one or both child's parents are currently incarcerated.

Education level of guardian:
Defined as when the parent or legal guardian of the child does not have a high school diploma, or high school equivalency, or postsecondary degree.

Eligible for or receives the following public assistance: TANF, SSI, SNAP
This risk factor was added in 2024. Defined as a family who can produce documentation of eligibility for or receipt of TANF, SSI, or SNAP.

Child enrolled in Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program (ITCSP):
Defined as a child enrolled in ITCSP and eligible to transition into PA PKC.

Programs may add additional risk factors to their enrollment prioritization plans, but all additional risk factors must be supported by the program's community needs assessment and may not be exclusive in nature.

Any "other" risk factors that are identified during the enrollment process with families must be reported in the Early Learning Network. These risk factors can be determined by

careful interview. Providers should ask specific questions and follow up with requests for additional documentation as needed. Additional considerations for enrollment include the following:

Child lives in geographic area of high poverty
Providers wishing to prioritize specific geographic regions with higher rates of poverty may do so. This might include specific zip codes, school districts, or other factors.

Concerns regarding child's physical development or existing medical condition (currently not receiving EI services)
This risk factor can be used when a family concern is shared that is not covered by any of the other risk factors. If the family shares such a concern and the child has not yet been referred to EI for evaluation, the program should share information on EI.

Concerns regarding child's speech or language development (currently not receiving EI services)
This risk factor can be used when a family concern is shared that is not covered by any other risk factors. If the family shares such a concern and the child has not yet been referred to EI for evaluation, the program should share information on EI.

Concerns regarding child's social, emotional, or behavioral development (currently not receiving EI services)
This risk factor can be used when a family concern is shared that is not covered by any other risk factors. If the family shares such a concern and the child has not yet been referred to EI for evaluation, the program should share information on EI.

Programs wishing to prioritize enrollment to a particular geographic region (e.g., school district catchment zone or zip code) may do so, however, if the program is not fully enrolled, children from outside the defined catchment zone must be included.

The prioritization plan must be approved by the Preschool Program Specialist. The Department reserves the right to request any PA PKC's prioritization plan at any time throughout the program year.

In addition to the selection criteria, the plan should also include instructions for maintaining transparent waiting lists and reflect a means to inform families of their status on the waiting list based on the prioritization plan.

At no time should children be excluded from enrollment for any reason that does not explicitly align with the program's prioritization plan and wait list protocols.

Communicating Prioritization and Enrollment Decisions with Families

Communications with families interested in the PA PKC program must be transparent and timely. Programs should communicate the program's prioritization plan, along with information on the program's enrollment process, with interested families in a way that the enrollment process and how enrollment decisions are made are understood by families. If a

program becomes fully enrolled and must wait list children who have lower prioritization, the program must communicate this explicitly with the family within 24 hours of the finding. The program must explain the use of prioritization to make enrollment decisions to the family and share the option for the child to be placed on a waiting list. When feasible, the program will assist the family in connecting with Head Start and/or other PA PKC programs in the area, and/or the regional ELRC to find other potential care options for a waitlisted child. If a child is found ineligible for the PA PKC program, the program must communicate the details of this finding with the family within 24 hours of the finding, and when feasible, will assist the family in connecting with the regional ELRC to find other potential care options.

#005: Enrollment, Vacancies, and Attendance

Full Enrollment:
Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs must achieve full enrollment by September 1 of each school year, except for the start-up year when programs may operate fewer days to accommodate the cost and time related to starting a new program.

Full enrollment is defined as a lead agency maintaining 90 percent or higher overall enrollment, as demonstrated by PELICAN enrollment statistics. Full enrollment must be achieved by September 1 of each year and always maintained. A child will not be counted by OCDEL as enrolled if the child is not entered into PELICAN.

Enrollment Reporting:
Programs should make efforts to enroll children using their "legal" name. Efforts may include asking for documentation (e.g., birth certificate) to verify legal name. However, programs should not refuse enrollment to children of parents who do not wish to provide evidence to verify "legal" name.

Each enrolled child must be entered in the PELICAN data system. Effective April 1, 2024, an approved provider is required to report the following information to OCDEL:

- Notice and information on an eligible student enrolled in a program-funded slot in the approved provider's program within 15 days of enrollment.
- Notice and information on an eligible student's removal from enrollment in a program-funded slot in an approved provider's program within 15 days from the removal of enrollment.

This information will be used for statutorily required quarterly enrollment reporting meetings between OCDEL and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

Vacancies:
Providers have 20 instructional days to fill vacated slots. Vacancies will be tracked through monthly enrollment reporting, which is completed within the PELICAN system. Providers must include an accurate enrollment start date in PELICAN when entering a child's enrollment within 15 days of enrollment. Providers must report an accurate end date in PELICAN within 15 days of a child's removal from the program along with an accurate reason for end dating the child. Maintaining a waiting list will ensure slots are filled immediately.

Additional Definitions and Clarifications:

Definitions

Attendance is for reporting purposes defined as those instructional days when the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts child is attending the classroom or engaged in **approved** virtual instruction.

Excused absences are defined as those absences when a student is prevented from attending for physical/mental health or other urgent reasons. These can be further defined as illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health or dental appointments, fire, natural disaster, or other extenuating circumstances deemed as excused by the program.

Unexcused absences are any absences that are not included in the above definition of excused absences.

Enrollment:
Children are enrolled when there is mutual understanding documented in writing between parent or guardian, and the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program that the child has been accepted in the program and will begin attending on a specified future date.

Start date:
The date an eligible funded child begins attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts class.

End date:
The date an eligible child no longer receives PA PKC funding and/or stops attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts class.

Clarifications
Full Enrollment Monitoring:
Enrollment monitoring reports are generated monthly by OCDEL using available PELICAN child enrollment data entered by programs. These monthly monitoring reports are reviewed to track enrollment. Beginning October 1 of each program year (December 1 during competitive rebid years), any lead agency not meeting the definition of full enrollment will receive an under-enrollment notification and must engage in under enrollment improvement planning. Monthly monitoring and under enrollment improvement planning will continue through the last day of February.

Lead agencies identified as under-enrolled must develop, in collaboration with the assigned Preschool Program Specialist, an improvement plan and timetable for reducing or eliminating under enrollment. A working improvement plan to reduce under enrollment must be submitted to OCDEL (through the assigned Preschool Program Specialist) 30 days after receipt of the initial under enrollment notification letter. Note: OCDEL does not formally approve plans; however, the plan will be used to support and facilitate conversations prior to the deadline for full enrollment. If your agency reaches and maintains full enrollment by the last day of February, then OCDEL will process a continuation grant for the subsequent fiscal year with a slot amount equal to the slot amount awarded in current fiscal year. If your agency does not reach at least 90 percent enrollment by the last day of February, then the program may be designated "under enrolled", and will be subject to the recapture, withholding, or reduction of your base grant during the continuation grant process. Any reduction in funding would lead to an adjustment of your funded enrollment to be consistent with the historical, actual enrollment level.

Waiting Lists:

Providers should maintain waiting lists to assist in the maintenance of full enrollment over the course of the program year. In addition, providers may be asked periodically to inform OCDEL of waiting list numbers. This information should be maintained and readily available. The PELICAN system may be used for this purpose, but PELICAN use for this purpose will not be required.

Attendance:

Providers must monitor attendance and establish a means to maintain attendance information so that it is available upon request of the Department. The PELICAN system may be used for this purpose; however, attendance data reporting within the PELICAN system will not be required.

Attendance Requirement

Students enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom are considered full-time and must attend 5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year for the full length of the day, either 2.5 hours/half day or 5 hours/full day.

Families must be contacted when children are absent for 3 consecutive days to learn the nature of the absence and offer support, as appropriate.

When children have more than 5 consecutive unexcused absences, the provider and family, together, must discuss the reasons for the absence and determine ways to support the child's attendance in school.

Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10 percent unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to program support must be dismissed from the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom and replaced with an eligible child from the waiting list or who is recruited from the community.

Attendance Policy for Families

Grantees must develop an attendance policy that identifies excused and unexcused absences, describes strategies for working with families when children are absent, processes for maintaining full enrollment, and the policy for dismissing children from the program as a last resort.

The attendance policy must be in writing and included in the provider's parent or family handbook.

Programs should include a review of the policy with families at enrollment and/or orientation. Annual reviews during a parent meeting are appropriate and providers should remind families of the policy at the first unexcused absence.

#006 Definition of Instructional Time

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funds may only be used to support activities, materials and program content that are secular in nature.

The following activities are acceptable for classroom instructional activities provided a certified teacher is present during these activities:

- Classroom instruction
- Orientation to the classroom, orientation to classroom/school experiences (e.g., bus procedures)
- Meals and snack time, if they are integral parts of the curriculum, supervised by the teacher and used for student learning experiences
- Times when children choose activities (sometimes called free-choice time, center-time, etc.) if it is an integral part of the instructional day, supervised by the teacher and used for student learning experiences
- Time spent at the library, and in art, music or physical education if provided by the regular teacher or area specialists
- Opening exercise (morning message)
- School, group, or class education trips to which admission is not charged to students or parents and a certified teacher accompanies the students
- Student services, such as guidance and counseling services, psychological services, speech pathology and audiology services, and student health services
- Civil defense, fire, bus evacuation, and similar drills
- Early dismissal and delayed opening due to inclement weather

Much of a typical pre-kindergarten classroom schedule should include time spent in child-directed, teacher-facilitated instructional activities. These are teacher-guided play experiences where children interact with materials and peers that offer rich and age-appropriate opportunities for learning. Routine parts of a daily schedule such as meals or opening exercises offer unique and opportune times for teachers and students to participate together in stimulating learning experiences. Pre-kindergarten classrooms should maximize children's active and experiential learning and provide a minimal amount of teacher-directed instruction.

There are other times during a pre-kindergarten day when students are not engaged in instructional activities. Children's arrival or dismissal times, for example, the period when children enter or leave the building and are waiting for others to join them are not considered instructional time and are not counted in the 2.5- or 5.0-hour instructional time requirement. Nap or quiet times are other examples of non-instructional activity. These times, regardless of length, must be scheduled in addition to the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts instructional time requirement. It is anticipated that programs will operate longer than the 2.5 or 5.0 schedule to accommodate non-instructional times throughout the day. Recommended schedules are: 3.0 hours for a half day and 5.5 hours for a full day.

When routine parts of the day such as lunch or outdoor playground play are staffed by someone other than a certified teacher, they are not included in the instructional time

requirement. If programs use these times to offer their Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teachers breaks or planning time, a similarly qualified substitute must be present to count as instruction.

#007 Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs must hire qualified teachers to participate in the program. Staffing recruitment and retention are important to ensuring quality pre-kindergarten programs. While recruitment allows for the acquisition of distinctive teachers; retention helps maintain classroom and program consistency. Recruitment and retention are critical to program quality and consistency for children attending Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs. The Program Review Instrument (PRI) conducted annually by your Pre-K Counts specialist will evaluate that a staff recruitment and retention plan in place. Please see recommended strategies below to help with the development of your plan.

Recommended Recruitment strategies:

- Offer competitive salaries and benefits *comparable* to teachers in local school districts.
    - All program budgets should include provisions for competitive lead teacher and aide salaries and benefits. As part of the review of program budgets, program and fiscal staff will continue to review the recommended percentages outlined in the line-item budget. PA PKC programs must continue to include detailed and accurate line-item justifications as outlined in the PA-PKC-Fiscal-Supplement-2020.01.pdf (pcdn.co). Program and fiscal staff will pay close attention to the following during their review:
        - Compensation amounts for direct service staff. The recommended starting PA PKC teacher wage is $45,000/school year (180 days) or $33.33/hour (180 days/7.5 hours per day) or use the comparable public school district starting teacher salary, in cases where the comparable public school district teacher salary is higher than this amount.
        - Provided benefits for direct service staff.
- Review salary scale at least every three years for internal and external equity.
- Collaborate with Higher Education Institutions that offer PK-4 certification.
- Work with CareerLink and the PA Keys site to post job opportunities.

Recommended Retention strategies:

- Covering costs associated with moving from Level I to Level II certification and Act 48 professional development coursework, including written policies to require staff to maintain employment if these costs are covered.
- Information regarding professional development opportunities is posted and/or communicated to staff on an ongoing basis.
- Use tuition assistance programs such as Rising STARS or TEACH for staff to use towards continued education. Please note: The Rising STARS Tuition Assistance Program is only applicable if your Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts center also has a STARS designation.

- Research and refer staff to scholarship opportunities. Build policies that provide Level II teachers incentives and leave time to mentor other staff or to conduct evaluations at other Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts sites.
- Provide paid leave time for new teachers to be mentored by veteran teaching staff.
- Provide merit increases in addition to annual salary increases.

Strategies to assure maintenance of certified teachers in PKC classrooms:

- Hire two certified teachers (lead and assistant).
- Maintain a pool of qualified substitutes.
- Hire additional staff that meet lead teacher qualifications who perform multiple program duties (e.g., covering planning time, data entry, instructional coaching).
- Teaching staff have the equivalent of at least one paid hour per day to prepare lessons and document learning and development.

#008: Early Childhood Education and Teacher Certification: Frequently Asked Questions

This document was developed by the PDE Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education and OCDEL to address issues regarding currently certified early childhood educators and individuals who are seeking certification.

1. What are the requirements for an Early Childhood Education Instructional I Certificate?

For the purposes of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts an Early Childhood Education Instructional Certificate is defined as N-3 Instructional Certification or PK-4 Instructional Certification. N-3 Instructional Certification is no longer available but holding an active N-3 Instructional Certification does qualify a teacher to teach in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom.

In order to obtain an Early Childhood Education Pre K-4 Instructional I Certificate (also referred to as a Level I) a teacher must do the following:

a. Complete a state-approved Early Childhood Education teacher preparation program, including:

- Student teaching;
- Grade point average (GPA) requirements: 3.0 overall cumulative GPA as noted on Bachelor's or Master's transcript. (See also question 11 for a limited exemption of this requirement under the internship program);
- Six semester hour credits in college level mathematics;
- Three semester hour credits in college level English Composition; and
- Three semester hour credits in college level English/American Literature.

b. Receive the recommendation or verification of education from the preparing college/university; and

c. Meet all testing requirements established by the State Board of Education. Currently required tests and required qualifying scores can be found at Teacher Certification Testing.

2. What is required to convert an Early Childhood Education Instructional I Certificate to an Instructional II Certificate?

In order to convert an N-3 or Pre K-4 Instructional I Certificate to an Instructional II Certificate (also referred to as a Level II), the teacher must complete the following:

a. 24 post-baccalaureate credits of collegiate study (graduate or undergraduate) from a Baccalaureate or Master's degree granting institution, or PDE-approved college equivalent in-service credits or a combination of both. Credits in the areas of law, medicine, theology, or real estate are not acceptable unless relevant to the area of Early Childhood Education.

Initial certificates issued on or after Sept. 1, 2007, must complete six specific course credit hour requirements as identified in Certification Staffing and Policy Guidelines (CSPG)#7. PDE Certification FAQ can be found at Certification FAQs (pa.gov).

b. Three years of satisfactory teaching on an Instructional I Certificate attested to by the chief school administrator of the approved public or non-public school entity in which the most recent service was performed (22 Pa. Code § 49.83). When one Instructional I Certification area is converted to a Level II, all other instructional certificates held by the educator will be simultaneously converted to a Level II.

- An Instructional I Certificate is valid for six service years. Therefore, the educator has six years of teaching in which to complete all requirements to convert to a Level II Certificate.
- Teaching in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program, applies toward years of service on an Instructional I Certificate.

Service Time Counted as Mandatory:

- Service in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program, beginning in 2007;
- Service in a public school pre-kindergarten program; and
- Service in a public school K-4 as an Early Childhood Education certified teacher

Service Time Counted as Optional:

(Applied at the discretion of the certificate holder)

- Service in Head Start programs;
- Service in child care facilities that are a STAR 3 or above;
- Service in licensed nursery schools; and
- Service in an Early Intervention special education classroom (Only 50 percent of total required experience may be counted).

c. Completion of a PDE-approved induction program. Programs such as Head Start that have an approved plan that meets the requirements of an Induction Plan may submit that plan to OCDEL for approval.

d. A completed Instructional I to Instructional II Assessment (as established by Act 13 of 2020 and amended in 22 Pa. Code §19.1 Educator Effectiveness Tool) with a "Satisfactory" rating for teachers who were certified on or after September 1, 2001. The teacher being evaluated and the entity where the teacher taught keeps the following documents on file:

- The record of six Semi-Annual Evaluations, which is used as a basis for the recommendation/verification of satisfactory years of service. The satisfactory years of service must be attested to by the chief school administrator, or the school entities equivalent of a chief school administrator on the Instructional I to Instructional II Assessment form Educator Effectiveness tool.

Evaluations for educators employed in community-based, non-public school Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs and other community-based entities may be conducted by an individual who meets one of the following requirements:

1) The following school district or intermediate unit (IU) personnel (with an active certificate in their field as listed) qualify to perform the teacher evaluation function:

- Principal or assistant principal
- Superintendent or assistant superintendent
- IU executive director or assistant executive director
- Supervisor of Special Education (must have experience in Early Intervention)

2) Early childhood faculty at an approved institution of higher education that has a PDE-approved early childhood teacher preparatory program. This does not include adjunct faculty.

Where the above is not possible, an OCDEL approved evaluator may be utilized:

OCDEL approved Evaluator Criteria:

Evaluators applying to be an OCDEL approved evaluator who meet the following criteria, must submit their qualifications to OCDEL for approval prior to conducting teacher evaluations.

- Holds an active level II Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate in Early Childhood Education OR a Supervisory Certificate
    - If applicant holds a supervisory certificate, evidence of three years of early childhood education experience in a 0-5 and/or PK-3 setting must be provided. A review of an applicant's resume will serve as evidence. Experience must be in the following: Head Start program, child care program at STAR 3 or higher, licensed nursery school, or school district serving PK- 3.
    - If applicant holds a level II teaching certificate, evidence must be provided to show experience in the completion of teacher evaluation. Applicant should submit one or more examples of a written evaluation conducted of a pre-kindergarten teacher.

3. How many years is an Instructional I certificate valid before it must be converted to an Instructional II certificate?

An Instructional I certificate is valid for six years of actual professional service, not calendar years, in a public-school entity and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs.

Service on a Level I certificate in a public-school entity and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program will be charged against the period of validity of the Level I Certificate.

An Instructional I certificate may be valid for longer than six years of service if the service is performed in one of the schools identified in question number two as **optional.** Service time in these schools is only credited toward Level II Certification at the **option** of the certificate holder.

4. Will the time an individual certified in Early Childhood Education at the Instructional I level teaches for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, regardless of the setting, count toward Instructional II?

Yes

5. Do Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts teachers working in community-based Pennsylvania Pre-Counts Programs have to earn an Early Childhood Education Instructional II certificate after six years of teaching experience on an Instructional I certificate?

Yes

6. Does the experience approved for the Instructional II certification apply for eligibility to become a supervisor of a single area (i.e., supervisor of Early Childhood Education or supervisor of elementary)?

Yes

Issuance of a Supervisory Certificate requires a minimum of five years of professional school service **in the area for which the certificate is sought.** Preparation for this certificate is at the graduate level and includes in-depth study in the area of supervision (22 Pa Code §49.111).

A person prepared as a single area supervisor may be eligible for certification provided the applicant:

a. has completed an approved program of graduate study preparing them for the responsibilities of supervising in the specified single program area and of directing the activities of certificated professional employees. (Preparation completed out-of-state must meet Pennsylvania standards for certification.);

b. is recommended for certification by the authorized certification officer of the institution where such education was obtained, or holds a comparable certificate from another state (for out-of-state applicants only);

c. provides a chief school administrator's verification of the completion of five years of

satisfactory professional service in a program in the area for which the supervisory certificate is sought;

d. has provided evidence of satisfactory achievement on assessments prescribed by PDE under Section 49.18(a); and

e. can meet all other requirements provided by law.

7. What will happen if an educator fails to convert an N-3 or PreK-4 Instructional I Certificate to an Instructional II certificate after six years of certified service?

If an individual has served six years on an Instructional I certificate in a public school entity or Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program without applying to convert it to an Instructional II, the certification is considered lapsed or invalid. In order for the individual to continue teaching beyond the six years, they must convert the certification to an Instructional II. In order to receive a Level II certificate by September 1, PDE should receive the application by January 1 of the year in which conversion is sought.

8. How do you re-establish the validity of an invalid or lapsed certificate?

If an individual has completed six years of service on an Instructional I or Level I certificate in a public-school entity or Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program without applying to convert it to a Level II, their certification is considered lapsed. In order for the individual to continue teaching, they must submit the required documentation and application to convert the certification to an Instructional II or Level II. (See list of requirements in Question #2).

9. What will happen if an educator fails to achieve the continued professional development requirements of Act 48?

In order to maintain active certification, an individual must comply with the continuing education requirements of Act 48. If an individual fails to comply with the continuing education requirement of 180 hours or six credits of professional education within the five-year period, their certification is considered inactive. In order for the individual to continue teaching, they must complete the required professional education and submit proof of successful completion of the credits required. Once the requirement is met, the certification automatically becomes reactivated. Information on Act 48 requirements can be found at Act 48 Information.

10. How do you re-activate an inactive certificate?

To re-activate an inactive certificate, one must complete the required six credits or 180 hours, or equivalent combination of approved continuing professional education. The coursework can come from an accredited 4-year college, an accredited 2-year college, a Pennsylvania IU, or any Act 48 approved provider.

If credits or hours are earned from a PDE-approved provider, at the request of the teacher, the credits will be submitted by the professional education provider to PDE's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality (BSLTQ).

If credits are earned from an out-of-state college, the teacher must submit official, sealed transcripts to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Act 48 Transcripts, 607 South Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

A certificate that has been put on Voluntary Inactive (suspends the continuing education requirements) status by the educator will require an application and fee to be sent to PDE for reactivation. A certificate inactivated by the system due to insufficient Act 48 hours continuing professional education credits, will be re-activated only when all requirements are met.

11. What is the required status of a certification?

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts requires all lead classroom teachers in the program to be Early Childhood Education N-3 or PreK-4 certified. This means the certification must be both active and valid.

12. What is a Teacher Intern Certificate?

The Pennsylvania Teacher Intern Certification Program is specifically designed for individuals who have:

a. a minimum of a baccalaureate degree related to the area of certification requested.

b. completed six credits of college-level math, six credits of college-level English literature and composition.

c. a minimum of a 3.0 GPA in their baccalaureate degree. An individual who has passed the basic skills may enter the program with a 2.8 GPA and exit the program with a 3.0.

d. completed an approved institution of higher education's screening process and been accepted to the Teacher Intern Program in order to teach under an Intern Certificate.

e. achieved a satisfactory score on the required certification tests.

f. achieved satisfactory assessments on their student teaching conducted by the college or university in which they are enrolled.

Further information regarding the program and requirements can be found at Intern Certificate.

13. Are elementary education staff eligible to participate in the Teacher Intern Certificate Program to achieve an Early Childhood Education certificate?

Yes. The individual will have to meet the requirements of the institution offering the Teacher Internship Program.

14. Does teaching under an Intern Certification require the candidate to leave his/her teaching position in order to meet student teaching obligations?

Not necessarily. The intern candidate may continue as a lead teacher in a classroom. The assessment of his/her teaching by the college or university under which the Intern Certificate is being acquired constitutes the "assessment of the student's teaching." However, this is determined by the college or university offering the intern program. Prospective interns are encouraged to ask these detailed questions of the institution where they hope to do their internship. In some cases, the college or university may require the intern candidate to spend some time teaching in another classroom and grade level, particularly if the individual is not certified in any field.

15. What is the minimum number of Early Childhood Education credits a person must take to become Early Childhood Education certified?

The preparing institutions make this decision, not PDE.

16. Can a community college refer someone to be presented for certification?

No. Community colleges do not have PDE approval for teacher certification programs. The program referral for certification must come from a PDE-approved 4-year degree granting college/university. However, the degree granting institution may decide which community college credits to accept toward certification requirements.

17. What are the requirements for emergency permits for PA PKC providers and how is an emergency permit obtained?

The lead or partner entity must request an emergency permit from PDE for an individual to serve in a vacant position as a long-term substitute lead teacher. Emergency permits are issued at the request of the lead or partner entity expressing an emergency need to fill a position that has been advertised, but no qualified and properly certificated applicant is available. The candidate for an emergency permit must have earned a bachelor's degree from a state-approved college or university and must meet all other eligibility requirements related to age, citizenship, mental and physical health, and good moral character.

The permit is valid from the first day of the month of issuance to the last day of summer school in that school year and may be reissued only if the emergency circumstances necessitating the permit still exist, a fully qualified and certified individual is unavailable,

and the entity submits the appropriate application to PDE. Additional information about Emergency Permits can be found in Appendix E.

18. Can an Early Childhood Education certificate be added onto an existing instructional certificate by taking the required certification tests alone?

Yes. PDE does permit an Early Childhood Education certificate to be added on to an existing certificate by passing the content area test alone.

19. Can student teaching be waived by a college?

A minimum of 12-week full-time student teaching experience under the supervision of qualified program faculty and cooperating teachers is required. Individuals providing supervision must be program faculty with knowledge and experience in the program area. The cooperating teachers must be trained by the preparation program faculty and have certification in Early Childhood Education, have had three years of satisfactory certificated teaching experience and at least one year of certificated teaching experience in the school entity where the student teacher is placed.

There is no provision for a waiver of student teaching experience. However, the teacher intern program may offer an option for fulfilling this requirement. See questions 10 through 13 for more information.

20. Does a minor in Early Childhood Education enable a candidate who holds a bachelor's degree in another area to take the Pennsylvania certification tests and become certified in Early Childhood Education?

No. An individual must complete the college's or university's certification program approved by PDE for that area of certification.

21. What is the Accelerated Certification Program, how does it work, and what is its status?

22 Pa. Code §49.86 refers to an accelerated program for PreK-4 and 4-8 Certificate administration. Accelerated Programs are programs designed for current holders of PA Instructional I or II certificates who wish to become certified in additional grade levels.

#009: Tracking Activity for Moving ECE Level I Certification to Level II Certification

OCDEL has created a form to track a teacher's progress in moving from Level I certification to Level II. This form can be accessed through the PA Key PKC intranet or by contacting your Preschool Program Specialist.

The form is to be maintained and updated on an on-going basis as a record of the providers' progress in having ECE Level I teachers convert their certificates to Level II. The form is to be completed and submitted to the Preschool Program Specialist through each provider's Lead Agency by October 1 and February 1 of each program year. The Preschool Specialist will review this form during on-site monitoring visits with the expectation that it is being kept current.

Components on the Form:

Name of Teacher: List name of teacher, including maiden name (if applicable). If a teacher who is listed resigns from the provider's staff, make a note below the teacher's name stating "resignation" and the date. Do not eliminate this person's name from the form as it will be a record of the teacher's employment at your facility. If a teacher is on an extended leave, indicate "leave" and the type (sick, family, etc.) along with the date. When the teacher returns, indicate "returned" and the date.

Date Entered PKC Classroom: List date teacher started in the PA Pre-K Counts classroom. Note: Teachers have six years from start date (in an eligible classroom) to move from Level I to Level II certification.

Date Left PKC Classroom: List date teacher left the PA Pre-K Counts classroom (if applicable).

> ECE Level I Certification Date: List date that ECE Level I certification was approved by PDE. Note: All lead teachers must have ECE Level I certification to teach in a PA Pre-K Counts classroom.

Teacher Induction Program: List "start date" and "completion date" for required teacher induction program.

> Evaluation Dates: List completion dates for the required six (6) satisfactory evaluations toward Level II certification.

Note: Two bi-annual evaluations are required beyond the six (6) satisfactory evaluations if Level II certification is not achieved within 3 years.
Note: PDE 13-1 Tool replaces PDE 82-1

Level II Final Evaluation Date: List date that the final evaluation was completed.

Post-Baccalaureate Credits: List current number of credits completed toward the 24 post-baccalaureate credits required for Level II certification. As additional course credits are acquired, enter the new number of credits accumulated and the date the entry was made. Substitute new numbers for the old numbers as changes in the number occur and revise the date to reflect when the change in the number was entered.

- Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness System - Act 13 Training Date: List date that the required training was completed. Comments: Include any additional notes relevant to the teacher's progress toward Level II certification.

Note: An asynchronous Act 13 training is available on the PA Key site in the PD Registry. This training is available for PA Pre-K Counts teachers, evaluators, and directors.

#010: Teacher Certification Evaluation in Community-Based Programs

Teachers in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts community-based classrooms are required to engage in the PDE-prescribed evaluation process as part of conversion of Level I to Level II Certification. For more information on Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness System Project, visit PDE SAS Act 13 Educator Effectiveness.

When evaluating Level II certified teachers in community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs, the program may continue to utilize an LEA or IU evaluator or may utilize an OCDEL approved evaluator.

Act 13 of 2020 revised the Act 82 Educator Effectiveness process used to evaluate professional employees working for Pre-K to 12 educational entities across Pennsylvania. Effective 2021-2022, the revised rating system applies to classroom teachers, non-teaching professionals, and principals as defined in Act 13.

Clarifications:
Evaluation Requirement

- Teachers must have at least three years of satisfactory service in as Level I and 24 post-baccalaureate credits to convert a Level I teaching certificate to Level II; additionally:
    - Six credits must be associated with area(s) of certification and/or must be designed to improve professional practice
    - The three years of satisfactory service on a Level I certificate must be verified by the chief school administrator of the employing school entity
    - Completion of a PDE induction program verified by the chief school administrator of your employing entity

Teachers with Level I certification must have a minimum of two evaluations per year with a "satisfactory" rating.

These evaluations must be conducted within the six-year window for Level I to Level II conversion.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must identify an evaluator who meets the criteria (described below) for this requirement.

- Lead agencies must monitor partners' efforts to fulfill this requirement and to offer support in the identification of a qualified evaluator.

Options for community-based teacher evaluators after transition to Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness System Educator Effectiveness System established by Act 13 and amended in 22 Pa. Code §19.1:

NOTE: It is recommended that evaluator types listed above have experience or understanding of early childhood classrooms and their unique instructional structure to offer appropriate feedback.

1) The following school district or IU personnel (with an active certificate in their field as listed) qualify to perform the teacher evaluation function:

- ✓ Principal or assistant principal
- ✓ Superintendent or assistant superintendent
- ✓ IU executive director or assistant executive director
- ✓ Supervisor of Special Education (with Early Intervention experience)

2) Early childhood faculty at an approved institution of higher education that has a PDE-approved early childhood teacher preparatory program. This does not include adjunct faculty.
3) Interested professionals who meet the credentials listed below may apply to PDE's Office of Child Development and Early Learning for approval. Documentation of all required elements must be submitted. Required elements include:

- An active Level II Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate in Early Childhood Education OR a Supervisory Certificate.

- If applicant holds a supervisory certificate, evidence of three years of early childhood education experience in a 0-5 and/or PK-3 setting must be provided. A review of applicant's resume will serve as evidence. Experience must be in the following: Head Start program, childcare program at STAR 3 or higher, licensed nursery school, or school district serving PK- 3.

- If applicant holds a Level II teaching certificate, evidence must be provided to show experience in the completion of teacher evaluation. Applicant should submit one or more examples of a written evaluation conducted of a pre-kindergarten teacher.

Preschool Program Specialists may share these criteria and discuss this option with their assigned grantees and counsel them on the criteria for evaluator approval. Should an individual wish to seek OCDEL approval to conduct evaluations, they should submit a letter of interest and the above referenced documentation to Jolie Phillips (jolphillip@pa.gov) requesting approval.

All evaluator types listed above must have PDE-approved training in teacher evaluation (22 Pa. Code § 19.1) or an alternate LEA teacher evaluation plan approved by PDE. Please contact your local IU for training.

Using the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Evaluation and Assessment Forms

Level I evaluations must be completed on the PDE-approved forms: PDE 13-1. Teacher Effectiveness Tool. This form can be found in the PKC portal. When evaluating Level II certified teachers in community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs, the program may continue to utilize PDE-approved forms or may develop an equivalent means for the annual evaluation of Level II certified teachers.

#011: Teacher Induction for Community-Based Providers

The Guidelines for Induction Programs, developed by PDE, while written for public school districts, should be interpreted to apply to community-based providers.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies must work together with their partners to determine the best option for induction programs for the partnership.

Lead agencies should discuss the options available to partners and secure agreement about the option they want to pursue.

A school district or IU may add an addendum to their approved PDE-plan to include community-based PA PKC providers. The addendum should:

- Be written on LEA letter head;
- Include the following statement: "(LEA name) will include the following community-based PA PKC providers in their PDE-approved induction plan for school year (include relevant school term);"
- Include a listing of all community-based PA PKC providers to be included; and
- Indicate how the plan will be made applicable to and implemented for community-based partners.

All PA PKC providers should reference Appendix F: Changes to Induction Planning. The Designated Educator Evaluator form (see below) must be submitted to OCDEL annually. The form is also available within the PKC portal.

All community-based Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must name an induction coordinator and ensure that all their early childhood education teachers participate in an approved, teacher induction program, regardless of years of teaching.

All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must provide a copy of their finalized Induction Plan, including the Designated Educator Evaluator Form to their Preschool Specialist.,

Options for Teacher Induction Plans:

1. Become part of a school district's Teacher Induction Plan using the following steps:

    a. This option works especially well for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers in partnerships that include a public-school district or those providers that have a strong collaboration with a local district;

    b. The lead agency should consult with the local district(s) of the partnership to determine the school's willingness to assist community-based providers with meeting the induction requirement;

c. Meet with representatives of each partner provider to be included in the plan to discuss ways the Induction Plan can be amended to include the community-based providers;

d. Create an addendum to the plan that details the variations of the plan and how it has been made applicable to partners (see above);

e. Submit both the plan and the addendum to the director and the Teacher Induction Council for sign-off by the authorized person; and

f. The school district should submit the plan using protocols detailed in Appendix F: Changes to Induction Planning. The addendum should be submitted to the Preschool Program Specialist who will forward to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. The Preschool Program Specialist will review the plan and work with the provider to suggest any changes as needed prior to submitting the document to OCDEL.

2. Become part of an IU's existing Induction Plan by following the steps outlined above.

3. Develop a stand-alone Induction Plan. This option works well for those providers who are not in a partnership with a school district or IU.

This form is available within the PA Key portal.

DESIGNATED EDUCATOR EVALUATOR FORM

Please complete all the information below.

This form must be submitted/updated annually on or before October 1.

Contact Name:
Title:
Lead Agency Name:
Mailing Address:
Telephone Number:
Email Address:

Evaluator(s): List any evaluator associated with the programs listed above (repeat information below as needed)

Name:
Credentials:

(e.g., Principal, Asst. Principal, Office of Child Development and Early Learning approved, intermediate supervisor, etc.)

Evaluator Contact Information (Phone): (Email Address):

#012 Comprehensive Screening

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must complete a developmental screening on all children within 45 calendar days of the child's first day in the classroom setting. Developmental screening processes that occur up to 90 days prior to entry in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom fulfill this requirement.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers shall ensure all children have had the opportunity to receive the recommended vision, hearing, and health screenings. To meet this requirement, programs should at minimum:

- Communicate to families about the importance of early screening;
- Collect evidence from families regarding screenings that have occurred within 180 days of the recommended screening timeframes;
- In cases where screenings have not occurred, provide timely opportunities for enrolled children to have the opportunity for screening. These screenings may be conducted by the providers or an outside agency including a physician; and
- Communicate with families about screening results and support follow up as needed.

At no time should a child be denied access to PKC programming or be disenrolled if recommended screenings are not up to date. Screenings should be used as a first step in identification of potential delays or health concerns and to indicate those children who need to be further referred for evaluation or follow up care.

OCDEL provides a free tracking tool for programs that do not have another means to track screenings. The tool can be accessed through the PKC intranet. Please speak with your preschool program specialist if you do not currently have access to the intranet.

Clarifications:
A developmental screening for young children is a preventative strategy that quickly triggers additional supports for those children with suspected developmental delays or disabilities.

Screening is not a readiness test and should not be used to determine a child's readiness for pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Instead, it should be used to identify potential delays for learning that typically result in the need for further diagnostic evaluation by professionals. Developmental screening instruments were developed to alert early childhood professionals to a child's potential areas of strength and need in each developmental domain. Developmental screening instruments are "early alert systems" that can help to focus further assessment and observation. In other words, "screening may be used to identify children who should be observed further for possible delay or problems" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005, p.13).

Developmental Screenings:

Developmental screenings are quick snapshots that should collect information in all domains of a child's development: social, cognitive, physical, and social emotional to identify potential risks.

OCDEL recommends the use of the Ages & Stages, and the Ages & Stages SE Questionnaires. These instruments are valid and reliable, easy to use and family friendly. There is a minimal cost associated with purchasing Ages & Stages. Grantees are permitted to include the cost of the resource in their budgets.

Physical Health Screenings:

Vision and Hearing screenings may be administered by appropriately trained program staff or by partnering with Head Start, the Association for the Blind, or other appropriate local community-based organizations. Preschool Program Specialists can be a resource for programs identifying equipment and possible community resources to meet the hearing and vision screening requirement. If a child demonstrates a concern on the screening, parents should be informed and assisted in connecting with follow up.

Physical and oral health are important to children's school readiness. According to the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Program (EPSDT), all three- and four-year-old children should have an annual well child checkup and a dental exam.

Children enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts should be covered by Medicaid, Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or private insurance. Children on schedule for a well-child visit annually may have sensory, health and/or developmental screenings completed. Providers may request consent to exchange information to obtain screening results from a child's physician or request families provide this information.

Returning children do not need screening annually unless indicated by a change in the child's circumstances or development.

Once a screening has been conducted, based on the findings, the agency will make the necessary recommendations and referrals, and work with the local intervention agencies to support the child and family. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must coordinate enrollment strategies with "Child Find." Child Find is a requirement under federal law that mandates Early Intervention programs reach out to identify all those children who may be eligible or in need of Early Intervention services.

OCDEL funds an information and referral service, CONNECT, designed to link families with early intervention and special education services. CONNECT is a statewide resource and referral system accessed by phone or fax. Programs are encouraged to share information regarding CONNECT with families when the results of screening suggest the need for additional services. CONNECT services can be accessed at 1-800-692-7288, help@connectpa.net, or by submitting the form online. Hours for CONNECT are 7:30AM-3:30PM on business days.

Important Note:
All children in Pennsylvania are eligible for Health Insurance. Medicaid is a free program for eligible children. CHIP provides no cost or low-cost health coverage for eligible children. If a family is seeking information about obtaining insurance for enrolled children can be provided with contact information to the Pennsylvania Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or Medicaid by applying on COMPASS.

#013: Assessment of Learning Environment

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs must select and use an assessment tool from the tools approved by PDE to assess and monitor program learning environment (classrooms).

Classroom internal assessments, performed by trained facility personnel, must be completed annually. Results of the environmental assessment must be used by the program to determine program needs as part of the program's Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

An external assessment shall be conducted annually in at least one PA PKC classroom. The external assessment process may be conducted by a Program Quality Assessor or another designee of the Department that has received training in the assessment tool being used to conduct the assessment.

When required by the Department, additional assessments shall be conducted by an external assessor assigned by the Department.

Lead teachers must attend training on the use of the chosen program assessment tool within the first six months of employment in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom. The PA Key Professional Development System supports a variety of environmental assessment professional development. To learn what is currently available programs should reference the Pennsylvania Professional Development Registry. Programs are responsible for ensuring staff receive training on use of the tool.

Clarifications

External Assessment for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs:

An external assessment shall be conducted annually in at least one PA PKC classroom. The external assessor will be trained in the assessment tool used for the external assessment. Results of the environmental assessments must be used by the program to determine program needs as part of a continuous quality improvement plan.

The Department reserves the right to require and conduct additional external assessment(s) of select Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms.

If the Department requires an external assessment in additional classrooms, the assigned Preschool Program Specialist will initiate the process for an external assessment. The external assessment process may be conducted by Program Quality Assessor or another designee of the Department that has received training in the assessment tool being used to conduct the assessment.

Providers must receive and shall retain a hard copy of their assessment results.

Results of the external assessment must be shared with the preschool program specialist who may share results including those of its partners, with the lead agency. For those

programs participating in Keystone STARS, a copy will also be sent to the STARS Quality Coach.

Internal-Assessment:

Programs may choose to use any Department approved assessment of learning environment to fulfill the required annual internal assessment.

An internal assessment must be completed in every classroom annually.

Internal assessments must be completed by personnel who have completed training on the chosen tool. Depending on the chosen assessment personnel may include persons outside the facility. The PA Key Professional Development System supports a variety of environmental assessment professional development. To learn what is currently available programs should reference the Pennsylvania Professional Development Registry.

Internal assessments should, as much as possible, be an honest reflection of the classroom environment.

Results of annual internal assessments for all classrooms must be submitted to preschool program specialists. Partners must also submit their results to the lead agency.

Department Approved Assessments of Learning Environment:

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 (Professional development supported by the Department)

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms (Pre-K through 3rd grade version)

Teaching Pyramid Tool for Preschool Classrooms (TPOT)

Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)

Climate of Healthy Interactions for Learning and Development (CHILD)

Programs may submit to have additional assessments of learning environment added by contacting OCDEL staff at RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov.

#014: Collaboration with Early Intervention

Providers of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs must coordinate with the local Infant and Toddler, and the Preschool Early Intervention programs. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure a smooth transition for children coming into Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts from the Infant and Toddler program and who may be receiving Preschool Early Intervention services. In such instances, it is important for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provider to understand supportive services provided by the Early Intervention program to transitioning Pre-K counts children with disabilities or delays. A working relationship with the local Early Intervention program will be helpful in supporting a successful early learning experience for children with disabilities and their families.

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania is modeled on the belief that children with disabilities should experience supports and services within settings that are typical for all children. This is further supported by federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that requires service provisions in the "least restrictive environment." Children who are receiving Early Intervention services and who are enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts must be enrolled for and participate in the full range of opportunities within the program. They must attend the full scope of the program (five days per week, for the 2.5- or 5-hour day). Children in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts receiving Early Intervention services may not miss significant portions of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program to receive their Early Intervention services. The Early Intervention services must be scheduled to make regular attendance in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program possible.

The method of support for each individual child with a disability will be decided with the family and Early Intervention staff after completion of an evaluation. PA PKC staff will be invited and should make every effort to attend these meetings.

Early Intervention staff will work with PA PKC staff to integrate targeted skills into everyday classroom routines and activities.

For information about the Early Intervention service delivery model go to *Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings Announcement and/or the Service Delivery Coaching Across Settings* course on the PD Registry.

PA PKC providers must document the collaborative approach to service provision. Examples of documentation might include meeting minutes and/or formal agreements signed by both PA PKC and the local Early Intervention program(s).

Both Early Intervention and PA PKC must review and update their collaborative processes annually.

Transitions

Eligible children who are receiving services in the Infant-Toddler Early Intervention program will usually begin the transition process into Preschool Early Intervention before their third birthday.

PA PKC providers should collaborate with their Infant-Toddler Early Intervention program, to develop procedures for families to explore PA PKC as an option for the child's early learning education.

The Early Intervention team and PA PKC staff must work collaboratively with families to support transition into kindergarten. Meetings with the team to discuss successful entry into kindergarten, best learning modalities, and adaptations should be shared. Preschool Early Intervention Programs hold transition meetings every year for children transitioning to school-age the following school year. These transition meetings are required to be held no later than the last day of February.

Additional collaborations

PA PKC should make family referrals to Early Intervention when appropriate. Families should be informed of referrals and included in the referral process.

Early Intervention programs should refer children to PA PKC as an option, regardless of whether they are eligible for Early Intervention services.

PA PKC and Early Intervention are encouraged to develop and share joint professional development.

#015: Reporting and Data Requirements

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must submit documentation of program implementation through multiple sources:

- Early Learning Network (PELICAN);
- Financial Accounting Information System (FAI); and
- Submission of written program plans.

PELICAN/Early Learning Network:
Data reports must be submitted through OCDEL's PELICAN/Early Learning Network. Demographic and fiscal reports are required from each lead agency and partner.

Financial Accounting Information System:
Providers must submit their *Reconciliation of Cash on Hand Quarterly Reports* via the Financial Accounting Information System website. To access FAI, applicants must use MyPDESuite. This is a web portal that enables users to access various PDE data collection applications including eGrants and FAI. Download Information on how to access MyPDESuite for various PDE data collection applications including eGrants. Failure to complete *Reconciliation of Cash on Hand Quarterly Reports* will result in payment delays.

Clarifications:
Reporting through the PELICAN/Early Learning Network:
The PELICAN/Early Learning Network serves as the web-based repository for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts information. Access PELICAN for further information.

Lead agencies and partners must, together, determine the responsible party for each type of reporting requirement. In some cases, the lead agency may choose to enter data for its partners, in other situations the partners may enter their own data.

The lead agency is responsible for assuring that all data is entered accurately and thoroughly, within the designated timeframe. Program Review determinations will be impacted in cases where programs fail to meet reporting deadlines. In addition, payments may be withheld in cases where a final expenditure report is more than 60 days overdue.

Data entered through the PELICAN/Early Learning Network must be updated monthly to assure accuracy. This includes information on program contacts, providers, classrooms, teachers, families, and children. Updates to PELICAN data must occur by the last day of each month for changes to be reflected in the monthly program monitoring report, unless otherwise noted in policy.

The information submitted through OCDEL's reporting system is utilized to create the annual and quarterly reports to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office, and to make programmatic decisions about new policies, recommendations, and professional development. Provider contact information must be kept current to ensure accurate and timely communications.

Financial Accounting Information System:

Lead agencies must submit supporting budgetary information quarterly through the Financial Accounting Information (FAI) System. This information needs to be gathered from partners and compiled for lead agency submission. Provider pay-outs from the Comptroller rely on accurate and timely completion of reports within the FAI System**.** Payments will be delayed as a result of delays in FAI reporting completion.

Written Reports Submitted to the Preschool Program Specialist:

The following plans will be reviewed annually for completion and specific application to the PA PKC program:

- Plan to Reduce Suspension and Expulsion
- Attendance Plan
- Emergency Preparedness Plan
- Induction Plan, with submitted "Designated Educator Evaluator Form"
- Community Needs Assessment
- Partnership Plan (if applicable)
- Parent Involvement Plan
- Transition Plan
- Staff Recruitment and Retention Plan
- Continuous Quality Improvement Plan
- Flexible Instruction Plan (if applicable)
- **Under enrollment Plan (if applicable)**

Teacher Induction Plans are required of all providers. See Supplemental Resource #011.

The lead agency is responsible to collect these plans from partners and submit them with their own plans. Preschool program specialists review these plans and discuss modifications when needed and monitor implementation of these plans.

Programs must submit the Level I to Level II certification tracker to the assigned preschool program specialist on October 1 and February 1 of each school year.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Reporting Deadlines

July:

- Staff qualifications added to PELICAN (completed by 9/29)
- Child Enrollments (full enrollment by 9/1)
- Previous month's attendance finalized **7/5**

August:

- Staff qualifications added to PELICAN (completed by 9/29)
- Child Enrollments (full enrollment by 9/1)
- Previous month's attendance finalized **8/4**
- Partnership Agreement **8/15**
- Select an Assessment Vendor **8/15**
- Final Expenditure Reports for Previous Year **8/31** (PELICAN)

September:

- Full Enrollment **9/1**
- Previous month's attendance finalized **9/5**
- Begin Class No Later than **9/29** Guaranteeing 180 days of Instruction
- Staffing completed in PELICAN by **9/29**

October:

- Teacher Tracker of Level I to Level II Activities to Specialist **10/2**
- Previous month's attendance finalized **10/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10th business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10th business day (PELICAN)
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **10/31**

November:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **11/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **11/30**

December:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **12/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **12/31**

January:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **1/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10th business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10th business day (PELICAN)

- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **1/30**

February:

- Teacher Tracker of Level I to Level II Activities to Specialist **2/1**
- Previous month's attendance finalized **2/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **2/28**

March:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **3/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **3/31**
- Audit Reporting due for most child care and Private Licensed Nursery schools **3/30**

April:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **4/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10th business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10th business day (PELICAN)
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **4/30**
- Continuation Grant must be approved and finalized **4/15**
- Funding adjustments must be approved and finalized by **4/15**

May:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **5/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN by **5/31**

June:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **6/5**
- Final Budget Revisions due **6/17** (PELICAN)
- Audit Reporting due for school districts, Intermediate Units, and Community Action Programs **6/30**
- End date all enrollments by **6/30**, even for children who will return for the next school year.

#016: Continuous Quality Improvement Planning

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs will develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan after each annual Program Review in collaboration with their assigned Preschool Program Specialist (PPS). Plans of correction within the CQI plan will be established for providers who are not meeting program requirements. Plans of Correction will be developed in collaboration with the PPS and will detail specific regulations not being met, action plans for correction, timelines for correction, and personnel responsible for corrections. The CQI plan will also include a section for recognizing excellence and promoting innovation. This section will be used primarily with grantees who are fully compliant with all program requirements. The CQI plan will be reviewed on an on-going basis based on the timelines reflected within the plan itself. CQI plans will be reviewed annually and will be used as sources of evidence for on-going program reviews. The expectation is programs are correcting identified deficiencies in meeting program requirements within the designated timeframes outlined within the plan itself. On-going deficiencies year-to-year that are not corrected may impact program funding.

Continuous Quality Improvement is the complete process of:

- identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and weaknesses;
- developing a plan that includes benchmarks and measurable goals for improvement;
- implementing the plan;
- learning from outcomes; and
- revising solutions.

It is an ongoing process by which an organization reviews data, makes decisions and evaluates its progress.

Information from the *Program Review Instrument*, *Best Practice Inventory*, *Classroom Observation Checklist, Instructional Observation Checklist,* assessment of learning environment as well as agency-specific strategies for documenting and reviewing program, classroom and teacher performance that include Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts regulations and policies will be considered when developing the CQI plan.

Lead agencies will be included in the partners' development and ongoing review of a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

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Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Planning		
Compliance-Plan of Correction (POC)		
Lead Agency Name: **Partner Name:**		**Specialist:** **Administrator:**
Subscales		
Mark all subscales that require follow up actions to meet program requirements.	☐ **Subscale A: Program Requirements**	☐ **Subscale E: Collaborations**
	☐ **Subscale B: Eligibility, Enrollment, and Attendance**	☐ **Subscale F: Fiscal Responsibilities**
	☐ **Subscale C: Personnel Qualifications**	☐ **Subscale G: Quality Initiatives**
	☐ **Subscale D: Instructional Supports**	☐ **Subscale H: Health & Safety**
Rating Description: (Describe the details of the "Does Not Meet" .)		

Compliance Area 1: [Insert Area]
Subscale: [Insert Subscale]
Indicator: [Insert Indicator]
Description of Non-Compliance: [Provide detailed description]
Action Steps: 1. **Specific Actions to Address Non-Compliance:** o [Detail specific actions needed]
2. **Policy or Procedural Changes Required:** o [Detail policy or procedure changes if any]
3. **Resources Needed:** o [Specify resources such as training, materials, additional staff, etc.]
4. **Responsible Person(s):** o [Identify the person(s) responsible for each action]
5. **Timeline for Completion:** o [Provide realistic timelines for each action]
6. **Evaluation and Monitoring Plan:** o [Describe how the progress will be monitored and evaluated]
Preschool Program Specialist: Complete this section.
Support and Resources:

• **External Support Needed:** [Identify external support such as consultants, referrals, etc.]
Review Plan: [Schedule regular review meetings]
Rating Description: (Describe the details of the "Does Not Meet" .)
Compliance Area 2: [Insert Area]
Subscale: [Insert Subscale]
Indicator: [Insert Indicator]
Description of Non-Compliance: [Provide detailed description]
Action Steps: **Specific Actions to Address Non-Compliance:** 1. **[Detail specific actions needed]**
2. **Policy or Procedural Changes Required:** a. **[Detail policy or procedure changes if any]**
3. **Resources Needed:** a. **[Specify resources such as training, materials, additional staff, etc.]**
4. **Responsible Person(s):** a. **[Identify the person(s) responsible for each action]**
5. **Timeline for Completion:** a. **[Provide realistic timelines for each action]**

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6. **Evaluation and Monitoring Plan:**
   a. **[Describe how the progress will be monitored and evaluated]**

Preschool Program Specialist: Complete this section.

Support and Resources:

- **External Support Needed:** [Identify external support such as consultants, referrals, etc.]

Review Plan: [Schedule regular review meetings]

Recognizing Excellence and Promoting Innovation

This section aims to acknowledge programs that meet regulatory requirements and encourage the sharing of innovative approaches and best practices. We believe that recognizing excellence and fostering mentorship can enhance the overall quality of early childhood systems and approaches within our programs.

Mark all subscales that demonstrate exceptional practices and exceed program requirements.	☐ **Subscale A: Program Requirements**	☐ **Subscale E: Collaborations**
	☐ **Subscale B: Eligibility, Enrollment, and Attendance**	☐ **Subscale F: Fiscal Responsibilities**
	☐ **Subscale C: Personnel Qualifications**	☐ **Subscale G: Quality Initiatives**
	☐ **Subscale D: Instructional Supports**	☐ **Subscale H: Health & Safety**
Rating Description: (Describe the details of the "Exceeds Expectations" rating**.)**		

Program Recognition and Goals:

Describe any innovative practices or approaches the program has implemented that go beyond standard regulatory requirements.

How have these practices positively impacted the children, families, and staff in your program?
Identify any goals the program has set to further enhance your existing best practices.
What steps is the program planning to take to achieve these goals?
Mentorship Opportunities: • **Would your program be willing to share your expertise with other programs within our network?** • **Are you interested in mentoring a program administrator who may benefit from extra support and guidance?** **Showcasing Skills:** • Would you consider participating in workshops, seminars, or conferences to showcase your program's best practices and innovative approaches? • Are there specific topics or areas of expertise you would like to present or discuss with your peers?
Signatures and Acknowledgment
Preschool Program Specialist Signature/Date:

Lead Agency Administrator: **Date:**	**Partner Administrator:** **Date:**

#017: Fiscal Reporting and Deadlines

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must maintain and submit accurate fiscal reports to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

Clarifications:

Continuation Grant Budget:

Annual budgets must be completed in the Early Learning Network's PELICAN system within two weeks of notification of Continuation Application Narrative approval in PELICAN.

Proper descriptions and justification must be provided for each line item. A description is **ALWAYS** needed for every line item. A justification is needed when a line item falls outside of the recommended range for that line item.

Ranges for each line item will be provided annually.

Programs must properly cost allocate any expenditures that are shared resources.

Programs must adhere to the guidance provided within the PA Pre-K Counts Fiscal Supplement when creating or revising program budgets.

Lead agencies with partners must assure all partner budgets are submitted before lead agencies may submit their Continuation Grant Budget.

Budget Revisions:

Budget revisions that show expenditure deviations +/- 10 percent from the originally approved budget must be completed as needed and require prior approval from all appropriate levels.

Lead agencies and partner agencies must submit budget revisions in PELICAN.

Strong written justification must be provided for expenditures outside the recommended fiscal guidelines provided by OCDEL. Grantees are encouraged to include quotes, receipts, proposals, or work plans with their requests. This information may also be requested prior to budget revision approval. Programs should include a cost-allocation plan, if applicable, when submitting a budget revision.

The approval process will be electronic for the following budget revisions that require advance approval:

- Any deviation to a line item greater than +/-10 percent
- Addition of a new line item

All budget revisions must be submitted and approved prior to initiating the *Final Expenditure Report* in PELICAN.

Final budget revisions should be submitted no later than the submission of the *Final Expenditure Report* by **June 30**.

OCDEL reserves the right to deny any budget revision that was not pre-approved. This could impact final payment.

Quarterly Expenditure Reports (Applies to Lead Agencies Only):

Quarterly Expenditure Reports are to be completed in PELICAN.

The *Quarterly Expenditure Report* details the amount expended prior to the close of quarter and the amount projected to be spent to the close of the quarter.

Submission dates are: The 10th business day of October, January, and April.

Final Expenditure Report (Applies to Lead Agencies Only):

The *Final Expenditure Report* ensures that revenues and expenditures are properly accounted for in the correct fiscal year.

Funding for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program is distributed on a state fiscal year (July 1-June 30) and cannot be carried over to the following year.

The final expenditure report must be entered into PELICAN no later than August 31. Payments may be withheld in cases where a final expenditure report is more than 60 days overdue.

Inventory Control:

Grantees must maintain an inventory list of equipment with a purchase price exceeding $5,000. The list should be submitted in PELICAN, along with the *Final Expenditure Report*, no later than **August 31** of each year.

The lead agency is responsible for reviewing inventory reports from partner agencies which is submitted into the PELICAN system along with the lead agency's *Final Expenditure Report* and Inventory Report.

Financial Accounting Information System (Applies to Lead Agencies Only)

Interim Reports, one-time filing exceptions, can be submitted for projects that are in their first quarter payment cycle and are experiencing extraordinary cash needs that cannot be met by the regular monthly payments.

Quarterly Reports, the reconciliation of cash on hand, are required to be submitted no later than the 10th working day of the month. Once this deadline has passed, no changes can be made to the previously submitted report. Reports submitted after this date will be considered delinquent and will be processed in the next payment cycle.

Revised reports can be filed to correct material misstatements submitted on a prior *Quarterly Report*. Contact the specialist for instructions.

Delinquent reports are necessary if the *Quarterly Report* has not been submitted by the 10th working day of the month. Scheduled payments to the respective project will be suspended until the report has been submitted.

#018: Audit Requirements

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies and partner agencies may be required to meet audit requirements depending upon the amount and types of funding the agency receives.

Clarifications:
Providers must comply with all applicable state audit requirements.

Providers are expected to maintain books, records, documents, and other evidence in sufficient detail to support all claims against the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding. OCDEL reserves the right to request a review of these materials.

Agencies that receive more than $750,000 in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding and/or are subject to 2 CFR 200, Uniform Guidance, have until **June 30** to submit a copy of their audit**.**

Audit expenses should be charged to the next fiscal year budget.

All documentation for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program must be maintained for seven years.

PDE reserves the right to cost settle with a grantee for non-allowable costs and/or undocumented costs.

Audit requirements:

If a Provider receives more than $750,000 in state Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding during the program year, but is not subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200), they must have an audit of those funds made in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (The Yellow Book), revised, as published by the Comptroller General of the United States.

If the Provider is not subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200), and receives less than $750,000 in state Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding during the program year, they are not required to have an audit. Programs meeting this definition will have a fiscal review as part of typical program monitoring. The fiscal review may include the following:

1. Internal controls exist that provide safeguards against improper use of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding;
2. Cost allocation plan is appropriate and a sample of allocated expenses is reviewed;
3. Payments to the provider were consistent with expenditures; program did not have more than 30 days of cash on hand;
4. A review of fiscal implications based on the following policies:

    a. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may not charge families any fees during the established program hours;
    b. Provider did not charge a concurrent fee to any other program for a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funded child during the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts portion of the day.
5. Mid-year and final expense reports accurately reflected the expenses of the program;
6. All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funds were, at a minimum, segregated from other funds through the use of a general ledger or other acceptable accounting practices; and
7. Any unexpended funds were returned to PDE.
8. For Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs operating under a joint grant (lead with partners), a partnership agreement exists between the provider and the lead agency.

School District and Intermediate Unit Lead Agency and Partners who submit Audits, which include Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding, to the Pennsylvania Department of Education are excused from submitting an additional copy of this audit to OCDEL but must provide evidence to demonstrate the audit has been submitted by June 30. (Submission pages, confirmation page or findings summary pages)

When an audit is required, providers must submit the Executive Summary as documentation of compliance with this requirement annually. Providers are required to submit documentation for their audit to the Fiscal Specialist by June 30

According to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR 200), no extension requests will be permitted. Audit reports are due 9 months after the close of fiscal year. For most Childcare and Private License Nurseries, March 31 is the deadline. For most School Districts, Intermediate Units and Community Action Programs, June 30 is the deadline.

#019 Flexible Instruction Plan (FIP)

Flexible Instruction Plans (FIPs) allow programs to serve children and families through alternative modalities. FIPs must include the following information:

- How students will be engaged remotely and indicating how the provider will ensure equitable access and meet the needs of students with special needs.
    - See *"Considerations When Planning for Remote Instruction"* below.
    - Programs should consider virtual and non-virtual modalities.
    - Technology purchases should not be considered a necessity of a successful FIP.
- The specific instances when a program will use a FIP. Only instances detailed in the approved FIP should initiate use of the FIP, unless specifically approved in writing by PPS and OCDEL prior to use.

FIP may be used for the following pre-defined circumstances:

- Inclement weather closings;
- Act 80 and teacher in-service days built into the provider program year calendar;
- For emergency-related classroom or building closures such as, unsafe building conditions (e.g., flooding, sewer), COVID-19 classroom or building exposure resulting in the need to quarantine or need to clean classroom or building; or
- When an absence for an individual student would typically be "excused" by the program. PA PKC programs are reminded that Supplemental Resource #005 defines an excused absence as: "Those absences when a student is prevented from attending for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons. These can be further defined as illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health or dental appointments, fire, natural disaster, or other extenuating circumstances deemed as excused by the program (PA PKC Statute, Regulations, and Guidelines, 2023, p. 49)." If a student engages remotely in this circumstance, the day can be counted for attendance per Tracking Student Attendance in a Remote Learning Environment.

FIP occurrences not included in the pre-defined circumstances:

- If a provider encounters a circumstance not included in the predefined circumstances above, the provider must obtain approval from PDE and the OCDEL PKC/HSSAP steering committee prior to implementation.
- To obtain approval, the following should occur:
    - The provider must submit a written request to the Preschool Program Specialist detailing the circumstances, including assurance of family participation, and justifying the requested use of an approved FIP. Details should include all relevant information based on the requested need, such as, but not limited to, the following:
        - For medical issues of persons other than the enrolled student that would impact regular attendance of the enrolled student include

documentation by medical staff. Documentation does not need to contain specific medical information protected by HIPPA but should include a general statement of need and must be signed by a health care professional with Medical ID number included. An example of when this would be appropriate is when an enrolled student lives with an immunocompromised family member and in-person instruction may expose a family member to a contagious disease, such as COVID-19 or the measles.

- For staffing related issues, include current staffing profile (number of classes and current staff available to cover these classes); number of children affected; time frame for use of the FIP; and documentation of family consent to engage in remote learning and understanding of attendance policy as it relates to remote learning.
- For behavior related issues, include documentation of behavior plan steps taken to date; members of the behavior team (families must be included; include EI and/or behavior health personnel for students receiving those services); time frame for use of FIP; and the plan for how the student will transition back to full in-person instruction. Use of an FIP does meet the definition of exclusion and should only be used in instances where time is needed to implement an evaluation or an in-person behavior plan, or all other avenues have been exhausted.
- For Head Start eligible PA PKC providers, include documentation that the proposed remote learning model has been approved by the federal program.

- If the Preschool Program Specialist views the request as reasonable, the Specialist will submit the request to OCDEL through the PKC/HSSAP Steering Committee for consideration. The PKC/HSSAP Steering Committee will review requests submitted up to 24 hours prior to the scheduled steering committee meeting
  - All single-occurrence requests to utilize an approved remote learning plan for non-predefined circumstances will be reviewed but are not guaranteed for approval.
  - Committee approval applies only to the single-occurrence circumstance described in the request. Approval must be sought by the provider for each occurrence of a non-predefined circumstance.
  - In cases where approval by the Steering Committee would potentially come after a need to implement a FIP plan (e.g., meeting staff ratios), programs may implement the FIP plan while awaiting approval. If the committee denies the request, the provider is still responsible for meeting the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts 180 instructional day requirement for the program year. However, the instructional time while the provider awaited the committee's decision and an approved FIP was implemented will count as instructional time.

FIP Monitoring

Providers will be monitored by the Preschool Program Specialist for successful implementation of the approved FIP after each occurrence. If the Preschool Program Specialist determines that the approved remote learning plan has not been successfully implemented, the provider is still responsible for meeting the PA PreK Counts 180 instructional day requirement and the HSSAP service hours requirement for the program year.

Considerations When Planning for Remote Instruction

Remote learning: Virtual
When planning and implementing virtual learning, providers must consider the following:

- Access and availability to technology for students, families, and educators;
- Family schedules and demographics, teachers' experience, competency, and ability to create quality virtual learning opportunities.

For virtual remote learning options to count as an instructional day, the following requirements must be included in the plan and met:

- The provider must develop a written FIP that identifies what virtual options will be used, share the plan with families, and have families acknowledge receipt of the policy. At minimum, the plan must address the following:
    - How family technology needs were assessed and addressed, including documentation of such assessment;
    - How student participation, learning and family engagement is assessed;
    - What platforms will be used;
    - How students, staff, and families have or will receive training in the platforms;
    - How content will be delivered;
    - Certified lead teachers must develop and monitor content of no more than 30 minutes per day of virtual remote learning.
- Content must be delivered using a platform familiar to students and families and that includes all learning domains aligned with PA Learning Standards for Early Childhood. Allowable content includes:
    - Synchronous: real time; virtual meetings between lead teacher/student(s) in which instruction/learning activities occur (e.g., live read aloud); and
    - Asynchronous: on own time instruction/learning activities that are reviewed after submission by teacher or other staff (e.g., a recorded lesson with clear expectations to access/complete it within a specified time frame).

Preschool Program Specialists will monitor virtual learning experiences through review of provided options and family interviews and must be provided access to online platforms upon request.

Remote Learning: Non-Virtual

For non-virtual remote learning options to count as an instructional day, the following requirements must be met:

- The provider must develop a written FIP that identifies what non-virtual options will be used, share the plan with families and have families acknowledge receipt of the policy. At minimum, the plan must include the following:
    - Documentation outlining how family needs (for pickup of materials, for example) were assessed and addressed;
    - How student participation will be tracked;
    - What materials will be provided to students, families, and staff;
    - How families will receive training on at-home learning activities;
    - How students and families will be engaged, including ways participation will be flexible to meet student and family needs; and
    - How programs will document and assess student learning.
- The provide must take steps to understand and alleviate any barriers to obtaining materials necessary for completing and collecting take-home assignments. Providers may not charge fees to families for remote learning.
- Certified lead teachers must develop and monitor content of no more than 30 minutes per day of non-virtual remote learning. Content must include all learning domains aligned with the PA Learning Standards for Early Childhood.
- An adult must facilitate the content and include documentation of completion that is reviewed by program staff on a regular schedule (e.g., a videoed or photographed at home learning activity). Allowable content includes any learning activity completed outside of school environment, take-home activity packets, and Public Broadcasting System (PBS)-related activities. Home visits will count when an instructional component is included for the child.

Preschool Program Specialists will monitor non-virtual remote learning experiences through review of provided options and family interviews and should be provided access to provided options upon request.

Tracking Student Attendance in a Remote Learning Environment

When a PA PKC initiates a FIP, the program must accurately track out of school instructional time (i.e., remote learning) like attendance in the school building. For tracking purposes, participation in remote learning options must be verified by the provider.

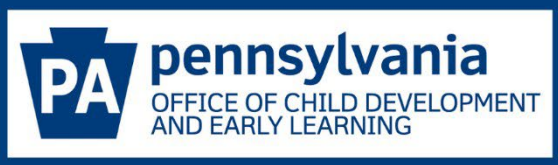
For any remote learning (virtual or non-virtual) to count for any funded instructional day requirement at least 30 minutes of content must be developed and monitored by the lead teacher for any day remote learning is offered.

Thirty minutes a day is the minimum expectation for remote learning in an FIP. A program may offer more than 30 minutes. Programs should refer to the Summary of National Responses to COVID-19 and Continuity of Education for Early Years for specific recommendations. No more than 30 minutes of remote instruction each day may count toward the minimum requirement for daily attendance.

If a program is offering at least 30 minutes of remote learning per day that is developed and monitored by the lead teacher, the program is in compliance with its instructional day requirement. Children who complete at least 30 minutes of remote learning per day should be considered "in attendance" for that day even when more than 30 minutes of remote learning is provided. At no time should families be penalized if their child(ren) is unable to participate in more than 30 minutes per day of remote learning.

Appendix A: PKC 20-#001: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Changes to Legal Entity Information

PKC 20-#001; HSSAP 20-#001



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: Nov. 3, 2020
Effective Date: Nov. 3, 2020

Subject: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Changes to Legal Entity Information

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs

From:
Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE
To review the requirement of relevant and timely communication whenever there is a change to legal entity information.

BACKGROUND
Pennsylvania supports a mixed delivery system of services for children birth through age five through the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), and federal programs. Providers applying for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and/or Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) funding hold multiple licenses and across multiple state Departments, and, in some cases, federal Head Start as well. Providers are awarded licenses and grants based on the legal entity information supplied at the time a license and/or a grant are provided. Changes in legal information, such as changes to the legal entity name, the legal entity address, and/or Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Tax ID # may impact multiple systems.

DISCUSSION

In order to decrease instances of delayed payments, and to ensure proper legal accounting is being followed, whenever a Pennsylvania PKC or HSSAP grantee anticipates a change in any information related to the legal entity, the grantee must notify their Preschool Program Specialist before the legal changes take place. The Pennsylvania PKC or HSSAP grantee must also notify any other relevant agencies and systems of the change including, but not limited to the following:

- Federal IRS agency
- DHS child care licensing (when the entity holds the DHS child care licensing)
- PDE Private Academic Licensing Office (when the entity holds a PDE Private Licensed Nursery (PLN) license)
- Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) (for subsidy agreements and STARS)
- Education Names and Addresses (EDNA) system (to update information linked to AUN)
- Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) system
- Vendor profile with the commonwealth's Vendor Management Unit (for payment purposes)
- Bank accounts to which payments are made
- All commonwealth departments with which the legal entity has grants or contracts

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist.

Appendix B: PKC 20-#002: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Budget Revision and Funding Adjustment Clarifications

PKC 20-#002; HSSAP 20-#002

pennsylvania
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: Nov. 10, 2020 (updated March 8, 2022)

Effective Date: Nov. 10, 2020

End Date: N/A

Subject: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs Budget Revision and Funding Adjustment Clarifications

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs

From:

Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE

To clarify the differences between a program budget revision and a program funding adjustment and to provide timelines for when each type of budget change can be processed.

BACKGROUND

In order to process changes to program budgets so programs can receive the correct funding, changes need to be made in the Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) system as soon as programs are aware of a change. Since carry over of funding is not allowable, timely changes need to be made prior to the end of the fiscal year. Any changes that will impact the overall allocation to a provider need to be made prior to April 15 of the program year so payments can be adjusted prior to the close of the program year.

DISCUSSION

There is a difference between a budget revision and a funding adjustment, and a different timeline for when each needs to be completed.

A **budget revision** is a change to the budget that impacts individual line items. Budget revisions are necessary when there is a funding adjustment (see below) or when there is an expenditure deviation of +/- 10 percent from the originally approved budgeted line items.

Further clarification is provided in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Statute, Regulations, and Guidance document:

> *Budget revisions that show expenditure deviations +/- 10 percent from the original approved budget should be completed as needed and receive prior approval from all appropriate levels.*
>
> *Lead agencies and partner agencies must submit budget revisions in PELICAN.*
>
> *Strong written justification must be provided for expenditures outside the recommended fiscal guidelines provided by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PKC) and Head State Supplemental Assistance Programs (HSSAP) Guidance.*
>
> *The approval process will be electronic for the following budget revisions that require advance approval:*
>
> - *Any deviation to a line item greater than +/-10 percent*
> - *Addition of a new line item*
>
> *All budget revisions must be submitted and approved prior to initiating the Final Expenditure Report in PELICAN.*
>
> Final net zero budget revisions (meaning there is no increase or decrease to the overall allocation) should be submitted no later than **June 30.**
>
> *OCDEL reserves the right to deny any budget revision that was not pre-approved. This could impact final payment.*

A **funding adjustment** is a change to the overall allocation to the provider. A funding adjustment requires a budget revision but follows a stricter timeline due to the processing time necessary to assure appropriate program payments are made prior June 30. Budget revisions that are necessary due to a funding adjustment or change to the providers overall allocation (either an increase or a decrease in overall funding for a program year) should be completed as soon as possible after the notification of the change.

The final due date for budget revision due to a funding adjustment must be submitted and final approval is **April 15** of that fiscal year. If April 15 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the deadline for submission is the close of business the Friday immediately preceding April 15.

Budget revisions due to a funding adjustment **CANNOT be completed after April 15 of the program year.**

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff, including all those responsible for fiscal decisions.
2. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist.

Appendix C: Announcement DS 21-01: Monitoring Coordination Across Dually Licensed Programs and Programs with PA Pre-K Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs

ANNOUNCEMENT
DS 21-01

pennsylvania
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: Feb. 02, 2021

Effective Date: Feb. 02, 2021

Subject: Monitoring Coordination Across Dually Licensed Programs and Programs with PA Pre-K Counts and Head State Supplemental Assistance Programs

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs, Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Staff, Child Care Providers

From:
Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE
To clarify the distinction of and interaction between Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) licensed programs, PDE funded programs, and Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed child care as it relates to program monitoring and or complaint investigation.

BACKGROUND
Pennsylvania supports a mixed delivery system of services for children birth through age five through both PDE and DHS licensed and funded programs. In many cases providers hold multiple licenses and grants across multiple commonwealth departments. In some cases, there has been confusion about when providers should be monitored and what program regulations apply when multiple licenses and grants are held by a provider. The following definitions

provide information on some programs that may be interacting with one another within child care programs:

DHS licensed (certified) program: Programs which hold a DHS child care Certificate of Compliance (COC) and are subject to monitoring under child care facility regulations. The certificate of compliance includes the maximum number of children permitted to be in care at one time, and any special restrictions applicable to the child care facility.

PDE private licensed school (also referred to as Private Academic School (PAS): Programs which hold a PAS and are subject to monitoring under Chapter 53 of Title 22. In a prekindergarten setting, this typically includes a license for nursery school (also called Private License Nursery (PLN)) and/or kindergarten serving children ages 2 ½ through 5. The license includes specific classrooms, capacity, and hours of operation.

PDE-funded program: PDE offers two state-funded grant opportunities for prekindergarten programs, the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PKC) program and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP). These grants allow eligible providers to apply for funding to offer prekindergarten (ages 3-5) services to eligible students. Both programs build upon the requirements of the provider's existing provider type(s). For HSSAP, grantees **must** follow federal Head Start Performance standards.

The PA PKC program has four eligible provider types:

1) School districts
2) PDE privately licensed nursery (PLN)
3) Head Start Grantee
4) Child care centers and group homes at STAR 3 or 4 designation

DISCUSSION

For HSSAP grantees, grantees must follow federal Head Start Performance standards and are monitored by the Office of Head Start for the Head Start portion of the day. Some HSSAP grantees may also hold a COC. This might also include blended classrooms models in which Head Start funded children are blended into classrooms that also serve children enrolled in child care only. HSSAP grantees holding a child care COC are monitored by DHS certification representatives for the non-Head Start portion of the day and when classrooms are blended. Any HSSAP staff serving non-Head Start children or working during the non-Head Start portion of the day would be subject to DHS monitoring.

When a provider applies for a PKC grant, they are asked to choose only **one** provider type from the list of PDE approved eligible provider types. A PKC provider may hold multiple licenses; however, they are required to apply for PKC under **one** type.

The following entities may operate PKC classrooms.

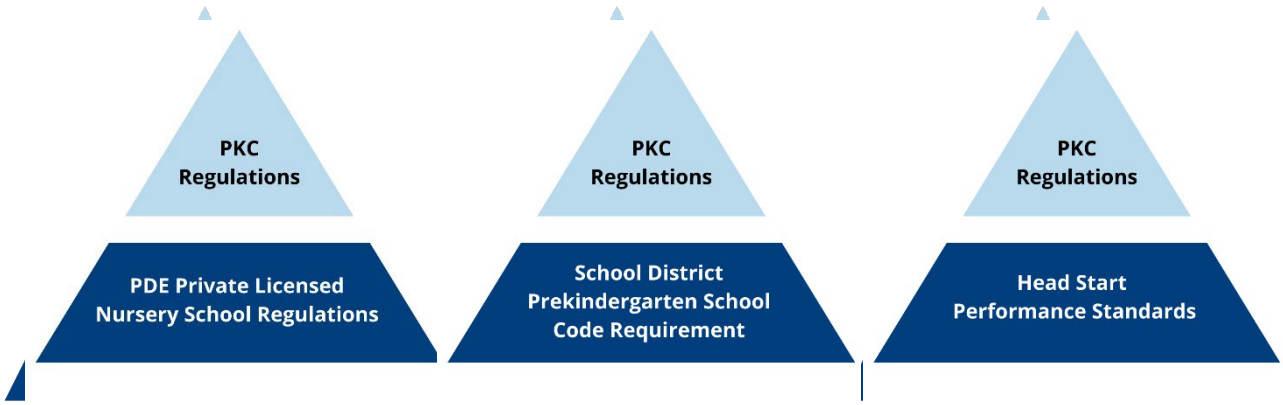
1. School districts;
2. Licensed nursery schools;
3. Head Start grantees; and

4. Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes that maintain a STAR 3 or 4 rating in Keystone STARS Program.

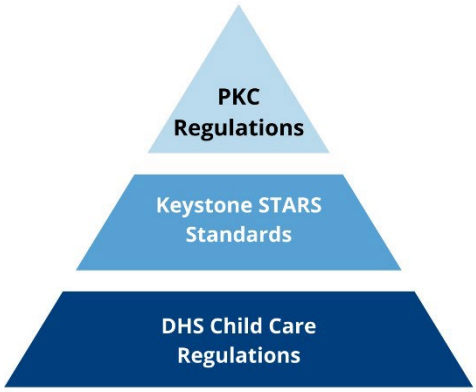
PKC programming builds upon the requirements of these eligible provider types, and provider eligibility must be maintained throughout the entire grant period to maintain PKC operations. Therefore, it is important that the PKC classrooms are being monitored by the relevant monitoring system of their eligible provider type. The eligible provider type for each PKC location can be found within the PELICAN system or can be verified with a PKC Preschool Program Specialist.

If a PKC classroom is operating in one of the first three eligible provider types above, the DHS certification representative is **not** responsible for inspecting the PKC classroom during the PKC hours of operation. These PKC classrooms would be monitored by the entity responsible for monitoring the chosen provider type *(please see detailed in the graphics below)*. These classrooms **do not** need to be added to the capacity of the location's COC (unless they operate child care wrap around services for any portion of the day or year).

NOTE: PKC programs that receive STAR 4 reciprocity due to operating as a HS/EHS grantee are **not** eligible to apply as a Pre-K Counts eligibility type if the HS/EHS federal funding is lost, unless the site was able to attain at least a STAR 3 status through the regular Keystone STARS designation process, and they changed their provider type to Child Care Center that maintains a STAR 3 or 4 rating in Keystone STARS Program.



If a PKC classroom is operating under the fourth eligible provider type (i.e., child care centers and group homes at STAR 3 or 4 designation), the DHS certification representative is responsible for inspecting the PKC classroom during the PKC hours of operation for regulatory compliance. These classrooms **must** be included in the capacity of the location's COC and compliance with all regulations will be reviewed and verified.



For PKC grantees, when determining which licensing requirements apply it is important to understand whether the provider holds a DHS COC, a PDE license or both. It also must be determined what portion of the program is funded through PDE.

DHS COC and PDE PAS licenses
In addition to the provider's DHS COC, if the PKC provider holds a valid PAS, then the following would apply:

A PKC provider **must** be able to demonstrate that it holds a valid PAS operating license issued by the Department of Education. This license should include classrooms and hours of operation.

- If the classroom is only used for the PAS licensed classroom, then DHS monitoring of the classroom and assigned teachers should **not** occur (Please see Example #1 below).
- If the classroom is used for child care services before and/or after the PAS licensed hours of operation, then DHS monitoring **will** occur for the assigned child care portion of the day (Please see Example #2 below).
- If staff work only in the PAS classroom and only during the PAS operational hours, then those staff files should **not** be reviewed by DHS certification representative.
- If staff work in PAS classrooms and also work during child care hours (before and/or after), then DHS monitoring **will** occur for staff assigned to the DHS child care portion of the day (Please see Example #2 below).

Example #1: Provider holds both a COC and a PAS license. There are 4 child care classrooms and one PAS classroom. The PAS classroom is ONLY used during the hours of operations listed on the PAS license.

	Hours of operation	Staffing	Monitoring

DHS license	6 am- 6 pm	Child care staff in child care classrooms	DHS monitoring **does not** occur in the PAS classroom. PAS staff are not included in monitoring.
PDE PAS license	8 am- 2:30 pm	PAS licensed staff only in PAS classroom	Monitored by PDE for operational hours on PAS license.

Example #2: Provider holds both a COC and a PAS license. There are 4 child care classrooms and one PAS classroom. The PAS classroom is used during the hours of operations listed on the PAS license and is also used for child care before and/or after the PAS hours of operation.

	Hours of Operation	Staffing	Monitoring
DHS license	6 am- 6 pm	Child care staff in child care only classrooms	DHS monitoring would occur in child care classrooms and in the PAS classroom ONLY between 6am-8am and 2:30 pm- 6pm (*before and after the hours of operation for PAS*). Any staff working in child care would be included in the DHS monitoring.
PDE PAS license	8 am- 2:30 pm	Staff who work during both PAS and DHS child care hours.	
		Staff who work only during the PAS operational hours.	PAS **only** staff are not included in DHS monitoring.

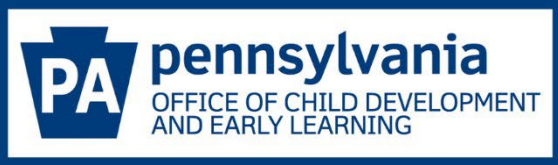
If there are inquiries regarding PAS, providers should contact PDE PAS staff at ra-nppss@pa.gov.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist, Certification Representative, or program supervisor.

Appendix D: PKC 22-#002; HSSAP 22-#003 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Trauma-Informed Resources

PKC 22-#002; HSSAP 22-#003



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: July 27, 2022

Effective Date: July 27, 2022

Subject: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Trauma-Informed Resources

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs (HSSAPs)

From:

Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE
To provide policy clarification regarding program expectations for trauma- informed policies and practices. To share trauma-informed resources available to Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs (HSSAPs).

BACKGROUND
The mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, PDE seeks to establish a culture committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.

Act 18 of 2019 (Act 18) revised the Pennsylvania school code to include a requirement that schools add professional development to include information on a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach was defined as:

> "…includes a school-wide approach to education and a classroom-based approach to student learning that recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, professional learning, procedures and practices for the purposes of recognizing the presence and onset of trauma, resisting the reoccurrence of trauma and promoting resiliency tailored to a school entity's culture, climate and demographics and the community as a whole."

Act 18 also included a provision in PA PKC statute for PDE to "encourage the integration of trauma-informed approaches into the program curriculum and the professional development curriculum of personnel of the eligible provider who have regular contact with children."

PA PKC and HSSAP providers **must** comply with the OCDEL Inclusion Policy Statement and Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement, which has relationship with implementing trauma-informed care practices and reducing expulsion. The policies and supporting resources for this program requirement can be accessed at PROMOTING INCLUSION & REDUCING EXPULSION AND SUSPENSION – THE PENNSYLVANIA KEY (pakeys.org). Connecting trauma-informed policy and practice to the everyday interactions between program personnel, children, and families can inform and impact program policy focused on reducing and eliminating suspension and expulsions.

DISCUSSION

PA PKC and HSSAP programs funded through PDE **must** integrate trauma-informed approaches into program curriculum and assure personnel who have direct contact with children have professional development in trauma-informed approaches.

Programs will need to be able to produce a training record for personnel having direct contact with children to their Preschool Program Specialist, if requested, to assure this policy is being met. The Preschool Program Specialist may also engage in discussions with program leaders and personnel related to the ways in which trauma-informed practice has been implemented into PA PKC and/or HSSAP curriculum and professional development.

There is no prescribed requirement on which training(s) need to be taken. Programs have the flexibility to use any training which covers the topic of trauma-informed practice and meets the needs of their program type. For example, Head Start provided training on the topic of trauma-informed care would meet the intent of this policy.

PDE has provided several resources to assure programs have access to training on trauma-informed approaches.

Programs can access PDE resources at: Office for Safe School website.

In addition, PDE has developed five (5) on-line learning modules on trauma-informed practices. The modules include:

- Module 1: Introduction to Trauma-informed Practices
- Module 2: Adverse Childhood Experiences in the Learning Environment

- Module 3: Neuroscience
- Module 4: Self-Care

- Module 5: Building Trauma-informed Schools

Programs can access this PDE-developed trauma-informed training through the PD Center at www.pdesas.org. Search keyword: *trauma-informed*. Users will need a SAS log-in to access these trainings. Trainings count for Act 48 training hours.
Additional school resources can be found at T.I.P. in School - Resources (pa.gov).

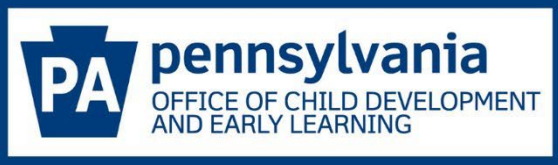
In addition to the resources discussed above, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has funded the following trauma-informed trainings specific to early childhood education that can be accessed through the PD Registry. A Registry ID and log-in ID are needed to access these trainings. Trainings count for the Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System (PQAS) hours.

- Becoming Trauma Informed: Define Trauma and its Impacts, Practice Skills, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Resilience and Supportive Practices (6-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Define Trauma and its Impacts (2-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Define Trauma and its Impacts (3-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Practice Skills (2-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Practice Skills (3-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Secondary Traumatic Stress, Resilience and Supportive Practices (2-hour course)
- Becoming Trauma Informed: Secondary Traumatic Stress, Resilience and Supportive Practices (3-hour course)

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Lead agencies share with all partner agencies, as applicable.
3. Include and implement on-going trauma-informed training in personnel's training plans.
4. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist.

PKC 22-#004 Emergency Teacher Certification Permits



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: September 20, 2022

Effective Date: September 20, 2022

Subject: Emergency Teacher Certification Permits now available to all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provider types.

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC)

From:

Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary,
Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE
To provide updates on Chapter 49, as defined in § 49.31 *Criteria for eligibility* regarding Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) provider ability to apply for Emergency Teacher Certification Permits.

BACKGROUND
The amendments to Chapter 49 are intended to support efforts to improve educator recruitment, increase the number of classrooms staffed by fully prepared teachers, increase retention in the profession, and improve student outcomes by strengthening the preparation of new educators, creating conditions to provide more support for educators as they enter the classroom and by improving the skill sets of current educators in working with an increasingly diverse student population. For complete information on the Chapter 49 amendments visit: Pennsylvania Bulletin (pacodeandbulletin.gov)

Emergency Teacher Certification Permits are now available to all PA PKC providers. § 49.31 *Criteria for eligibility* adds language to include PA PKC eligible providers, as defined in §405.11 (CHAPTER 405. PA PRE-K COUNTS), as entities to which the Pennsylvania Department of

Education (PDE) may issue an Emergency, day-to-day (Type 06) or long-term (Type 01 or 04) Permit. These eligible providers can now request these permits from PDE to address lead teacher staffing needs. PA PKC requires all lead teachers in program classrooms to possess early childhood education certification.

An Emergency Teacher Certification Permit is requested to fill a vacant lead teacher position when the school or eligible provider is unable to find a qualified and properly certified educator holding a valid and active certificate. Prior to the amendments to Chapter 49, only Local Education Agencies (i.e., the school district PA PKC eligible provider type) had the ability to apply for an Emergency Permit.

On April 23, 2022, the final form amendments to Chapter 49: Certification of Professional Personnel became effective upon publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin (pacodeandbulletin.gov). This new process will allow eligible PA PKC teachers to apply for Emergency Permits through their lead or partner agencies.

DISCUSSION

This announcement is intended to provide relevant PA PKC information regarding the use of Emergency Teacher Certification Permits. PDE Teacher Certification oversees the implementation of emergency teacher certification and provides multiple resources. PA PKC providers interested in emergency teacher certification should access the links below to understand all information regarding Emergency Permits.

Emergency Permits FAQ
CSPG 13 - Emergency Permits (pa.gov)

Why would a PA PKC provider wish to apply for an Emergency Permit?

In cases where a lead teacher holding Instructional Certification cannot be recruited, applying for a Type 01 Emergency Permit means PA PKC programs without a qualified lead teacher can come into compliance with the PA PKC lead teacher staff qualifications while the teacher holding an emergency Permit is pursuing Level I certification.

In cases where a lead teacher holding Instructional Certification cannot be recruited, applying for a Type 04 Emergency Permit means PA PKC programs without a qualified lead teacher can come into compliance with the PA PKC lead teacher staff qualifications for one school term only with no educational obligation.

PA PKC providers would not have a need to apply for the Type 06 Emergency Permit: Day to Day substitute as the PA PKC regulations already provide provisions for substitute teachers up to 90 days.

Who is eligible to apply?

An Emergency Teacher Certification Permit can only be issued to a candidate who has earned a bachelor's degree from a state-approved institution and can only be used to teach in a vacant position or as a long-term substitute. The Emergency Teacher Certification Permit is **only** valid for **one school year**.

Emergency Teacher Certification Permits **will not be issued** if the candidate:

- Holds an expired Intern certificate in the subject area being requested; • Holds a lapsed Level I certificate; or
- Voluntarily deleted the subject area being requested from their certificate.

Who applies for the Emergency Permit?

An individual, who holds a bachelor's degree from a state-approved institution, identified by a PA PKC lead or partner provider as a candidate for either a Type 01 or a Type 04 Emergency permit. Individuals may **not** apply for an Emergency Teacher Certification Permit without a recommendation to do so from the hiring lead or partnering agency.

After an individual has applied within the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS), the PA PKC lead or partner agency must also access TIMS to submit a request to PDE to process the application on behalf of the applicant.

How does an individual apply?

Instructions for submitting an application for an Emergency Teacher Certification Permit can be accessed here: Submit an Emergency Permit (pa.gov)

PA PKC programs have been pre-populated in TIMS using the AUN on file from EDNA and the most recent PA PKC application.

If an applicant does not find the program name in the drop down, the PA PKC lead or partner agency should reach out to Brian Bell (bribell@pa.gov) to obtain an AUN. The program will need to be added to the TIMS system before an application can be submitted. This will take 4-6 weeks to process once an AUN has been established.

How does a lead or partner agency request an Emergency Teacher Certification Permit on behalf of an applicant?

PA PKC agencies need to have a Local Security Administrator (LSA) assigned. PA PKC lead and/or partner agencies who already have an assigned LSA with PDE TIMS, can access TIMS to request Emergency permits after an individual has applied.

PA PKC lead and/or partner agencies who do not already have an assigned LSA with PDE TIMS, need to contact Nathaniel Edmonds at nedmonds@pa.gov to get set up before they can request an Emergency permit.

Once an LSA has been assigned, they may log into TIMS and submit a request to PDE for the Emergency permit on behalf of an applicant.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Lead agencies share with all partner agencies as applicable.

3. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist or to the PDE resource account at ra-edcertquestions@pa.gov

PDE Emergency Permit: Steps for PA Pre-K Counts

****Before initiating this process, talk to your PK Program Specialist**

Are you a lead or partner agency?

No

STOP: Locations may not apply on their own. Location staff must apply under their PA PKC lead or partner agency.

Yes.
Do you have an AUN Number?

Yes

A Local Security Administrator (LSA) must exist at your institution who will approve registration requests for two required TIMS roles: PK-12CertifyingOfficer and PK-12SuperintendentOrCSA. These roles are needed to gain access to Emergency Certification within the TIMS application that is launched via MyPDESuite. To obtain an LSA, contact the MyPDESuite Helpdesk at: ra-edhubadmin@pa.gov.

Teacher submits the initial request via the **Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) at the request of the employing lead or partner agency**.

Lead or Partner School Administrator (LSA) must go into TIMS and request the Emergency Permit from PDE.

The teacher **or** agency submits any pending documentation listed on the TIMS coversheet to the PA Department of Education.

I don't know.

No

Check in EDNA

Yes

No

Contact Brian Bell bribell@pa.gov

Once you have your AUN number, go back to the "yes" response and follow.

Resources

Submit an Emergency Permit (pa.gov) Emergency Permits FAQ

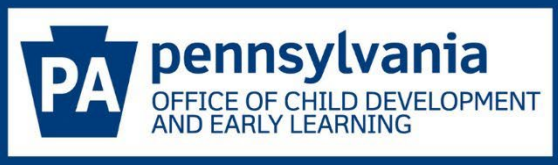
CONTACTS for issues encountered when following this flowchart:

- For TIMS system questions, contact PDE resource account ra-edcertquestions@pa.gov
- For general questions, contact RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov

pennsylvania
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING

Appendix F: PKC 23-#001 Changes to Induction Planning and Implementation

PKC 23-#001



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: August 29, 2023

Effective Date: July 1, 2023

Subject: Changes to Induction Planning and Implementation

To: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) Programs

From: Shante' Brown
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE
This policy announcement provides additional and relevant PA PKC information regarding submission of the PA Pre K Counts Designated Evaluator Form and updates to Educator Induction Plans as they relate to amendments to Chapter 49 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code (related to Certification of Professional Personnel).

BACKGROUND
Sections 405.44(c) (related to staffing and professional development) and 405.64 (related to teacher induction plans and evaluations) of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code outline the regulatory requirements for PA PKC lead teachers to advance their certification from Instructional Level I to Instructional Level II. Participation in an approved Induction Program is a component of these requirements. See PA PKC Statute, Regulations, and Guidance.
The Educator Induction Plan Guidelines, developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, apply to public schools and community-based PA PKC providers. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies must work together with their partners to determine the best option for induction programs for the partnership. Lead agencies should discuss the options available to partners and secure agreement about the option they want to pursue.
On April 23, 2022, the State Board of Education's final form amendments to Chapter 49 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code (related to Certification of Professional Personnel) became effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. These amendments include increasing the length of the Educator Induction Program from one year to two years and creating the Future Ready

Comprehensive Planning Portal (FRCPP) to provide a consistent planning framework and collection tool for all Pennsylvania schools to complete the Educator Induction Plan online. More information can be found at Chapter 49 Implementation (pa.gov).

DISCUSSION

Approved providers shall continue to facilitate activities that teachers must undertake to advance their certification from Instructional Level I to Instructional Level II. PA PKC Statute, Regulations, and Guidance includes the relevant policy information related to the staffing and professional development requirements of the PA PKC program.

Submission of the Designated Educator Evaluator Form

In accordance with Supplemental Resource #011 Teacher Induction for Community Based Providers, all PKC programs must submit the Designated Educator Evaluator Form to OCDEL annually. (See pg. 72 of PA PKC Statute, Regulations, and Guidance.) The Designated Educator Evaluator Form collects relevant information on evaluators who will be used to evaluate PA PKC lead teachers. The information provided will allow OCDEL staff to provide direct communication, including relevant professional development and support, to evaluators serving our PA PKC lead teachers.
The form should be submitted to ra-paprekcounts@pa.gov no later than October 1 each year.

Updates to Educator Induction Planning and Implementation

Effective July 1, 2023, PA PKC providers without a current Induction Plan approved by the Department of Education must submit a plan that includes the following requirements of 22 Pa. Code §§ 49.16 and 49.83 (relating to approval of induction plans; and Instructional II):

- Two-year induction experience for first-year teachers (22 Pa. Code § 49.16(a));
- A mentor relationship between the first-year teacher, long-term substitute or educational specialist, teacher educator and the induction team, and the mentor relationship for the length of the program (22 Pa. Code § 49.16(d)); and
- Professional development in Professional Ethics, The Common Ground Framework, Educator Effectiveness, Teacher Competency, and Student Learning. Providers should reference PA PKC Statute, Regulations and Guidance for continuing professional educational training topics that also may be included in Induction Plans.

All Educator Induction Plans must be submitted via the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning Portal. See Accessing the FRCPP (pa.gov) for information on navigating the online submission portal.

Once approved, Induction Plans are valid for six years. Providers with a currently approved Induction Plan do not need to meet the new Induction requirements until time of renewal.

NEXT STEPS

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Lead agencies share with all partner agencies.
3. Review the renewal timelines for any currently approved Induction Plans.
4. Review and update any program policies related to the discussed topics, as needed.
5. Submit the Designated Educator Evaluator form to ra-paprekcounts@pa.gov no later than October 1, 2023.
6. Direct any questions to your Preschool Program Specialist.