

## The Pennsylvania Key & the Pennsylvania School-Age Professional Credential

The Pennsylvania School-Age Professional Credential is administered by the Pennsylvania Key (PA Key). The PA Key provides statewide leadership in collaboration with the Office of Child Development and Early Learning in the development of an integrated coordinated system of program quality improvements and professional development supports.

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### Central Region

570-601-9736  
800-346-3020  
John LaRose

### Northeast Region

610-437-6000 ext. 2328  
Ivy Reynolds

### Northwest Region

800-860-2281 ext 132  
Chuck Lytle

### South Central Region

717-854-3539 ext. 250  
800-864-4925 ext. 250  
MaryJane Hostetter

### Southeast Region

610-617-4550 (opt. 4)  
Bernadette Kelly

### Southwest Region

412-255-1175  
877-349-4850

**Pennsylvania  
Early Learning**

*Keys to  
Professional  
Development*



# Pennsylvania



## School-Age Professional Credential

# The Pennsylvania School-Age Professional Credential

Applying for the Pennsylvania School-Age Professional Credential is a big commitment. However, working towards the Credential can be a rewarding experience. It offers staff members an opportunity to:

- ⊙ Examine his/her own work in relation to the Pennsylvania School-Age Care Competency Statements
- ⊙ Get feedback and support from people who have experience working with school-age children and knowledge about school-age services.
- ⊙ Improve his/her knowledge and skills in ways that are satisfying for themselves and beneficial for children;
- ⊙ Plan their educational pathway through the use of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Career Lattice by identifying where they currently fit on the lattice and by identifying the position they are interested in attaining; and
- ⊙ Earn a professional credential that is recognized throughout Pennsylvania and the Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement System.

## What are the steps in the process?

1. Request credential materials packet from PA Key at [www.pakeys.org](http://www.pakeys.org) or 800-284-6031
2. Begin taking required course work equivalent to 120 hours
3. Form and work with a team consisting of an advisor and parent.
4. Complete coursework
5. Complete Portfolio and Resource File
6. Apply for credential
7. Have an observational assessment, interview and review of Portfolio and Resource File
8. Upon satisfactory completion of all requirements credential is awarded.

## What are the eligibility requirements?

- ⊙ Must be working in a Department of Public Welfare regulated program working with school-age children (5-12 years-old).
- ⊙ Must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED credential.
- ⊙ Have completed a Professional Development Record (PDR)
- ⊙ Must have worked at least 480 hours with school-age children in the past five years.

**Assessment Fee:** The assessment fee will be waived for up to 120 individuals (from across the state) meeting all credential requirements. Individuals will be responsible for paying a \$60.00 non-refundable processing fee.

The PA School-Age Professional Credential is modeled after the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. These credentials differ from other forms of credentialing in several ways:

- ⊙ Competence is based on performance. A school-age staff person who wants to earn the Credential is observed several times by members of the Local Assessment Team (Advisor, Parent/Community Representative, the School-Age Credential Assessor) while actually working with a group of children.
- ⊙ The Candidate is a participant in the Credential Process. The Candidate prepares a personal Portfolio to demonstrate her/his knowledge and skill; collects a Resource File to be used throughout her/his career with children; and participates in the Local Assessment Review Meeting.
- ⊙ A Parent/Community Representative helps evaluate the Candidate's competence. Families (including the school-age children) express their views about the Candidate on a Family Questionnaire. The Parent/Community Representative collects and tallies the questionnaires, observes the Candidate and submits both results as a part of the assessment process.
- ⊙ The team approach guarantees that judgment of competence will be based on a well-rounded picture of the Candidate's performance drawn from team members' observations, the Portfolio, the Resource Collection, and Family Questionnaires.

