



# Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Statute, Regulations and Guidelines

Effective July 1, 2020

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### Statutory Authority:

Act 45 of 2007 established the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PA PKC) program as a competitive grant program to expand pre-kindergarten opportunities for eligible students throughout this commonwealth. It authorized the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to promulgate regulations and establish guidelines and standards necessary to implement the Program. 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 disadvantage. 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 1/2 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)]) 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, hold a child development associate's credential or an associate's degree or higher, or pass 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 a year-long teacher 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).

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.

## **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 disadvantage, 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 in order 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, 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, either in a locked separate file or in the child's confidential file. These records, while confidential, are subject to audit and review.

Grantees will need to use the [current poverty guidelines](#) established for the current 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, will serve as the authoritative contact list for the program. Notices and announcements and other communications will be dispersed based on email addresses pulled from this source. Information in PELICAN should be updated, at minimum, on a monthly basis.

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 that 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](#), and announced through Penn\*Link (to LEAs) and through the Early Education e-news.

[Subscribe to the PA Early Ed News.](#)

The eGrants system is the submission system typically used for competitive grant submission. This is a system separate from the PELICAN system.

### **§ 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.

##### **Continuation Grants:**

The PELICAN system is used for the continuation grant process.

There are several potential types of Continuation Grant applicants. Each is 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 and 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. Single applicants that want to change the number and type of slots, (half-day and full-day) they will provide, but not the level of funding, including 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 for a change in 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 The Office of Child Development and Early Learning. 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).

#### **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 in order to be considered for enrollment in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. Eligible 3 and 4 year olds who reside in a low income household and are at risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, community factors, academic difficulties, or economic disadvantage may be enrolled in the program. Additional Risk Factor Guidance can be found in [#004: Additional Risk Factor 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 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Head Start, Child Care Works, and Early Intervention Programs) to ensure children on waiting lists have the opportunity to 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 assure up to date and accurate program information is searchable by 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 as long as additional eligible students are served and all of the Program standards are met by the program supported with the combined resources.

### *Guidance and Clarifications*

The Accountability Block Grant is now named 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 CCIS offices are required to work together to coordinate services for those Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children who are also enrolled in wrap-around child care.

Head Start programs may participate in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts as well. In order 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 especially 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 a Program by reason of the student's disability.

### *Guidance and Clarifications*

Full enrollment, as demonstrated by PELICAN enrollment statistics, must be achieved by September 1 of each year and maintained at all times. A child will not be counted by OCDEL as enrolled if the child is not entered into PELICAN.

Children are considered to be 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 income, then other risk factors such as homelessness, teen mother, or English language learner. Children funded through Infant Toddler Contracted slots and meeting Pre-K Counts age and income eligibility, should be prioritized for Pre-K Counts enrollment.

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.

Children with disabilities may receive at-risk prioritization in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts as part of a provider's enrollment strategies if the child meets all eligibility requirements. Services for eligible students may not be denied based on disability.

#### **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.

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 Pre-K Counts provider and may result in the child's dismissal from the program.

Written provider policies regarding attendance and notification 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, Attendance and Vacancies](#).

## **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 the before and after Program 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*

Children receiving supports and services from local Early Intervention programs shall receive services in the same learning environments as same age peers.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must coordinate enrollment strategies with “Child Find” (a program to identify all children who may be eligible or in need of Early Intervention services).

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 in a 2.5 or 5 hour day, 180 days per year. A temporary modified schedule may be approved by OCDEL on a case by case basis, with the goal of moving toward full program

participation. Decisions will be made based on input from early Intervention, the provider, the family, and the Preschool Program Specialist. Providers should be aware that in cases where a modified schedule is approved, funding may be reduced.

Supports and services for children receiving Early Intervention services are determined through the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IFSP/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 Pennsylvania 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, in collaboration with 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 families transition process.

Referrals should be made by Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts staff to families for Early Intervention services when appropriate.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must document all collaboration efforts. Programs are encouraged to operationalize collaborative efforts through written, formal agreements, which are reviewed 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 all of its operational expenses, such as salaries of the teacher and the aide, materials, and supplies. This would not include an entity that is merely providing space for the classroom (rental agreement).

## **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 snow days or 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.

### **§ 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 in order to ensure that children receive either the full 2 ½ or 5 hours of instructional time that is intended. 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.

#### *Counting Hours per Day:*

Only time providing instructional activities to children may be counted toward the half-day and full-day length of day and the 180 days per year. Grantees will need to plan for a slightly longer day and year so that you have allowed for nap-time in full-day programs and for arrival time, as well as for closures for inclement weather and non-attendance of students on days when professional development is being provided.

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.

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

Additional guidance on defining instructional time can be found in [#006: Definition of Instructional Time](#).

### **§ 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.

### **§ 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's credential for preschool. Aides who have completed all of the requirements of the Child Development Associate's 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's 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 possession by the teacher aide of 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 highly quality teachers creates a consistent teaching staff in programs. Consistent staffing is critical to obtaining and maintaining high quality pre-kindergarten programs. Salaries of teaching staff in community-based programs should be comparable to school districts using grant funding.

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. 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;
3. Strengthening Relationships with Children, Families and Colleagues; and
4. Application of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in Pre-Kindergarten Classrooms

All core series trainings can be scheduled through the PA Keys professional development registry.

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.



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 Core Knowledge Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals](#). At least 50 percent or 12 hours should be specific to early childhood education.

Act 120 of 2013 (SB 34) made significant changes to the Educator Discipline Act including enhanced mandatory reporting requirements. 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 settings that have Instructional Level I Certificates must convert and maintain their certificate to an Instructional Level 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.

#### **§ 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 [PKC Approved Curriculum and Child Assessments](#). 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](mailto: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](mailto:RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov) for review and approval to assure alignment. A template for submission is available on the PA Key website at [PKC Approved Curriculum and Child Assessments](#).

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.

#### **§ 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 identification of potential delays and to indicate those children who need to be further referred for evaluation. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning 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 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. 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 attend training on the use of the tool. A listing of approved assessment tools is available at [PKC Approved Curriculum and Child Assessments](#). 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](mailto: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 may not use a locally designed assessment tool to meet this requirement. A template for submission is available on the PA Key website at [PKC Approved Curriculum and Child Assessments](#).

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 on the chosen assessment tool.

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 self-assessments, performed by trained personnel, must be completed annually. Results of the environmental assessment must be used by the program to determine program needs as part of a continuous quality improvement plan. At a frequency determined by PDE, an Environment Rating Scale assessment may be conducted by an outside assessor.

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 the Environment Rating Scale Foundations and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 courses. 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 the 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 the Partnerships for Learning Key Learning Area of the Learning Standards for Early Childhood in the development and implementation of the parent engagement plan.

Elements to consider in development of a plan for family involvement include the following:

- Joint staff and parent planning.

- Policies for development and support of reciprocal relationships with families that acknowledges families as the child’s first teacher.
- Establishment of a role for families in developing and evaluating program success.
- A regular system of reporting to families showing the progress of their children and provision of opportunities for families to contribute their ideas and thoughts about progress, using language and a communication vehicle that is understood and readily accessible to them.
- Involvement activities such as field trips, informational training, workshops, and other family and child events.
- Toy and book lending 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](#) are 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 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--28 Pa. Code §23.81-87 which implements Sec. 13031 of the Public School Code (24 P.S. §1303a);
- Child care centers and group child care homes – 28 Pa. Code §27.77.
- Head Start agencies -- 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.

### **§ 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*

PKC Providers must comply with the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) policy statement on Inclusion found here: [Inclusion Policy Statement](#), and OCDEL's policy statement on Suspension and Expulsion found here: [Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement](#).

#### *Early Intervention Program*

Providers of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs must coordinate with the 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 know what, if any, supportive services have been determined to be necessary for a child identified as having a developmental delay or disability and are available through the Early Intervention program. A working relationship with the Early Intervention program will be helpful in coordinating the array of services a particular child may be receiving.

Children in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts that receive Early Intervention services may not miss significant portions of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program in order to receive their Early Intervention services. The Early Intervention services must be scheduled so as to make regular attendance in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program possible. Managing these kinds of scheduling challenges requires cooperation and good working relationships across programs that serve children. A temporary modified schedule may be approved by OCDEL on a case by case basis, with the goal of moving toward full program participation. Decisions will be made based on input from early Intervention, the provider, the family, and the Preschool Program Specialist. Providers should be aware that in cases where a modified schedule is approved, funding may be reduced.

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provider may be the first to identify that a particular child is in need of a referral for Early Intervention services. This "Child Find" or child identification role will be greatly facilitated if there is an established working relationship



with both the Infant and Toddler Early Intervention program and the Preschool Early Intervention program for three to five year-olds.

The practice of enrolling children with developmental delays in typical environments is often referred to as inclusion. In order 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 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.

## **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 [#014: Reporting and Data Requirements](#), [#015: Continuous Quality Improvement/Best Practices](#), and [#016: 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 §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 one year of 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](#).



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 through the use of 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 [#017: 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. Half-day programs may receive no less than \$4,375 per child. Full-day programs may receive no less than \$8,750 per child. Per child amounts must be fully justified in the grant application and will not be awarded unless fully justified.

In order 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*  
No Further Clarification.

## 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.”

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 of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

No child may be forced to eat the prepared meal, 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.

If food is left over from a snack or meal, children shall be allowed second helpings of foods listed in the USDA’s child and adult care meal patterns. \*Second helpings of meals/snacks cannot be re-claimed.

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 for meals. A family member may prefer to provide an occasional meal or snack. While this is allowable, it is not recommended and providers should work with families to assure that offered meals meet family expectations whenever possible. \*In order for a meal/snack to be reimbursable in the CACFP, a parent/guardian may not provide more than one creditable meal/snack component. There is one exception to this: the entire snack/meal can be reimbursed if a child has a documented disability even in cases where the parent/guardian has provided more than one creditable meal/snack component.

Alternative foods for children who are allergic to the prepared meal or snack must be offered.

Providers should follow the most recent, age-appropriate nutritional requirements of a recognized authority such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program of the United States Division of Food and Nutrition.

Foods and beverages that have little nutritional value (e.g., sweets, soft drinks) must not be served 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.

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

If participating in CACFP each parent is highly encouraged to complete the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) form for free and reduced meal reimbursement. \*If a parent refuses to complete the form the school can be reimbursed under the “paid” reimbursement claim for that child. These should be kept on file at the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Program.

Children should be encouraged to develop good nutritional habits.

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.

#### *Resources*

[CACFP Child Meal Pattern](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education: Division of Food and Nutrition Services](#)

[Nutrition Education Programs](#)

[PA WIC](#)

[Penn State Extension Nutrition Links](#)

[Project PA](#)

[School Breakfast Program](#)

[School Lunch Program](#)

[USDA Food and Nutrition Service: Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#)

[USDA Choose My Plate](#)

## #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 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.

### *Whose Income is Counted:*

- The parent or caretaker of the child.
- The parent or caretaker's spouse.
- 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 data base report that establishes the amount of unearned income.
- 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, the Program Review Instrument, the Best Practices Rubric, the Instructional Observation Checklist, the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan 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 on most recent PRI are 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 Rubric*

The Best Practice Rubric 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 was introduced in the FY 2014-15 program year.

The Checklist is **not** an assessment, but is intended to provide teachers with additional, higher-level feedback and was developed using elements of the [Danielson Framework ECE examples](#), [Pennsylvania's Pre-Kindergarten Standards for Early Childhood](#), Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R), and [NAEYC's Developmentally Appropriate Practices](#). A complete list of supplemental resources used in the tool's development can be found on the last page of the Instructional Observation Checklist.

The Instructional Observation Checklist is a multi-page tool that focuses more deeply on lesson planning, the environment, instruction and professionalism.

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 Plan*

The requirements for a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan are explained in [#015: Continuous Quality Improvement/Best Practice](#). The ongoing assessment of the goals within the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan will be monitored as a source of evidence for compliance with Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts policies.

### *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 for each Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agency and partner annually during a site visit. Preschool Program Specialists will work with the program administrators to schedule a convenient date for the visit. Lead agencies should be prepared to accurately reflect a partner's performance as well as their own during this visit.

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: Additional Risk Factor Guidance

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. Each program, based on their community needs, should consider prioritizing enrollments for:

### *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.

### *Child or family who receives protective services:*

Defined as a child who is a foster child, a kinship care child, or receiving Children and Youth Services.

### *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.

### *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:*

Defined as a child who lacks a fixed, adequate and regular place of nighttime residence due to one of the following:

- sharing the household of other individuals due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason. Children, who are residing in motels, hotels or camping grounds due to the lack of alternate accommodations, are living in emergency or transitional shelters, are abandoned in hospitals, or are awaiting foster care placement.
- having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- living in cars, parks, public places, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

### *Incarcerated Parent:*

Defined as a child for whom one of the child's parents is currently incarcerated.

*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.

*Migrant (non-immigrant) seasonal student:*

Defined as a child has moved from one school district to another in order to accompany or join a parent or guardian who is a migratory 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.

*Teen mother:*

Defined as a child whose mother was under the age of 18 when the child was born.

Any additional risk factors that are identified 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.

## #005: Enrollment, Attendance and Vacancies

### *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.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must maintain 100 percent enrollment throughout the program year as indicated by their number of funded slots and establish a written plan on ways to assure 100 percent enrollment.

### *Enrollment Reporting:*

Programs should make efforts to enroll children using their “legal” name. Efforts may include asking for documentation (eg. 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 and updated monthly. Children who have ended PKC programming must have program participation ended with the PELICAN system no later than the month following the participation end date.

### *Vacancies:*

Providers have 20 instructional days from the date of vacancy to fill vacated slots.

### *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.

**Excused absences** are defined 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.

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

### *Enrollment:*

Children are considered to be 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 children begin attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts class.

***End date:***

The date children stop attending the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts class.

***Clarifications******Full Enrollment:***

Outreach efforts throughout the community to locate and enroll children whose families are at 300 percent or below the federal poverty guidelines is 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 subsidized child care 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 income, then other risk factors such as homelessness, teen mother or English language learner.

Slots that are under 20 days since they were vacated are considered as enrolled and may be reported as such.

Chronic under-enrollment will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will, in most cases, result in reduced funding, which is calculated by the number of vacancies and the length of time. Programs will be notified in writing to identify issues of chronic under-enrollment.

When slots are unfilled or a partner returns slots to a lead agency, they must be returned to OCDEL for redistribution to a program that demonstrates the capacity to serve additional children with identified need.

***Enrollment Reporting:***

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning uses the PELICAN data system to assess overall Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts enrollment as well as provider compliance with enrollment requirements.

All enrollments must be recorded into PELICAN and kept up to date. This includes “end dating” children who are no longer participating in the program.

Preschool Program Specialists will monitor PELICAN periodically to assure data is entered accurately for each child and that enrollment is at 100 percent.

***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.

#### *Vacancies*

Programs that have not filled a vacant slot within the 20 day timeframe will be considered under-enrolled.



Providers must submit a Plan for Vacant Slots for any un-filled slots by September 30 for vacancies at the start of the program and/or 30 days from any un-filled vacancy occurring throughout the school year.

Chronic under-enrollment will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will, in most cases, result in reduced funding, which is calculated by the number of vacancies and the length of time. Programs will be notified in writing to identify issues of chronic under-enrollment.

Vacancies occurring 20 days prior to the end of school term do not require a Plan for Vacant Slots.

## #006 Definition of Instructional Time

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funds may only be used to support activities and for 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, as long as they are integral parts of the curriculum, supervised by the teacher and used for student learning experiences
- Play time, as long as 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

A typical pre-kindergarten classroom schedule includes a majority of 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 children's 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 of time when children enter or leave the building and are waiting for others to join them are not considered instructional time and do not count toward the 2.5 or 5.0 hour instructional requirement. Nap or quiet times are another example of a non-instructional activity. These times, whether they are short 10-15 minute periods or 1-2 hours in length, must be scheduled in addition to the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts instructional 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 in order 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 is 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.
- 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- Level II, ACT 48 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 allow 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 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 Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary and Higher Education and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 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; and
- 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 degree granting institution, or Pennsylvania Department of Education-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](#).

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
- Only 50 percent of total required experience may be in an Early Intervention special education classroom

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 (Act 82 of 2012 [22 Pa. Code §19.1] Educator Effectiveness Tool) with a “Satisfactory” rating for teachers who were certified on or after Sept. 1, 2001. The entity where the teacher taught keeps the following documents on file at the institution:

- 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 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
- ❖ Intermediate unit executive director or assistant executive director
- ❖ Early intervention supervisor

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-K 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 intermediate unit, 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, 333 Market Street, 3rd Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

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 2.80 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 and how is an emergency permit obtained?*

The emergency permit must be requested by the public school entity for an individual to serve in a vacant position or as a long-term or day-to-day substitute teacher. Emergency permits are issued at the request of the employing public school 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 until 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 at: [Emergency Permits](#).

*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?*

Pennsylvania Code (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. Access [The Accelerated Program Guidelines](#) to learn more about the program.

## #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:** To move from Level I to Level II certification, teachers have six years from start date (in an eligible classroom).

**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 (2) bi-annual evaluations are required beyond the six (6) satisfactory evaluations if Level II certification is not achieved within 3 years.

**Note:** As of July 1, 2014, PDE 82-1(*Classroom Teacher Rating Tool Form*) will replace PDE 426 as the required observation tool for community-based providers.

**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.

**Teacher Effectiveness Training Date:** List date that the required *Application of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in Pre-kindergarten Classrooms* training was completed.

**Comments:** Include any additional notes relevant to the teacher's progress toward Level II certification.



## #010: Teacher Certification Evaluation in Community-Based Programs

Teachers in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts community-based classrooms must engage in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) prescribed evaluation process as part of conversion of Level I to Level II Certification requirement. For more information on Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness Project, visit [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 an intermediate unit evaluator, or may develop an equivalent means for the annual evaluation of Level II certified teachers.

### *Clarifications:*

#### Evaluation Requirement

- Teachers must have at least three years of satisfactory teaching experience to convert a Level I teaching certificate to Level II.
- 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 Educator Effectiveness System established by Act 82 of 2012 (22 Pa. Code §19.1)

1) The following school district or intermediate unit 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
- ❖ Intermediate unit executive director or assistant executive director
- ❖ Early intervention supervisor

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.

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

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:

❖ 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 applicants 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.

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](mailto:jolphillip@pa.gov)) requesting approval.

**All evaluator types listed above must have PDE-approved training in teacher evaluation (Educator Effectiveness in accordance with Act 82 of 2012 (22 Pa. Code §19.1) or an alternate LEA teacher evaluation plan that was approved by PDE. Please contact your local intermediate unit for training.**

It is strongly recommended, that ALL evaluators view the [Early Childhood Supplement to Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching](#).

### ***Engaging Teacher Evaluators***

Community-based providers that have an approved person on staff may have evaluations conducted by that person.

Providers may contact local school districts or intermediate units to determine if there is someone on staff with the expertise and availability to conduct the evaluations.

Provider may contact faculty at local institutions of higher education to determine if there is someone on staff with the expertise and availability to conduct the evaluations.

If providers are unable to secure an evaluator from these options, they should contact their preschool program specialist for additional options.

The cost associated with conducting teacher evaluations may be included in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts' budget.

*Instructions for using the Pennsylvania Department of Education's evaluation and assessment forms*

Level I evaluations must be completed on the PDE-approved forms: Teacher Effectiveness Tool. 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.

OCDEL has developed [Pre-kindergarten Examples](#) and [Guiding Questions](#) as supplements to the Danielson Rubric. These tools should be used by any evaluator of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programming.

The language contained within the teacher effectiveness tool is specific to school district personnel, however community-based providers may interpret the wording as follows:

- ❖ Form says "District/LEA": Community-based provider interpretation-name of Pre-K Counts entity or partner,
- ❖ Form says "School": Community-based provider interpretation-name of site where the teacher is teaching.

## #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.

Community-based partners may add an addendum to a district or intermediate unit plan to include the provider. This addendum must indicate how the plan will be made applicable to and implemented by community-based partners.

School districts or intermediate units do not need to undertake submission of a Teacher Induction Plan as they already have PDE-approved plans. However Appendix A “Designating Evaluator Information” must be submitted to OCDEL.

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

All Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts providers must give a copy of their finalized Induction Plan to their Preschool Specialist for final approval, including Appendix A, designating evaluator information.

### *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;
  - 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 lead agency should submit the plan and addendum to the Preschool Program Specialist who will send it to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning for approval. 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 intermediate unit's existing Induction Plan:  
Follow 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 intermediate unit.

## #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:*

Click [Early Childhood Assessment for Children from Birth to Age 8](#) to explore assessment resources provided by OCDEL. [Summary tables](#) on screening tools are provided.

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

In general, screening is not an end in itself (Meisels & Atkins-Burnett, 2005). 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. This tool is being used across various state and county programs including Children and Youth programs, Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania Early Head Start, Nurse-Family Partnership and Parent Child Home Program. Training for Ages & Stages and the Ages & Stages SE Questionnaires can be found on the PA Keys Professional Development Calendar (search Using Ages and Stages Questionnaires® as a Screening Tool). This is a one-time training need. Information on additional screeners can be found by clicking the following: [Summary tables](#).

Sensory screenings may be administered by appropriately trained program staff, or programs partnering with Head Start, the Association for the Blind or other local community based organizations to complete vision and hearing screens. Preschool specialist can be a resource for programs identifying equipment and possible community resources to meet the hearing and vision screening requirement. In the event that a child demonstrates a concern on the screening, parents should be informed and provided assistance in connecting with follow up.

#### Physical Health Screenings:

Physical and oral health is important to children’s school readiness. As three and four year old children, according to the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment Program, EPSDT, should have an annual well child checkup and a dental exam.

Children enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts should be covered by Medicaid, by the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or through 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.

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 and currently is a phone and fax system staffed by one full time employee (FTE) who is a trained information specialist. Back up support is provided as needed. The line is staffed 7:30 am to 3:30 pm each business day. 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.

**Important Note:**

There is a minimal cost associated with purchasing Ages & Stages. Grantees are permitted to include the cost of the resource in their budgets.

All children in Pennsylvania are eligible for Health Insurance. 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 \(CHIP\)](#).

*Resources:*

American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care

[Ages & Stages website](#)

[Developmental and Behavioral Screening Initiative: Impact and Opportunities – presentations and resources](#)

Meisels, S.J. and Atkins-Burnet, S. 2005. Developmental Screening in Early Childhood, A Guide 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. NAEYC Washington, D.C.

[NAEYC Supplement, Screening and Assessment of Young English Language Learners](#), 2005.



## #013: Assessment of the 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 self-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.

At a frequency determined by PDE, an external assessment of the learning environment may be conducted by an outside assessor.

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 the Environment Rating Scale Foundations and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 courses. Programs choosing to use other approved program assessments are responsible for ensuring staff receive training on use of the tool.

### *Clarifications*

#### External Assessment for select Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs:

- PDE reserves the right to require and conduct an external assessment of select Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs.
- If PDE requires an external assessment using ECERS-3, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classrooms that are not participating in Keystone STARS will be rated on five of the six subscales during the external assessment. They include: Space and Furnishings, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interaction, and Program Structure.
- Preschool program specialists will initiate the application for an external assessment. When the Assessor contacts the program to confirm the window, they will also confirm address and other site specific information to determine the number of classrooms to be assessed. This will also provide an opportunity for selecting black-out days.
- Programs will be notified of their window for the external assessment. Failure to keep the window will result in a charge of \$700 per day for each day that was cancelled, rescheduled or denied unless just cause is established.
- When the assessor arrives at the site, a facility contact should greet the assessor. A facility contact should be accessible for the duration of the assessors visit.
- Based on the number of classrooms that need to be assessed, assessments may be conducted over a period of time.
- Providers will receive a hard copy of their assessment results.
- Results of the external assessment will also 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 Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC).

#### External Assessment for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts STARS facilities:

- PKC classrooms in STARS facilities will be included in the STARS random sampling.

#### Self-Assessment:

- Programs may choose to use any Department approved assessment of learning environment to fulfill the required annual self-assessment.
- A self-assessment must be completed in every classroom annually.
- Self-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. For programs choosing to use the Environment Rating Scale, personnel conducting the self-assessment must have attended both Environment Rating Scale sessions: the Environment Rating Scale Foundations and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3 OR online ECERS-3 training. The Environment Rating Scale professional development is supported by the PA Keys system. Training for other approved assessments must be attained by the program.
- Self-assessments should, as much as possible, be an honest reflection of the classroom environment.
- Results of annual self-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 version)

Teaching Pyramid Tool for Preschool Classrooms (TPOT)

- Programs may submit to have additional assessments of learning environment added by contacting OCDEL staff at [RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PAPreKCounts@pa.gov).

## #014: Reporting and Data Requirements

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

- Early Learning Network;
- Financial Accounting Information System; and
- submission of written program plans.

### *PELICAN/Early Learning Network:*

Data reports must be submitted through OCDEL's PELICAN/Early Learning Network. Demographic, narrative, fiscal, and child outcomes 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. Failure to complete *Reconciliation of Cash on Hand Quarterly Reports* will result in payment delays.

### *Program Plans:*

Required program plans, including plans for vacant slots, continuous quality improvement plans, partnership agreements, and teacher induction plans, must also be submitted to the preschool program specialist who monitors each provider's program compliance.

### *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 on the PELICAN/Early Learning Network system.

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 providers, classrooms, teachers, families and children.

The information submitted through OCDEL's reporting system is utilized to create the annual 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, housed in PELICAN, must be kept current to assure accurate and timely communications.

#### Financial Accounting Information System:

Lead agencies must submit supporting budgetary information quarterly through the Financial Accounting Information 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 Financial Accounting Information 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 must be submitted annually:

- Partnership; and
- Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

Teacher Induction Plans are required of all providers. They are submitted to the preschool program specialists and approved by OCDEL.

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 9/30)
- Child Enrollments (full enrollment by 9/1)
- Previous month's attendance finalized **7/5**

### August:

- Staff qualifications added to PELICAN (completed by 9/30)
- Child Enrollments (full enrollment by 9/1)
- Previous month's attendance finalized **8/5**
- 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 **9/30** Guaranteeing 180 days of Instruction
- Staffing completed in PELICAN by **9/30**

### October:

- Teacher Tracker of Level I to Level II Activities to Specialist **10/1**
- Previous month's attendance finalized **10/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10<sup>th</sup> business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10<sup>th</sup> business day (Pelican)
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN

### November:

- Continuous Quality Improvement Plans Updated to Specialist **11/1**
- Previous month's attendance finalized **11/5**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN

### December:

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

### January:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **1/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10<sup>th</sup> business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10<sup>th</sup> business day (Pelican)
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN

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

March:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **3/5**
- Audit Reporting due for programs receiving \$75,000 to \$750,000 in combined state and federal awards and **NOT** subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards **3/31**
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN

April:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **4/5**
- Financial Accounting Information System reporting by 10<sup>th</sup> business day
- Quarterly Expenditure Reports by 10<sup>th</sup> business day (Pelican)
- Update child enrollment and staffing qualifications information in PELICAN

May:

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

June:

- Previous month's attendance finalized **6/5**
- Final Budget Revisions due **6/15** (Pelican)
- Audit Reporting due for programs receiving \$750,000 or more in combined state and federal awards and subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards **6/30**
- End date all enrollments by 6/30, even for children who will return for the next school year.

## #015: Continuous Quality Improvement/Best Practices

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs must develop and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan during the first Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts implementation year. It must be reviewed at least annually and updated to accurately reflect progress made towards meeting identified goals, or to establish new goals or areas of focus for the current year. The plan must be submitted each year to the preschool program specialist by November 1.

### *Clarifications:*

#### **Definition:**

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 makes decisions and evaluates its progress.

It is grounded in the overall mission, vision and values of the organization and should become a natural part of the way every day work is done. Continuous Quality Improvement planning for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts must include staff, families, children and stakeholders at all levels.

Consider the information from the *Program Review Instrument, Best Practice Rubric*, 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.

Incorporate the following four components:

- Sources of Evidence: The evidence used to identify the areas of needed improvement.
- Goals, Objectives and Strategies: Description of identified and measurable goals to be accomplished and how they will be achieved.
- Timeline and Person(s) Responsible: Ongoing dates of review and targeted end-dates should be included, along with the person who has the primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring the goal.
- Follow-up: The procedure for ongoing review that will occur annually at a minimum.

Include a process for annual submission to the preschool program specialist and be available for review at each site visit.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Continuous Quality Improvement Plan may be a subset of a provider's existing strategic or ongoing plan. School district improvement plans, Head Start self-assessments or Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plans that incorporate Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts-specific goals and the four components described above are acceptable.

Professional development for Continuous Quality Improvement is provided through the Keystone STARS Core Series and can be accessed through the PA Key online professional development calendar.

Lead agencies are responsible for assuring partners' development and ongoing review of a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.



## Appendix A: Continuous Quality Improvement Goal Planning Form

Lead Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Partner Agency: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

### CQI Goal Planning Form

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Goal*: <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate <input type="checkbox"/> Short Term (1-2 years) <input type="checkbox"/> Long Term (3-5 years)	Staff Coordinating/Staff Involved	Projected Date of Completion Actual Date of Completion

How does your goal align with quality standards

PA Pre K Counts Guidance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment	<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Practices and ERS Scores
<input type="checkbox"/> Partnerships and Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Transitions	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Involvement

What are the action steps? Who is responsible? What is the timeframe?

Action Steps
1

What source(s) of evidence did you use to determine this goal?

Source(s) of Evidence	Date(s) Completed

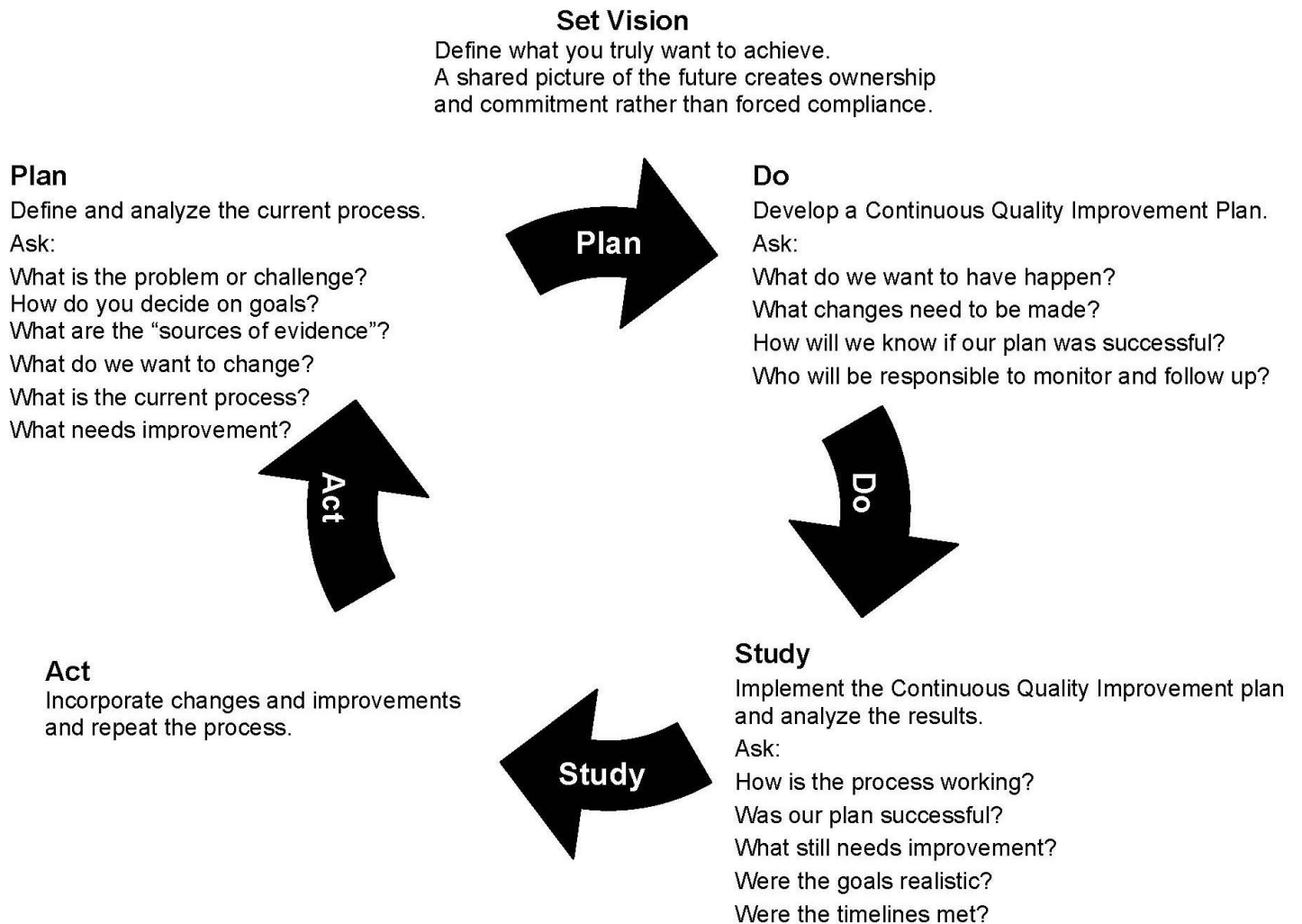
What resources or supports are needed to assist in the achievement of this goal?

Professional Development/Technical Assistance Needs	Changes/Improvements to Learning Program, Management, or Business Practices	Materials, Equipment, or Facility Improvements

\*Please use a separate page for each goal. Copy this page, as needed, to accommodate your program's goals.

CQI Goal Planning Form (Optional Tool)  
4/2/2008

## *Appendix B: Continuous Quality Improvement Process*



### *Steps for Continuous Quality Improvement:*

1. Develop your new vision or reflect your current version and modify as appropriate.

Visions should be statements about your agency's view of provision of services. They reflect values and hopes for the future, are collaborative in nature, and describe the best possible outcome.

2. Solicit buy-in.

Teachers and administrators, the families that are served and community representatives should be part of the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan team. Each offers valuable information and insight into the strategic planning process.

3. Define and analyze the current processes.

- Review the current operation to determine what is going well and what could be improved;
- Use the vision and program implementation designs to consider levels of quality functioning and progress towards the overall goal;
- Gather sources of evidence to help with this assessment;
- Develop the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan;
- Identify goals that will help improve the overall quality of the program. Goals should be both short-term and long-term and can relate to classroom and/or teacher performance, management systems, work with parents and community, expansion or new locations, or enhanced collaborations; and
- Include a process for ongoing assessment and modifications, as needed in addition to an annual review.

4. Implement the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan and analyze the results.

Consider the way in which the goals and strategies to achieve them will be communicated to staff and stakeholders.

Identify strategies for assuring program-wide ownership of the changes in structure and program, and how staff and stakeholders will be involved in the improvements and assessment of the plan.

Schedule regular assessments of the goals and action steps that can occur during regular staff meetings, parent meetings or meetings with governance boards.

5. Incorporate changes and improvements and repeat the process.

Action steps to achieve Continuous Quality Improvement Plan goals should be flexible, changing as staff, children, or program requirements change. Ongoing reviews of each goal are necessary to identify whether the goal still makes sense for the overall program vision and if it is on track according to the timeline originally established.

## #016: 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 (see Supplemental resource #011) 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 should properly cost allocate any expenditures that are shared resources.

Programs should utilize the [PA Pre-K Counts Fiscal Supplement](#).

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 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 in the *Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts 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 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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) basis, 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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, if this is necessary, for instructions.

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

## #017: Audit Requirements

All funded Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts lead agencies and partner agencies will be required to meet Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts audit requirements.

### *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.

Providers must submit the *Executive Summary* or the *Attestation* form as documentation of compliance with this requirement to the Pennsylvania Key Fiscal Coordinator, **annually, by March 31** for agencies who receive \$75,000 - \$750,000 in state and federal funding. Agencies that receive more than \$750,000 and/or 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), but receives between \$75,000 and \$750,000 in state Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding during the program year, they are required to have an independent auditor conduct an examination in accordance with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements (SSAE, Section 215, Agreed-Upon Procedures Engagement or SSAE, Section 315, Compliance Attestation) and shall include all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding. The independent auditor shall issue a report on its attestation engagement as defined in aforementioned sections. Please see below for Agreed -Upon Procedures/Examination Engagement Guidelines for guidance.



If a Provider receives less than \$75,000 in state Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding within the funding year, an audit is not required. Providers can meet this requirement through the use of an independent Certified Public Accountant, external Auditor or partners may work with Lead Agencies to include Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in the Lead Agency Audit.

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)

Annually providers must submit the Executive Summary or the Attestation form as documentation of compliance with this requirement. Audit expenses should be charged to the next fiscal year budget. Providers are required to submit documentation for their audit to Fiscal Coordinator or Fiscal Specialist by June 30. If you are not subject to an audit and are completing an agreed upon procedures report or a compliance attestation, your deadline for submission is March 31.

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.

#### Agreed-Upon Procedures/Examination Engagement Guidelines:

##### Agreed-Upon Procedures:

The objective of the CPA/Auditor's agreed-upon procedures is to *present specific findings* to assist users in evaluating a provider's compliance with specified requirements or the effectiveness of a provider's internal control over compliance based on procedures agreed upon by the users of the report.

##### Examination Engagement:

The objective of the CPA/Auditor's examination procedures applied to a provider's compliance with specified requirements is to *express an opinion* on a provider's compliance (or assertion related thereto), based on the specified criteria. To express such an opinion, the practitioner accumulates enough evidence about the provider's compliance with specified requirements.

For financial attestation work of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program operating as a **lead agency**, OCDEL would suggest the following compliance reviews:

1. Internal controls exist that provide safeguards against improper use of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding;
2. Cost allocation plan is appropriate and fair testing a sample of allocated expenses;

3. Payments to the provider were consistent with expenditures; program did not have more than 30 days of cash on hand;
4. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may not charge families any fees during the established program hours; assure that all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children attended for free (including meals and field trips);
5. 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. A sample review is acceptable;
6. Mid-year and final expense reports accurately reflected the expenses of the program per sample review;
7. 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
8. Any unexpended funds were returned to PDE.

For financial attestation work of the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program operating as a **partner**, OCDEL would suggest the following compliance reviews:

1. A partnership agreement exists between the provider and the lead agency;
2. Internal controls exist that provide safeguards against improper use of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding;
3. Cost allocation plan is appropriate and fair testing a sample of allocated expenses;
4. Payments to the provider were consistent with expenditures;
5. Program did not have more than 30 days of cash on hand;
6. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts programs may not charge families any fees during the established program hours; assure that all Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts children attended for free (including meals and field trips);
7. 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. A sample review is acceptable;
8. Mid-year and final expense reports accurately reflected the expenses of the program per sample review;
9. 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
10. Any unexpended funds were returned to the lead agency.