

ANNOUNCEMENT

ELRC 22-08



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

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End Date: N/A

Subject: Requirements for Programs Using an OCDEL-Approved Alternate Pathway to a Keystone STARS Designation in the Professional Development (PD) Registry

To: All Keystone STARS Providers using an OCDEL-Approved Alternate Pathway for STARS Designation; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program Representatives

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

PURPOSE

To outline the requirements for programs using an OCDEL-approved alternate pathway to Keystone STARS designation that become effective on December 1, 2022.

The following appendices are attached to this policy announcement:

- Appendix A: [Required Documentation for Verification of Alternate Pathway Accreditation \(Provider Facing\)](#)
- Appendix B: [Tip Sheet for Applying for Keystone STARS Designation Through an Alternate Pathway](#)

BACKGROUND

Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), promotes quality in early childhood education programs for children and families across the commonwealth. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) recognizes that there are state and national accrediting organizations that similarly serve to ensure early childhood education programs are providing high quality and enriching programming to children and families. In order to give credence to these

organizations and their accreditation standards of quality, OCDEL offers several OCDEL-approved alternate pathways to a Keystone STARS designation.

DISCUSSION

Programs who hold accreditation through an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway accrediting body can apply for a Keystone STARS designation. For a current list of the accreditations that serve as OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathways, click [here](#).

The Professional Development (PD) Registry System: Initial Steps for Programs Using an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway

Programs who are or become accredited through an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway **must** complete the following steps in the PD Registry Designation System:

1. Claim their program's Organization Profile in the PD Registry. Click [here](#) for more information on claiming an organization profile.
2. Submit documentation of the OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway accreditation in the PD Registry. Click [here](#) for more information on how uploading verification of accreditation. Programs should refer to Appendix A: [Required Documentation for Verification of Alternate Pathway Accreditation \(Provider Facing\)](#) for guidance on the required documents to be uploaded for each accrediting agency.
3. Provide the most current version of their program's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan. If programs complete their CQI Plan outside the PD Registry Designation System, they must upload it to their Document Vault prior to completing their designation application. Click [here](#) for more information on accessing and navigating the Document Vault.
4. Review their staff information including their positions and employment dates and update any incorrect entries and ensure their *Staff Report* in the PD Registry Designation System is accurate. Click [here](#) for more information on verifying staff. (The *Staff Report* can be found on the program's *Organization Profile* tab.)
5. Ensure that all current onsite leadership team members and teaching staff have taken the course, *Overview of Keystone STARS: Pennsylvania's Quality Rating and Improvement System*.
6. Ensure that all current onsite leadership team members and teaching staff have completed their PD Registry Profile to the point of having their Career Pathway level assigned and their employment has been verified by the program. Click [here](#) for more information on this step.
7. Ensure that all current onsite program leadership team members and teaching staff have completed their PD Plans (PDP) in the PD Registry to support their educational achievement and professional growth. Click [here](#) for more information on this step.

The PD Registry Designation System: Applying for and Renewing a Keystone STARS Designation Using an OCDEL-Approved Alternate Pathway

Programs using an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway should follow the steps on Appendix B: [Tip Sheet for Applying for Keystone STARS Designation Through an](#)

[Alternate Pathway](#) when applying for and renewing a Keystone STARS Designation in the PD Registry System. Annually, programs **must** renew their OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway designation in the PD Registry Designation system. The PD Registry System processes annual renewals the same way it handles full designations for OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway programs.

Functionality of the PD Registry Designation System for Alternate Pathway Programs

The PD Registry's Designation System assigns designation expiration dates that are three years in the future to all programs, including those using an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway.

NOTE: It is important to note that while the PD Registry Designation System implies that an Alternate Pathway program's designation is valid for 3 years, these programs are required to complete annual renewals during Years 2 and 3 in order to maintain their STAR rating.

Failure to complete annual renewals at Years 2 and 3 or a Full designation in Year 1 will result in an Alternate Pathway program dropping to a STAR 1.

Programs using an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway should be aware of the following:

- The ability to apply for a **full designation** will always be available in the PA PD Registry System.
- The ability to apply for an **annual renewal** will be available in the PA PD Registry 245 days after the full designation start date (month/day) in Years 2 and 3 in the PA PD Registry System.
- The PA PD Registry designation system will process both **full designations and annual renewals** of Alternate Pathway programs in the same way.

NEXT STEPS

1. Keystone STAR Programs Using an OCDEL-approved Alternate Pathway
 - a) Review the information contained in this document and in the attached Appendices and share with staff.
 - b) Follow all steps listed in this policy announcement.
 - c) For help and assistance in using the PD Registry, programs can reference Appendix B [Tip Sheet for Applying for Keystone STARS Designation Through an Alternate Pathway](#). In addition, there are numerous training resources and additional tip sheets that can be accessed [here](#)
 - d) Please direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRCs

- a) Review the information contained in this document and in the attached Appendices and share with staff.
- b) Please direct any questions to your program representative.

Appendix A: Required Documentation for Verification of Alternate Pathway Accreditation (Provider Facing)

Name of OCDEL-Approved Accrediting Organization	STAR Level	Documentation Required to Be Uploaded During Annual Keystone STAR Designation and Annual Renewal
Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
American Montessori Society (AMS)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
Association Montessori Internationale Recognition (AMI)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of AMI Recognition Certificate • Copy of Annual Letter from AMI • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
Council on Accreditation (COA) After School Program	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent Update Letter • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Accreditation Certificate • Copy of most recent Update Letter • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC)	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Approval Letter • Copy of most recent annual Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan
Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Private Academic Nursery School License	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of most recent Annual Private Academic License issued through PDE