

Contracted Slots Infant Toddler (CS-IT) Request for Applications FY 2026-2027

Early Learning Resource Center 8 ONLY

Frequently Asked Questions

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Attendance

Are there excused absences or not?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Attendance*

Annual absences are tracked by fiscal year, July 1 through June 30.

Providers must contact families when children are unexpectedly absent for three consecutive days to learn the nature of the absence and, as appropriate, offer support.

If children accrue more than five consecutive unexcused absences or 20 total absences, the provider and family must develop an attendance action plan. The plan documents and discusses the reasons for the absence and identifies ways to support the child's attendance.

Providers may approve consecutive absences of up to 5 days for extenuating circumstances, such as homelessness, unexpected crises, family emergencies, or significant illness.

Providers are encouraged to support families with relevant community resources when appropriate.

Providers should communicate with families on an ongoing basis regarding attendance issues. Once a child reaches 40 unexplained/unexcused absences within a fiscal year, a

registered letter should be sent to the family detailing the attendance issue, and the date enrollment in the CS program will end. Families will be provided with 13 days' notice from the date of the notice before CS ends. A family may return to CCW funding, and the CS absences would not be counted against that funding stream.

Providers should work with the ELRC and Contracted Slots team if a family experiences extenuating circumstances for absences that require a policy exemption.

Child Eligibility

What is the date of birth cut-off for this application? Is it just for infants and toddlers, and does it not cover preschool?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Child Eligibility*

- Family must be eligible for Child Care Works.
- Family must agree to enroll children as full-day, full week, regardless of a family's work schedule.
- Additional eligibility requirements are outlined below based on the Contracted Slots type.
 - Infant and Toddler-
 - Must be between the ages of six weeks and 36 months at the time of enrollment.

Is the income 200% of poverty like CCW?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Child Eligibility*

- Family must be eligible for Child Care Works (same income limits apply)
- CCW families in the Low-Income or Former TANF categories are eligible for the Contracted Slots Program. Families accessing CCW through TANF and/or SNAP are not eligible to participate.

If a family with multiple children enrolls, will the co-pay portion designated for the infant or toddler be covered, or will it be reallocated to the other children?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Family Co-Payment*

Providers are prohibited from charging a co-payment for children enrolled in a Contracted Slot. A family utilizing the Contracted Slots program will not be required to pay a co-payment for the child enrolled in a Contracted Slot.

If a family utilizing a Contracted Slot has other eligible children enrolled in CCW, a co-payment for those children must be charged.

If the family is also in need of non-traditional child care, under CCW, for the child enrolled in Contracted Slots, the co-payment will be charged for the CCW-funded, non-traditional child care hours.

Enrollment

If a Contracted Slot becomes available, we need to fill the opening within 20 days. Would the ELRC help fill those spots, or would we be responsible for recruiting families ourselves?

Contracted Slots providers are responsible for ensuring that full enrollment is maintained. However, collaboration with the ELRC is expected to support recruitment efforts.

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Determining Eligibility*.

The ELRC is responsible for determining a family's eligibility for the CCW program and subsequently for Contracted Slots. A communication/collaboration plan must be established between the ELRC and the contracted provider to support recruitment, manage referrals, and eligibility for Contracted Slots.

Upon determination of eligibility and intended Contracted Slot enrollment at a participating provider, the ELRC will provide verification of CCW eligibility to the provider. This verification must be maintained in the provider's file for the child.

The ELRC will help providers recruit children by contacting parents with infants and toddlers on the waiting list.

If parents contact the provider directly, the provider will help the parent connect with the ELRC to establish the parent's eligibility for CCW.

What are the negatives of family enrollment? Why would they choose not to enroll?

Although many families experience the benefits of Contracted Slots, it may not be the best fit in certain circumstances, such as but not limited to:

- The family does not need or want a full-time child care schedule
- The family wants more flexibility with absences
- The family may not prefer a particular classroom configuration (i.e. mixed-age classroom) supported by Contracted Slots funding
- The family would benefit from the comprehensive services of another program like Early Head Start
- The family prefers to stay on CCW funding

Do we apply for a slot for every child with ELRC (CCW) funding?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Staff Qualifications*

- *The lead teacher must be present in the classroom for the portion of the program day in which the greatest number of children enrolled in Contracted Slots are in attendance. There will be enough lead teachers, assistant teachers, and/or aides assigned to Contracted Slots classrooms to meet the staff-to child ratio for the age level served as promulgated in DHS regulation § 3270.51.*

In addition to staffing and the staff-child ratio, you will want to consider your planned classroom configuration and enrollment priorities when determining how many slots are requested. Contracted Slots policies must be implemented at all times in any classroom serving Contracted Slots-enrolled children, and full enrollment must be maintained. Contracted Slots funding is one of several options available to families, and not all families may agree to participate.

Grant Structure

Would the number of available slots for providers change each year?

Generally, fully enrolled providers maintain the same number of Contracted Slots each year through a continuation process, pending available funding. There are circumstances that could impact the number of slots, including:

- Slots removed due to under-enrollment.
- Slots added through reallocation.
- A competitive RFA is held, redistributing the number of slots among providers.

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Request for Applications*

A centralized Request for Application (RFA) process will be conducted to determine an array of eligible providers. Each Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) for which eligible provider applications are received will participate in the RFA process by providing information on subsidy waiting lists, as well as pertinent information related to the applying providers.

Also refer to the *Policy Statement: Contracting with Providers*

Each ELRC is responsible for generating contracting documentation with awarded providers within their region. Each ELRC will conduct a continuation of the grant process pending the availability of funds.

Will the payment be added to our ELRC payment?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Payments*

Payments will be made to the ELRC based upon annual amounts, payable per slot. The cost per slot supports a full day, full week (Monday through Friday), of traditional child care and is funded through the duration of a fiscal year (July through June).

The ELRC is responsible for managing the payment of funds to successful providers, according to a specific process for each ELRC. The provider will ensure segregation of program funds in their fiscal record-keeping.

Successful providers shall be paid 1/12 of the total grant award as soon as possible after a provider contract is fully executed and shall be paid 1/12 of the total grant award monthly thereafter based upon an agreed-upon timeframe between the ELRC and the provider. In cases where verified monthly expenses exceed 1/12 of the total grant award, providers may request an advanced distribution of funding equal to 1/12 of the total grant award. Such requests must be received by the ELRC on or before the 15th of the preceding month to be processed in a timely manner. The provider's receipt of funding shall not exceed the total grant award.

Given that the Contracted Slots are infant and toddler, what ratio do you suggest when choosing the number of slots for our program?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Staff Qualifications*

The lead teacher must be present in the classroom for the portion of the program day in which the greatest number of children enrolled in Contracted Slots are in attendance. There will be enough lead teachers, assistant teachers, and/or aides assigned to

Contracted Slots classrooms to meet the staff-to-child ratio for the age level served as promulgated in DHS regulation § 3270.51.

In addition to staffing and the staff-child ratio, you will want to consider your planned classroom configuration and enrollment priorities when determining how many slots are requested. Contracted Slots policies must be implemented at all times in any classroom serving Contracted Slots-enrolled children, and full enrollment must be maintained. Contracted Slots funding is one of several options available to families, and not all families may agree to participate.

Staffing

Given that the Contracted Slots are infant and toddler, what ratio do you suggest when choosing the number of slots for our program?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Staff Qualifications*

The lead teacher must be present in the classroom for the portion of the program day in which the greatest number of children enrolled in Contracted Slots are in attendance. There will be enough lead teachers, assistant teachers, and/or aides assigned to Contracted Slots classrooms to meet the staff-to-child ratio for the age level served as promulgated in DHS regulation § 3270.51.

In addition to staffing and the staff-child ratio, you will want to consider your planned classroom configuration and enrollment priorities when determining how many slots are requested. Contracted Slots policies must be implemented at all times in any classroom serving Contracted Slots-enrolled children, and full enrollment must be maintained. Contracted Slots funding is one of several options available to families, and not all families may agree to participate.

Is the provider required to enter staff into the PD Registry?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Tracking Staff Information*

Staff working within classrooms where children funded through Contracted Slots are being served need to be entered into both PELICAN and the PD Registry.

PELICAN Data Entry Requirements: Classroom assignment, staff demographics, and location specifics.

PD Registry Data Entry Requirements: Personal information, education, employment, credential information, and qualification information.

Providers must update PELICAN ELN by the last day of the month if any changes occur to classrooms, staffing, or child enrollments.

Providers must have staff entered and verified in the PD Registry within 90 days of staff assignment to a Contracted Slots classroom.

I have a current staff member who is finishing her CDA through PennAEYC. If everything goes as planned, I expect her to complete the credential by August or September. In the meantime, if this affects my staffing qualifications, would I be able to place myself or my Program Coordinator in the teacher's position until she completes her CDA? Also, if a staff member leaves during the contract period, is there a specific timeframe within which I must hire a replacement?

On the application, please list all staff who you expect to support the Contracted Slots classroom and include all relevant qualifications. This can include pending qualifications, but make sure to include specific projected completion dates for staff who do not currently meet the qualifications. Information about the intended Lead Teacher must be shared in the response. You can also list any other program staff who may serve as a Lead Teacher during interim periods if the intended Lead Teacher does not meet the qualifications. However, all DHS staffing regulations must be followed.

It is expected that Contracted Slots providers maintain a qualified Lead Teacher in Contracted Slots classrooms at all times. If a Lead Teacher leaves and is not readily replaced, the provider and Contracted Slots Specialist will discuss the specific situation and the impact on program monitoring. In general, there is some flexibility during the hiring process; however, providers must document attempts to always comply with this policy.

Transition

Can you go into detail about what we need to do as providers when they age out? If we do not have a Pre-K Counts or Head Start in our building? Are families allowed to return to CCW?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Transition to Pre-kindergarten*

Providers must develop a transition plan for children aging out of Contracted Slots for Infants and Toddlers.

The ELRC and the contracted providers must coordinate with families no later than 6 months prior to the child's third birthday to inform families of preschool/pre-kindergarten eligibility procedures and options for transition. These include Child Care Works, PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start, or private pay.

Coordination for children with an IFSP/IEP shall follow timelines established by IDEA.

The transition plan shall be in writing and must be coordinated with the appropriate entity. Transition plans must be completed at least six months prior to the child turning three and, in cases where a child turning three will not be eligible to attend PA Pre-K Counts or Head Start, due to their birth date falling after the kindergarten cutoff for their school district, at least 6-weeks prior to eligibility for the program, the provider will ensure the family completes a Pre-Kindergarten Intent Form. Completed forms should be shared with the ELRC, as well as with the assigned Specialist.

The full *Policy Statement: Transition to Pre-kindergarten* includes additional information about the specific ways in which children will transition to pre-kindergarten funding, pending eligibility.

Written Policies for Families

What if the ECE program is not open 12 hours per day?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Family Co-Payment*

Contracted Slots funding supports up to 12 hours of care per day or the maximum traditional care hours of the enrolling program.

- Full day, traditional care is defined as up to 12 hours of service between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Children enrolled in Contracted Slots are eligible for up to 12 hours of full-day, traditional care per day.
 - If an enrollment requires 12 hours of full-day traditional care, but the provider's service schedule is shorter in duration, either the parent must agree to the provider's service schedule, or the enrollment should not be designated in a contracted slot.

Does the child have to attend full-time or can they be part-time?

Please refer to the *Contracted Slots Policies, Guidance, and Clarifications, Policy Statement: Child Eligibility*

Family must agree to enroll children as full day, full week, regardless of a family's work schedule.

- Full day is defined as up to 12 hours of traditional child care. Children enrolled in any contracted slot are eligible for up to 12 hours of care per day (or the maximum traditional care hours the program is open, in cases where it may be less than 12 hours).
 - Program policies limiting the time a child can be enrolled (e.g., 10 hours per day) should not be applied to children funded through any contracted slots program, as they are eligible to be served for the duration of the program's service hours if it does not exceed 12 hours of care.
 - Evening care, weekend care, or overnight care is considered non-traditional child care and is not eligible for Contracted Slots funding.
 - Full week is defined as 5 days a week (Monday through Friday). Full year is defined as the full fiscal year (July 1 through June 30).