

# Early Childhood Education Professional Development Organization (ECEPDO) Policies, Clarifications, and Guidance

July 1, 2026

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## Introduction

Originally instituted in 2019, The Early Childhood Professional Development Organizations (PDOs) are a key component of The Office of Child Development and Early Learning’s (OCDEL’s) Early Childhood Workforce Preparation and Professionalization Model. Funded primarily through the Child Care Development Funding (CCDF), the overarching goal of PDOs is to advance Early Childhood Education (ECE) professional’s Career Pathway placements through increased access to education, degree attainment and credit-bearing coursework. For more information on OCDEL’s Early Childhood Preparation and Professionalization Model see [Appendix A](#).

This document contains the requirements and policies for PDOs. All information within this document should be considered program policy and must be followed by awarded grantees and their partners. These policies will be diligently monitored for compliance and effectiveness.

A minimum of one formal compliance review will occur with PDOs annually. The PDO Grants Supervisor will implement and utilize the Program Review Protocol which includes a Program Review Instrument (PRI) to identify areas of strength and areas of needed focus to assure full compliance with ECE PDO policies. The Program Review Protocol will be shared with the PDOs prior to implementation and the Program Review Instrument (PRI) will include details on how

goals and policies will be reviewed and scored. The PRI score and the results from the Program Review Protocol will be used 1) to set PDO continuous quality goals, 2) in competitive PDO Request for Applications (RFAs) during recompetes years, and 3) to document successes and lapses in policy adherence. Search the PDO portal for the most recent Program Review Protocol and Program Review Instrument.

OCDEL will also provide on-going monitoring of the PDOs through review of narrative reports, PD Registry data, and fiscal reports.

Additional resources for program administration can be found within the [PDO portal](#). PDOs must gain access to the PDO portal to obtain important information including policy announcements, communications, resources, and templates related to program operations. To access the portal, contact the PDO Grants Supervisor with the names and emails of any grant-related staff who need access. Once names and emails are processed, the identified individual will receive an electronic link inviting them to the portal. This link should be retained and/or bookmarked for continual access to the portal.

## Definitions

### Accessible

Easily obtained. Used in reference to the ability of each Early Childhood Education professional to enter and navigate PDO offerings to advance their education and PA Career Pathway.

### Apprenticeship

A specific career pathway for Early Childhood Education professionals to transition from holding a CDA to an AA or BA while working in an early childhood setting. A collective approach to a career pathway in which many partners collaborate to provide a combination of credit-bearing on-the-job learning, related instruction, and coaching. Apprenticeship models may be Registered or non-registered. Apprenticeship is an approved PDO modality.

### Articulation

Agreements between AA and BA degree granting institutions that allow practitioners, upon successful completion of the Associate degree program in Early Childhood Education, to transfer between 54 and 60 academic credits to a Baccalaureate degree program. PDO partner contracts must also prioritize the creation of articulation agreements that provide college credit for awarded CDA certificates and CDA-related training through “credit for prior earning” models instituted at AA and BA degree granting institutions.

### Career Advising

A process driven by the employment goals identified by the early childhood educator and facilitated by the PDO (PD Coordinator) to support the student through following activities:

- Completing a verified Career Pathway placement, which forms the foundation of the career advising plan,

- Providing opportunities to discuss goals related to advancing their career, and
- Discussing potential steps to meet their goals which will include discussion of financial needs and opportunities, as well as which credentials and/or degrees would best meet their goals.

Career advising in the context of the PDOs does not replace an Institution of Higher Education (IHE) academic advisor whose focus is to enroll students in the best coursework trajectory to accomplish their degree.

#### Career Pathway

The Career Pathway defines entry points and on-going leveling for the ECE Professional Workforce. For more information, visit the [Career Pathway page on the Pennsylvania Key website](#).

#### Completion

A participant status of “completed” is used when an enrolled participant earns their intended credential or degree. This means that in addition to all coursework being completed, all other necessary steps to having a degree or credential have also been completed, and the degree or credential has been awarded to the participant.

#### Credit-Bearing Professional Development

Professional development that provides credit to advance career pathway levels.

#### Divert or Diversion

The transfer of personnel by a PDO or its subcontractor to another assignment within the control of either the PDO or subcontractor.

#### Early Childhood Education Professional

An individual who promotes the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age eight, in all Early Childhood Education settings, while meeting the qualifications of the profession and having mastery of specialized knowledge, skills, and competencies.

#### Early Childhood Education Workforce

Individuals who support Early Childhood Education professionals in promoting the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age eight, in all Early Childhood Education settings.

#### Mixed Delivery Model

References different types of modalities for delivery of course content to meet the needs of the field and account for on-the-job experiences. Examples in a mixed delivery model might include, but are not limited to, face-to-face classes, online learning, cohorts, competency-based credits through portfolios or on the job assessments.

#### Professional Development Organization

References the grant awardees of the Department of Human Services (DHS) ECE PDO RFA.

#### Persistence

A PDO-funded participant enrolling in a higher degree program no more than 18 months after completing a lower degree program

#### Professional Learning Organization

Local, regional, and state organizations that offer on-going professional learning for Early Childhood Education professionals.

#### Relevant

Referring to course content appropriate to the current time, period, or circumstances and includes the most current research and practices to support the learning, development, and well-being of children birth through age eight, in all Early Childhood Education settings.

#### Retention

A PDO student is “retained” when they complete one semester of study (Fall or Spring) and continue into the next semester of study (Fall or Spring) without a pause. If a student enrolls in a Winter or Summer semester, they are considered retained, if they continue into the next immediate semester (Fall or Spring).

#### Stackable

Sequential postsecondary awards, that allow individuals to progress on a career path.

#### Subcontractor

Also referred to within this document as “PDO partner.” An individual, business, university, governmental entity, or nonprofit organization contracting to perform part, or all, of another entity's contract.

#### Portable

Credentials independently verified or issued from an accredited institution thereby making them acceptable across a variety of settings (e.g. state, employers, and educational institutions) throughout the state or country.

#### Turnover

Turnover is defined as those activities that the PDO(s) must perform at the end of the grant period, to turnover service delivery to a successor applicant(s), or to Commonwealth resources.

#### Youth Pathway

Youth Pathway encompasses programs to recruit high school aged students into the field of Early Childhood Education. Youth Pathway programs must be approved by OCDEL prior to use of PDO-funding and currently include expansion of existing Career and Technical Centers’ Early Childhood Education Programs of Study, Dual Enrollment Programs, and Diversified Occupations Programs, approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

## Professional Development Organization Grants and Awards

PDO grant agreements will commence on the effective date. The current PDO grant agreement term is July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2027, with the option of three one-year renewals.

Contracts are awarded through a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) overseen by the Department of Human Services Bureau of Procurement and Contract Management. Current PDO service areas and grantees can be found at [Professional Development Organizations \(PDOs\) - The Pennsylvania Key](#).

## Project Plans

The overall objective of the PDOs is to support direct access across each identified service region for ECE professionals to participate in CDA Credential from the Council for Professional Recognition (Center-Based Infant /Toddler, Center-Based Preschool, Center-Based B-5, Family Child Care, and Home Visitor), Associate of Arts (“AA”), Associate of Science (“AS”), Associate of Applied Science (“AAS”), Bachelor of Arts (“BA”), and Bachelor of Science (“BS”) programs through a mixed delivery model. Priority enrollment should be provided for participants interested in CDA Credentials and Associate Degrees.

The PDO must develop the Project Plan to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of credit-bearing Professional Development at the regional, county, and local level and support non-traditional students that align with [Appendix B: PDO Announcement 22 #001](#).

Upon the Department’s request, PDOs will provide a revised Project Plan and Budget for any renewal. The revised Project Plan and Budget, if any, will become part of the PDO contractual agreement upon approval of the Department and Comptroller Operations.

PDOs will conduct a strategic planning process and/or needs assessment annually. The result will be the development of a detailed project plan outlining the sequencing of events and the time required to fully implement the plans for this project. PDOs must describe the relationship between project personnel and the specifics tasks, assignments, and deliverables including specifying the number of staff hours allocated to each task to meet the policies detailed throughout this document. The PDO should clearly state how the objectives of the project will be met and how each task will be performed.

The PDO must include a clear project timetable from beginning to end. The plan must be based on data provided by OCDEL and collected by the PDO regionally that includes specific targets for education attainment that align to Pennsylvania’s Early Childhood Education Career Pathway and the strategic planning process and/or needs assessment. The PDO Project Plan must be approved by OCDEL prior to implementation.

### The Project Plan should:

- Align with OCDEL’s Mission, Vision, and Priorities;
- Reflect the needs of families, children, child care providers and early education professionals;
- Detail utilization of data, research, and best practices that contain measurable results and outcomes;

- Focus on quality assurance, as well as compliance monitoring, for all services;
- Address the needs of unserved and underserved populations and offer local capacity building supports;
- Leverage and broaden partnerships at the local, regional, and statewide levels; and
- Allow for flexibility to adjust to the changing needs of OCDEL.

### Monitoring and Reporting

OCDEL will collect both qualitative (narrative reports) and quantitative (PD Registry reports) data to understand and track the following:

- The extent to which the PDO has developed transparent, clearly articulated career pathways
- The extent to which PDOs are meeting prioritization targets
- Increased participation of ECE professionals in credentialing
- Increased rates of ECE professionals in completing degrees

### Narrative Reporting (Point in Time Reports)

The Department will use Narrative Reports to ensure funding compliance and to identify effective strategies or policies. Narrative reporting templates (Point in Time report) will be provided to the PDO within 5 business days after the end date of each reporting period, except for the final report which will be pulled no later than August 5. The documents will be shared electronically and PDOs will update and submit completed narrative reporting to the PDO Grants Supervisor no later than the final business day of October, January, April, and August.

### Data Reporting

Each PDO will provide information on any contracts funded through program dollars. Data will include a breakdown of funding for direct tuition and supports, per fiscal year within the PD Registry. The information must be current and accurate within 30 days following the execution of any contract involving program funds with a partner. Partner and contract information must be updated in the PD Registry quarterly; no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of October, January and April, with a final update required prior to submission of a fiscal year's final expenditure report.

Each PDO will provide information on funded participants per fiscal year within the PD Registry. The information should be up-to-date and accurate within 30 days following participant enrollment. Participant information must be updated in the PD Registry within 15 days of any changes.

Paused students must receive on-going follow up at minimum once prior to each semester (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer), encouraging them to re-engage in coursework. Once the fiscal year ends, paused students should be designated as 'dropped'. Dropped students must receive on-going follow up at minimum once prior to each semester (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer), encouraging them to re-engage in coursework. Once the fiscal year ends, dropped students

should be removed from the system. Should these participants wish to re-engage, they would be subject to redetermination, and prioritization as if they were a newly enrolling student.

Ensuring data is accurate requires compliance with the PD Registry User Guide document, provided by the Department. Any incomplete, duplicative or inaccurate data will be considered erroneous until reconciled.

#### Fiscal Reporting

Fiscal reporting must be completed in compliance with [Appendix C](#): Payment Provisions. PDOs should invoice for expenditures in compliance with [Appendix C](#). Final expenditures for a fiscal year are due within 60 days after the end of the state fiscal year.

#### Calendar of Report Due Dates

|           |                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July      | -Initial fiscal year partner contracts and participants added to PD Registry within 30 days of contracting/enrollment.           |
| August    | -Final narrative report of previous FY due final business day of the month.<br>-Final invoice is due on or before August 30.     |
| September | -Final Expenditures are due for previous state fiscal year on or before September 30.                                            |
| October   | -Narrative report due by the final business day of the month.                                                                    |
| November  |                                                                                                                                  |
| December  |                                                                                                                                  |
| January   | -Narrative report due by the final business day of the month.<br>-Annual Program Review and Monitoring Process Window begins.    |
| February  |                                                                                                                                  |
| March     |                                                                                                                                  |
| April     | -Narrative report due by the final business day of the month.<br>-Annual Program Review and Monitoring Process Window concludes. |
| May       |                                                                                                                                  |
| June      |                                                                                                                                  |

#### Turnover

Turnover is defined as those activities that an outgoing grantee shall perform at the end of the grant term, to turnover service delivery to a successor grantee, or to Commonwealth resources. During the turnover period, the outgoing grantee shall work cooperatively with any successor grantee and the Department with the goal that program stakeholders do not experience any adverse impact from the transfer of services. Six months prior to the end of the grant term, or upon the Department's request, the outgoing grantee shall develop and submit a Turnover Plan, which specifies the proposed transition schedule, activities, and resource requirements for the necessary turnover tasks to be implemented.

#### The outgoing grantee shall:

1. Execute the approved Turnover Plan in cooperation with the incoming selected Applicant's

Transition Plan,

2. Maintain service delivery staffing levels during the turnover period unless otherwise expressly approved by the DHS Grant Administrator,
3. Work closely with the Department to ensure that the turnover of responsibilities and necessary knowledge transfer is completed by the end of the grant period, and
4. Respond in a reasonable time to all Department requests regarding turnover information.

#### State and Federal Regulatory Requirements

The PDOs must comply with the following federal regulations and restrictions as applicable:

- [CCDF regulations, 45 CFR § 98.56\(b\)\(1\), Restrictions on the use of funds](#)
- [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards, Part 75](#)
- [Contract Cost Principles and Procedures, 48 CFR Part 31, For-Profit Agencies](#)

#### Eligibility

PDOs must be Pennsylvania community-based nonprofit or for-profit organizations, Pennsylvania local education agencies, or Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs). If the applicant is not an IHE, it must submit a letter of commitment to the Project from one or more IHEs.

If an applicant offers child care as part of its services, 75 percent or more of those locations must be designated as a STAR 3 or higher in Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System, as of the submission date of the application. The 75 percent threshold must be maintained or exceeded for the duration of the grant agreement.

#### Conflict of Interest

PDOs operating a child care program must develop and implement an organization approved 'Conflict of Interest' policy. This policy must preclude employees (including child care staff) from receiving any advantage to access Professional Development offered by the PDO. PDOs must provide a notarized copy of the 'Conflict of Interest' policy to the Department for review and approval during the Readiness Review period.

At a minimum, the 'Conflict of Interest' policy shall include provisions for:

1. Documenting the implementation of the 'Conflict of Interest' policy.
2. Addressing any conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest if the PDO includes child care.
3. Policies and protocols for ensuring staff will not be shown favoritism in accessing PDO supports.

As part of the response, the Applicant must submit complete organizational information including an organization chart, listing all relationships with child care providers part of the legal entity.

The PDO must be free of any conflicts of interest throughout the grant period with the Department.

#### OCDEL Organizational Structure

PDO policy and practices will be developed by the PDO Steering Team which includes, but is not limited to, participation from the following or their designated proxy:

- Deputy Secretary of OCDEL
- Bureau Director of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development
- Bureau Director of Early Learning Resource Center Operations and Monitoring
- Division Chief of Early Learning Standards and Professional Development
- Division Chief of Early Learning Resource Center Policy
- Bureau of Finance, Administration, and Planning staff
- PDO Grants Supervisor
- External Stakeholder liaison
- Pennsylvania Key Executive Director
- Pennsylvania Key Director of Programs

The primary contact person for the PDOs will be the PDO Grants Supervisor. PDOs should direct communications to the PDO Grants Supervisor who will be responsible for serving as liaison between the PDOs and the PDO Steering Team. The PDO Grants Supervisor will be responsible for monitoring PDO grant and policy compliance.

#### PDO Organizational Structure

The PDO must submit the organizational structure/chart of the PDO, and a description of how the organizational structure will support the Project. The chart must include all personnel related to this project and reporting relationships to OCDEL.

The organizational chart must illustrate lines of authority, designate positions responsible and accountable for the completion of each component of the PDO, indicate the names and job title and number of personnel assigned to each role, and the number of hours per week each person is projected to work to support the PDO.

#### Personnel

The following key personnel are required for each PDO:

**ECE PDO Director/Manager.** This individual will be responsible and accountable for the oversight of the grant agreement. A PDO Director/Manager must be assigned to this Project and will serve as the primary contact for the management of the Grant Agreement.

**Partner Liaison(s).** This individual or these individuals will coordinate and monitor any subcontracts.

**Data Specialist(s).** This individual or these individuals will provide timely and accurate data reporting and conduct data analysis.

**Fiscal Specialist(s).** This individual or these individuals will provide timely and accurate fiscal reporting.

**Professional Development Coordinator(s).** This individual or these individuals will serve as a point of contact to ECE professionals and provide Career Advising. At a minimum, one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) PD coordinator should be provided per every 75 students- including enrolled (providing on-going support to assure continued enrollment and completion), paused or dropped (to receive on-going follow up), and completers (to support potential movement to the next degree). The intent of the 1:75 ratio is to ensure that students receive targeted and intentional, ongoing follow up and that PD Coordinators are not overburdened.

The responsibilities of the PD Coordinator include, but are not limited to:

- Assuring accurate use of the PD Registry to support student entry and ongoing participation in the Career Pathway.
- Assisting students in planning and attaining degrees and/or progression of coursework.
- Linking students to financial resources to support degree attainment and/or coursework.
- Coordinating with ELRC Quality Coaches to support an individual's professional goals or needs.
- Tracking participant commitments in the PD Registry and providing on-going support to enrolled students to assure continued enrollment and success; and
- Tracking participant commitments in the PD Registry and providing on-going follow-up to paused and dropped participants.

In addition to the above listed Key Personnel, the grantee must clearly define the personnel who will be responsible for determining participant eligibility.

Roles, responsibilities, and Full Time Equivalency (FTE) for each project-funded individual should be clearly defined for this Project.

#### [Personnel Diversions or Replacements](#)

Once the Key Personnel position of ECE PDO Director/Manager is approved by the Department, PDOs may not divert or replace the ECE PDO Director/Manager without prior approval of the Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor.

PDOs shall provide notice of a proposed diversion or replacement to the Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor at least 30 calendar days in advance and provide the name, qualifications, and background check (if required) of the person who will replace the diverted ECE PDO Director/Manager. The Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor will notify the PDO within 10 business days of the diversion notice whether the proposed diversion is acceptable and if the replacement was approved. For other key personnel, PDOs may divert or replace personnel as necessary to support the goals of the Project. PDOs shall notify the Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor of any changes to key personnel other than the ECE PDO Director/Manager within two business days after identifying the need to change personnel, and shall inform the Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor of the status of the replacement process, including name, qualifications, and clearances (if required) of the person who will replace the diverted personnel. Advance notification and approval does not include changes in Key Personnel due to resignations, death, disability, dismissal for cause or dismissal as a result of the termination of a subcontract or any other causes that are beyond the control of the PDO or its subcontractor. The PDO shall obtain approval of the replacement personnel from Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor.

The Department may request that a PDO remove a person from this Project at any time. For vacancies other than those caused by diversions and unless otherwise approved by the Department's ECE PDO Grants Supervisor, the selected Applicant will have ten business days to interim fill and 60 calendar days to permanently fill the vacancy with a person acceptable in terms of experience and skills, subject to the Department ECE PDO Grants Supervisor's approval.

#### Staff Clearances

The PDO, including all subcontractors, must obtain written clearances, at its own expense, from the Pennsylvania State Police (Pennsylvania Criminal History Record), ChildLine (Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Certification), the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") (Criminal History Record) and National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) for all mandated reporters and staff that have direct contact with children, whether in person or virtually, while performing services pursuant to this RFA. For any staff who, in the past five years has resided outside of Pennsylvania, criminal history, child abuse, and sex offender registry checks from every state where the applicant lived within the past five years are required.

The PDO, including any subcontractors, need not obtain written clearances for any other staff unless otherwise required by the Child Protective Services Law, 62 Pa.C.S. §§ 6301-87, or the Child Care and Development Block Grant and related regulation at 45 C.F.R. § 98.43.

The PDO must provide written confirmation that the background checks are completed before the Commonwealth will permit access to PDO staff. If, at any time, it is discovered that a selected PDO's employee has an impermissible criminal record, the PDO shall not assign that employee to any Commonwealth service program; shall remove any access privileges already

given to the employee and shall not permit the employee remote access unless the Department consents to the access, in writing. Persons with convictions of one of the prohibited crimes are not permitted access to program data and systems and salaries of such persons cannot be supported, either in part or in full, by the ECE PDO grant. Failure of the PDO to comply with the terms of this paragraph may result in default of the PDO under its Agreement.

**Resources:** [Clearances/ Background Checks \(pa.gov\)](#) and [Keep Kids Safe \(pa.gov\)](#)

#### Staff Training

- PDOs shall conduct initial and ongoing training of all ECE PDO staff regarding their job duties, responsibilities and coordination of work. The ECE PDOs shall: Train all new staff within 60 calendar days of their start date on all aspects of their job assignments
- Provide ongoing staff training within 30 days of any updates or changes to any aspect of job assignments
- Cross-train staff so core operational functions can be performed in any circumstances involving staff vacancies and absences
- Develop and maintain a training plan. The PDO may designate up to two days annually as training days for all PDO staff. The PDO shall publicly announce the training days at least two weeks prior to the event if the PDO plans to close operations for the training days
- Attend required training, as directed by OCDEL.

#### Resource Requirements

PDOs will supply meeting rooms and office space for personnel, including equipment, computers and monitors, network and internet connectivity, supplies, clerical assistance, and administrative support needed to perform the responsibilities of the PDO. The PDO is required to have high-speed internet capabilities to deliver services in all counties and support electronic communications via email and web presence in the ECE PDO Service Region. If the PDO foresees any internet accessibility issue in the Service Region or counties within the Service Region, the PDO should provide a detailed explanation to the PDO Grants Supervisor. The PDO shall be able to accept and send both fax and email and maintain a toll-free telephone number, at minimum.

The PDOs will satisfy the following accessibility requirements before providing services:

1. Establish and publicize an operational schedule that allows those in the ECE workforce an opportunity to access the ECE PDO supports outside of traditional office hours.
2. Maintain a toll-free telephone number for communication by phone by individuals in the ECE workforce who live within the Service Region served by the ECE PDO.

3. Use consistent branding as determined by the Department to allow public recognition of the ECE PDO within the Service Region.
4. Respond to voice, fax, and email messages within two business days.
5. Develop a plan to coordinate and facilitate the delivery of credit-bearing PD at the regional, county and, where sufficient demand exists, local level, at times that support non-traditional students from the ECE workforce.

### Communication

All PDO related communications and branding must be consistent with the Department's use of logo and style guides. PDOs will notify the PDO Grants Supervisor of public facing events which involve the media no less than 60 days prior to the event occurring, to partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and/or Pennsylvania Key's Communication Team.

The PDOs will provide comprehensive information on all agency services; provide a timely response to all inquiries within two (2) business days; and resolve complaints within two (2) business days in a professional manner. PDO staff will respond to voice, fax, and e-mail messages within two (2) business days. This includes responding to OCDEL staff, PDO partners, and the ECE workforce.

Partner calls and Director calls will occur on a regular schedule as determined by the Department.

- Subcontractor/Partner calls are scheduled weekly, while Director calls are monthly
- At least one member of the leadership team is expected to participate in each call.

The primary contact person for the PDOs will be the PDO Grants Supervisor. PDOs should direct all PDO related communications to the PDO Grants Supervisor who will be responsible for serving as liaison between the PDOs, the PDO Steering Team, and others, such as the PD Registry team. The PDO Grants Supervisor will be responsible for monitoring PDO grant and policy compliance.

### Communicating and Acknowledging OCDEL

OCDEL requires ECE PDOs to acknowledge OCDEL when presenting information about the PDO, describing projects or programs funded by OCDEL.

Publicly acknowledging OCDEL helps families, ECE professionals, and community partners better understand OCDEL's mission to coordinate and facilitate access to credit-bearing coursework and credentials for the ECE workforce.

### Communications Requirements

Please include both the acknowledgement statement and the OCDEL logo on all PDO communication(s). This might include but is not limited to:

- Press releases and other public statements
- Publications and other documents
- Toolkits/Resource guides
- Websites
- Visual Presentations
- Printed Materials
- Newsletters
- Requests for proposals
- Bid solicitations

If you are unsure if you need to include the acknowledgement statement and OCDEL's logo, [email the Pennsylvania Key's Communication Team](#).

#### Acknowledgement Statement

The acknowledgement statement below must be included when recognizing OCDEL. It is recommended in a 10-12 pt. font and must be no smaller than 8 pt. font. The size and font must be legible.

This [project/publication/program/website, etc.] [is/was] supported by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) and Pennsylvania's Department of Education (PDE). For more information, visit [dhs.pa.gov](http://dhs.pa.gov) and [education.pa.gov](http://education.pa.gov).

#### Logo Usage

OCDEL provides the logo below for use by PDOs. When PDOs display logos, contributors or sponsors, OCDEL's logo must also be displayed. Do not alter the shape, proportion, color, or orientation of the logo. The logo must be large enough to legibly read "Office of Child Development and Early Learning" and can be no less than 3/8" tall in print or 36 pixels tall digitally. To request a print-ready logo, [email the Pennsylvania Key's Communication Team](#).



**Pennsylvania**  
**Office of Child Development**  
**and Early Learning**

**NOTE:** Use of this logo and funding acknowledgment statement are reserved explicitly for designated ECE PDOs.

### Communicating with ECE Workforce

PDOs are to conduct outreach to the ECE workforce and support targeted enrollment in credit-bearing course offerings in partnership with the ELRC's, specifically:

1. Recruit eligible and prioritized participants.
2. Support program attainment of Keystone STARS Performance Standards, particularly the Staff Qualifications Indicators requirements (i.e. assuring work of ECE PDOs supports STARS movement by implementing plans to prioritize STAR 1 and 2 programs).
3. Support credentialed and degree staff in programs serving the highest levels of CCW funded children.
4. Implement career advising strategies including on-going assistance: to assure enrollment in the most effective credential or degree to advance participant Career Pathways; and to assure completion of credential or degree.

PD Coordinators provide career advising. This includes ongoing support for enrolled participants to ensure their continued enrollment and completion, follow-up for paused or dropped participants, and assistance for completers to help them pursue the next degree.

### Contributions to OCDEL Distributed Newsletters

PDOs will have the opportunity to contribute to the [Early Ed News](#) and other communications generated for the ECE field. All written contributions should be submitted directly to PDO Grants Supervisor.

### Regional Approach/ Systems Building

PDOs shall implement a regional partnership strategy to address systems building for identified regions to support a focus on degree attainment for the ECE workforce. Within this regional approach, PDOs shall implement an advisory committee, a stakeholder group, and intentional and operationalized coordination with regional ELRCs. PDOs must engage and play a leadership role in regional and local communities and build on the enhanced visibility of the ECE PDO as a hub supporting the Early Childhood Educator Career and Educational Pathway by a diverse group of community stakeholders including ECE providers, ELRCs, school districts, higher education, Head Start/Early Head Start, Early Intervention, business representatives, local government agencies, and philanthropic funders.

### PDO Advisory Team

The formation and implementation of a PDO advisory team is required. This team should consist of local and regional stakeholders positioned to advise and potentially make decisions to guide the work of the PDOs either solely or in the context of broader local and regional workforce development efforts. OCDEL representation is encouraged but not required, however, the PDO Grants Supervisor should be informed of advisory team members, meeting dates, and have access to agendas and minutes.

### Stakeholder Engagement

To build and strengthen shared leadership throughout the Service Region, PDOs must engage a wide range of stakeholders, including those with limited English proficiency (“LEP”) and those with limited geographic access, in the planning and delivery of credit-bearing PD.

The PDO will convene a minimum of two (2) stakeholder meetings for the purpose of planning and coordination annually. Required participants are representatives from OCDEL, partnering postsecondary agencies, the PDO Director/Manager, ELRC staff, ECE professionals, and other stakeholders supporting the Project Plan.

The PDO will make the meeting agenda and invitees available for OCDEL’s review one week before the event.

PDOs must coordinate with and support the ELRCs in improving the quality of ECE programs. Coordination will include involvement of relevant ELRCs in the development of prioritization and recruitment plans. PDOs are tasked with establishing a working relationship with ELRCs which includes, but is not limited to:

- sharing PDO offerings and eligibility criteria.
- understanding workforce needs to advance Keystone STARS move-up goals; and
- developing an agreed upon process to receive referrals from the ELRC.

Efforts to coordinate with ELRCs should be documented through meeting agenda/minutes and narrative reporting.

A [data request form](#) must be submitted to OCDEL prior to any sharing of data between a PDO and an ELRC.

ELRC information can be obtained on the [Commonwealth’s website](#).

### Coordination between PDOs

The PDOs represent a systems approach at state, regional and local levels. Through a collaborative approach PDOs can align with each other and share innovative approaches, supports and resources. A goal of the PDOs is to share and build upon innovative approaches that represent statewide goals for the ECE workforce, align systems, and use state funds in a coordinated way. Financial coordination or sharing of services, including funding statewide cohorts and supplementing services should be negotiated before recruitment and must align with the needs assessment and Project Plan of the PDOs.

### Fiscal Considerations

The PDOs will develop and implement a funding strategy specifying layering and leveraging federal, state, and local resources to support the enrollment of the ECE workforce. The strategy must address an approach towards enrollment and funding with priority given to ECE professionals serving high numbers of children accessing Child Care Works (CCW) funding. **The**

**PDO will utilize all set aside/program funding annually to support ECE workforce enrollment in credit-bearing coursework. [Visit the Professional Competencies page of the Pennsylvania Key website.](#)**

#### Payment Provisions

Payment provisions for each PDO grantee are outlined in [Appendix C: Payment Provisions](#).

#### Budget Projections

A budget for each fiscal year must be submitted to OCDEL for approval. Any changes in an approved budget must comply with PDO contract language found in [Appendix C: Payment Provisions](#). Any submitted budgets, budget revisions, and/or invoices must be submitted on the templates provided by OCDEL (without edits).

#### Set Aside/ Program Funding

Set Aside/Program funding will be 80 percent of the total funding amount allocated to the PDO.

Funds associated with direct tuition payment for individuals or groups supports to address degree access, and the development and dissemination of credit-bearing coursework must meet the needs and preferences of the ECE workforce within the region. PDOs must:

- Negotiate all tuition and credit costs at the lowest possible rate;
- Establish procedures to allow IHEs to invoice and receive payment for individuals or groups in a regular and timely fashion; and
- Implement a monitoring process so contracted deliverables, such as newly developed course modules or classes, are completed and offered in accordance with agreed-upon terms.

PDOs must report separately on 1) set aside funding explicitly used to cover costs associated with direct tuition payment, 2) set aside funding used to provide supports to enrolled students to address barriers to degree access, and 3) set aside funding used to develop credit-bearing coursework and articulated systems, aligned with the [Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#). **The total set aside costs for supports and development of articulated systems must not exceed 50% of the total amount of program dollars budgeted per region. This number will be monitored during Program Reviews to ensure the maximum amount of funding is being used to directly support students.**

#### Coordinating Funding Streams

PDOs will coordinate with other tuition assistance programs and PD opportunities funded with Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) dollars. The goal is funding “one student per funding stream- entry to educational goal completion”. While PDOs may fund BA and BS degree attainment (with or without Pk-4 certification), PDOs should prioritize funding for students with educational goals which would place them at Career Pathway level A or B. Students who seek an educational goal placing them at Career Pathway levels higher than B who do not also meet

the PDO prioritization, should be referred to other funding sources, such as [TEACH](#). PDOs must attend OCDEL led funding partners meetings. Additional requirements include coordinating with Rising STARS Tuition Assistance Program (RSTA) to pay for vouchers related to credential CDA processing. Information on funding and eligibility requirements for funding partners is available on the [Financial Assistance page of the Pennsylvania Key website](#).

Activities toward this task will be outlined in the narrative report.

PDOs also shall identify opportunities for coordination of federal, state, and local funding beyond CCDF dollars to support access to education by the ECE workforce.

### [Subcontractors/ Partners](#)

PDOs shall subcontract/partner with and monitor IHEs, community colleges, Professional Learning Organizations (i.e., community-based providers of PD), and other contractors to implement a mixed delivery approach to community and institutional based courses, including student cohort-based formats, resulting in the attainment of ECE degrees. All subcontractor/partner contracts must have a limit of 10% for administrative costs.

PDOs shall have subcontracts/partnerships which include, but are not limited to, the following OCDEL priorities:

1. Offering tuition and other supports for credentials (CDA) and degree (AA/AS/AAS; BA/BS) at the lowest negotiated cost;
2. Offering supports that are proven to increase access to relevant credentials and degrees that increase the number of ECE professionals placed in Levels A and B on the Career Pathway and completion of prioritized educational goals.
3. Offering supports specifically for CDA completion efforts (completion equals CDA “in hand”).
4. Systems building efforts to align coursework with [PA PSCECE](#), including Standard 7 Health and Safety, and to offer relevant learning opportunities for the child care workforce; and
5. Systems building efforts to offer “credit for prior learning” models.

PDOs’ subcontractors/partners will use data and input from the ECE workforce to guide their funding requests and support efforts. Additionally, PDOs shall only approve subcontractor partner funding requests that align with their current needs assessment and the OCDEL Approved Project Plan.

PDOs shall monitor contracted partners to manage progress and shall have a clear management and monitoring approach that describes how the ECE PDOs oversee Institutions of Higher Education and Community Partnerships.

### [Partnering with Institutions of Higher Education \(IHE\)](#)

PDOs shall only partner with IHEs that hold regional accreditation. PDOs shall ensure that all funded pathways align with Pennsylvania’s ECE Career Pathway, and that

funded credentials that lead to an AA or BA degree adhere to the [ECE Professional Standards](#). See [Appendix B](#) on policy related to regional accreditation and the Career Pathway.

The PDOs will communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with regionally accredited IHEs to achieve goals of articulation and transformation agreements, increase support for the attainment of ECE credentials, increase the number of IHE programs offering ECE coursework and teacher certification, and increase opportunities for student teaching at high-quality early learning programs. Partnering with IHEs should result in access to credit-bearing, stackable, portable coursework, and credentials for the ECE workforce, and the development and delivery of community and institutional based coursework, including student cohort-based formats, resulting in the attainment of an ECE degree.

PDOs must subcontract with at least one IHE, but partnerships with multiple IHEs, including community colleges, are encouraged.

There must be a signed Letter of Commitment, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and /or a formal contract in place between the PDO and partnering IHEs. This formal documentation of the partnership must describe the IHE's involvement with the PDO including any human resources, space, other resources, and funding the IHE will contribute. Formal documentation must be signed by an official of the IHE with capacity and authority to allocate resources to the Project. This formal documentation must be made available to the PDO Grants Supervisor upon request.

The PDOs will review funding priorities to promote credit-bearing offerings and explore alternative higher education opportunities, such as distance or online education and on-the-job learning through apprenticeship models, portfolios, or competency-based education.

#### [Program to Program Articulation](#)

A goal of partnering with multiple IHEs is to increase articulation between credentials and degree programs (CDA, AA, BA). PDOs shall only partner with IHE partners that support articulation agreements with other regional or statewide partners.

Program to program articulation agreements are established, agreed upon and advocated for by IHE partners, including Community Colleges and degree granting partners. PDOs support the development of articulation agreements between CDA, AA and BA programs through successful methods and reduce barriers to stackable degrees. PDOs will report out on techniques used to advance articulation in narrative reports. CDA transformation agreements may be regionally based; PDOs should monitor for compliance and advocate for formalizing policy so agreements do not lapse.

#### [Coursework Alignment to Competencies](#)

Partnering with IHEs should positively impact the quality and alignment of offered coursework to assure relevance to the field. PDOs will encourage partnering IHEs to participate in coursework alignment activities as prescribed by the Department through their formal

partnership agreements. Funded coursework must align with the PA PSCECE, including Standard 7 Health and Safety.

#### Credit for Prior Learning

Partnering IHEs who offer Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) to enrolled PDO participants should receive funding priority. Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) in early childhood education (ECE) is a system that allows individuals to receive college credit for the knowledge and skills they have gained outside of a traditional classroom setting. This can include extensive work experience in child care centers, professional development training, certifications, military service, volunteer work, or even independent study. Instead of requiring ECE professionals to retake courses covering material they've already mastered through practical experience, CPL offers various assessment methods such as portfolio reviews, departmental exams, or evaluation of industry credentials, to formally recognize their existing competencies.

The benefits of CPL in ECE are significant for both individuals and the field. For professionals, it saves considerable time and money by reducing the number of required courses, thereby accelerating their path to a degree or credential. This validation of their existing expertise boosts confidence and empowers individuals to pursue further education. For the ECE sector, CPL helps to build a more highly qualified workforce by providing a streamlined pathway for experienced professionals to earn formal qualifications.

#### Partnering with Professional Learning Organizations (PLOs)

The PDOs will communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with PLOs to achieve goals of content alignment, and increase support for the attainment of ECE credentials. Since PLOs do not often offer credit-bearing coursework, PDOs subcontracting with a PLO must enter any PDO-funded offerings into the PD Registry. PLO funded coursework/training must also articulate into at least one credit at a minimum, one accredited IHE.

#### Request For Application (RFA) process

Each PDO will use their agency's procurement procedures to design an RFA process in collaboration with OCDEL that would occur within Quarter 3 of the fiscal year during a continuation year, and as soon as feasible during rebid years. OCDEL will provide PDOs with specific priorities which must be included in the RFA decision-making materials. PDOs will develop RFA materials and submit to OCDEL for review and approval, along with the RFA process timeline. OCDEL's 15-business day review should be included within the timeline. PDOs should consider building in additional time necessary for any edits. RFA materials must include specific differentiation between tuition and supports funding to fully understand what proposed funding will be used for.

OCDEL/PA KEY staff must be included in the application review process and will contribute to partner funding decisions.

### Partner Eligibility

- All funded IHE partners must be regionally accredited, and their funded pathways must align with PA's ECE Career Pathway. See [Appendix B](#) on policy related to regional accreditation and the Career Pathway.
- Funded credentials that lead to AA or BA must be aligned to the National ECE Professional Standards.
- IHEs must support articulation agreements with other regional or statewide partners.
- Community-based (non-IHE) partners must place any funded course/training offerings into the PD Registry.
- Community-based CDA offerings must explicitly articulate into college credits.

PDOs must have a clear management/monitoring approach for PDO oversight of IHE/Community Partnerships. Partners should use data and ECE workforce input to drive their funding requests and supports. Further eligibility for funding is determined by alignment to the current needs assessment and OCDEL Approved Project Plan.

PDOs shall ensure that the funds associated with direct tuition payment for individuals or groups, and development/dissemination of credit-bearing coursework meets the needs and access preferences of the ECE workforce within the region.

PDOs shall:

- Negotiate all tuition and credit costs at the lowest possible rate through the subcontractor application process.
- Establish procedures through the subcontractor application process to allow IHEs to invoice and receive payment for individuals or groups in a regular and timely fashion; and
- Implement a monitoring process so that subcontracted deliverables, such as newly developed course modules or classes, are completed and offered in accordance with agreed-upon terms.

Prioritization Plans and targets should be communicated, evaluated, and discussed with all funded subcontractors/partners.

### Mixed Delivery Models

PDOs are encouraged to implement different types of modalities for delivery of course content to meet the diverse needs of the field and to potentially account for on-the-job experiences. Examples in a mixed delivery model might include, but are not limited to, face-to-face classes, online learning, cohorts, competency-based credits through portfolios or on the job assessments. Priorities should be aligned to the needs of the local workforce.

### Contracts

Each PDO is responsible for generating documentation with awarded subcontractors within their region(s). PDOs must provide executed contracts for all subcontractors (partners) who will

be assigned to the project. PDOs are prohibited from subcontracting or outsourcing any part of this Project without the express written approval of the Commonwealth. Subcontractors will be awarded based upon ability to support students in completing courses successfully. Data-informed decision making will influence grant availability based upon an IHE's ability to offer stackable and portable credentials, at a negotiated cost to the PDO. Contracts, at minimum, will include regionalized negotiated tuition costs, overall funding, funding allocated to student supports, funding allocated to system building supports, statement of work, budgets, roles and responsibilities of subcontractors, consequences if responsibilities are not met and language allowing for termination and/or transition of the grant agreement to another PDO.

#### Partner Monitoring

PDOs will monitor contracted partners to assure compliance with program policy and manage progress. PDOs must describe a management approach that includes how partners may express concerns through a clear chain of command, as well as how it will implement its project plan. Where applicable, PDOs should provide specific examples of methodologies or approaches, including monitoring approaches. PDOs must describe the management and monitoring controls it will use to achieve the required quality of contracted services and all performance requirements for itself, the IHEs, and other contracted agencies included in the scope of the Project.

#### Outreach and Participant Enrollment

PDOs shall conduct outreach to the ECE workforce and support targeted enrollment in credit-bearing course offerings in partnership with the ELRCs, specifically:

1. Recruit eligible and prioritized participants.
2. Support program attainment of Keystone STARS Performance Standards, particularly the Staff Qualifications Indicators requirements (i.e. assuring work of ECE PDOs supports STARS movement by implementing plans to prioritize STAR 1 and 2 programs).
3. Support credentialed and degree staff in programs serving the highest levels of CCW funded children and
4. Implement career advising strategies including on-going assistance: to assure enrollment in the most effective credential or degree to advance participant Career Pathways; and to assure completion of credential or degree.

PD Coordinators provide career advising. This includes ongoing support for enrolled participants to ensure their continued enrollment and completion, follow-up for paused or dropped participants, and assistance for completers to help them pursue the next degree if desired.

#### Prioritization Plans for Recruitment

PDOs must develop and implement a plan to prioritize recruitment based on set aside funding priorities and available funding. PDOs must reference the current policy announcement for prioritization plan guidelines (PDO-25-01) and review any changes issued by the Department.

## Participant Eligibility

To receive PDO funding, at initial eligibility determination, participants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a Pennsylvania resident
- Be a current employee at a **PA DHS certified child care program** or a **state-funded PA PKC program** for 3 months or more or demonstrate employment history of 6 months in PA DHS certified child care or a state-funded PA PKC program, if newly hired.
  - Participants actively enrolled in PDO activities will not be impacted by change of employer if the new employer is a certified child care program or a state-funded PA PKC program.
  - Child Care employment may be verified through the participant's PD Registry account with a status of "verified by program".
- Work a minimum average of 25 hours per week directly in a **PA DHS certified child care program** or a **state-funded PA PKC program** or a combination of both.
- For child care directors/assistant directors make no more than \$30.00 per hour; for child care teachers, assistant teachers and aides make no more than \$25.00 per hour
- Have a GPA and course grades that meet transfer requirements; a watch plan will be developed for participants not meeting transfer requirements
- Sign a [Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Commitment Form](#) (Appendix D)

PDOs must review enrolled participant eligibility annually. During this annual review, participants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a Pennsylvania resident
- Be a current employee at a PA DHS **certified child care** program or a state-funded PA PKC program.
  - If there has been a change in employment this should be verified through the participant's PD Registry account with a status of "verified by program".
- Work an average of a minimum of 25 hours per week directly in a PA DHS **certified child care** program or a **state-funded PA PKC program** or a combination of both.
- Verify that income does not exceed 85% of State Median Income (SMI)
- Review student's Career Pathway to assure verification has occurred.
- Sign a [Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Commitment Form](#) (Appendix D)

Eligibility must be redetermined for a student who has paused for more than six months or a student who has dropped. Funding should never be held for a dropped student or for a paused student who has been paused for more than six months.

Individuals not meeting the above eligibility criteria who are interested in participating in PDO funded activities can participate, however, funding for these individuals to participate will need to come from another funding source. It is encouraged that although not receiving direct PDO

financial support, individuals from non- DHS certified child care programs be offered PDO sponsored options at reduced fees.

Applicants for PDO funding working for “temp agencies” must meet all eligibility criteria including verification of hours and work history specifically in a PA DHS certified child care program to be eligible for PDO funding.

#### Youth Pathway Programming

##### Eligibility:

- Students enrolled in high school who are enrolled in or wish to enroll in one of the following:
  - Career and Technical Early Childhood Education Programs of Study,
  - Dual Enrollment Programs, or
  - PDE-approved Diversified Occupations Programs.
- Must sign (or have guardian sign) an Early Childhood Education Professional Development Commitment Form
- PDO-funded students must also meet any requirements of the specific program of study they are enrolled in
  - E.g. 15 hours work requirement for the Diversified Occupations Program

#### Youth Pathway Student ability to work in a child care setting

Child care regulations (55 Pa. Code §§ 3270.31 **AND** 3270.37) define when a high school student (16 or over, but under 18) can be **hired** as an Aide and counted in ratio:

1. **8th grade education** and enrollment in the § 3270.31(c) training curriculum, with documentation of **completed classroom training** and **continued enrollment** kept in the facility file.

**NOTE: 8th grade education and 2 years of experience working with children is NOT APPLICABLE BECAUSE A STAFF PERSON HAS TO BE 18 years old UNLESS they meet #1 above.**

In any case where the high school student can meet this requirement: **8th grade education** and enrollment in the § 3270.31(c) training curriculum, with documentation of **completed classroom training** and **continued enrollment** kept in the facility file, the programs should be **HIRING** the student as an AIDE. The student can, therefore, be compensated, meet the requirements for the PDE Diversified Occupations Program and be counted in ratio.

If a high school student does not yet meet these aide requirements, they CAN be a “paid volunteer” to meet the requirements for the PDE Diversified Occupations Program. Volunteers MAY NOT be counted in ratio. As soon as a “paid volunteer” meets aide qualifications, they should be transitioned into the role of aide.

Neither aides nor volunteers are allowed to be left alone with children.

#### Transitioning to traditional PDO-funded

Once a high school student graduates, they must meet all PDO eligibility requirements to continue being funded through the PDO. The work requirements are the most relevant barrier to continuing funding. At no time should a “transition period” be applied for a former youth pathway student who does not yet meet all PDO eligibility requirements.

#### Tracking and responding to barriers to participation

PDOs should review available data or collect information to understand the demographics of the population of the ECE workforce in the service region. PDOs must recruit, provide outreach and engage underserved and hard to reach populations in the service region based on this information.

PDOs must implement an approach to reduce barriers to credit-bearing PD opportunities. PDOs will identify the unique characteristics of the ECE workforce populations in their service region and collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop strategies to support PD needs for the workforce in their specific area. PDOs are also expected to provide supports to ECE professionals with Limited English Proficiency in culturally responsive ways.

PDOs must have processes for reviewing attendance and completion of programs. PDOs must reliably track retention rates by program and credential level in the PD Registry. Paused or dropped participants receive follow up, which encourages individuals to re-engage and to collect information on their experiences to better support positive outcomes for retention.

#### Data-Informed Decision-Making

##### Professional Development (PD) Registry

The PD Registry will serve as the main data-repository for tracking PDO related efforts. PDOs will use the PD Registry in the following ways:

1. Partner contracts are developed, tracked, and shared with OCDEL. Partner contract information is entered into the PD Registry, including a detailed breakdown of program funding (tuition and supports).
2. Tracking of participant enrollment information; and
3. Tracking of participant outreach.

The PDO will use the PD Registry as prescribed by the Department. The PD Registry User Manual for PDO related data collection and maintenance can be accessed within the PDO portal and is considered program policy.

Each PDO participant must have a completed profile that includes uploading all sources of evidence to the Career Pathway tab.

PDO staff (in most cases the PD Coordinator) will complete the following tasks:

- Support the PDO participant in completing the Career Pathway profile.

- Review current PD Registry Career Pathway verified placement.
- Support participants in understanding their options for advancing their Career Pathway.
- Discuss funding options.
- If eligible for PDO funds, monitor the participant's commitment period.
- Complete follow up for all enrolled, paused, and dropped participants (per fiscal year).

#### Information Handling

PDOs will abide by the Commonwealth's specific regulations and requirements concerning confidentiality of information and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA").

The PDOs shall protect the confidentiality of all Commonwealth information.

The PDOs shall implement and maintain adequate measures to prohibit unauthorized access, copying, and distribution of information during work on this Project.

The PDOs will develop a disclosure statement for enrolled students for information sharing across systems such as the PD Registry and other ECE systems.

The PDOs will properly dispose of both hard and electronic working copies of information during the term of the grant agreement, as well as any information remaining upon expiration or termination of the grant agreement. See [Appendix E: Business Associate Addendum/ Rider 6 of Contract](#).

The PDOs may need to transfer sensitive information to other agencies, vendors, or to the Commonwealth pursuant to the requirements of the agreement.

The PDOs will comply with Commonwealth procedures for information handling and sharing.

The PDOs will retain all records for (7) seven years after becoming fully inactive or until the disposition of court hearings, audits, and appeals.

The PDOs will follow record retention procedures for all applicable federal, state, and local government agencies.

#### Data Requests

[Appendix E: Business Associate Addendum/ Rider 6 of Contract](#), signed by PDOs governs the sharing of data. Rider 6 is sufficient to provide contracted entities with data needed if the data requested aligns with the Grant Agreement. PDOs must complete and submit a [data request form](#) and include how the requested data will be used to request data from OCDEL. If the data

is strictly to be used for internal purposes, such as developing project plans or strategizing for field work, then the data does not need to go through data governance. If data is to be used to create public facing products or manipulate raw data for public consumption, then Department Data Governance would need to review and apply suppression (aggregate data) if necessary.

If the PDO subcontracts or awards sub-grants with another entity and the duties of the subgrantee or subcontractor require access to or use of OCDEL data, the Department requires the contract between the PDO and subcontractor/subgrantee have the exact same provisions regarding confidential information found in Rider 6. Copies of subcontracts must be provided to OCDEL before any exchange of OCDEL data could occur to external entities.

### Policy Exceptions

Exceptions to PDO policy may be granted by OCDEL upon written request.

Exceptions to PDO policy will be limited to situations when the policy impedes goals of the program. Written requests for policy exceptions should include reference to the specific policy being addressed, justification for the exception with specific details related to the goals of the program, the time frame for which the exception would apply and a plan which details how the policy will be met within the provided time frame.

Requests should be discussed with the PDO Grant Manager before submission to exhaust any potential supports to assist the provider in meeting the policy before a written request for exception is submitted for review.

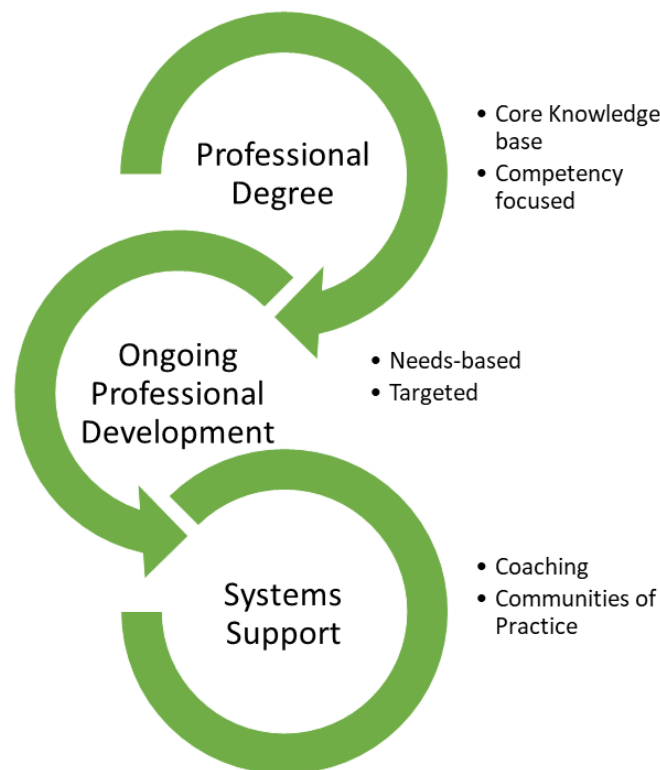
Written requests should be submitted to OCDEL for review. OCDEL will have 30 days from receipt of the written request to review. The review could result in one of the following:

- 1) a request for follow up information,
- 2) denial of the request, or
- 3) approval of the request.

In cases where more information is requested, the provider must respond within ten (10) business days of the request for follow-up information. If follow-up information is not received within this timeframe, the exception will automatically be considered denied. When follow-up information is received within the designated timeframe, OCDEL will have an additional ten (10) business days to approve or deny the request.

Providers are expected to meet program policy until requests for policy exception are processed.

## Appendix A: Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Workforce Preparation and Professionalization Model



Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is committed to supporting Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce as a key partner in professionalizing the ECE field while raising the stature, compensation, and competencies of all ECE professionals. OCDEL recognizes the challenges an under-resourced and under-compensated ECE professional faces when pursuing traditional higher education opportunities. OCDEL also acknowledges the financial obstacles ECE programs face in supporting robust professional development (PD) and offering fair compensation to retain qualified staff. To address these systemic challenges, OCDEL undertakes three specific strategies to ensure all ECE professionals can produce positive outcomes for all children.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM)/National Research Council (NRC) explored the implications of the science of child development for the professionals working with children from birth through age eight in the report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*.<sup>1</sup> The committee highlighted what ECE professionals need to know and need to be able to do, and the professional learning supports required. With that lens, OCDEL has identified opportunities within the current system to systemically improve the quality of education children experience and the current

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<sup>1</sup> *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* a report by the National Academies of Sciences Engineering Medicines, April 1, 2015.

working conditions for ECE professionals. As an example, ECE providers routinely share their frustration about the lack of access to high level PD content, the challenges of meeting both the organization PD needs, and the individual PD needs of their ECE professionals and barriers to compensating their staff for their knowledge attainment. The revisioning of Keystone STARS offered an opportunity to look at PD for the ECE workforce through a different lens and fostered the procurement of the Professional Development Organizations (PDOs).

Building a professionalized workforce requires investment in degree attainment through credit-bearing course work. PD is needed to continue one's expertise in that profession and support structural quality of that profession. The following strategies have been developed with that philosophy in mind.

### **Strategy 1: Focus on Career Pathway advancement through ECE degree attainment and credit-bearing coursework**

Organization: Professional Development Organizations (PDOs)

PDOs develop partnerships with Pennsylvania-based institutions of higher education (IHE) and community-based partners to provide credit-bearing professional preparation for ECE professionals working to provide high-quality early learning services to children and families. Credit-bearing coursework must align with Pennsylvania's Early Childhood Education Career Pathway. The pathway is best realized through a sequence of stackable, portable credentials that reflect developmentally and culturally appropriate content supporting ECE professionals in teaching practice, need to advance their individual career, and education attainment. PDOs address the broad needs of their regions while supporting the individual needs of professionals through partnerships that demonstrate a strong relationship between IHE and community-based organizations.

Anticipated Outcome: Streamlined and highly accessible ECE degree systems producing enough degreed and experienced staff verified at Career Pathway level B or above.

### **Strategy 2: Focus on Professional Development to Support Structural Quality**

Organization: Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) in collaboration with the PDOs.

Description: ELRCs support ECE providers to build and maintain structural quality in ECE programs. ELRC Quality Coaches provide performance-based coaching to ECE programs prioritizing STAR 1 and STAR 2 programs. Quality Coaches help programs identify Career Pathway and on-going professional development needs (like regulatory referral from Certification) and encouraging degree attainment, and coordinate with PDOs to impact individual advancement along the Career Pathway and with on-going professional development needs.

Organization: The Pennsylvania Key

Description: The Pennsylvania Key, through the Pennsylvania Professional Development Registry (PD Registry) will provide access to on-going professional development opportunities. Through the PQAS system for trainers and the Director Credential process, the ECE system of PD can address the needs of ECE professionals by strengthening and maintaining their professional knowledge base. Online courses developed in-state and nationally will continue to be offered through the PD Registry. Non-funded PD, offered by consultants and other organizations, will continue to be available across the Commonwealth. OCDEL will invest in foundational courses like the 10-hour Health and Safety courses, the STARS 101 and

102 courses and other initiatives addressing OCDEL priorities like supporting Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) compliance, supporting English Language Learners, and cultural competency.

Organization: Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Care Certification in collaboration with the PDOs and the PA Key.

Description: DHS Child Care Certification supports ECE providers in maintaining child care certification and assure safe and healthy learning environments as the foundations of a quality child care system. DHS Certification Representatives assure minimum staffing qualifications and training requirements are met and help to identify qualification and required training needs, including Pediatric First Aid and CPR training. To address these training needs specifically; DHS Certification Reps coordinate program referrals for required training with the PA Key.

Organization: Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA)

Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) provides state, regional and local professional development based on the analysis of statewide data, including program monitoring results, state and federal requirements, relevant research, and planning with state department staff. Examples include positive behavior support, coaching, inclusion, autism and leadership. The primary recipients of EITA training and technical assistance are the local Infant/Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention agencies that provide support and services to children birth to school age with developmental disabilities and their families. EITA also includes Family Support Consultants who provide training and technical assistance to the OCDEL funded family support and home visiting programs. EITA maintains an on-line learning portal with credit bearing courses and multiple shorter job aids [www.eita-pa.org](http://www.eita-pa.org). EITA is part of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and is fiscally administered through Intermediate Unit 11.

Anticipated Outcome: Impact on program quality and ELRCs meet regional STAR level movement targets to produce increased access to high-quality ECE programming for all children due to an increase in the availability of qualified staff dedicated to degree attainment and continued professional growth after degree attainment.

### **Strategy 3: Building Comprehensive Systems and Scaling Best Practices and Innovation**

Organization: Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)

Description: OCDEL's role is to design and support an ECE system that works for children, families, and the ECE workforce. OCDEL will identify local, regional, and national best practices and innovations to ensure all partners and grantees have resources available to support ECE professionals in attaining and maintaining high-quality ECE programming. When a best practice or innovation is identified, OCDEL works with the Pennsylvania Key, the PDOs, and the ELRCs to ensure all appropriate staff are offered professionally recognized degrees, PD opportunities and support in implementation, like communities of practice (CoP).

Organization: The Pennsylvania Key

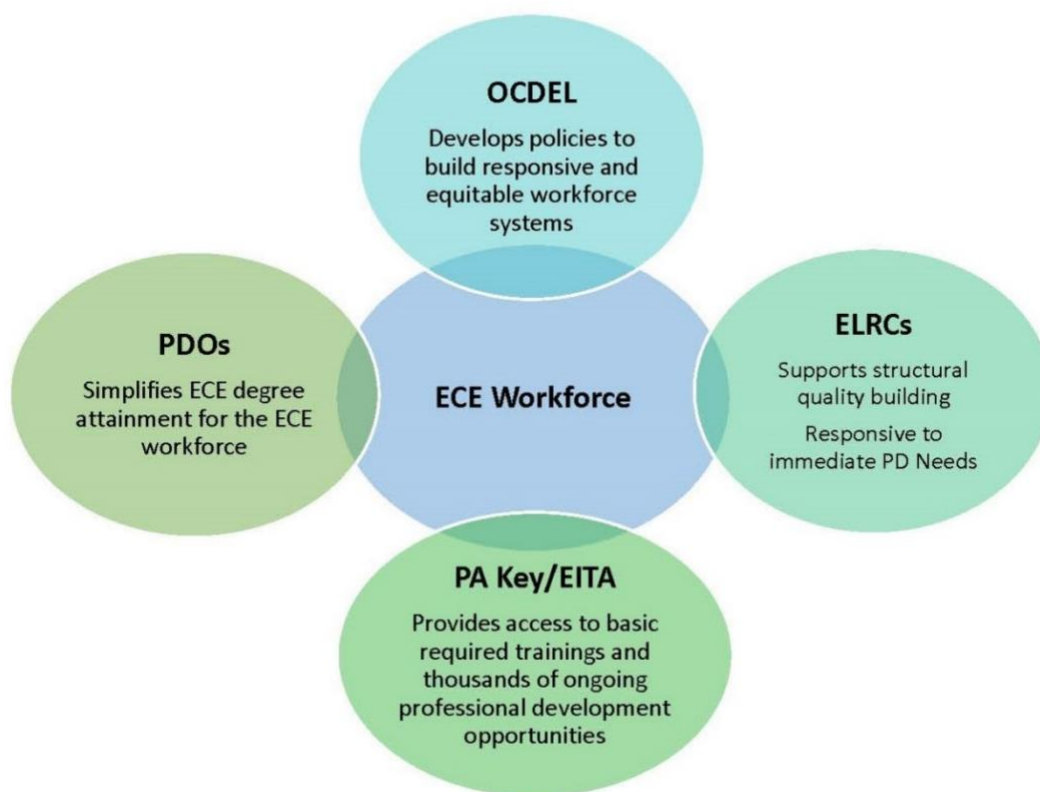
Description: The Pennsylvania Key provides statewide support and coordination for multiple initiatives within Pennsylvania's ECE system including Pre-K Counts, Early Head Start (OCDEL's Grantees), Head

Start State Collaboration, Program Quality Assessment (PQA), the PD Registry, coaching to support the ELRCs, school-age supports, STAR 3 and 4 internal coaches, and coordination of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation. The Pennsylvania Key's role is to ensure the larger system is responsive to the needs of organizations that support ECE programs in attaining higher STAR levels through data driven decision making and regionally responsive supports.

Anticipated Outcome: An equitable, culturally, and developmentally responsive ECE system that builds a professional workforce, fosters innovation, and ultimately produces meaningful child outcomes.

### How Do These Strategies Work Together?

OCDEL is committed to building systems that work together in a focused and equitable way. When the above strategies are linked, they produce a robust foundation allowing for individual flexibility while consistently raising quality. OCDEL, the Pennsylvania Key, and the ELRCs are focused on systems alignment and supporting ECE programs in quality attainment. The PDOs are focused on supporting individuals in their ECE degree attainment, while the Pennsylvania Key provides a statewide PD Registry to support individuals in their professional advancement and on-going growth. When the pieces of the system are aligned, ECE programs have quality staff and quality applicants, and the ECE workforce has the skills and credentials they need to provide comprehensive, developmentally appropriate learning experiences while continuing professional growth.



Appendix B: PDO Announcement 22#01 Career Pathway Level A-Plus Verification Change and Clarifying Procedures for Verifying Credits and Degrees from Nationally Accredited (Non-Regionally Accredited) Institutions



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

**Issue Date:** Feb. 7, 2022

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2022

**End Date:** N/A

**Subject:** Career Pathway Level A-Plus Verification Change and Clarifying Procedures for Verifying Credits and Degrees from Nationally Accredited (Non-Regionally Accredited) Institutions

**To:** All Department of Human Services (DHS) Certified Child Care Providers; Early Childhood Education Professionals; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); Pennsylvania Key Career Pathway Verifiers and Career Pathway Staff; Professional Development Organizations (PDOs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) staff

Tracey Campanini

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

**PURPOSE**

To provide clarification on the verification of credits and degrees from nationally accredited (non-regionally accredited) institutions and to provide information on a procedural change in the verification of educational transcripts when designating an individual's Career Pathway level.

## **BACKGROUND**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) professionals submit credentials and degree information to the Professional Development (PD) Registry to receive verification and placement on the [Career Pathway](#) to indicate current Career Pathway level in the ECE workforce, and to verify qualification requirements of various Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) programs. Upon submission for review, a team of verifiers, following standard protocols, review, verify, and assign a Career Pathway level based upon submitted qualifications, credentials, degrees, and transcripts.

Non-regionally accredited Associate of Specialized Technology (AST) / Associate of Specialized Business (ASB) has been recognized on the Career Pathway at Level a Plus. Credits and degrees from a non-regionally accredited Institutions are **not** recognized anywhere else on the Career Pathway (Level B, Level B Plus, Level C, Level C Plus, Level D, Level E). Nationally accredited institutions are also not recognized on the Career Pathway.

The United States does not have a centralized authority exercising singular, national control over postsecondary educational institutions. Consequently, the character and quality of postsecondary schools and their programs can vary widely. The role of accreditation in higher education is a voluntary process that ensures a college, university, or degree program meets a universal standard for quality. This gives an institution and its graduates credibility with other institutions and employers.

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the non-profit Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversee the accreditation process. They review the federally recognized agencies that set accreditation standards. There are three general types of accrediting agencies, each of which serves a specific purpose: Regional accrediting agencies, national accrediting agencies, and programmatic accrediting agencies. For the purposes of Career Pathway verification protocols, this document will discuss the differences between regional and national accrediting agencies and accreditation.

### **Regional Accreditation**

Regional accrediting agencies concentrate reviews on institutions in specific regions of the United States and oversee institutions that place a focus on academics that are state-owned, non-profit colleges or universities. These institutions receive regional accreditation from one of seven regional accrediting bodies (operating in six regions of

the US), determined by where the school is located. The seven regional accrediting organizations for institutions of higher education in the United States are:

- Accrediting Commission for Community & Junior Colleges (ACCJC) Western Association of Schools & Colleges
- The Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- WASC Senior College & University Commission (WSCUC)

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) oversee regional accrediting agencies. Degrees/credits from regionally accredited institutions are accepted by other regionally accredited institutions as well as nationally accredited institutions. Regionally accredited programs may be more expensive than nationally accredited programs and are mostly non-profit (fundraise through federal grants, private donations, legacy giving.) Regionally accredited institutions typically have stricter standards and are more selective during the admissions process. Employers accept regionally accredited degrees, and graduates are eligible for corporate tuition reimbursement plans.

[The Council for Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#) can be used to identify if the Institution of Higher Education (IHE) is regionally accredited.

#### **National Accreditation (Non-Regionally)**

National accrediting agencies operate across the United States and primarily review proprietary institutions, career-based single-purpose institutions, and religiously affiliated institutions. National accreditation is comparable in many ways to regional accreditation. National accreditation also indicates that a school underwent a voluntary review by a third-party accrediting agency, which evaluated the school's academic programs, student resources, and institutional processes. It is not as rigorous as regional accreditation, so it does not hold as much prestige. However, it is the accreditation standard for vocational, trade, and faith-based schools. Degrees/credits from nationally accredited institutions are only accepted by other nationally accredited institutions, not at regionally accredited institutions. Nationally accredited programs may be less expensive than regionally accredited programs and are mostly for-profit (earn revenue through enrollment or selling educational products.) Nationally accredited institutions typically have more relaxed admission standards. Employers do accept nationally accredited degrees; however, graduates are not always eligible for corporate tuition reimbursement plans.

For a descriptive comparison of regional versus national accreditation, visit the [Regional vs. National Accreditation: Why Does it Matter? on Drexel's website](#).

## **DISCUSSION**

Effective July 1, 2022, non-regionally accredited ASB/AST will be removed from the Career Pathway Level A Plus. For degrees and credits received after July 1, 2022, no credits from a non-regionally accredited Institution will be counted for purposes of placement on the ECE Career Pathway. This includes credits from a nationally (non-regionally) accredited Institution that does not also hold regional accreditation.

Degrees and credits received from a nationally (non-regionally) or regionally accredited institution prior to July 1, 2022, will be counted for Career Pathway placement.

Individuals who have already received a Career Pathway placement in which nationally accredited degrees and/or credits received prior to July 1, 2022, that were not counted, must submit a review form to have their Career Pathway placement reviewed and potentially revised. This review form can be found on the [Pennsylvania Key website](#) under the professional development tab.

It is important that staff of IHEs, Professional Development Organizations (PDOs), the Pennsylvania Key and Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) understand and convey this change to ECE professionals, so those interested in an ECE career, are able to make informed decisions about what counts within the system, and do not invest time and funds in coursework from non-regionally accredited Institutions.

In addition, OCDEL-funded pathways support only regionally accredited coursework. Individuals and program administrators are reminded to use the PDO Professional Development Coordinators to support Career Pathway advancement needs. In many cases, individuals may qualify for OCDEL-funded support for Career Pathway advancement. Contact Information for Regional PDOs can be found at [Professional Development Organizations](#).

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. Review and share this information with all relevant staff.
2. Discuss Career Pathway needs with staff.
3. Contact Regional PDO to discuss Career Pathway advancement needs.

**RIDER 1**  
**PAYMENT PROVISIONS**

The Department shall pay Grantee for the services rendered pursuant to this agreement as follows:

- A. Payment. Subject to the availability of State and Federal funds and the other terms and conditions of this agreement, the Department shall reimburse the Grantee in accordance with Rider 3 for providing the services described in Rider 2, up to the maximum amount of \$200,544.00, as it may be adjusted pursuant to paragraph 4 of the agreement, and no payments will be made under this agreement in excess of that amount. The Department shall make payment to the Grantee in accordance with the Budget set forth in Rider 3 as follows:
1. The Department shall reimburse Grantee on a monthly basis for actual expenditures for services provided pursuant to this agreement.
  2. The Department will disapprove any expenditures made by the Grantee that are not in accordance with the terms of this agreement and will adjust payment to Grantee or seek repayment from Grantee. Any duplication of payment requests for services rendered under this agreement may result in termination of this agreement by the Department.
  3. Living and travel expenses may be reimbursed in accordance with Rider 3, but the expenses may not exceed the rates as set forth in Management Directive 230.10, Commonwealth Travel Policy, unless the Grantee has higher rates that were established and publicized prior to entering into this agreement. Grantee shall retain itemized receipts in its files to support all claims submitted for living and travel expenses and shall make these receipts available to the Department upon request.
- B. Invoicing. Grantee shall submit itemized invoices of its actual expenditures for services provided for the prior month pursuant to this agreement. The Grantee shall submit invoices in accordance with the following:
1. Grantee may invoice the Department no more than once month. All invoices are due on the 15th day of the month following the month in which services were provided.
  2. The Grantee shall include on each invoice the agreement number, Grantee's SAP Vendor Number, the period covered by the invoice, the name of the person submitting the invoice, and the date the invoice is being submitted.

3. Grantee must submit one copy of the invoice to:

Department of Human Services

cwong@pa.gov and paualc@pakeys.org

4. Grantee shall submit the last actual invoice no later than 60 days after the expiration date of the agreement or, in the event of earlier termination or cancellation, no later than 60 days after notice to the Grantee of termination or cancellation. The Department will not reimburse or pay Grantee for any invoice not submitted in accordance with this provision. The Department will not pay for any expenditure not claimed by Grantee in its final invoice.
- C. Interest. The Grantee shall account for all interest earned on the payments made under this agreement and use it for expenditures in accordance with the terms of this agreement.
- D. Accounting of Expenditures. Grantee shall submit a detailed accounting of its expenditures under this agreement to the email addresses listed in paragraph B.3, within 90 days after the end of the state fiscal year and within 90 days after expiration or termination of the agreement. For each state fiscal year and at the termination or expiration of the agreement, the Grantee shall include a Supplementary Schedule that consists of a budget to actual expenditures presentation in the same format as Rider 3, Budget, including all updates and revisions. The Grantee must include all allowable and reimbursable costs for the agreement. The Department will use this Supplementary Schedule for reconciliation and settlement for the state fiscal year and the agreement. The Grantee must pay to the Department all excess funds received by Grantee and any unused interest income earned on payments made to the Grantee within 90 days of the end of the state fiscal year and the termination or expiration of the agreement.
- E. Reallocations. The Grantee may reallocate funds among or within budget categories and line items, subject to the following criteria:
1. The Grantee must receive the Department's prior written approval for reallocations that are:
    - a. Between budget categories;
    - b. Among line items when the reallocation exceeds 10% of a line item; or

- c. Adding a new line item or budget category.
2. In its sole discretion, the Department may waive the requirement for prior approval of budget reallocations.
3. The Grantee may request approval for budget reallocations, as needed, throughout the state fiscal year, with all final requests being received by the Department prior to June 30 of each year. In its sole discretion, the Department may approve requests for reallocations received after June 30.
4. For all reallocations, including those that do not require the Department's prior written approval, the Grantee must submit a budget revision, which will become part of the agreement upon approval of the Department and Comptroller Operations.

F. Audit.

1. The Grantee shall maintain supporting documentation for all fiscal and programmatic activity under this agreement and make this documentation available for review by the Department or its representatives upon request. Failure to provide documentation within the timeframe prescribed by the Department may result in a payment delay for outstanding invoices submitted by the Grantee.
2. This agreement is subject to audit in accordance with the Audit Clause attached as part of Rider 5.

## Appendix D: PA Early Childhood Education Professional Development Commitment Form

### **Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education Professional Development Commitment Form**

This form serves as a statement to explain the requirements of participation and an attestation to receiving funding. All Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) funded participants **must** complete this form. The person who signs this document represents themselves (or a minor under the age of 18) as a professional and their commitment to serve young children and families in Pennsylvania. To confirm agreement, place initials next to each statement. If you do not initial all statements, the OCDEL-funded partner cannot approve your application for or participation in any OCDEL funded opportunities.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has contracted with several established entities to be their agents in funding Early Childhood Education (ECE) credential and degree programs.

#### **Accountability**

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that if I leave/withdraw without completing the course in which I am enrolled and the PDO has expended funded, I may be disqualified from eligibility of subsequent PDO funding.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my participation may be suspended or removed if I am unable to maintain eligibility status or meet the academic requirements outlined by my Institute of Higher Education (IHE).

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my participation may be suspended or removed if I do not obtain and renew annually a verified Career Pathway status in the PD Registry.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand I have the right to appeal decisions by the PDO.

#### **Evaluation**

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the information I provide as a participant is utilized by OCDEL and funding partner staff for research and evaluation purposes, monitoring compliance, and so they can analyze the State's professional development efforts and answer key policy and practice questions. The data collected will be used in the aggregate and personal information will not be disclosed. This includes:

1. My academic standing at the IHE
2. My academic records and documents that pertain to my enrollment in a degree or credential program.

\_\_\_\_\_ I provide assurance that to the best of my ability I will participate in evaluation activities, if selected to participate.

#### **Personal Responsibility**

\_\_\_\_\_ I am at least 18 years of age or a parent/guardian of a participant under 18 years of age.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have obtained or will obtain and submit required background clearances before entering a classroom experience.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have not been convicted and am not awaiting trial on charges involving a crime of child abuse, child neglect or physical violence.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will report to the PDO if I am under any investigation that may result in a change in to my employment status.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that falsifying application information or documentation or the failure to comply with documentation requirements may result in the inability to be a participant in this program and are subject to the penalties of 18 Pa C.S. § 4904 (relating to unsworn falsification to authorities).

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that if I leave the ECE field (any setting serving children birth through age 8) in Pennsylvania within 2 years after completing my PDO funded coursework, I may be required to reimburse the funded partner for the full amount of funding provided to me for my course of study.

CDA enrollments ONLY:

\_\_\_\_\_ Once I complete all CDA required coursework, I assure I will complete the CDA application process in full within one (1) year.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Individual receiving services

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent/guardian of the individual if under 18 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

## Appendix E: Business Associate Agreement/ Contract Document Rider 6

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (“Covered Entity”) and Contractor/Grantee (“Business Associate”) intend to protect the privacy and security of certain Protected Health Information (“PHI”) to which Business Associate may have access in order to provide services to or on behalf of Covered Entity, in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-191 (“HIPAA”), the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (“HITECH”) Act, Title XIII of Division A and Title IV of Division B of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Pub. L. No. 111-5 (Feb. 17, 2009) and related regulations, the HIPAA Privacy Rule (Privacy Rule), 45 C.F.R. Parts 160 and 164, as amended, the HIPAA Security Rule (Security Rule), 45 C.F.R. Parts 160, 162 and 164, ), as amended, 42 C.F.R. §§ 431.301-431.302, 42 C.F.R. Part 2, 45 C.F.R. § 205.50, 42 U.S.C. § 602(a)(1)(A)(iv), 42 U.S.C. § 1396a(a)(7), 35 P.S. § 7607, 50 Pa.C.S. § 7111, 71 P.S. § 1690.108(c), 62 P.S. § 404, 55 Pa. Code Chapter 105, 55 Pa. Code Chapter 5100, the Pennsylvania Breach of Personal Information Notification Act, 73 P.S. § 2301 et seq., and other relevant laws, including subsequently adopted provisions applicable to use and disclosure of confidential information, and applicable agency guidance.

Business Associate may receive PHI from Covered Entity or may create or obtain PHI from other parties for use on behalf of Covered Entity, which PHI may be used or disclosed only in accordance with this agreement and the standards established by applicable laws and agency guidance.

Business Associate may receive PHI from Covered Entity or may create or obtain PHI from other parties for use on behalf of Covered Entity, which PHI must be handled in accordance with this agreement and the standards established by HIPAA, the HITECH Act and related regulations, and other applicable laws and agency guidance.

The parties, intending to be legally bound, agree as follows:

### 1. Definitions.

A. “Business Associate” has the meaning given to such term under HIPAA, the HITECH Act, applicable regulations and agency guidance.

B. “Covered Entity” has the meaning given to the term under HIPAA, the HITECH Act and applicable regulations and agency guidance.

C. “HIPAA” means the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-191.

D. “HITECH Act” means the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act, Title XIII of Division A and Title IV of Division B of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), Pub. L. No. 14-FA-3.0 Revised 12/20/23 Business Associate Agreement 2 111-5 (Feb. 17, 2009).

E. “Privacy Rule” means the standards for privacy of individually identifiable health information in 45 C.F.R. Parts 160 and 164, as amended, and related agency guidance.

F. "Protected Health Information" or "PHI" means any information, transmitted or recorded in any form or medium; (i) that relates to the past, present or future physical or mental condition of an individual; the provision of health care to an individual; or the past, present or future payment for the provision of health care to an individual, and (ii) that identifies the individual or which there is a reasonable basis to believe the information can be used to identify the individual, and has the meaning given to the term under HIPAA, the HITECH Act and related regulations and agency guidance. PHI also includes any information that can be used to identify a current or former applicant or recipient of benefits or services of Covered Entity (or Covered Entity's contractors/business associates).

G. "Security Rule" means the security standards in 45 C.F.R. Parts 160, 162 and 164, as amended, and related agency guidance.

H. "Unsecured PHI" means PHI that is not secured by a technology or methodology as specified in HITECH regulations and agency guidance or as otherwise defined in the HITECH Act.

2. Stated Purposes for Which Business Associate May Use or Disclose PHI. The- Business Associate may use, disclose, or both PHI provided by or obtained on behalf of Covered Entity for the purposes of providing services under its contract/agreement with Covered Entity, except as otherwise stated in this agreement.

NO OTHER DISCLOSURES OF PHI OR OTHER INFORMATION ARE PERMITTED.

### 3. Business Associate Obligations.

A. Limits on Use and Further Disclosure. Business Associate shall not further use or disclose PHI provided by or created or obtained on behalf of Covered Entity other than as permitted or required by this agreement or as required by law and agency guidance.

B. Appropriate Safeguards. Business Associate shall establish and maintain appropriate safeguards to prevent any use or disclosure of PHI other than as provided for by this agreement. Appropriate safeguards must include implementing administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that reasonably and appropriately protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the electronic PHI that is created, received, maintained, or transmitted on behalf of the Covered Entity and limiting use and disclosure to applicable minimum necessary requirements as set forth in applicable federal and state statutory and 14-FA-3.0

C. Reports of Improper Use or Disclosure. Business Associate shall report to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Governor's Office of Administration, Office of Information Technology at OA-SecurityIncidents@pa.gov or 1-877-552-7478, within two days of discovery any use or disclosure of PHI not provided for or allowed by this agreement.

D. Reports of Security Incidents. In addition to the breach notification requirements in section 13402 of the HITECH Act and related regulations, agency guidance and other applicable federal and state laws, Business Associate shall report to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Governor's Office of Administration, Office of Information Technology at OASecurityIncidents@pa.gov or 1-877-552-7478,

within two days of discovery any security incident of which it becomes aware. At the sole expense of Business Associate, Business Associate shall comply with all federal and state breach notification requirements, including those applicable to Business Associate and those applicable to Covered Entity. Business Associate shall indemnify the Covered Entity for costs associated with any incident involving the acquisition, access, use or disclosure of Unsecured PHI in a manner not permitted under federal or state law and agency guidance.

E. Subcontractors and Agents. When PHI is provided or made available to Business Associate subcontractors or agents, Business Associate shall provide only the minimum necessary PHI for the purpose of the covered transaction and shall first enter into a subcontract or contract with the subcontractor or agent that contains the same terms, conditions and restrictions on the use and disclosure of PHI as contained in this agreement.

F. Right of Access to PHI. Business Associate shall allow an individual who is the subject of PHI maintained in a designated record set, to have access to and copy that individual's PHI within five business days of receiving a written request from the Covered Entity. Business Associate shall provide PHI in the format requested, if it is readily producible in that form and format; or if not, in a readable hard copy form or other form and format as agreed to by Business Associate and the individual. If the request is for information maintained in one or more designated record sets electronically and if the individual requests an electronic copy of the information, Business Associate must provide the individual with access to the PHI in the electronic form and format requested by the individual, if it is readily producible in that form and format; or, if not, in a readable electronic form and format as agreed to by the Business Associate and the individual. If any individual requests from Business Associate or its agents or subcontractors' access to PHI, Business Associate shall notify Covered Entity within five business days. Business associate shall further conform with all the requirements of 45 C.F.R. §164.524 and other applicable laws, including the HITECH Act and related regulations, and agency guidance. 14-FA-3.0

G. Amendment and Incorporation of Amendments. Within five business days of receiving a request from Covered Entity for an amendment of PHI maintained in a designated record set, Business Associate shall make the PHI available and incorporate the amendment to enable Covered Entity to comply with 45 C.F.R. §164.526, applicable federal and state law, including the HITECH Act and related regulations, and agency guidance. If an individual requests an amendment from Business Associate or its agents or subcontractors, Business Associate shall notify Covered Entity within five business days.

H. Provide Accounting of Disclosures. Business Associate shall maintain a record of all disclosures of PHI in accordance with 45 C.F.R. §164.528 and other applicable laws and agency guidance, including the HITECH Act and related regulations. The records shall include, for each disclosure, the date of the disclosure, the name and address of the recipient of the PHI, a description of the PHI disclosed, the name of the individual who is the subject of the PHI disclosed, and the purpose of the disclosure. Business Associate shall make such record available to the individual or the Covered Entity within five business days of a request for an accounting of disclosures.

I. Requests for Restriction. Business Associate shall comply with requests for restrictions on disclosures of PHI about an individual if the disclosure is to a health plan for purposes of carrying out payment or

health care operations (and is not for treatment purposes), and the PHI pertains solely to a health care item or service for which the service involved was paid in full out-of-pocket. For other requests for restriction, Business Associate shall otherwise comply with the Privacy Rules, as amended, and other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and agency guidance.

J. Access to Books and Records. Business Associate shall make its internal practices, books, and records relating to the use or disclosure of PHI received from or created or received by Business Associate on behalf of the Covered Entity, available to the Secretary of Health and Human Services or designee for purposes of determining compliance with applicable laws and agency guidance.

K. Return or Destruction Of PHI. At termination or expiration of the contract/agreement, Business Associate shall return or destroy all PHI provided by or obtained on behalf of Covered Entity. Business Associate may not retain any copies of the PHI after termination or expiration of its contract/agreement. If return or destruction of the PHI is not feasible, Business Associate shall extend the protections of this agreement to limit any further use or disclosure until such time as the PHI may be returned or destroyed. If Business Associate elects to destroy the PHI, it shall certify to Covered Entity that the PHI has been destroyed.

L. Maintenance of PHI. Notwithstanding Section 3.K of this agreement, Business 14-FA-3.0 Associate and its subcontractors or agents shall retain all PHI throughout the term of its contract/agreement and this agreement and shall continue to maintain the information required under the various documentation requirements of its contract/agreement this agreement (such as those in Section 3.H) for a period of six years after termination or expiration of its contract/agreement, unless Covered Entity and Business Associate agree otherwise.

M. Mitigation Procedures. Business Associate shall establish and provide to Covered Entity upon request, procedures for mitigating, to the maximum extent practicable, any harmful effect from the use or disclosure of PHI in a manner contrary to this agreement or the Privacy Rules, as amended. Business Associate shall mitigate any harmful effect that is known to Business Associate of a use or disclosure of PHI by Business Associate in violation of this agreement or applicable laws and agency guidance.

N. Sanction Procedures. Business Associate shall develop and implement a system of sanctions for any employee, subcontractor or agent who violates this agreement, applicable laws or agency guidance.

O. Grounds for Breach. Non-compliance by Business Associate with this agreement or the Privacy or Security Rules, as amended, is a breach of the contract/agreement, for which the Commonwealth may elect to terminate Business Associate's contract/agreement.

P. Termination by Commonwealth. Business Associate authorizes termination of the contract/agreement by the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth determines, in its sole discretion, that Business Associate has violated a material term of this agreement.

Q. Failure to Perform Obligations. In the event Business Associate fails to perform its obligations under this agreement, Covered Entity may immediately discontinue providing PHI to Business Associate.

Covered Entity may also, at its option, require Business Associate to submit to a plan of compliance, including monitoring by Covered Entity and reporting by Business Associate, as Covered Entity in its sole discretion determines to be necessary to maintain compliance with this agreement and applicable laws and agency guidance.

R. Privacy Practices. Covered Entity will provide and Business Associate shall immediately begin using any applicable form, including but not limited to, any form used for Notice of Privacy Practices, Accounting for Disclosures, or Authorization, upon the effective date designated by the Program or Covered Entity. Covered Entity may change applicable privacy practices, documents and forms. The Business Associate shall implement changes as soon as practicable, but not later than 45 days from the date of notice of the change. Business Associate shall otherwise comply with all applicable laws and agency guidance pertaining to notices of privacy practices, including the requirements set forth in 14-FA-45 C.F.R. § 164.520.4.

#### Obligations of Covered Entity.

- A. Provision of Notice of Privacy Practices. Covered Entity shall provide Business Associate with the notice of privacy practices that the Covered Entity produces in accordance with applicable law and agency guidance, as well as changes to such notice. Covered Entity will post on its website any material changes to its notice of privacy practices by the effective date of the material change.
- B. Permissions. Covered Entity shall provide Business Associate with any changes in, or revocation of, permission by individual to use or disclose PHI of which Covered Entity is aware, if such changes affect Business Associate's permitted or required uses and disclosures.
- C. Restrictions. Covered Entity shall notify Business Associate of any restriction to the use or disclosure of PHI that the Covered Entity has agreed to in accordance with 45 C.F.R. §164.522 and other applicable laws and applicable agency guidance, to the extent that such restriction may affect Business Associate's use or disclosure of PHI.