Early Childhood Provider Call
Meeting Minutes
February 24, 2022 – 1:30pm

Kimberly Krzanowski, Executive Director, Office of Early Learning (OEL)

Kim welcomed everyone and thanked them for joining today's call. This call was recorded for transcription purposes.

Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) Staffing:

Open positions are currently being screened & interviewed. In March, we hope to have more updates

Developmental Screening:

The Delaware General Assembly passed **House Bill 202** last July 1, 2021. Its purpose is to increase the opportunity for young Delaware children to have a developmental screening to identify children who may be eligible for Early Intervention or special education services.

This law requires any applicant for a childcare license or renewal of a childcare license on or after July 1, 2023, to ensure that each child between the age of birth and 5-year-olds, not yet in kindergarten enrolled by the childcare provider have a developmental and social emotional screening.

The screening system approved by the Department of Education is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is intended to be done by the parent or guardian of the child seeking to be enrolled in the childcare facility. If the parents decline and gives written consent, the childcare provider will then complete the child's screening

At the March 24, 2022, provider call we will provide more details as to how DDOE is planning to expand their current ASQ system to support this new requirement. This planning includes communication materials, outreach, training, technical assistance, and support.

Please know, you as childcare providers do not need to purchase anything at your own expense- DDOE is providing the online data system, training, and technical assistance!

We look forward to sharing more with you in March!

Department of Public Health Update:

Anticipated recommendations for post-March 31, 2022, mask mandate should be available by the end of February.

Elizabeth (Betty Gail) Timm, Director, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL)

Senate Bill 169, passed during the previous legislative session, requires OCCL to license all early learning programs in public and private schools. Recently the implementation date of this was changed to July 1, 2024. All programs in public and private schools serving children younger than kindergarten must be licensed by July 1, 2024.

As Kim said, **House Bill 202** was also passed last legislative session. This bill requires every licensed child care provider to ensure that each child has a developmental screening upon entering child care and annually thereafter and, if applicable, that the appropriate referral is made to Child Development Watch (for children younger than 3 years old) or to the school district in which the child care is located (for children 3 years and older). OCCL are required to monitor this and will add this to our regulations. Lots of conversations are happening with the Office of Early Learning staff and others on how to implement the provisions of this bill. Providers will be informed well in advance of the implementation date when the process is finalized. Contact Jenny Grady via email at **Jenny.Grady@doe.k12.de.us** with questions.

Revised family/large family regulations will be posted in the March 2022, issue of the Register of Regulations and open to receive public comment. OCCL anticipates that the Register will publish the proposed center regulations in April 2022. OCCL will keep providers informed.

This will not pertain to most providers, but OCCL is reducing the number of provisional licenses a provider may receive when they have not corrected non-compliances **within their control**. No longer will providers be able to receive provisional licenses for multiple months when they do not comply with regulations **for items within their control**. Providers will still be able to receive provisional licenses when needed, but not for long periods of time IF the items needing correction are within their control. When providers are working to resolve an issue, their licensing specialist will be able to issue provisional licenses as needed but only if the provider is actively working to resolve the issue. Talk with your licensing specialist with any concerns. Details will be in the letter you receive if you receive a provisional license.

When checking child files at your annual compliance visit, your licensing specialist will look at the health appraisal form for evidence of a blood lead test for children 12 months and older, excluding school-age children. If you have a kindergarten program in your facility, OCCL may also check those child files, including the presence of a blood lead screening. Delaware Code requires that the blood lead screening be an actual blood draw, not responses to a questionnaire. See regulations **41 (Centers)** or **23 (Family Child Care/Large Family Child Care)** for information on blood lead testing. To avoid non-compliance with this requirement, you should review each child's health appraisal and inform the child's parent/guardian of this requirement if a test has not been conducted.

OCCL wants to clarify the expanded use of interns in a center. School-age interns may work with the school-age population only. Early childhood interns may work with early childhood or school-age children. There is no change to **DELACARE** Regulations in this area.

- As a reminder, how interns will be used in an individual center is the decision of each facility as long as it does not violate regulations. The individual must:
    - Be qualified as at least an early childhood or school-age intern by Delaware First or DEEDS Early Learning; early childhood interns may work with any age child. Persons qualified as a school-age intern may work only with school-age children.
    - Be at least 18 years old.
    - Be determined eligible by the Criminal History Unit after completion of a comprehensive background check.
    - Have been employed at the current center for at least one month and oriented to the policies and procedures of that center and DELACARE Regulations.
- It is recommended that centers place their more experienced staff with the younger children they serve. Remember, an Early Childhood or School-Age Aide may never be alone with children.

Thomas Hall, Director, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)

The Purchase of Care (POC) Program continues to waive the family co-pay and we will be doing that through at least March 2022.

Beginning in December 2022, we expanded the number of approved absent days from ten (10) to fifteen (15) days per month. Child care providers can bill for up to fifteen (15) absent days in the month for any child that attends at least one (1) day during the month. Absent days can be the result of the following:

- Need for the child to be out
- The providers need to close the classroom(s)
- Their facility to meet quarantine and isolation requirements

The 15 absent days will be in effect through March at this time.

The Cost of Quality Care Estimator tool is on schedule to be released on March 1, 2022. The tool was developed in response to **HB 250 Section 183**. That bill required the Department of Health and

Social Services (DHSS) and the Department of Education (DOE), in consultation with the Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC), to create a cost of quality child care estimator tool, which enables the state to model actual costs of child care, according to the quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), Stars, and other factors. The estimator tool was also required to be developed to meet requirements of alternative methodology for rate setting with the Administration for Children and Families under the Child Care Development Block Grant.

DHSS will continue to add data and refine the tool after the March 1, 2022, release to better capture Delaware specific data. The next steps will be to work with ACF to begin the process of receiving approval for Delaware to use an alternative rate setting methodology and replacing the current practice of setting rates based on the Market Rate Surveys.

Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC

Stabilization Fund

As part of the initial rounds of the stabilization fund, we've approved $64,244,834.40, going to 833 programs. We are continuing to support the last group of programs with finalizing their information to complete the initial rounds.

As part of round 4, we have approved $3,117,000.000 for 159 programs. Round 4 amounts are: $7,000 for family and large family programs; $37,000 for small center programs; $49,000 for large center programs.

Eligible programs that submitted an application during the initial rounds of the stabilization fund, that remain open and serving children, and that submitted the necessary documentation to verify their awards are on the list for Round 4 award payments.

Round 4 awards are being processed in order. The first approvals are for programs that were fully paid their initial award in the summer of 2021 and have completed the verification for those funds. We are continuing to submit batches of approved payments through for processing.

For programs that are newly licensed and were not eligible to participate in the initial rounds of the stabilization fund, there is funding that has been allocated to provide support for you. We will be sending details on the final amounts and the application process in April, once the final policy framework is determined.

Please submit any questions or concerns regarding the stabilization fund to: **StabilizationFund@udel.edu**

DIEEC Offerings:

All of the summer camp trainings for new providers and the refresher trainings will be hosted online on **DEPDnow.com**. DIEEC will not be offering in-person trainings for summer camp CCDF requirements; all of the summer camp CCDF trainings will be online. The full set of summer camp trainings and the refresher training will be listed on dieecpd.org, and registration will be available through **DIEECPD.org**.

This shift is another step in aligning the services we're providing, partnering with state agencies and with early childhood programs in working toward the best outcomes for children and families.

DIEEC will be hosting an information sharing session on Wednesday, March 9 to talk more about how we are able to support early childhood programs now, as well as moving forward.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PURCHASE OF CARE

Q – What website will we be able to find the cost of care model?
A – Tom Hall, DHSS – There's going to be somebody else hosting it but we will put a link on our site as well as share it with Kristy

STABILIZATION

Q – Kristy, you said Round 4 needs verification but those of us who applied for Bonus & Payroll in Rounds 1 thru 3, did not need verification of how funds were spent?
A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – Initially if there's been documentation submitted on payroll and bonuses, that's great, if you have it and you'd like to send it ahead of time to **StabilizationFund@udel.edu**. If not, we'll be following back up within 6 months of when the payment goes out.

Q – Was the verification sent in an email for the stabilization grants?
A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – Any request about verification programs will be hearing from a stabilization TA via **StabilizationFund@udel.edu** or phone. If there is any other documentation that is needed you will receive an official email letting you know when verification is complete but we are communicating mostly through email now, so that we can send information back and forth with programs. So, if you have not received anything from us please email **StabilizationFund@udel.edu** so we can verify that we have the right email address for you.

Q – If the center didn't receive their payment in February will it be given with March? Or how many months will we receive the extra stabilization funds?
A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – The round 4 payments were started in February. We will be continuing to process those on a rolling basis as everything comes through. Some programs will receive their payment in February and some programs will receive their payment in March.

Q – What kind of documents do we need for the bonus funds if we are a home daycare?
A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – For family programs, the amounts that are approved as salary and/or bonus for the family child care licensee during the initial review process, the award letter will serve as documentation to verify these expenses; no additional documentation is needed. If any other expenses were requested and approved (e.g., salary or bonuses for staff or substitutes, funding requests in other categories), family child care programs will still need to provide documentation to verify those expenses.

COVID

Q –The mask mandate for child care and districts goes away on March 31st, 2022, which means that districts and child care will have a decision to make on whether or not they want to continue or not to continue wearing masks. Is that correct?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – OCCL follows the directive of Public Health, that means if public health is determining that masks will be optional at the end of March than that we will support that. An individual business can decide to continue masks as business decision, or they can decide not to continue masks as a business decision. OCCL will follow the recommendations of public health.

Q –Testing to stay program update?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – You should have received an email today from OCCL that we sent out on behalf of public health regarding the testing to stay program. So please look for that. But right now, public health, and their partners have determined that as of right now only centers with a licensed capacity of 100 or more are eligible.

Q – We are not allowing parents to enter into the building yet. Do you know when allowing the parents or the open door policy will be enforced again?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – You may do that now, that is a business decision.

Q – Is there an update on Quidel testing for FCC providers?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – I have no information on that for family child care providers

OCCL

Q – Can we get the names of an actual list of the vehicles approved that we may be able to use for transporting children, especially any and all information for more than 11 seats like small bus and what brands are approved?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – There are too many of them out there to be able to do that. If there are any questions before you buy the van, contact OCCL, because typically we contract the Department of Transportation to find out if they are included or excluded in the listing of, or prohibited for transporting children.

Q – What capacity constitutes a large center?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – OCCL does not have that kind of terminology. If you have over 13 children you're a center period to OCCL.
A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – the definition that's used for stabilization is a large center is a program that has the licensing capacity of more than 60 children.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Q – Parents may opt out of the screening correct?
A - Jenny Grady – Yes, Parents have the right to decline the screening

Q - When will the 10.5 million designated by the Governor for the early childcare workforce go out? How will staff apply?
A – Kim Krzanowski, OEL - DDOE leadership is finalizing eligibility requirements for the one-time bonuses- more information to come soon.

Q – What does the blood lead indicator look like on the appraisal? Will it simply say blood lead test?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – The section to record the blood lead test is listed at the end of the immunization section of the **Child Health Appraisal**.

Q – Last month Jamie Mack had mentioned that there would be an announcement about testing to stay. Any update on this?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – An email was sent to providers on the day of the call. Centers with a licensed capacity of 100 or more may register to participate.

Q – What happens when they have trouble getting enough blood out of a baby to perform the test? Can they do a screening and then try again when the child is older?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – The blood lead test is not due until the child is 12 months old. Getting a blood sample should not be an issue at that age.

Q – Why are providers in charge of this lead test policing and not the pediatricians? There are so many kids not in any kind of daycare, I would think it would be more beneficial to make the pediatricians responsible for something like this?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Delaware Code states that "for every child who has reached the age of 12 months, child care facilities…shall require proof of screening for lead poisoning for admission or continued enrollment."

Q – Do we need a lab report showing the lead test result or will the dr. indicating the result (>3, etc) on the HA be sufficient?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – A lab report is not necessary.

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Q – Can a parent decline legally that they don't want their child to have a lead test done on their child just as they do for immunizations and vaccinations?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Yes; a certificate signed by the parent or guardian stating that the screening is contrary to the parent/guardian's religious beliefs is required.

Q – Will the state update the child health form to note the required lead test? Just like the adult child care health form documents TB testing?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Yes.

Q – Just to be clear we as centers cannot accept children who do not have a blood lead test completed?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – A center may accept children and work with the family to get the required immunizations documentation, which includes proof of a blood lead test at the appropriate times.

Q – Will the physicals/well-visit forms that school districts and child cares use be updated to reflect the new lead test requirements? The current OCCL physical form does not reflect the new 12 months and 14-months requirements.
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Yes.

Q – The OCCL Health Appraisal linked in the chat does not reflect the new 12 months and 24 months lead screening requirements. When will the new form be available?
A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – The form will be updated ASAP.

UPCOMING PROVIDER CALL
March 24 at 1:30pm
As the date gets closer a reminder email will go out along with the WebEx link