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## Announcement: ELRC-20 #14, Keystone STARS Designation Process for FY 20-21

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The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has released the [\*Announcement: ELRC-20 #14, Keystone STARS Designation Process for FY 20-21.\*](#)

This Announcement provides information to child care programs regarding the processes for Keystone STARS Designations for the 20/21 FY. Virtual components have been added to the Keystone STARS designation process in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in ECE programs. In addition, the expectations for STARS paperwork renewals are explained through this policy announcement.

The outbreak of COVID-19 across the commonwealth has required OCDEL to continually monitor the conditions posed by the pandemic and adapt accordingly. As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, OCDEL will allow for virtual components to the Keystone STARS designation process to mitigate the risk of virus transmission. Additionally, OCDEL has suspended the requirement for STAR 3 and 4 programs to have an external Program Quality Assessment (PQA) for FY 2020. In place of an external PQA, during FY 2020, STAR 3 and 4 programs will work with their Quality Coach and a member of the Pennsylvania Key PQA Team to develop an Internal Assessment Process (IAP). This IAP will help to guide the program's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan and activities.

OCDEL has directed Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) to grant six-month extensions to programs' Keystone STARS designations for all those with expiration dates from March through Aug. 31, 2020. These extensions were designed to allow programs to focus on health and safety practices rather than on activities associated with designation renewals.

Beginning Sept. 1, 2020, the designation process for Keystone STARS will include virtual options for both renewals and move-ups. This protocol will remain in place during the COVID-19 pandemic conditions and until further notice from OCDEL. Each ELRC will be implementing a virtual designation procedure that has been approved by OCDEL. These individualized plans allow each ELRC to meet the unique needs of the programs within their regions.

For more information, see the [\*Announcement: ELRC-20 #14, Keystone STARS Designation Process for FY 20-21.\*](#)

The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning supports families and their children, from prenatal through school age, by using data, research and stakeholder guidance to assure high quality services.