

Early Childhood Provider Call

Meeting Minutes

April 28, 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.

OEL continues to fill vacancies. We will update with specifics once final candidates have been selected.

Tiered Reimbursement Update:

- Unique relationship between Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS)
- Payment based on Purchase of Care (POC) enrollment and star level
- Multi-agency effort to ensure timely and accurate payments
- DHSS sends report to DDOE, DDOE approves and issues funds to DHSS, DHSS pays individual providers
- All inquiries or questions can be directed to tiered.reimbursement@doe.k12.de.us

Caitlin Gleason, Associate Secretary, Early Childhood Support (ECS)

Introduced herself as the new Associate Secretary of ECS. Caitlin worked in the Office of Early for five years before taking a little break to work in the Governor's office with the Family Service Cabinet Council. Her focus is thinking about policy conditions and why some of the experiences that children and family are having are the result of how government puts things down on paper and how can we be more creative and think threw a system that allows children and families to grow thrive and be healthy. Other top focus items are the workforce crisis, using data to make decisions to inform how we think about everything that guides our work, also the funding mechanisms and how can we simplify and make things more consistent for professionals so that our children and families can feel that consistency.

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

Proposed changes to Center regulations are posted in the [April issue of the Delaware Register of Regulations](#). Comments may be submitted until May 2, 2022. A summary of the proposed changes is in the Registry and Kelly McDowell held info sessions regarding the proposed changes and many of you participated. Please provide comments to DOEregulations.comment@doe.k12.de.us, **we want your comments**, if you support the proposed change or if you do not support the proposed change. If you do not support the change, please offer suggestions for improvement.

The bonus payments are coming. To speed up the process, we will discontinue developing the professional registry until the bonus payments have been made to providers. You must be currently working with children in a licensed facility at the time of your application and have done so for at least 20 hours a week for at least 90 days. Please save or gather your pay stubs. Details will be in the Registry system and we will send a notice when the system is available.

OCCL still has a licensing specialist position vacancy. The position is posted on the DDOE website if you know someone who might be interested in applying. Click [here](#) for more information.

Public Health has COVID test kits available for child care providers. We are working to get pick up locations. If you are willing to serve as a pick-up location for COVID testing kits for child care providers, please contact your local OCCL office. Final determination of those sites will be based on location, etc.

Qualifications Certificates: There seems to be some confusion regarding staff NOT having a DEEDS Early Learning qualifications certificate and the ability to work in a licensed center without one.

Center providers received a notice from OCCL on March 9, 2022, informing you that all staff must physically possess their DEEDS certificate, with a copy in their personnel file, in order to be able to work in that position as of May 1, 2022. OCCL was reverting to [DELACARE](#) Regulations as written and as shown below.

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This does NOT mean that staff cannot work and must be terminated if they do not have a DEEDS certificate. Staff without any DEEDS Early Learning certificate are temporarily classified as an aide and can work as an aide until their certificate for a higher position is received. (Newly hired staff have 60 days to submit their qualifications to DEEDS and can work as an aide until their qualifications approval for a higher position is received.) The individual may not be alone with children but can count in ratio for the first year of employment. (See Regulation 24 L for a complete description.)

OCCL supervisors will review [DELACARE](#) Regulations to see if a change is warranted. As always, please contact your licensing specialist with any questions.

Center Regulations state:

24 A.: “A licensee shall ensure sufficient qualified staff members are hired and retained to meet the requirements of these regulations. A licensee shall ensure a copy of the qualifications certificate is kept in the staff member’s file.”

24C: “A licensee shall ensure each staff member without a qualifications certificate submits, within 60 days of hire, true and accurate documentation to Delaware First showing how the staff member is qualified for a position.”

27 A.: “A licensee shall ensure supervision and direct observation of children is provided at all times. This supervision occurs through the assignment of qualified staff members who are physically present and working 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 May 2022.

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 May at this time.

The Cost of Quality Care Estimator tool was released on March 1, 2022. The links to those tools can be found on <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dss/>

Any questions regarding POC please feel free to reach out to Tom Hall directly at 302-255-9605.

DHSS has communicated with the Administration for Children and Families’ the federal agency that administers the CCDF program, that Delaware would like to explore and pursue the option of using the cost estimator tool as a measure for establishing provider rates. They have responded with a number of conditions which will need to be met for Delaware to implement that option. Over the next year we will be working with our partners, at DDOE, the provider community, advocates and government officials to respond to ACFs’ requests.

Stabilization Grants round Four, I apologize we have exceeded the two-week turnaround time for the distribution of grants this month; this was the result of a number of internal issues that have been identified and resolved, all grants we have received for processing will be processed by the end of the week, we expect to have all back within the two-week turnaround going forward

Kristy Sheffler, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC)

As of April 27, 2022, a total of \$82,954,093.05 has been approved for early childhood programs as part of the stabilization fund

- \$66,807,093.05 approved for 855 programs as part of rounds 1-3

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- \$16,147,000.00 approved for 727 programs as part of round 4

For newly licensed programs that were not eligible to participate in the stabilization fund program before, applications are now open – we are reaching out to each eligible program individually to answer questions and help get applications submitted.

Please reach out to StabilizationFund@udel.edu with any questions

Jamie Mack, Chief, Health Systems Protection, Delaware Public Health

Working on plans for the summer/fall in case there are any spikes or resurgences of COVID

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

BONUS PAYMENTS

Q – Purpose of the bonus payments and who is eligible?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – The purpose of the bonus payments is to recognize the hard work that child care providers have done through this very difficult time. Who is eligible will be anyone who has worked directly with children at least 20 hours a week and has done so for the last 90 days

Q – If an administrator doesn't work with children they are not able to participate?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – They are able to participate if they are actively working with children in their child care center. As long as the administrator is onsite working in the center, they do not have to be assigned to a classroom, they are eligible for the bonus payment. If they are an owner and not in center/program working 20 hours per week they would not be eligible

Q – How much is the bonus payments and when can they apply

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – The bonus payment is expected to be \$1,500.00 and you can apply as soon as the system is complete within the next six to eight weeks

Q – About the applications and when will it be live?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – When we know the exact timing it will go out to the OCCL email blast list and will also explain the process on the next provider call that will be on May 26, 2022. The process for applying will be an online portal and will be explained in full

Q – What do we need to do to get our center on the OCCL email blast?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – If you are not on the OCCL email distribution list you need to call you local OCCL office and tell them that either your email address has changed or that you are not on the list. But if you have supplied us with an email address you should have been receiving emails from OCCL regarding a variety of different things, from our community partners, as well as OCCL notices

Q – Is it matter of how much each employee earn?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – It is not a matter of what employees earn

Q – Who are the emails coming from for bonus

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – The email with the application link will be coming from the Office of Child Care Licensing

Q – Even if we qualify, do we still need to apply?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – Yes, you will still need to apply. The application process will be live and we will describe how to apply but it is not something that is automatically given because it is a taxable payment and you will need to upload your information so we can properly get you that bonus payment

Q – Are the cafeteria staff also eligible to receive the bonus payment, please clarify?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – I will need to confirm about cafeteria staff since I am coming up to speed on this initiative myself. It will be included in the information about the application that we send out. Thank you for bringing this up!

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Q – Is our finance director able to qualify for the bonus? They are part of administration in our center.

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – We will be clear on what positions are eligible for bonus payments. Since this is a new, one-time initiative, we are finalizing our portal system, website, and user guide. I appreciate people sharing that this might be the first time they are learning about the bonus payments! This is very helpful to help us answer these questions in our communication when we send it.

STABILIZATION FUNDS

Q – Can a family child care provider use money they have received from the stabilization grant to open a child care center?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – There are federal stipulations on what the stabilization funds can be used for, and opening a new program is not one of those eligible expenditures. That being said, we can provide support to a family child care provider to verify eligible expenditures that might then make other funds available for their use.

Q – Who can the provider follow up with if they have not yet received our funds?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – Please follow up by emailing StabilizationFund@udel.edu

Q – If we took the previous grant as pay, what receipts are we sending for this latest grant?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – The same expenditures are eligible for round 4 that were eligible for previous rounds and the same types of documentation will be accepted. A DIEEC employee will be following up with programs to discuss what is needed.

Q – When can we expect to get the round 4 funds?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – For outstanding payments, DHSS has confirmed that electronic payments should be available the week of May 2, 2022, and if you are receiving a paper check within two weeks of May 2, 2022.

Q – Who gets electronic/paper check?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – That depends on how your account is set up with the Division of Accounting, if you would like to know that you will need to reach out to them directly at 302-672-5000

Q – How much are the round 4 grants?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – For small and large family programs it's \$7,000, small centers \$37,000 and large centers \$49,000

Q – Can we use January and February payroll expense to show allowable expense for round 4?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – Yes, you can, round 4 covers January 1 – June 30th expenses

Q – This last round of stabilization funds that went to in-home providers, are we able to treat that as salary and bonus or do we need to submit receipts for those items purchased with the \$7,000?

A – Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC – Yes, family providers are able to use the funds for round 4 in the same way as the earlier rounds - your own pay and bonus is eligible. We will support you in documenting the same way as the last round - if you do not have an official payroll, we will help you calculate and use that as documentation.

PURCHASE OF CARE

Q – Do you know how long POC may be covering parent copays and paying for 15 days of absence? Do you foresee this happening through the summer? permanently?

A – Tom Hall, DHSS – Currently we are looking at the 15 absent day and co-pays on a month to month basis as relates to the pandemic and the program budget

Q – I was asked to forward in my entire Handbook and I was given a deadline to hand it in or I would be blocked out of the Portal. We do not have a handbook for POC to provide to OCCL, where can we find this?

A – Tom Hall, DHSS – We have given out a packet, but it sounds like we can do more. Tom asked to give him a call to look into this to provide better documentation to providers.

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Q – My parent received their authorization for the upcoming term, but I haven't received anything yet. What can I tell my parent? They do not have an authorization coming up.

A – Tom Hall, DHSS – Anytime this situation happens we are going to error in the favor of the family, so if they have documentation that they have authorization, please provide services to that family and we will make sure that the provider gets paid. Please send Tom the information regarding that particular parent and he can research that and look into that.

DEEDS EARLY LEARNING

Q – If we have a Qualification certificate through DE1st, do we need to get a new Certificate through DEEDS?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Only if you are changing positions

Q – Who can an employee call who is having a difficult time getting her DEEDS certificate.

A – Amber Shelton, OEL – If the employee is having trouble printing off their certificate they can send an email to deedsearlylearning@doe.k12.de.us

Q – Can the rule that requires teachers to have their certification before they can start work that begins on May 1st, be something that we can state we don't agree with?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – If there is something that you do not agree with, if you're telling us that the DEEDS system is not getting responses out as promptly as we believed, let OCCL know. We based that decision on the fact that deeds had informed us that everything was getting turned around within 2 weeks assuming that the application was complete, if you're not sending everything in then of course, there's no way for DEEDS to process it that promptly. Licensing does not want to damaging your program; I will take this issue back to the supervisory team and we will have a discussion.

Q – If an employee is waiting for their certificate can they still work after May 1, 2022?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Yes

Q – Who is to apply for DEEDS Certificate?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – That is for center employees, everybody except an aide, they are all listed in the regulations.

Q – Does a very part time aide who is never alone with children need a certificate?

A – Kimberly Garvey, OCCL – Aides do not receive a qualifications certificate

Q – If staff have to be certified before starting work, how are we addressing the experience requirement of the certification?

A – Betty Gail Timm, OCCL – Not all staff require experience to begin work or to be alone with children, we have aide positions. The licensing regulations outline what the age, what the education and what the experience are for all of the center positions.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Q – Would DE be able to move forward with UPK without congress passing Build Back Better? Or is that completely contingent on BBB?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – Build Back Better legislation was pitched with a lot of money attached to it so the concept of providing preschool universally is contingent on a lot more money and I think we can do more around creating a cohesive preschool system that children can participate in in our state without those funds but in terms of financing it, the federal legislation would need to pass in order for us to do that fully

Q – Who can my employee contact regarding information on CDA? She has taken 3 years EC training in high school several years ago and wants to know if she can just complete the Portfolio?

A – Kim Krzanowski, OEL – If an individual meets all the requirements for, which is 120 hours of required training, and they have also completed an observation as well as the exam from the Council for Professional Recognition. They need that along with our portfolio to actually get the CDA. So, it's not just hours and doing the portfolio that's part of the component. The council for professional recognition website is <https://www.cdacouncil.org/en/>, and that will be a great resource to see exactly what the person needs to do to obtain their CDA.

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Q – Who governs the office of childcare license?

A – Caitlin Gleason, ECS – The Office of Child Care Licensing is now a part of the Delaware Department of Education, which is led by the Secretary of Education

This meeting recording can be found [HERE](#)

UPCOMING PROVIDER CALL

May 26, 2022, at 1:30pm

As the date gets closer a reminder email will go out along with the WebEx link