



Procedure Letter 13

TO: Early Care and Education Stakeholders - Early Childhood Education Grantees

FROM: Kara B. Wente, Director

DATE: March 26, 2025

SUBJECT: Important Updates on SFY26 Early Childhood Education Grant Eligibility

Background

On February 12, the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) Early Childhood Education (ECE) team presented a proposed plan for the next school year. On February 25, the Director testified before the Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee, highlighting a comprehensive early care and education system designed to streamline the application process for families and the payment process for providers.

DCY has received many questions about next year's eligibility criteria for ECE. DCY understands concerns about funding and access, and both remain top priorities in the DCY long-term plan for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 26-27. The DCY is committed to expanding access to quality early care and education services for more Ohio children. Additionally, several school districts have expressed interest in offering Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC), a development DCY is excited about. DCY hopes to see this momentum continue. DCY appreciates your commitment and hopes this update addresses many of your questions regarding next year.

Note: The details in this procedure letter are contingent upon legislative action to enact the biennial budget.

Purpose

This procedure letter shares the final decisions regarding eligibility for the ECE grant program for the next school year. Looking ahead, DCY will begin drafting Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) rules for the SFY 26 administration of the ECE Grant (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026). These rules will further solidify eligibility and other key criteria. DCY is committed to engaging stakeholders in this process. DCY thanks grantees for your continued dedication to serving young children and families in our community. Please see the details regarding ECE eligibility below.



Family Applications

- **Application Process:** Families may apply for the school year 25-26 on a rolling basis, either via paper or electronically (electronically is preferred for tracking county 30-day application timeliness).
- **Application Assistance:** Grantees may assist families with the application process but may not apply on their behalf or without their knowledge and informed consent. It is important parents acknowledge their rights and responsibilities.

Eligibility Determination

- **Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC):** All applications will first be evaluated for PFCC eligibility. If approved for PFCC, all children will be authorized for PFCC only. A family will not have the option to decline PFCC to receive ECE. Exceptions to this include:
 - Families with a preschool-aged child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). DCY will honor the least restricted environment as identified in the IEP in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Rule 3301-51-11(J). In the event the placement is not the PFCC program, the preschool-aged child is allowed both ECE and PFCC; the attendance must not overlap hours.
 - When a highly rated PFCC program is not available. Families may choose ECE for their preschool-aged child and are allowed both ECE and PFCC for the preschool-aged child only; the attendance must not overlap hours.
- **Child Care Choice Voucher Program (CCVP) and ECE:** If the family is denied PFCC, eligibility for CCVP and ECE will be explored. Families will then be able to choose the best option for their preschool-aged child.
 - Families eligible for CCVP will be authorized to an eligible CCVP program.
 - The family may choose between CCVP **or** ECE for their preschool-aged child.

Initial and Ongoing Early Childhood Education Eligibility

- **Initial ECE Criteria:**
 - Determined **not** eligible for PFCC.
 - Child must be 3-5 years old and not eligible for kindergarten.
 - Child must be a U.S. citizen or qualified alien.
 - Family income must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), as updated in October 2025 (see attached).



- At least one caretaker with no qualifying activity. *You may have some “working families” that do not qualify for PFCC that could be enrolled in ECE. For instance, if you have a 2-parent household, but only one parent is working, and they are under 200% FPL, that family does not meet PFCC eligibility, and that child could be served in ECE.*
- Automatically eligible (categorically eligible) children include:
 - Children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
 - Homeless children
 - Children in foster or kinship care with a family service plan or Kinship Permanency Incentive Program (KPIP)
 - Early Intervention (EI) program exiters (Part C)
- **Ongoing ECE Criteria:**
 - Once a preschool-aged child is determined to be eligible for an ECE slot, eligibility continues until they become Kindergarten age eligible unless eligibility is discontinued for another reason (moved out of state, became PFCC eligible, etc.).
 - In August, Ohio Benefits will maintain eligibility for the ECE grant until the preschool-aged child turns five or completes the program year (June 30) of their fifth birthday, whichever is later.

Office Hours

The ECE team will hold office hours for grantees on **April 16, 2025**:

School based: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM [ECE OFFICE HOURS](#)

Community based: 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM [ECE OFFICE HOURS](#)

Reminders

Previous guidance was shared on the February 12 ECE call that the Time Attendance and Payment (TAP) system is not required for the Education Management Information System (EMIS) users for next year. However, attendance recording will still be required. Community-based grantees will continue to use TAP to record attendance in SFY26.

The Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) grants application and planning system (or its replacement) will continue to be used for all grantees in SFY26.



Contact

- Time Attendance and Payment (TAP) or KinderConnect
Phone: (833)866-1708
Website: [Contact – Child Care Time, Attendance and Payment Information – TAP Programs – Child Care Time, Attendance and Payment Information – TAP](#)
Email: SupportOH@kindersystems.com
- Grant Administration or Agreement Questions
Email: earlychildhoodeducation@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov
- Local JFS Agency: [Local Agencies Directory](#) and [Contact Us | Ohio Benefits Self Service Portal Core](#)