



ANNOUNCEMENT: S-07 #06
ANNOUNCEMENT: ELS/PKC-07 #07
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING
BUREAU OF SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE SERVICES
BUREAU OF EARLY LEARNING SERVICES

ISSUE DATE: August 31, 2007
EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2007

SUBJECT:	Linking Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and Child Care Works Subsidized Child Care Services
TO:	Child Care Information Services Agencies and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Grantees
FROM:	Harriet Dichter Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development and Early Learning

Harriet Dichter

PURPOSE:

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is pleased to announce that the Pennsylvania (PA) Pre-K Counts program is now accepting enrollments for the 2007-08 school year. PA Pre-K Counts will provide 3- and 4-year old children the opportunity to attend quality half- and full-day pre-kindergarten classes located in schools, Head Start facilities, STAR 2 and above child care centers and nursery schools.

The program targets children who are at-risk of academic failure due to economic circumstances, language barriers, cultural and special needs issues. Many children who are at-risk academically currently receive subsidized child care services through Child Care Works. The purpose of this Announcement is to provide information regarding how PA Pre-K Counts will link with Child Care Works, the subsidized child care program, to provide children with a full day of quality early care and education services while their parents participate in work and training activities.

BACKGROUND:

Research indicates that children who attend quality pre-kindergarten programs do better in school, are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education services, and are more likely to graduate and attend college. PA Pre-K Counts offers half- and full-day quality pre-kindergarten services for 180 days during the school year.

Parents who receive subsidized child care services should be afforded the opportunity to enroll their children in high quality pre-kindergarten programs while continuing to receive before and after pre-kindergarten child care. Linking PA Pre-K Counts and the Child Care Works subsidized child care program will give subsidy-eligible parents a full day of care to cover all hours the parent needs to work or participate in employment and training activities.

Child care regulation Chapter 3041, Subsidized Child Care Eligibility, provides special eligibility for children enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program such as PA Pre-K Counts. The regulation allows eligibility for subsidized child care to continue until the child is no longer enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts. In addition, parents need only report a loss of employment and the end of enrollment in the pre-kindergarten program to the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agency.

Participation in PA Pre-K Counts does not signify the parent is eligible for Child Care Works. If a parent whose child is enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts needs help with paying for before and after pre-kindergarten child care, the parent must contact the local CCIS agency for an application and eligibility determination for subsidized child care.

A family with a child enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts must meet all Child Care Works eligibility requirements in order to receive a child care subsidy. If the family is determined eligible for Child Care Works, but funds are not immediately available to enroll the child in the program, the child will be placed on the waiting list. Children are enrolled from the waiting list on a “first come first serve” basis as funding for enrollment becomes available. A child’s enrollment in PA Pre-K Counts has no impact on the amount of time the child must wait for Child Care Works funding.

DISCUSSION:

PA Pre-K Counts information for parents:

The CCIS will actively promote participation in PA Pre-K Counts. PA Pre-K Counts will provide CCISs with a listing of PA Pre-K Counts classroom sites. The CCIS will assure that parents of three and four-year old children who apply for subsidized child care services receive information and counseling about the benefits of enrolling their child in PA Pre-K Counts. The CCIS will assure that all private-pay parents of three and four-year olds who contact the CCIS for resource and referral services receive information about PA Pre-K Counts.

Benefits for families that participate in PA Pre-K Counts and Child Care Works:

Children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms will have teachers with the education and expertise to teach young children, curriculum that helps children grow academically and socially and small classroom sizes that allow plenty of one-on-one time with their teachers.

Families who are eligible and participating in the Child Care Works subsidized child care program receive additional benefits when their child is enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts. The following benefits, if needed, apply to children receiving subsidized child care:

- Continued eligibility for subsidized child care, with no redetermination requirement, until the child is no longer enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts.
- Availability of wrap-around hours of care for before and after pre-kindergarten hours.
- Full-time summer care if needed when a child is returning to a PA Pre-K Counts classroom in the fall.
- Reporting requirements that are limited to loss of employment and end of enrollment in PA Pre-K Counts. Redetermination for the subsidized child care program occurs when the child is no longer eligible for the PA Pre-K Counts program.

Parents will be assessed a weekly co-payment based on family size and income. Parents who receive subsidized child care before and after pre-kindergarten must continue to make timely co-payments in order to remain eligible for Child Care Works.

Payments to providers:

PA Pre-K Counts awarded grants to providers to cover the cost of the pre-kindergarten day. Child care centers and group homes with a Keystone STAR rating of two and above were eligible to apply for PA Pre-K Counts. Providers may establish classrooms that are half-day (no fewer than two and a half hours) or full-day (no fewer than five hours). Payments for child care before and after pre-kindergarten hours will be made as follows:

- A provider who establishes a full-day PA Pre-K Counts classroom will receive a part-time subsidized child care rate for children enrolled in Child Care Works, no matter how many hours of before and after pre-kindergarten child care are needed.
- A provider who establishes a part-time PA Pre-K Counts classroom will receive a part-time or full-time subsidized child care rate for children enrolled in Child Care Works depending on the number of hours of before and after pre-kindergarten child care are needed.
- A provider may be paid the blended rate for Child Care Works children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts who need a blend of part-time and full-time child care during the PA Pre-K Counts school year.
- A provider may be paid a nontraditional rate when appropriate. If the provider has a full-day PA Pre-K Counts classroom, the provider must accept a non-traditional part-time rate when appropriate, no matter how many hours of before-and-after pre-kindergarten child care hours are given to the child enrolled in Child Care Works.

NEXT STEPS:

- 1) Share this Announcement with appropriate staff.
- 2) Share the Frequently Asked Questions with appropriate staff.
- 3) Encourage parents of three- and four-year old children to participate in PA Pre-K Counts.
- 4) Refer questions about Child Care Works to Subsidy Coordinators.
- 5) Refer questions about PA Pre-K Counts to Bob Bell at (717) 213-2070 or e-mail bobbel@berksiu.org.