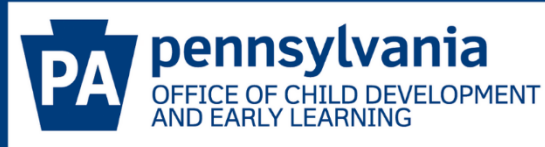


ANNOUNCEMENT ELRC 20 #18



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: Dec. 21, 2020

Effective Date: Dec. 21, 2020

Expiration Date: Until the Governor's Proclamation of Disaster Emergency expires or is rescinded

Subject: Keystone STARS Designation Maintenance for Facilities
Temporarily Closed Due to COVID-19

To: Keystone STARS Facilities
Early Learning Resource Centers
Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Staff

From: Tracey Campanini 
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE

To provide protocols for Keystone STARS facilities that were temporarily closed or will temporarily close in the future due to COVID-19.

BACKGROUND

This announcement provides protocols and timeframes for Keystone STARS facilities planning to reopen during the current Proclamation of Disaster Emergency issued by Governor Tom Wolf on March 6, 2020, and most recently renewed on Nov. 24, 2020 (together, "Disaster Proclamation").

On a temporary basis, some child care facilities may have closed or might choose to close in the future due to COVID-19. OCDEL acknowledges the need for further guidance for these facilities on managing their Keystone STARS designations, particularly for those that experienced a Keystone STARS designation expiration during closure.

DISCUSSION

Certification regulations serve as the foundation of Keystone STARS and, all facilities who are planning to reopen following a temporary closure due to COVID-19, must first follow the guidance issued in *Announcement C-20-13 Reopening of Certified Child Care Facilities Temporarily or Permanently Closed Due to COVID-19, or any future revisions to this Announcement*, related to their Department of Human Services (DHS) certificate of compliance. All Keystone STARS facilities reopening after a COVID-19 closure **must** hold either a regular DHS Certificate of Compliance or a private academic license through Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) prior to a Keystone STAR designation being awarded.

The protocols below address specific circumstances that may apply to Keystone STARS facilities designated in the STARS system prior to closure and steps that must be taken when reopening following a COVID-19 related closure:

TABLE OF KEYSTONE STARS DESIGNATION STATUS PROTOCOL FOR REOPENING

Scenario	Protocol
<i>Facility is reopening with regular DHS Certificate of Compliance or a private academic license through PDE and...</i>	
The facility will reopen before their current Keystone STARS designation has expired. The facility has been closed for less than six months .	PROTOCOL #1
The facility will reopen before their current Keystone STARS designation has expired. The facility has been closed for six months or more .	PROTOCOL #2
The facility will reopen after their Keystone STARS designation has expired (length of closure irrelevant).	PROTOCOL #3

NOTE: Any facility with a provisional certificate of compliance (COC) can still work with their ELRC and Quality Coach to begin or resume the Keystone STARS designation process. Once a regular COC is issued, the facility can officially apply for a STARS move-up.

1. PROTOCOL #1: The facility will reopen before their current Keystone STARS designation has expired and the facility has been closed for less than six months:

A Keystone STARS facility that has been temporarily closed due to COVID-19 for less than six months and whose current Keystone STARS designation has not expired must complete the following steps prior to reopening:

- The legal entity/operator must notify their Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) two weeks prior to the date they plan to reopen the facility, if possible.
- Facility will reopen at same STAR level designation they held at the time of their temporary closure.
- Facility will maintain their current placement on the Keystone STARS 3-year designation cycle including current expiration date.

2. PROTOCOL #2: The facility will reopen before their current Keystone STARS designation has expired. The facility has been closed for six months or more:

A Keystone STARS facility that has been temporarily closed due to COVID-19 for six months or more and whose current Keystone STARS designation has not expired must complete the following steps:

- The legal entity/operator must notify their Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) two weeks prior to the date they plan to reopen the facility, if possible.
- The facility will be placed on a STARS Status Review at the time they contact the ELRC of plans to reopen. The facility can complete this STARS Status Review by completing a paperwork renewal, as outlined below, prior to reopening or within five (5) business days after reopening.
- The facility must complete a paperwork renewal to consist of the following items **prior to reopening or within five business days after reopening:**
 - Request for Keystone STARS Designation and Program Information Form
 - CQI Plan Annual Update – must meet updated requirements found in 2020 Keystone STARS Performance Standards, quality indicator EC 2.1
 - Facility Staffing Grid - must meet updated requirements found in 2020 Keystone STARS Performance Standards, quality indicator SQ 2.2.
- A facility that completes the paperwork renewal items, as outlined above, prior to reopening or within five (5) business days of reopening, will maintain the same STAR level they held at the time of their temporary closure. The Keystone STARS Status Review would end at this point. The facility will maintain their current placement in the Keystone STARS 3-year Designation Cycle.
- The facility will still maintain its current upcoming Keystone STARS designation expiration date and will be required to complete which ever type of designation renewal they are due to complete (paperwork or full designation).
- A facility that is unable to complete their Keystone STARS Status Review paperwork renewal as outlined above prior to reopening or within five business days of reopening, will have their STAR reduced to a STAR 1. The facility will have to use 2020 Keystone STARS Performance Standards to move up in STAR levels. These facilities will begin a new Keystone STARS 3-year Designation Cycle.

3. PROTOCOL #3: The facility will reopen after their Keystone STARS designation has expired (length of closure irrelevant)

A Keystone STARS facility that is temporarily closed and Keystone STARS designation expired (*These facilities would have been moved to a STAR 1 or No STAR Level and, in some cases, their DHS Certificate of Compliance may be expiring*) must complete the following steps prior to reopening:

- The legal entity/operator must notify their Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) two weeks prior to the date they plan to reopen the facility, if possible.
- The facility will reopen as a STAR 1 but will be prioritized for move-up with the ELRCs.
- The facility can request to move up in STAR levels using the 2020 Keystone STARS Performance Standards.

NEXT STEPS

1. Child care facilities
 - a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
 - b. Direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRCs
 - a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
 - b. Direct any question to your program representative.