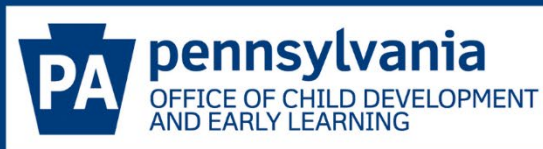


# ANNOUNCEMENT ELRC 21 #01



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

**Issue Date:** Jan. 13, 2021

**Effective Date:** Jan. 13, 2021

**End Date:** Feb. 12, 2021

**Subject:** Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award

**To:** All Regulated Child Care Providers; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program Representatives

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

## PURPOSE

To announce the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award, a one-time award of \$600 paid to eligible child care employees and child care support staff of Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) certified child care providers. This award is paid through Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC) on behalf of Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) directly to eligible certified child care providers. DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director will apply on behalf of their eligible child care employees and child care support employees currently working directly with children as of Jan. 1, 2021, and working a minimum of 20 paid hours a week. The child care eligible employees will be paid directly by the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director.

## BACKGROUND

In order to provide assistance to child care employees within the child care industry, OCDEL approved a one-time Child Care COVID-19 pandemic award using federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) quality dollars and remaining CARES Act round one and two funding. This award process will replace the quality Keystone STARS Education and Retention Award (ERA), Merit and Rising STAR previously funded quality grants and awards for FY 2020. This award will positively impact a greater number of child care employees and child care support staff. Child care providers of all STAR levels may apply on behalf of their child care employees. Awards are not based

on the provider's STAR level. The Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award will provide \$600 to approximately 33,000 child care employees and child care support staff across the commonwealth. Past quality grants and awards benefited a much smaller complement of child care employees. For example, the ERA annually only provided payments to approximately 9,000 child care employees. All awarded funds are contingent upon the availability of state and federal funds.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Eligibility Requirements:**

Requirements of past quality grants such as the ERA minimum 10 percent participation with subsidized and early intervention children do not apply to this award. Providers of all STAT levels may apply on behalf of their child care employees and child care support employees.

To be eligible for the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award, a DHS certified child care employee or child care support staff must meet the following requirements:

- Currently working at the provider as of Jan. 1, 2021.
- Earn less than a gross salary of \$70,000 annually.
- Work a minimum of 20 hours a week at a DHS certified child care provider.
  - Holidays, vacation, sick and other approved time off does not factor into this eligibility requirement.
- Pre-K Counts (PKC) and Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) DHS child care employees and child care support staff are also eligible if they work directly with children in a DHS certified child care at least 20 hours a week.
  - These employees must work outside of the PKC and HSSAP program hours and meet all other eligibility criteria as noted in the above first three bullets.
  - PKC and HSSAP DHS child care employees and child care support employees are also eligible if they work directly with children in a blended classroom with both PKC and HSSAP funded children, Child Care Works (CCW) and/or private pay child care children.

Examples of child care employees may include but are not limited to the following:

- **Child Care Center:** Director, Group Supervisor, Assistant Group Supervisor, Aide
- **Group Child Care Home:** Primary Staff and Secondary Staff
- **Family Child Care Home:** Owner/Operator and Staff Person

### **Ineligible:**

The following scenarios will deem the DHS certified child care employee or child care support employee ineligible:

- DHS certified child care employees and child care support employees who are currently laid off or did not return after being laid off from work during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- DHS certified child care employees or child care support employees working less than 20 hours a week at the DHS certified child care provider.
- Volunteers.
- Household member (unless household member is a paid employee working 20 hours a week in a DHS regulated child care).
- Pre-K Counts and HSSAP employees not working directly with children in a DHS certified child care setting at least 20 hours a week.
- Employees working in a business role where no direct contact with families or children take place.
- Employees who earn more than a gross salary of \$70,000 annually.
- Relative child care providers.
- Outside vendors serving as support staff.
- Staff working virtually.

**Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Criteria:**

- The award amount is the same for any eligible DHS certified child care employee or child care support employee, regardless of their role in the organization as detailed above: \$600
- The award is paid directly from the local ELRC to the eligible DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director for each eligible DHS certified child care employee or child care support employee submitted on the application.
- The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director pays the award to the eligible DHS certified child care employee or child care support employee directly after taxes and deductions that would apply to regular wages.
- Only one award is allowed per eligible certified child care employee or child care support employee; regardless of employment at multiple locations or with multiple employers.
- The award is on a first-come, first-served basis.
- All awarded funds are contingent upon the availability of state and federal funds.

**Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Application:**

**Do not submit applications through Provider Self Service.**

The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director who has the authority to certify the application will submit, either by mail or email, the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief application to their local ELRC. This application is submitted on behalf of all their eligible DHS certified child care employees or child care support employees within each location. Applications are processed by the local ELRC and the payments sent directly to the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director who applied. The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director is then responsible for giving each DHS certified child care employee or child care support employee the **one-time payment** of \$600, minus the taxes and deductions that would apply to regular wages. Funds must be processed through payroll and are subject to applicable taxes.

DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director will **not** submit pay stubs to the ELRC with the application but must keep such documentation for potential review by ELRCs and state/federal agents who may need to review for auditing or monitoring purposes. DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director must maintain all award related documents for seven (7) years.

#### **Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Application Dates:**

- The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director can begin to apply on behalf of all their eligible DHS certified child care employees or child care support employees for this award on **Jan. 13, 2021**.
- All applications must be postmarked, if not sent electronically, by **Feb. 12, 2021**, to the ELRC.
- This award will be **issued on a first-come, first-served basis**.

**Funding will be distributed regionally and is limited, so applicants are encouraged to apply sooner rather than later.**

#### **Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Approval:**

- All applications must be completed in their entirety when sending to the local ELRC.
- Any incomplete applications will be returned to the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director for corrections and must be returned to the ELRC by Feb. 12, 2021.
- The local ELRC will **not** complete any portions of the application for the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director, but can provide technical assistance, if needed.

#### **Monitoring of the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Expenses and Payments:**

- There will be a sampled monitoring of DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director by the ELRC to ensure proper issuance of the payments to child care employees or child care support employees.
- The spending of the award by the awarded child care employee or child care support employees will not be monitored or documented by the ELRC or the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director.
- Each recipient must follow their local, state and federal tax obligations when filing their taxes.

#### **Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Dates for Payments:**

- The ELRC must issue the awards to the qualifying DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director by March 31, 2021.
- Awards must be paid by the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director to their eligible DHS certified child care employees or child care support employees by May 31, 2021.

- Any funds awarded for this purpose must be paid to employees or returned to the ELRC by June 30, 2021.
- Monitoring will occur after May 31, 2021.

**Monitoring of the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award by the ELRC:**

DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director must keep an accounting of the payments to their child care employees and child care support employees. Each child care employee and child care support employee awarded must have a valid pay stub that covers the pay period of Jan. 1, 2021. The pay stub must also show that the employee worked a minimum of 20 hours, not including holidays, vacation, sick and other approved time off.

Following payment of the awards, the ELRC will monitor a sample of the approved applications and conduct a monitoring process with a sample of provider agencies. Selected DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director will need to provide the ELRC with proper verification of the payment going to their child care employees and child care support employees; and that the employees met the work requirements.

The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director must also keep documentation of payment to employees such as:

- Copies of general ledger posting records;
- Copies of check registers or listing of checks written by the provider; or
- Computer accounting record screenshots or other lists of data indicating payment.

If non-compliance is identified during the ELRC monitoring, the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director will be obligated to return these funds to the ELRC. If employees choose not to accept the funds or if the DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director has unexpended funds, these funds must be returned to the ELRC.

**Additional Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award Information:**

- DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director will be notified by mail or email from the ELRC where they applied of their eligibility or ineligibility of the Child Care COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award.
- If a DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director chooses not to participate in this award process, the employee cannot apply as an individual.
- DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director who determined they were temporarily closed as of Jan. 1, 2021, cannot apply for this award.
- The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director who are required to be temporarily closed for 14 days due to COVID-19 cases, may apply.
- The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director who have a provisional or regular Certificate of Compliance as of Jan. 1, 2021, and intend to operate in program year FY 2020 can apply on behalf of their eligible employees.
- The DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director with a 'refuse to renew' or 'revocation' status as of Jan. 1, 2021, are not eligible to apply.

- If DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director received a 'refuse to renew' or 'revocation' status after they applied, but before payment is made by the ELRC, the award will not be made.
- If DHS certified child care provider's owner/operator/director has a tax lien, their employees are still eligible for this award.

## **NEXT STEPS**

1. DHS certified child care providers
  - a. Begin applying for eligible DHS certified child care employees and child care support employees on Jan. 13, 2021.
  - b. Direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRCs
  - a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
  - b. Direct any question to your program representative.