

# Getting To Know PA Pre-K Counts Webinar Series

## *Child Eligibility, Enrollment, and Attendance*

### ***Today's Presenters:***

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# Meeting Topics

- Child Eligibility
  - Income Verification
  - Prioritization Plans
  - Program Enrollment Expectations
  - Enrollment Monitoring
  - Inclusion
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# Child Eligibility Statute

## Act 45 of 2007

"Eligible student." A child who is at least three years of age and is younger than the entry age of kindergarten in the school district of residence.

"At-risk child." A child who is at a risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, community factors, academic difficulties or economic disadvantage.

The ACT gives authority to PDE to (1) To promulgate regulations and establish guidelines and standards necessary to implement this sub article.

# Child Eligibility Regulation

## § 405.3. Targeting General Rules

- (a) Program services shall be provided free of charge.
- (d) Programs must be open to children with identified developmental delays or disabilities, or both, and provide inclusive environments for these children.
- (e) Approved providers may enroll eligible students who reside outside of the providers' usual attendance area but all eligible children must be residents of this commonwealth.

# Child Eligibility Regulation

## § 405.3. Targeting General Rules

(f) Program grant funds are to be used for providing services and programs to age-eligible students as described in § 405.21 (relating to targeting children to be served). Program classes may include children supported by alternative funding sources, including Early Intervention, Head Start, school district or other public funds. In addition, those other funding sources may be used to support a student in a Program outside the age requirements or the 2-year time limitation.

Pursuant to the 2- year time limitation for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts participation, children enrolled in PA PKC must have turned three years of age by the kindergarten cutoff date for the district of residency. Once a child is age-eligible to attend kindergarten in the public school district of residence they are no longer eligible for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts funding. Those children eligible for kindergarten whose parents elect to keep their child in prekindergarten for an additional year may be placed in a Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom provided alternate funding sources are used and the child is not included in the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts enrollment. This applies to a kindergarten-eligible child who is participating in the Early Intervention program.

# Child Eligibility Regulation

## § 405.3. Targeting General Rules

(g) Approved providers shall verify the income and family size of all children participating in the Program prior to enrollment pursuant to Program announcements issued by the Department.

There are two primary eligibility requirements that all children must meet in order to be considered eligible for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts; children must be age and income eligible for the program. Local programs may define additional eligibility requirements, but at a minimum age and income must be met.

All children who participate in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts must be income-eligible. Families whose income is at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible. Income verification is required for every child.

# Highlights of Child Eligibility Supplemental Resources #002, #003

- Income Verification Guidance
  - Income Deductions
  - Income Exclusions
  - Whose Income Is Counted
  - Time Period For Income Verification
  - Family Size
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# Income Verification Examples

- Pay stubs (or a sampling) calculated across 12 months
- W-2 from previous year's income tax filing
- Written employer statement
- Copy of current benefit check
- Child Support documentation

\*\*To be equitable, providers should not require only one type of verification from families

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# Child Eligibility Regulation

## § 405.21. Targeting children to be served.

The Department will instruct applicants to **target their program enrollment to children who are most at risk, consistent with the description in the program guidance of targeting services to children most at risk**, if it is likely that the funds appropriated for the upcoming program year will be less than the funds required to serve all eligible children in this commonwealth. The Department will also instruct approved providers to engage in outreach and partnership with Child Care Works, Head Start, and other appropriate programs of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning to inform Programs and families that they serve about the availability of the Program and to coordinate with these programs particularly when there are waiting lists.

# Prioritization Statute

The PA PKC programs must target enrollment to children who are most at risk of school failure, which is defined as living in households below 300 percent of the federal poverty rate, **are English Language Learners (ELL) or are at risk due to community factors, academic difficulties, or economic disadvantage.**

**\*\*Importance of communicating prioritization process to families**

# Prioritization Plans

- Eligibility is not only based on income and first come first serve, but must consider additional risk factors
  - Must be transparent and unbiased
  - Should reflect local community needs
  - Communication of enrollment prioritization process to families
  - Prioritization of families over 100% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
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# Enrollment Regulation

## § 405.24. Enrollment.

- Each approved provider shall develop and implement a plan for securing full enrollment throughout the program year, except as follows:
- (1) When a student leaves the Program after the start of the program year, the provider shall have up to 20 instructional days to fill the vacancy, after which time the Department may request the return of funds or reduce future payments for the vacated and unfilled slot in the amount of funds, relative to the remaining instructional days of the Program for that program year, unless the vacancy occurs within 21 instructional days of the last day of class.
- (2) If an enrolled child has ten or more unexcused absences, the provider shall take appropriate steps to address attendance, up to and including dismissal of the child from the program. The department may request the return of funds or reduce future payments to Programs that have not taken appropriate steps to overcome unexcused absences.
- (3) Provider policies regarding unexcused absences and the number allowed must be written and provided to parents, families, or guardians of enrolled children and to the Department.
- (4) An approved provider may not deny a student admission to a Program by reason of the student's disability.

## Highlights of Enrollment, Attendance and Vacancies Supplemental Resources #005

- Definition of Full Enrollment (by Sept. 1)
  - Enrollment Reporting in PELICAN
  - Vacancies
  - Wait Lists
  - Attendance Requirement & Monitoring
  - Attendance Policy and Communication To Families
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# Enrollment Monitoring

- OCDEL monitoring of overall program enrollment is solely dependent on PELICAN monitoring data
  - Any child attendance issues, difficulty enrolling vacant slots, or failure to meet enrollment expectations must be communicated to Preschool Program Specialist
  - Failure to meet program enrollment expectations can result in loss of PRI points and funding adjustment (reduction).
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# Inclusion Statute

Children with identifiable disabilities or developmental delays may be included in the program and shall be served in inclusive environments in which they constitute no more than 20 percent of the initial enrollment at the start of the program year.

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# Inclusion Regulation

## **§ 405.51. Inclusive Environments.**

A Program classroom should reflect the naturally occurring ratio of students with and without developmental delays and disabilities in the area served by the approved provider and should not contain more than 20 percent of students who have been identified by the start of the program year as having a developmental delay or disability. However, in attempting to promote inclusion in this way, approved providers may not deny students admission to a classroom based on their disability or delay.



# Guidance for Inclusion

- PKC Providers must comply with the OCDEL [Inclusion Policy Statement](#) and [Suspension and Expulsion Policy Statement](#). For information about the Early Intervention Service Delivery Model go to [Early Intervention Service Delivery: Coaching Across Settings Announcement](#).
- After the start of the program year, additional children may be identified as needing Early Intervention services and ultimately an IEP or IFSP, bringing the percentage of children in the classroom having identified developmental delays or disabilities higher than 20 percent. This increase in the percentage after the start of the program year is allowed.