Program and Policy Guide for Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) for Early Care and Education Programs

Fiscal Year 2025
July1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Office of Early Learning

Updated August 12, 2024

Delaware
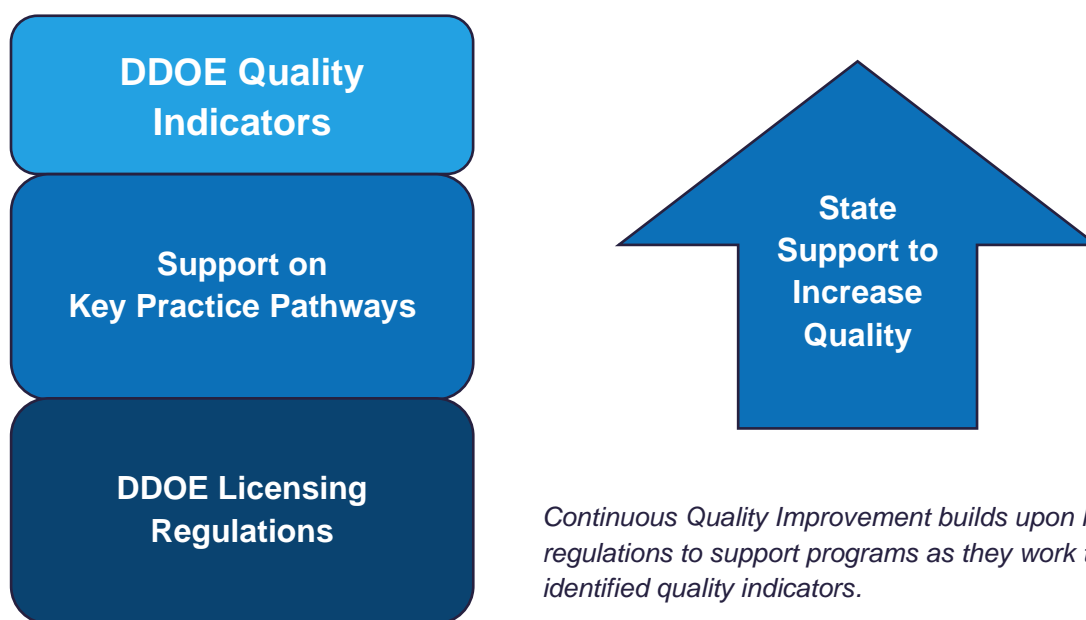Department of Education

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DELAWARE'S QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) is designed to support center-based and home-based early care and education programs through continuous quality improvement (CQI), building upon licensing regulations and working towards identified quality indicators. The QIS outlines a variety of supports that are accessible for programs as they work on implementing key practices.

Quality Indicators

Quality indicators are Delaware's identified components of quality. The Delaware QIS includes three Quality Indicators. For FY25, programs may write a Quality Improvement Plan and a Quality Improvement Award focusing on specific Key Practices in Quality Indicator 1 and/or 2.

1. **Creating Conditions for Quality (CQ)** - Program implements policies, procedures, and systems that support children, families, and early childhood professionals in the provision of early care and education.	**Funded areas of focus for FY25**
2. **Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ)** - Program creates culturally responsive, playful learning environments, using intentional and responsive interactions to promote relationships between educators and children and build a sense of community, while using developmentally-appropriate approaches to support each child's learning and development.	
3. **Family Engagement and Community Services Partnerships (FECS)** - Program promotes families in their roles as their child's first teacher and engages in collaborative relationships with community organizations to holistically support children and their families.	**Not a funded area of focus for FY25**

DDOE Quality Indicators

Support on Key Practice Pathways

DDOE Licensing Regulations

State Support to Increase Quality

Continuous Quality Improvement builds upon licensing regulations to support programs as they work towards identified quality indicators.

Key Practices

A set of Key Practices defines each Quality Indicator, and each Key Practice has a Pathway to support programs in continuous quality improvement. The Pathway is a continuum that reflects how program practices evolve from the relevant licensing regulations to fully meeting the specific Key Practice. Pathways are designed to guide improvement efforts as programs work to implement the Key Practices. Appendix A outlines the Key Practices and Pathways for center/school-based programs, and Appendix B outlines the Key Practices and Pathways for family child care programs.

The Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Learning has prioritized five Key Practices for FY25. Priority Key Practices were selected using Teaching Strategies GOLD checkpoint data submitted by state-funded early care and education programs along with information collected from state-funded partner programs during site visits.

Priority Key Practices – Family Child Care Programs

Creating Conditions for Quality (CQ)

CQ-KP6: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors (as relevant)

CQ-KP7: Provides effective and meaningful supervision of teaching practices (LFCC)

Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ)

PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions

PCHQ-KP2: Uses culturally responsive and identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the program

PCHQ-KP5: Implements inclusive practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program

Priority Key Practices – Center-Based Programs

Creating Conditions for Quality (CQ)

CQ-KP4: Implements practices to recruit and retain high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors

CQ-KP7: Provides effective and meaningful supervision of teaching practices

Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ)

PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions

PCHQ-KP2: Uses culturally responsive and identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the classroom

PCHQ-KP5: Implements inclusive practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program
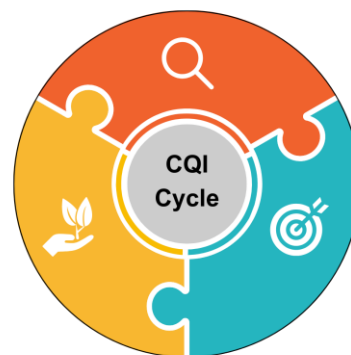
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

What is Continuous Quality Improvement?

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is "a process to ensure that programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children and families they serve. It is an environment that uses collected data to make positive changes - even when things are going well - rather than waiting for something to go wrong and then fixing it." (Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Interdepartmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children & Families).

As part of Delaware's Quality Improvement System, CQI is a cycle where data is used to identify a program's strengths and opportunities for growth. The data guides program leaders to identify a goal, build an improvement plan, access relevant supports, and monitor their progress. Licensed early care and education programs can request support from a Quality Improvement Specialist through the **Delaware Early Care and Education (ECE) portal**.

DATA GATHERING How are we doing?	🔍
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN What do we want to work on?	🎯
QUALITY INVESTMENT SUPPORTS What do we need to get there?	🤲

Initial Data Gathering 🔍

Program leaders deciding to embark on a journey towards quality will collaborate with a Quality Improvement Specialist from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) to gather data on current practices. The Quality Improvement Specialist will support program leaders in completing a Needs Assessment to better understand how the program is doing overall. Needs Assessments are aligned with selected Key Practices, and these data will provide a more comprehensive view of the program's strengths and opportunities for growth and will guide quality improvement planning.

Quality Improvement Planning 🎯

Guided by data and the Key Practice Pathways, the Quality Improvement Specialist will support program leaders in selecting focus areas for their quality improvement work. In consultation with the Quality Improvement Specialist, program leaders will review resources and identify program goals. As outlined by the Key Practices, quality improvement work can occur at all levels of the program.

Quality Improvement Specialists will guide program leaders in reviewing a menu of available, relevant supports and incorporating their selections into meaningful action steps in their quality improvement plan.

Quality Investment Supports 🤲

With the Quality Improvement Plan in place, the next phase is to access the identified supports, implementing the action steps to achieve the identified goals. The Delaware Department of Education is committed to providing both professional supports and financial supports to assist programs in working toward their identified quality improvement goals.

Continued Data Gathering

As program leaders and educators engage with relevant supports and make progress on their quality improvement goals, they can document the changes that are occurring in their program. In the CQI cycle, once programs implement the activities outlined in their Quality Improvement Plan, they return to Data Gathering.

Programs will conduct a post-assessment, using the same tool(s) and/or survey(s) they have used throughout the CQI process, to determine to what degree enhancements to program practices have occurred and if their goals have been met. Programs should upload pre- and post-assessment data, as well as any evidence of growth and implementation of targeted Key Practices into the Delaware ECE Portal. In the Delaware ECE portal, on the QIP, there will be a tab to "Upload Pre- and Post-Assessment Data and Evidence of Growth." The supporting documentation will serve as program evidence of growth and implementation of target Key Practice(s)/goal(s).

Programs can choose to share evidence of the implementation of Key Practice(s) in a variety of ways. For example, submitting a narrative, policies and procedures in writing, and/or pictures may work best for some programs. Other programs may choose to provide evidence verbally through video. Programs can also choose a combination. There are multiple ways for programs to provide evidence of meeting a Key Practice/goal. A variety of metrics can be utilized. It will be up to the program, in partnership with their Quality Improvement Specialist, to determine what metrics best tells their story of growth. Data can be connected with a tool or with metrics.

ECE programs, with the support of their Quality Improvement Specialists, will focus on Key Practices and on movement along the pathways.

Quality Improvement Specialists will support programs in their review of pre and post data to determine whether the program has increased quality. Together, program leaders and Quality Improvement Specialists will collaborate to consider if the goals are met. If so, they can create a plan for sustainability or, if goals have not been met additional items can be added to the QIP.
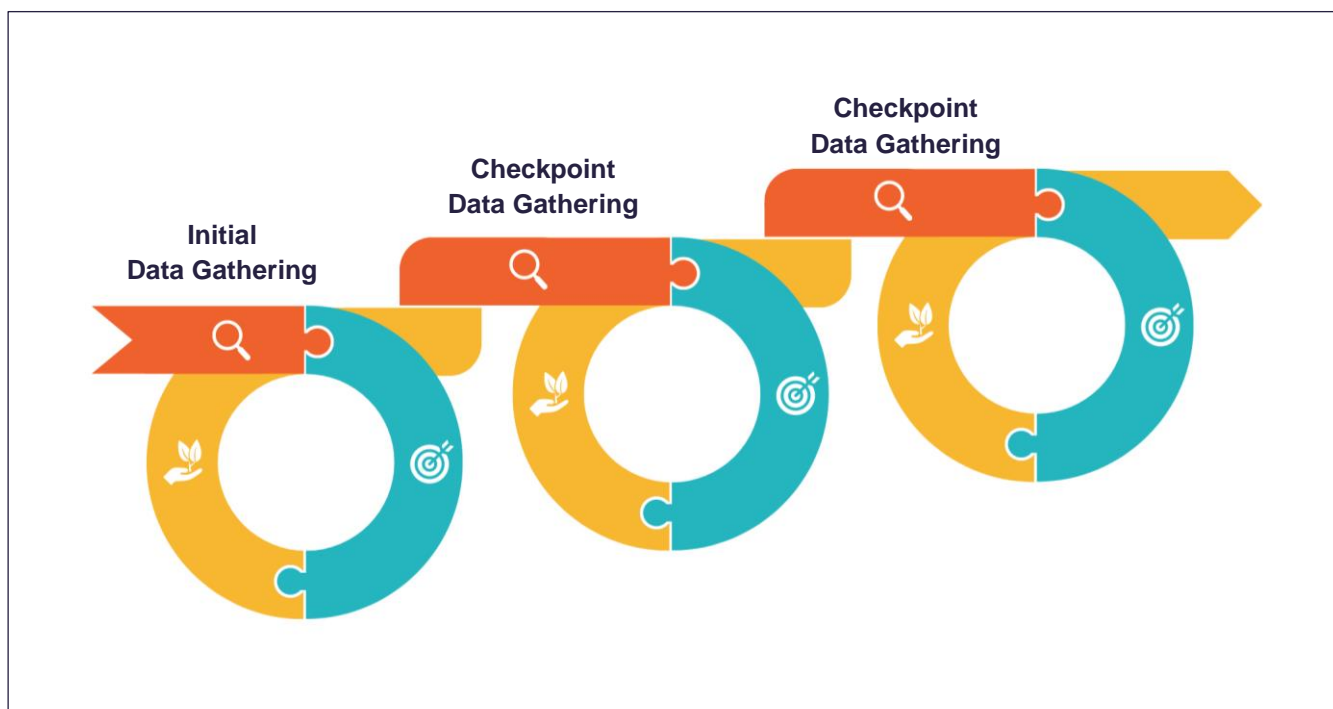
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

Universal Supports

All licensed Delaware early childhood education programs - center-based, family and large family, and school-age programs - are eligible to make use of universal supports. There is no application to fill out, these universal supports require no commitment for continued engagement, and they can be accessed through the **DIEEC** website. Universal supports include:

- Access to the monthly REACH e-newsletter.

- Access to the What's Up Wednesday weekly recap for family and large family child care programs.

- The Resource Hub on the DIEEC website.

- Communities of Practice.

- Networking meetings for family and large family child care programs.

- Self-paced professional learning experiences, including iPD **Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio | ECLKC (hhs.gov)**.

- Community-based professional learning experiences.

- Familiarity with and utilization of community resources, such as those found on the **Delaware Partners Website**, that can be accessed and/or utilized to meet program goals.

Targeted Supports

Programs seeking to engage in continuous quality improvement in a more in-depth way are able to choose to participate with targeted supports. Targeted supports are offered throughout the year and require a greater degree of commitment. Targeted supports include:

- Support from your Quality Improvement Specialist to develop and implement a Quality Improvement Plan

- Intensive Professional Learning Experiences (including workshops and coaching)
  - Grant Readiness
  - Leadership Cohort
  - Let's Go Outside
  - Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS)
  - Shining the Light on You

- Comprehensive Professional Learning Series (including workshops, observations, coaching, and targeted leadership support)
  - The Pyramid Model
  - Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Social and Emotional Development
  - Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Cognitive Development
  - Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Language and Literacy

State-funded early care and education programs are expected to be consistently engaged with targeted supports offered as part of Delaware's Quality Improvement System. In addition to the examples listed above,

state-funded early care and education programs participate in a facilitated Community of Practice series and facilitated working sessions focused on topics relevant to state-funded policies and procedures.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Financial Supports: Teaching Strategies GOLD Access

The Office of Early Learning is providing access to Teaching Strategies GOLD for all licensed programs interested in using Teaching Strategies GOLD as their formative assessment tool, at no cost to the program. Once access is obtained, the program administrator is required to complete an online introductory training to support setup, and all teachers who are utilizing Teaching Strategies GOLD in their classrooms are required to complete the two introductory online trainings to get started with the SmartTeach (a new Teaching Strategies platform).

To Get Started with Teaching Strategies GOLD:

1. Request the (1) Teaching Strategies GOLD Program Agreement form and (2) Teaching Strategies GOLD Access form from Brittany Hazzard at Brittany.Hazzard@doe.k12.de.us and Kelly McDowell at Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us (from September 1, 2024 to December 30, 2024) at the Office of Early Learning.

2. Sign and submit both forms to Brittany Hazzard or Kelly McDowell (from September to December 2024) through email.

3. Brittany or Kelly will provide access for Teaching Strategies GOLD to program staff.

4. All staff utilizing Teaching Strategies GOLD will complete the trainings required for their program, and the program administrator will submit documentation of the trainings to Brittany Hazzard or Kelly McDowell.

Financial Supports: Quality Improvement Awards (QIA)

Quality Improvement Awards are a state-funded financial support available to all licensed early care and school-age programs. They are designed to assist programs in working toward their identified quality improvement goals, supporting their efforts to increase quality programming for children and families in the state of Delaware. These are one-time funds; however, programs will be able to apply for additional QIAs in future fiscal years, as funding allows and the program meets the eligibility requirements.

Programs can only apply for one Quality Improvement Award per fiscal year. Programs are responsible for choosing an application deadline that works best for how they budget for the fiscal year.

As part of accepting a QIA, programs are agreeing to collaborate with DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialists to implement a Quality Improvement Plan. This collaboration with a Quality Improvement Specialist will enhance program services around the identified Priority Key Practices.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a QIA, programs must:

1. Be licensed by the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing.

2. Be open and providing services to children and families.

3. Have designed a QIP that was co-created with a Quality Improvement Specialist and aligned with Quality Indicators and OEL-identified Priority Key Practices and Pathways.

4. Use a formative assessment tool with fidelity (as intended by the publisher) to inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualization across all developmental domains.

a. Implementing a formative assessment tool with fidelity is a marker of high-quality programming. The Office of Early Learning's goal is for Delaware early care and education programs to meaningfully promote children's development. Implementing a formative assessment tool with fidelity requires developing and coordinating multiple intentional processes. Licensed early care and education programs used Fiscal Year 24 as a timeframe to work towards fidelity - establishing and fine-tuning the processes required to fully implement a formative assessment tool. During Fiscal Year 25, programs will be expected to implement a formative assessment tool with fidelity. Additionally, program staff must engage in the training for the formative assessment tool used. Documentation of training will be accepted in multiple formats based on the training available for that particular assessment tool.

b. To use a published tool typically means that the tool has been tested across various groups of children, throughout the country, often proving to receive the same responses in most situations. There is research proving the validity (the degree to which a method measures what it is intended to measure) of the tool, if observers follow the method suggested by the tool's publisher. Please consider these points as you search for a tool in alignment with your curriculum. Many curricula can be purchased with a formative assessment tool aligned to the content of the curriculum. For examples of evidence and research-based curricula, please see the **Curriculum Consumer Report**. Click on any title, and then "Full Review and Ratings" to view Criterion 6 "Ongoing Child Assessment".

c. If utilizing Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) through SmartTeach, formerly known as MyTeachingStrategies, it is strongly recommended that all staff who utilize TSG use their annual clock hours to complete the following training within the timeframe indicated:

   i. Power of GOLD and Introduction to Teaching Strategies within 3 months of quality improvement plan approval.

   ii. Interrater reliability training and certification test within 6 months of quality improvement plan approval.

   iii. These free trainings are available using Quorum by Teaching Strategies.

5. Sign the QIA Funds Policy as part of the application process agreeing that funds will be spent on items listed in the approved budget narrative. If funds are spent on unapproved items, reimbursement will be required (see 6f for information about reallocating funds).

6. Have provided approved evidence showing that previously awarded QIA funding was spent on approved items. (FCC Providers - refer to Table B)

   a. Centers and LFCC - All awarded funds must be accounted for with evidence of fund usage.
   b. Center administrators receive no more than 5% of the QIA. Center Owners are only eligible if working on site, at least 25 hours a week.
   c. Large Family Providers and Center Owners owning more than one site are only eligible for a bonus/salary increase at one site.
   d. One time funding toward salary and bonuses may be provided to staff who are fingerprinted and work directly with children and families.
   e. Items purchased must align with the approved budget narrative. If programs need to change how the budget line items are allocated, the new budget narrative must be approved by OEL. Please forward updated narratives to (Takeisha.Edmonds@doe.k12.de.us). All updates must align with the five state prioritized Key Practices highlighted on page 4 of this Guide. No budget narrative updates will be approved following the deadline to upload evidence of spending (May 31, 2025).
   f. All staff members must be paid at least minimum wage.

Calculating Your Award Maximum

In fiscal year 2025, programs must determine the award amount they can apply for using a rubric. This process, the rubric, and the award maximum amounts are listed in the section below.

Steps to Complete the Quality Improvement Award Rubric

Step 1- Use the number of POC-enrolled (they must be enrolled) to count in the number of enrolled children receiving POC who are attending during your hours of operation

  a. Count state-funded, Head Start and Early Head Start funded children in the count of enrolled full-time children receiving POC.
  b. Define enrolled children as children who are currently present and enrolled in a program as well as children who are enrolled but not currently present, such as infants or "held" spots during the summer. Your enrollment cannot be greater than your licensed capacity. See below for further clarification on your enrolled school-age children for enrollment.
  c. Use the total number enrolled at the time of application.

Step 2- Identify your regular hours of operation. If operating a school-age only site, choose the hours the program normally operates, not the hours when school is out.

Step 3- Use licensed capacity to determine the size of your facility.

Step 4- Use the data from steps 1 through 3 to determine your rubric award maximum.

Quality Improvement Award Rubric

Calculating Your Rubric Points				
What is your percentage of POC-enrolled children / total enrolled children?	**0-24.99%**	**25%-49.99%**	**50%-74.99%**	**75%-100%**
How many points do you receive for this question?	Baseline	+1	+2	+3 pts
What are your hours of operation?	**0-4 hours**	**Over 4 to 7.5 hours**	**Over 7.5 hours**	
How many points do you receive for this question?	Baseline	+1	+2	
What is your total number of points?				

Finding Your Quality Improvement Award Maximum						
Licensed facility type and current licensed capacity	Baseline	1 rubric point	2 rubric points	3 rubric points	4 rubric points	5 rubric points
FCC	You can apply for up to *$5,000	*$10,000	*$15,000	*$17,000	*$19,000	*$21,000
LFCC	*$8,000	*$13,000	*$18,000	*$20,000	*$22,000	*24,000
Center 0-59	*$25,000	*$37,000	*$50,000	*$60,000	*$70,000	*$80,000
Center 60-119	*$27,000	*$41,000	*$55,000	*$65,000	*$75,000	*$85,000
Center 120-239	*$30,000	*$45,000	*$60,000	*$70,000	*$80,000	*$90,000
Center 240 and up	*$37,000	*$51,000	*$65,000	*$75,000	*$85,000	*$95,000

Clarifications for Calculating Your Enrollment

This section clarifies our policy about counting your total enrolled children and POC-enrolled children as of the date of your application for the Quality Improvement Award.

We picked the date of the application as the day to count your total enrolled children and POC-enrolled children so that you can clearly count your enrollment numbers. You are counting the number of enrolled children on that day.

However, your total number of enrolled children cannot be larger than your current licensed capacity. The idea of an enrolled "seat" within your licensed capacity can help us visualize this policy. At this time, the Department of Education (DOE) funds "seats" or full-time enrolled children in child care facilities. DOE currently defines one "seat" per day as having an enrolled child in up to 7.5 hours of care and education for 5 days per week.

But that may not be the situation for your facility! Your hours of operation may mean that you have more than one enrolled child in an open "seat" per day for 5 days per week. Or, you might have two children sharing a single enrollment "seat" because they attend your facility on different days of the week. The QIA policy still applies to you, and we will explain how through the two scenarios below.

> **Key points for calculating enrollment**
>
> 1. Use the date of your application to count your total enrolled children and POC-enrolled children.
>
> 2. Your total number of enrolled children cannot be larger than your current licensed capacity.

Scenario 1: Multiple enrolled children in the same "seat" towards your licensed capacity during the day.

Example A: You enroll more than one school-age child in an open "seat" throughout the day in your center.

You have one seat within your licensed capacity that is filled with a school-age child who comes from 6am to 8am before school. Another school-age child comes to that one seat from 3pm to 6pm. That is one full-time enrolled seat, because both of those enrolled children count towards your licensed capacity once at different times during the day.

Example B: You enroll more than one child in an open "seat" throughout the day and evening shifts of your family child care.

You have one seat within your licensed capacity that is filled with a 3-year-old child who comes from 7:30am to 4pm. A school-age child comes to fill that one seat from 4pm to 11pm. That is one full-time enrolled seat, because both of those enrolled children count towards your licensed capacity once at different times during the day.

How to count these examples for your QIA award:

Number of total enrolled children:	Only 1 enrolled full-time seat even though 2 children attend.
Number of POC-enrolled children:	Your program may choose which child to count for enrollment. If you choose a child who is enrolled in POC, your numerator should increase.

Scenario 2: You enroll multiple children in the same "seat" during the week because they attend on different days.

Example A: You enroll three infants in the same classroom seat, but one attends M/W, one attends T/Th and one only attends on Friday.

You enroll one infant, Aisha, on Monday and Wednesday. You enroll one infant, Hector, on Tuesday and Thursday. You enroll one infant, Celine, on Friday. They have the same classroom teacher, and they each count towards their licensed classroom ratio of 1:4 on the day they attend. That is one full-time enrolled seat, because all three of those enrolled children count towards your licensed capacity on different days during the week.

Example B: You enroll two infants in the same "seat" and maintain your capacity, with correct ratios, in your large family child care, but one attends M/W/F and one attends T/Th.

You enroll one infant, Elizabeth, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. You enroll one infant, Jeremiah, on Tuesday and Thursday. In this way, you maintain your licensed capacity requirement, with correct ratios, that no more than 4 of your 12 children are under the age of 12 months (permitted when you employ an assistant or aide). That is one full-time enrolled seat, because those enrolled two children count towards your licensed capacity on different days during the week.

How to count these examples for your QIA award:

Number of total enrolled children:	Only 1 enrolled full-time seat even though 3 children (Example A) or 2 children (Example B) attend throughout the week.
Number of POC-enrolled children:	Your program may choose which child to count for enrollment. If you choose a child who is enrolled in POC, your numerator should increase.

Additional Information

Salaries/Bonuses: The Office of Early Learning will fund the differential above minimum wage and an employee's hourly wage. For example, if an employee's hourly wage is $20, and minimum wage is $15 an hour, QIA funds can be used to cover the $5 difference. The Office of Early Learning will not fund full salaries of employees.

When applying for bonuses and salary increases above minimum wage, Large Family Child Care providers must include staff in plans for improvement in this area.

Centers and LFCC: If applying for salary increases above minimum wage and/or bonuses, justifications for how bonuses and increases to pay scales will need to accompany the Quality Improvement Plan. See the Pathway for this Key Practice (Classroom-based CQ-KP4; FCC CQ-KP6) for additional details. Large discrepancies between the bonuses of administrators and other program staff may require more information to process the QIA. Salaries/bonuses for administrators of center-based programs may not exceed 5% of the QIA. Center owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families. Large Family Providers and Center Owners owning more than one site are only eligible for a bonus/salary increase at one site.

Timeframe: QIA funds are retroactive to July 1, 2024, and can be used on expenses up to May 15, 2025. Please note that evidence reporting is due by May 31st. Programs must ensure their plans to spend the funds will align with meeting the deadline. Programs that fail to submit evidence on time, may not be eligible for a QIA during the next fiscal year. Programs that fail to submit complete evidence showing how all the funds were spent as described in the approved budget narrative will not be eligible for the following year's QIA.

Delaware Quality Improvement Award Spending Funds Policy: The following policy will be a part of the QIA application. A signature will be required.

Purpose: This policy is designed to prevent and address any instances of misappropriation or misuse of funds awarded as Quality Improvement Awards (QIA) and allocated for Quality Improvement (QI). It outlines the expectations, procedures, and consequences related to the handling of QIA funds.

Scope: This policy applies to all that have received state funds for Quality Improvement initiatives.

Policy

1. **Authorized Use of Funds:**

   - State funds allocated must be used exclusively for the purposes outlined in the QIP/QIA agreement and in accordance with applicable DE laws and regulations.

   - Permissible uses of funds include but are not limited to: staff training, purchasing educational materials, and enhancing program quality. All intended utilization of funds must be approved by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) or a DDOE Designee. All expenditures must be documented with receipts, which are to be submitted to DDOE or a DDOE Designee, as required.

2. **Financial Oversight (Centers ONLY):**

   - QIA recipients must maintain accurate and detailed records of all expenditures that were identified in the budget narrative.

   - Financial records must be made available for review by state authorities/DDOE staff, and/or DDOE Designees upon request.

3. **Prohibited Activities:**

   - Misappropriation or misuse of state funds is strictly prohibited.

   - Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to: theft, fraud, submitting false reimbursement claims, and intentionally misrepresenting financial information.

4. **Reporting Procedures:**

   - Any suspected instances of misappropriation or misuse of state funds must be promptly reported to the appropriate state agency.

   - Reports should include detailed information and evidence supporting the suspicion.

5. **Investigation and Enforcement:**

   - Upon receiving a report of potential misappropriation, the DDOE and/or a DDOE Designee will conduct a thorough investigation.

   - If misconduct is substantiated, the QIA recipient/entity may be subject to penalties, including but not limited to: repayment of misused funds, termination of current QIA agreements, ineligibility for future QIAs, OCCL violations, and legal action.

Compliance: All programs receiving state grants for Quality Improvement initiatives are required to comply with this policy. Failure to comply may result in the termination of funding and other disciplinary actions.

Review and Revision: This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.

Acknowledgement: By accepting state funds, QIA recipients agree to abide by the terms of this policy and acknowledge their responsibility to use funds appropriately and transparently.

Attestation Statement:

- I will submit documentation for all expenditures associated with this award within the timeframe established by the Office of Early Learning within the Delaware Department of Education.

- Collaborate with a Quality Improvement Specialist (QIS) to implement the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

- Use a formative assessment with fidelity to inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualization across all developmental domains.

- I hereby certify that I am authorized to apply on behalf of the eligible early care and education program for this state funding. Further, I hereby certify that the information provided herein is true and accurate. By signing this document, I understand that I am required to maintain the original supporting documents to confirm this information for a period of five years beyond the receipt of any payment, which may be received from this grant program. During any audit, if my records are not available and/or this information is found to be inaccurate, I understand that I may be required to make full reimbursement for any amounts identified as payment that were not eligible. I submit this application under penalty of perjury.

Application Process and Timelines

Quality Improvement Award Application Timeline for Fiscal Year 2025

Applications will be accepted beginning September 1, 2024.

Rolling QIA Application Deadlines:	
September 15, 2024 for October award	Deadlines for school districts and state agencies. School districts and state agencies must apply during September 15th or November 15th deadlines to receive funds in time. School districts and state agencies who apply to later deadlines will not have their applications considered.
November 15, 2024 for January award	
January 15, 2025 for March award	
March 15, 2025 for May award	

May 31, 2025: Documentation for expenditures (evidence) due to OEL by the close of business

To document your expenditures, please refer to page 10 of the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Application Guide for instructions on where to upload this information on the Delaware ECE Portal. The directions require programs to return to the QIA application and click the "Evidence" tab to upload documents.

PREPARING TO APPLY FOR A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AWARD

Programs access the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) application through the **Delaware ECE Portal**. There are seven sections to the QIA application. The program leader will add information to 6 of the 7 sections to complete the application.

Quality Improvement Award Application Sections

1. **Program**

Programs will provide general information about the program. Programs must provide the following information at the time of application:

- Program Name
- License Number
- Street Address City
- Zip Code
- Hours of Operation
- Days of Operation
- Name of Formative Assessment Tool
- Administrator information (first and last name, email address and phone number)
- Number of assistant teachers
- Number of administrators
- Number of other staff
- How many open classrooms are in your facility?
- How many closed classrooms are in your facility?
- Licensed capacity
- Full time (4 or more hours per day)-Enrolled Children
- Part-time (less than 4 hours per day- Enrolled Children
- Date enrollment count was conducted
- Number of enrolled children receiving POC only?
- Number of children in a state-funded seat only?

- Number of children in a state funded seat who also receive POC?
- Number of children in a Head Start seat?
- Number of children in a Head Start seat who also receive POC?
- Number of children in an Early Head Start Child Care Partnership seat?
- Number of children in an Early Head Start Child Care Partnership seat who also receive POC?
- Total number of children receiving POC, in a state funded seat, or in an Early/Head Start seat?
- Current staff list on the Delaware ECE Portal. Each staff person is required to create a profile to ensure the program list is accurate. *All staff included on a budget narrative for a salary increase and/or bonus, must have an accurate profile on the Delaware ECE Portal. Directions for how to invite staff members to create a Delaware ECE Portal account can be found on page 6 of the Program Portal Guide.
- **Yes or No to the following**: Has your program leadership asked any children to leave your program temporarily (for a few days) or permanently (to not return) within the last 12 months?
- **If Yes**: How many children were asked to leave temporarily or permanently, what were their ages, and what was the reason that the children were asked to leave?

2. **Eligibility**

When responding to the questions in the "Eligibility" section of the application, it is important to answer each question correctly. If there is an incorrect response, you will receive an email asking for clarification, additional information, or you will receive a message indicating that you are not yet eligible to apply.

*Please note, any requests for additional information will extend the amount of time needed to process the application.

3. **Budget**

Programs will submit a budget narrative to the Office of Early Learning that is aligned with their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to apply for a QIA (see below for sample budget narratives). Budget narratives must reflect how programs plan to spend the full amount of the award. More information may be requested if the budget differs from what the program is eligible for and/or what the program has requested.

- **Bonuses** - Include the number of staff and the bonus amount for each staff member during each bonus period. Staff names and positions must be included. Salary increases and bonuses are only provided to staff who are fingerprinted k and determined eligible for employment at the program and who work directly with children and families. Both full-time and part-time staff are eligible for bonuses. Center administrators may receive no more than 5% of the QIA for a bonus/salary increase. Center Owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families, 25 hours or more per week. If owning more than one site, Center Owners may only receive a salary increase or bonus at one site.

- **Salary Increases** - Share how you plan to distribute salary increases for each staff member. Include the names and number of staff members and the salary increase each staff member will receive. To be eligible for a salary increase, staff must be fingerprinted for the program, be determined eligible for employment by the Criminal History Unit, and be directly working with children. Both full-time and part-time staff are eligible for salary increases. Center administrators may receive no more than 5% of the QIA for a bonus/salary increase. Large Family Providers and Center Owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families, 25 hours or more per week. If owning more than one site, center owners may only receive a salary increase or bonus at one site.

- **DIEEC Templates** – Use the templates provided by your Quality Improvement Specialist. Programs that utilize the templates, and fill them out completely, provide enough information for the Office of Early Learning to process the QIA application.

- **Total Award Requested** – Include this amount on the Budget Narrative. All line items should add up to equal the total amount requested.

- **Connections Between Line Items and Narrative** – Be sure to include a monetary breakdown of all areas presented in the narrative. For example, if you would like to use some of the funds to enhance cozy corners in classrooms, include each item being purchased, the number of classrooms, and the associated amount.

- **Unapproved Items** – The following items will not be approved for use of QIA funds: food, building or home repair or maintenance, utility bills, mulch for playground, large stationary outdoor climbing/play equipment, bonuses/salary increases for family members or friends who are not fingerprinted for the program and determined eligible for employment and who are not working with children or families at the program, pest control, fencing, kitchen supplies, refrigerators, travel expenses for staff for professional development/conference (hotels, meals, or transportation) and vehicle rental.

4. Evidence

Programs will not complete this section during the application process. This is where you will upload documentation sharing how the funds were spent.

See Submitting Proof of Spending for Quality Improvement Award (page 25)

5. Payment

Please make sure that:

- The account and routing numbers provided are in the correct fields. If these numbers are incorrect on the application, we cannot match the voided check attached to the application. See the "Payment" section of the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Application Guide

6. Tax

Please make sure that:

- SSN (or EIN) entered matches the document provided.

- The account and routing numbers provided are in the correct fields. If these numbers are incorrect on the application, we cannot match the voided check attached to the application.

- The address on the W9 matches other documents.

7. Agreement

After reading the agreement in the last section of the application, please enter your first and last name as your signature. See page 15 of this Guide for a copy of this agreement.

Budget Narrative Examples

Associated Key Practice 1: Implements practices to recruit and retain high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors

Associated Key Practice 2: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions

Associated Key Practice 3: Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practices

QIP Goal 1: Program will recruit and retain high quality staff by offering recruitment and retention bonuses

QIP Goal 2: Preschool classrooms will create cozy corners designed to support the positive social-emotional development.

QIP Goal 3: One Lead Teacher will participate in Practice-Based Coaching training to implement the research-based strategies necessary to support and sustain classroom practices.

Small Center Example

A. Staff Supports ($17,000):

- Program will recruit and retain high quality staff

- Recruitment Bonuses for 1 Lead and 1 Assistant Teacher ($500 upon hire) $1000

- Retention Bonuses for 4 Lead Teachers and 4 Assistant Teachers ($2000/year) – $1000 after six months of employment; $1000 after twelve months of employment) $16,000

B. SEL Supports for Classrooms ($631.10)

- Preschool classrooms will create cozy corners designed to support the positive social-emotional development

- Emotions Wheel – 4.25 * 5 classrooms - $21.25

- Small Carpet - $39 * 5 classrooms - $195

- Comfy Chair/Bean Bag - $25 * 5 classrooms - $125

- Problem Solver Kit - $57.97 * 5 classrooms - $289.85

C. Practice- Based Coaching Institute ($490)

- One Lead Teacher will participate in Practice-Based Coaching training to implement the research-based strategies necessary to support and sustain classroom practices.

D. TOTAL REQUESTED $18,121.10 (Please note that this is lower than the maximum award ceiling)

Family Child Care Program Example

Sample FCC Narrative using QIA for Bonus *(Not for use by LFCC Providers - see Center-based examples)*

"I am requesting the QIA to support the additional time and effort needed to work towards my quality improvement goal of (insert goal) within the quality indicator (insert QI and key practice). The current minimum wage is (Box H). These funds will be used to provide a weekly bonus on top of the minimum wage that I currently receive in order to compensate myself for the increased work and level of quality that I will provide to the children and families in my program."

    A.   Staff supports ($15,000)

        a.   Weekly bonus for FCC Educator for time and effort needed to (list quality improvements on QIP)

            i. $333 x 44 weeks (7/1/24 to 5/4/25) = $14,652

            ii. $348 x 1 week - 3 days (5/5/25 to 5/15/25) = $348

    B.   Total Requested ($15,000)

Sample FCC Narrative using QIA for Salary Increase

"I am requesting the QIA to support the additional time and effort needed to work towards my quality improvement goal of (insert goal) within the quality indicator (insert QI and key practice). The current minimum wage is (Box H). These funds will be used to provide a weekly salary increase on top of the minimum wage that I currently receive in order to compensate myself for the increased work and level of quality that I will provide to the children and families in my program."

    A.   Staff supports ($15,000)

        a.   Weekly salary increase for FCC Educator for time and effort needed to (list quality improvements on QIP)

            i. $333 x 44 weeks (7/1/24 to 5/4/25) = $14,652

            ii. $348 x 1 week and 3 days (5/5/25 to 5/15/25) = $348

    B.   Total Requested ($15,000)

*If using this template, programs must complete all sections.

Retention Bonuses - Budget Narrative Example

Office of Early Learning Child Development Center (OELCDC)

Budget Narrative – Total Amount Requested: $19,500

Award Ceiling - $50,000 for a center with 0-59 children licensed capacity, with 2 out of 5 points on the rubric

Associated Key Practice: CQ-KP4 – Implements practices to recruit and retain high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors

QIP Goal: Increase staff morale, professionalism, and retention by offering monthly bonuses from October 2024 to May 2025. The bonus program for current staff will be based on the length of time the employee has been with the program.

Sample scale for determining bonus amounts	
Number of Years with Program	**Total**
Administrators with more than 5 years	$4,000
Administrators with 1-4 years	$3,500
Lead Teachers with more than 5 years	$4,000
Lead Teacher with 1-4 years	$3,500
Assistant Teachers with more than 5 years	$2,500
Assistant Teachers with 1-4 years	$2,000

Example bonus amount as determined by years of service at program		
Name of Employee and Title	**Length of Time with Program**	**Total**
Tanisha L., Administrator	10 years	$4,000
Jorge H., Administrator	3 years	$3,500
John D., Lead Teacher	5 years	$4,000
Bethany B., Lead Teacher	1 year	$3,500
Angela T., Assistant Teacher	5 years	$2,500
Jane S., Assistant Teacher	4 years	$2,000

Salary Increases - Budget Narrative Example

Office of Early Learning Child Development Center (OELCDC)

Budget Narrative – Total Amount Requested: $83,832

Associated Key Practice: CQ-KP4 – Implements practices to recruit and retain high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors

QIP Goal: In line with the program's mission, OELCDC would like to recruit and retain highly qualified teaching staff by offering an hourly wage over the state required minimum wage. Salary increases will be based on an employee's education level as suggested by the Early Childhood Educator Target Compensation Scale.

Rubric - Program chose to use the Early Childhood Educator Target Compensation Scale and Professional Pathway - Published by DECC on December 1, 2021.

Example of hourly wages based on educational attainment	
Education (minimum)	**Target Salary**
High School Diploma	$15/hour (minimum wage)
High school diploma or equivalent recognized by DOE, plus: • 6 credits: At least 3 college credits in ECE and 3 college credits in child development OR • Training for Early Care and Education 1 or equivalent training as recognized by OCCL OR Completion of traditional high school's career pathway program (CTE) in ECE as recognized by DOE	$17.25/hour
High school diploma or equivalent recognized by DOE, plus: • Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) OR • Completion of at least 9 credits from a college/university in early childhood education, early childhood development, and positive behavior management OR • State determined credential and/or certificate equivalencies	$19.50/hour
Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education (or Associate's degree with at least 9 credits in early childhood)	$25.35/hour
Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education(or Bachelor's degree with at least 9 credits in early childhood)	$29.15/hour
Master's degree in Early Childhood Education	$36.80/hour

Name of Employee and Title	Education Level	Hourly Rate	Above Minimum Wage	Weekly Hours	Weekly Reimbursable Wages	Weeks in Reimbursable Period (28)	Total
Tanisha L., Administrator	M.A. in ECE	$36.80	$21.80	40	$872		$24,416
Jorge H., Administrator	M.A. in ECE	$36.80	$21.80	40	$872		$24,416
John D., Lead Teacher	B.A. in ECE	$29.15	$14.15	40	$566		$15,848
Bethany B., Lead Teacher	AA in ECE	$25.35	$10.35	40	$414		$11,592
Angela T., Assistant Teacher	HS diploma and CDA	$19.50	$4.50	40	$180		$5,040
Jane S., Assistant Teacher	HS diploma and 6 credits in ECE and Child Development	$17.25	$2.25	40	$90		$2,520
							$83,832

Example of hourly wages based on the Early Childhood Educator Target Compensation Scale and Professional Pathway

After the Quality Improvement Award Application is Submitted

To check the status of your application, visit the first page of the Quality Improvement Award in your Early Childhood Program Portal.

If more information is needed, programs will receive an email or text with the request. Please add that information to your application as soon as possible. Please allow five business days for the Office of Early Learning to review any clarification or additional information submitted to the Delaware ECE Portal.

It is extremely important to check emails to ensure no additional information is needed. You should also check your application in the Delaware ECE Portal to ensure your application is verified in all sections.

Award approvals will be sent via email to the designated program contact. Payments will be distributed by WELS Systems Foundation through the Delaware ECE Portal. Allow 30 business days from the date the application was approved for funds to be disbursed to the bank account shared in the application.

Submitting Proof of Spending for the Quality Improvement Award

By May 31, 2025, you must upload documentation into the Delaware ECE portal showing that awarded QIA funding was spent on approved items. Documentation of spending may be uploaded as soon as the QIA is spent.

1. All awarded funds must be accounted for with evidence of fund usage.
2. Center administrators may receive no more than 5% of the QIA for salary/bonus. Center Owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families.
3. Large Family Providers and Center Owners owning more than one site are only eligible for a bonus/salary increase at one site.
4. Salary increases and bonuses are only provided to staff who are fingerprinted for the program and were determined eligible by the Criminal History Unit.
5. Salary increases and bonuses are only provided to staff who work directly with children and families.
6. Items purchased must align with the approved budget narrative.
7. Non-approved items will be reimbursed to the Office of Early Learning.

Auditing Quality Improvement Awards

Documentation is required for all expenditures (see below for examples). Documentation must be submitted to the Office of Early Learning via the Delaware ECE Portal by **May 31, 2025**. Please upload proof of spending to the "Evidence" section of the application. Please ensure the images are clear and not blurry when uploading documentation. Do not email proof of expenditures to OEL staff.

The auditing process reviews budget narratives submitted with each application against the documents submitted verifying spending. If there are discrepancies between the amount awarded, and the total amount of receipts received as evidence showing how the funds were spent, an Office of Early Learning representative will contact programs administrators to submit additional information. Inconsistencies with budget narratives and documents verifying spending, as well as the inability to share how the funds were spent may negatively impact a program's eligibility status for applying for a QIA in the next fiscal year.

All programs that receive Quality Improvement Awards (QIAs) must sign and submit the **Delaware Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Funds Policy** at the time of QIA application.

Auditing of Quality Improvement Award expenditures will occur throughout the year as programs upload documents to the Evidence tab in the application.

Examples of Appropriate Documentation of Expenditures

Possible Expense(s) from Budget	Documentation, Evidence of Spending
Salary Increases Recruitment, Retention, or Merit Bonuses Paid Sick or Family Leave Retirement Contributions Contributions to medical, dental, vision insurance	Payroll documentation accounting for new salaries, bonuses, leave and/or retirement contributions *Documentation must show staff names and positions FCC Providers Documentation of education level (transcripts with conferral date when appropriate, diploma), if not previously submitted during FY24
Technology	Receipts showing purchase date and name of company/organization *Purchase dates should be between 7/1/24 and 5/14/25
Professional Development or Training for Staff Contracts/Partnerships with Experts (e.g., Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant; mental health consultation or other types of mental health supports for staff)	Invoice with training date(s) and name of organization Proof of payment (example – canceled check) Certificates of Completion
Program/Classroom Enhancements	Receipts for each item purchased showing the item, cost, purchase date, and name of company/organization *Purchase dates should be between 7/1/24 and 5/30/25

APPENDIX A - PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES AND PATHWAYS FOR CENTER-BASED PROGRAMS

Quality Indicator: Creating Conditions for Quality

Program implements policies, procedures, and systems that support children, families, and early childhood professionals in the provision of early care and education.

CQ-KP4: Implements practices to recruit and retain highly quality educators, consultants, and contractors			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 15. Governing Body 18. General Human Resources and Personnel Policies 24. Staff Qualifications 25. Substitutes, Volunteers, and Contracted Special Services Persons 26. Staffing 30. Personnel Files 82. Staffing 87. School-Age Staff Qualifications 88. Staffing	• Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to recruiting and retaining high-quality staff. • Program leader remains informed on competitive wages and opportunities to fund wage increases. • Program implements a salary scale, with consideration of levels of education and years of experience (not differentiating based on ages of children they work with). • Program offers 1-2 benefits to all staff (e.g., health insurance, retirement, paid time off, paid planning time, paid professional development time, reduced child care tuition).	• Program leader implements mission-driven recruitment and retention policies and procedures • Program implements a yearly salary increase and/or a merit bonus system for early childhood professionals. • Program offers 3-4 benefits to staff. • Program encourages educators to earn an associate's degree or specialized credential in early childhood.	• Program leader uses data to reflect on recruitment and retention procedures to strengthen policies and procedures and indicate gaps in services and supports. • Program salary scale aligns with Delaware's ECE Salary Framework. • Program implements a yearly Cost of Living salary increase • Program offers 5+ benefits to staff. • Program is involved in advocacy opportunities for increasing ECE wages. • Program encourages those in leadership roles and educators to earn a bachelor's degree in early childhood.

CQ-KP7: Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practice			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School- Age Centers: 3. Definition of Terms – "Supervision of staff" 73. Program Goals and Planning	• Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to the supervision of teaching practices, including educator observations, strengths-based feedback, and staff reflection and goal-setting. • Program leader ensures supervision is supportive and focused on teaching practices rather than punitive in nature. • Program leader takes steps to develop and grow their own supervision practices in line with program goals.	• Program leader observes and provides feedback quarterly on teaching practices for all educators. • Program supports educators in accessing professional growth opportunities that are in line with feedback from observations and aligned with program goals. • Program has a system for educators to request observations as needed.	• Program leader observes and provides feedback monthly on teaching practices for all educators. • Program leader provides coaching for educators to develop their skills and work to improve practice. • Program leader observes using a reliable, valid tool or a curriculum implementation checklist. • Program helps educators reflect on their own practices, values, and beliefs and connect external learning experiences to practices and program goals.

PCHQ-KP2: Uses culturally responsive and identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the classroom			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 20. Positive Behavior Supports 23. Center Parent or Guardian Handbook 28. General Qualifications 74. Lesson Plans	• Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to fostering a sense of community through cultural responsiveness and identity affirming practices. • Program supports educators to maintain classroom environments that provide opportunities for children to feel ownership and/or show responsibility.	• Educators have a comprehensive knowledge base of how to make meaningful connections with all children, placing particular emphasis on understanding the cultural and identity aspects of both children and their families • Educators encourage cooperative play and positive social interactions that develop a sense of community. • Educators respond to children's comments and questions about individual differences in supportive and constructive ways.	• Programs use data from families to design inclusive, culturally-responsive classroom environments, incorporating diverse displays, materials, and activities that reflect the diversity of all enrolled families. • Educators consistently implement a variety of classroom practices that encourage social interactions and promote a sense of community and belonging. • Program leaders and educators are intentional about modeling empathy and promoting social justice. • Program curriculum is inclusive of the culture of the enrolled children and families (e.g., celebrations, perspectives, and traditions) • Educators embed activities to promote understanding of individual differences.

PCHQ-KP5: Implements inclusive practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program.			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 20. Positive Behavior Supports 23. Center Parent or Guardian Handbook 32. Orientation 39. Enrollment 40. Child Files 73. Program Goals and Planning	• Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to individualized classroom experiences that are inclusive of the needs of each and every child in the program. • Program leader is knowledgeable and promotes families' knowledge of inclusive practices that support the development of all children, including federal and state laws that apply to individuals with disabilities (e.g., IDEA/ADA), how to understand an IEP/IFSP, and community resources available to support children's development. • Program ensures that all children, including those with disabilities, can fully participate by adjusting the physical space, varying teaching strategies, and providing personalized support and accommodations as needed.	• Educators have a comprehensive knowledge base and implement programming that is responsive to the needs of each and every child. • Programs will collaborate with external agencies supporting children with identified disabilities, tracking progress towards plan goals, seeking external assistance if needed, and maximizing implementation of services within the child's educational setting. • Program leaders support educators in using resources from early childhood specialists (e.g., ECMH, OT, PT) to incorporate individualized learning experiences for children. • The program assists children, families, and staff in employing proactive strategies and practices that prevent suspensions or expulsions.	• Program uses data to ensure environments are providing appropriate accommodations and modifications to support children in reaching their goals. • Program uses the Delaware Early Childhood Inclusion Guide as a resource to meet the developmental needs of children with disabilities. • Program implements policies that prohibit expulsion and prohibit or severely limit suspension due to a child's behavior or disability. • Program actively recruits children with disabilities to enroll in the program. • Program works with families and outside agencies (as relevant) to plan and advocate for children's individual needs and accommodations, ensuring services are delivered in the least restrictive environment.

APPENDIX B - PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES AND PATHWAYS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Quality Indicator: Creating Conditions for Quality

Program implements policies, procedures, and systems that support children, families, and early childhood professionals in the provision of early care and education.

CQ-KP6: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high quality educators, substitutes, consultants and contractors (as needed)			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	• FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to recruiting, retaining, and orienting high-quality staff. • FCC Educator offers 1-2 benefits using a benefit plan and pay schedule for themselves and staff (e.g., health insurance, retirement, paid time off, paid planning and professional development time). • FCC Educator creates a comprehensive orientation system for new staff/substitutes. • FCC Educator provides written job descriptions, responsibilities for all paid and volunteer positions. • FCC Educator uses their program mission as a baseline for building recruitment and hiring procedures.	• FCC Educator implements a recruitment policy that includes a commitment to staff and reflects the children and community served. • FCC Educator offers 3-4 benefits using a benefit plan and pay schedule for themselves and staff (e.g., health insurance, retirement, paid time off, paid sick time, paid planning and professional development time). • FCC Educator implements a comprehensive orientation system for onboarding new staff/substitutes, including a formal review after the staff probationary period. • FCC Educator shares and utilizes community resources that support recruiting and retaining high-quality staff.	• FCC Educator reflects on retention data to determine the effectiveness of recruitment and orientation procedures. • FCC Educator implements a yearly cost of living salary increase for self and staff and provides 5+ benefits to support the retention of high-quality staff. • FCC Program's salary scale aligns with Delaware's ECE Salary Framework. • FCC Educator uses feedback from staff to update the orientation system annually. • FCC Educator is involved in advocacy opportunities for increasing ECE wages and benefits.

CQ-KP7: (LFCC) Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practice			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	• FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to providing supervision on teaching practice, including regular observations, strength-based feedback, and opportunities for staff reflection and goal-setting. • FCC Educator provides supportive supervision focused on teaching practices rather, encouraging staff/substitutes to request observations as needed, rather than being punitive in nature.	• FCC Educator implements policies and procedures related to providing supervision on teaching practice. • FCC Educator completes staff observations at least quarterly. • FCC Educator supports staff/substitutes in identifying strengths, concerns, challenges and areas of growth through reflection and feedback. • FCC Educator has a system for educators to request observations as needed. • FCC Educator supports staff/substitutes in accessing professional growth opportunities that are in line with feedback from observations as they develop their skills and work to improve practice.	• FCC Educator completes staff observations at least monthly using a standardized tool. • FCC Educator provides timely feedback on teaching practices for all staff/substitutes. • FCC Educator supports staff to reflect on their own practices, values, and beliefs as part of goal-setting to improve teaching practice. • FCC Educator provides follow-up support as staff develop their skills and work to improve practice.

Quality Indicator: Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions

Program creates culturally responsive, playful learning environments, using intentional and responsive interactions to promote relationships between educators and children and build a sense of community, while using developmentally-appropriate approaches to support each child's learning and development.

PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	• FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to supporting the whole child through positive interactions, with an emphasis on supporting children's physical and mental well-being. • FCC Educator is responsive to children's interests and needs. • FCC Educator acknowledges children's emotions and supports children to understand and respond to their feelings.	• FCC Educator implements policies and procedures related to supporting the whole child through positive interactions. • FCC Educator uses community resources to support the whole child. • FCC Educator engages in sustained, reciprocal social interactions with individual children. • FCC Educator facilitates and/or promotes positive multi-age interactions among children. • FCC Educator intentionally plans play-based experiences to promote social-emotional skill development. • FCC Educator uses positive guidance strategies to support all children.	• FCC Educator individualizes support for children's physical and mental well-being. • FCC Educator implements comprehensive experiences that are individualized for each child based on observations. • FCC Educator is consistently available to children and shows enjoyment when engaging with children. • FCC Educator utilizes a supplemental curriculum to plan for additional experiences for social and emotional development. • FCC Educator uses child observations and formative assessment data to identify goals and inform planning to support children across all domains.

PCHQ-KP2: Uses culturally responsive and identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the program
Entry	Emerging	Developing	Advanced

Entry	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
	• FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to fostering a sense of community and building meaningful connections through culturally responsive and identity-affirming practices. • FCC Educator maintains environments that provide opportunities for children to feel ownership and/or show responsibility.	• FCC Educator implements policies and procedures related to fostering a sense of community and building meaningful connections through culturally responsive and identity-affirming practices. • FCC Educator gathers and uses information from families about their cultures and communities to build meaningful connections with children. • FCC Educators encourage cooperative play and positive social interactions that develop a sense of community. • FCC Educators respond to children's comments and questions about individual differences in supportive ways.	• FCC Educator uses data from families to design inclusive, culturally-responsive environments, incorporating diverse displays, materials, and activities that reflect the diversity of the program • FCC Educator consistently uses a variety of strategies that encourage interactions and promote a sense of community and belonging. • FCC Educator is intentional about modeling empathy and promoting social justice. • FCC Educator is inclusive of the culture of the enrolled children and families (e.g., celebrations, perspectives, and traditions) • FCC Educator embeds activities to promote understanding of individual differences.

PCHQ-KP5: Implements inclusive practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	• FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to individualized experiences that are inclusive of the needs of each and every child in the program. • FCC Educator is knowledgeable and promotes families' knowledge of inclusive practices that support the development of all children, including federal and state laws that apply to individuals with disabilities (e.g., IDEA/ADA), how to understand an IEP/IFSP, and community resources available to support children's development.	• FCC Educator implements policies and procedures related to inclusion and being responsive to the needs of individual children in the program. • FCC Educator supports families through the early intervention process (when applicable). • FCC Educator collaborates with external agencies supporting children with identified disabilities, tracking progress toward plan goals, seeking assistance if needed, and maximizing implementation of services in the child's educational setting. • FCC Educator ensures all children can fully participate by intentionally organizing the physical space, varying teaching strategies, and providing individualized support and necessary accommodations to meet individual children's needs.	• FCC Educator collaborates with outside agencies (e.g. therapists or interventionists) to collect data and plan for children with identified plans. • FCC Educator uses the Delaware Early Childhood Inclusion Guide as a resource to meet the needs of children with disabilities. • FCC Educator implements policies that prohibit expulsion and prohibits or severely limits suspension due to a child's behavior or disability. • FCC Educator actively recruits children with disabilities to enroll in the program. • FCC Educator and families work together to plan and advocate for children's individual needs and accommodations, ensuring services are delivered in the least restrictive environment. • FCC Educator uses information gathered from observation and assessment to ensure environments are supporting children to reach their goals.

APPENDIX C - GLOSSARY

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) – ongoing efforts to enhance program services for children and families. As part of Delaware's Quality Improvement System, CQI is a cycle where data is used to identify a program's strengths and opportunities for growth. The data guide program leaders to identify a goal, build an improvement plan, access relevant supports, and monitor their progress.

Delaware Early Care and Education (ECE) Portal – **https://delawareece.com/** – a website for Delaware's early childhood professionals. The professional portal provides access to scholarships and supports for the CDA and degrees in education. The program portal provides access to the background check form, quality improvement plans, and the quality improvement award application.

Center Administrator - means a staff member with direct responsibility for the center's total program of services provided to children and their families, and when applicable, the administrative aspects. This person meets the qualifications as defined by DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers. For early care and education programs, this means the early childhood administrator and for school-age programs, this means the school-age administrator.

Evidence is Proof of Spending - documents submitted after spending the QIA showing how funds were spent.

Key Practices - A set of practices that defines each Quality Indicator.

Pathway - A continuum that reflects how program practices evolve from the relevant licensing regulations to fully meeting the specific Key Practice.

Quality Improvement Award - State-funded financial support available to all licensed early care and education and school-age programs. They are designed to assist programs in working toward their identified quality improvement goals, supporting their efforts to increase quality programming for children and families in the state of Delaware.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) - A plan developed in consultation with a Quality Improvement Specialist, a set of meaningful action steps incorporating available and relevant supports to assist programs in working toward their identified goals.

Quality Improvement System - A state-driven infrastructure designed to support quality improvements in early care and education programs, bridging the gap from licensing requirements to recognized levels of quality that optimally support child development and learning.

Quality Improvement Specialist - A professional from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) who collaborates and consults with program leaders opting to engage in targeted support to develop and implement a quality improvement plan.

Quality Indicator - a standard established by the Office of Early Learning, Delaware's identified components of quality in the early childhood setting.

Targeted Support - resources available to programs selecting and committing to engage in CQI in an in-depth way.

Universal Support - resources available to all licensed early care and education programs. There is no application to fill out and no commitment for continued engagement is required.

APPENDIX D - CONTACT INFORMATION

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Learning (OEL)

Office of Early Learning - **early.learning@doe.k12.de.us**

Director of the Office of Early Learning

Dawn Alexander **dawn.alexander@doe.k12.de.us**

State-funded Early Care and Education

Takeisha Edmonds **Takeisha.Edmonds@doe.k12.de.us**

Quality Improvement Awards

Takeisha Edmonds **Takeisha.Edmonds@doe.k12.de.us**

Teaching Strategies GOLD/SmartTeach

Brittany Hazzard **Brittany.Hazzard@doe.k12.de.us** or
Kelly McDowell **Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us**

Delaware HelpLine 1-888-352-4653 (must have user ID ready)

Delaware ECE Portal

General Support **Support@Welsfoundation.org** or 302-549-4212
Kelly McDowell **Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us**

DEEDS Early Learning

General Support **Deedsearlylearning@doe.k12.de.us** or 302-735-4236

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Intervention

Ages & Stages Questionnaires

Developmental Screening Help Desk **de.screens@doe.k12.de.us**
Jenny Grady **jenny.grady@doe.k12.de.us**

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL)

OCCL - **occl.doe@doe.k12.de.us**

Main office or to file a complaint

New Castle County: 302-892-5800
Kent and Sussex Counties: 302-739-5487

Background Checks

Identigo helpline: 844-539-5541

Delaware Health and Social Services

Purchase of Care

POC mailbox: **POCresource@delaware.gov**
New Castle County: 302-255-9670
Kent County: 302-857-5037
Sussex County: 302-515-3116

Escalated concerns

Thomas Hall **Thomas.Hall@delaware.gov** or 302-255-9605

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, & Their Families

Report Child Abuse & Neglect
800-292-9582

Child Crisis Hotline
800-969-4357

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC)

DSCYF_ECMHC@state.de.us
Mary Moor **Mary.Moor@state.de.us** or 302-256-9308

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC)

Professional Development
ecinstitute@udel.edu or 302-831-3239

Technical Assistance
ecinstitute@udel.edu or 302-831-3239

Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC)

Career Advisement
Charley Anderson **canderson@desu.edu** or 302-535-5654

CDA Cohorts
Dionne Patterson **depatterson@desu.edu** or 302-554-0429

DE Rise Scholarships
Jennifer Seo **jseo@desu.edu** or 302-535-0582

My Child Delaware

www.mychildde.org

mychildde@cffde.org

APPENDIX E - QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM VISUAL