

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Happy New Year!

As we step into 2025, I'm excited to share that our team has updated DIEEC's mission statement to reaffirm our commitment to ensuring high-quality early childhood experiences for all children. You can find the full statement in the DIEEC News section below. Together, we'll continue working to build brighter futures for Delaware's children and families.

In this issue, we share a variety of upcoming initiatives designed to support your important work. Our website is undergoing a refresh, and soon you'll have access to the new Resource Hub—a comprehensive library of trusted information and tools to enhance your practice. On the wellness front, Shining the Light on You returns this March, offering family child care educators a free, 15-week program focused on health and well-being. Additionally, we've included details about a mini-grant opportunity to promote healthier lifestyles, and a last call for open enrollment in the Health Insurance Marketplace. Finally, don't forget about the upcoming FY25 Quality Improvement Award deadlines, with support available from our Quality Improvement Specialists.

We are always open to input and ideas from the early childhood community—this month, be sure to fill out our poll about the topics you'd like to see covered in future Coach's Corner blogs.

Guided by our updated mission, the DIEEC team looks forward to collaborating with you to make 2025 a year of growth and success.

Warmest regards,

Kristy Sheffler
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

DIEEC Action Items

Shining the Light on You

Are you a family child care educator looking to boost your wellness? Our next cohort of Shining the Light on You, a free 15-week program focused on your health and wellbeing, begins in March. Get insights on topics like stress management and mindfulness, earn up to 18 Quality Assured hours, and enjoy benefits like one-on-one health coaching. [Sign up for an info session](#) on January 27 or February 10 to learn more!

Health Insurance Marketplace Open Enrollment Ends January 15

Last chance for open enrollment! Get a [checklist to prepare for enrollment](#), then enroll in a plan at [HealthCare.gov/get-coverage](https://www.healthcare.gov/get-coverage). For general information, go to www.healthcare.gov.

For more help, the flyer What Do Early Childhood Educators Need to Know About the Marketplace? is a great starting point- it's available in [English](#) and [Español](#). Need help applying? Local support is available. [Find an "assister" near you](#).

DIEEC News

DIEEC's Mission Statement

The DIEEC team recently updated our mission statement to reflect the current work that we do in the early childhood community. Please take a look, and know that we are excited to live our mission through our work with you!

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is committed to improving the lives of young children and their families by strengthening early childhood experiences. We develop and deliver comprehensive, evidence-based supports for early childhood professionals, children, and families. Through innovative research and partnerships, we advance equity and promote high-quality education. Housed within the University of Delaware's College of Education and Human Development, DIEEC works collaboratively to build a brighter future for all children.

Coming Soon: A Refreshed DIEEC Website!

Our [DIEEC website](#) is getting a facelift! The site will have a new look, and it will be easier for you to find what you need. All information and resources related to DIEEC's role in supporting Delaware's Quality Improvement System will now be gathered in one convenient location on the site.

We're also adding a brand-new Resource Hub! This carefully curated collection features reviewed materials from trusted sources. Whether you're looking for tools to enhance your practice or new ideas to inspire your work, the Resource Hub will be there to help.

Coach's Corner - We Want to Hear from YOU!

Coach's Corner is taking January off and will return in February. In the meantime, we want to hear from you! What topics would you like to see covered in Coach's Corner?

Raffle Alert 🎁🎉

Answer our Coach's Corner poll question and you'll be entered to win a DIEEC goodie bag!

Take the poll here: <https://bit.ly/42eXcpG>

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Highlight

As she ponders what is developmentally appropriate to teach about Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and other "peace heroes," educator Nadia Jaboneta reflects on her anti-bias teaching. "The children had big questions. They wanted to have real conversations and understand why things happen in our world. They asked about life, death, fairness, skin color, and race." Jaboneta is fueled by the hope that she "can be as prepared as possible and answer children in a way that is honest, is developmentally appropriate, respects their competence and point of view, helps them feel safe, and shows them their power to change the world."

Read more in her article, [What About People Like Me? Teaching Preschoolers about Segregation and "Peace Heroes."](#) The article is excerpted from the book [Each and Every Child: Teaching Preschool with an Equity Lens](#).

DIEEC Public Calendar

DIEEC's public calendar is a great way to keep up with what's happening in the early childhood community. Upcoming events are listed on the bottom left side of [our homepage](#), and you can also click through to the [full calendar](#). Click on an event name to get all the details: who, what, when, where and how to join in!

News from Our Partners

Mini-Grants to Support Healthier Lifestyles- Apply Now

We are thrilled to share an opportunity for center-based Delaware early childhood education (ECE) programs to receive funding through the Delaware Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Healthy ECE Mini-Grant Program! This program offers mini-grants of up to \$10,000 to support initiatives that foster healthier lifestyles for children through physical activity and nutrition-focused interventions. Eligible projects include programs, events, or policy changes that improve physical activity, nutrition, and overall health in your center-based ECE environment. [Apply by January 31](#).

ECLKC is Moving!

ECLKC is moving to a new address at www.HeadStart.gov. Same great resources, new location. If you have a login and/or saved items on the ECLKC site, you will NOT need to create new credentials on the new site- everything will transfer over. Questions? Check the [Transition to HeadStart.gov FAQs](#) page.

Quality Improvement Planning

If you are working on a Quality Improvement Award application, be sure that you are referring to the most recent version of the [QIS Program and Policy Guide](#). On page 2 of the guide, you will find a summary of the most recent updates made by the Delaware Department of Education.

FY25 Quality Improvement (QI) Award Deadline

The next application deadline for the FY25 QI Award is March 15, 2025. Keep the important information below in mind if you would like to apply by March 15.

- **You must be in contact with a QI Specialist AND have your first meeting scheduled by February 1st.**
- **This is the final opportunity to apply for a QI award in FY25.**
- **Your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) must be co-created with a Quality Improvement Specialist to be eligible for the award.**

- **The program leader is responsible for connecting with their QI Specialist.**
 - **If you already have a QI Specialist**, you can reach out to them directly.
 - **If you do not yet have a QI Specialist**, you must request support through the Delaware Early Care and Education portal. See the [Program Portal Guide](#) for information about how to use the portal and request QI Specialist support.
- **Developing a QIP is a multi-step process.** You will need to meet with your QI Specialist several times. To ensure your plan is developed and submitted on time, we encourage you to connect with your specialist as early as possible.
- **QI Specialists are working with programs on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis.**

QI Specialists are available to support programs in their quality improvement journey regardless of their intent to apply for a QI Award. For more information on the QI process, working with a QI Specialist, or applying for an award, please refer to the [Program and Policy Guide for Delaware's Quality Improvement System for Early Care and Education Programs](#).

Quality Improvement Resource Highlight

Each month, we share resources that Delaware program leaders can use to support themselves and their staff as they work towards higher levels of quality.

This month, we're focusing on resources that support learning about and building on children's interests, preferences, and choices, which are essential to implementing practices and providing environments that are responsive to all children.

- The [August 2023 issue of Natural Resources](#), published by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, offers several resources on this topic, some of which are available in English and Spanish.
- Here's a [quick video](#) from ECLKC that shares how teachers can engage children in learning by following their lead.
- ECLKC also offers this [teacher's guide](#) and [recommended materials list](#) to support educators in responding to children's interests as they explore the natural world.

Your Quality Improvement Specialist can assist you in selecting the most suitable resources for your Quality Improvement Plan.

If you have a resource to share or something that you're doing in your program that we can highlight, we'd love to hear about it! Submit your ideas to ecinstitute@udel.edu to be included in a future edition of REACH.

DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs)

Upcoming Free PLE Opportunities with DIEEC

DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) are available at no cost to you. You can browse and register for a variety of PLEs on the [DIEEC professional learning experience calendar](#). Check out these upcoming offerings:

Virtual-Live and Hybrid Professional Learning Experiences

[Advanced Assessment for Teachers: Purposeful Planning](#), a 10-hour advanced course starting on **January 18**.

[Physical Activity Learning Sessions \(PALS\)](#), a 12-hour intermediate course starting on **January 21**.

[Transitions: Emotions in Motion](#), a 5-hour intermediate course starting on **January 21**.

[A Series of Conversations for Family Child Care Networks: Understanding Head Start Program Performance Standards - Healthy Lifestyles & Wellness](#), a 3-hour intermediate course starting on **January 22**.

[The Parent Voice: Engaging Families](#), a 5-hour intermediate course starting on **January 22**.

[The Leader's Role in Giving Care to the Caregiver PLUS](#), an 8-hour intermediate course starting on **January 28**.

[The Wonder of Outdoor Learning PLUS](#), an 11-hour intermediate course starting **January 28**.

[Flip It! Flipping the Challenging Behavior PLUS](#), a 10-hour intermediate course starting on **January 28**.

[Authentic Community Engagement](#), a 5-hour intermediate course starts on **February 3**.

[The Business of Early Childhood: Your Purpose, Passion, and Position as a Leader PLUS](#), an 8-hour intermediate course starting on **February 4**.

Self-Paced Professional Learning Experiences

All of the PLEs listed below will begin on **February 1st**. Click on each PLE name to learn more.

- [Recordkeeping in Family Child Care](#)
- [Self-Regulation and Play](#)
- [Engaging Fathers](#)
- [Center-Based Child Care: An Introduction to Designing an Operating Budget](#)
- [Mindfulness: A Resilience Practice](#)
- [STEAM: Tinkering to Making](#)

Important Update from the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)

As shared at November's DECC meeting and at December's Provider Call, DEPDNow is no longer available as of January 1, 2025. Instead, three foundational courses can now be accessed through DIEEC using an online platform called Canvas.

Please note that each step below may require processing time. Creation of a Canvas account and access to courses on the Canvas platform are not instantaneous. Allow extra time for these steps when planning to enroll in the courses below.

1. Request a Canvas Guest Account

- Video tutorial: [Creating Your Canvas Account](#)

2. Register for one of the three foundational courses

- [Health & Safety Training for Child Care Professionals](#)
- [Administration of Medication Certification](#)
- [Maintaining Equity in Early Childhood: Suspension / Expulsion Prevention](#)

[Log in to Canvas](#) and begin your course.

Additional Online Professional Development Options for Delaware Early Childhood Professionals

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has created a list of organizations that provide online training hours to meet the educational requirement for the CDA. The Office of Child Care Licensing will also accept training hours from these companies to meet annual licensing clock-hour requirements. This list can be found on their webpage: Educator Requirements: Birth through Second Grade - Delaware Department of Education.

<https://bit.ly/3Yz8zaa>. Scroll all the way to the bottom of the page to view the list.

FREE option

Listed on the DDOE site above as "Head Start ECLKC," the Office of Head Start's Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio **offers free online courses** on child development and practical teaching strategies for infant/toddler educators and preschool educators. <https://bit.ly/3WxJ8TI>.



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