

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

As we move into March, we are excited to celebrate several milestones within our community. Please take a moment to nominate a deserving colleague for the 5th annual DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards before the March 10d deadline so we can continue to recognize the vital work happening in programs across Delaware. We are also preparing for the 5th anniversary of the 1st State Family Child Care Conference and invite you to share your expertise by submitting a session proposal. This issue highlights the recent graduates of our Pyramid Model Tier 1 Cohort, whose dedication to building responsive relationships and supportive environments is truly inspiring.

This month's practical supports include tips in Coach's Corner for refreshing your digital workspace, and information on upcoming asynchronous learning opportunities designed to fit your busy schedule. We also encourage you to join us in "Rocking Your Socks" on March 21 to promote awareness and inclusion for World Down Syndrome Day. We hope these resources and the many opportunities listed below offer helpful guidance as you navigate the spring season.

Warmly,

Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC Interim Co-Director

Call for Proposals: 1st State Family Child Care Conference

Something big is growing...2026 marks the 5th anniversary of the 1st State Family Child Care Conference, and we're preparing our most impactful year yet! We are currently seeking proposals for sessions at this year's conference on October 17 in Newark. Learn more: the call for proposals and link for submissions are available on [our conference web page](#). Apply by **April 1, 2026!**



Photo credit: Maria Errico/UD Office of Communications and Marketing

DEADLINE EXTENDED: DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards!

Excellence happens every day in Delaware's early childhood programs, but time is running out to ensure it gets recognized! Nominations for the **5th Annual Excellence in Early Childhood Awards** close on March 10th. Do you know a professional who goes above and beyond? We are still accepting nominations in three categories:

- **Classroom Educators**
- **Family Child Care Educators**
- **Early Career Educators** (those in their first 3 years of the profession)

A note on nominations: An individual only needs to be nominated once to be considered for an award; multiple nominations for the same person do not increase their chances of winning.

Help us shine a light on the vital work happening across the state. [Visit our Excellence In Early Childhood Awards webpage](#) and submit your nomination by **March 10th!**



DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
Excellence in Early Childhood Awards  Anniversary



Celebrate a standout Delaware educator by submitting your nomination in one of our three categories by March 10th.

A Commitment to Continuous Growth: Celebrating DIEEC's 2026 Cohort Participants 🎉

We are thrilled to celebrate several programs that have recently reached a major milestone! A DIEEC cohort is a multi-month journey of reflection, collaborative learning, and hands-on practice. Over the last several months, these dedicated educators have worked hard to bridge the gap between theory and real-world application.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to these programs for their partnership. This milestone isn't a finish line; it's a spark for the work ahead. We're proud of what they've accomplished so far, and can't wait to see how they carry the momentum in the months and years ahead.

The programs below recently engaged in the Pyramid Model Tier 1 Cohort with DIEEC. Through practice-based coaching, these teams are successfully integrating Pyramid Model strategies into their daily routines, ensuring that Nurturing and Responsive Relationships and High-Quality Supportive Environments are active parts of their classrooms. Want to learn more? [Visit DIEEC's Pyramid model page](#) for information.



Asynchronous Learning Opportunities with DIEEC

Looking for flexible, engaging professional learning that fits your schedule? DIEEC's upcoming Quorum PLUS opportunities are completely asynchronous Professional Learning Experiences, so you can participate on your own schedule. Content is delivered through Quorum modules, with Canvas providing a space for participants and the DIEEC Professional Development Coordinator to connect through discussion and reflection.

Upcoming asynchronous learning opportunities include:

- [Family Child Care Indoor Environment](#) (begins 3/31/26)
- [Responsive Caregiving: Nurturing Relationships with Infants and Toddlers](#) (begins 4/6/26)
- [Enriching Indoor Environments](#) (begins 5/4/26)
- [Enriching Indoor Environments](#) (begins 6/1/26)
- [The Juggling Act: Schedules, Routines, and Transitions](#) (begins 6/1/26)

To learn more about how these courses work, click on any of the linked courses above and review the “Additional Information” section. Join us and learn in a way that works for you!



Connect, reflect, and grow through interactive professional learning experiences to fit your busy schedule. (Photo credit: Getty Images Signature)

Coach’s Corner: Spring Cleaning for Technology

Just as we might scrub our classrooms and offices for spring, a technology cleanup refreshes the digital spaces we inhabit every day. It’s about more than just saving storage; it’s a proactive way to boost your productivity, sharpen your focus, and ensure your technology runs safely and smoothly in the year ahead. In this month’s Coach’s Corner, [learn about some simple steps you can take to tame the digital clutter.](#)



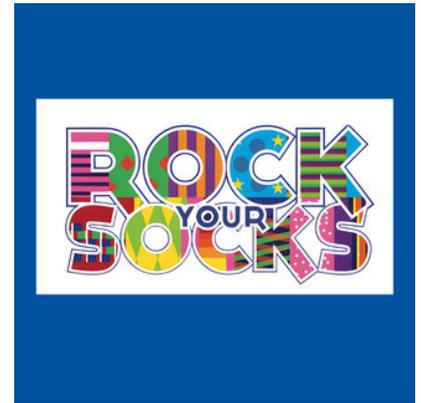
Photo credit: Getty Images Pro

Meeting the Needs of All Children: Word Down Syndrom Day

Get ready to “Rock Your Socks” by wearing your most colorful socks on March 21, [World Down Syndrome Day](#), to promote awareness and inclusion! This year’s theme is Together Against Loneliness. Mismatched socks represent the triplication of the 21st chromosome that causes Down syndrome (also known as Trisomy 21).

Visit the [Down Syndrome Association of Delaware](#) for social media toolkits, apparel, ways to be involved locally throughout the year, and more. For more information on Down syndrome, visit the [National Down Syndrome Society](#).

Rock your most colorful, mismatched socks on March 21 to spread awareness and celebrate World Down Syndrome Day. (graphic credit: Down Syndrome Association of Delaware)



Provider Spotlight: From Sensory Play to Sustainable Harvest - The Evolution of an Outdoor Classroom

From a sensory "pizza garden" to a shared harvest, Ollie's Imagination Station is proving that a grassy yard can be transformed into a flourishing outdoor classroom. By integrating gardening into their daily curriculum and sharing fresh produce and recipes with families, this Laurel-based program is cultivating both healthy habits and a calming sanctuary for children and staff alike. [Read the full story](#) to see how this program is growing a sustainable outdoor classroom for its community.



The outdoor garden at Ollie's Imagination Station includes raised beds, a greenhouse, and shady space. (Photo credit: Ollie's Imagination Station)

Monthly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

This month, we're raffling off two \$10 Wawa gift cards! Read this month's Coach's Corner article, then share a creative tip to get children moving, and you'll be entered to win. Raffle entries close on Wednesday, **March 25**. [To enter the raffle click here](#).



Congratulations to our **February raffle winners** 🎉

- **Center-based classroom educator:** Pamela Maiorano
- **Family child care educator:** Tonia Hurtt

We'll reach out soon to get your prizes to you.

Office Hours

Did you know that DIEEC offers regular drop-in office hours for FCC educators and center-based administrators? DIEEC staff is on hand and ready to provide technical assistance and help get your questions answered. See our upcoming office hours below. No appointment needed- just stop by!

Center-Based Programs	Family Child Care Educators
Zoom link for ALL center-based office hours	Zoom link for ALL FCC office hours
Tuesday 2/10 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Tuesday 2/3 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
Tuesday 2/24 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.	Tuesday 2/16 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

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 of our [DIEEC 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

Conscious Discipline Training Opportunity

The Early Childhood Excellence team at the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) is excited to offer FREE Conscious Discipline "Handling Upset" Professional Development. The format of this course is asynchronous and virtual synchronous, and participants will receive 12 hours of Quality Assured credit for participating.

- [Cohort 5 begins on March 30, 2026](#)
 - [Cohort 6 begins on May 21, 2026](#)
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Delaware Immigrant Children Guidance for Early Care and Education

The Delaware Department of Education has a webpage with guidance and resources for educators and families concerned about immigration actions in child care facilities. [This page links to the Attorney General's Office guidance for businesses and organizations](#). It is important to note that guidance for child care businesses differs from guidance for Delaware public schools.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Final Fiscal Year 2026 Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Deadline Approaching

The final QIA application deadline for fiscal year 2026 is March 15, 2026. Programs planning to apply should already be in close collaboration with their DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp) to finalize all components of their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). As you complete these final steps, please refer to the [FY26 Program and Policy Guide for Delaware's Quality Improvement System \(QIS\) for Early Care and Education Programs](#), published by the Delaware Department of Education's Office of Early Learning. This guide serves as the primary resource for understanding QIS requirements and provides detailed guidance for developing a QIP and preparing a complete QIA application.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Don't miss this month's featured PLEs- check out our new asynchronous learning opportunities listed on page 3!

DIEEC's 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.

To view the current list of OEL-approved training opportunities, visit [Professional Development, Coaching, and Other Professional Learning Experiences for the Early Care and Education Workforce](#).