

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

Welcome to the July issue of REACH! This month brings an exciting new chapter for our team as we settle into DIEEC's new office home on the University of Delaware's Children's Campus. We can't wait to welcome you for tours and summer snacks at our upcoming Block Party in August.

Whether you're navigating your busy summer schedule or preparing for the upcoming school year, we have resources and supports to share with you. You can sign up for an upcoming FY27 Quality Improvement System (QIS) informational session, or register for this fall's 1st State Family Child Care Conference- a wonderful opportunity to connect with peers and re-energize your practice. Don't miss our latest Coach's Corner for creative, budget-friendly ways to use dot stickers in your classrooms, as well as crucial health resources for keeping your youngest learners safe during extreme summer heat. Wishing you a fun, safe, and memorable summer!

Warmly,

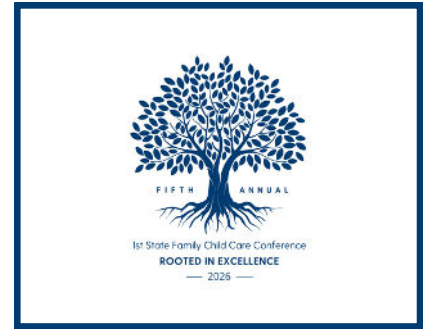
Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC Interim Co-Director

DIEEC ACTION ITEMS

Registration is Open for the 1st State Family Child Care Conference!

DIEEC Family child care (FCC) educators shape the future every day by creating caring, supportive environments for children and families. **DIEEC's 1st State Family Child Care Conference** is the perfect place to celebrate your impact. Earn up to 5 hours of Quality Assured professional development while gaining practical strategies you can immediately use in your program. Whether it's your first year attending or your fifth, you'll discover fresh ideas, gather new resources, and connect with local FCC educators to grow your support network. Your registration includes breakfast, lunch, refreshments, and full access to our vendor marketplace!

Ready to join us? [Head over to our conference webpage](#) to register, check out hotel and transportation details, and learn about this year's keynote panel.



Psst! Are you a business looking to support our community? Sponsor and vendor registration is also open on the webpage!

Quality Improvement System (QIS) Information Sessions

The Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Learning (OEL), will be hosting several QIS information sessions in July for early childhood providers and educators. These sessions will include presentations from OEL, the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) and the Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC). Participants will learn about the broader QIS system, the FY27 QIS Focus Areas, and the Quality Improvement Planning (QIP) Process. There will also be time to discuss questions related to upskilling, including the different pathways available for educators working toward CDA requirements. There are three remaining opportunities to attend:



For program leaders and FCC providers:

- Thursday, July 9, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 15, 1-2:30 p.m.

For educators:

- Monday, July 13, 6-7:30 p.m.

You are welcome to attend more than one session. All sessions will be recorded. **Registration is required** to attend and to receive access to the recording. [OEL QIS Informational Sessions Registration Link for all sessions.](#)

We encourage all programs planning to participate in QIS and/or apply for QIA to attend one of these sessions. The information shared will help programs understand expectations, available supports, and next steps for FY27.

DIEEC Block Party - You Are Invited!

Join us for a casual summer event to tour our new space, catch up with friends, and celebrate the good work happening in Delaware's early childhood education community!

- **Who:** Program administrators, educators, and friends of the early childhood field.
- **When:** 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- **Where:** DIEEC's new office at 461 Wyoming Rd., Newark, Del. 19716



What's on the block? Elevated summer snacks and a custom "build-your-own" lemonade and iced tea bar, playful activities, helpful resources, and plenty of raffle drawings throughout the evening. Get ready for good food, great music, and even better company! [RSVP here by August 12.](#)

Join the Conversation about Outdoor Time in Early Childhood (Compensation Provided)

DIEEC, with support from the Delaware Division of Public Health, is developing new materials focused on supporting outdoor time in early childhood programs, and we would love your input! We are hosting two Zoom discussions where we can learn about your experiences with taking kids outside. Family child care educators, center-based classroom educators, and center administrators are welcome to share their successes and challenges.

- **July 15th** from **10:30-11:30 a.m.**
- **July 16th** from **6:00-7:00 p.m.**

Attendees will receive a \$20 gift card as a thank you for participating. Space is limited, so [sign up today via this link!](#)

Update Your Address Book: DIEEC Has Moved!

Our new location is in the heart of the University of Delaware's Children's Campus. We're excited to have new neighbors: the [UD Lab School](#), the [Center for Disability Studies](#), the [Early Learning Center](#), and [The College School](#)!

Our email address and phone number remain the same: you can still reach us at ecinstitute@udel.edu or by phone at [302-831-3239](tel:302-831-3239).

DIEEC's new street and mailing address is:
Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood
[461 Wyoming Rd., Newark, DE 19716](#)



DIEEC NEWS

Provider Spotlight: 2026 DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Award Winners

In this month's Provider Spotlight, DIEEC is thrilled to introduce the inspiring educators who won or placed as runners-up in our 2026 DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards initiative.

Through responsive teaching, deep family partnerships, and peer mentorship, they are building the supportive communities our children need to grow and thrive. [Click here to discover their stories and celebrate their impact.](#)



(left to right) Cherie Johnson, Shakira Waples, Aaronasha Bruton-Gasby, Janiece Sugick, and Ugochi Akinmoladun

Monthly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

This month, we're raffling off two \$10 Wawa gift cards. [Read this month's Coach's Corner about dot sticker fun](#), then answer our survey question, and you'll be entered to win.

Here are our lucky June raffle winners:

- **Family child care educator:** Theresa Rogers
- **Center-based classroom educator:** Amy Walkingshaw, One Step Ahead Child Care and Preschool

Congratulations! 🎉 Check your email- we'll reach out soon to get your prizes to you.



[Enter to win here!](#)

[Deadline is July 29.](#)

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

We are thrilled to celebrate all of the 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.

Through a combination of learning opportunities and coaching, participants are deepening their understanding of effective teaching practices, strengthening their interactions with children, and gaining strategies to support high-quality early childhood experiences. Congratulations!

Congratulations!

Early Language and Literacy

Pulaski Early Education Center

Trauma-Informed Care

Hope House Knowledge Center
Blossom & Bloom Learning Center 2

Pyramid Model

Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center

Tree of Life Learning Center (The Learning Tree)

Milford Early Learning Center

Wonder Years Early Learning Center

Wilmington Head Start, Leslie Johnson Center

Wilmington Head Start, West 3rd Street Center

Wilmington Head Start, Van Buren Street Center

Seeds of Jesus Daycare

Congratulations!

Let's GROW Outside!

Cindy Jones
Room to Bloom

Dawn Perry-Schafferman, Patrick Schafferman
Dawn's Large Family Home Childcare

Gale Dutton
Riverview Place

Nadinena Smith
Nana's Touch of Joy

Shamanda Rice
Little Village Home Daycare

Kenna Chanoux, Heather Stitik, Barbi Tulowitzki-Hojnicki
Margaret H. Rollins CDC at Children's Beach House

Ashley Stanford, Tracey Wilson
Little Arrows Childcare

Tykiesha Raison
Lend a Helping Hand Childcare

We extend a heartfelt **thank you** to these programs for their partnership. We can't wait to see how they carry the momentum into the months and years ahead.

Coach's Corner: Dot, Dot, Dot...8 Ways to Get Creative with Dot Stickers

Discover the endless versatility of the humble dot sticker! [In our latest Coach's Corner, we share 8 budget-friendly activity ideas](#) designed to promote spatial awareness, fine motor skills, and creative exploration. Learn how to put dot stickers to work in open-ended dramatic play, as well as in activities that support early literacy and math skills, in ways that fit the unique needs of every learner in your room.



Image credit: Getty Images

Meeting the Needs of All Children: Keeping Children Safe in the Heat

Summer offers plenty of opportunities for fun in the sun, but high-heat days can quickly become unsafe for our most vulnerable learners- indoors and out.

Who is vulnerable? All children's bodies are still developing the ability to regulate temperature, and caregivers should monitor them closely. Children who may be at particular risk include:



Image credit: Getty Images Signature

- **Children with asthma**, for whom dehydration can worsen symptoms, and high temperatures can cause airways to tighten.
- **Children with Down syndrome or neurological conditions** who have compromised thermoregulation (their bodies physically struggle to cool down).
- **Children with autism or sensory processing differences** who may experience distress from the feeling of sweat, sticky sunscreen, or humid air.
- **Infants, whose bodies can overheat rapidly** without showing obvious signs, such as sweating.

Whether you are staying inside or playing in the shade, check out these resources for keeping everyone safe. Don't forget to take care of yourself by hydrating, wearing sunscreen, and seeking shade!

- [Keeping Children Safe During Extreme Heat Events: Tips](#) (from the National Association for Family Child Care/NAFCC)
- [Keeping Your Cool: High Heat Awareness and Solutions](#) (PennState Extension)

Office Hours to Support Programs and Educators

DIEEC offers regular drop-in office hours for FCC educators and center-based administrators, with DIEEC staff ready to provide technical assistance and help get your questions answered. No appointment needed- just stop by!

Upcoming office hours

Center-based programs [use this Zoom link to join all center-based office hours](#).

- Tuesday, 7/14 from 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, 7/22 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Family child care educators [use this Zoom link to join all FCC office hours](#).

- Tuesday, 7/7, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
 - Monday, 7/20, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
-

DIEEC Summer Hours

From May 25 through September 4, DIEEC will be on summer hours. Our main phone line, 302-831-3239, will be staffed **Monday through Thursday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**, and **Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** You may also email us at your convenience at ecinstitute@udel.edu and you will receive a reply during business hours. You can visit our website anytime at www.dieec.udel.edu.

DIEEC Public Calendar: Stay Informed, Stay Connected

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!

Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) Call

The next DECC call will take place on **Tuesday, July 21**, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. [Subscribe here](#) to receive DECC emails, meeting reminders, and links to join virtual DECC calls.

Health2Go Mobile Units Come to You

Health2Go is a free mobile health care clinic designed to bring medical services and community resources directly to the public. No appointments are needed, and while insurance is accepted, it is not required to receive care. Certified translators are available.

The mobile clinic offers a wide range of free services, including:

- **Vaccinations:** COVID-19 and seasonal flu shots.
- **Screenings & Testing:** Blood pressure checks, lead testing, and screenings/referrals for diabetes, cholesterol, and HIV.
- **Resources & Support:** Educational materials, smoking/vaping cessation referrals, and Opioid Rescue Kits (Naloxone).



*Image credit: DPH Community
Mobile Health Unit*

You can [view the list of upcoming dates and locations for Health2Go mobile units here](#). To be added to the Mobile Unit distribution list of dates and locations and receive printable informational flyers for each event that can be shared with families, please email Lisa.Diehl2@delaware.gov.

WECEC Resource Center Summer Location and Hours

The WECEC Resource Center is officially open at its temporary summer location inside the Police Athletic League Wilmington (**PALW**), **located at 3707 N. Market Street!**

Summer hours for the WECEC Resource Center at PALW are:

- **Monday to Thursday:** 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday & Thursday evenings:** 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Please note that WECEC is only able to make about 25% of their materials available at their summer location- they kindly ask that you email them before stopping by to make sure we have the specific items or resources you are looking for.

Free Summer Meals for Children

The Delaware Department of Education's "SUN" Summer Nutrition Program offers free, healthy daily meals to children and teens aged 18 and under across the state. The program requires no sign-ups or costs. You can print and post the flyer in either [English](#) or [Spanish](#) to help families find nearby meal locations.

Free Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)/SmartTeach

Did you know that licensed early care and education programs in Delaware have free access to Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG)/SmartTeach assessment tools through the Early Childhood Excellence Team at the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)? TSG/SmartTeach tools support educators in observing, documenting, assessing, and planning for children's learning and development in meaningful, research-based ways.

Monitoring for adherence to [DDOE's TSG/SmartTeach policies](#) began on July 1, 2026. Programs should review the updated guidance and expectations for the use of TSG/SmartTeach to ensure they are making the most of these valuable supports to strengthen classroom practice, continuous quality improvement, and every child's growth and learning.

Free Book for TSG/SmartTeach Users!

Programs already using TSG/SmartTeach can request a free copy of Teaching Strategies GOLD: Objectives for Development & Learning for each classroom*. This book is an essential resource that outlines developmental progressions, helps educators understand widely held expectations, and supports intentional teaching aligned with child development. [To request copies for your program, simply complete this Google form](#), and your Quality Improvement Specialist will deliver the book directly to you!

****Books are available on a first-come, first-served basis.***

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 Planning for FY27 is Underway

Quality improvement planning for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) has officially begun. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), in partnership with the Early Childhood Excellence Team, has identified strengthening the workforce as Delaware's priority focus area for FY27. This year, quality improvement planning connected to Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) will focus on upskilling staff, with an emphasis on increasing Child Development Associate (CDA) attainment. Investing in staff professional growth supports stronger teaching practices, more positive interactions, and better experiences for children and families.

As always, the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is here to support your program through the process. With guidance from a DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp), programs will reflect on program strengths, consider opportunities for upskilling, and develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) focused on workforce goals. As in prior years, programs must be actively engaged in quality improvement to be eligible for a FY27 Quality Improvement Award.

To get started, programs are encouraged to reach out to their assigned QISp, or [click here to learn how to request QISp support](#) (see p.11). Connecting early will help ensure you have the time and support needed to complete your QIP and stay on track.

Quality Improvement Award Application Deadlines for FY27

- September 15, 2026
- November 15, 2026
- January 15, 2027
- March 15, 2027

Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) with DIEEC

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](#).

Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio Update

Head Start's iPD Portfolio has transitioned to Early Education Pathways (EEP). If you previously had an iPD account, you will be able to log in to EEP with the same credentials. [Visit the EEP webpage and learn more](#).

Accessing Core Trainings on PDMS and Schoology

As of May 1, 2026, all new registrations for the following courses are available only on the Delaware Department of Education's PDMS/Schoology platform. PDMS is where you register for professional development, and Schoology is where you complete the course.

If you do not already have one, you will need to create an EdAccess account to use PDMS and Schoology. Click [HERE](#) to learn how to get started. Once you have an account, you can use the links below to register for and access the trainings.

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

An additional course, [Mandatory Reporting and Recognition of Child Abuse and Neglect](#), has also been added to PDMS and Schoology. This is a new version of the course previously available through the Office of the Child Advocate.

If you do not already have one, you will need to **create an EdAccess account to use PDMS and Schoology**. [Click HERE to learn how to get started](#). Need additional information? This [brief overview and toolkit](#) can be used to guide you through EdAccess account creation and requesting help.

Verifying training completion for PDMS/Schoology courses. When you complete one of the above courses in PDMS/Schoology, please **upload your transcript to OCCL**, rather than the PDMS certificate, to verify training completion.