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



FISCAL YEAR (FY) 27
July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

Office of Early Learning (OEL)
Early Childhood Excellence (ECE Team)
Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)

Delaware Department of Education

Updated November 12, 2026

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Update History

Please see below for a summary of changes.

November 12, 2026 update

- Added contact email for TSG access and technical support.
- Added examples to support SFECEPs in completing the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) budget narrative.
- Updated DDOE-approved professional learning and supplemental curriculum lists for Language and Literacy and Social, Emotional, Behavioral Well-Being.

October 2, 2026 update

- Added text aligning QIS Area 3 with the Delaware's Birth Through Grade 3 Early Literacy Plan for 2025-2028
- Added Kelly McDowell as the contact person for Quality Improvement Awards
- Added application link for CDA cohorts managed by ECIC
- Added information about uploading CDA certificate to DEEDS Early Learning
- Updated "SEBW" acronym to be consistently spelled throughout the doc
- Added to text to further clarify the requirement to co-create at QIP with a QISp before applying for a Quality Improvement Award
- Updated needs assessment information to clarify that school-age programs will include all staff (full- and part-time) on their needs assessment
- Updated list of CDA options for obtaining 120 training hours

August 14, 2026 update

- Added links to FY27 Quality Improvement System (QIS) Suggestions and Questions Form and the FY27 QIS Frequently Asked Questions and Suggestions document

August 13, 2026 update

- Added link to FY27 OEL Strategic Plan
- Added link to sample FY27 QIA rubric/budget narrative for licensed programs
- Added link to sample FY27 QIA rubric/budget narrative for school districts

OVERVIEW OF DELAWARE'S QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (QIS)

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 on Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) regulations and working toward identified Quality Indicators (QI). This QIS Program and Policy Guide outlines a variety of supports available to programs as they implement Key Practices (KP).

State Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP) and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Information:

- Throughout this document, you will see informational boxes referencing **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Policies and Procedures** and **FY27 State Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP) Policies and Procedures**. These boxes apply **only** to SFECEPs and EHS-CCPs.
- EHS-CCPs are programs that receive funding via the DE DOE Early Head Start Funds. If your program does not receive **EHS-CCP** funding, you may disregard these boxes. If you are unsure if your program is EHS-CCP funded, visit the **EHS-CCP webpage.**
- **SFECEPs** are programs that receive funding through DDOE **ECAP** or **Redding** state funds. If your program does not receive **ECAP** or **Redding** funding, you may disregard these boxes. If you are unsure if your program is State Funded, visit the **SFECEP webpage.**

Quality Indicators (QI)

Quality Indicators represent Delaware's core components of quality within the QIS. Delaware's QIS includes three QIs that support high-quality early care and education programs.

Delaware's Quality Indicators

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.	**QIA funded areas of focus for FY27**
2. Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ) Program creates culturally responsive, playful learning environments, using intentional and responsive interactions to promote relationships between and among educators and children, and build a sense of community, while developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and 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 QIA funded area of focus for FY27**

Key Practices (KP) & Pathways

A set of Key Practices (KPs) defines each QI, and each KP has a pathway to support programs in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). Each key practice has a pathway to support a program's quality improvement efforts. A pathway is a continuum that reflects how program practices evolve from the relevant licensing regulations to fully meeting the specific KP. Pathways are designed to guide improvement efforts as programs work to implement the KPs.

- Appendix A outlines DDOE's priority KPs and Pathways for **center/school-based programs** for FY27
    - CQ-KP4: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high-quality educators, substitutes, consultants and contractors
    - CQ-KP6: Promotes professional growth and personal well-being for all educators and staff
    - PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions
    - PCHQ-KP5: Implements practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program
- Appendix B outlines DDOE's priority KPs and Pathways for **family child care programs** for FY27
    - CQ-KP4: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high-quality educators, substitutes, consultants and contractors (as needed)
    - CQ-KP6: Promotes professional growth and personal well-being for self and LFCC staff
    - PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions
    - PCHQ-KP5: Implements practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program

QIS Framework Alignment

To strengthen program quality across Delaware's licensed child care programs, DDOE's QIS for early care and education programs is informed by and aligned with:

- **DDOE's:**
    - **2025-2028 Strategic Plan**
    - DDOE's **Early Literacy Plan** and Playbooks
    - 2021 **Social Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) Plan**
    - **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**
- **The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC):**
    - **2025 Program Standards**
    - 2020 **Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession**
- The Buffet Institute's March 31, 2026 Report: **Who Stays in the Early Childhood Programs? Stability Starts with the Workforce**
- **The Office of Head Start's:**

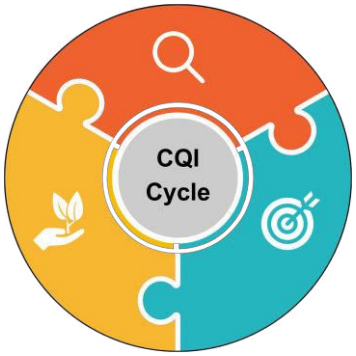
    - Head Start Program Performance Standards
    - Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)
    - Planned Language Approach (PLA)
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
- OEL's Strategic Plan for Continuous Quality Improvement for ECE Programs and Educators
- FY27 OEL Strategic Plan
    - Under Construction: DDOE, OEL, OCCL and NAEYC Program and Professional Standards Informed QIS
- Delaware's 2026 PDG Projects



CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

CQI is a simple process programs use to get better over time. Programs look at their data, set SMART goals, develop plans with their Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp), implement quality initiatives, and check their progress. Each program works with a QISp from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC).

DATA GATHERING How are we doing?	
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN What practices do we want to improve?	
QUALITY INVESTMENT SUPPORTS What do we need to do to improve these practices?	



The CQI cycle operates in three cyclical phases to drive intentional, program-wide growth.

1. It begins with a **Data Gathering** phase**,** where program leaders partner with a QISp to complete a Needs Assessment (NA) and identify unique strengths and needs based on Key Practice pathways.
2. This data directly informs the **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)** phase, during which leaders co-create a three-year roadmap and establish two to four targeted SMART goals focused on increasing educator l competencies and increased qualifications and overall program quality in the priority KP areas.
3. Finally, the program enters the **Quality Investment Supports** phase, actively implementing the plan by accessing professional and financial resources while tracking their ongoing progress through monthly QISp touchpoints.

Programs request Quality Improvement Planning support through the Delaware Early Care and Education (ECE) portal. (See page 9 of the linked Program Portal Guide for instructions.)

FY27 (Fiscal Year) Quality Improvement Planning Cycle

Moving Through a Cycle in FY27

For FY27, which includes July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, programs will focus on increasing educator competencies and qualifications by supporting progress toward Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies or higher education credentials. To support this effort, the DDOE has established a phased approach for quality improvement planning this year, designed to strengthen the early childhood workforce while advancing overall program quality.

This approach guides programs through a progression designed to build foundational staff qualifications, deepen professional practice, and expand program-wide continuous quality improvement. The QIS extends beyond educator upskilling to include the implementation of QIS Key Practices that promote high-quality program practices and meaningful learning experiences for children.

Phase 1: Initial Data Gathering

Program leaders work with their QISp to gather FY27 data and review current program practices and staff education/training levels.

- For FY27, the QISp will support programs in completing a Needs Assessment. Using this data, programs will understand their strengths and areas of focus for the FY27 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
    - Center-based, family child care and large family child care programs will include all full-time staff (25 hours or more) on the needs assessment
    - School-age programs will include all staff, part-time and full-time

Phase 2: Developing the FY27 QIP

Program leaders will collaborate with their QISp, using the strengths and areas of focus (data) identified by their NA to establish SMART goals for their FY27 QIP. This process will include developing a program-wide plans to 1) increase educator competencies and qualifications and 2) progress along the KP pathways outlined in Appendices A and B.

Once goals are established, programs engage in reflective conversations to identify strategies and resources that support the development of 1–4 formal SMART goals. Using the DDOE-approved menu of supports, the QISp guides the program in creating a quality improvement plan (QIP) and translating selected supports into meaningful action steps to achieve those goals. As outlined by the KPs, quality improvement work can occur at all levels: the overall program and the professional.

- **QIS Area 1: Qualifications and Credentials**- Early care and education programs will begin by supporting full-time educators in achieving Child Development Associate (CDA) competencies or higher education credentials.
    - Programs must ensure that at least 50% of full-time early care and education staff who do not currently hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher to be working toward obtaining CDA, a Montessori Credential, an associate degree (AA) or a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education (ECE) or a related field with at least 9 ECE credits, or an associate or bachelor's degree in any field with at least 15 ECE credits.
    - If an educator obtained a CDA after receiving their qualifications certificate or once they obtain a CDA, they must upload their CDA to DEEDS Early Learning. To do this they will complete the following steps:

        1. Log into their DEEDS dashboard
        2. Click View/Update my file
        3. Click Nat/Pro certificates
        4. Click new Nat/Pro certificates
        5. Enter the type
        6. Select CDA
        7. Select content type of CDA (choose either infant/toddler, preschool, birth to 5, or FCCH)
        8. Enter the effective date and expiration date
        9. Upload the CDA
        10. Save it as Nat/Pro certificate

    - Acceptable related fields include Child Development; Elementary Education; Elementary Special Education; Psychology; Social Work; Neuroscience; Social Behavior; Behavioral or Cognitive Science; Human Services and Counseling; Speech Language Pathology; Communications Sciences and Disorders; Child and Family Studies; and other fields of study that capture competencies and knowledge on development, behavior, health, and education as approved by the Department of Education.
        - For example: A program employs 20 full-time educators. Of these, 12 already hold a CDA or

higher degree (AA/BA), leaving 8 educators who do not yet meet the minimum educational requirement.

- To meet FY27 expectations, the program must ensure that at least 50% of those 8 educators, meaning 4 educators, are actively working toward earning their CDA or higher. Cooks, office staff, and janitorial staff are not considered educators.
- Family Child Care (FCC) providers without a CDA or higher must work toward obtaining a CDA or higher. For Large Family Child Care (LFCC) providers, if neither the provider nor assistant has a CDA or higher, at least one must begin working toward earning a CDA. If one already has a CDA or higher, the other educator should begin working toward earning a CDA or higher. FCC and LFCC substitutes are not required to upskill.

- A CDA includes the following components:
  - 120 hours of approved education/training (Training is accepted from a wide variety of institutions assuming it includes at least 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA subject areas and an additional 40 hours in content specific areas such as infant/toddler, preschool, birth to five, or family child care. The approved training list is found at **Educator Requirements: Birth through Second Grade – Delaware Department of Education)** Relevant ECE coursework from a C: RAC accredited college may count toward may count toward the CDA's required education hours if it aligns with CDA competency areas. Training may include TECE1 and TECE 2 no matter what date it was completed.
  - Professional portfolio
  - CDA exam
  - Observation (if required by the CDA Council)
    Completing only the training hours does not result in a CDA credential. **Please Note:** Educators who are qualified as an Early Childhood Teacher through DEEDS may or may not hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Programs are responsible for verifying whether an educator has earned a CDA.
  - To verify a CDA, visit the **Delaware Department of Education's DEEDS educator search**, enter the educator's name, select their profile, and scroll to the **National Credentials** section. If the educator holds a CDA, it will be listed there. CDAs are counted even if they are not active.

- Each educator must be engaged in one or more of the following activities:
  1. Participating in a comprehensive CDA cohort program;
  2. Completing coursework or professional development aligned with the CDA competency standards by earning at least 10 hours of training annually in each of the four CDA subject areas (40 in total) they are actively working to complete;
  3. Working with a coach, mentor, or advisor to prepare for CDA completion;
  4. Developing a professional portfolio that meets the requirements of the CDA Council;
  5. Collecting family questionnaires and other documentation required for the CDA assessment process;
  6. Completing the CDA application process;

7. Scheduling and completing the CDA Verification Visit (observation);
8. Preparing for, scheduling, and passing the CDA exam; or
9. Completing college or university courses in early childhood education.

Half Day Preschool Programs – serving children in a Morning or Afternoon

- Programs whose educators do not meet the full-time staff requirement because the center operates less than 25 hours per week, will need to have at least 50% of their staff without a CDA or higher to be working toward obtaining CDA, a Montessori Credential, an associate degree (AA) or a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education (ECE) or a related field with at least 9 ECE credits, or an associate or bachelor's degree in any field with at least 15 ECE credits.
- Acceptable related fields include Child Development; Elementary Education; Elementary Special Education; Psychology; Social Work; Neuroscience; Social Behavior; Behavioral or Cognitive Science; Human Services and Counseling; Speech Language Pathology; Communications Sciences and Disorders; Child and Family Studies; and other fields of study that capture competencies and knowledge on development, behavior, health, and education as approved by the Department of Education.

School-age only programs and ECE programs with 75% of full-time staff having a CDA or higher will skip QIS Area 1 and move to QIS Area 2.

- **QIS Area 2: Social Emotional Behavioral Well-being – ECE programs with at least 75% of their educators having already met QIS Area 1, CDA or higher, will have educators focus on completing focused professional development in Social Emotional Behavioral Well-Being (SEBW).**

  School-age only programs are not required to have CDAs or higher and will begin by focusing on SEBW training, followed by Language and Literacy training (Area 3).

  To meet FY27 expectations, educators will complete at least 18 hours of SEBW training or coaching. Previous high-quality training in SEBW may be accepted as long as it was at least 4 hours in length.

  Once 75% of the educators have completed SEBW training, the program may move to QIA Area 3 Language and Literacy.

- **QIS Area 3: Language and Literacy** - After completing SEBW training, educators will work to complete high-quality training in Language and Literacy.

  To meet FY27 expectations, educators will complete at least 18 hours of language and literacy training or coaching. Previous high-quality training in language and literacy may be accepted as long as it was at least 4 hours in length.

  Once 75% of the educators have completed Language and Literacy training, the program may move to QIA Area 4 Intensive Cohorts.

- **QIS Area 4: Intensive Cohorts -** Programs that have attained both QIS Areas 1, 2 and 3 will have access to participate in intensive SEBW and/or Language and Literacy cohort opportunities to promote program-wide implementation and sustained quality improvement.

Phase 3: Quality Improvement Supports

With the QIP in place, the next phase is to access identified supports, implementing the action steps to achieve the identified goals. The DDOE is committed to providing both professional and financial support to assist programs in

working toward their identified quality improvement goals, as outlined in the Menus of Support for center-based and home-based programs. See Appendix C.

Programs will engage in targeted activities based on their current staff education levels and will progress through the defined QIS Areas accordingly. More information related to universal and targeted supports related to the priority QIS Areas are listed below in the Quality Improvement Supports section.

Monitoring QIP Progress

QISPs will offer monthly touchpoints with programs to review progress, identify barriers, and develop strategies to address challenges. If the QIP is not progressing as outlined in the QIP, the QISp can support revising the program's QIP to help the program get back on track to meet the original SMART goals.

Programs that do not show progress towards completing their SMART goals are not eligible for FY28 QIA funding.

SFECEP and EHS-CCP ONLY:

SFECEPs and EHS-CCPs QIP benchmark MUST follow the staffing qualifications requirements listed in their FY27 Policies and Procedures Manuals.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

Universal Supports

All OCCL-licensed Delaware programs (center-based, family and large family, and school-age programs) are eligible to make use of universal supports. There is no application to complete. These universal supports can help programs reach their QIP goals, require no commitment for continued engagement, and many may be accessed through DIEEC's 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.
- Network meetings for family and large family child care programs.
- Community-based professional learning experiences offered by DIEEC
- Leader Link-Up meetings for center-based program leaders
- Self-paced learning experiences, including Early Education Pathways (previously iPD), Cox Campus, and iCDA
- Community-based professional learning experiences offered by DIEEC

Targeted Professional Development Supports (FY27 Focus on Increasing Educator to Earn Credentials)

The DDOE will prioritize targeted supports for FY27 on KP improvement areas that require greater commitment to professional upskilling to earn credentials. To achieve this, there will be a wide variety of offerings for the different QIS areas outlined above.

Before selecting a QIS Area(s) of Focus- School districts will review and abide by district contract restrictions. If contract restrictions do not allow for requiring paraprofessionals to increase qualifications:

- Districts are still responsible for educating paraeducators about the benefits of earning a CDA (support and retention bonuses, and the CDA = 12 ECE college credits at DE colleges and universities.) DDOE encourages districts to use QIA funds to allow paraprofessionals to participate in training. Funds may be used for substitutes to allow participation during the workday or to provide stipends for those completing training or working toward a CDA, if applicable.
- Districts will provide information on the school's professional development plans and coaching supports and will collaborate with their QISp to focus on QIS Area 2 or 3, depending on their Needs Assessment.

QIS Area 1: Credentials & Degrees for Early Childhood Professionals Professional Development and Coaching for CDA content and CDA Credential Attainment

CDA Coursework (120 Hours) with Coaching (apply here: **Child Development Associate | Early Childhood Innovation Center**)

1. **iCDA Cohort**
   - Asynchronous (independent) Coursework through **Early Education Pathways (EEP) | HeadStart.gov** iCDA– Free online courses that provide CDA subject area modules to complete 80 of the 120 hours required for the CDA credential.
   - The additional 40 pathway-specific content (I/T, Preschool, FCC) is available for the educator to choose from a course catalog.
   - This comprehensive experience also includes a monthly Community of Practice, biweekly individual coaching, support to complete the CDA portfolio, and exam preparation resources.
   - Monthly in-person working sessions in each county and the City of Wilmington are held to provide technology assistance and offer support to earn the CDA.
2. **Professional Preparation: Early Childhood Educators (PP:ECE) Cohort**
   - Synchronous (virtual live) Coursework through PP:ECE – Instructor-led workshops to complete the 120 hours required for the CDA credential.
   - This comprehensive experience also includes biweekly individual coaching, support to complete the CDA portfolio, and exam preparation resources.
   - Monthly in-person working sessions in each county and the City of Wilmington are held to provide technology assistance and offer support to earn the CDA.
3. **Portfolio Preparation Cohort**
   - This module is available to professionals who have already completed the 120 hours required for the CDA credential and would like support to complete the portfolio requirements.
   - Monthly virtual sessions are held to provide support for portfolio development and to provide resources.
   - Monthly in-person working sessions in each county and the City of Wilmington are held to provide technology assistance and offer support to earn the CDA.
4. **Exam Preparation**
   - This module is available to professionals who have completed the 120 hours and portfolio that are required for the credential and would like support to prepare for the CDA exam.

CDA Coursework Only (120 Hours, No Coaching)

- Professional Preparation: Early Childhood Educators - Instructor-led workshops to complete the 120 hours required for the CDA credential, enrolled in these institutions:
  - Del Tech (https://www.dtcc.edu/academics/programs-study/early-child-care/)
  - Sussex Tech
- iCDA - Asynchronous: 120 hours of training and online live instruction, and guidance in preparing for the test and submitting the portfolio (Spanish-language cohorts available)
  - Wilmington University (https:continuinged.wilmu.edu/)

QIS Area 2: Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) Competencies

- After strengthening educator qualifications to meet minimum QIS expectations, programs will focus on Social, Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) Competencies
- Social-emotional development training
- Trauma-informed practices
- Relationship-based teaching strategies
- After focusing on Social, Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) competencies, programs will focus on Language and Literacy competencies
- **DDOE-Approved Social, Emotional and Behavioral Well-being Supports for FY27**

QIS Area 3: Language and Literacy Competencies

- After focusing on Social, Emotional and Behavioral Wellbeing (SEBW) competencies, programs will focus on Language and Literacy competencies
- QIS Area 3 is driven by the Priority Areas and Goals outlined in **Delaware's Birth Through Grade 3 Early Literacy Plan for 2025-2028**
- **DDOE Approved Language and Literacy Supports for FY27**

QIS Area 4: Targeted Cohorts for Early Childhood Programs

Programs whose ECE professionals have met individual goals related to QIS Area 1, 2 and 3 may participate in program-level improvement initiatives.

- Conscious Discipline
- Pyramid Model 2 (Prerequisite, Pyramid Model Tier 1)
- Language and literacy cohorts

SFECEP ONLY:

Programs must actively participate in the targeted supports offered through Delaware's Quality Improvement System. This included joining a facilitated Community of Practice series and attending facilitated working sessions related to state-funded policies and procedures.

SFECEPs **must** use their Quality Improvement Award (QIA) funds to SFECEP funds and/or Quality Improvement Award (QIA) funds MUST be utilized by programs to meet all requirements when one or more variance requests are made.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Scholarships

Educators who have at least a DDOE approved high school diploma or GED and who work in a licensed child care program for at least 20 hours per week may apply for a scholarship through the Early Care and Education Portal.

- CDA Credential Scholarships – $500 support stipend, CDA books, tablet, Quorum E-Learning subscription for Spanish speaking educators, and CDA assessment fee.
- Associate degree Scholarships – Tuition (up to 13 credits per semester), tablet, and $250 per semester support stipend
- Bachelor's degree Scholarships - Tuition (up to 13 credits per semester), tablet, and $250 per semester support stipend

Completion Stipends

- CDA Completion Incentives – $1,000 after 6 months of continued employment in a licensed program after earning a CDA
- Associate degree Completion Incentive - $10,000 after 6 months of continued employment in a licensed program after earning an associate degree.
- Bachelor's degree Completion Incentive - $10,000 after 6 months of continued employment in a licensed program after earning a bachelor's degree.

The Delaware SEED (Student Excellence Equals Degree)

- Covers undergraduate tuition for qualified state residents at Delaware Technical Community College or the University of Delaware Associate in Arts Program.
- It applies to both degree programs and non-credit workforce training certificates.

Free Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD® / SmartTeach Access

- The Department of Education provides free access to **Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG) / SmartTeach** for licensed programs that choose to use it as their **research-based formative assessment tool**.
- Use of TSG is **optional**. However, programs that receive free TSG/SmartTeach access through the Department must follow all **DDOE's TSG/SmartTeach policies**. Policy monitoring will begin **July 1, 2026**.
- To access free TSG support or request technical assistance, please email **ecetechsupport@udel.edu**.

Quality Improvement Awards (QIA)

Licensed early care and education programs, school-age programs, and certified school districts can apply for a Quality Improvement Award (QIA) for FY27. Funds may be used to:

- Fund paying for wages above minimum wage, bonuses, and wage increases,
- Fund QIP aligned and DDOE approved Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) and supports,
- Fund QIP aligned and DDOE approved materials that support high-quality experiences for children,
- Administrative overhead.

Programs in school districts that cannot request bonuses will only receive funding for professional development and materials.

SFECEP and EHS-CCP ONLY:

SFECEPs and EHS-CCPs MUST use Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as their formative assessment tool.

Programs that meet eligibility requirements may apply for one QIA per fiscal year and may choose the application deadline that best fits their budgeting needs.

Eligibility Requirements

To apply for a QIA, programs must meet all the following requirements:

1. Licensing Status
    - Hold a certificate or license from the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL).
    - Not be on the enforcement action of Probation or Suspension by the Office of Child Care Licensing.
    - Programs must be licensed by January 15, 2027, and must have a visit scheduled with their QISp by February 1, 2027.
2. Program Operation
    - Be open and actively serving children and families.
    - **Have at least two enrolled children.**
3. Complete a Needs Assessment by time of application.
4. Develop a QIP that was co-created with a QISp and is aligned with DDOE/OEL Priority Key Practices.
5. Ages and Stages Questionnaire Account
    - Have an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) account in the DE DOE Enterprise system (**School-age programs are exempt**).
    - Programs needing access must submit the ASQ Support Request Form.
    - Guidance is available in **the ASQ Provider Manual for Early Childhood Programs and on Delaware's Developmental Screening Resources** webpage.
6. Formative Assessment Tool
    - Programs must
        - Use an evidence and research-based formative assessment tool with fidelity.
        - Ensure the tool is used as intended by the publisher.
        - Use assessment data to plan curriculum, guide instruction, and individualize learning.
        - Understand that formative assessment measures each child's growth over time, not comparisons between children.
    - Training Requirements: for Formative Assessment Tools
        - All staff conducting or supervising assessments must complete training.
        - Documentation must be uploaded to the DE ECE Portal with the QIA application.
        - QIA funds may be used for training on approved formative assessment tools.
        - School age programs are exempt from having to use a Formative Assessment Tool.

- If using Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)/SmartTeach:
    - Complete all required trainings as described in **DDOE's TSG/SmartTeach policies**.

7. Budget and Spending Requirements
    - Programs must:
        - Sign the QIA Funds Policy, agreeing to spend funds only on approved items.
        - Provide documentation showing that all previously awarded QIA funds were spent appropriately.
        - Ensure all staff receiving salary or bonus support are fingerprinted and work directly with children and families.
        - Ensure all staff are paid at least minimum wage.
    - Owner-specific rules:
        - Center owners must work onsite in a classroom with children and families at least 25 hours per week to receive a bonus or wage differential.
        - FCC, LFCC, and center owners with multiple sites may receive compensation at only one site per fiscal year.
        - Owners and spouses combined may not receive more than 10% of the total QIA.
        - Immediate family members (parents/children) individually may not receive more than 5% of the total QIA.
    - Budget:
        - The FY27 QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative must be used and uploaded to the Delaware Early Care and Education portal as an Excel spreadsheet. PDFs will not be accepted.
        - Any changes to budget line items require OEL approval.
        - Programs must contact **Support@welsfoundation.org** to reopen the application and upload a revises rubric/budget narrative.
        - All updates must align with the prioritized Key Practices.
        - No updates will be approved after June 15, 2027.
8. Business standing
    - Programs must provide proof that any business liens or tax levies have been resolved.

Application Process and Timeline

Applications open **September 1, 2026**.

Rolling QIA Application Deadlines

- **Apply by September 15, 2026** — If approved, QIA funds will be issued on or before November 15, 2026.
- **Apply by November 15, 2026** — If approved, QIA funds will be issued on or before January 15, 2027.
- **Apply by January 15, 2027** — If approved, QIA funds will be issued on or before March 15, 2027.
- **Apply by March 15, 2027** — If approved, QIA funds will be issued on or before May 15, 2027.

SFECEP PROGRAMS, SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND EARLY HEAD START PROGRAMS MUST APPLY BY NOVEMBER 15, 2026.

Final Requirement

- **June 15, 2027** — Documentation of expenditures (evidence) must be uploaded to the ECE Portal by close of business.

To document your expenditures, please refer 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.

REMINDER: Working with your QISp to complete a needs assessment and QIP takes dedicated time, and the dates above mark the final step in this quality improvement process. Please initiate your FY27 quality improvement plan early by having your first quality improvement planning visit completed at least one month prior to the QIA deadline. Requests made near a QIA deadline cannot be expedited for QIA application submission.

Calculating Your Maximum Award for Licensed Programs

This calculation is for those **programs that are licensed by OCCL and not operated by a school district**.

How to Use the FY27 QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative

Programs must use the **FY27 QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative spreadsheet** to find out how much funding they can apply for. This spreadsheet also helps programs write their **budget explanation (budget narrative).**

Step 1: Count the Children Enrolled

- **Full-time (F/T) means a child is present for 4 or more hours each day (20 or more hours per week).**
- **Part-time (P/T) means a child is present less than 4 hours each day (less than 20 hours per week).**

If a Family or Large Family Child Care home runs two shifts, only one shift's enrollment can be used when completing the rubric.

Your program's hours of operation will affect how many full-time and part-time children you can enroll.

Programs can:

- View an example of the FY27 QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative for Licensed Programs – view only
- Request the editable Excel spreadsheet from their Quality Improvement Specialist.
- Submit the spreadsheet in Excel format only (not as a PDF) when applying.

Steps to Complete the FY27 QIA Rubric Section of the Rubric/Budget Narrative

Step 1
Enter the number of full-time children enrolled.
Full-time means the child is present 4 or more hours each day.

Step 2
Enter the number of part-time children enrolled.
Part-time means the child is present less than 4 hours each day.

Please note school-age children are counted as part-time, unless attending 4 or more hours per day, excluding summer and school vacations.

The spreadsheet will:

- Divide the number of part-time children by 2
- Add the full-time and part-time numbers to find your total enrollment

Step 3
Enter the number of full-time children who receive Purchase of Care (POC) or are in a Head Start or State-Funded seat.

Step 4
Enter the number of part-time children who receive POC or are in a Head Start or State-Funded seat.

The spreadsheet will:

- Divide the part-time POC or Head Start or State-Funded seat number by 2
- Add the full-time and part-time POC or Head Start or State-Funded seat numbers to find the total number of children receiving POC or Head Start or State-Funded seats

Step 5
The spreadsheet will then calculate the percentage of children in your program who receive POC or are in a Head Start or State-Funded seat.

It does this by comparing:

- The number of children receiving POC or in a Head Start or State-Funded seat
- The total number of children enrolled

You do not need to do this math yourself. The spreadsheet will calculate it automatically.

Sample data entry

Description	Number of children	F/T equivalency
Number F/T Children Present (4+ hours per day)	58	58
Number P/T Children Present (less than 4 hours per day)	12 (divided by 2 to get F/T equivalency)	6

Total Enrollment	**70**	**64**
Number of F/T Children Present who receive POC or in a Head Start or State-Funded seat	48	48
Number of P/T Children Present who receive POC or in a Head Start or State-Funded seat	8 (divided by 2 to get F/T equivalency)	4
Total POC enrollment	**56**	**52**

To determine the percentage of children who receive POC:

Divide the F/T Equivalency of POC enrolled children by the F/T Equivalency of Total Enrollment. Using the example above, the calculation would be 52/64 = 81.3%. The table below shows how the percentage of POC enrollment determines the number of rubric points. Continuing with the example, a program with 81.3% POC enrollment receives 3 rubric points.

Rubric points as determined by % POC/Head Start/State-Funded enrollment

% of POC Enrollment	0-24.99%	25-49.99%	50-74.99%	75-100%
Points	Baseline	1	2	3

Step 6

The table below determines your award based on enrollment and POC percentage. (NOTE: the spreadsheet will automatically calculate your award.) Programs without any children who receive Purchase of Care are eligible for a QIA.

Award amounts based on enrollment and rubric points

Enrollment	Baseline	1 Rubric Point	2 Rubric Points	3 Rubric Points
2-5	$16,000	$16,500	$17,000	$17,500
6-10	$20,000	$21,000	$22,000	$23,000
11-15	$24,000	$25,500	$27,000	$28,500
16-20	$28,000	$30,000	$32,000	$34,000
21-25	$32,000	$34,500	$37,000	$39,500
26-30	$36,000	$39,000	$42,000	$45,000
31-35	$40,000	$43,500	$47,000	$50,500
36-40	$44,000	$48,000	$52,000	$56,000
41-45	$48,000	$52,500	$57,000	$61,500
46-50	$52,000	$57,000	$62,000	$67,000
51-55	$56,000	$61,500	$67,000	$72,500
56-60	$60,000	$66,000	$72,000	$78,000
61-65	$64,000	$70,500	$77,000	$83,500
66-70	$68,000	$75,000	$82,000	$89,000
71-75	$72,000	$79,500	$87,000	$94,500
76 and up	$76,000	$84,000	$92,000	$100,000

The spreadsheet will automatically assign a minimum budget for staff bonuses and wage differentials of 80% of the QIA budget, materials and professional development will be assigned a maximum of 10% of the award, and a maximum budget for administrative overhead of 10%. Programs may choose to use more than 80% of the QIA budget for staff bonus and wage differentials.

Step 7
List each staff member's full name, select their current position, and length of employment.

Step 8
Determine bonus amounts based on criteria such as education level, length of employment, training completion, attendance, etc., and assign bonuses based on a rubric you develop. **Programs are encouraged to incentivize educators who are working on CDA competencies, higher education, and social-emotional well-being training with bonuses**.

Step 9
Complete the wage differential by listing the rate of pay, hours worked per week, and number of weeks per year. If a staff receives a pay increase, list that person two times and list both rates of pay and the number of hours and weeks worked at that pay rate. Programs may claim up to 50 weeks for wage differential assuming the educator has been employed since July 1, 2026.

Step 10
Provide an itemized list of materials, professional development, or employee supports, such as health insurance, in the materials/PD section of the rubric showing the items, professional development, etc. costs.

Note: When applying for a QIA, be sure that the enrollment numbers listed on your completed rubric/budget narrative match what you list on the application. If they do not match, your application and budget narrative will be returned for edits.

Calculating Your Maximum Award in School Districts

This calculation is for **school district programs that cannot provide staff bonuses because of contract rules**. If your district permits bonuses, please use the standard form above. Note that districts are limited to a single, centralized QIA application rather than individual submissions for each site.

- **Example:** FY27 School District QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative (view only)
- School districts must **request the editable Excel version** of the rubric/budget narrative from their **Quality Improvement Specialist**.

Steps to Complete the Quality Improvement Award Rubric Section of the Rubric/Budget Narrative for School Districts

Step 1- Enter the number of full-time (F/T) children enrolled. F/T means the child is present 4 or more hours per day.

Step 2- Enter the number of part-time (P/T) children enrolled. P/T means the child is present less than 4 hours per day.

Step 3- The spreadsheet will divide the number of part-time children by 2.

Step 4- The spreadsheet will add the number of full-time children and the number of part-time children divided by 2 to get the total enrollment.

Step 5- The spreadsheet will assign an award amount based on the chart below.

The materials & professional development award is based on the enrollment chart below.

Materials and professional development award amounts

Minimum Enrollment	Maximum Enrollment	Award Amount
1	24	$12,000
25	44	$14,000
45	64	$16,000
65	84	$18,000
85	104	$20,000
105	124	$22,000
125	144	$24,000
145	164	$26,000
165	184	$28,000
185	204	$32,000
205	1000	$34,000

Step 6- Provide an itemized list of materials, professional development, or employee supports such as health care in the materials/PD section of the QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative.

Timeframe: QIA funds are retroactive to July 1, 2026, and can be used on expenses up to June 15, 2027. Please note that evidence reporting is due by June 15, 2027. Programs must ensure that 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.

PREPARING TO APPLY FOR A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AWARD

Programs access the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) application through the **Delaware ECE Portal.**

Quality Improvement Award Application Sections

1. Program

Excluding the italicized items because they are prepopulated, programs must provide the following information at the time of application:

- Program Name
- License Number
- Street Address and City
- Zip Code
- Hours of Operation
- Days of Operation
- Name of research-based Formative Assessment Tool and Training Documentation indicating all staff have been trained to use the tool with fidelity (School-age programs are exempt from this requirement.)
- Administrator information (first and last name, email address and phone number)
- Owner (first and last name or organization)
- How many total classrooms are in your facility?
- How many classrooms are closed in your facility?
- How many staff members are needed to open closed classrooms?
- Licensed capacity
- Enrollment

- Total Full-time enrollment including children who are present 4 or more hours per day or 20 or more total hours per week
- Total Part-time enrollment including children who are present less than 4 hours per day or less than 20 hours per week
- Total Full-time enrollment including children who are present (4 or more hours per day or 20 or more total hours per week) for children who are funded by POC, Head Start or Early Head Start funds, or State Funded Early Care and Education Program funds
- Total Part-time enrollment including children who are present (less than 4 hours per day or less than 20 hours per week) for children who are funded by POC, Head Start or Early Head Start funds, or State Funded Early Care and Education Program funds
- Answer 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 that any requests for additional information will extend the amount of time needed to process the application.

3a. Budget for Licensed Programs

Programs will upload a QIA Rubric/budget Narrative for Licensed Programs that is aligned with their QIP, using the ECE Portal to apply for a QIA. Budget narratives must reflect how programs plan to spend the full amount of the award. See below for sample budget narratives.

More information may be requested if the budget differs from what the program is eligible for, if the budget includes non-approved items, or if the budget does not align to the QIP.

Budgets will only be approved if meeting these requirements:

- At least 80% of the budget is used for bonuses, salary increases, and/or wage differentials.
- No more than 10% is used for materials that support high-quality interactions, professional development, coaching, or staff support such as health insurance, retirement funds, etc.
- No more than 10% is used for administrative overhead.

Bonuses

Programs must document the number of staff, bonus amounts, and staff names/positions for each bonus period.

Eligibility

Staff are eligible if they:

- Are fingerprinted for the program
- Are cleared by the Criminal History Unit
- Work directly with children or families (full- or part-time)

Note: Cooks, custodial staff, and office/secretarial staff are not eligible for bonuses.

Owner Eligibility

- LFCC and Center owners are eligible only if they work 25+ hours/week on site.
- Owners with multiple sites may receive a bonus at one site per DDOE fiscal year.
- LFCC owners may use up to 75% of QIA funds for their own bonus/salary increase.
- Center owners and spouses combined may receive no more than 10% of the total QIA for a bonus or wage differential. If owning multiple sites, center owners with spouses working at a different site from one another may request 5% of the total QIA from each site.
- Immediate family (parents, children) individually may receive no more than 5% of the total QIA.
- Centers must ensure the difference between the lowest and highest bonus is ≤ 50%.

Multiple Bonuses

Programs may award multiple bonuses based on criteria such as:

- Training completion
- Length of employment
- Education level
- Low absences

DDOE recommends higher bonuses for staff with higher qualifications and higher bonuses for those actively working to increase their qualifications.

Bonus Equity Calculation

Lowest Payment ÷ Highest Payment × 100

The percentage must be **50% or lower.**

Examples:

- Lowest: $1,000; Highest: $5,000 → **20% (NOT APPROVED)**
- Lowest: $2,500; Highest: $5,000 → **50% (APPROVED)**

Educational Attainment Bonus Examples (AA -$4,000, CDA-$3,000, and 120 CDA hours- $2,000)

Staff Name	Education/Training to Complete	Bonuses
LaShay W.	AA – 12 credits	$4,000
Maggie P.	120 CDA Hours	$2,000
Clarice R.	120 CDA Hours	$2,000
Coco	120 CDA Hours	$2,000
Delany	CDA	$3,000
Ivy	CDA	$3,000

Longevity Bonus Examples (1-2 years $1,500, 2-3 years $2,250, 3 years and higher $3,000)

Staff Name	Years of Employment	Bonuses
LaShay W.	1	$1,500
Maggie P.	1	$1,500
Clarice R.	3	$3,000
Coco	2	$2,250
Delany	1	$1,500
Ivy	1	$1,500

QIA funding is not guaranteed on an annual basis, nor is the amount assured. For this reason, the use of bonuses is recommended rather than permanent salary increases.

Salary Increases — Describe how salary increases will be distributed to staff, including each staff member's name and the amount they will receive. To qualify, staff must:

- Be fingerprinted for the program;
- Be approved for employment by the Criminal History Unit; and
- Work directly with children or families.

Both full-time and part-time staff are eligible. LFCC and center owners may only receive a salary increase if they work on-site with children or families at least 25 hours per week. Owners with multiple sites may only receive a salary increase or wage differential at one site per DDOE fiscal year. LFCC owners may use up to 75% of the QIA for their own salary increase or bonus.

For centers, the difference between the lowest and highest salary increase may not exceed 50%. To calculate this percentage, divide the lowest payment by the highest payment and multiply by 100. DDOE recommends providing larger increases to staff with higher qualifications.

- Example 1: Lowest increase = $1,000; Highest increase = $5,000 → 20% → Not Approved
- Example 2: Lowest increase = $2,500; Highest increase = $5,000 → 50% → Approved

Wage Differentials — List each staff member's current hourly wage and the amount paid above minimum wage. QIA funds may only be used to cover the portion of wages above minimum wage. For example, if minimum wage is $15/hour and an employee earns $20/hour, QIA funds may cover the $5 difference. QIA funds may not be used to pay full salaries.

Staff receiving wage differentials must work directly with children or families. Center owners are eligible only if they work on-site with children or families at least 25 hours per week and may only receive a wage differential at one site per DDOE fiscal year. Center owners and spouses may receive no more than 10% of the total QIA for wage differentials and/or bonuses, and immediate family members may receive no more than 5%.

DIEEC Rubric / Budget Narrative Templates — Programs must use the templates provided by their Quality Improvement Specialist and complete all sections showing how funds will be spent.

Total Award Requested — The total amount requested must be included on the QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative, and all line items must equal the total request.

Connections Between Line Items and Narrative — Include a detailed cost breakdown for all proposed expenses. For example, if requesting funds for classroom cozy corners, list each item, the number of classrooms, and the associated cost. If using QIA funds for professional development, list the name of the training, the trainer or company, and the associated costs. Only high-quality training will be accepted.

Unapproved Uses of QIA Funds — QIA funds may not be used for:

- Food
- Building or home repairs/maintenance
- Items required by OCCL (cribs, cots, diaper-changing stations, feeding chairs, licenses, inspections, etc.)
- Utility bills
- Playground mulch

- Large stationary outdoor equipment
- Bonuses or salary increases for individuals who are not fingerprinted, employment-approved, and working directly with children or families
- Pest control
- Fencing
- Kitchen supplies or refrigerators
- Staff appreciation events, activities, or gifts
- Vehicle purchase or rental
- Business signs, website updates, or marketing mailers
- Job posting services
- Professional development events must be held in professional meeting or training venues; short-term vacation rentals (e.g., Airbnb properties) are not allowable.

Award Amount: Programs that do not want the full award amount should only allocate the funds that they are requesting in the budget narrative.

SFECEP ONLY:

Programs must review their state program budget along with their Quality Improvement Award budget narrative.

Programs must make sure that the same costs are not listed in both budgets. Each expense should be clearly shown in only one budget.

When planning for the next fiscal year, programs should look at both funding sources together to make sure the money is used in a clear and coordinated way.

The SFECEP budget must list the FTE percentage, the state funds requested, the matching funds provided by the program, and the total funds a staff will be paid. Programs must consider the percentage that each employee is paid using State-funds when creating their QIA budget narrative. If a staff's position is 100% state-funded, they cannot be claimed for the wage differential. Programs may only claim the wage differential on the portion of weeks that is not covered by state-funds. Example 1: If someone is funded 57% by state funds. This means the program can receive the wage differential for 43% of the time worked. 43% of 50 weeks is 21.5 weeks, (rounded to 22). The program can claim what the staff is paid above minimum wage for 22 weeks. Example 2: If someone is funded 74% by state funds. This means the program can receive the wage differential for 26% of the time worked. 26% of 50 weeks is 13 weeks. The program can claim what the staff is paid above minimum wage for 13 weeks. The only way to fully fund a position is by using state-funds.

3b. Budget for School Districts, that cannot provide wage differentials or bonuses.

Programs will upload a QIA Rubric/budget Narrative for School Districts that is aligned with their QIP, using the ECE Portal to apply for a QIA. Budget narratives must reflect how programs plan to spend the full amount of the award. See below for sample budget narratives.

More information may be requested if the budget differs from what the program is eligible for, if the budget includes non-approved items, or if the budget does not align to the QIP.

DIEEC Rubric / Budget Narrative Templates — Programs must use the templates provided by their Quality Improvement Specialist and complete all sections showing how funds will be spent.

Total Award Requested — The total amount requested must be included on the QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative, and all line items must equal the total request.

Connections Between Line Items and Narrative — Include a detailed cost breakdown for all proposed expenses. For example, if requesting funds for classroom cozy corners, list each item, the number of classrooms, and the associated cost. If using QIA funds for professional development, list the name of the training, the trainer or company, and the associated costs. Only high-quality training will be accepted.

Unapproved Uses of QIA Funds — QIA funds may not be used for:

- Food
- Building or home repairs/maintenance
- Items required by OCCL (cribs, cots, diaper-changing stations, feeding chairs, licenses, inspections, etc.)
- Utility bills
- Playground mulch
- Large stationary outdoor equipment
- Bonuses or salary increases for individuals who are not fingerprinted, employment-approved, and working directly with children or families
- Pest control
- Fencing
- Kitchen supplies or refrigerators
- Staff appreciation events, activities, or gifts
- Vehicle purchase or rental
- Business signs, website updates, or marketing mailers'
- Job posting services
- Professional development events must be held in professional meeting or training venues; short-term vacation rentals (e.g., Airbnb properties) are not allowable.

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 by June 15, 2027.

See Examples of Appropriate Documentation of Expenditures (page 26)

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 the program's owner or designated representative must enter their first and last name as the signature. In cases where a designated representative will be signing the application, a signed notice must be uploaded along with the budget narrative from the owner authorizing the designated representative to sign.

QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative Examples

The Key Practices and QIP goals listed below are used for all QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative Examples on the following pages.

Key Practices	
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
QIP Goal Examples	
QIP Goal Example 1	By July 1, 2027, program educators will participate in CDA cohorts to strengthen staff qualifications, with at least 75% of teaching staff earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. To support recruitment and retention of high-quality staff, the program will provide recruitment and retention bonuses throughout FY27.
QIP Goal Example 2	By July 1, 2027, 100% of program staff will complete introductory Conscious Discipline training to strengthen social-emotional practices and positive behavior supports. In addition, all preschool classrooms will establish safe spaces that promote self-regulation, emotional well-being, and positive social-emotional development for children.

QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative for Licensed Centers

Enrollment: Program has 50 full-time and 10 part-time children with 100% POC enrollment.
Award total: $72,500

A. Staff Bonuses ($31,200):

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

QIP Goal: By July 1, 2027, program educators will participate in CDA cohorts to strengthen staff qualifications, with at least 75% of teaching staff earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. To support recruitment and retention of high-quality staff, the program will provide recruitment and retention bonuses throughout FY27.

Staff Bonus Projections

Name of Employee	Title	Monthly Bonus for Working toward CDA	Total Bonus Possible
Jan T.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Cynthia P.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Valerie L.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Krista K.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Rowy M.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Jackie D.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Lizbeth S.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Marisol W.	Teacher	$200	$2,400
Dena L.	Assistant Teacher	$200	$2,400
Alena C.	Assistant Teacher	$200	$2,400
Shakeena O.	Assistant Administrator	$200	$2,400
Mary T.	Intern	$200	$2,400
Wilma H.	Intern	$200	$2,400
TOTAL			**$31,200**

B. Wage Differentials

Name of Employee	Title	Rate of Hourly Pay	Hours Worked Per Week	Number of Weeks Worked	Wage Differential
Jan T.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
Cynthia P.	Teacher	$18	25	50	$3,750
Valerie L.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
Krista K.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
Rowy M.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
Jackie D.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250

Lizbeth S.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
Marisol W.	Teacher	$18	35	50	$5,250
TOTAL					**$40,500**

C. Administrative Overhead - $800

Budget Narrative Examples for Materials and Professional Development

SEL Supports for and Curriculum for Classrooms ($5,100)

Preschool classrooms will create “safe spaces” to support the positive social-emotional development in alignment with their Conscious Discipline training.

SEL supports

Item	Cost per item	Quantity (for 5 classrooms)	Total cost
Emotions Wheel	$15	5	$75
Small Carpet	$40	5	$200
Comfy Chair/Bean Bag	$25	5	$125
Social Emotional Competence Support Kit for Preschool Programs	$695	5	$3475
Curriculum	$245	5	$1,225
TOTAL			**$5,100**

Professional Development

One Lead Teacher will complete Practice-Based Coaching training through DIEEC to support implementation of research-based classroom practices. The assigned coach will receive a $1,500 bonus upon completion of all required training modules and participation in follow-up support sessions. Once fully trained, the teacher will receive a semiannual bonus of $1,000 for serving in the Practice-Based Coach role and supporting program-wide implementation.

Practice-Based Coach ($2,500) - Once fully trained, this teacher will receive a bonus, two times a year, for supporting the program in this capacity.

SFECEP ONLY:

Programs must designate a staff member to serve as a Coach. Coaches must hold at least a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or a related education field, including a minimum of nine credit hours in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, and participate in the DIEEC Practice-Based Coaching cohort. Individuals who do not meet these requirements must submit a waiver request using the form provided in the FY27 SFECEP Policies and Procedures Manual.

Rubric/Budget Narrative Example for State-Funded School Districts

Enrollment: Program has 100 full-time and 25 part-time children.
Award Total: $22,000

A. SEL Supports for Classrooms ($22,000)

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

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

SEL supports

Item	Cost per item	Quantity	Total cost
Feelings Chart Rugs	$200	10	$2,000
Social Emotional Competence Support Kit for Preschool Programs	$695	4	$2,780
Preschool Classroom Calming Corner Bundle	$2,369	3	$7,107
Social-Emotional Match Ups Complete Set	$36.99	4	$147.96
Gel-Bead Emotion Friends	$25	8	$200
Fill a Bucket Storytelling Kit	$85	2	$170
Kindness Kit	$519	3	$1,557
SEL for all	$2,000	3	$6,000
Shipping	$2038.04	1	$2,038.04
TOTAL			**$22,000**

After Submitting the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Application

Application status can be viewed on the first page of the QIA in the Early Childhood Program Portal. If additional information is needed, you will receive a text or email notification. Please submit requested updates promptly and allow up to five business days for review. Programs should regularly check both email and the portal to ensure all application sections are verified. Award approval notices will be sent to the designated program contact, and payments issued by WELS Systems Foundation through the Delaware ECE Portal may take up to 30 business days from approval for deposit into the listed bank account. Payments are expected to be dispensed before the next application round opens.

Submitting Proof of Spending for the Quality Improvement Award

All QIA expenditures must be documented and uploaded to the Evidence section of the Delaware ECE Portal by June 15, 2027. Documentation must be clear and readable and should not be emailed to Office of Early Learning or DIEEC staff. Programs may be contacted if submitted receipts or payroll records do not align with the approved budget. Missing, inconsistent, or unapproved expenses may impact future QIA eligibility or require repayment of funds. Programs that close before the deadline must submit documentation within two weeks of closure and return any unspent or unapproved funds. Audits are conducted throughout the year as documentation is uploaded.

FY27 Eligible Expenses and Documentation

Eligible Expense Category	Examples of Allowable Expenses	Required Documentation / Evidence of Spending
Compensation and Staff Supports	Wage differentials; Recruitment and retention bonuses; Bonuses for working on CDA competencies or higher education; Merit bonuses for participation and completion of DIEEC cohorts or OEL-approved training series (examples: Pyramid Model, Zero to Three, Practice-Based Coaching); Salary increases; Paid sick or family leave; Holiday pay, Retirement contributions; Contributions toward medical, dental, or vision insurance	Payroll documentation showing salaries, bonuses, leave, retirement contributions, or benefit contributions; Documentation must include staff names and positions
FCC Programs Education and Training	New training or educational attainment; CDA or higher education coursework	Transcripts with conferral date, diploma, or other proof of educational attainment; Documentation only required if not previously submitted during FY24, FY25, or FY26
Technology Purchases	Computers, tablets, printers, software, classroom technology, or related equipment	Receipts showing item purchased, purchase date, cost, and company/organization name; Purchase dates must be between 7/1/26 and 6/15/27
Professional Development and Staff Training	***DDOE-approved professional learning*** experiences in the following areas only: Practice-Based Coaching; Adult SEL; Child SEL; and Play-based learning. Coaching by individuals who meet the Office of Early Learning's **Coaching Policy** requirements. *Programs*	Invoice showing training dates and organization name; Proof of payment (example: canceled check or invoice marked "paid"); Payroll documentation or contractor paid invoice; Certificates

Eligible Expense Category	Examples of Allowable Expenses	Required Documentation / Evidence of Spending
	interested in CDA cohorts or the CDA voucher-only model should contact the Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC).	of Completion
Contracts and Partnerships with Experts	Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants; Mental health consultation; Other approved mental health supports for staff	Invoice showing service dates and organization name; Proof of payment
Program and Classroom Enhancements	Classroom materials and enhancements; Program management systems; Parent communication platforms; Digital databases	Receipts showing item purchased, cost, purchase date, and company/organization name; Purchase dates must be between 7/1/26 and 6/15/27

Taxes: The Delaware Department of Education cannot give tax advice or pay for taxes related to the QIA. Programs may use up to 10% of their award for administrative overhead costs instead. If taxes are listed in the budget, programs will be asked to remove them and replace them with an administrative overhead line item.

Delaware Quality Improvement Award Spending Funds Policy

Use of Funds Policy & Attestation Summary

This policy applies to all early care and education programs receiving Quality Improvement Award (QIA) funds. When applying for a QIA, program owners or designated representatives must sign the application confirming that they understand and will follow the QIA Use of Funds Policy. In cases where a designated representative will be signing the application, a signed notice must be uploaded from the owner authorizing the designated representative to sign.

1. **Authorized Use of Funds**

   QIA funds must be used only for activities approved in the program's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and QIA budget narrative, and in accordance with Delaware laws and regulations.

   Allowable uses may include:

   - Staff bonuses or wage increases
   - Professional development and training
   - Educational materials and program resources
   - Other approved activities that improve program quality
   - All expenditures must be approved by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) or its designee and supported with receipts or payroll documentation.

2. **Financial Recordkeeping (Centers and Large Family Child Care Only)**

   Programs must:

   - Maintain accurate financial records for all QIA expenses
   - Ensure spending matches the approved QIA rubric/budget narrative
   - Provide documentation to DDOE or its designee when requested.

3. **Prohibited Activities**

   Misuse of state funds is strictly prohibited.

   Examples include:

   - Theft or fraud
   - False reimbursement claims
   - Misrepresenting financial information
   - Using funds for unapproved purposes

4. **Reporting Misuse of Funds**

   Suspected misuse of QIA funds should be reported to:

   Dawn Alexander – OEL Director
   dawn.alexander@doe.k12.de.us

   Kelly McDowell – OEL Education Associate
   kelly.mcdowell@doe.k12.de.us

   Reports may be made anonymously and should include supporting details or evidence.

5. **Investigation and Consequences**

   DDOE or its designee will investigate reported concerns. If misuse is confirmed, consequences may include:

   - Repayment of funds
   - Termination of the QIA agreement
   - Ineligibility for future QIA funding
   - OCCL violations
   - Legal action

Program Responsibilities (Attestation)

By applying for or accepting QIA funds, programs agree to:

- Submit documentation for all expenses within the timeframe set by the Office of Early Learning (OEL)
- Work with a Quality Improvement Specialist to implement the Quality Improvement Plan
- Use a research-based formative assessment tool to support curriculum planning and instruction *(School-age programs are exempt.)*

Applicants certify that:

- They are authorized to apply on behalf of the program
- All information submitted is true and accurate

Programs must keep supporting documentation for five (5) years after receiving funds.

Failure to comply may result in repayment of funds and loss of eligibility for future QIA funding.

Appeals Process

Programs may initiate the appeals process if they believe to have been unfairly denied a QIA or denied funding for specific activities within the program's QIA rubric/budget narrative and QIP. Programs should follow the following steps:

1. File a Notice of Appeal: Forward a short narrative explaining the concern, the program's QIA rubric/budget narrative, and QIP to **early.learning@doe.k12.de.us** with "QIA Appeal" in the subject line. The short narrative should outline the reasons for appealing the decision.
2. OEL Review: An OEL review team will review the appeal documents (short narrative, budget narrative, and QIP).
3. Possible Outcomes:
    a. Affirm the decision - The OEL review team agrees with the original decision and upholds it.
    b. Reverse the decision - The OEL review team disagrees with the original decision and overturns the original decision.

Suggestions and Asking Questions

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) within the Delaware Department of Education's Early Childhood Excellence Team is committed to Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and values feedback from the Early Care and Education community. To improve policies, supports, and data systems, programs are encouraged to share suggestions or questions through the **FY27 QIS Feedback and Questions Form**, which is anonymous and reviewed weekly. Feedback will be used to update the **FY27 QIS Frequently Asked Questions and Suggestions document**, updated at least twice monthly. Input from programs played a key role in shaping FY27 improvements, and continued feedback will support ongoing quality improvement.

APPENDIX A: PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES & PATHWAYS FOR CENTER-BASED PROGRAMS

Quality Indicator 1: 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 encourages educators to earn an associate's degree or specialized credential in early childhood. • 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 those in leadership roles and educators to earn a bachelor's degree 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.

CQ-KP6: Promotes professional growth and personal well-being for all educators and staff			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 33. Annual Training 34. Annual Professional Development Plan 35. First Aid and CPR Training 47. Smoking and Vaping	• Program supports educators' use of a self-reflection tool for their professional growth. • Program leaders meet with educators to discuss their needs, goals, and professional development plans and supports follow-through. • Program leaders have knowledge about strategies and initiatives to promote well-being. • Program collects data on educators' morale and well-being needs. • Program follows policies related to fair and respectful treatment of all staff and their cultures.	• Program provides information on relevant and collaborative professional development opportunities, and leaders encourage staff to attend. • Program provides training and opportunities for educators to serve as a mentor and encourages staff members to engage in mentoring relationships. • Program uses data to plan for site-wide and individual professional growth. • Program leaders use data from educators to develop and implement a plan to support morale and well-being. • Program leaders encourage and support ECP to create and achieve goals related to their well-being and growth. • Program leaders support educators in using stress-reducing practices both in and out of the classroom. • Program consistently provides opportunities for social connection and development of community.	• Program helps to finance enrollment in a variety of professional development opportunities aligned to professional development plans. • Program encourages educators to engage in sequential, in-depth (i.e., multiple-session) professional development. • Program leaders ensure professional development opportunities include intentional follow-up, including coaching. • Program supports opportunities for educators to regularly observe each other's practice and engage in discussions around professional development. • Program consistently provides opportunities to promote educators' individual well-being. • Program celebrates all cultures and considers them an integral part of the program. • Program leaders demonstrate flexibility in scheduling to meet the needs of all educators.

Quality Indicator 2: Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions

Program creates 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**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 20. Positive Behavior Supports 23. Center Parent or Guardian Handbook 24. Staff Qualifications 28. General Qualifications 32. Orientation 34. Annual Professional Development Plan 64. Child Accident and Injury 74. Lesson Plans 78. Interactions with Infants 79. Interactions with Toddlers 80. Interactions with Preschool and School- Age Children	• Program leader 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 • Educators are responsive to children's interests and needs • Educators acknowledge children's emotions and support children to understand and respond to their feelings.	• Program leader(s) and educators are participating in professional learning experiences focusing on social-emotional well-being, inclusion, cultural competencies, play based learning, language & literacy, mathematics. • Educators have a comprehensive knowledge base related to positive interactions that support the whole child. • Program implements policies and procedures that support building meaningful connections between children and educators • Educators engage in sustained, reciprocal social interactions with individual children. • Educators intentionally plan experiences to promote skill development across all developmental domains (ex. social-emotional development, language and literacy, etc.). • Educators implement positive guidance strategies to support all children.	• Educators individualize support for all children's developmental needs. • Educators are consistently available to children and show enjoyment when engaging with children during activities and play. • Educators utilize supplemental curriculum to plan for additional experiences across all developmental domains. • Educators use child observations and formative assessment data to identify goals and inform planning to support children across all domains.

PCHQ-KP5: Implements 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 acknowledge 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 & 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-KP4: 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-KP6: Promotes professional growth and personal well-being for self and LFCC staff			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	• FCC Educator understands the importance of professional growth and personal well-being. • FCC Educator uses self-assessment to identify professional growth and well-being needs • FCC Educators consider their own physical & mental health when making program decisions. • FCC Educator examines their own practices and recognizes potential for change for personal and professional growth	• FCC Educator engages in outside support to promote growth and professional learning • FCC Educator uses information gathered from self-assessment to inform professional growth and well-being plan. • FCC Educator engages with state initiatives to further education outside of professional development (CDA, AA, BA, MA) • FCC Educator seeks peer support to promote personal well-being and increase professionalism. • FCC Educator implements healthy conflict resolution practices	• FCC Educator exceeds minimum requirements to engage in intentional and meaningful professional development. • FCC Educator uses formal observation tool to plan individual professional growth and staff. • FCC Educator participates in formalized peer support including mentorship relationships. • FCC Educator uses state initiatives to obtain additional credentials or degrees. • FCC Educator intentionally plans and practices well-being strategies for self and staff.

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 skill development across all developmental domains (ex. social-emotional development, language and literacy, etc.). • FCC Educator uses positive guidance strategies to support all children.	• FCC Educators individualize support for all children's developmental needs. • 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 Educators utilize supplemental curricula to plan for additional experiences across all developmental domains. • FCC Educator uses child observations and formative assessment data to identify goals and inform planning to support children across all domains.

PCHQ-KP5: Implements 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 acknowledge the needs of each and every child in the program. • FCC Educator is knowledgeable and promotes families' knowledge of 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 Educators have a comprehensive knowledge base and implement programming that is responsive to the needs of each and every child. • 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 in activities 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 (IFSP/IEP). • 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

Center Administrator – 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.

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 QIP and the quality improvement award application.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) – as defined by the National Education Association for Young Children, means methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning. Educators implement developmentally appropriate practice by recognizing the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning program as unique individuals and as members of families and communities. Building on each child's strengths—and taking care to not harm any aspect of each child's physical, cognitive, social, or emotional well-being—educators design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all domains of development and across all content areas. Developmentally appropriate practice recognizes and supports each individual as a valued member of the learning community. As a result, to be developmentally appropriate, practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child.

Evidence is Proof of Spending – documents submitted after spending the QIA showing how funds were spent which includes paid invoices, payroll documentation, and receipts of purchase.

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 (QIA) – 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 (QI) 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 QIP.

Quality Improvement System (QIS) – 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 (QI) 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 QIP.

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: EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES CONTACT AND INFORMATION

Delaware Department of Education's (DE DOE)- Early Childhood Excellence (ECE) Team

Website: DE DOE Birth to Five Information

ECE Associate Secretary: Caitlin Gleason - caitlin.gleason@doe.k12.de.us

ECE Administrative Assistant: Tracey Wertz - Tracey.wertz@doe.k12.de.us

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Office of Early Learning (OEL), ECE Team, DE DOE:

OEL's Early Care and Education Resources Manual for Professionals, Partners, and Families

General Support: early.learning@doe.k12.de.us

OEL Director: Dawn Alexander - dawn.alexander@doe.k12.de.us

OEL Administrative Assistant: Marianne Bernardi - marianne.bernardi@doe.k12.de.us

State-Funded Early Care & Education Programs (SFECEPs):

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

Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCPs) Project Manager:

Jaquaya Thomas - jaquaya.thomas@doe.k12.de.us

EHS-CCP Administrative Assistant:

Theresa Ruffin - theresa.ruffin@doe.k12.de.us

Quality Improvement System (QIS) Project Manager:

Dr. Cara Cuccuini-Harmon - cara.cuccuini-harmon@doe.k12.de.us

Quality Improvement Awards (QIA)

Kelly McDowell - Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us

QIS Website (Managed by the DIEEC):

https://dieec.udel.edu/quality-improvement-system/

DEEDS Early Learning:

General Support: Deedsearlylearning@doe.k12.de.us

Phone: 302-735-4236

DEEDS Project Manager: Kelly McDowell - Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us

Delaware's ECE Portal:

General Support: Support@Welsfoundation.org

Phone: 302-549-4212

ECE Portal Project Manager: Kelly McDowell - Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us

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Office of Early Childhood Intervention (OECI), ECE Team, DE DOE

OECI Director: Dr. Amber Shelton - amber.shelton@doe.k12.de.us

OECI Administrative Assistant: Joanne "Jo" Gannon - joanne.gannon@doe.k12.de.us

Ages & Stages Questionnaires: de.screens@doe.k12.de.us

DOE Webpage with ASQ Information and Preschool Special Education/Preschool Child Find contact information for each Delaware school district

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Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL)

General Support: occl.doe@doe.k12.de.us

New Castle County: 302-892-5800

Kent & Sussex Counties: 302-739-5487

Delaware HelpLine-1-888-352-4653

Background Checks (Identigo): 844-539-5541

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DE DSCYF)

Report Child Abuse/Neglect: 800-292-9582

Child Crisis Hotline: 800-969-4357

Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH):

Website: DSCYF_ECMHC@state.de.us

Mary Moor: Mary.Moor@state.de.us – 302-256-9308

Delaware Department of Health & Social Services (DE DHSS)

DHSS webpage with ASQ Information and Information about Early Intervention Services for Children Ages Birth to Three

Purchase of Care (POC)- Child Care Subsidy

General Support: POCresource@delaware.gov

New Castle County: 302-255-9670

Kent County: 302-857-5037

Sussex County: 302-515-3116

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC)

Website: www.dieec.udel.edu

Professional Development & Technical Assistance: ecinstitute@udel.edu

Phone: 302-831-3239

Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC)

Website: www.ecic.desu.edu

General Support: ECIC@desu.edu