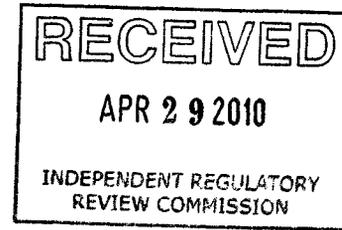


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Independent Regulatory Review Commission
333 Market Street
14th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Fax number: (717) 783-2664
irrc@irrc.state.pa.us



RE: Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts final omitted regulations (#6-319)

Dear Commission members:

I am writing to express my support for the Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts final omitted regulations re-submitted to you on April 7, 2010 (#6-319).

The quality expectations of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which are included in the regulations, are essential to gaining positive outcomes for our young children. Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is giving our at-risk children, such as those living in low-income families, those with special needs, and English language learners the strong start that research shows can help them overcome these risk factors and enter school ready to learn.

An important piece of these guidelines is promoting inclusive classrooms.

I know these regulations are important for families in our community, Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and for Pennsylvania, and that the program promotes inclusion of children with disabilities and developmental delays, for example several YMCA classrooms have children working with speech and language delays, behavior problems and three children diagnosed with Autism. These children brought a whole new dimension of learning to these classrooms and all children have had a positive early learning experience.

- Research has shown many positive effects of including children with disabilities in early childhood programs. The benefits accrue not only to children with disabilities but also to children with typical development, their families, classroom teachers, and the community at large.
- The quality expectations of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, which are included in the regulations require approved providers to collaborate with infant/toddler and preschool Early Intervention services to provide a smooth transition for children entering classrooms, facilitate the Early Intervention services needed for children enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms, and facilitate identification of children who are not receiving Early Intervention services but are eligible.
- PA Pre-K Counts has been a contributing factor to the increase of EI children in typical settings. Historically, less than 50% of preschool children receiving Early Intervention services received their services in typical early childhood settings. Since the creation of PA Pre-K Counts and targeted efforts to promote inclusion in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms, 15% more preschool children receiving Early Intervention services are enrolled in typical classroom settings.
- Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is serving a proportionate amount of children receiving Early Intervention services. Approximately 4% of Pennsylvania's three and four year olds are participating in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, with 7.5% of those children receiving Early Intervention services. Across Pennsylvania, between 5%-7% of preschool children are receiving Early Intervention Services.

Although the YMCA has had many experiences working with early intervention there is one that really speaks to the collaborations between Early Intervention programs, Pre-K Counts programs and school districts. One of the YMCA Pre-K Counts teachers had a child begin the school year with social and emotional difficulties, which made the start of the year a challenge for everyone. With the help of a local early intervention agency this child is thriving and ready for kindergarten. The Pre-K Counts teacher and parents met with the guidance counselor of the school he will attend in the fall, the guidance counselor and their intervention team came into the pre-k counts classroom to monitor the child. During this process the pre-k counts teacher was able to share what strategies the early intervention program gave

her to use and what has been successful and what hasn't worked. This is valuable information for the school district to have. The relationship between the school and the pre-k counts program will allow for a smooth transition for this child and allow him to enter a classroom with a teacher who knows what his needs are, which in turn will give him a jumpstart to a successful year.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is working because it is providing high quality pre-kindergarten to our at-risk children in inclusive classrooms.

Please approve these regulations in full.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tina Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

Tina Carter
VP of Child Care
YMCA of Greater Erie