

#3275

Ordonez, Michael

14-545-08

From: Kimberly Early <kearly@pennaeyc.org>
Sent: Friday, December 11, 2020 3:27 PM
To: PW, OCD Subsidized Child Care; Ordonez, Michael
Cc: Campanini, Tracey; Grimm-Thomas, Karen; Jen DeBell
Subject: [External] PennAEYC - Regulation #14-545 Subsidized Child Care Eligibility
Attachments: PennAEYC Letter to OCDEL on Child Care Subsidy Eligibility.pdf

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Good afternoon,
Thank you for the opportunity to comment. PennAEYC's comments are attached.
Thank you,
Kim

Kimberly Early
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DEC 14 2020
Independent Regulatory
Review Commission



Pennsylvania Association for the
Education of Young Children

December 11, 2020

Tracey Campanini
Deputy Secretary
Department of Human Services
Office of Child Development and Early Learning
333 Market Street, 6th Floor
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126

Michael Ordonez
Department of Human Services
Office of Child Development and Early Learning
333 Market Street, 6th Floor
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126

Dear Deputy Secretary Campanini and Mr. Ordonez:

The Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC) is a statewide, non-profit membership organization of over 2,500 early childhood care and education professionals and is the Pennsylvania affiliate of the National AEYC. On behalf of PennAEYC, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subsidized child care eligibility proposed rulemaking (# 14-545). Supporting low-income parents who are working or in training or education is extremely important to ensuring all children have access to high-quality child care. Pennsylvania's child care subsidy program, Child Care Works, is the support that families need to make high-quality child care affordable. We appreciate the proposed changes that would align Pennsylvania's eligibility requirements with the Child Care and Development Block Grant reauthorization of 2014, such as minimum 12-month redeterminations and continuous eligibility up to 235 percent of Federal Poverty Income Guidelines or 85 percent of the State Median Income.

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that enable them to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society.¹ The subsidized child care eligibility proposed rulemaking is a tool that helps eliminate the differences in educational outcomes as a result of where children live and what resources their families have. We applaud the Office of Child Development and Early Learning's (OCDEL) and the Department of Human Services' leadership for the efforts to align eligibility requirements with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 and sections of the Human Services Code. As you know, the reauthorization of the act made clear the importance of continuity of child care in supporting a parent or caretaker's ability to achieve financial stability and the ability of a child to develop a nurturing relationship with the child care provider, which is the foundation of a high-quality early learning experience. The efforts to reflect these eligibility requirements, such as 12-month redetermination periods and changes to reporting requirements provide families stable and consistent child care, in addition to 12-month eligibility, which stabilize access to child care subsidy. These proposed changes are a piece to making high-quality child care universally accessible.

We have provided our specific comments on the regulations in the chart attached to this letter. PennAEYC supports the vast majority of the proposed changes, as they will improve access and

¹ *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, April, 2019.

affordability of child care to low-income working families and allow equitable learning opportunities for children. We appreciate your consideration of our comments.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide public comment and for your consideration of our thoughts on the subsidized child care eligibility proposed rulemaking (# 14-545). Please contact our Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Kimberly Early, at kearly@pennaeyc.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen DeBell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jen DeBell
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children

Topic and Proposed Regulation	PennAEYC Comment
<p>Subsidy benefits</p> <p>3042.13</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports the efforts taken to remove barriers for parents and caretakers that work non-traditional hours, such as requiring a parents' shift to end between certain hours. This change will allow more families to become eligible and to receive care when they need it.</p>
<p>Payment of provider charges</p> <p>3042.14(h)</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports the current provision to prohibit new subsidy enrollments for a provider that has been issued a revocation or refusal to renew. PennAEYC supports the Department considering and including situations where new subsidy enrollments should be temporarily prohibited. We would support the Department having the authority to temporarily prohibit subsidy enrollments at their discretion in consideration of current complaint investigations involving the serious physical injury of a child, sexual assault of a child, death of a child, etc.</p>
<p>Subsidy limitations</p> <p>3042.15(b)</p>	<p>PennAEYC strongly supports parent choice. Allowing a kindergarten-age child one additional year of kindergarten at the parent or caretaker's request, allows parents or caretakers eligible for child care subsidy to make the same decision a private pay parent or caretaker may make. Allowing for parent choice here provides equity between parents and caretakers who receive a child care subsidy and parents and caretakers who are private pay.</p>
<p>Subsidy limitations</p> <p>3042.15(e)</p>	<p>PennAEYC recognizes that it is important for eligible children to be enrolled with an eligible child care provider when funding becomes available. PennAEYC recommends added clarity for exceptions, by specifically stating that the Department will allow families to postpone enrollment for 30 days and include in what cases this would occur. The process to receive a Department approval for an exception should be clear. The type(s) of exceptions that would receive Department approval should also be shared here. The circumstances that exceptions would be approved by the Department are more detailed in 3042.57(c).</p> <p>PennAEYC also has concerns about whether a child would maintain eligibility if they are not enrolled within 30 days because they are in a child care desert or if a high-quality provider is not available or does not have a slot at that time. PennAEYC supports parent choice and parents/caretakers should not be forced to enroll with a provider that they do not want or prefer or lose eligibility, this is contrary to parent choice.</p>

<p>Absence 3042.18(a), 3042.18(d)</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports the intent of this change to meet the CCDBG requirement to delink payment for child care from a child's occasional absences. These changes remove barriers for parents and caretakers, to allow the eligibility agency to suspend enrollment if the child is absent for more than five consecutive days and increase the number of total paid absences to 40, allowing parents and caretakers to maintain eligibility and increase stability for the child and family.</p>
<p>Face-to-face meeting 3042.56(e), 3042.56(f)</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports removing barriers for parents and caretakers who have hardship in participating in a face-to-face meeting with the eligibility agency and in cases where a face-to-face meeting occurred in the previous 12 months, to allow for telephone contact to meet the requirement. This flexibility for families is necessary to maintain stability.</p>
<p>Waiting list 3042.57(c)</p>	<p>PennAEYC recognizes that it is important for eligible children to be enrolled with an eligible child care provider when funding becomes available. Although this provision provides some clarity around in what circumstances the Department would approve an exception, the availability of parent choice does not appear to be considered. PennAEYC has concerns about whether a child would maintain eligibility if they are not enrolled within 30 days because they are in a child care desert or if a high-quality provider is not available or does not have a slot at that time. PennAEYC supports parent choice and parents/caretakers should not be forced to enroll with a provider that they do not want or prefer or lose eligibility, this is contrary to parent choice. A circumstance where an exception would be approved by the Department does not indicate parent choice and appears to indicate that a child would need to enroll in care if a spot opens at the only child care facility in the area.</p>
<p>Parent or caretaker co-payment requirements 3042.94</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports removing the requirement that parent or caretakers pay the equivalent of the co-pay in advance.</p>
<p>Homelessness 3042.142</p>	<p>PennAEYC supports permitting waivers to parents or caretakers who are experiencing homelessness.</p>