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Wolf Administration Announces $600 Pandemic Relief Awards to Eligible Child Care Employees Across Pennsylvania

January 20, 2021

Human Services, Press Release

Governor Tom Wolf today announced the opportunity for one-time, $600 grants for child care workers across Pennsylvania. The funds are available to child care providers licensed by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) through federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) quality dollars and remaining funding previously made available through federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocated for child care providers.

“A healthy, vibrant child care industry is a cornerstone of a healthy economy. As with many other sectors of our economy, Pennsylvania’s child care providers have been greatly challenged by this pandemic,” said Governor Tom Wolf. “For nearly a year, child care professionals have continued to work through a challenging environment, providing a safe and caring setting for our youngest Pennsylvanians as their parents go to work performing essential work through a tumultuous period. We are incredibly grateful for their commitment to our children and families and their resilience through this time.”

This award is available to all licensed child care providers that are currently open and operating regardless of Keystone STARS level and will be administered through local Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs) on behalf of OCDEL and will replace the quality Keystone STARS Education and Retention Award (ERA) for state fiscal year 2020-2021, and provide approximately 33,000 child care employees across the commonwealth the one-time $600 award. The previous ERA provided payments to approximately 9,000 child care employees, so this restructuring will significantly expand this reach during a time of great need.

“Child care workers shape and care for our youngest minds during some of their most formative years, and a safe, loving child care center can be an extension of family for parents and children who rely on their work,” said Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller. “I am incredibly grateful that we are able to reallocate this federal funding to support the child care workforce, and I urge all providers to apply for this opportunity on behalf of their staff.

Eligible employees include child care workers who:

1. Are employed by a licensed child care provider as of January 1, 2021;
2. Earn less than or equal to a gross salary of $70,000, annually; and,
3. Work a minimum of 20 hours per week at a licensed child care provider.

Child care providers that are currently licensed and certified through OCDEL can begin to apply on behalf of their eligible employees. All applications must be sent to the provider’s ELRC and received by February 12, 2021. The COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Award will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding will be distributed regionally and be limited, so applicants are encouraged to apply sooner rather than later.

In addition to repurposing these existing funds, approximately $220 million in CARES funding has been allocated to support child care providers across Pennsylvania since the COVID-19 crisis began in Pennsylvania to support this critical educational and economic infrastructure for children and families across the commonwealth. The distribution method of CARES funding was based in part on the findings of researchers at Penn State Harrisburg’s Institute of State and Regional Affairs, who studied the impact of COVID-19 on Pennsylvania’s child care industry.

On December 27, 2020, an additional $10 billion dollars was allocated by the federal government to support child care. States should receive their share of the additional funds made available in the coming weeks.

For more information on child care providers operating during the COVID-19 public health crisis, visit www.dhs.pa.gov.