Program and Policy Guide for Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS)

Fiscal Year 2026
July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Office of Early Learning
Early Childhood Excellence Team

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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 upon **Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) regulations** and working towards identified Quality Indicators (QI). This QIS Policies and Procedures Manual outlines a variety of supports that are accessible for programs as they work on implementing key practices.

Providing Suggestions and Asking Questions

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) within the Early Childhood Excellence Team at the Department of Education is committed to internal and external Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and we recognize the importance of receiving suggestions and questions from the Early Care and Education community.

To best meet the needs of children, families, professionals, and programs and to improve how we set standards/policies, provide supports, and collect data, we are providing two new opportunities for programs to make suggestions and ask questions about Delaware's FY26 Quality Improvement System.

> **FY26 QIS Feedback and Questions Form** - This form is anonymous, and it will be available throughout FY26. Responses to the form will be reviewed weekly by the OEL team.
>
> Based on feedback and questions received via the form, the OEL team will maintain the **FY26 Quality Improvement System Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Suggestions** document, which will be updated at least two times per month.

Quality Indicators (QI)

Quality indicators are Delaware's identified components of quality. Delaware's QIS includes three QIs. For FY26, programs may write a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and request Quality Improvement Award (QIA) focusing on specific Key Practices in QI 1 and/or 2.

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 FY26**
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 FY26**

Key Practices (KPs) & Pathways

A set of Key Practices (KPs) defines each QI, and each Key Practice (KP) has a Pathway to support programs in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). The 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 Key Practices.

These pathways were designed using the **National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action: Using Knowledge of Child Development and Learning in Context,** and are informed by **NAEYC's Early Childhood Program Standards.**

The Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Learning (OEL) has prioritized five KPs for FY26. These priority KPs were selected using **Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)** data submitted by State-Funded Early Care and Education Programs (SFECEPs) and information obtained from program staff during site visits.

- **Appendix A** outlines the KPs and Pathways for center/school-based programs

- **Appendix B** outlines the KPs and Pathways for family child care programs
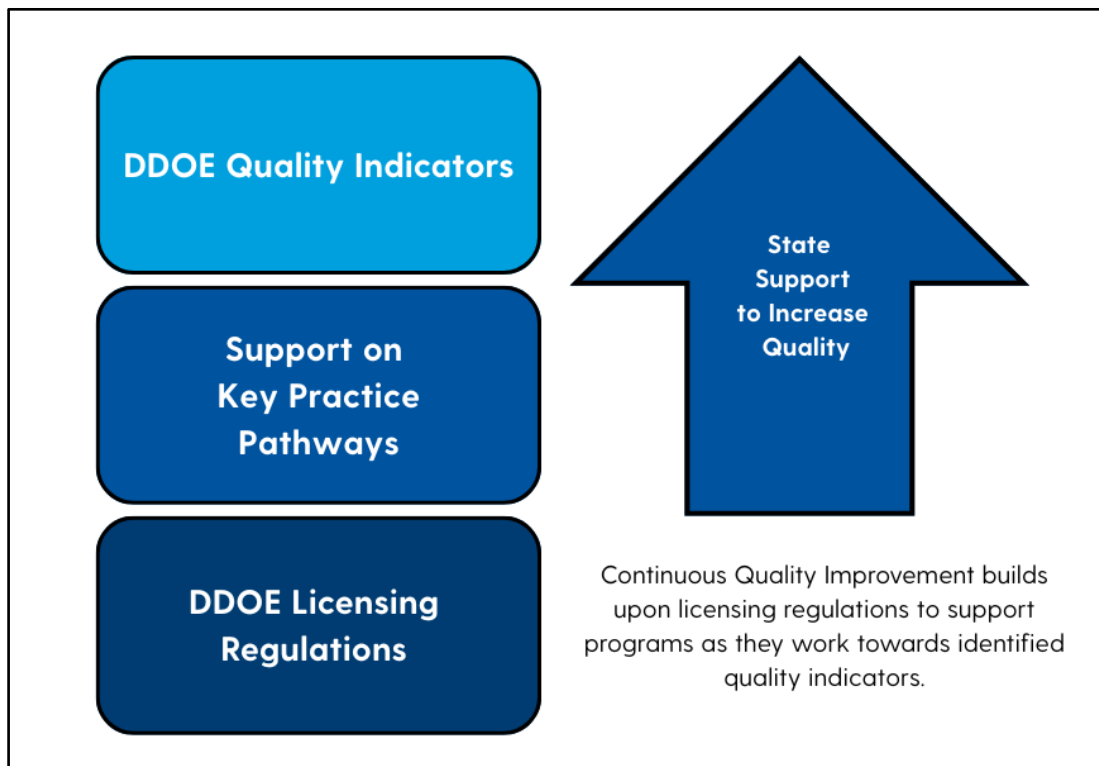
Priority Key Practices – Center-Based Programs

Creating Conditions for Quality (CQ)

CQ-KP4: Implements practices to recruit and retain high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors

CQ-KP7: Provides effective and meaningful supervision of teaching practices

Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ)

PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions

PCHQ-KP2: Uses identity-affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the classroom

PCHQ-KP5: Implements practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program

Priority Key Practices – Family Child Care Programs

Creating Conditions for Quality (CQ)

CQ-KP6: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors (as needed)

CQ-KP7: (LFCC) Provides effective and meaningful supervision of teaching practices

Positive Climate and High-Quality Interactions (PCHQ)

PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions

PCHQ-KP2: Uses identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the program

PCHQ-KP5: Implements practices and provides environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children enrolled in the program

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

What is Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)?

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is "a process to ensure that programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children and families they serve. It is an environment that uses collected data to make positive changes - even when things are going well - rather than waiting for something to go wrong and then fixing it." (Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Interdepartmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, Administration for Children & Families).

As part of Delaware's QIS, CQI is a cycle where data is used to identify a program's strengths and opportunities for growth. The data guides program leaders to identify a goal, build an improvement plan, access relevant supports, and monitor their progress. Licensed early care and education programs request support from a Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp) through the **Delaware Early Care and Education (ECE) portal.** See page 9 of the linked Program Portal Guide for instructions.

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?	🌱
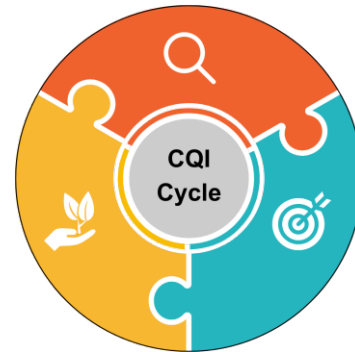
Initial Data Gathering 🔍

Program leaders deciding to embark on a QI journey will collaborate with a QISp from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) to gather data on current program practices.

- As applicable, the QISp will support program leaders in completing a DDOE-approved needs assessment, to better understand how the program is doing overall.

- The post-assessment data from FY25 can support program leaders with data gathering for future goal-setting.

Quality Improvement Planning 🎯

Program leaders partner closely with their QISp to utilize the program's needs assessment, FY25 post-assessment data, and/or the KP Pathways to identify program goals. Programs, with the support of their QISp, will focus on KPs and on movement along the pathways outlined in Appendix A and Appendix B. Once goals are established, programs engage in reflective conversations to explore strategies and resources that will support their growth. Using the Department of Education-approved menu of support, the QISp will guide the program in developing a quality improvement plan (QIP), incorporating their menu selections into meaningful action steps in the program's QIP. As outlined by the KPs, QI work can occur at all levels of the program.

An assessment tool will be selected to collect pre and post-data related to program QIP goals. Pre-assessment data and post-assessment can be compared to highlight areas of strength and future opportunities for growth, as related to the program QIP goals.

Prior to working through QIP action steps, programs will complete the selected pre-assessment. This will be uploaded into the Delaware ECE portal. When uploading the QIP, there is an "Attach pre-assessment" tab for the assessment tool to be uploaded. Programs accredited by NAEYC may choose to use their annual NAEYC plans and program data instead of creating an additional QIP.

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 Delaware Department of Education 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 may apply for a QIA to increase quality. Licensed, non-state-funded programs may use quality improvement award funding for paying wages above minimum wage, bonuses, professional development, materials, and administrative overhead. State-funded Early Care and Education Programs may use quality improvement award funding for bonuses (retention and qualification level), materials, professional development, and administrative overhead. Programs in school districts will only receive funding for professional development and materials.

Continued Data Gathering

Program leaders and educators engage with relevant supports and programs make continued progress on their QI goals. Programs implement the activities outlined in their QIP, and gather data using an assessment tool (see **FY26 Priority Key Practices: Pre and Post Assessment Tools** for examples) to document the changes that are occurring in their programs. A variety of metrics can be utilized. It will be up to the program, in partnership with their QISp, to determine what tool best tells their story of growth. Data can be connected with a tool or with metrics.

Programs will then conduct a post-assessment, using the same assessment tool they have used throughout the CQI process, to determine to what degree enhancements to program practices have occurred and if their goals have been met. Programs should upload **pre- and post-assessment data** into the Delaware ECE Portal. In the Delaware ECE portal, on the QIP page, there is a tab to "Attach Post-Assessment." The post-assessment will serve as program evidence of growth and implementation of target Key Practice(s)/goal(s).

QISps will support programs in their review of pre and post data to determine whether the program has increased quality. Together, program leaders and QISps will collaborate to consider if the goals are met. If so, they can create a plan for sustainability or, if goals have not been met, additional items may be added to the QIP.

Checkpoint data gathering

Checkpoint data gathering

Initial data gathering
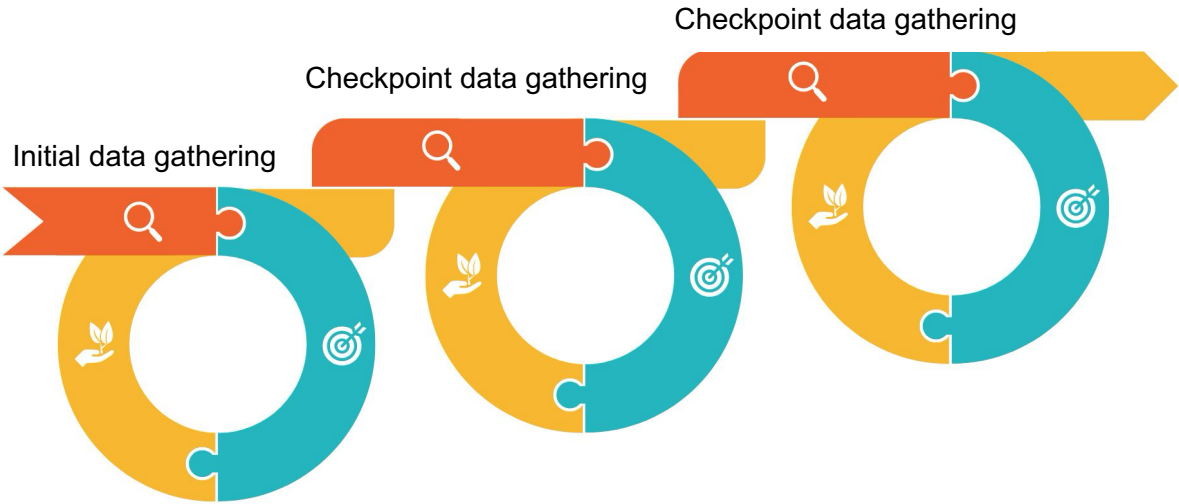
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORTS

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.

- Self-paced learning experiences, including iPD, Cox Campus, and Quorum. Additional options are listed in **Appendix E.**

- Community-based professional learning experiences offered by DIEEC

- Familiarity with and utilization of community resources, such as those found on the **Delaware Partners webpage,** that can be accessed and/or utilized to meet program goals.

- **FY26 OEL External Communication Document for Partners & Families**

- The **Delaware Early Childhood Inclusion Guide**

- The **Understanding Delaware's Early Childhood Special Education System- Supporting Young Children With Disabilities** Guide- Focusing on Preschool Aged Children - 2023- (Currently being updated by the Office of Early Childhood Intervention)

- **A Guide to Working Together for School Districts and Community Preschool Programs- Supporting Young Children with Disabilities** - Focusing on Preschool Aged Children- 2023- (Currently being updated by the Office of Early Childhood Intervention)

Targeted Supports

The Delaware Department of Education adopted the **Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework** (ELOF) on July 1, 2025 as Delaware's Child Outcomes Framework and the Delaware Department of Education has updated Early Care and Education priorities for FY26. Therefore, Quality Improvement Awards for FY26 must be aligned with the ELOF and with DOE's new priorities, including:

- Language and Early Literacy

- Early Math Skills

- Supports for Caregivers of Infants and Toddlers

- Practice-Based Coaching

- Social Emotional Well Being (SEWB)- SEL for Children & Adults, Trauma Informed Practices (TIP), etc.

Please refer to **Appendix E f**or DDOE-approved professional development and staff training.

Programs seeking to reach QIP goals may desire to participate in free targeted supports. Targeted supports are offered throughout the year and require a greater degree of commitment. SFECEPs are given prioritized access to these supports.

Targeted supports include:

- Support from a QISp to develop and implement a Quality Improvement Plan. Request support from a Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp) through the **Delaware Early Care and Education (ECE) portal.** See page 9 of the linked Program Portal Guide for instructions.

- Communities of Practice are advertised on the **DIEEC Calendar**, and contact information regarding how to enroll is included on the DIEEC Calendar.

- Comprehensive Professional Learning Series/Cohorts (including workshops, observations, coaching, book studies, and targeted leadership support):

Pyramid Model Tier 1	Trauma-Informed Practices (TIP)
Pyramid Model Tier 2	Language and Literacy in Early Childhood
Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Social and Emotional Development	Mathematics in Early Childhood
	Leadership
Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Cognitive Development	Conscious Discipline
	Practice-Based Coaching
Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Language and Literacy Development	

State-Funded Early Care and Education Programs (SFECEPs) are expected to be consistently engaged with targeted supports offered as part of Delaware's QIS, including participating in a facilitated Community of Practice series and facilitated working sessions focused on topics relevant to state-funded policies and procedures. **SFECEPs MUST use Quality Improvement Award funds to meet the needs of any Waiver Requests before identifying other uses for funds.**

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SUPPORTS: FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Teaching Strategies GOLD Access

The Department of Education is providing access to Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) for all licensed programs interested in using TSG as their formative assessment tool, at no cost to the p program. To request a TSG account for your program:

- If you are a State-Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP) or an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Program, use this **FY26 OEL SFECEP & EHS-CCP Program TSG Account Request Form.**

- If you are **NOT** a State Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP) or an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) Program, use **this FY26 OEL ECE Program TSG Account Request Form.**

Once TSG access is obtained:

- Within 30 days:
  - **Administrators** must complete "Getting Started with SmartTeach for Administrators," unless previously completed.
  - **Administrators, coaches, and teaching staff using TSG** must complete "The Power of GOLD" and "Introduction to SmartTeach," unless previously completed.
  - **All new hires who will be using TSG** must complete the courses listed above, based on their role, unless previously completed.
  - Courses can be completed using the online TSG "Develop" PD system.
- Within 60 days:
  - If a program has the utilization of TSG as a component of their FY26 QIP, **all administrators, coaches, teaching staff, and new hires who have not successfully completed Interrater Reliability** (IRR) within the past three years must successfully complete IRR using the online TSG "Develop" PD system.
- TSG PD Monitoring and Documentation: **Directors will monitor IRR completion status** by running completion reports and retaining documentation of completed courses for all necessary employees. DDOE will monitor completion reports to ensure that TSG is being used with fidelity.

Quality Improvement Awards (QIA)

Quality Improvement Awards are a Delaware-funded financial support available to all licensed early care and school-age programs. QIAs are designed to assist programs in working toward their identified QI goals, supporting their efforts to increase quality programming for children and families in Delaware. Programs that meet eligibility requirements may apply for one QIA per fiscal year. Programs are responsible for choosing an application deadline that works best for how they budget for the fiscal year.

- There are four application deadlines: 9/15/25, 11/15/25, 1/15/26, and 3/15/26.
- School districts, SFECEPs, and EHS-CCPs must apply on or before November 15, 2025.

As part of accepting a QIA, programs are agreeing to collaborate with a DIEEC QISp to implement a QIP. This collaboration will enhance program services around the identified priority Key Practices.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Programs must obtain their FY26 QIA Rubric/Budget Narrative Spreadsheet from their QISp.
- Spreadsheets must be uploaded to the ECE Portal in spreadsheet format (Excel, etc.), NOT PDFs.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a QIA, programs must:

1. Hold a certificate or be licensed by the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing. *Programs must be licensed by January 15, 2026, AND have a visit scheduled with their Quality Improvement Specialist by February 1, 2026, to apply for a QIA during FY26.*

2. Be open and providing services to children and families.

3. Have, use, and implement a QIP that was co-created with a QISp and is aligned with Quality Indicators and DOE/OEL-identified Priority Key Practices and Pathways. Programs continuing to use an open QIP from FY25 must have documented progress in the ECE Portal showing completed activities towards their goals.

4. Have an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Account in the DE DOE Enterprise system. If you need to register or do not have access to your ASQ Portal, please use the **ASQ Support Request Form**. Once your request has been processed, you will be contacted via email with your login information for you to access your portal. You can find step-by-step guidance in the **ASQ Provider Manual for Early Childhood Programs**, and you can learn more about Developmental Screening by visiting Delaware's **Developmental Screening Resources** webpage.

5. Use a formative assessment tool with fidelity (as intended by the publisher) to inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualization across all developmental domains. If programs choose to use Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG), programs must complete the previously referenced TSG online professional development courses *prior* to applying for a QIA. School-age programs are exempt from this requirement.

    a. Implementing a formative assessment tool with fidelity is a marker of high-quality programming. OEL's goal is for Delaware early care and education programs to meaningfully promote children's development. Implementing a formative assessment tool with fidelity requires developing and coordinating multiple intentional processes. Licensed early care and education programs used FY24 as a timeframe to work towards fidelity, establishing and fine-tuning the processes required to fully implement a formative assessment tool. During FY26, programs will be expected to implement a formative assessment tool with fidelity. Additionally, program staff must engage in the training for the formative assessment tool used. Documentation of training will be accepted in multiple formats based on the training available for that particular assessment tool. Training must be completed and documentation must be uploaded to the DE ECE Portal when applying for a QIA. QIA funds may be used to support training on formative assessments that are research-based.

    b. Using a published tool typically means that the tool has been tested across various groups of children, throughout the country, often proving to receive the same responses in most situations. There is also research proving the validity of the tool (the degree to which a method measures what it is intended to measure) if observers follow the method suggested by the tool's publisher. Please consider these points as you search for a tool in alignment with your curriculum. Many curricula can be purchased with a formative assessment tool aligned to the content of the curriculum. For examples of evidence and research-based curricula, please see the **Curriculum Consumer Report**. Click on any title, and then "Full Review and Ratings" to view Criterion 6 "Ongoing Child Assessment".

6. Sign the QIA Funds Policy as part of the application process, agreeing that funds will be spent on items listed in the approved budget narrative. If funds are spent on unapproved items, reimbursement will be required. If programs need to change how the budget line items are allocated, the new budget narrative must be approved by OEL, following the process outlined below (see 7e).

7. Have provided approved evidence showing that previously awarded QIA funding was spent on approved items.

   a. Centers and LFCC providers - All awarded funds must be accounted for with evidence of fund usage.

   b. Center owners are only eligible if working on-site with children and families, at least 25 hours a week.

   c. LFCC and Center owners owning more than one site are only eligible for a bonus, salary increase, and/or wage differential at one site per DDOE's fiscal year.

   d. One-time funding toward salary and bonuses may be provided to staff who are fingerprinted and work directly with children and families.

   e. Items purchased must align with the approved budget narrative. If programs need to change how the budget line items are allocated, the new budget narrative must be approved by OEL. Please contact **Support@welsfoundation.org** to reopen your application so you can upload and submit a new budget narrative for approval. All updates must align with the five state prioritized Key Practices highlighted on page 3 of this guide. No budget narrative updates will be approved following the deadline to upload evidence of spending (June 30, 2026).

   f. All staff members must be paid at least the minimum wage.

8. Provide proof that any business liens or tax levies associated with a program have been released. Documentation must be submitted by January 15, 2026, and a request to meet with a QISp must be made by February 1, 2026, to apply for a QIA during FY26.

Calculating Your Award Maximum for OCCL Licensed Programs

In FY26, programs must determine the award amount they can apply for using the FY26 Licensed Program QIA Rubric. This new rubric is a spreadsheet that will assist programs in determining the maximum award amount for which they are eligible. This spreadsheet will also be used to create their budget narratives.

When using the rubric, you will first need to determine how many children you have enrolled. The Quality Improvement Award policy mirrors the state's Purchase of Care policy.

- The definition of "**full-time enrollment**" (F/T) means the child is present 4 or more hours per day. Therefore, a child who is enrolled for 20 or more hours per week is full-time.

- The definition of "**part-time enrollment**" (P/T) means the child is present less than 4 hours per day. Therefore, a child who is enrolled for less than 20 hours per week is part-time.

- Family and Large Family Child Care homes **operating two shifts** may only use one shift's enrollment when completing the rubric to determine the QIA.

Your programs' operating hours will dictate how many full-time and part-time children you are able to enroll. This policy supports programs with non-traditional hour enrollment and part-week enrollment.

- OCCL Licensed Programs may **view an example of the rubric** by clicking on this link. **FY26 Licensed Programs QIA Rubric and Budget Narrative- View Only.**

- Programs must **request the editable Excel version of the rubric** from their QISp.

- When applying for a QIA, programs MUST submit their rubric as an Excel spreadsheet, not as a PDF file.

Steps to Complete the Quality Improvement Award Rubric for Licensed Programs

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

Step 2- Enter the number of part-time children enrolled. Part-time (P/T) means the child is present less than 4 hours per day. The spreadsheet will divide the number of P/T children by 2. Then the spreadsheet will calculate the total enrollment by adding the F/T and P/T children.

Step 3- Enter the number of F/T children enrolled who receive POC**.** F/T means the child is present 4 or more hours per day.

Step 4- Enter the number of P/T children enrolled who receive POC. P/T means the child is present less than 4 hours per day. The spreadsheet will divide the number of P/T children by 2. The spreadsheet will calculate the total enrollment of POC by adding the F/T and P/T children receiving POC.

Step 5- The percentage of children in the program who receive POC is determined by dividing the F/T equivalency of POC enrolled children by the F/T equivalency total enrollment. **The spreadsheet will calculate this for you.**

Sample data entry

Description	Number of children	F/T equivalency
Number F/T Children Enrolled (4+ hours per day)	58	58
Number P/T Children Enrolled (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 Enrolled who receive POC	48	48
Number of P/T Children Enrolled who receive POC	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 enrollment

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

Step 6- The rubric below determines your award based on enrollment and POC percentage. (NOTE: the spreadsheet will automatically calculate your award.)

Award amounts based on enrollment and rubric points

Enrollment	Baseline	1 Rubric Point	2 Rubric Points	3 Rubric Points
0-5	$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 75% of the QIA budget, materials and professional development will be assigned a maximum of 15% of the award and a maximum budget for administrative overhead of 10%. Programs may choose to use more than 75% of the QIA budget for staff bonus and wage differentials. Programs may use the materials budget for staff health insurance, retirement funds, etc. Programs must provide itemized lists of the materials, equipment, or professional development they plan to purchase.

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.

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.

Step 10- Provide an itemized list of materials, professional development, or employee supports, such as health care, in the materials/PD section of the rubric.

After using the FY26 Licensed Programs Rubric to determine this year's award amounts, centers that are operating at 50% or less capacity, that will be receiving less funding than in FY25 may either accept the terms of the revised rubric that recognizes that centers serving more children should receive a higher funding amount that those serving fewer children OR may complete the second tab on the Rubric spreadsheet to request additional funds to increase enrollment.

- If choosing to increase enrollment, centers will need to justify how the requested additional funds will be used to increase enrollment only, such as by opening currently closed existing classrooms by hiring more staff, etc.

- Requests for increased enrollment funds will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- Centers that receive funds for increasing enrollment must increase their current enrollment by the number of children served by one classroom teacher (as defined by the **Delacare regulations** on Ratios, Group Size, and Supervision) within three months of receiving the award.

  - *Example 1: A program may choose to increase enrollment by 4 infant seats with one qualified infant teacher.*

  - *Example 2: A program may choose to increase enrollment by 10 young preschool seats with one qualified young preschool teacher.*

- Program attendance will be monitored after three months. If centers do not meet this increased enrollment requirement, centers must pay DOE back within one month of being monitored. Centers who fail to reimburse DOE within the required time will be ineligible for a QIA in FY27.

Calculating Your Award Maximum for State-Funded Early Care and Education Programs (SFECEPs) and Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCPs)

In FY26, SFECEPs and EHS-CCPs (NOT including school districts) may choose to utilize a different rubric spreadsheet for their QIA Application. This spreadsheet will assist programs in determining the maximum award amount for which they are eligible and will be used to create their budget narratives. SFECEPs and EHS-CCPs may use this rubric or the one designated for licensed programs.

- SFECEP + EHS-CCP Programs **that are not school districts** may view this rubric by clicking on this link. **FY26 SFECEP + EHS-CCP Programs QIA Rubric and Budget Narrative- View Only**

- Programs must request the editable Excel version of this Rubric from their QISp.

- When applying for a QIA, programs MUST submit their Rubric as an Excel spreadsheet, not as a pdf file.

Steps to Complete the Quality Improvement Award Rubric for SFECEP (not including school districts):

Step 1- Select your facility type (Center, Family Child Care, or Large Family Child Care)

Step 2- Enter the number of full-time (F/T) children enrolled. F/T means the child is present 4 or more hours per day.

Step 3- Enter the number of part-time (P/T) children enrolled. P/T means the child is present less than 4 hours per day.

Step 4- List each staff member's first and last name and select the current DEEDS qualification certificate held or select aide, if no qualification is held.

Step 5- Meet with each staff member and determine whether they would like to increase their qualifications or keep the same qualifications.

Step 6- Select Timeframe for Increasing Qualifications (July - December, January - June, or Not Increasing Qualifications) for each staff.

Step 7- Select Position after Increasing Qualifications. If staff are not increasing their qualifications, select the current position in this column. Select the new position for those who are increasing their qualifications.

Step 8- Provide an itemized list of materials, professional development, and employee supports, such as health care, in the materials/pd section of the rubric.

Please note that staff choosing to increase their qualifications from July - December, will receive a higher retention bonus in January - May based on the qualification they are seeking. Staff choosing to increase their qualifications in January - June will receive a retention bonus at the rate for their original position. Staff will be given a bonus based on their current position and for advancing to their selected position. Program leaders must develop plans to ensure their staff meet the qualifications within the selected times. Programs whose staff are unable to meet the higher qualifications within the required timeframe will need to either pay back the additional bonuses awarded or reallocate those funds to another staff seeking to increase their qualifications. Please note: CDAs take approximately 9 months to complete when participating in an ECIC cohort.

Step 9- The spreadsheet will automatically determine the retention bonus and qualification bonus each staff should receive as well as assign a maximum budget for materials and professional development as well as a maximum budget for administrative overhead at 10%. Programs may use the materials budget for staff health insurance, retirement funds, etc. Programs must provide itemized lists of the exact materials, equipment, or professional development they plan to purchase.

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

Staff bonuses

Staff Role and Qualification	Bonus	Retention Bonus	Total Award
Aide	$0	$0	$0
EC Intern/FCC Level I	$200	$100 per month	$1,400
EC Assistant Teacher/FCCH Provider or LFCCH Assistant with 60 hours	$700	$125 per month	$2,200
EC Teacher/FCCH Provider or LFCCH Assistant with 120 hours	$1,200	$175 per month	$3,300
EC Teacher with CDA/FCC or LFCC Provider with CDA	$1,700	$275 per month	$5,000
EC Teacher with Associate	$1,950	$300 per month	$5,550
EC Teacher with Bachelors	$2,200	$325 per month	$6,100
EC Administrator with Associate/FCC or LFCC Provider with Associate	$2,200	$325 per month	$6,100

Staff Role and Qualification	Bonus	Retention Bonus	Total Award
EC Administrator EC Administrator with Bachelor's /FCC or LFCC Provider with Bachelor's	$3,200	$375 per month	$7,700
All-School-Age Positions	N/A	$100 per month	$1,200

Calculating Your Award Maximum in School Districts

This calculation is for those **programs that are unable to offer staff bonuses** due to contract restrictions.

- School District preschool programs may view an example of the rubric by clicking on this link. **FY26 School District QIA Rubric and Budget Narrative- View Only**

- School Districts must **request the editable Excel version** of this Rubric from their QISp.

- When applying for a QIA, districts MUST **submit their Rubric as an Excel spreadsheet**, not as a PDF file.

Steps to Complete the Quality Improvement Award Rubric 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 rubric.

Timeframe: QIA funds are retroactive to July 1, 2025, and can be used on expenses up to June 30, 2026. Please note that evidence reporting is due by June 30, 2026. 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.

Delaware Quality Improvement Award Spending Funds Policy

The following policy will be a part of the QIA application. A signature will be required.

Purpose: This policy is designed to prevent and address any instances of misappropriation or misuse of funds awarded as QIAs and allocated for QI. It outlines the expectations, procedures, and consequences related to the handling of QIA funds.

Scope: This policy applies to all that have received state funds for Quality Improvement initiatives.

Taxes: The Delaware Department of Education cannot provide tax advice and will not pay for any taxes related to the QIA during this fiscal year. Instead, programs may apply up to 10% of the budgeted award for administrative overhead. If taxes are included on a budget narrative, programs will be asked to remove the line item for taxes and add a line item for administrative overhead.

Policy

1. **Authorized Use of Funds:**

   - State funds allocated must be used exclusively for the purposes outlined in the QIP/QIA agreement and in accordance with applicable DE laws and regulations.

   - Permissible uses of funds include but are not limited to staff bonuses, wage differentials, and salary increases, staff training, and purchasing educational materials to enhance program quality. All intended utilization of funds must be approved by the DDOE or a DDOE Designee. All expenditures must be documented with receipts or payroll documentation, which are to be submitted to DDOE or a DDOE Designee, as required.

2. **Financial Oversight (Centers and LFCCs ONLY):**

   - QIA recipients must maintain accurate and detailed records of all expenditures that were identified in the budget narrative. PD

   - Financial records must be made available for review by state authorities/DDOE staff, and/or DDOE Designees upon request.

3. **Prohibited Activities:**

   - Misappropriation or misuse of state funds is strictly prohibited.

   - Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to theft, fraud, submitting false reimbursement claims, and intentionally misrepresenting financial information.

4. **Reporting Procedures:**

   - Any suspected instances of misappropriation or misuse of state funds must be promptly reported to the appropriate state agency.

   - Reports should include detailed information and evidence supporting the suspicion.

5. **Investigation and Enforcement:**

   - Upon receiving a report of potential misappropriation, the DDOE and/or a DDOE

Designee will conduct a thorough investigation.

- If misconduct is substantiated, the QIA recipient/entity may be subject to penalties, including but not limited to repayment of misused funds, termination of current QIA agreements, ineligibility for future QIAs, OCCL violations, and legal action.

Compliance: All programs receiving state grants for Quality Improvement initiatives are required to comply with this policy. Failure to comply may result in the termination of funding, paying received funds back to the state, and other disciplinary actions.

Review and Revision: This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.

Acknowledgement: By accepting state funds, QIA recipients agree to abide by the terms of this policy and acknowledge their responsibility to use funds appropriately and transparently.

Attestation Statement:

- I will submit documentation for all expenditures associated with this award within the timeframe established by the Office of Early Learning within the Delaware Department of Education.

- Collaborate with a Quality Improvement Specialist to implement the QIP.

- Use a formative assessment with fidelity to inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualization across all developmental domains. School-age programs are exempt from this requirement.

- I hereby certify that I am authorized to apply on behalf of the eligible early care and education program for this state funding. Further, I hereby certify that the information provided herein is true and accurate. By signing this document, I understand that I am required to maintain the original supporting documents to confirm this information for a period of five years beyond the receipt of any payment, which may be received from this grant program. During any audit, if my records are not available and/or this information is found to be inaccurate, I understand that I may be required to make full reimbursement for any amounts identified as payment that were not eligible and I may not be eligible for future Quality Improvement Awards. I submit this application under penalty of perjury.

Application Process and Timelines

Quality Improvement Award Application Timeline for Fiscal Year 2026

→ **September 1, 2025:** Applications will be accepted beginning on this date.

Rolling QIA Application Deadlines	
September 15, 2025 for an award before the November application deadline	● Deadlines for school districts, state agencies, SFECEPs, and EHS-CCPs. ● School districts, state agencies, SFECEPs, and EHS-CCPs that apply on November 16th or thereafter will not have their applications considered in FY26.
November 15, 2025 for an award before the January application deadline	
January 15, 2026 for an award before the March application deadline	
March 15, 2026 for an award before the May application deadline	

→ **June 30, 2026:** Documentation for expenditures (evidence) due to OEL by the close of business.

To document your expenditures, please refer to page 14 of 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.

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 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 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.

PREPARING TO APPLY FOR A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AWARD

Programs access the Quality Improvement Award (QIA) application through the **Delaware ECE Portal**. There are seven sections to the QIA application. The program leader will add information to 6 of the 7 sections to complete the application.

Quality Improvement Award Application Sections

1. Program

Programs will provide general information about the 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 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)

- 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 (4 or more hours per day or 20 or more total hours per week)

- Total Part-time enrollment (less than 4 hours per day or less than 20 hours per week)

- Total Full time enrollment (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 (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, any requests for additional information will extend the amount of time needed to process the application.

3a. Budget for Licensed Programs

Programs will submit to OEL a budget narrative 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 75% of the budget is used for bonuses, salary increases, and/or wage differentials.

- No more than 15% is used for materials or professional development, and

- No more than 10% is used for administrative overhead.

- Programs may use the materials budget for staff health insurance, retirement funds, etc.

Bonuses — Include the number of staff and the bonus amount for each staff member during each bonus period. Staff names and positions must be included. To be eligible for a bonus, staff must be fingerprinted for the program, be determined eligible for employment by the Criminal History Unit and be directly working with children or families. Both full-time and part-time staff are eligible for bonuses. LFCC and Center owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families, 25 hours or more per week. If owning more than one site, LFCC and Center owners may only receive a bonus at one site per DDOE fiscal year. LFCC owners may only apply to receive up to 75% of the QIA toward a bonus or salary increase for themselves. Center owners may not receive more than 10% of the total QIA for a bonus for themselves. For centers, the percentage difference between the lowest and highest payments for a bonus or must be 50% or higher. Multiple bonuses may be provided to staff based on criteria, such as length of employment, education level, low absences, etc. Calculation: Take the lowest payment and divide it by the highest payment. Multiply by 100 for the percentage. Confirm that the percentage is 50% or higher. DDOE recommends that staff bonuses be higher for those with higher qualifications.

- *Example 1* – Lowest payment to a staff member is $1,000, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 20% NOT APPROVED

- *Example 2* – Lowest payment to a staff member is $2,500, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 50% APPROVED

Salary Increases — Share how you plan to distribute salary increases for each staff member. Include the names of staff and the salary increase each staff member will receive. To be eligible for a salary increase, staff must be fingerprinted for the program, be determined eligible for employment by the Criminal History Unit and be directly working with children or families. Both full-time and part-time staff are eligible for salary increases. LFCC and Center owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families, 25 hours or more per week. If owning more than one site, LFCC and Center owners may only receive a salary increase or wage differential at one site per DDOC fiscal year. LFCC owners may only apply to receive up to 75% of the QIA toward a salary increase or bonus for themselves. For centers, the percentage difference between the lowest and the highest payments for a salary increase must be 50% or higher. Calculation: Take the lowest payment and divide it by the highest payment. Multiply by 100 for the percentage. Confirm that the percentage is 50% or higher. DDOE recommends that staff salary increases be higher for those with higher qualifications.

- *Example 1* – Lowest payment to a staff member is $1,000, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 20%   NOT APPROVED

- *Example 2* – Lowest payment to a staff member is $2,500, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 50%   APPROVED

Wage Differentials — List staff's current wages and show the amount above minimum wage each employee receives. QIA funds may be used to pay the differential paid above minimum wage for an employee's hourly wage. For example, if an employee's hourly wage is $20, and minimum wage is $15 an hour, QIA funds can be used to cover the $5 difference. QIA funds may not be used to fund full salaries of employees. Center owners are only eligible for wage differentials at one site per DDOE fiscal year, when owning or working at multiple sites. Center owners must be working on site with children and families at least 25 hours per week to be eligible. Center owners may not receive more than 10% of the total QIA for wage differentials for themselves. Staff must be working directly with children and families for OEL to fund the wage differential.

DIEEC Rubric — Budget Narrative Templates – Use the templates provided by your QISp. Programs must use the templates, and fill them out completely, showing how all funds will be spent.

Total Award Requested — Include this amount on the Budget Narrative. All line items should add up to equal the total amount requested.

Connections Between Line Items and Narrative — Be sure to include a monetary breakdown of all areas presented in the narrative. For example, if you would like to use some of the funds to enhance cozy corners in classrooms, include each item being purchased, the number of classrooms, and the associated amount.

Unapproved Items — The following items will not be approved for use of QIA funds: food, building or home repair or maintenance, items required by OCCL (cribs, cots, diaper-changing stations, feeding chairs, business licenses, fire marshal inspections etc.), utility bills, mulch for playground, large stationary outdoor climbing/play equipment, bonuses/salary increases for family members or friends who are not fingerprinted for the program and determined eligible for employment and who are not working with children or families at the program, pest control, fencing, kitchen supplies, refrigerators, staff appreciation events/activities/gifts, and vehicle purchase or rental.

3b. Budget for State Funded Early Care and Education Programs (programs who have a contract with OEL to provide high-quality care to children, not including school districts)

Programs will create a budget narrative using the FY26 SFECEP QIA Rubric Budget Narrative. Programs will submit a budget narrative to OEL using the ECE Portal that is aligned with their QIP to apply for a QIA (see below for sample budget narratives). Budget narratives must reflect how programs plan to spend the full amount of the award. More information may be requested if the budget differs from what the program is eligible for and/or what the program has requested. Programs will receive a budget for materials and professional development, staff bonuses based on current qualifications and obtaining higher qualifications, and administrative overhead.

Unapproved Items – The following items will not be approved for use of QIA funds: food, building or home repair or maintenance, utility bills, mulch for playground, large stationary outdoor climbing/play equipment, items required by OCCL (cribs, cots, diaper-changing stations, feeding chairs, business licenses, fire marshal inspections etc.), bonuses/salary increases for family members or friends who are not fingerprinted for the program and determined eligible for employment and who are not working with children or families at the program, pest control, fencing, kitchen supplies, refrigerators, staff appreciation events/activities/gifts, and vehicle purchase or rental.

3c. Budget for State-Funded Early Care and Education Programs (programs that have a contract with OEL to provide high-quality care to children that are school districts, which prevent staff bonuses from being awarded due to contracts)

- Programs will create a budget narrative using their designated QIA FY26 School District Rubric and Budget Narrative. Programs will submit the budget narrative to OEL using the ECE Portal that is aligned with their QIP to apply for a QIA (see below for sample budget narratives). Budget narratives must reflect how programs plan to spend the full amount of the award. More information may be requested if the budget differs from what the program is eligible for and/or what the program has requested. Programs will receive a budget for materials and professional development.

- Unapproved Items – The following items will not be approved for use of QIA funds: food, building or home repair or maintenance, utility bills, mulch for playground, large stationary outdoor climbing/play equipment, bonuses/salary increases for family members or friends who are not fingerprinted for the program and determined eligible for employment and who are not working with children or families at the program, pest control, fencing, kitchen supplies, refrigerators, staff appreciation events/activities/gifts, and vehicle purchase or rental.

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.

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, please enter your first and last name as your signature. See page 22 of this Guide for a copy of this agreement.

Budget Narrative Examples

The Key Practices and QIP goals listed below are used for all 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
Associated Key Practice 3	Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practices
QIP Goals	
QIP Goal 1	Program will recruit and retain high quality staff by offering recruitment and retention bonuses
QIP Goal 2	Preschool classrooms will create cozy corners designed to support positive social-emotional development.
QIP Goal 3	One Lead Teacher will participate in Practice-Based Coaching training to implement the research-based strategies necessary to support and sustain the enhanced classroom practices introduced through participation in the Pyramid Model Cohort.

Budget Narrative Example for Licensed Centers

Enrollment: Program has 50 full-time and 10 part-time children with 100% POC enrollment.

Award total: $72,500

A. Staff Supports ($54,375):

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

QIP Goal: Increase staff morale, professionalism, and retention by offering monthly bonuses from July 2025 to May 2026. The bonus program for current staff will be based on the length of time the employee has been with the program and their qualifications certificate.

Staff bonuses

Name of Employee	Title	Length of Time with Program	Total Bonus (regardless of distribution schedule)
Jan T.	Teacher	8 months	$3,700.00
Cynthia P.	Teacher	8 months	$3,700.00
Valerie L.	Teacher	5 months	$2,500.00
Krista K.	Teacher	3 years	$4,500.00
Rowy M.	Teacher	5 months	$2,500.00
Jackie D.	Teacher	3 years	$4,500.00
Lizbeth S.	Teacher	3 months	$3,600.00
Marisol W.	Teacher	8 months	$3,600.00
Dena L.	Assistant Teacher	8 months	$2,250.00
Alena C.	Assistant Teacher	8 months	$2,250.00
Shakeena O.	Assistant Director	8 months	$4,000.00
Mary T.	Teacher	1 year	$4,000.00
Wilma H.	Teacher	2 years	$4,500.00
Sherry R.	Teacher	3 years	$4,500.00
Shamika T.	Director	10 months	$4,275.00
TOTAL			**$54,375.00**

B. SEL Supports for Classrooms ($3,875)

Preschool classrooms will create safe places designed to support the positive social-emotional development.

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
TOTAL			**$3875**

C. Practice- Based Coaching Training (Modules free through iPD) ($7,000)

- One Lead Teacher will participate in Practice-Based Coaching training to support implementation of the research-based strategies necessary to support and sustain enhanced classroom practices. ($5,000) - The assigned Coach will receive a bonus for participating in the five training modules and follow-up support offered through DIEEC. The first half of the bonus will be disbursed after completion of half of the modules and associated DIEEC supports. The last half of the bonus will be disbursed at the completion of the modules and active participation with accompanying sessions offered by DIEEC.

- Practice-Based Coach ($2,000) - Once fully trained, this teacher will receive a bonus, two times a year, for supporting the program in this capacity.

D. Administrative Overhead - $7,250

TOTAL REQUESTED $72,500

Budget Narrative Example for State-Funded Early Care and Education Programs (not including school districts)

Enrollment: Program has 100 full-time and 25 part-time children.

Award Total: $88,913

A. Staff Supports ($51,600)

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

QIP Goal: Increase staff morale, professionalism, and retention by offering monthly bonuses based on qualification and retention.

Staff bonuses

Staff Name	Current Position	Timeline for Increasing Qualifications	New Position, if applicable	Total Bonus (Qualifications and Retention)
Jan T.	ECT	January-June	ECT with CDA	$3,800
Cynthia P.	ECT	January-June	ECT with CDA	$3,800
Valerie L.	ECT	January-June	ECT with CDA	$3,800
Krista K.	ECT	Not increasing qualifications	ECT	$3,300
Rowy M.	ECT	January-June	ECT	$3,800
Jackie D.	ECT	Not increasing qualifications	ECT	$3,300
Lizbeth S.	ECT with CDA	Not increasing qualifications	ECT with CDA	$5,000
Marisol W.	ECT with CDA	Not increasing qualifications	ECT with CDA	$5,000
Dena L.	ECAT	July-December	ECT	$3,000
Alena C.	ECAT	July-December	ECT	$3,000
Shakeena O.	Admin with AA	Not increasing qualifications	Admin with AA	$6,100
Shamika T.	Admin with BA	Not increasing qualifications	Admin with BA	$7,700
TOTAL				**$51,600**

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

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

QIP Goal: 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	5	$1,000
Calming corner school mental health pillow	$25	12	$300
Social Emotional Competence Support Kit for Preschool Programs	$695	2	$1,390
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
Moods and Emotions Mirrors	$40	2	$80
Kindness Kit	$519	3	$1,557
SEL Tool Kit	$3,000	3	$9,000
Shipping	$1,048.04	1	$1,048.04
TOTAL			**$22,000**

C. Practice-Based Coaching Training (Modules free through iPD)

● Two Lead Teachers will participate in Practice-Based Coaching training to support implementation of the research-based strategies necessary to support and sustain enhanced classroom practices. ($8,000) - The assigned Coach will receive a bonus for participating in the five training modules and follow-up support offered through DIEEC. The first half of the bonus will be disbursed after completion of half of the modules and associated DIEEC supports. The last half of the bonus will be disbursed at the completion of the modules and active participation with accompanying sessions offered by DIEEC.

● Practice-Based Coach ($2,000) - Once fully trained, this teacher will receive a bonus, two times a year, for supporting the program in this capacity.

D. Administrative fees: $7,360

TOTAL REQUESTED $80,960

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**

TOTAL REQUESTED: $22,000

AFTER THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AWARD APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED

To check the status of your application, visit the first page of the QIA in your Early Childhood Program Portal.

If more information is needed, programs will receive an email or text with the request. Please add that information to your application as soon as possible. Please allow five business days for the Office of Early Learning to review any clarification or additional information submitted to the Delaware ECE Portal.

It is extremely important to check emails to ensure no additional information is needed. You should also check your application in the Delaware ECE Portal to ensure your application is verified in all sections.

Award approvals will be sent via email to the designated program contact. Payments will be distributed by WELS Systems Foundation through the Delaware ECE Portal. Allow 30 business days from the date the application was approved for funds to be disbursed to the bank account shared in the application.

Submitting Proof of Spending for the Quality Improvement Award

By June 30, 2026, you must upload documentation into the Delaware ECE portal showing that awarded QIA funding was spent on approved items. Documentation of spending may be uploaded as soon as the QIA is spent.

1. All awarded funds must be accounted for with evidence of fund usage.
2. LFCC and Center owners are only eligible if working on site with children or families 25 hours or more per week.
3. LFCC owners are only eligible to apply up to 75% of the QIA towards a bonus or salary increase for themselves.
4. For centers, the percentage difference between the lowest and highest payments for a salary increase or bonus must be 50% or higher. Calculation: Take the lowest payment and divide it by the highest payment. Multiply by 100 for the percentage. That percentage must be 50% or higher.

   > *Example 1 – Lowest payment to a staff member is $1,000, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 20% NOT APPROVED*

   > *Example 2 – Lowest payment to a staff member is $2,500, highest payment to a staff member is $5,000: 50% APPROVED*

   > *Example 3 – Lowest payment to a staff member is $3,000, highest payment to a staff member is $4,000: 75% APPROVED*

5. LFCC and Center owners owning more than one site are only eligible for a bonus/salary increase/wage differential at one site per DDOE fiscal year.
6. Center owners may receive no more than 10% of the total QIA for wage differentials and no more than 10% of the total QIA for a bonus.
7. Salary increases, wage differentials, and bonuses are only provided to staff who are fingerprinted for the program and were determined eligible by the Criminal History Unit.
8. Salary increases, wage differentials, and bonuses are only provided to staff who work directly with children and families.
9. Items purchased must align with the approved budget narrative.
10. Non-approved items will be reimbursed to the Office of Early Learning.

Auditing Quality Improvement Awards

Documentation is required for all expenditures (see below for examples). Documentation must be submitted to the Office of Early Learning via the Delaware ECE Portal by **June 30, 2026.** Please upload proof of spending to the "Evidence" section of the application. Please ensure the images are clear and not blurry when uploading documentation. Do not email proof of expenditures to OEL staff.

The auditing process reviews budget narratives submitted with each application against the documents submitted to verify spending. If there are discrepancies between the amount awarded, and the total amount of receipts received as evidence showing how the funds were spent, an Office of Early Learning representative will contact programs administrators to submit additional information. Inconsistencies with budget narratives and documents verifying spending, as well as the inability to share how the funds were spent may negatively impact a program's eligibility status for applying for a QIA in the next fiscal year.

All programs that receive Quality Improvement Awards (QIAs) must sign and submit the **Delaware Quality Improvement Award (QIA) Funds Policy** at the time of QIA application.

Auditing of Quality Improvement Award expenditures will occur throughout the year as programs upload documents to the Evidence tab in the application.

FY26 Eligible Expenses and Documentation

Eligible Expenses	Documentation, Evidence of Spending
Wage Differentials Recruitment and Retention Bonuses Merit Bonuses - bonus for staff participating and completing DIEEC cohorts (examples: Pyramid Model, Zero to Three, Practice Based Coaching) and/or any OEL-approved series of training and classroom support Salary Increases Paid Sick or Family Leave Retirement Contributions Contributions to medical, dental, vision insurance **SFECEPs will only receive funding for bonuses to use for retention and increasing or maintaining higher qualifications.**	Payroll documentation accounting for new salaries, bonuses, leave and/or retirement contributions *Documentation must show staff names and positions FCC Providers Documentation of education level (transcripts with conferral date when appropriate, diploma), if not previously submitted during FY24 or FY25
Technology	Receipts showing purchase date and name of company/organization *Purchase dates should be between 7/1/25 and 6/30/26
Professional Development or Staff Training in the following areas **ONLY**, and ONLY utilizing DDOE approved Professional Learning Experiences. - Language and Literacy - Early Math Skills - Supports for Caregivers of Infants and Toddlers	Invoice with training date(s), name of organization, proof of payment (example – canceled check, or indicating "paid" on invoice), and Certificates of Completion

Eligible Expenses	Documentation, Evidence of Spending
● Practice Based Coaching ● Adult SEL ● Child SEL ● Play based learning * *See DDOE approved Training list in Appendix E.* (Programs with staff wishing to participate in a CDA cohort or the CDA voucher-only model should contact the **Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC)**) Contracts/Partnerships with Experts (e.g., Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant; mental health consultation or other types of mental health supports for staff)	
Program/Classroom Enhancements	Receipts for each item purchased showing the item, cost, purchase date, and name of company/organization *Purchase dates should be between 7/1/25 and 6/30/26

APPENDIX A: PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES & PATHWAYS FOR CENTER-BASED 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 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 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 educators to earn an associate's degree or specialized credential 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. ● Program encourages those in leadership roles and educators to earn a bachelor's degree in early childhood.

CQ-KP7: Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practice			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers: 3. Definition of Terms – "Supervision of staff" 73. Program Goals and Planning	● Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to the supervision of teaching practices, including educator observations, strengths-based feedback, and staff reflection and goal-setting. ● Program leader ensures supervision is supportive and focused on teaching practices rather than punitive in nature. ● Program leader takes steps to develop and grow their own supervision practices in line with program goals.	● Program leader observes and provides feedback quarterly on teaching practices for all educators. ● Program supports educators in accessing professional growth opportunities that are in line with feedback from observations and aligned with program goals. ● Program has a system for educators to request observations as needed.	● Program leader observes and provides feedback monthly on teaching practices for all educators. ● Program leader implements a research-based coaching model to support educators to develop their skills and work to improve practice. ● Program leader observes using a reliable, valid tool or a curriculum implementation checklist. ● Program helps educators reflect on their own practices, values, and beliefs and connect external learning experiences to practices and program goals.

Quality Indicator: 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	● 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-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
		developmental domains (ex. social-emotional development, language and literacy, etc.). ● Educators implement positive guidance strategies to support all children.	

PCHQ-KP2: Uses identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the classroom

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 28. General Qualifications 74. Lesson Plans	● Program leader has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to fostering a sense of community through identity affirming practices. ● Program supports educators to maintain classroom environments that provide opportunities for children to feel ownership and/or show responsibility.	● Educators have a comprehensive knowledge base of how to make meaningful connections with all children, placing particular emphasis on understanding the families represented in the program and identifying aspects of both children and their families ● Educators encourage cooperative play and positive social interactions that develop a sense of community. ● Educators respond to children's comments and questions about individual differences in supportive and constructive ways.	● Programs use data from families to design classroom environments, incorporating diverse displays, materials, and activities that reflect enrolled families. ● Educators consistently implement a variety of classroom practices that encourage social interactions and promote a sense of community and belonging. ● Program leaders and educators are intentional about modeling empathy and promoting social justice. ● Program curriculum is inclusive of the culture of the enrolled children and families (e.g., celebrations, perspectives, and traditions) ● Educators embed activities to promote understanding of individual differences.

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-KP6: 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	• 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: Implements practices to recruit, retain, and orient high quality educators, substitutes, consultants and contractors (as needed)			
	baseline for building recruitment and hiring procedures.		

CQ-KP7: (LFCC) Provides effective and meaningful supervision on teaching practice			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	● FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to providing supervision on teaching practice, including regular observations, strength-based feedback, and opportunities for staff reflection and goal-setting. ● FCC Educator provides supportive supervision focused on teaching practices rather, encouraging staff/substitutes to request observations as needed, rather than being punitive in nature.	● FCC Educator implements policies and procedures related to providing supervision on teaching practice. ● FCC Educator completes staff observations at least quarterly. ● FCC Educator supports staff/substitutes in identifying strengths, concerns, challenges and areas of growth through reflection and feedback. ● FCC Educator has a system for educators to request observations as needed. ● FCC Educator supports staff/substitutes in accessing professional growth opportunities that are in line with feedback from observations as they develop their skills and work to improve practice.	● FCC Educator completes staff observations at least monthly using a standardized tool. ● FCC Educator provides timely feedback on teaching practices for all staff/substitutes. ● FCC Educator supports staff to reflect on their own practices, values, and beliefs as part of goal-setting to improve teaching practice. ● FCC Educator implements a research-based coaching model to support educators to develop their skills and work to improve practice.

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-KP2: Uses identity affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the program			
Entry	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Advanced**
	● FCC Educator has a comprehensive knowledge base and develops policies and procedures related to fostering a sense of community and building meaningful connections through culturally responsive and identity-affirming practices. ● FCC Educator maintains environments that provide opportunities for children to feel ownership and/or show responsibility.	● FCC Educator gathers and uses information from families and the community to build meaningful connections with children, placing particular emphasis on understanding the families represented in the program and identity-affirming aspects of both children and families. ● FCC Educators encourage cooperative play and positive social interactions that develop a sense of community. ● FCC Educators respond to children's comments and questions about individual differences in supportive ways.	● FCC Educator uses data from families to design environments, incorporating diverse displays, materials, and activities that are of interest to the children and families the program serves. ● FCC Educator consistently uses a variety of strategies that encourage interactions and promote a sense of community and belonging. ● FCC Educator is intentional about modeling empathy and promoting social justice. ● FCC Educator is inclusive of the culture of the enrolled children and families (e.g., celebrations, perspectives, and traditions) ● FCC Educator embeds activities to promote understanding of individual differences.

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

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**
			observation and assessment to ensure environments are supporting children to reach their goals.

APPENDIX C: MENU OF SUPPORTS ALIGNED WITH KEY PRACTICES

The menus of support for FY26 are currently being updated by DIEEC to include the most recent list of offerings. Appendix C will be updated with the FY26 menus as soon as they are available.

[FY25 FCC, LFCC PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES: MENUS OF SUPPORT](#)

[FY25 CENTER-BASED PRIORITY KEY PRACTICES: MENUS OF SUPPORT](#)

APPENDIX D: SUPPORTS FOR OTHER OEL PRIORITIES

Priority	Universal Supports	Targeted Supports
Language and Early Literacy	ELOF: **Language and Literacy** **Office of Head Start's Planned Language Approach:** • **Background Knowledge** • **Oral Language and Vocabulary** • **Book Knowledge and Print Concepts** • **Alphabet Knowledge and Early Writing** • **Phonological Awareness**	• Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Language and Literacy Development • Language and Literacy (in development)
Early Math	ELOF: **Cognition** **Office of Head Start's Math Learning Trajectories** **Learning and Teaching with Learning Trajectories** **High Five Mathematize: An Early Head Start and Head Start Math Resource Guide**	• Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Cognitive Development • Math (in development)
Supports for Caregivers of Infants and Toddlers		• Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Social and Emotional Development • Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Cognitive Development • Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Language and Literacy Development

Priority	Universal Supports	Targeted Supports
Practice Based Coaching		● Practice Based Coaching (in development)
Social Emotional Well Being (SEWB)- SEL for Children & Adults, Trauma Informed Practices (TIP), etc.	ELOFs: **Approaches to Learning** and **Social and Emotional Development**	● Pyramid Model Tier 1 ● Pyramid Model Tier 2 ● Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators: Supporting Social and Emotional Development ● Trauma Informed Practices (TIP) ● Conscious Discipline ● Adult SEL
		● Leadership Cohort
		● Play
	ELOF: **Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development**	

APPENDIX E: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When using QIA funds for Professional Development, programs must use approved DDOE training entities, unless the trainer has the required education and expertise to offer high-quality training and proof of credentials are provided.

The approved DDOE Training entities are as follows:

- **Bertelsen Education**

- **Better Kid Care (Penn State)**

- **Bridging Child Development**

- **Care Courses**

- **ChildCare Education Institute**

- **ChildCareEd – Online Courses**

- **Child Care Lounge**

- **ContinuEd**

- **Cox Campus- Language, literacy, Trauma Informed Practices, and more**

- **Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) Professional Development Registry**

- **Head Start- Individualized Professional Development (iPD)**

- **H&H Training**

- **DOE's Professional Development Management System (PDMS)**

  - To access PDMS courses, users will need an EdAccess Account and a Schoology Account.

  - **Follow these instructions** to request these accounts.

- **Professional Preparation Early Childhood Education (PPECE)- Courses available via Del Tech**

- **ProSolutions**

- **Smart Horizons**

- **Teaching Strategies/Quorum**

- **Teachstone Home – Teachstone**

- Additional community-based workshops from Sponsoring Organizations are available on the **DIEEC Professional Development Registry** or can be requested through the Sponsoring Organization, using the Course Catalog found on the DIEEC website.

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APPENDIX F: 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 background check form, 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.

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) – the Framework is grounded in a comprehensive body of research about what young children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. It describes how children progress across key areas of learning and development and specifies learning outcomes in these areas. This information will help adults better understand what they should be doing to provide effective learning experiences that support important early learning outcomes.

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 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 G: CONTACT INFORMATION

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Learning (OEL)		
Office of Early Learning	General support	**early.learning@doe.k12.de.us**
Director of the Office of Early Learning	Dawn Alexander	**dawn.alexander@doe.k12.de.us**
State-Funded Early Care and Education	Takeisha Edmonds	**Takeisha.Edmonds@doe.k12.de.us**
Quality Improvement Awards	Takeisha Edmonds	**Takeisha.Edmonds@doe.k12.de.us**
Teaching Strategies GOLD/SmartTeach	Brittany Hazzard Kelly McDowell	**BrittanyHazzard@doe.k12.de.us** **Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us**
Delaware HelpLine (must have user ID ready)		1-888-352-4653
Delaware ECE Portal	General support or Kelly McDowell	**Support@Welsfoundation.org** 302-549-4212 **Kelly.McDowell@doe.k12.de.us**
DEEDS Early Learning	General support	**Deedsearlylearning@doe.k12.de.us** 302-735-4236

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Intervention		
Ages & Stages Questionnaires	Developmental Screening Help Desk	**de.screens@doe.k12.de.us**
	Jenny Grady	**jenny.grady@doe.k12.de.us**

Delaware Department of Education, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL)		
OCCL	General support	**occl.doe@doe.k12.de.us**
Main office or to file a complaint New Castle County		302-892-5800

Kent and Sussex Counties		302-739-5487
Background checks	Identigo helpline	844-539-5541

Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, & Their Families		
Report Child Abuse and Neglect		800-292-9582
Child Crisis Hotline		800-969-4357
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultations	General support	**DSCYF_ECMHC@state.de.us**
	Mary Moor	**Mary.Moor@state.de.us** 302-256-9308

Delaware Health and Social Services		
Purchase of Care	Purchase of Care mailbox	**POCresource@delaware.gov**
New Castle County		302-255-9670
Kent County		302-857-5037
Sussex County		302-515-3116
Escalated concerns	Thomas Hall	**Thomas.Hall@delaware.gov** 302-255-9605

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) **www.dieec.udel.edu** The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood supports continuous quality improvement in a variety of ways, including professional learning, technical assistance, and Quality Improvement Planning.	
Professional Development	**ecinstitute@udel.edu** 302-831-3239
Technical Assistance	**ecinstitute@udel.edu** 302-831-3239

Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC)   **https://ecic.desu.edu/**

The Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC) at Delaware State University supports early childhood educators with scholarships, CDA training, and personalized career advisement to enhance education across Delaware.	
All inquiries	**ECIC@desu.edu**

MyChildDE	
www.mychildde.org	
My Child DE is a user-friendly website that brings together resources to help families, providers and other caretakers make informed choices for the children of Delaware.	
All inquiries	**mychildde@cffde.org**