

Early Childhood Education Grants Child Eligibility Approval Policy

**Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)
Office of Early Learning and School Readiness**

PURPOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) program is Ohio's state funded preschool for eligible four-year old children. The goal of the program is to ensure that children have access to, and receive, one year of high quality preschool prior to beginning kindergarten. Qualified providers ("Grantees") are awarded funds to provide eligible four-year-olds access to high quality preschool. Grantees shall enroll eligible four-year-olds in their communities and shall not hold slots or create waiting lists for children younger than four years of age.

CHILD ELIGIBILITY

If, on the first day of October of each fiscal year, a Grantee has Early Childhood Education award funds remaining after enrolling eligible four-year-olds, the Grantee may seek approval from the Department of Education to consider using remaining funds for a child(ren) who is at least three years of age, is not of age to be eligible for kindergarten, and whose family earns less than two hundred per cent of the federal poverty guidelines. Pursuant to state law, upon receiving ODE's approval in accordance with this policy, the Grantee may use the remaining award funds to serve eligible three-year-old children.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Grantees will seek approval from the Department via an application on an annual basis. Applications for fiscal year 2020-21 will be accepted for consideration beginning October 1, 2020. The deadline to submit an online application is close of business on October 15, 2020. Approval by the Department is effective through June 30, 2021.

In the 2020-21 application, the Grantee will be required to report to the Department:

1. Number of eligible four-year-old children enrolled in Grantee's program as of October 1, 2020;
2. Amount of Grantee's unallocated ECE award funds;
3. Number of three-year-old children Grantee is seeking approval to enroll and fund using Grantee's remaining ECE award funds; and
4. Evidence showing Grantee's attempts to enroll eligible four-year-old children prior to October 1, 2020. This evidence must include, but is not limited to, an explanation of:
 - a. Grantee's efforts to collaborate with other ECE grant funded providers, Head Start and/or child care programs in the area to identify and enroll eligible four-year-old children;
 - b. Grantee's efforts to identify and engage hard-to-reach families in the area; and
 - c. Additional steps Grantee will take to identify and fill allocated slots with eligible four-year-old children in fiscal year 2021-22.

The Department will review each application and will make decisions on a case-by-case basis. The Department will approve or deny each application in writing. All decisions of the Department are final.