

State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY25) Frequently Asked Questions Updated: 9/25/2024

The Department of Children and Youth is committed to as many families as possible having access to high quality early care and education services. This includes serving 31,000 children through the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Grant to improve outcomes and the number of children ready for success in school and life.

Changes being implemented during SFY 25 are intended to make the application process consistent for all families, maximize systems and technology available to ECE Grantees and to gather real time information about the enrollment and attendance in the ECE program.

Families and children who were or will be determined eligible for ECE services by the grantee prior to October 1, 2024, will be honored.

Any family who preschool-aged child is utilizing Publicly Funded Child Care and Early Childhood Education will need to choose the funding that best meets the needs of their families.

This document is intended to be updated as needed.

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Child Eligibility

Q1. Can I serve a child that does not meet citizenship requirements with ECE Grant funds?

A. No. Children must be verified citizens to receive ECE Grant funding.

Q2. How do I know if a child meets citizenship requirements?

A. Grantees can review the Verification of [Citizenship for Children in the Publicly Funded Child Care Program](#) found in Appendix B of [Ohio Administrative Code 5101:2-16-02](#).

Q3. How will citizenship be verified?

A. For children enrolled prior to 10/1/2024, if the county agency does not already have verification of citizenship through another program, they will reach out to the family for verification. For children enrolled after 10/1/2024, this will become a part of the normal application and verification process with the county agency.

Q4. Do I need to complete a waiver to serve children that are three years of age?

A. No. The ECE Grant no longer requires grantees to request a waiver to serve children three years of age. Grantees can begin serving a child as soon as the child turns three.

Q5. Can families with children that are eligible and enrolled under the ECE Grant still be asked to pay tuition on a sliding scale?

A. Yes. Children from families whose income is between 101 percent and 200 percent of the federal poverty level may be charged a prorated tuition determined by the grantee. Families whose income is at 100 percent of the federal poverty level or below cannot be charged tuition to attend during the ECE funded hours. A child with an IEP; a child placed in Foster or Kinship care with a case plan or family service plan as defined in [ORC 2151.412](#); a child placed in Kinship Care as documented through Kinship Permanency Incentive Program payments; or experiencing homelessness attends the program for ECE Grant hours at no cost to the family (regardless of family income level).

Q6. What do we do with children using ECE programs for AM care, who have an IEP or are foster children and who pays for child care the rest of the day or do we cut services?

A. The family could choose to private pay for the remainder of the day, or they could choose to only attend for the portion of the day that is covered by ECE. The family could also choose to return the ECE slot and attend a different program that accepts child care for a full day. The

county should work with the family on this decision. PFCC and CCCP do not have categorical eligibility for IEP and foster care, so if they do not meet eligibility and qualifying activity requirements the family would have to pay for care the rest of the day if it was required.

Q7. How will the Grantee know the child is eligible for the ECE Grant?

A. The family completes the application and must provide the county with a program that has an available slot. Next, the county will authorize to the family selected ECE grantee. Grantees will see the authorization appear in the TAP system. Note: If the child is eligible for PFCC and the ECE Grant, the family will get a notice that they are eligible for PFCC.

Q8. How do we get paid during the time while the children are being approved?

A: If a child is not eligible for any DCY program, (PFCC, Child Care Choice, or ECE), Payment After Denial (PAD) is available to providers utilizing the TAP system for attendance and is based on the date of application until the date of denial plus five days, as long as payment for PAD has not been issued for the family in the prior 12-months.

For children who are eligible for ECE, providers entering attendance in the TAP system would receive PAD from the application date to the denial date plus five days. The PAD Funding can be reimbursed based on enrollment and attendance requirements and is separate from ECE Grant funding in the CCIP. Programs that do not wish to receive PAD should not enter attendance in the TAP system.

Q9. Can the JFS 1121 applications continue to have parent verbal signatures?

A: After October 1, 2024, all families are encouraged to use the JFS 07200 paper form or the Ohio Benefits Self-Service Portal to apply for eligibility. The JFS 07200 allows for audio signature using an automated phone system and this process will continue to be allowed.

Q10. When a family applies through Ohio Benefits, what is the general timeframe for a family to know if they are eligible?

A. Applications are to be reviewed within 30 days. Families are notified at the end of the 30-day period either via email and their Ohio Benefits' Self Service Portal (SSP) account or via U.S. Postal mail.

Q11. Do I have to wait for the County Agency to determine eligibility before serving the child?

A. It is an ECE Grantees decision to allow the child to enroll before eligibility. If the child has not applied to the county agency, the location may not be paid for ECE services. If the child has applied for ECE through the county and the child is not approved for ECE, the location may receive Payment After Denial (PAD) for the time period that the county was determining

eligibility. The rates entered on the Provider Agreement will determine the PAD payment amount according to [Rule 5101:2-16-10 - Ohio Administrative Code | Ohio Laws](#).

Q11. If a family has a visa and living in my area, are they considered a verified citizen?

A. It is the expectation that the county agency determines if a child meets the citizenship requirements. Prior to 10/1/2024, grantees should send the information to the county agency to review the documents. After 10/1/2024, the family will submit their information to the county agency.

Q12. How does a public school district determine if a child is a verified citizen when it is not a school district requirement to ask?

A. It is the expectation that the county agency determines if a child meets the citizenship requirements. It is not expected for the school district to do so and it is understood that they are not able to request this documentation.

Q13: Why is verified citizenship now a requirement?

A. As we continue down future alignment, state funding cannot be used for non-citizens. Until we confirm services for citizens, this will not change. For public schools, they must serve all children with an Individualized Education Plan. This isn't true for child care and state-funded preschool funding.

Transition to Ohio Benefits and Time Attendance and Payment (TAP) System

Q14. What is the TAP system?

A. The Time Attendance and Payment (TAP) system is the Department of Children and Youth's automated system that currently tracks attendance and calculates payment for the Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) program. DCY is looking to leverage the TAP system to track attendance and generate payments.

Q15. Do all ECE Grantees have to use Ohio Benefits and the TAP system?

A. Yes. All ECE enrollment and eligibility will be completed by the county agency utilizing the Ohio Benefits system. The county agency will link the child's authorization in Ohio Benefits to the ECE Grantee TAP account. ECE Grantees will not have access to Ohio Benefits.

Q16. How do I get access to the TAP system?

A. Grantees must complete a Provider Agreement in OCLQS. Once an eligible early care or education program receives an authorization through the Time, Attendance and Payment (TAP) system a tablet and directions will be sent to the program.

Q17. By signing the Provider Agreement, do we have to offer PFCC?

- A. No. The Provider Agreement is required for:
1. County agencies to authorize a child’s application to a grantee in Ohio Benefits; and
 2. ECE Grantees to utilize the TAP system for attendance purposes. Grantees are not required but are encouraged to serve PFCC children.
 3. There will be an addendum to the PFCC Provider Agreement for Grantees to acknowledge they are using ECE funding only.

Q18. Do we have to enter a customary rate if we do not charge tuition?

A. Yes. The system requires the program to have rates. Grantees should consider the amount of funding received to serve that child. Grantees can refer to the [Weekly Payment Rates for Providers using PFCC](#) for additional information on the State of Ohio’s reimbursement rates for PFCC.

Q19. How do I know if the Provider Agreement is complete?

A. The program will receive an email generated from OCLQS.

Q20. Do previous ODE licensed programs have to complete the ODJFS background check on all staff to proceed with the PFCC Provider Agreement?

A. No. ODJFS background checks are not required if the program only intends to sign the agreement to serve ECE children.

Q21. What do I do with the information that was collected on eligible ECE grant funded children that are currently enrolled?

A. Grantees should be preparing each of their eligible student applications. Each application must include

- [Early Childhood Education Checklist](#) for each application
- Age verification documentation
- Eligibility screening tool or application used
- Required Documentation based on the student's eligibility type

In addition, Grantees should prepare the enrollment spreadsheet. The enrollment spreadsheet provides a checklist of all the applications to serve as a cross-check of applications. Once this is complete, grantees should email their local county agency to determine the preferred method to submit the applications. Please contact earlychildhoodeducation@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov if you did not receive the county contact list. Grantees can also visit [Local Agencies Directory | Job and Family Services \(ohio.gov\)](#) for specific County JFS building location information.

Q22. Does the ECE Grantee need the family to sign a release form before submitting the student application to county agency?

A. No. When the family completed the application process with the Grantee, they signed up to receive funding from the state of Ohio. That information is shared with the state through a data collection system. Ohio Benefits is replacing EAS and EMIS. The [Early Childhood Education Grantee Protecting Personal Information](#) has step-by-step instructions on how to send encrypted documents. After October 1, 2024, families are encouraged to use the JFS 07200 or the Ohio Benefits Self-Service Portal to apply for eligibility directly with the county agency.

Q23. Is the Early Childhood Education Checklist required for each student application?

A. Yes. The ECE Checklist supports the county in processing student applications.

Q24. Is the signature page of the IEP adequate proof of eligibility?

A. Yes. Section 15 of the IEP will have the parent signature and date and child's name/ID number at the top. This is the only page that needs to be submitted to the counties pre-October 1, 2024. **After** October 1, 2024, families will apply through the county agency JFS 07200 paper application or Ohio Benefits Self Service Portal. Families will need to complete the child care section, provide income verification, and a copy of the signature page of the IEP.

Q25. Will Ohio Benefits process all preschool applications for a program?

A. No. Grantees should only send families that are utilizing ECE grant funds and that are counted in their ECE Grant slot total.

Q26. Does a family that was determined eligible for ECE by a Grantee prior to October 1, 2024, have to complete an application in Ohio Benefits?

A. No. County agencies will enter previously enrolled ECE Grant student applications into Ohio Benefits. The county may reach out to families for additional information if required.

Q27. How does a family enroll a child that meets the family income exceptions (IEP, foster/kinship care, EI Exiter, or experience homelessness) apply for the ECE Grant in Ohio Benefits?

A. Families will enroll with the same process as a family meeting the income requirements, however, will need to provide proof of the exception. These documents include a copy of the signature page of the IEP; an active case plan or family service plan as defined in ORC 2151.412; or a child placed in in a placement receiving KPIP or receiving Special Education Services. Families that are experiencing homelessness will follow the prompts in the system.

Q28. Will the TAP system be able to automatically split hours between PFCC and ECE?

A. No. For the transition year, if the child is receiving PFCC and ECE, ECE attendance will not be captured in the TAP system.

Q29. Will Ohio Benefits and EMIS have an interface?

A. No. For the transition year EMIS reporting will still be required by the grantees as they have in past years.

Q30. What if a family reports that they have already completed an Ohio Benefits application in the past and are receiving benefits?

A. The family can submit another application and the county will take proper action accordingly. If they have an open case for SNAP and need to apply for PFCC/CCC or ECE eligibility a new application will be required to explore the new benefit type for eligibility. If the case is not active with no open benefits a new case will be created to explore eligibility.

Q31. Will a child show up in a Grantee's TAP system as eligible, but not enrolled at the program?

A. An authorization means the child is eligible and wishes to attend this program. At this time, they are considered enrolled. If they are not enrolled, the family should contact the county to update their provider.

Q32. Will families have to use the TAP system for attendance purposes?

A. ECE Grantees will begin to use the TAP system for all ECE Grant funded children. Grantees should use another method for attendance while waiting for children to be authorized to their program in the TAP system. EMIS reporting programs will be required to have ECE Grant funded children in the TAP system but will not be required to collect attendance through TAP

for this SFY 2025. Additional information around attendance for EMIS reporting programs will be provided soon.

Q33. What is KinderConnect?

A. KinderConnect is an internet-based software system that enables early care and education programs licensed by Ohio to collect attendance electronically for families receiving assistances from the Department of Children and Youth for early care and education funding.

Q34. Will we receive a report in KinderConnect that tells us who our eligible children are by location, so that we know which children to complete ELA assessments for?

A. Programs can run authorization reports in KinderConnect. Children in the ECE program will have a different pay source code that allows the program to determine which children would be required to have the ELA. Pay Source Code 363 is the only code currently used for ECE eligibility. These reports are specific to each site location and must be pulled for each. It is important to note, if a site location is serving a child that is also eligible for PFCC or Child Care Choice, they will not have an authorization and will not appear on these reports. Programs will be required to monitor those children manually.

Multiple Funding Streams

Q35. Can a child receive ECE Grant funding and Head Start funding during the same hours?

A. No. Head Start funding can be used to provide wrap-around services to extend the half day but cannot bill for the same hours.

Q36. Can a child receive ECE Grant funding and Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC)?

A. No. PFCC and ECE cannot be authorized for the same child. The family should utilize the maximum benefits through PFCC in a high-quality program to meet the child's needs. A child authorized for PFCC that does not have a highly rated program available that meets the family's need may be enrolled in ECE and PFCC to meet the full need of the family and to provide high quality preschool services to the child for a portion of the day.

Example: A child attends a half-day preschool program at the local school district and is transported to a bronze or unrated center or family-based provider for the second half of the day. Both programs the child attends may not be highly rated.

Q37. Can a child use ECE slots at the same or two different locations?

A. No. A child can only be enrolled in one ECE slot at the same time during the grant year. The only scenario that allows a child to hold two ECE slots at the same time is in the case of shared parenting, where they may have one ECE slot per case.

Q38. Can an ECE grantee that uses PFCC offer a 9- or 10-month calendar for ECE and use full time PFCC for the remaining months in the grant year?

A. No. The chart below outlines the only situations where PFCC and ECE can be utilized for the same child.

Multiple Funding Streams Table

Funding Source	PFCC Full Time	PFCC Part Time (26 hours or less)	Child Care Choice	ECE Grant	Head Start
PFCC Full Time	No	Criteria 1	No	Criteria 1	Criteria 2
PFCC Part Time (26 hours or less)	Criteria 1	Criteria 1	No	Criteria 1	Criteria 2
Child Care Choice	No	No	No	Criteria 1	Criteria 2
ECE Grant	Criteria 1	Criteria 1	Criteria 1	No	Criteria 2
Head Start	Criteria 2	Criteria 2	Criteria 2	Criteria 2	As determined by Head Start

Criteria

Children may not have a combination of more than one of the following programs at a time to the same program: PFCC, Child Care Choice, and ECE.

Criterion #1 Children may have a combination of PFCC or Child Care Choice and ECE or PFCC at separate programs when one program is highly rated, and the other program is not highly rated but meets the needs of the family, typically due to the need for non-traditional care or the limited availability of highly rated programs. Hours for these funding sources may not overlap.

Criterion #2 Hours for these funding sources may not overlap.

Please note, shared parenting exceptions are not captured in the table above. If a child lives in two separate homes with separate caretakers who are both eligible, each individual case will follow the eligibility outlined above.

Grantees using local funding sources should follow the guidelines of the local initiative.

Q39. If ECE was supposed to be a mixed delivery program, how do these new eligibility rules support that?

A. The goal of DCY is to focus the funding streams on the needs of the family, regardless of setting type. ECE eligibility is being clarified to meet the needs of non-working families or families meeting the categories of eligibility. We hope that any high-quality early care and education provider will consider serving this population, but we recognize that not all businesses or program structures align with a part-day. DCY is committed to providing services to families needing full-day, full-year to meet their families need when they have a qualifying activity or are a public paying family. DCY will continue to work to increase base rates for programs participating in Publicly Funded Child Care. DCY hopes that the full day, full year pilot will cover non-working families with additional services that they may not have access to today.

Q40. Why can't Head Start be used for wrap around services with ECE and PFCC?

A. It is our hope that Head Start providers will access PFCC before pairing ECE with HS services. HS has demonstrated additional requirements and services consistently that are paid for by the federal government for 3 or 6 hours per day. It is unlikely that ECE programming would be offered for the remainder of the day, if in fact the child is receiving full day programming.

Attendance

Q41. How will attendance be collected?

A. Grantees will use their own system to collect ECE Grant attendance hours between July 1, 2024, and when children are authorized in their TAP system. Once the child is authorized in TAP, the Grantee should transition the attendance to that system.

EMIS users will not be required to use the TAP system for attendance for SFY 2025. There will be more information on how attendance will be collected for EMIS users soon.

The TAP system can only record a child on PFCC, Child Care Choice, or a child using ECE funds. Grantees that have a child that utilizes multiple funding sources must create a customized schedule in TAP that will deduct the ECE hours. Grantees will be responsible for continuing to use their own system to collect the ECE hours for those children enrolled in multiple programs. Monitoring of attendance hours will be conducted during the grant year and grantees should expect to provide attendance records at any time. A risk analysis will be completed to determine the random selection of Grantees for review. A grantee must consistently apply its own attendance policy to grant-funded children regarding withdrawal for non-attendance.

Technical assistance will be provided as programs are setting up their TAP equipment and customized schedules.

Enterprise Application System (EAS) and EMIS (Education Management Information System (EMIS))

Q42. Will Child Care Centers, Family Child Care, Chartered Nonpublic Schools, and Community Schools use the Enterprise Application System (EAS) for data reporting?

A. No. The EAS system will not be used for data reporting. All grantees will utilize Ohio Benefits for enrollment and TAP for attendance. Teacher data will be collected in the site location form that is uploaded into the CCIP funding application.

Q43. Will Public School Districts, Community Schools, Educational Service Centers, and Joint Vocational Schools use EMIS for data collection?

A. Yes, however, for minimal data collection than in years past. ECE Grant funded children will need to be coded E so they are included in an organization's overall preschool count.

Q.44. How will EMIS users know how to code a family's poverty level in EMIS if the grantee does not have the paperwork?

A. DCY is working on the best process to share data accurately and efficiently. Additional information is coming soon.

Q45. Does an EMIS user have to record attendance in EMIS and TAP system?

A. No. During this transition year attendance should be recorded in EMIS and the system used by the program. EMIS users will need to ensure that their ECE Grant funded students are in the TAP system under their Provider Agreement but will not be required to collect attendance in TAP.

Q46. Who will create the SSID for the ECE Grant funded child?

A. The SSID is generated by the Ohio Benefits system when the child is determined eligible for any early care and education program

Q47. How do I find the child’s Statewide Student Identifier (SSID)?

- A. The SSID will be in the TAP/KinderConnect System. To find a child’s SSID.
1. Click on Child and the Search
 2. Results will populate in a table
 3. The SSID will appear next to the child’s name in search results table.

Early Learning Assessment (ELA)

Q48. What is the Priority Set of skills, knowledge, and behaviors that must be reported?

A. There is a revised set of Priority Items for the 2024-25 school year. The fifteen (15) Priority Items are marked with a star in the [2024-2025 Early Learning Assessment](#).

Q49. What is the process to report ratings in the fall and spring?

A. Programs will collect scores on a spreadsheet template and upload the spreadsheet to a secure portal. Details about the process are posted on the [Ohio K12 Help ELA Score Entry and Reporting webpage](#).

Q50. When will we complete assessments?

A. ECE Grantees and Preschool Special Education funded children must be assessed at least twice a year using the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) during the following administration windows:

Fall:	Aug 15 - Nov 14
Spring:	Feb 15 - May 14

Q51. When will we report scores?

A. Programs receiving the ECE Grant and/or Preschool Special Education funding must report ELA scores twice per year. Reporting can begin during the assessment administration window and ends approximately two weeks after the assessment window closes. The fall reporting window is August 15 – December 6. The spring reporting window is February 15 – May 30.