

Early Childhood Education Grants Child Eligibility Approval Policy

**Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020)
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 2019-20 will be accepted for consideration beginning October 1, 2019. The deadline to submit an online application is close of business on October 15, 2019. Approval by the Department is effective through June 30, 2020.

In the 2019-20 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, 2019;
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, 2019. 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 2020-21.

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.

ENROLLMENT REPORTING

On December 1, 2019, all Grantees will report ECE enrollment numbers by age to the Department. Additional enrollment reporting may also be required monthly thereafter. Once the Department reviews the 2019-20 ECE enrollment data, decisions will be made regarding ECE awards and slot allocations for fiscal year 2020-21. To meet the goal of providing one-year of preschool access to all eligible children, the Department may reduce a Grantee's total award/slot allocation in fiscal year 2020-21 and these slots may be distributed to other areas with need. The Department will communicate the process it will use in awarding fiscal year 2020-21 funds and slots to Grantees in Spring 2020.