

Frequently Asked Questions
Preschool Expansion Program

Compliance

Question	Answer
Can snack be offered as a center?	Yes, please refer to the sample schedule on the PDG website. The ECERS requires additional free choice time if snack is offered as a center.
ISBE lets us spend other grants with a substantially approvable grant, is this grant the same?	No, federal funds may only be expended with an approved grant.
Can you give written example of monitoring plan?	Please see the sample plan on the PDG website -- http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/pdg-eg-grants.htm
Can the free workers that are paid by the department of human services for TANF be used as in-kind.	No, because these workers are paid by federal TANF funds, they may not be used as in-kind.
If our program is not at GOLD since it is new, how are we supposed to attain a circle? What is our role in Lead, Learn, Excel?	<p>If your program does not yet have a Gold Circle of Quality at each site, your focus should be on obtaining a Gold Circle of Quality.</p> <p>All programs are required to send an instructional leader to participate in Lead. Learn. Excel, but it is not required to pursue the Preschool Teaching and Learning Award of Excellence.</p>
Will attaining an award in our PFA be sufficient?	<p>We encourage programs to pursue continuous quality improvement and strive for an Award of Excellence for all of your programs, including Preschool for All.</p> <p>For compliance for this grant, we expect that your programs will earn an Award of Excellence for at least one site</p>
If a staff member who is paid from Head Start (Federal grant funds) and they donate time/service to PEG (i.e. provide vision and hearing screenings) does this count as in-kind?	No, because these are federal funds, they may not be counted as local match. Staff members cannot volunteer or donate time.
What if we have a classroom that does not currently have a circle of quality due to being a new partner-classroom within an elementary school. How would this impact application for AoE?	<p>We recognize that some programs are in buildings that do not yet have an ExceleRate Circle of Quality. The priority is to obtain a Gold Circle of Quality for those sites.</p> <p>Even if your site does not have a Circle of Quality yet, we still encourage programs to work towards improving quality through the AoE cohorts. These cohorts are supports and professional development for program improvement</p>
Do we need to create a form to track these contributions. Is there any other documentation on the ISBE site regarding in-kind?	There is not a specific form for documenting in-kind on an ongoing basis. This information needs to be reflected in your egrant in IWAS.

Question	Answer
Is afternoon snack mandated? We do a morning snack and lunch is late.	Yes, please see the sample schedule on the PDG website -- http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/pdg-eg-grants.htm . All programs are required to offer breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. We are not requiring use of CACFP, but we do encourage it
Is the USDA CACFP payment for children's food acceptable as it is federal money?	No, federal funds must not be reported as local matching funds.
Do we know the amount of in-kind that we must collect?	We are not mandating a specific amount of in-kind contributions per program. Our goal is to reach the state's local matching funds commitment – the more in-kind provided by each program, the closer we are to our state target.
Accommodations on #40...list specific ones as outlined in IEPs or general overall accommodations that MAY be provided if necessary	Assessors will be looking at the individual IEP's.
Can you provide additional guidance on the length of time for breakfast, snack, lunch?	Please look at the sample schedule on the PDG website. www.isbe.com/earlychi
Will we be getting a schedule for the day the parent interviews will need to be done so that the parents will know when to be available?	Parents may be scheduled during the regularly scheduled times of the assessment (8:30 – 4) and the assessor should be advised of the time that the parents are available.
Some of these items take a considerable amount of time to develop and implement. Will this be taken into account when we are visited?	The goal of monitoring is to support continuous quality improvement – findings during monitoring will allow us to target technical assistance and support to programs.
What is the minimum ECERS score that is expected?	5 or above on each item is the goal. Anything under 5 would be addressed in the continuous quality improvement plan.

Documentation and Data

Question	Answer
Can you clarify-- we need to keep a copy of the income verification documents on file? We were explicitly told we were not required to keep these on file, just the signature and date of the person who checked these documents. Did that change?	Yes, there may have been miscommunication previously about this. Income verification documents must be kept on file for each family. However, the income verification must be waived for homeless families. It is referred to as "other documentation" below. The district/school homeless liaison should assist in verifying that the family meets the McKinney-Vento definition and income verification would be waived. http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/guidance.pdf

Question	Answer
	<p>G-7. What are a school’s responsibilities for enrolling homeless children and youth? A school selected on the basis of a “best interest determination” (see G-1 and G-2) must immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce the records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, birth certificates, or other documentation). The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic or other records.</p> <p>http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html#sec721 (C) ENROLLMENT- (i) The school selected in accordance with this paragraph shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation.</p>
Will the preschool expansion children be assigned a child ID number through ISBE?	Yes, all children in the Preschool Expansion Program need to be enrolled in the ISBE Student Information System.
We are not an ISBE school. Will we be required to register children enrolled in Pre-K Expansion in SIS?	Yes, please contact the Early Childhood Division. 217-524-4835
Lesson Plans -- can they be electronic or do they want paper copies?	Yes, they can be electronic. You will need to show the assessors.
How often does nutrition education need to be on lesson plans, currently it's once a month. Does it need to be a cooking experience?	Nutrition education should be offered on a regular basis – once per month is sufficient.

McKinney-Vento

Question	Answer
Is access to transportation to school a requirement of the McKinney-Vento Act for children in a PFA classroom?	If a district does not provide transportation for children who are non-homeless, they do not have to provide it for children who are homeless. However, our Lead Area Liaisons see it as a barrier to education and they do work with districts to provide transportation to relieve that barrier. With the new ESEA Reauthorization, there are some added perks to preschool, one being that preschool will now have a “school of origin”, which was not stated in federal law before. <i>Please see additional McKinney-Vento information below.</i>

Personnel

Question	Answer
Can you provide a template for the individual Professional Development Plan	There is a template available in the Preschool for All implementation manual. Another example is available in Lead. Learn. Excel.
Can the mental health consultant be a school social worker or psychologist?	Yes, although this is not required.
Typically a parent educator in the birth to 3 yr. has a caseload of under 20. Setting the caseload at 100 per parent educator is concerning, as goal setting and monitoring of goals is time intensive. Any schedules or additional information on this would be appreciated	We recognize that we have limited resources for parent educators. The parent educator role in birth to three programs is generally much more time intensive than what we are expecting here. Focus on developing strong systems for serving parents, including active referral to partners.
Parent Educator and Education Manager--What are the qualifications for this position?	Please refer to the sample job descriptions on the PDG website -- http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/pdg-eg-grants.htm
Will there be funds available in the future to have a social worker? It seems like a lot of the expectations of the parent educator could fall on the shoulders of a social worker. Thanks	Programs may choose to structure budgets in whichever way best fits programmatic needs, as long as compliance elements are met. There are not additional funds available.
As a school district we have a salary schedule approved by District and Union. Do we still need to have separate salaries listed?	Yes, please provide a copy of your salary scale and the individual salaries for each staff member.
We can not remove files from the site due to DCFS requirements. Will we get a list of the 7 files before the visit so we can make copies of them?	If needed, you may make physical or electronic copies of the files on the date of the assessor visit. If you have additional questions, please contact Jenny Metcalf in the Early Childhood Division at 217.524.4835 or jmetcalf@isbe.net

Eligibility

Question	Answer
I enrolled a foster student in the spring and over the summer was adopted. Is that ok? I obviously don't want to throw that student out:	Yes, the child was in a high-priority category at the time that eligibility was determined.
We could be full but we are holding those spaces open as suggested. How long do we need to wait and what is the date you are expecting them to be filled? Thanks	We've asked programs to be fully enrolled by October 16, this is the same date as Fall Housing.
Should we be screening with the ESIR tool at the time of the parent interview, or is there a particular time the screenings need to be completed?	Screenings should be ongoing throughout the year as a part of the recruitment process

Parent Involvement

Question	Answer
Will we need a separate policy council, if we have a Head Start policy council or can we join in with them?	No, as long as you have proportional representation of Preschool Expansion parents and the council specifically addresses agenda items related to the Preschool Expansion Program.
Was the expectation to provide an individual family plan told to us at the beginning of this grant period?	Yes, the individual family assessment and goals were indicated in the compliance checklist.
Is an initial home visit required for individual families?	The visits are not required but are recommended.
For the Parent Advisory Council, how many parents per site would you like to be part of the council?	There is no set requirement. Representation on the parent advisory committee should be proportional based on enrollment.

Collaboration

Question	Answer
Can you give examples of the detailed community partner collaboration activities that you were referencing regarding monitoring?	There should be evidence that you are actively collaborating with local partners. For example, how do you partner with your local food pantry to recruit families using the pantry and to connect families in your program to food resources?
Could we encourage expansion grantees to have MOUs with the community based programs in their communities? This would be in addition to a Head start MOU.	We are monitoring for and requiring an MOU with Head Start. However, we absolutely want all early childhood programs within a community to work together and we strongly encourage active, collaborative partnerships between Preschool Expansion grantees and all of the community-based programs in their community.
Can participation in local AOK count for this item #30?	Yes! The AOK network is an excellent collaboration to participate in.

Community Partners

Question	Answer
Are the grantees creating the monitoring plan or are we (community partners) using the Compliance checklist? Is a timeline also a part of this plan.	Grantees are required to develop a monitoring plan, including a timeline. Please see our guidance on the PDG website: http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/preschool/pdg-eg-grants.htm

Websites:

- Lead. Learn. Excel. registration – <http://www.theounce.org/what-we-do/LLE/LLE-signup-form>
- COFI report on recruitment -- http://www.cofionline.org/sites/default/files/Briefings_complete_WEB_3.pdf
- Sample time and effort form -- <http://isbe.net/ea/pdf/checklists/time-and-effort-sub.pdf>
- CACFP Application -- http://isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/cacfp_step3.htm
- CACFP Fact Sheet -- http://isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/cacfp_step3.htm
- ExceleRate Illinois -- www.exceleerateillinoisproviders.com/
- Sample MOU for community-based organizations and LEAs regarding special education services -- <http://www.exceleerateillinoisproviders.com/resources/resources-by-standard?id=52>

McKinney-Vento Information:

<http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/early-childhood.pdf>

Transportation to Early Childhood Programs

LEAs that provide preschool transportation for non-homeless children also must provide comparable transportation services for homeless preschool children (ED, 2004, H-8). ED does not require that transportation be provided to early childhood programs beyond this comparability requirement; however, some school districts use Title I set-aside funds³ to assist with the cost of providing transportation to Title I-funded LEA preschool programs. Other districts collaborate with Head Start, Even Start, or other early childhood providers to provide transportation necessary to enable young children experiencing homelessness to attend SEA- and LEA-administered public preschool programs.

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/guidance.pdf>

H-8. Does McKinney-Vento require an LEA to provide transportation services to homeless children attending preschool?

To the extent an LEA offers a public preschool education, McKinney-Vento requires that homeless children have equal access to that preschool education as provided to non-homeless children. Furthermore, the statute requires that the services provided to homeless children be comparable to those provided to non-homeless children. Thus, if an LEA provides transportation for non-homeless preschool children, it must also provide comparable transportation services for homeless preschool children.