

2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-E-30PA

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Pennsylvania

Assign Program Category (applicant): Children & Families/Education (Use list at end of application)

1. Program Name: Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)
2. Administering Agency: Pennsylvania Departments of Education (PDE) & Public Welfare (DPW)
3. Contact Person (Name and Title): Harriet Dichter, Deputy Secretary
4. Address: 333 Market Street, 6th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17103
5. Telephone Number 717 346-9320
6. FAX Number 717 346-9330
7. E-mail Address hdichter@state.pa.us
8. Web site Address www.dpw.state.pa.us/ServicesPrograms/ChildCareEarlyEd/ and www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

In most states, early childhood programs are organized and managed in piecemeal categories -- child care, early learning, preschool, family support and Early Intervention for children with developmental delays and disabilities -- which results in little to no coordination among programs and less effective provision of services to families. Pennsylvania created a unique, sustainable, and replicable Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) as a consolidated office of both the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare, with a single unified staff and coordinated programming across welfare and education, to promote opportunities for all Pennsylvania children and families by building systems and providing supports to create a quality early education continuum for children from birth to age five.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

OCDEL was created in January 2007.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

OCDEL was created to develop a seamless system of quality early learning opportunities from birth to age five so that our children will be prepared for school and achieve success in school and in life. The stakes are high: children in 70 percent of Pennsylvania's counties are at moderate to high risk of school failure.¹ More than one-third (37 percent) of Pennsylvania's children under age five live in

¹ "Program Reach and County Risk Assessment: State Fiscal Year 2006-2007," Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Available at www.pde.state.pa.us, click "Pre K-12," then "Early Childhood," then "Early Childhood Research"

low-income families.² Early childhood programs of high quality in their design and implementation make a dispositive difference in children’s short term school achievement and attendance and in their long-term life success, based on over 30 years of documented high quality research.

Typically early childhood programs and public sector oversight for them has been divided into the following categories: programs providing a “care” orientation, i.e. child care; programs providing an early learning orientation, i.e. pre-kindergarten, Head Start; programs providing a “family support” approach, i.e. Nurse Family Partnership, home visiting; and programs addressing children with special needs, i.e. Early Intervention for children with developmental delays and disabilities. This has resulted in multiple state governance structures typically involving the state’s education as well as human service agency; confusion to families and difficulties accessing necessary services; inefficient use of public investments; and conflicting standards for quality in the programs, including public investment in programs that do not contribute to quality outcomes for children.

In order to rectify these longstanding problems, Pennsylvania created the Office of Child Development and Early Learning as an integrated single office of both the Departments of Public Welfare and Education, and houses all of its early childhood programs in this Office, consolidating its staffing, planning, accountability, and financial resources in order to overcome the historic and problematic fragmentation typically associated with these programs. The goal is a well-coordinated continuum of early childhood programs that respond to the diverse needs of Pennsylvania families, with a common core of quality standards and program design; effective coordination of the continuum of programs in order to leverage public resources and respond to family needs; and strong public accountability in order to assure that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s programs are structured to achieve a long-lasting benefit.

Prior to the creation of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Pennsylvania’s early childhood initiatives were not smoothly coordinated, not maximizing use of limited resources, or effectively documenting the positive impact of the programs.

Because programs serving children’s early learning were housed in different offices within the Departments of Education and Public Welfare, there was not adequate coordination among programs, which caused frustration among families accessing services and wasted resources.

There was also the continued perception that child care, which is the largest publicly-funded early learning program in the Commonwealth, was simply babysitting and a way to keep families working, rather than also a way to prepare our young children for school and life.

Programs did not have a common language amongst themselves to address child development or school readiness, which made it difficult for programs to communicate and collaborate, and more difficult to effectively prepare children who access multiple programs for school.

The final problem that had to be overcome was lack of adequate communication, planning and mission between the early childhood and K-12 communities.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

Groundwork for creating the Office of Child Development and Early Learning began in 2004.

- **July 2004:** Pennsylvania creates two new funding streams for early childhood education: the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and the Accountability Block Grants (funds to

² 2000 U.S. Census. Low income defined as earning 200% or less of the federal poverty level.

school districts to improve school performance, could be used for 11 options; three of which focus on early childhood – pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, and reduced class size grades K-3).

- **September 2004:** The Office of Child Development is created in the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) to oversee all of that Department's early childhood programs. These include Child Care Works subsidy, Early Intervention birth – 3, Child Care Certification (i.e. licensure), child care quality improvement (i.e. Keystone STARS), and family support programs. In addition, the Deputy Secretary for the Office of Child Development was also appointed the Policy Director for the Department Education, which managed the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program and Accountability Block Grant funds used for early childhood education, creating a link between DPW and PDE early learning services for children under age five. The Policy Director was also charged with policy oversight for the Department of Education's Early Intervention program for children from 3 to 5 years of age.
- **December 2004:** Pennsylvania publishes Early Learning Standards for Pre-Kindergarten, to be used by all early childhood programs, including child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, and Early Intervention.
- **December 2004:** Pennsylvania launches Keystone STARS statewide, a quality improvement and rating system for child care programs.
- **July 2005:** Pennsylvania creates the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality System, which provides regional professional development and continuous quality improvement opportunities to child care staff and is currently expanding its reach to all early childhood professionals served by the OCDEL programs.
- **July 2005:** Pennsylvania awards Performance Grants for Inclusive Practices, a competitive grant, for Preschool Early Intervention Programs to increase the number of children with developmental delays/disabilities included in typical early childhood programs such as child care and Head Start.
- **January 2006:** In partnership with private foundations, Pennsylvania pilots the Infant Toddler Mental Health Initiative in three regions in the state to help child care professionals effectively address behavioral concerns among infants and toddlers and understand and access early intervention services when appropriate.
- **September 2006:** Keystone STARS is open to Head Start programs
- **January 2007:** Pennsylvania creates the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) within the Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare, bringing together all of the Commonwealth's early childhood programs in one management and governance structure with a single staff and the opportunity to assure common standards, monitoring, and other activities to more effectively serve families and efficiently leverage public resources.
- **January 2007:** First "Program Reach and County Risk Assessment" report published to identify the degree to which children throughout Pennsylvania are at risk of school failure and how well OCDEL programs are reaching those children, both in terms of numbers served and public investment in those who are being served. This study finds that there are at-risk children throughout Pennsylvania and that quality programs are only available to about 1/3 of these children. This report is also organized to provide OCDEL with a method for fund distribution for its programs to target resources in a fair, equitable way to communities based on the risk factors for the children and the current availability of quality early childhood programs.
- **May 2007:** Planning phase for the Early Learning Network, a standard system of child assessment and data evaluation to be used in all of the OCDEL programs, begins. This system will assure that children are not subject to multiple assessment, will provide information to parents about their children's development, will assist OCDEL in organizing technical

assistance and professional development to improve programs, and will help document the impact of the public investment in the OCDEL programs. The Early Learning Network will be the first of its kind in the nation as it will apply across all early childhood programs and not just one single program.

- **June 2007:** OCDEL unifies child care subsidy services under the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agencies. Previously TANF families received child care assistance through the County Assistance Offices (CAO).
- **July 2007:** Pennsylvania approves new funding stream for full day kindergarten (Full Day Kindergarten Supplemental) and creates Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, a quality pre-kindergarten initiative for 3 & 4 year olds across the Commonwealth, that draws upon the full range of providers who are associated with OCDEL.
- **July 2007:** Established the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) as consistent monitoring tool among Keystone STARS, Head Start and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts Programs

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

OCDEL crosses departmental and program boundaries to provide the best services possible from birth to age five. Creation of OCDEL has:

- Maximized resources and expertise within state government relating to early childhood education
- Raised the profile of early education and care in Pennsylvania among state government, the media, legislators, and the general public
- Enabled Pennsylvania to create a quality early education continuum from birth to five

Pennsylvania is one of a handful of states that has taken on the complex and significant work of governance of its early childhood programs, and its solution is unique among those few states that have tackled this issue. In the few other states, programs were transferred either to the human services or education agency or the state created a stand-alone early childhood department. The Pennsylvania solution leverages the additional resources of its public welfare program, which also houses the Medicaid, Mental Health, and Child Welfare programs—all of which provide necessary and significant linkages for early childhood. For example, OCDEL has played a leadership role in working with these programs to establish use of a common child screening instrument for infants and toddlers to assure early detection of child development concerns in all of its own programs as well as the child welfare program. In FY 09-10, the Medical Assistance program plans to improve its rate-setting in order to assure that pediatricians are also using this common screening tool. While this may seem like a commonsense approach to identifying the needs of vulnerable young children, the linkage between OCDEL and the rest of the human services agencies enabled this to occur along with OCDEL's position as the government's designated child development leader. Likewise, the resources of its public education department are also used in this model, providing an opportunity for meaningful work to address traditionally difficult issues of transition for children into the traditional public education system and meaningful work to assure a smooth flow of standards, curriculum and teacher preparation and support from early childhood throughout high school. For example, the early learning standards for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners and first and second graders that OCDEL has created are firmly and appropriately tied to the Education Department's third grade academic standards and expectations. This could not have happened without a strong connection between OCDEL and the rest of the education agency.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The creation of the office was budget neutral. Staff was joined from the Department of Public Welfare (159 staff) and the Department of Education (18 staff). In July 2007, the Department of Public Welfare received an additional complement position for Fiscal Year 2007-2008 for child care oversight. With the new complement position, to date, OCDEL has a complement of 178 staff.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

OCDEL's total administrative budget is \$26,324,620. The amount includes \$13,117,202 for salaries and benefits and \$13,207,418 for operational expenses including subcontracts for information technology system development. The total appropriations associated with the office are over \$1.4 billion.

16. How is the program funded?

The program receives funding from several federal funding streams, including the Child Care Development Fund Block Grant, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Block Grant, Social Services Block Grant, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, restricted revenue streams, Medical Assistance, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including appropriations through both the Departments of Education and Public Welfare.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

Executive Board Resolution dated February 20, 2007 created the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks (PELICAN) is a single integrated information system that allows OCDEL to focus on quality and provides easily accessible information for Pennsylvania parents about early learning programs and services. PELICAN supports:

- Child Care Works for subsidized child care services, including online client access to apply for services;
- Provider Certification for licensing of child care providers, including online provider access to update information;
- Early Learning Services for quality initiatives including PA Pre-K Counts and Keystone STARS;
- Early Learning Network for child based assessments and outcomes (development phase);
- Early Intervention for management of these services.

Over time, PELICAN will help Pennsylvania to measure program, service, and provider performance as it relates to progress and outcomes of children participating in early childhood programs.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes. Governor Ed Rendell established the Office of Child Development and Early Learning as part of his administration's view that early childhood learning is a foundational element of children's long-

term education and life success, and that the public sector can and should be creative and non-bureaucratic in its approach to solving the problems confronting its citizens.

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No other state has tackled its governance for early childhood in this way. A few states have created new agencies outside of their public education or human services agency. A few states have consolidated some early childhood programs in either their education or human services agencies.

Only Pennsylvania has included the full panoply of early childhood programs. Specifically, those states that have created either stand-alone new agencies or moved programs into either education or human service departments, have typically excluded their programs for children with special needs (Early Intervention for children birth to three, and three to five) and their family support programs (i.e. Nurse Family Partnership). Pennsylvania's solution is broader and more systemic in the scope of programs it is bringing together.

Further, the Pennsylvania solution is highly efficient use of public resources. Not only are all the staff in a single administrative and management structure, but it did this in a cost-neutral way. And its linkages with both public welfare and education allows the organization to uniquely build its comprehensive early childhood programming with close attention to the expectations for children school outcomes as well as close connection to the human and health services that these vulnerable young children need to thrive.

Finally, the Pennsylvania solution was accomplished through executive branch action and can be accomplished in other states through similar actions.

To learn more about the approaches throughout the country, please see <http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org/Meetings&Calls/ConfCall%2012507/ConferenceCallGovernanceResourceBrief.doc>

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The establishment of the Office is complete and the establishment of the core continuum of early childhood programs has been accomplished. As an innovator in building a strong system for early childhood education and learning, OCDEL has outlined several key activities in the coming year. Some of the actions that OCDEL plans to take in 2008-2009:

- **Quality program design.** OCDEL has commissioned an independent evaluator to determine if Pennsylvania's early learning standards effectively align from infant – 3rd grade.
- **Quality implementation and coordination.** OCDEL is implementing consistent monitoring tools among OCDEL programs.
- **Meeting the diverse needs of families.** OCDEL will 1) deepen its reach and risk study to include all OCDEL programs and 2) provide parents with online search features for child care assistance.
- **Maximizing resources.** OCDEL will convene a task force to assure programs can most effectively access and coordinate multiple funding streams in early childhood programs.
- **Documenting positive impact and building accountability into the program.** OCDEL will continue work on creating a standard system of assessing child outcomes across all OCDEL programs and creating a data system that provides the big picture of how we are serving Pennsylvania's children and families and what we are missing.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program’s effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The creation of OCDEL has made it possible to make progress on quality implementation and coordination:

- Pennsylvania is consistently providing quality early childhood programs to more children as a result of this effort. In 2002-03 about 18% of the Commonwealth’s children had access to a quality early learning program. In the 2006-07 year, this number rose to 38%. Children served by selected OCDEL programs FY 2002-03 versus Governor Budget FY 08-09:

Program	FY 02-03	FY 08-09 ¹
ABG Class Size Reduction (K-3rd Grade)	Did not exist	18,887 ²
Child Care Works		
TANF	33,939	29,020
Former TANF	20,000	38,713
Low Income	45,908	60,114
TOTAL (monthly average)	99,847	127,847
Early Intervention		
Birth to 3 Program	22,020	32,689
3 to 5 Program	33,726	44,976
Full Day Kindergarten		
ABG Full Day Kindergarten	Did not exist	56,939 ²
ABG Full Day Kindergarten Supplement	Did not exist	6,377 ²
All Full Day Kindergarten ³	42,015	77,505 ²

Program	FY 02-03	FY 08-09 ¹
Head Start		
Federal Head Start	30,986	35,372 ²
Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program	Did not exist	5,610
Keystone STARS	45,745	170,936
Nurse Family Partnership	3,092	4,287
Pre-K		
School Based Pre-K and K4 ⁴	2,684	10,456 ²
ABG Pre-K	Did not exist	4,155 ²
PA Pre-K Counts	Did not exist	12,000

¹ Fiscal Year End Goal or Projection

² FY 08-09 is based on 07-08 Participating

³ Total children in school-based full day K from ABG, ABG Supplement and other funding sources

⁴ Total children in Pre-K minus ABG Pre-K

- Because infant/toddler and preschool Early Intervention are now housed in one office, and serve the same children, we have created a unified set of tools to monitor these programs and more importantly, to create the individual service plans for the children participating. The same staff people now handle both the birth to three and three to five programs in the regions of the Commonwealth in order to assure a common perspective and supports for the work. The result is that the staffs of both programs have a better understanding of their similarities, and most importantly, families are experiencing a smoother transition between the infant/toddler and preschool EI programs than before.
- Because a DPW-funded program such as Keystone STARS, the state’s child care quality improvement initiative, and a PDE-funded program such as Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, the state’s pre-k program for at-risk three and four year old children, are now managed in the same office, we have achieved more efficiencies in our approach to standard setting, professional development of the staff, and monitoring. For example, both Keystone STARS and PA Pre-K Counts programs are required to have Environment Rating Scale (ERS) assessments in their classrooms. Because of the coordination between programs, facilities that participate in both programs do not have to conduct two assessments, and ERS assessor staff share responsibility for assessing facilities in both programs.
- Created Early Learning standards for infants-toddlers, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade that are used across the continuum of early childhood programs that OCDEL leads;

- Established a career path and provided supports for early childhood professionals through the Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality System;
- Engaged communities in promoting quality early learning opportunities through Pennsylvania’s Promise for Children; and
- Created four new funding streams for early childhood education (Accountability Block Grant, Full Day Kindergarten Supplemental, Head Start Supplemental, and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts).

Concrete evidence of impact of the new office can also be heard from the teachers and parents who are impacted by this work. For example, here is a statement from a parent who has benefited from the work of OCDEL:

My daughter was diagnosed with seizure disorder and developmental delays when she was 15 months old. Through Early Intervention, she started receiving physical therapy and occupational therapy services. At three she transitioned to a preschool classroom with continued supports, and now attends kindergarten at our local school. Thanks to the services she received early, her speech and language skills have improved tremendously and she is thriving emotionally, as well as physically.

Teachers and administrators also praise the approach taken by the Office in accomplishing its mission:

One of the greatest successes that I feel Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts has accomplished is making programs that were in ‘competition’ with each other for students now in ‘cooperation’ with each other working towards a common goal of a stronger early childhood experience. Pre-K Teacher, Southern Tioga School District, Tioga County

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts has been wonderful for us - it builds a strong foundation, that's why we're a firm believer in early childhood education. An active 4-year-old program is a great feeder into our full-day kindergarten program. As a result, our scores in the elementary schools on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment test have been phenomenal. Dr. Francis Fregly, Superintendent, Marion Center Area School District, Indiana County

Some other examples show how the integration of programs into one office is of great benefit.

Child Care Works – PA Pre-K Counts Relationships Forged Due to OCDEL: Because there is a waiting list in many counties for Child Care Works subsidized child care for low-income families, OCDEL organized a partnership between its programs, setting up methods for the Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agencies that run the Child Care Works program to work cooperatively with PA Pre-K Counts sites to identify openings at PA Pre-K Counts sites for waiting list children. For example, in Lackawanna County the CCIS used the listing of open PA Pre-K Counts slots and then personally contacted families on the wait list and told them that there were openings at these high quality programs and gave them the contact information. As a result of the Lackawanna CCIS working in partnership with PA Pre-K Counts, families from the wait list were enrolled in these programs. These families now had the benefit of a PA Pre-K Counts program and only had to pay for part-time wrap around child care which was more affordable until they could come off the waiting list and secure additional resource to meet their children’s early learning needs while fulfilling their work responsibilities.

PA Pre-K Counts – Keystone STARS – Early Intervention Collaborations at Work in a Local Community:

Riverview Children's Center is partnering with Redeemer Lutheran School in Verona to provide PA Pre-K Counts to 74 children in full-day and half-day classrooms. Verner Elementary School is collaborating by housing one of the five classrooms in the school.

Prior to applying for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Riverview Children's Center enrolled in Keystone STARS and received a STAR 4 rating, which entitles the program to merit awards to maintain program quality and adequately compensate qualified staff. Because Riverview was a STAR 4 child care program, they were eligible to apply for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

According to Verner's principal, approximately 60 percent of students receive free or reduced priced school lunch and 80 percent come to kindergarten with no preschool experience. Teachers at Verner noticed that when the school changed its kindergarten from half day to full day there was a dramatic improvement in school readiness. They felt that quality pre-kindergarten could increase this improvement even more.

As children enter the classroom, they receive free screenings through OCDEL's early intervention program to determine if they will require any additional services or therapies.

The participants report "great enthusiasm and positive energy around the program, among the staff, among school personnel, and families." Because of Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts "the perception of early education is changing. We can already feel a difference in the way our work is viewed and the value that is placed on it." OCDEL's ability to help communities leverage its program is paying off in terms of concrete gains for children and families.

Public-Private Partnership- Head Start – ABG – PA Pre-K Counts:

OCDEL partnered with leading foundations in Pennsylvania (Heinz, Grable, William Penn) to create Pre K Counts Public-Private Partnership for Educational Success. The purpose of Pre K Counts was to facilitate pre-kindergarten partnerships in local communities between school districts, child care, Head Start, and Early Intervention with the goal of expanding quality pre-kindergarten opportunities in communities while maximizing use of resources. In addition to impacting more than 7,000 children directly through the public-private partnership, Pre K Counts communities have increased their investment in pre-kindergarten through Accountability Block Grants and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program by more than 50% since 2004, and most Public-Private partnerships are also grantees in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts. This unique partnership formed the model for the new public investment PA Pre-K Counts that OCDEL designed and is now managing in 57 counties, serving 11,000 children, throughout Pennsylvania.

The creation of OCDEL is also facilitating the development of cross-system methods of documenting positive impact of ECE programs through the PELICAN (Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children Across Networks) data system for collecting families' use of OCDEL programs, and the Early Learning Network, a standard system of child outcomes assessment. Because all of Pennsylvania's early learning initiatives are managed in one office, the Commonwealth can more effectively and efficiently evaluate the impact of these programs on Pennsylvania's children and make smart future investments.

Finally, the creation of OCDEL has raised the profile of early childhood education among the administration and among the General Assembly, which can make it easier to secure additional public investments and assures ongoing public accountability for results.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

Since creation of OCDEL in January 2007, the General Assembly passed legislation to create Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, a \$75 million initiative to provide quality pre-kindergarten to 11,000 3 & 4 year olds across the Commonwealth. This addressed a critical gap in the early childhood continuum. Each year, OCDEL identifies a set of key objectives and deliverables to assure its ongoing work as a systems builder that focuses on appropriate planning, accountability, quality program design and implementation, capacity building of the individuals and programs that do the work directly with children and their families, and community engagement and outreach about the value of early childhood education. These key objectives and deliverables are modified as each next step is achieved.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Creating an office that spans two large Departments requires a great deal of coordination between the two Departments in question.

Identifying the right leader for the Office, someone who can develop and execute the vision while also navigating the policies and procedures of two Departments, is a critical aspect of this process.