



Delaware

Early Childhood Assistance Program

The Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) expands access to the federal Head Start program—state ECAP funds can go to federal Head Start grantees, schools, and other community agencies. Children already receiving federal Head Start services are not eligible.

Eligibility

(Same as Head Start)

Income: 90 percent of children must come from families with earnings at or below the federal poverty level

Age: children who are 4 years old by August 31

Length of Program

Hours/day: four hours per day, five days per week

Days/year: minimum of 160 days per year

Eligible Providers

Schools, Head Start programs, for-profit early care and education centers, nonprofit community agencies, family child care providers

Number Served¹

843 (2002-03): 227 in public schools; 118 in nonprofit community-based centers; 17 in private, for-profit child care; 17 in community colleges; and 464 in federally funded Head Start agencies

Total Annual Budget

\$4,456,700 (2002-03) from state general revenues

Monitoring

The state Department of Education is responsible for overseeing ECAP. Programs are comprehensively monitored once every three years to assess compliance with implementation of Head Start Performance Standards. The Department of Education contracts with federal Head Start monitors to monitor state-funded programs. The ECAP monitoring teams are led by a member of the department of education staff, and use the same instrument as Head Start (the Program Review Instrument for System Monitoring, or PRISM). All community-based programs must be licensed by the child care licensing agency (schools do not). All children in ECAP are entered into the Delaware Student Identification System and assigned a student identification number to track them throughout their public school careers.

¹ For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

Governance

How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?

The statute reads, “the department of education shall contract with public and private providers including but not limited to federal Head Start agencies.” Some grantees do subcontract with other providers.

Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?

The legislation does not mandate integration of ECAP and child care at the state level, and most decisions about its implementation are made by the department of education. At the local level, the statute reads: “Each contracting provider will be required to establish written agreements within the providers’ respective service area with their contracted providers for Head Start and/or other early childhood initiatives as well with the local school district to address issues including, but not limited to: service areas, recruitment, transition of children and families, and sharing of resources and information.” Any application for ECAP funds must include these written agreements with local providers.

Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?

There is no mandated protocol for notifying programs. Recently, when funds were available, notice of the RFP was printed in the newspaper, current grantees received notification, and providers who had expressed interest were notified.

The state Department of Education selects providers for ECAP based on a competitive application process and reviews by a team of professionals. The process does not vary based on the auspices of the program, and no on-site reviews are required. Programs must meet standards from the beginning. However, new grantees often have difficulty fully implementing the Head Start standards; the Department of Education is available to provide extensive guidance.

What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?

There are many statewide activities to improve the overall quality of early childhood education in Delaware, but none are unique to ECAP.

Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?

There is no policy or guidance on teacher salaries.

Supports for Working Families

Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?

The request for proposals (RFP) states that priority will be given to programs that propose to “collaborate with existing community-level early care programs to facilitate access to or provide full-day/full-year early care and education services where needed.”

What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?

Because priority goes to programs that provide full-day/full-year services for those who need it, most eligible working families can access ECAP. Transportation is an allowable use of funds (except for purchase of vehicles), but there is no separate funding stream for this service. Programs provide comprehensive services and family support as required under Head Start Performance Standards, including: social services; health screenings, follow up and referrals for children’s health needs; nutritious meals; transportation; and parental involvement.

Funding

What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?

The payment was \$5,200 in 2002-03.

How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?

If the provider cares for the child for more than four hours in addition to the ECAP four hours (or more than eight hours per day), then he/she can receive a full child care subsidy. If it is for fewer than four hours (and under eight hours per day), then he/she can only receive a part-day child care subsidy. A provider cannot receive Head Start and ECAP funding for the same child. ECAP funds are intended to serve additional children.

Sources

- Interview: Constance Moran, 07/06/2004
- Legislation: www.delcode.state.de.us/title14/c030/
- Program Guidelines and Requirements: state refers to the Federal Head Start Performance Standards
- Head Start/ECAP Early Outcomes Report Fiscal Year 2001-02:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/research/State%20Report%20-Total%2001-02.pdf>
- 2003 Interagency Resource Management Committee Annual Report:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/research/2003%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

- Investing in Better Outcomes: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study 2002:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/research/DECLS02.pdf>
- Survey of Kindergarten Teachers:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/research/2000%20Delaware%20Kindergarten%20Survey.pdf>
- Transition Report:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/Transition/Transition%20synthesis.pdf>
- Emotional wellness in children initiative:
<http://www.doe.state.de.us/early%5Fchildhood/Emotional/framework.pdf>

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.