



# New Jersey

## *Early Childhood Program Aid*

Early Childhood Public Aid (ECPA) is a legislated program that provides funding for full-day kindergarten and half-day pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds. If funds remain after meeting these two goals, districts may use ECPA for 3-year-old pre-kindergarten or grades 1 through 3. ECPA funds 102 districts and also partially funds some of the Abbott districts.

### **Eligibility**

**Income:** low-income children must comprise 20 to 40 percent of total enrollment

**Age:** 4- and 5-year-olds (3-year-olds if funds permit)

**Priority:** 102 designated districts

### **Length of Program**

**Hours/day:** a minimum of two and a half hours

**Days/year:** academic year

### **Eligible Providers**

Public schools, child care, and Head Start classrooms

### **Number Served<sup>1</sup>**

7,600 (includes general education students only for 2003-04): 89 percent in public school settings; 11 percent in private settings (including child care and Head Start)

### **Total Annual Budget**

\$30 million (2003-04)

### **Monitoring**

School districts are responsible for ensuring that all programs meet quality standards. The department of education conducts a seven-year monitoring cycle with each school district to ensure compliance. Community-based programs must be licensed by the department of human services. All teachers must have a Bachelor's degree and certification in early childhood.

## Governance

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

Diverse delivery settings are authorized, but a lack of pressure for school districts to sub-contract with community-based providers means there is less contracting than in the Abbott pre-k program.

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

School districts decide whether to sub-contract and how to select providers. School districts are required to conduct local needs assessments to develop program plans that meet the specific needs of their children. Each district must form an Early Childhood Education Advisory Council to review and provide comment on the operational plan, but this body is strictly advisory.

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

There is no requirement to integrate at either the state or local level.

Each district must establish an Early Childhood Advisory Council, but it is strictly advisory. The Early Childhood Advisory Council provides an opportunity for local stakeholders in the education and welfare of preschool-age children to participate in community-wide planning, as conducted by the school district, to review progress towards full implementation of high-quality programs, regardless of venue, and to consider and propose resolution of issues that arise during implementation. The council might include representatives of the following groups: child care providers, pediatric medical day care providers, Head Start agencies, child and family advocates, municipal government, health professionals/agencies, social service providers, higher education, philanthropic community, mental health agencies, and other stakeholders.

## Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

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

Districts determine how to communicate the opportunity to providers, and there is limited knowledge about the opportunity in some districts.

There are no rules or guidelines for selecting providers that districts must follow, other than that programs must meet the curriculum and teacher standards prior to approval for funding. Districts decide whether to conduct an on-site review as part of the application process.

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

The Department of Human Services provides some supports—for example, scholarships and support for accreditation—that providers can access, but this is not limited to ECPA-funded programs.

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

Comparable wages are not required.

## 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?**

No.

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

There are no policies to help working families access the pre-k program.

## **Funding**

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

Funding is determined based on district K-12 enrollment. There is no per-child rate. In 2003-04, the program cost \$30 million for 7600 children, for an average of \$4,000 per child.

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

If a child attends child care for six hours in addition to the ECPA hours (for a minimum of 8.5 hours), the center receives a full child care subsidy. The center receives a part-day subsidy if child care is provided for less than six hours.

Each district negotiates its contracts with Head Start. There are only three Head Start providers that contract with the ECPA districts, and at least two of them are using the funds to extend the Head Start day to provide a full-day program.

## **Sources**

- Interview: Ellen Frede, 09/01/2004
- Website: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/index.html>
- Program Guidelines and Requirements:  
<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/nonabbott/guidelines/>

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](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).