

# American Rescue Plan Child Care Provider and Family Forum

## Cumberland, Dauphin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, Union Counties

Thursday, May 6, 2021

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

22 Participants

Link to recording

<https://vimeo.com/552613336>

### Panelists

Denise Cressman, Owner/Operator; Denise Cressman Group Child Care Home

Lauren Hand, Parent/Teacher; Tender Years, Inc.

Melissa Nagengast, Early Childhood Professional Development Coordinator; HACC

Jeanne Predmore, Early Education Specialist; The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC)

Kim Shearer, Owner/Executive Director; Tender Years, Inc.

Diana Verbeck, Executive Director; Danville Child Development Center

Peter Zurfleigh, Attorney; Community Justice Project

### Issues and Themes

How should American Rescue Plan funds be used to increase the share of children in high-quality programs and support families who need child care to return to work?

- Raise base rates significantly (e.g., at least 75<sup>th</sup> percentile) for high-quality programs.
- Fully fund the cost of having subsidized children enrolled.
- Eliminate parents being charged the difference between subsidy payment and private pay rate.
- Expand subsidy eligibility.
- Incentivize families to choose high-quality care.
- Use CCW contract as determining eligibility for funding, rather than #/% of subsidized children.
- Reinstate Merit Awards.
- Provide funding for capital improvements – but not on reimbursement basis.
- Open Pre-K Counts and Infant/Toddler contracted slots to home-based providers.
- Make Pre-K Counts and Infant/Toddler contracted slot funding available to all high-quality programs.
- Reinstate LEARN Networks to lay the foundation for establishing ongoing and effective connections between ECE to school districts.
- Provide more funding to support children with special behavioral needs. Provide Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) staff in the classroom.

How should American Rescue Plan funds be used to support the child care workforce?

- Reinststate the Keystone STARS Education and Retention Award.
- Expand the apprenticeship program statewide.
- Reinststate loan forgiveness program for individuals with four-year-degrees that are working in early childhood education.
- Fully fund T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) scholarships.
- Support salaries that are comparable to public schools so that people who want to work with young children can do so financially.
- Pay for fingerprinting and background checks.
- Streamline administrative requirements to remove barriers to working in child care.
- Provide wage assistance for child care workers in all settings – e.g., provider grants, bonus hazard pay, wage supplement.
- Provide funding for benefits, especially health care and retirement.

Survey Questions and Results

Q1. Pennsylvania currently funds a pilot project, providing contracts for infant and toddler subsidy slots to a limited number of Pre-K Counts providers. Should this pilot project be expanded?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Expand to more Pre-K Counts providers.	14.29%	1
Expand to STAR 3 and 4 center and home-based providers.	0.00%	0
Expand to providers serving in specific under-served zip codes.	14.29%	1
Do not use funds to expand pilot project.	71.43%	5
<b>Answered</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>

Q2. Pennsylvania normally has a waiting list for child care subsidy. As we move beyond the pandemic and more parents are able to return to work the waiting list is expected to grow. Use funds to:

Answer Choices	Responses	
Completely eliminate the waiting list.	57.14%	4
Eliminate up to 75% of the waiting list.	0.00%	0
Eliminate between 50 - 75% of the waiting list.	14.29%	1
Do not use funds for the subsidy waiting list.	28.57%	2
<b>Answered</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>

Q3. Pennsylvania’s child care subsidy base rates were increased on March 1, 2021. (The amount the state reimburses after the family’s co-pay.) With the exception of a small increase in 2018, this is the

first significant increase in 14 years. The increase places Pennsylvania’s child care provider reimbursement rates at approximately the 40th percentile of the market rate (meaning, the amount charged by the lower 40% of the area’s providers). The federal government requires rates to be at the 75th percentile.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Increase base rates to 50th percentile.	0.00%	0
Increase base rates to 60th percentile.	71.43%	5
Do not use funds to increase base rates.	28.57%	2
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

Q4. Pennsylvania’s child care subsidy reimbursement rate includes a quality add on called tiered reimbursement. Additional amounts are connected to the provider’s STAR level intended to better support the cost of quality.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Increase tiered reimbursement rates at STAR 2-4 levels.	42.86%	3
Do not use funds to increase tiered reimbursement rates.	57.14%	4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

Q5. Pennsylvania’s child care program quality improvement system is called Keystone STARS. Only 42% of child care programs are STAR 3 or 4 (high-quality).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Advertise Keystone STARS to parents.	42.86%	3
Do not use funds to advertise Keystone STARS.	57.14%	4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

Q6. Pennsylvania’s child care program quality improvement system is called Keystone STARS. Only 42% of child care programs are STAR 3 or 4 (high-quality).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Increase support for STAR 2 programs’ efforts to move to STAR 3 (provide quality coaching, mentoring, curriculum costs, professional development).	42.86%	3
Do not use funds to increase support for STAR 2 programs.	57.14%	4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

Q7. Pennsylvania’s child care subsidy program currently serves only 19% of eligible children under 5.

Answer Choices	Responses	
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Advertise the child care subsidy program; target information to under-served communities/families.	28.57%	2
Eliminate family co-pay for subsidy through 2021.	28.57%	2
Do not use funds to advertise the child care subsidy program.	0.00%	0
Do not use funds to eliminate the family co-pay.	42.86%	3
<b>Answered</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>

Q8. Pennsylvania child care providers earn an average wage of \$10.69/hour. Nearly 50% of child care teachers qualify for government subsidies

Answer Choices	Responses	
Establish a minimum wage for child care teachers based on job classification.	14.29%	1
Establish a pay scale for certified teachers comparable to certified teachers working with Kindergarten students in the public school system.	0.00%	0
Establish specific funds to support benefits for all staff at child care programs, like health care or retirement.	42.86%	3
Reinstate the Education Retention Awards (awards granted to teachers after specific educational milestones; degrees, credentials, certificates).	42.86%	3
Provide additional funds to support the child care workforce to reach higher degrees (T.E.A.C.H., Rising STARS).	0.00%	0
Do not use funds to support the child care workforce.	0.00%	0
<b>Answered</b>		<b>7</b>
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>

Q9. Additional suggestions

Answer Choices	Responses	
Use funds for initiatives to specifically support family child care providers.	14.29%	1
Use funds for initiatives to specifically support child care providers who offer non-traditional hours.	0.00%	0
Use funds to pay providers that still have not been fully-compensated for their under-enrollment during the pandemic to ensure they are stabilized and do not close.	71.43%	5
Use funds so continue to support provider costs for PPE/cleaning supplies until the pandemic ends.	14.29%	1
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>