

American Rescue Plan Child Care Provider and Family Forum Montgomery County

Thursday, April 29, 2021

1:30 pm - 2:30pm

67 participants

Link to recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYqHKb3j0lo>

Panelists

Zakiyah Boone, CEO, Wonderspring
Desiree Bonkoski, Executive Director, Pennsylvania, Children of America
Cristine Deckman, EHS Teacher, Parent
Devorah Deitsch, Preschool Director, Chabad Garden School
Kim Follett, CEO, Play & Learn
Melanie Godhania, Play & Learn
Dana Hembree, Parent Returning to the Workforce
Kym Ramsey, Owner/Director, The Willow School
Tana Rinehart, Area Manager, Warwick Child Care Center, Inc.
Cheryl Varlaro, PKC Coordinator, Children of America

Media Clip:

<https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-pre-ks-could-see-millions-in-federal-dollars-parents-and-providers-weigh-in-on-how-to-spend-it/amp/>

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?

- Align subsidy reimbursement rates with the cost of providing high-quality care by increasing base rates.
- Pay child care subsidy paid based on average enrollment versus attendance.
- Pay providers at the beginning of each month rather than the current 45-day delay in payment to allow for more accurate budgeting.
- Compensate providers for the “financial gap” between private pay rates and subsidy reimbursement.
- Provide monetary assistance for middle-class families earning above subsidy and Pre-K Counts income guidelines by expanding eligibility.
- Pay providers directly for contracted slots, without funds being filtered through Intermediate Units/school districts.

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

- Provide funds for providers to offer health/retirement benefits to employees.
- Provide funds to hire and retain employees, such as sign-on bonuses.
- Offer tuition reimbursement and loan forgiveness.
- Reinststate the Keystone STARS Education and Retention Awards for highly credentialed staff.
- Restore Technical Assistance so teachers are supported in the classroom.
- Address the mental health issues of the workforce in light of the pandemic, including training/consultants in the classroom.
- Launch a public relations campaign that highlights the workforce as essential workers during the recovery.

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.	28.57%	6
Expand to STAR 3 and 4 center and home-based providers.	38.10%	8
Expand to providers serving in specific under-served zip codes.	23.81%	5
Do not use funds to expand pilot project.	9.52%	2
	Answered	21
	Skipped	0

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.	47.06%	8
Eliminate up to 75% of the waiting list.	17.65%	3
Eliminate between 50 - 75% of the waiting list.	23.53%	4
Do not use funds for the subsidy waiting list.	11.76%	2
	Answered	17
	Skipped	0

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.	23.53%	4
Increase base rates to 60th percentile.	70.59%	12
Do not use funds to increase base rates.	5.88%	1
	Answered	17
	Skipped	0

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.	87.50%	14
Do not use funds to increase tiered reimbursement rates.	12.50%	2
	Answered	16
	Skipped	0

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.	52.94%	9
Do not use funds to advertise Keystone STARS.	47.06%	8
	Answered	17
	Skipped	0

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).	79.19%	16
Do not use funds to increase support for STAR 2 programs.	23.81%	5
	Answered	21
	Skipped	0

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

Answer Choices	Responses	
Advertise the child care subsidy program; target information to under-served communities/families.	50.00%	11
Eliminate family co-pay for subsidy through 2021.	18.18%	4
Do not use funds to advertise the child care subsidy program.	9.09%	2
Do not use funds to eliminate the family co-pay.	22.72%	5
	Answered	22
	Skipped	0

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.	12.82%	5
Establish a pay scale for certified teachers comparable to certified teachers working with Kindergarten students in the public school system.	12.82%	5
Establish specific funds to support benefits for all staff at child care programs, like health care or retirement.	23.08%	9
Reinstate the Education Retention Awards (awards granted to teachers after specific educational milestones; degrees, credentials, certificates).	28.21%	11
Provide additional funds to support the child care workforce to reach higher degrees (T.E.A.C.H., Rising STARS).	23.08%	9
Do not use funds to support the child care workforce.	0.00%	0
	Answered	39
	Skipped	0

Q9. Additional suggestions

Answer Choices	Responses	
Use funds for initiatives to specifically support family child care providers.	0.00%	0
Use funds for initiatives to specifically support child care providers who offer non-traditional hours.	19.23%	5
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.	38.46%	10
Use funds so continue to support provider costs for PPE/cleaning supplies until the pandemic ends.	42.31%	11
Answered		26
Skipped		0