
Pennsylvania: Strategies to Support Child Care Subsidy Access and Retention



SAMI Conference

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Pennsylvania *Child Care Works* Subsidy Program: 7 Big Strategies

1. Link Benefit Systems
2. Improve Customer Service
3. Simplify Subsidy Application
4. Simplify Re-Determination for Eligibility
5. Simplify Interim Reporting
6. Minimize Inadvertent Terminations
7. Increase Flexibility with Special Populations



Strategy 1: Link Benefit Systems in a Multi-Dimensional Approach

- PA links subsidy and quality systems and programs
- Linkages with computer system, R&R, Keystone STARS Quality Initiative and other early care & education programs
- Unification of the child care system just completed
- Client self-service and open portal for families and providers in January 2008



Strategy 2:

Improve Customer Service

- Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agencies provide parent counseling and R&R for subsidy families and the community.
 - Customer service is a performance standard that is measured and monitored through parent surveys and on-site monitoring tool by Subsidy Coordinators.
 - CCIS agencies provide information on the importance of high-quality early care and education programs, including Keystone STARS.
 - Database lists providers by STAR rating.
 - Database can do provider referrals based on parameters requested by the parent.
 - CCIS staff are located in different sites which are accessible to the community and open evenings and weekends.
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Strategy 3: Simplify Application

- Organized in a more user-friendly and readable format
- Simplification of verification procedures with more options and self-declaration allowed.
- Timely processing of applications
- TANF transfer families have 183 time period with priority status maintained
- Seamless transfer process for TANF/FGS/GA families into child care data base and CCIS agency
- Systems and forms are linked and multiple ways to submit application



Strategy 4: Simplify Re-Determination

- Re-determination every 6 months, but only changes since application or re-de need to be verified. No change reporting required between re-de except for loss of employment
- Parent can just sign a form saying there are no changes for re-determination if there are no changes
- System automatically generates re-de notice to families
- System can do automatic re-determinations for TANF/FS/GA child care.



Strategy 5: Simplify Interim Reporting

- No change reporting required between re-determination except for loss of employment
 - Multiple forms and documents accepted for reporting purposes
 - Call centers exist for TANF clients
 - With client self-service module and open portal scheduled for January 2008, families can report changes and do re-determination on-line.
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Strategy 6: Minimize Inadvertent Terminations



- Subsidy continuation expanded to 60 days due to involuntary loss of work, or the date a person graduates or completes an education or training program.
- TANF transfer families have a 183 day time period to enroll with priority status maintained.
- Child care can be suspended for up to 90 days if the p/c has a break in work, education or training that exceeds 30 calendar days.
- Continuous payment when families change eligibility categories.

Strategy 7: Flexibility with Special Populations

- Expanded definition of domestic violence with certain eligibility and verification requirements waived
- Allows for a higher non-traditional rate to be paid to providers
- Care can be authorized for more than one provider based on special circumstances
- Materials are provided in different languages
- Language is tracked in computer system
- Envelopes have tag lines in 6 languages



What Helps Makes Subsidy Systems Work:

- Engagement of Parents
 - Engagement of ECE Leaders and Community leaders
 - Full Coordination of State Efforts
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Engagement of Parents



- Parent Council
- Focus on counseling and Stars in early childhood parent counseling services (a/k/a R&R)
- Parent focus found in standards, parent calendar in development
- Created Governor's Institute on Parent Involvement

Engagement of ECE Leaders & Community Leaders

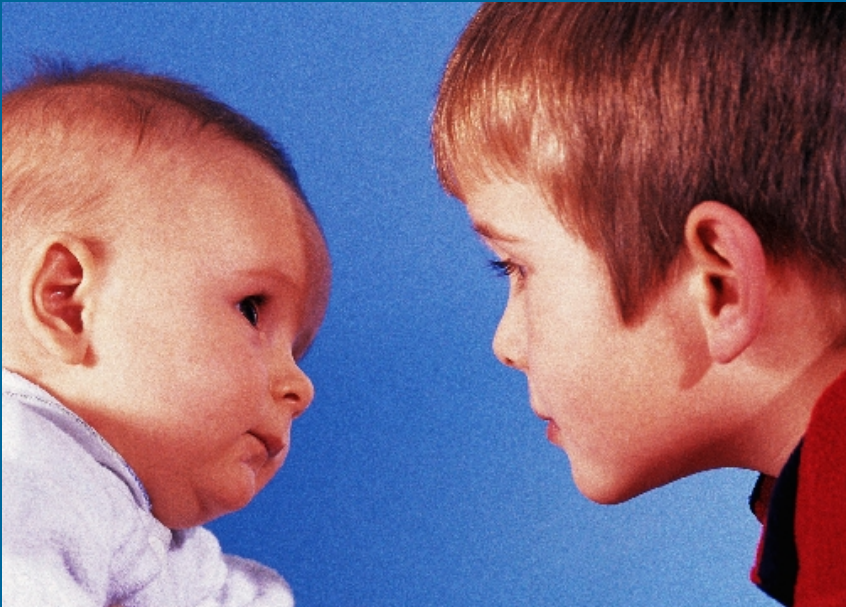
ECE Professionals:

- BUILD List-Serve
- State-level conferences

Mixed Groups of ECE and Other Leaders:

- Partnership for Quality Pre-Kindergarten
 - Local community engagement
 - State-level through Governor Rendell & PNC CEO Jim Rohr
 - Community Engagement Initiative
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Full Coordination of State Efforts



- Office of Child Development & Early Learning
- BUILD
- Governor's Early Learning Team

Systems Development



Concluding Wisdom

“Fifty years from now it will not matter what kind of car you drove, what kind of house you lived in, how much you had in your bank account or what your clothes looked like. But the world may be a little better place because you were important in the life of a child”.

-Anonymous
