



Pritzker Administration Launches Pilot Program To Support Quality Improvements For Child Care Providers In Rural Illinois Communities

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CHICAGO – The Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) today announced a new pilot program to address obstacles faced by rural child care providers in meeting the state’s quality of care standards. In partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), GOECD is providing thirty-five (35) centers in rural counties with \$3.8 million in funding per year to hire additional staff or increase the salaries of existing staff. The pilot program, made possible by both federal and state funding, is expected to run for three years, and builds on the Pritzker administration’s ongoing commitment to improving equity and accessibility to quality child care for all Illinois families.

“Child care investments not only nurture our youngest residents, but also allow working parents to embrace their full potential,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “I’m proud that Illinois has been the best in the nation during this pandemic in supporting child care providers and the children they serve. This important pilot program strengthens our ongoing efforts to improve equity in every corner of our state, bringing new resources to regions where families have historically had less easy access to quality child care. The truest measure of our pandemic recovery will be the opportunities and support we offer our working families, and Illinois will leave no community behind as we build the future our residents deserve.”

“Governor JB Pritzker and his administration want every child to enter school safe, healthy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn. This pilot gives us the opportunity to test a new approach to child care quality that we can evaluate based on data and evidence,”

said Dr. Jamilah R. Jor'dan, Executive Director of GOECD. "We are excited to be working closely with the 35 child care centers participating in this pilot and with our partners at the Illinois Department of Human Services."

Unlike other programs which reward child care providers already meeting quality of care standards, this pilot program facilitates grants to child care centers in need of additional support to increase quality of care. Participating centers will be reviewed using ExceleRate Illinois, the state's quality and rating improvement system for child care providers.

"Governor Pritzker has a clear understanding of the significant meaning and impactful ways the child care industry supports families across the state. We are pleased to be working with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and see 35 centers benefit from this federal funding. This is an opportunity to support providers and enhance accessibility to quality child care for all Illinois families," said Grace Hou, Secretary, Illinois Department of Human Services.

Pilot funding is allocated per classroom and is provided to centers up-front for salary and staffing improvements centers need to meet standards beyond the basic licensing requirements. Pilot participants are working towards implementation of ExceleRate Illinois' standards for [Continuous Quality Improvement \(CQI\)](#).

"Morale is up! Teachers feel they are more appreciated," said Dr. Jill Andrews, president of the Southern Illinois Early Childhood Action Team and owner of Kiddie Kollege Early Childhood Center in Fairfield, IL. "The improved salaries based on credentials, along with regular team planning, are making a difference. Planning and testing improvements at a much faster pace is more effective than just annual reporting for quality."

"Childcare providers frequently operate with limited or scarce resources and when the pandemic hit, the consequences on the childcare industry were devastating," said State Senator Dale Fowler (R-Harrisburg). "The pandemic only reinforced the fact that childcare centers are critical to working families. This program will give facilities and workers in Southern Illinois some much needed financial assistance to help them recover and continue to provide the critical service they do to our communities."

"Teachers and staff make a huge difference in our children's lives and are the main reason for their academic success while they're in school and away from home," said State Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield). "I am pleased that the Decatur Day Care, among others, was selected to receive this grant. This grant directs funding to a program most families need. Child care is expensive and it's crucial we provide our teachers and staff with support, especially during this time which has been difficult for everyone."

The following centers are participating in the pilot:

- Amity Learning Center, Freeport
- Bright Beginning Learning Day Care Center, LLC, Harrisburg
- Bright Start Child and Family Education Center, Mount Vernon
- Buckeroo Early Education Center, Inc., Flora
- Bumblebee Child Care Center & Pre-K, Mt. Vernon
- Centralia's Mary's House, Centralia
- Decatur Day Care, Decatur
- D's Day Care, Breese
- Educational Child Care Center, Jacksonville
- Kiddie Kollege Early Childhood Center, Fairfield
- Kids Corral, Frankford
- Kids Day Out, Murphysboro
- Knox County YMCA Early Learning Center, Galesburg
- Little Angels Learning Center, Harrisburg
- Malone's Early Learning Center, Inc., Carterville
- Murry's Child Development Center, DeSoto
- Prairieland Kids Daycare and Learning Center, Inc., Morris
- Presbyterian Church Day Care Center, Jacksonville
- Primrose Academy, Sandoval
- Rainbow Day Care Center, Inc., Eldorado
- RBC Early Education, LLC dba KidZone, Olney
- Robin's Nest, Carbondale
- Robin's Nest, Carterville
- Robin's Nest, Marion
- Step by Step, Aquarius in Ottawa
- Step by Step, Diamond
- Step by Step, McKinley in Ottawa
- Step by Step, Morris
- Stepping Stones Children's Center II, LLC, Charleston
- Stepping Stones Children's Center II, LLC, Mattoon
- Sunny Days Child Care & Learning Center, Vandalia
- The Learning Zone, Mattoon
- The Little School House, LLC, Mattoon
- We Care Center, Macomb
- Yellow Brick Road Learning Adventure, Marion

These 35 centers include 577 teachers and assistants in 104 infant/toddler classrooms, 63 preschool classrooms, and 37 school-age rooms. The Pilot is supported by the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) and State child care funds.

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