

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 20, 2019

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\$10 Million in Grants, Incentives to Expand Access to Quality Child Care

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will offer capacity-building grants totaling \$7 million to grow the number of publicly funded child care providers and improve the quality of existing providers. Nonprofit and public entities are eligible for these funds. The agency also will offer \$3 million in incentives to help current publicly funded child care providers become rated or improve their Step Up To Quality rating.

“A child’s first few years lay the foundation for the rest of his or her life,” said Ohio Governor Mike DeWine. “Having access to quality child care is a necessity as we work together to provide the tools Ohio’s kids need to be set up for success.”

By July 1, 2020, all Ohio licensed child care programs that receive state funding must participate in Step Up To Quality. To date, nearly 80% of programs offering publicly funded child care services are rated.

“Our youngest and most vulnerable learners deserve to learn in quality settings that help them get to the same starting line,” said ODJFS Director Kimberly Hall. “These grants will not only support Ohio’s publicly funded child care providers in improving their quality, but they also will help improve outcomes for Ohio’s children.”

ODJFS has implemented multiple initiatives to help providers become rated, including the following:

- Funding incentive payments.
- Reducing licensing application fees.
- Dedicating ODJFS staff to meet with and guide providers through the process.
- Offering free curricula and assessments.
- Paying wage and retention bonuses for provider staff members.
- Hosting workshops where providers can ask questions and receive guidance.
- Creating a mentorship program where rated providers help guide programs that are not yet rated.

Nonprofit and public entities interested in applying for the capacity-building grants can [click here](#). Unrated programs that submit a Step Up To Quality registration between Jan. 1 and Feb. 29, as well as one- and two-star programs that submit a registration during this time and improve their ratings, will be eligible for the one-time incentive payment upon approval of the rating. Qualifying child care centers will earn \$4,000, and family child care providers will earn \$2,000.

All Ohio families can search for child care providers by county, city, ZIP code, program type and Step Up To Quality rating at ChildCareSearch.Ohio.gov.

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

