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POWER Ohio Program Helping 1,000+ Child Care Professionals Earn Credentials

COLUMBUS, OHIO – More than 1,000 child care professionals across Ohio are taking advantage of a state program that provides scholarships to help them earn advanced credentials. The Powering Optimal Wages and Encouraging Retention (POWER) Ohio program offers scholarships to qualifying staff who work toward an associate's degree or child development associate credential while remaining employed with their program.

“This is a phenomenal opportunity,” said Kimberly Hall, director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), which administers the state's publicly funded child care program. “POWER Ohio makes it easier for child care administrators and teachers to increase their knowledge and advance in their careers, all while providing higher-quality care to children. It also helps child care programs retain skilled staff.”

ODJFS and the Ohio Department of Education operate Step Up To Quality, the one- to five-star quality rating and improvement system designed to assess licensed early childhood programs that exceed minimum health and safety standards. Participating programs use child assessments to guide learning and development and take additional steps to help prepare children for kindergarten. Teachers and administrators are required to complete ongoing professional development, and ratings are posted online at ChildCareSearch.Ohio.gov.

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.

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.

POWER Ohio was created by a subcommittee of the Early Childhood Advisory Council, which includes state agency representatives and early childhood stakeholders. To learn more about how to apply for POWER Ohio, please visit occrpa.org/wd.

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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.

