

Governor Carney, Secretary Bunting Announce \$7.6 Million Early Childhood Education Grant

Grant targets early learning opportunities for children from low-income families

WILMINGTON, Del. – A \$7.65 million federal grant will help Delaware expand high quality early childhood education to more of the state’s youngest learners over the next five years.

This new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant follows a \$7.24 million grant the state received in January 2015. Both grants target early learning opportunities for children from low-income families. While the first grant supported such placements statewide, this new grant will continue the expansion with a focus on high quality care options in Kent and Sussex counties, areas with continued need for high quality infant and toddler care and holistic services, such as health and nutrition.

Governor John Carney, joined by Secretary of Education Susan Bunting, announced the new award today during a visit to the Latin American Community Center’s early childhood center in Wilmington. The LACC is one of participants in the 2015 grant.

“A high quality early learning experience is important for all children, and research shows this is especially true for our children from low-income families. High quality early learning yields substantial benefits for these children,” said **Governor Carney**, noting a 39 percent reduction in special education placements, 30 percent increase in high school graduation, 50 percent increase in college attendance and 20 percent reduction in the likelihood of serving time in jail. “Thanks

to this grant, all children in these centers' classrooms will benefit from teachers with higher education and classrooms with higher quality materials and structural supports.”

The Early Head Start-Child Care partnership integrates the financial and program support of three programs – Delaware Stars, federal Early Head Start, and Delaware’s Purchase of Care program – to raise the quality of infant and toddler child care with more stabilized funding and by paying for teacher education, infant-toddler classroom materials and playground equipment. The program also provides wraparound health and parent services for children from low-income families, such as developmental, nutrition and dental assessments, referrals to services, home visits and help accessing housing, food and job supports.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Early Head Start-Child Care program “brings together the strengths of child care and EHS programs. Child care centers and family child care providers respond to the needs of working families by offering flexible and convenient full-day/full-year services. In addition, child care providers have experience providing care that is strongly grounded in the cultural, linguistic, and social needs of the families and their local communities.”

The grants support children from birth to age 3 years and their families being served in highly-rated Delaware Stars programs. The Delaware Department of Education is partnering with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services to support the work.

The state has made significant investments and progress in raising the quality of early learning in the state in recent years, and ensuring every child arrives in kindergarten ready to learn is a priority of Governor Carney’s administration. Investments include increased professional learning for early childhood educators, onsite support and classroom materials

for early learning programs, and developmental screenings and mental health consultants to detect and address physical and mental health issues.

The percent of low-income children enrolled in a highly rated Stars program increased from 5 percent in 2011 to 76 percent of children 0-5 and 78 percent of all children in 2016. And the number of 5-star programs statewide increased from 24 in 2012 to 203 as of January.

But more need exists, particularly in Kent and Sussex counties, where the newest grant will target its supports.

“Families want high quality early care and learning opportunities for their children. However, in some areas of our state there are few, if any, available options. This grant will provide more infants and toddlers in some of our neediest areas the chance to have the best possible start,” said **Bunting**.

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