

Frequently Asked Questions:
Items Discussed During the Fiscal & Contracts Training
September 4, 2012

1. Can clarification be provided on the payment and attendance policy?

A child must attend a minimum of 10 days in order to be reimbursed with payment. The NC Pre-KPlan and NC Pre-KKids systems will calculate the attendance days and payment. During August and June, first and last month of the SFY, a child must attend at least one day in order to be reimbursed. In addition, the NC Pre-KPlan and NC Pre-KKids systems will calculate for a child who has attended at least 50% of the attendance days in a month. So if there are five operational days marked in the NC Pre-K-Kids system, a child must attend for two days to be eligible for payment. This has been instated to resolve attendance issues during months when the total number of attendance days may be reduced due to tracking out, holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas, or Spring Break.

How will exceptions to attendance and payment be handled?

Exceptions for an individual child's attendance can be requested for certain conditions such as illness, hospitalization, military leave, or crisis requiring family travel. These requests should be sent to Lucille Baker until her retirement and then to the designated staff person. An education service that goes beyond a phone call must be provided to the child in these circumstances and may be a hospital visit, home visit, etc.

Requests for exceptions for attendance during a month for any other reason should be sent to Administration Section Chief, Janice Fain.

2. What will be involved with the process for submit payment requests?

Attendance forms will be submitted on-line through the NC Pre-K Kids system. Be aware that when submitting attendance forms for payment, the system will not allow you to print attendance until they are completed and corrections are made.

DCDEE is working on having an additional button added to the system that will allow contractors to print a DRAFT attendance report for review purposes only. Printed copies of attendance forms with signatures will continue to be required for payment.

A contractor must submit on-line before the individual classroom reports can be printed. After printing they will submit to DCDEE a completed original Financial Status Report, a Summary of Attendance and each individual classroom attendance report.

3. When will DCDEE be requesting information on funding sources for each NC Pre-K child and how are Contractors to report that information?

Contractors will be asked to submit this information in NC Pre-K Plan. This is not in the NC Pre-K Plan system yet and Contractors will be notified in late Sept. or Oct. when DCDEE will request this information. The system will ask for the “CASH” funding amounts per funding source per child per month such as:

Child Name: Susan Blackard	\$473 NC Pre-K
	\$85 Smart Start
	\$32 Title I
	\$48 EC
	\$89 Local Funds

This amount should be determined as a “per child” amount for each funding source that is used to contribute to the cost of Pre-K services provided. The “per child” amount should be calculated based on a percentage that takes into account *all* of the preschool children that are served with the funding source, not just NC Pre-K children. Then, that “per child” amount would be applied to the NC Pre-K children and reported as in the list above. Here’s an example:

Title I funding for Duvall County Schools is \$100,000

The school serves a total of 100 preschool children using Title I funds (NC Pre-K children and children funded without NC Pre-K funds), so the “per child” amount would be \$100,000/100 for a “per child” amount of \$1,000 per child.

Of all of the 100 preschool children served, only 20 children receive NC Pre-K funds and services. Therefore, the amount entered for Title I funds for each of the twenty NC Pre-K-funded children would be \$1,000 per child.

4. Can clarification be provided on dual funded classrooms and rates?

In the training sessions, it was obvious that it was confusing to use the term “Dual Funded” when referring to two different NC Pre-K rates for one classroom when that term was used differently in the past.

To eliminate the confusion, the terminology has been changed so the reference is now to “NC Pre-K Secondary” when an additional NC Pre-K rate is entered for one classroom.

Also, when a Contractor is going to pay some students at the maximum rate such as \$300 and other children in the same class at a lower NC Pre-K rate, if an exception is not needed, the Plan is set up with a NC Pre-K Secondary possibility for them to enter the two rates.

If a Contractor plans to pay two different NC Pre-K rates in one classroom, contact Susan Blackard or the designated staff person at DCDEE by email (susan.blackard@dhhs.nc.gov) informing her of the site type and the rates that will be paid. She will need to set this up in the system for the Contractor and then the Contractor will be able to then enter the rates.

5. How should a Contractor request an exception to rate of reimbursement for a site or teacher?

Any requests for exception to rate of reimbursement for a site or for a teacher should be sent to Anna Carter, Deputy Director, DCDEE. An 'exception' is defined as wanting to paying more than \$473 in public schools or \$300 per month in Head Start, or paying a rate other than \$650/\$600 in private sites. A lower rate can be negotiated in public schools or Head Start programs without review by DCDEE.

6. On Page 2-3 of the Program Requirements, there is a requirement listed that Committee chairs must provide signatures of approval when children are moved across sites. This reduces our ability to be flexible when budgeting. What is a good solution?

The Committee has the option to discuss this requirement and vote to allow the Contractor to move children across sites without Co-Chair signatures. The Co-Chairs and the Committee would agree that this decision-making authority is officially transferred to the Contractor. The decision should then be reflected in the meeting minutes for the NC Pre-K Committee meeting.

7. The time limit for long-term substitutes (12 week limit) may be an issue. Can we get an exception to the 12 week limit?

The NC Pre-K Program Requirements state that a long term substitute shall not exceed more than 12 weeks. Once this becomes rule, DCDEE Child Care Consultants would be required to cite the program out of compliance if that time period is exceeded. In addition, the current NC Child Care Licensing Rules state that a substitute placement should not exceed 2 consecutive months. NC Pre-K sites are given a few more weeks to find a replacement. The Family Medical Leave Act is also consistent with NC Pre-K Requirements in that it states that staff are entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave. <http://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/>.

NC Pre-KPlan should be current and reflect the teacher who is currently employed in the classroom. The Plan should be updated regularly and the payment will be adjusted for the teacher as needed. If the teacher attends and teaches at a minimum of one day in the classroom, NC Pre-KPlan will calculate the payment based on that teacher.

8. Can clarification be provided on the definition of "Legal Guardian" vs. "Legal Custody"?

DCDEE suggests that NC Pre-K programs align their eligibility process with the policies in place through the Child Care Subsidy Program. The Subsidy Program defines these terms in this way:

Definition of “legal custody”:

The parent or responsible adult is the person or persons with whom the child lives and who has the primary responsibility for the care and well-being of the child. However, a child may live with an adult who is responsible for his/her care but is not financially obligated for the support of the child. Legal custody or court-ordered custody does not act to terminate parental rights and therefore does not divest parents of financial obligation to their child. According to North Carolina General Statute, parents’ financial obligations toward their children are divested when an order of adoption or termination of parental rights is entered by the court.

Definition of “Legal Guardian”:

Unless limited by court order, a guardian of the person has custody of the ward and is responsible for making provisions for the ward’s care, including medical and psychological treatment; comfort, including shelter; and maintenance, including education, training, and employment. [G.S. 35A-1241] If the ward has written advance instructions for the ward’s medical or mental health care, the guardian should honor those instructions.

What counts when calculating family income for a Legal Guardian?

The income of the Guardian is counted because legally the Guardian assumes financial responsibility with Guardianship according to NC General Statute as indicated above.

9. What is included in the 6.5 hour day? Can transportation be included as instructional time?

The 6.5 hour day refers only to the instructional portion of the day for children. Transportation is not a part of the 6.5 hour day. Time adjustments should be made in the schedule for transportation time to ensure that children have a minimum of 6.5 hours of instructional time each day. If this is not possible and there is a conflict that cannot be resolved, an exception should be requested.

10. Which degrees are considered to be “related fields”?

The “related fields” indicated in Child Care Licensing Rules should be used in most purposes when hiring teachers. These are:

- Human Development and Family Studies
- Elementary Education
- Psychology
- Special Education
- Human Growth and Development

Unfortunately, there is not alignment between the Licensing Rules and the requirements related to the B-K licensure process. Please contact Fay Lewis in the EESLPD Unit if you have questions about individual teachers that are expected to enroll with the EESLPD Unit.

11. Can guidance be provided for how programs should respond to the new rule allowing parents to “opt out” of supplemental foods for their children?

This is new legislation that was signed into law by the General Assembly in July, 2012. It applies to all licensed programs, including NC Pre-K programs. Programs can develop a form that parents can sign to indicate that they are choosing to opt out of supplemental foods for their children if a lunch sent from home does not meet USDA requirements. If a parent chooses to opt out, documentation acknowledging this choice must be maintained on file at the program and be available for review by a DCDEE representative upon request.

NC Pre-K sites must provide breakfast and/or snacks and lunch meeting USDA requirements during the regular school day. Programs are encouraged to distribute the document attached to help inform parents about the importance of good nutrition for their children so they will hopefully not choose to opt out of supplemental foods for their children. Parents and program staff can also be referred to the USDA Choose My Plate website for additional information and resources to support good nutrition (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>) as well as the website for the NC Program “Eat Smart, Move More” (<http://www.nutritionnc.com/snp/kesmm.htm>).

12. Which DCDEE staff should we call with questions about NC Pre-K such as questions about eligibility, rates, exceptions, clarification on policies, etc.?

A document is attached that details the DCDEE staff roles and responsibilities related to NC Pre-K. For NC Pre-K programmatic questions, the DCDEE Licensing Supervisors are the first point of contact and their contact information has been sent in a previous email and will be posted in the NC Pre-K section of the DCDEE website.

13. What are the implications of Judge Manning’s ruling and appeal?

On August 21, 2012, an NC Court of Appeals unanimously upheld Judge Manning's ruling that the state cannot deny children who are at-risk admission to public pre-kindergarten programs. Our understanding is that legislative leaders have expressed an intention to appeal the decision to the NC Supreme Court.

Governor Perdue released the following statement:

“Our children’s ability to find a job later in life is tied directly to their educational opportunities, and quality pre-kindergarten programs lay the foundation for academic success. North Carolina has been a national leader in early childhood education, and I’ve fought against efforts in recent years to back away from that commitment. Today’s

unanimous decision provides both a boost for struggling families and hope for every child across our state. We need to come together on a bipartisan basis and recommit ourselves to early childhood education.”

The link to the Court of Appeals ruling can be found here:

<http://appellate.nccourts.org/opinions/?c=2&pdf=MjAxMi8xMS0xNTQ1LTEucGRm>

At this point, Contractors should think about the potential for NC Pre-K to be expanded to meet the needs of at-risk 4-year olds in our state. Given these developments, please think about how you can collect the following information:

- the number of eligible 4-year olds in your county/region that are not able to receive services at this time due to lack of funding
- the potential capacity to serve eligible 4-year olds in your county/region through NC Pre-K (ie: the number of available classroom slots that meet *all* of the NC Pre-K Requirements)

DCDEE is not asking you to send this information to us now, please know that it will be critical to have this information available in the weeks ahead.

14. If the NC Pre-K Program has the opportunity for expansion this year, can DCDEE work it out so that Contractors can be reimbursed for children they are currently serving without the support of NC Pre-K funds?

Every expansion of the state Pre-K program has been different based on the requirements set forth by the Governor or the General Assembly. Contractors will be fully informed of the parameters and requirements for any expansion at that point in time.

15. How will the ECERS-R assessment process be managed this year?

The assessment process for NC Pre-K will be managed as part of the regular Rated License Assessment Visit that is part of the licensing process. When a facility with one or more NC Pre-K classrooms is getting their Rated License Assessment visit, at least one NC Pre-K classroom will be assessed either through the selection process or it will be scheduled separately as part of the process. Reassessments will be managed as they have in the past if a classroom receives a score below 5.0.

16. Will Contractors have to complete the new scorecard for children that had been determined eligible prior to the new scorecard being issued July 23rd?

All children served in NC Pre-K during the 2012-2013 SFY must meet the eligibility requirements presented on the scorecard issued July 23, 2012. The major change in eligibility is that a child with an IEP from a family above the 75% of state income would fall into the 20% allowed of over-income families. If children with IEP's were previously determined automatically eligible regardless of income level (as they were last year), it is necessary to re-check their income eligibility to ensure eligibility for this year. It is not

necessary to complete a new scorecard, but all scorecards should clearly indicate that the child is eligible based on current eligibility criteria.

17. Can DCDEE look at the licensing paperwork required for public schools and try to eliminate redundancy?

The process for licensing public schools requires additional paperwork and DCDEE will conduct a review of these forms/documents and make every effort to eliminate duplication.

18. If health assessments are not able to be completed within 30 days, should the NC Pre-K child be eliminated from the NC Pre-K classroom?

Knowing that these children are at risk and that families may need assistance in accessing services such as getting health assessments for their children, Contractors and NC Pre-K program staff should make every effort to assist families in having the health assessment completed. As the timeline approaches, attempts should be made to determine what barriers are preventing this from occurring and assisting families with transportation, accessing the health department or other services to complete the health assessment. If problems continue, the Licensing Supervisor should be contacted for assistance.

19. Will there be any changes in the monitoring process this year?

The monitoring tools will be made available soon and the process will be similar to last year's process with either a desktop monitoring appointment or a site visit. With the change to financial assistance contracts, more attention will be given to fiscal and contracts monitoring and compliance this year.

20. Can additional users be designated or assigned to use the NC Pre-K Kids systems?

The User Guide for NC Pre-K Kids includes sections for "User Rights and Roles", "Adding and Maintaining Users" and "Changing Users Passwords". Cedric Booth can be contacted for assistance and the contact should be made only by the User Administrator. Contact information for Cedric Booth is cedric.booth@dhhs.nc.gov or 919-662-4499.

21. DCDEE sent out the Financial Status Reports form and the Contract Revision form but they cannot be found on the website. How can these forms be accessed?

These are set up as Excel spreadsheets. DCDEE cannot post Excel documents to the website. To have the forms re-sent by email, please email Lucille Baker or the designated DCDEE staff (Lucille.baker@dhhs.nc.gov).

22. When will the NC Pre-K Fiscal and Contracts Manual be available?

It is currently in the final stages of being revised. An announcement will be sent with the Manual as an attachment and it will be posted to the website as soon as it is completed.

23. When will the NC Pre-KKids system be available

DCDEE is working toward having this system available the first week in September.

24. When will the NC Pre-KKids User Guide be available?

It is currently in the final stages of being revised. An announcement will be sent with the User Guide as an attachment and it will be posted to the website as soon as it is completed.