Interagency Resource Management Committee (IRMC)

Early Childhood System Strategic Planning

Monday, June 22, 2026

THE OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
KYLE EVANS GAY

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Objectives

June 2026

1. Review the Governance Landscape Analysis Takeaways
2. Discuss initial Governance recommendations

Agenda

Agenda Item	Time Allotted
Attendance and Minutes	10 mins
Welcome & Review of 2026 IRMC Charge	10 mins
Presentation of Governance Landscape Analysis, Insights, and Initial Recommendations	30 mins
Next Steps	5 mins
Discussion	25 mins
Public comment	10 mins

2026 IRMC Charge: Systems-Building Work

ECE: A Statewide Priority

Since Fall 2025, the IRMC and ECE leaders across Delaware have taken steps towards aligning existing early childhood systems and investments into a coordinated approach.

IRMC Meeting Date	What the Meeting Accomplished
September 17, 2025	Defined what early childhood education as a public good in Delaware means
October 14, 2025	Charted the path to a universal birth-to-5 system
November 17, 2025	Assessed Delaware's current state and the potential roadmap forward
March 5, 2026	Aligned on the opportunity and next steps for a unified early care and education system in 2026
April 20, 2026	Previewed early insights from the landscape analysis and discussed national examples of coherent governance options

ECE System Foundations

Delaware's commitment to ECE builds on more than a decade of sustained investment and system-building efforts across Delaware.

Over time, the state has made substantial investments in strengthening early childhood education and care through:

- ✓ Strategic planning efforts
- ✓ Quality initiatives
- ✓ Workforce supports
- ✓ Local coordination efforts,
- ✓ Cross-sector partnerships spanning education, health, family support, and community organizations.

Many initiatives have contributed to the development of important ECE infrastructure and created a strong foundation for continued growth:

- ➔ Preschool Development Grant Birth-to-Five (PDG B-5)
- ➔ Local readiness efforts
- ➔ Quality improvement strategies
- ➔ Integrated service delivery approaches
- ➔ Efforts to improve family access and navigation

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- ✓ Local coor
- ✓ Cross-sec ... education, health, family support, and community organizations.

Each of these efforts contribute to the current, complex landscape.

- → ... t Grant
- → ... trategies
- → integrated service delivery approaches
- → efforts to improve family access and navigation

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2026: Critical Window to Act

In 2026, alignment across leadership, stakeholders, and resources will allow the IRMC and ECE state leadership to shift from planning to execution.

- **Leadership and Stakeholder Alignment:** State leadership, the IRMC, the advocacy community, providers, and partners share a clear understanding that incremental change is no longer sufficient and are unified on advancing early childhood system reform in 2026.
- **Funding Convergence:** One-time PDG B-5 resources and the FY27 budget cycle create a rare opportunity to pair planning with implementation.
- **Strategic Clarity:** The roadmap priorities are defined — governance, funding alignment, quality, and data — providing a shared direction for action.

These conditions led to this landscape analysis and the recommendations that it surfaces.

Landscape Analysis: Methods

Over the span of 3 months, the PDG governance and finance project team has:

Conducted landscape analysis interviews with Delaware's ECE system leaders, including state agencies, program administrators, and community-based organizations.

Interviews **aimed to understand how the system operates in practice** and how day-to-day experiences both shape and are shaped by it.

Reviewed current and historical resources, including legislation, previous reports, program data, provider supply, enrollment, funding and budgets, quality and licensing, workforce, and child and family outcomes.

The document review **aimed to understand the previous efforts** that has gone into developing the Delaware system and is foundational to this work.

Reviewed a wide range of fiscal documents, including deep dives on direct services budgets, funding for ecosystem supports, and funding for state administration supports.

The fiscal review **aimed to understand how Delaware's investments are going**, and how that aligns with named priorities.

Governance Comes First

Governance Choices are Critical: The governance structure should be established before major decisions about funding, accountability, or program design.

Choosing the right governance structure matters because it:

- Establishes ownership for the early childhood system
- Creates accountability for outcomes across agencies
- Aligns investments toward shared priorities
- Coordinates implementation across programs and partners

Funding Considerations: Comprehensive funding data has not yet been made available and so was not considered during this landscape analysis. Additional fiscal analysis will inform future funding recommendations. We expect them in the next quarter.

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Current State of the ECE System in Delaware

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Overview: PDG Landscape Analysis

This landscape analysis reflects interviews with leaders and stakeholders across Delaware's early childhood ecosystem, including state agencies, providers, research institutions, and community partners.

State Agencies & Government Offices

- **Legislative & Oversight:** Delaware General Assembly, State Board of Education, Office of Management & Budget (OMB), Office of the Controller General
- **Education & Early Learning:** Delaware Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Intervention (OECI), Office of Early Learning (OEL), Delaware Educator Data System (DEEDS), QIS, IDEA Part B representatives, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL)
- **Health & Social Services:** Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Division of Social Services / Purchase of Care (POC), TANF administration and coaching staff
- **Family & Youth Services:** Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF)
- **Additional Personnel:** Other current and former state government employees

Early Childhood Organizations and Networks

- Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC)
- Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (DEAEYC)
- Delaware After School Network
- Delaware Head Start Association
- Head Start programs & Head Start Collaboration Office
- Children & Families First
- Delaware Readiness Teams

Programs & Service Providers

- Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- State-funded early care and education programs

Partners

Research & Higher Education Institutions

- Delaware State University Early Childhood Innovation Center (DSU ECIC)
- University of Delaware, Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC)
- University of Delaware — SPARQ Project Team
- UD Biden Institute
- National Center for Children in Poverty

Advocacy & Community Partners

- Rodel
- Unite Us
- United Way
- Chambers of Commerce

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Insights from these conversations informed the findings and themes presented throughout this analysis.

Delaware’s ECE Population at a Glance

- There are 55,076 children under age 5 in Delaware[1]
- First Five Years Fund reports that 71% of Delaware’s children have all available parents in the workforce.[2]
- 9,649 children entered publicly funded kindergarten in fall 2025.[3]
- Delaware’s Title V/MCH profile, citing KIDS COUNT, reported that children ages 0–4 have a poverty rate of 20.7%.

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1. Bipartisan Policy - State Childcare Data
2. FFYF - DE
3. AECF Data Center

Delaware's ECE Programs and Administration

DHSS

Division of Public Health
- MIECHV
- Help Me Grow
- DE Thrives
- Part C Early Intervention*
- WIC

Division of Social Services
- Purchase of Care (POC)
- TANF
- WIC

Division of Medicaid & Med. Services
- DE Healthy Children (CHIP)

DSCYF

Division of Family Services
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Background Investigation

Division of Prevention & Behavioral Health Services
- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Intensive Family Consultation

DOE

Office of Child Care Licensing
- Licensing

Office of Early Learning
- State Funded Early Care and Education Program (SFECEP)
- Head Start Collab Office
- Quality Improvement System (QIS)
- DEEDS - Delaware Educator Data System

Office of Early Childhood Intervention
- IDEA Part B
- Part C Early Intervention Transfer*
- Developmental Screening

Student Support Services
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Early childhood supports and services are administered by many offices and divisions across DOE, DHSS, and DSCYF across six major funding streams.

Implications for Decision Making

As currently organized, Delaware's ECE programs serve many children and families every day, but struggle to address how ECE funding works for those children and families.

Questions that remain unanswered include:

- Do investments lead to increased access, improved child outcomes, and improved family outcomes?
- Are dollars reaching the children and families with the greatest need, or flowing by program eligibility rules rather than by state priority?
- Are functions duplicated across DOE, DHSS, and DSCYF? Would consolidating or coordinating them would free up resources?
- How does spending break down across age groups?

Without routine access to transparent information, decision-makers will continue to struggle to prioritize resources towards the state's goals.

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Access to ECE in Delaware

County	Total Estimated Children Ages 0-9	Average ratio of Children to Available Child Care Seats	Available Child Care Capacity (in children)	Unmet Child Care Need	Unique county needs
New Castle	63,899	2:1	39,614	24,285 (38%)	**66% of New Castle County families report that they are taking on debt and/or sacrificing savings/goals in order to afford child care.**
Kent	24,135	3:1	7,470	16,665 (69%)	**In some areas of Kent County the average ratio of children to available child care seats is as high as 6:1.**
Sussex	24,250	3:1	7,644	16,606 (68%)	**Sussex County has long waiting lists of up to 2-3 years.**
Delaware	112,284	2:1	15,114		**Delaware employers lose an estimated $415 million annually due to employee turnover and absenteeism due to child care challenges**

Between July 2025 and January 2026, Delaware recorded 17,087 denied POC applications.

Source: First State Pre-K (2025) Child Care Data: The State of Delaware, First State Pre-K (2025) Child Care Data: New Castle County, First State Pre-K (2025) Child Care Data: Kent County, First State Pre-K (2025) Child Care Data: Sussex County

Family Navigation and Access

Delaware has multiple strong programs that support families, but these are not consistently experienced as one pathway.

- Families apply to programs, each with different eligibility criteria & applications.
  - In a 2023 survey, three quarters (71%) of families surveyed looked into, contacted, or applied to two or more child care programs.[1]
- Access gaps are especially acute for families needing care outside traditional hours or for infants and toddlers.
  - Almost 22% of children 0-5 in Delaware have parents working non-traditional hours, but only 10% of licensed providers operate outside of business hours.[2]
  - Nearly one in two infant and toddlers in Delaware does not have access to licensed care.[3]

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1. 2023 Parent Survey Results
2. Urban - Nontraditional hour child care
3. CCA DE Infant Toddler Brief

ECE Access Shapes Later Outcomes

Nearly 50% of children ages 0-5 lack access to a licensed seat[1]

42nd in nation in preschool access[2]

6:1 Children to available seat ratio in some areas

8% of children ages Birth to 8 have a diagnosed disability or developmental delay [3]

3 in 4 children entering kindergarten lack access to public pre-K

23% of children in DE have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences [3]

*These challenges have long-term implications for educational outcomes, **74%** of Delaware 4th graders are not proficient in reading (NAEP, 2024)*

1. Two Children for Every Available Seat: Delaware's Unmet Child Care Demand
2. NIEER Delaware State Profile
3. NAEP, 2024

Child Outcomes: 2024 Reading Scores

In 2024, eighth grade reading scores in the First State hit a **27-year low**, prompting Gov. Matt Meyer to declare a “literacy emergency”.[1]

41% of Delaware eighth graders **scored below basic proficiency** in reading in 2024.[1]

Only 40% of Delaware students in grades 3–8 were **proficient in English language arts.**[2]

1. Delaware Reading Proficency
2. 2024 State Assessment Results

Landscape Analysis Insights

Key Themes Overview

Investments without visibility: Delaware is making significant investments in early childhood, but has limited visibility into what is being funded and whether those investments are achieving intended outcomes

Relationships, not structures: As a result of the fragmentation, the system relies on relationships for coordination, rather than structures

Impacts on Families and Providers: Families and providers bear the burden of a system that was not designed around their experience

Investments Without Visibility

Delaware is making significant investments in early childhood, but has limited visibility into what is being funded and whether those investments are achieving intended outcomes.

Investments are spread across multiple programs and agencies with no reconciliation	• **Lack of transparency:** Public early childhood funds flow through DOE, DHSS, DSCYF, and DOL, without reporting within or across agency budgets on how funds were spent, leaving policymakers with persistent questions about what's happening and what's possible to change • **Overlapping functions:** There is no way to track budget by function - for example, subsidized seats for children before kindergarten, classroom quality improvement, workforce development, supports for families, etc.
Governance fragmentation makes strategic investment challenging	• **Siloed counts:** Delaware tracks seats and services individually by funding stream administration, so stakeholders have difficulty understanding how many children are served in total, what the gaps are, and where there are opportunities to strategically invest • **No quality definition:** After Delaware STARS retired, stakeholders described uncertainty about how quality is defined, how progress is measured, and what impact quality investments are making • **Initiatives instead of strategy:** Stakeholders describe "pilot fatigue", and "a series of initiatives that start and stop", reflecting one-off funded opportunities without a path to drive change at scale • **Complexity adds friction:** Fragmented funding authority makes it harder to contract for priority services, target priority populations, or respond quickly when funding streams change, such as when Head Start funding changes
The impact of investments is nearly impossible to track	• **Investments are not evaluated for impact:** Delaware is making a substantial investment in CDA attainment, and can share how many new teachers have received a CDA, but stakeholders could not answer and were not tracking whether that investment was delivering changed experiences for kids or leading to improvements for the workforce. • **Limited learning:** When programs end or change (e.g., DE STARS, COVID-era stabilization funds ending), stakeholders described limited ability to assess what work should stop or continue based on impact

Relationships, not structures

As a result of the fragmentation, the system relies on relationships for coordination, which creates gaps when relationships break down or people leave.

When relationships fail to solve coordination issues, governance structures don't point to a clear leader	• **Initiatives across multiple teams:** Early childhood mental health consultation operates across DHSS, DOE, and DSCYF, with different funding streams, reporting structures, and agreements in order to function as a single initiative. • **Personal outreach as a solution:** Staff described relying on texting or calling someone they have personal relationships with to coordinate reporting, agreements, and approvals across agencies and keep the work moving • **No clear ownership:** Stakeholders reported cross-agency work stalling without a designated person with assignment and final approval authority
When fragmentation leaves gaps, the field bears the brunt	• **Informal supports:** Licensing staff go beyond their regulatory role to help providers navigate related requirements by checking on background checks, contacting fire departments, and connecting providers to other state or local offices. • **Many entry points:** Local partners often help connect providers, schools, community organizations, and families across separate systems, but no one entity acts as a single entry point across the entire range of services • **Lack of transparency:** Providers aren't clear on upcoming policy changes before they are implemented (e.g., background checks, ASQ statewide expansion)
Providers and community partners often become navigators for families	• **Providers as an entry point:** Providers help families complete paperwork, follow up on referrals, and connect to developmental or behavioral supports. • **Open loops:** When families are referred for developmental, behavioral, or support services, agency staff have limited visibility into whether families successfully connected to services or what barriers they encountered afterward.
Institutional knowledge often lives in people, not systems	• **Loss of knowledge:** When leadership at POC left, institutional knowledge of how the system functions left with them. • **Informal communication:** Interviewees described information frequently being shared through informal coordination and existing relationships rather than through consistent cross-system communication processes.

Families and Providers Bear the Burden of Fragmentation

Families and providers bear the cost of a system that was not designed around their experience.

Families navigate multiple entry points and eligibility rules	• **Multiple requirements:** There are separate applications and eligibility requirements for POC, pre-K, home visiting, developmental services, and other family supports • **Previous knowledge required:** Separate application processes require families to already understand what programs and services exist and where to find them before finding out what they are eligible for • **Informal Referrals:** Families approved for POC often rely on finding someone connected to a provider with an open seat to find care or be referred for services
Providers manage multiple, disconnected administrative systems at once	• **Braiding funds:** To participate in publicly funded programs, providers manage separate requirements and processes across licensing, POC, CACFP, quality supports, and workforce initiatives • **Complexity creates barriers:** Opening or expanding a program can require navigating processes across separate state agencies and local municipalities including licensing, POC, background checks, workforce supports, zoning, and fire code
Families and providers can't focus on supporting children's development	• **Administrative burden:** Providers manage licensing, subsidy, CACFP, quality supports, workforce requirements, background checks, zoning, and fire code processes while also trying to staff classrooms and support instruction • **Limited supports:** CCR&R services are only offered to low income families, so many families spend time finding care, following up on referrals, and piecing together services instead of experiencing one clear pathway to support

System-Level Implications

Stakeholders describe a system that does not yet function as a system, despite the best intentions of individual administrators and state leaders.

- **For children:** Stakeholders want clear visibility into whether children in publicly funded programs are having high-quality experiences across settings.
- **For families:** Families often rely on providers, informal networks, and community organizations to navigate services and identify available options.
- **For providers:** Stakeholders described misaligned requirements, unpredictable funding, and compensation structures that don't reflect the cost of care as contributing to workforce instability and provider attrition.
- **For state leaders:** Leaders and partners described difficulty accessing shared information needed to assess unmet need, understand system-wide impacts, and guide long-term investment decisions.

System-Level Capabilities

The landscape analysis identified capabilities that stakeholders consistently described as important to Delaware's next phase of work:

Capability	Landscape Analysis Finding
System Stewardship and Accountability	No entity is consistently positioned to oversee system performance as a whole.
Shared Outcomes, Measurement, and Learning	Leaders have limited ability to connect investments to results.
Strategic Investment Alignment	Investments are distributed across agencies, programs, and funding streams.
Cross-System Coordination and Implementation	Coordination frequently relies on relationships and informal structures.
State-Local Partnership & Implementation	Achieving statewide goals requires effective implementation within communities.
Improve Family & Provider Experience	Families and providers often experience fragmentation directly.
Continuous Improvement & Learning	Sustaining progress requires mechanisms to assess, learn, and adapt over time.

Recommendations

The Time for Effective Governance Change

Stakeholders consistently emphasized that Delaware is well-positioned for its next phase of early childhood system development:

- **Previous Investments:** The state has invested in building strong foundational infrastructure and fostering cross-sector partnerships
- **Delaware Context:** Delaware's relatively small size created unique opportunities for collaboration and engagement
- **Strong Foundation:** Delaware has a long history of reflecting on its system, identifying areas for improvement, and adapting over time

While many of the challenges identified in this draft report are not new, stakeholders frequently described Delaware's next phase as strengthening how existing programs, investments, and partnerships work together as a coherent system.

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Effective Governance Structures

The IRMC must choose a governance structure that will best position the state to achieve its vision of early childhood as a public good.

Delaware requires a governance structure that is responsible for the plan to achieve the state's vision and can ensure:

- Investments are aligned with priorities and produce the desired outcomes
- Systems function regardless of who is in the room and the coordination necessary to improve outcomes is the default
- The entire system focuses on the experiences of children, families, and providers in order to achieve the state's vision of ECE as a public good

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Increased Coordination Examples:

Option	Structure	Pros	Risks / Trade-Offs	Example States
Cross-Agency Coordinating Office	Shared office spanning multiple agencies	• Encourages coordination • Lower structural disruption	• Split across agencies means there is no single point of accountability at a cabinet level • **Operational inefficiency (All of ECE in PA reports to both DOE and DHS)** • Hard to drive decision-making	Pennsylvania
Independent Early Childhood Office Co-Located with DOE	Separate office physically/ administratively tied to DOE	• Some independence with continued education alignment • Lower disruption than full separation	• Unclear who has final authority over the ECE system • **Pre-K program isn't fully integrated in the OEC,** making it difficult to align with the rest of the ECE system (CT co-located within DOE)	Connecticut
Elevated ECE Division within DOE	Create an elevated and empowered ECE leader within DOE	• Stronger alignment with K–12 • **Keeps pre-K integrated** • **More operationally feasible** • Lower implementation burden • **Can still centralize strategy and accountability**	• Less symbolic independence • May require strong authority design to avoid silos	Maryland
Standalone Early Childhood Agency	Create a standalone early childhood agency outside DOE	• Strong visibility and political signal • Clear ownership of ECE agenda • Potential for unified birth–5 strategy	• Expensive to establish • Major operational transition • Hard to move pre-K out of DOE • Risk of fragmentation with K–12 • Significant pushback likely • **Not necessarily needed in a small state**	Colorado

Criteria for Effective Governance

Capability	Cross-agency Coordination	Cross -agency Coordination with Executive Leadership	Consolidated Lead Agency	Standalone Agency
System Stewardship and Accountability	Low	Medium	High	High
Shared Outcomes, Measurement, and Learning	Low	Medium	High	High
Strategic Investment Alignment	Low	Medium	High	Medium
Cross-System Coordination and Implementation	Medium	Medium	High	High
State-Local Partnership & Implementation	Medium	Medium	High	High
Improve Family and Provider Experience	Low	Medium	Medium	High
Continuous Improvement & Learning	Low	Medium	High	High
Implementation Feasibility	High	Medium	Medium	Low

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Elevated ECE Division within DOE *(Recommended Direction)*	Create an elevated and empowered ECE leader within DOE	• Stronger alignment with K–12 • **Keeps pre-K integrated** • **More operationally feasible** • Lower implementation burden • **Can still centralize strategy and accountability**	• Less symbolic independence • May require strong authority design to avoid silos	Maryland
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Governance Structure Options

Option	Structure	Pros	Risks / Trade-Offs	Example States
Standalone Early Childhood Agency	Create a st… early childh… agency out…			Colorado
Independent Early Childhood Office Co-Located with DOE	Separate of… physically/ administrat… to DOE		…ECE system **…he OEC,** …the ECE	Connecticut
Cross-Agency Coordinating Office	Shared offic… spanning m… agencies		…single point **…reports to**	Pennsylvania
Elevated ECE Division within DOE *(Recommended Direction)*	Create an elevated and empowered ECE leader within DOE	• Stronger alignment with K–12 • **Keeps pre-K integrated** • **More operationally feasible** • Lower implementation burden • **Can still centralize strategy and accountability**	• Less symbolic independence • May require strong authority design to avoid silos	Maryland

Delaware needs an elevated office of early childhood, with empowered leadership and authority at the Department of Education, responsible for driving the plan to achieve Delaware's vision of early childhood as a public good.

ECE Example: Elevated Early Childhood Leadership Within a State Education Agency

Maryland is restructuring early childhood leadership by moving the Division of Early Childhood out from under the Office of Teaching and Learning and establishing it as a standalone Office led by a cabinet-level Chief within MSDE.

Features:

- Elevates early childhood leadership statewide
- Stronger coordination and accountability
- Maintains alignment with K–12 systems/Part B
- Supports mixed-delivery implementation
- Centralized strategy and oversight

Why this model is relevant for Delaware:

- Elevated leadership with clear responsibility for system performance
- Formal authority for cross-agency coordination and accountability
- Alignment across early childhood, pre-K, and Part B preschool services
- Supports mixed-delivery implementation
- Centralized strategy, planning, and investment oversight

Delaware needs a clearly accountable leader responsible for stewarding the performance of the early childhood system and advancing the vision of early childhood as a public good.

Implementation Considerations for Any Governance Transition

- **Program Responsibilities:** Some programs, including IDEA Part B preschool special education services, are subject to federal and operational requirements that must be carefully considered when evaluating governance changes
- **Funding:** Any transfer of programs will require getting clear on what funding streams need to transfer alongside them, and what budgeting mechanisms may need to change
- **Workforce and Operations:** Transferring teams from several departments to a single office will require thinking about pay scales, new feedback loops, and internal government structures and department (DOE) capacity
- **Stakeholder Engagement and Change Management:** Successful implementation will require ongoing communication, transparency, and engagement with agencies, providers, families, and other partners throughout the transition process.
- **Phased Implementation:** Governance changes do not need to occur all at once. Implementation can be phased over time, allowing Delaware to sequence decisions, build capacity, and address operational considerations before additional changes are considered.

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Next Steps

What’s Next

After this meeting, IRMC members and key stakeholders will multiple opportunities to share any additional considerations:

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>June</th><th>July</th><th>August</th><th>September</th><th>October</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">IRMC members</td><td>Feedback form</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td rowspan="6">Final Report and Implementation Guide Shared during Oct 1 meeting</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">1:1 meetings and conversations</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Draft report and Implementation Guide shared for feedback</td></tr>
<tr><td>Agencies and program leaders</td><td></td><td>PDG B-5 Accountability Feedback meeting</td><td>Gather input on implementation guide</td><td>Draft report and Implementation Guide shared for feedback</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Engagements with the field and ECE partners</td><td></td><td>Provider focus groups</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">DECC engagements</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>External Stakeholders</td><td colspan="3">1:1 meetings, advisory group engagements, and informal conversations</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
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About the Implementation Guide

The implementation guide will accompany the final report and provide a phased roadmap for implementing recommendations.

The guide will include:

- **A phased timeline:** Clear short- and long-term milestones to move implementation efforts forward
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Which agency leads each action, who else needs to be involved, and how they coordinate
- **Implementation Considerations:** Funding, staffing, policy, operational, or legal and technology implications
- **Decision points for the IRMC:** Key implementation decisions that will need IRMC input before moving forward

Discussion

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IRMC Meeting Schedule

Month	Time
~~March 5th, 2026~~	~~9:30-11:30 am~~
~~April 20, 2026~~	~~2 – 4 pm~~
~~June 22, 2026~~	~~2 – 4 pm~~
October 1, 2026	1 - 3 pm
December 14, 2026	2 - 4 pm

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Public Comment

Appendix: Landscape Analysis Methods

Organizations Interviewed for Landscape Analysis

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Children & Families First
DEEDS
Delaware After School Network
Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (DEAAYC)
Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC)
Delaware Department of Education
Delaware Head Start Association
Delaware General Assembly
Delaware Readiness Teams
Delaware State University Early Childhood Innovation Center (DSU ECIC)
DHSS (Department of Health and Social Services)
DIEEC (University of Delaware, Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood)
DSCYF (Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families)
Early childhood advocates and organizations
Former state government employees
Head Start programs & Head Start Collaboration Office
IDEA Part B representatives
National Center for Children in Poverty
OCCL (Office of Child Care Licensing)
OECI (Office of Early Childhood Intervention)
OEL (Office of Early Learning)
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Office of the Controller General
Purchase of Care (POC)
Rodel
State Board of Education
State-funded early care and education programs
TANF administration and coaching staff
TAPP Network
Unite Us
United Way
University of Delaware (SPARQ Project Team)

Reports Reviewed for Landscape Analysis

- 2010- Consolidating Early Childhood Services: An Analysis Of States' Experiences
- 2016- Advancing Our Profession: Delaware's Early Learning Professional Development Committee Final Report
- 2019 PDG B-5 Needs Assessment, and accompanying materials:
  - Delaware PDG B-5 Consolidated Needs Assessment
  - Delaware PDG B-5 Cost of Quality Executive Summary
  - Delaware PDG B-5 Cost of Quality Study
  - Delaware PDG B-5 Data Systems Needs Assessment
  - Delaware PDG B-5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan Literature Review
  - Delaware PDG B-5 User Experience Needs Assessment
  - Executive Summary of the Needs Assessments
- PDG B-5 Strategic Planning Synthesis - January 2020 Update
- 2020-2025 DECC strategic plan
- 2021 IRMC Annual Report
- 2022 IRMC Annual Report
- 2023 IRMC Annual Report
- 2025-2028 Strategic DDOE Plan
- Blogs and reports published by Rodel including:
  - Delaware Child Care Cost Model
  - Delaware Continues to Untangle Its Early Childhood Governance
  - Delaware: Making Progress on Consolidating and Aligning Early Childhood Services
  - First State Pre-K: "Unlivable": Delaware Families and Businesses Sound Alarm Over Child Care Crisis
  - First State Pre-K: Solutions To Delaware's Child Care Crisis
  - Most Delaware Families Can't Access Publicly Funded Child Care
  - Survey: Cost, Availability of Child Care is Holding Back Delaware Families
  - True Cost of Quality Early Learning Exceeds State Rate Twice Over
- Delaware's CCDF FY 25-FY 27 Plan
- Final Recommendations of The DHSS Reorganization Committee
- Internal DHSS Documents
  - Expenditures
  - Purchase of Care Rate setting
- OEL Coaching Policy
- Purchase of Care Handbook

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Appendix: Fiscal Overview

Governance and Funding Overview (1 of 2)

Across Delaware's state system, there is limited insight on how money is spent, both internal to state government to run the system and externally through partnerships, grants, and vendors.

Department	ECE program/function	ECE funding Stream	ECE Funding Stream Description	Total Amount	What we know about how that money is spent
Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)	Subsidized child care benefits and administration	Federal CCDF (Direct Services)	Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) — federal block grant funding direct child care subsidies for income-eligible families through licensed providers; mandatory, matching, and discretionary allocations combined	$41M	12,522 children served (average monthly) Some portion of money is used by DOE for Quality Improvement and Licensing
		Federal TANF	A portion of TANF funds redirected to direct services for low-income working families	$12M	Flows directly to licensed provider reimbursements alongside CCDF and state GF; not separately tracked at child or provider level
		State General Fund	State funds for child care that serve as the maintenance of effort match required to draw down federal CCDF funds	$77M	Serves as the maintenance-of-effort base required to draw down federal CCDF matching funds
	Home visiting	MIECHV, State General Fund	Federal formula and competitive grant requiring states to implement evidence-based home visiting models for at-risk pregnant women and families with children birth through age 5	$5M	In DE funds Healthy Families America, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers. Includes central intake via Help Me Grow/2-1-1, training, technical assistance, and infant early childhood mental health consultants. 634 families served; evidence-based models used (HFA, NFP, PAT)
	Identification, evaluation, and coordinated services for children birth through 2 years old with developmental delays	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C	Federal formula grant requiring states to provide early intervention services to eligible infants and toddlers	$3M	1,667 children served; state carries ~85% of cost; federal law prohibits waitlists; 29.5 FTEs
		State General Fund	State appropriation serving as maintenance of effort (MOE) required to access federal IDEA Part C funds; covers the majority of program cost	$11M	
		State ASF (Medicaid and Insurance receipts)	Medicaid and private insurance billing revenue earned by providing early intervention services to eligible children; used to offset state program costs	$5M	Revenue earned through Medicaid and insurance billing for eligible children; amount varies with enrollment and billing rates; used as MOE on federal grants

Governance and Funding Overview (2 of 2)

Across Delaware's state system, there is limited insight on how money is spent, both internal to state government to run the system and externally through partnerships, grants, and vendors.

Department	ECE program/function	ECE funding Stream	ECE Funding Stream Description	Total Amount	What we know about how that money is spent
Department of Education (DOE)	State funded preschool (ECAP/SFECEP)	State General Fund	Funds directed to programs for services to eligible families of infants, toddlers, and 3 -and 4-year-old children	$19.5M	ECAP serves 1,154 seats (3- and 4-year-olds) plus 82 toddler seats = ~1,236 children; Gaps: number of classrooms and contracts not publicly reported; no classroom-level quality data; no child outcome data
	Quality Improvement Supports	Federal CCDF (Quality Set Aside)	Professional development, coaching scholarships, technical assistance, quality initiatives , workforce incentives	[Unknown]	
		State Early Childhood Initiatives Fund		$36M	Funds are largely contracted out
	Preschool SPED	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B	Federally required special education for 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities, allocated to districts by enrollment formula	$21M	1,151 enrolled students (Sept. 2024); formula-driven by district enrollment
	PDG B-5	Federal PDG B-5	Federal competitive grant supporting ECE systems building. Funding must be spent by 12/31/2026	$11M	Funds are largely contracted out
	Licensing	Federal CCDF	Health and safety regulation and oversight of child care providers, including inspections, compliance monitoring, and training	$514K	466 licensed centers; 418 family homes statewide
		State General Fund		$153K	
Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF)	Early childhood mental health and family support	Federal CCDF	Individual contracts for early childhood mental health clinicians	$1.2M	Individual ECMH clinician contracts funded jointly by CCDF and DOE
		State General Fund	State-directed funding for Family Crisis Therapists supporting Child Development Watch coordination	$165K	2.0 FTE Family Crisis Therapists supporting Child Development Watch; positions added in 2002 per federal coordination requirement

Gaps in Governance and Funding Information

This draft report was unable to answer basic questions about, across the agencies responsible for administration of early childhood, how much funding was spent by function and for what purpose.

Function	Description of Function	Example Programs	What Was Collected	What is Missing
Seats for Children before School (0-5)	Fully or partially subsidized seats for children before kindergarten	POC, state funded preschool, district funded preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start	Most of the ~$181M across six main programs, POC represents the largest investment at $118M, serving ~12,500 monthly seats	Title I and other LEA-funded seat dollars and counts, the share of Head Start/EHS funding spent on seats, spending by age group, confirmed TANF budget for FY26
Services for children B-5	Supports for children's additional needs	IDEA Part B and Part C services, diagnostic screening, intervention supports, food and nutrition	About $20.2M are invested in services for children through Birth to Three, Child Development Watch, IDEA parts C and B	Children served through Child Development Watch, age breakdowns, unduplicated counts across Part C and Part B programs
Family Supports	Resources for families to support their children's growth and development	Home visiting, family engagement, connecting families to resources, parent training	Home visiting funding by model. MIECHV ($4.5M, 634 children), Parents as Teachers ($1.1M, 350+ families), Nurse Family Partnership ($1.8M)	ECE-specific share of Title V Maternal and Child Health ($2.1M), CACFP family-facing dollars, families and children served across all programs.
Field Supports	Supports targeted to classroom quality, provider and businesses, and teacher workforce	PD and resources for curriculum, assessment, coaching, environmental supports, credential scholarships	Delaware spends ~$36.4M in early childhood initiatives	Contract/grant information showing amounts DE spends by category, and amount spent internally
Other Functions	Investments that support the system without funding seats, services, or field supports directly	Data systems, research and evaluation, governance and infrastructure contracts	Vendor names for the major data systems (licensing/QIS, FOCUS, ASQ), a handful of known amounts, revenue loss from Tax Credit ($6.2M)	Spending amounts for most data and infrastructure contracts, funding for licensing database update, research, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement costs
School Age Care	Subsidized care layered on top of school hours	Before/after and holiday care funded through POC	Of ~12,800 kids served monthly through POC, ~4,560 or 36% are K+	The amount of funding expended for school age care

Eligibility rules

Program	Primary Administering Department / Agency	Primary Eligibility Requirements	Age Eligibility	Entitlement vs. Limited Funding Program	Key Notes / Implications
Purchase of Care (POC)	Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) / Division of Social Services (DSS)	Income-based and workforce-linked eligibility. Families generally qualify at or below approximately 200% FPL and must demonstrate need for care through employment, education, training, or approved activities.	Birth through age 12 (older for some children with special needs)	**Limited funding / non-entitlement program** — meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee immediate access or placement.	Functions primarily as a workforce support program. Delaware allows continued eligibility at higher income thresholds to reduce benefit cliffs and support workforce continuity. Families must complete recertification and ongoing documentation requirements.
Head Start (HS) / Early Head Start (EHS)	Federally funded; administered through local grantees and community providers	Primarily income-based eligibility at or below 100% FPL. Additional prioritization may include homelessness, foster care, public assistance receipt, or other risk factors.	HS: Ages 3 to compulsory school age EHS: Pregnant women, infants, and toddlers (prenatal through age 3)	**Limited slot-based program** — eligible families may still face waitlists due to limited funded capacity.	Focuses on comprehensive child and family supports, no workforce participation requirements. Local grantees may enroll a limited percentage of over-income families based on community need.
State-Funded Early Care and Education / State Pre-K	Delaware Department of Education (DOE)	Eligibility varies by funding stream and program model. Historically focused on income-based eligibility and children facing economic disadvantage; some programs expanded eligibility up to approximately 200% FPL. May also include residency or developmental criteria.	Primarily ages 3–4	**Limited funding / slot-based program**	Includes state-supported pre-K and contracted early learning slots. Operates across mixed-delivery settings including schools and community-based providers. Eligibility rules may differ across programs and blended funding models.
IDEA Part C (Birth to Three / Early Intervention)	Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) / Birth to Three Early Intervention System	Eligibility based on developmental delays, diagnosed conditions associated with delays, or established risk conditions identified through evaluation and assessment processes. Income is not considered.	Birth through age 2	**Entitlement program** — eligible children are entitled to services under federal law.	Services are based on developmental need rather than income or workforce participation. Families cannot be denied services due to lack of funding availability if eligibility criteria are met.
IDEA Part B, Section 619 (Preschool Special Education)	Delaware Department of Education (DOE) / Local Education Agencies	Eligibility based on documented disability category and demonstrated educational need identified through evaluation processes. Income is not considered.	Ages 3–5	**Entitlement program**	Children who meet eligibility criteria are entitled to special education and related services under federal law. Services transition from Part C to school-based systems at age 3.

Coverage Rates

Program	Federally Eligible	Delaware Eligible	Children Served	Coverage Rate
POC	21,326	19,171	4,096	21%
State-funded Pre-K	-	20,633	1,238	6%
Head Start	5,755	-	1,175	20%
Early Head Start	5,755	-	688	12%

POC Denial Reasons: July 2025 – January 2026

Denial reason	Denial Number
No person eligible	8,670
Failure to recertify	3,784
Gross income failure	1,942
Failure to complete an interview	1,045
Did not give information	687
Other reasons	959
Grand Total	**17,087**

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Appendix: Fiscal Deep Dive

Overview: ECE Funding Streams in DE

Funding Stream	Total	Federal	State	Notes
CCDF (POC)	$118M	$41M	$77M	POC, Licensing, QIS, admin (funds can be carried over multiple years)
TANF	$12M	$12M		Used for POC
ECAP	$20M		$20M	Income-eligible PreK (now State Funded Early Childhood Education Programs - SFECEP)
Head Start/Early Head Start	$24M	$24M		This is FY25 amount
IDEA Part B/C	$37M	$4M	$33M	Birth to Three early intervention 3-5 Special Education Services
MIECHV	$5M	$5M		MIECHV: NFP, PAT, Happy Families DE, ABC parenting, EHS (home visiting model)

ECE Funding for Direct Services

Function	Total $	Total Federal	Total State	Example Programs Federal	Example Programs State	Notes
Seats for Children before School (0-5)	$18.5M	$65M	$116M	Seats partially or fully subsidized by: Federal: • CCDF/POC 0-5: $41M • Head Start and Early Head Start: $24M • TANF: UNKNOWN for FY26	State: • POC state share: $77M • ECAP/Redding: $19.5M • IDEA Part B PreK seats: $19M	Includes school-age — estimate below. TANF FY26 amount unconfirmed. Title I and other district-level funding not captured. Head Start/EHS outside state authority
Services for children B-5	$20M	$4M	$16M	Federal Programs • IDEA Part C: $2.6M • IDEA Part B Sec. 619 Preschool Special Ed: $1.4M	State: • Birth to Three Program (GF): $11.5M • Birth to Three ASF: $2.4M • Child Development Watch ASF: $2.3M • DSCYF Family Crisis Therapists: $166K • Preschool Diagnosis & Treatment: $59K	
Family Supports	$7.2M	$4.5M	$2.7M	Home Visiting: • MIECHV (Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting): $4.5M • Parents as Teachers: $1.1M • Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): $18M	State: • NFP match: $1.2M (tobacco ASF — under review FY27) • NFP: $1615K • Happy families DE • DE healthy children: $11M	MIECHV includes Help Me Grow, NFP, PAT, Healthy Families DE, ABC Parenting. Title V MCH ($2.1M) not included — ECE-specific portion unconfirmed
School Age	$47M	$16M est.	$31M est.	CCDF/POC School Age Care federal portion: $16M (Note: may be part of the "Seats for Children 0-5)		Calculated by applying the 37-40% school-age split from the HR14 authorization data to the confirmed budget figures. The actual dollar breakdown by age group is not in any of the documents we have.

ECE Funding for Ecosystem Supports

Function	Total $	Total Federal	Total State	Examples	Known Amounts
Field Supports	$55M	$15M	$40M	Classroom Quality Supports: • Teacher coaching • Curriculum and classroom materials purchase Provider & Business Supports: • Licensing TA • Shared services Workforce Supports: • Scholarships • Credentials • Bonuses and additional compensation	Federal: • CCDBG quality set-asides: $4M • Infant-toddler quality set-asides $1M • PDG Birth-5: $11.3M State: • Early Childhood Initiatives: $36.4M • Early Childhood Support Personnel: $3.6M • Licensing operations support: $153K
Other functions	$200K		$200K	Research and Evaluation *Vendor administration costs associated with QIS?* *Stakeholder Engagement?* *Infrastructure supports (PDG)*	State: • KIDS Count: $100,500 • Developmental Screening (PEDS): $103,800 (confirmed, leverages $2M federal annually)

ECE Funding for State Administration

Agency	Team Areas	Total	Federal	State
Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)	• Child Care Subsidy and Family Economic Supports • Maternal & Child Health/Family Supports • Medicaid & Early Childhood Health			
Delaware Department Education (DOE)	• Early Learning • Early Childhood Workforce • Early Childhood Special Education • DOE Early Childhood Data & Administration			
Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF)	• Birth to Three • Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health • Family Support & Prevention			

Stakeholder Engagement Structures

Delaware has several formal stakeholder engagement structures intended to align agencies, funders, providers, and community partners around early childhood priorities. Key structures include:

- **Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC):** promotes the development of a comprehensive and coordinated a early childhood system from birth to eight that provides the highest quality services and environment for Delaware's children and their families.
- **Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (deaeyc):** Focuses on supporting the early learning experience, which includes, but is not limited to, recruiting new educators into the field, advocating for more state and federal funding for early learning facilities, providing training to educators
- **First State Pre-K:** a coalition of partners, focuses on expanding access to publicly funded high quality early care and education in Delaware.
- **Vision Coalition:** public-private partnership composed of a broad range of Delawareans who work together to improve Delaware public education.

ECE Providers: Rates and Costs

- **Licensed providers:** There are 920 licensed providers in Delaware.
- **Reimbursement rates:** Since the beginning of FY2023, provider reimbursement rates have been 85% of the 75th percentile market rate.
- **Market Rate Survey (MRS):** The 2024 Delaware Child Care Market Rate Survey found the average increase of the 75th percentile of the market rate was approximately 38% in the past 3 years.
- **Cost of Care:** The annual average cost of child care for one child under 5 years old in Delaware is $13,160.

https://rodelde.org/unmet-child-care-demand/
https://bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/State-Childcare-Data-DE.pdf