

# UPK Program Implementation Handbook 2021 - 2024



Revised 8-18-23

Cuyahoga County Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children



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**Modifications to this Handbook**

The UPK Program Implementation Handbook may be modified or amended by Office of Early Childhood (OEC)/Invest in Children (IIC) during the Contract Period to conform to OEC/IIC policies or administrative and statutory guidelines issued by any state, federal, or local governmental agency. OEC/IIC will give the Provider fourteen (14) days notice of any changes or modifications made to the Handbook.

## Starting Point UPK Contact List

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# 1. Overview

## Purpose of Handbook

This UPK Handbook is meant to serve as a useful reference to help Providers navigate the requirements and assist in the implementation and delivery of a high-quality preschool program that adheres to all UPK rules. Many staff play a role in the implementation of UPK and all staff at a site, and in administration, should fully understand these rules and requirements.

## History and Overview of Invest in Children

In 1999, twenty-three private foundations and corporations joined with Cuyahoga County government to redesign the face of human services for young families. Working together, the founders organized Invest in Children as a public/private partnership within the Office of Early Childhood, and launched a plan to make sure that all children received the best possible start in life. For the past twenty-two years, Invest in Children has been nationally recognized for the quality, depth and breadth of the programs that have reached tens-of-thousands of kids, and the early childhood professionals who care for them. Additional information about Invest in Children and its programs can be found at [www.investinchildren.cuyahogacounty.us](http://www.investinchildren.cuyahogacounty.us)

### The Invest in Children Mission

*Invest in Children mobilizes resources and research to ensure the well-being of all young children in Cuyahoga County. We provide a continuum of targeted services, prenatal to kindergarten, for children and their families; build awareness; advocate; and measure our impact. We aim to achieve equity in access to services and eliminate racial/ethnic disparities in child and family outcomes.*

## UPK Lead Agency: Starting Point for Early Care and Education

Starting Point is designated by the state of Ohio as Cuyahoga County's childcare resource and referral agency. Starting Point also serves as Invest in Children's lead agency for multiple early care and education initiatives. Starting Point provides significant technical assistance and support to UPK sites to ensure successful implementation of the various components of UPK.

## History of the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program

The UPK Program was created through a community planning process that utilized evidenced-based standards to set quality expectations. All UPK sites meet a series of criteria, proven through research to improve school readiness. These standards include increased teacher qualifications, lower staff to child ratios, use of approved curricula, engagement of families, and family linkages to supportive services. Our goal remains to build upon the existing mixed delivery system of child care by enhancing quality with funding, training and technical assistance; and to keep it affordable for low- and moderate-income families.

Program evaluation has played an integral role in the planning and administration of OEC/IIC programs. OEC/IIC partners with a research team at the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). This team has conducted several evaluations since the UPK began in 2007; these evaluations have shown that:

- The quality of early care and education at the UPK sites improved substantially as reflected in a significant increase of 18% on a standardized measure (ECERS).
- Children enrolled in UPK, who were most at-risk at baseline (below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile), showed a significant improvement.
- The magnitude of the gains for the most at-risk children exceeded the gains to be expected from a “generic” preschool experience and compare favorably to the gains made by children in other larger-scale UPK initiatives (e.g., Oklahoma and Georgia).
- Children who attended a UPK preschool were more kindergarten-ready than children who attended a high-quality non-UPK program. The impact was strongest among children who attended preschool for 18 months in the 2 years before kindergarten. Sixty-six percent (66%) of UPK children were on-track for language and literacy at kindergarten entry (as measured on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, i.e., KRA), compared to 47% of similar children who attended a high quality, non-UPK site.
- UPK children also scored 7 points higher on the Social Foundations dimension of the KRA compared to children in high-quality non-UPK sites.

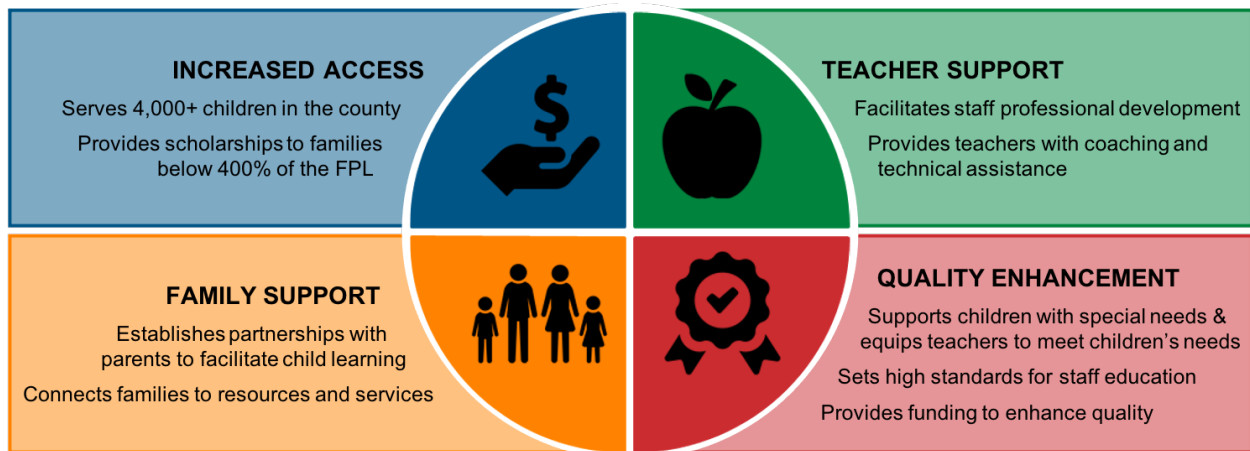
### **UPK Program Model**

UPK builds upon programs and preschool seats that **already exist** and that exhibit a high level of quality: this includes use of an approved curriculum with a comprehensive focus designed to promote children’s physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and language development and competence in serving low-income, culturally diverse children.

Furthermore, even high-quality programs can benefit from additional support. UPK provides that support through funding, training, and technical assistance to help programs further enhance quality and achieve the gold standard of quality as defined by the UPK program. While the return on investment in high-quality early care and education programs has been demonstrated, providing the level of quality that produces the desired child outcomes may cost more than the revenue typically available to programs from state and federal resources

and tuition. UPK fills that gap with quality dollars, allowing programs to further enhance quality levels. (Note: UPK funds may NOT be used to expand existing programs OR create new seats.)

**The UPK model has four key components.  
All UPK components are REQUIRED for all programs.**



## Teacher Support

UPK supports teachers through coaching and technical assistance in the classroom, facilitation of professional development, and funding for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. The OEC/IIC funds Starting Point, the state-designated child care resource and referral agency for Northeast Ohio, to deploy Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists to every UPK classroom to ensure successful implementation of UPK. TA Specialists visit UPK Providers to work with teachers and administrators on a number of topics including quality enhancement, SUTQ, partnerships with families, and assessments.

Starting Point also offers professional development trainings, including modules designed for the Childhood Development Associate (CDA) credential, and coordinates provision of Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) scholarships to help teachers pursue higher educational credentials.

TA Specialists visit UPK Providers to work with teachers and administrators on a number of topics including quality enhancement, SUTQ, partnerships with families, and assessments.

## Quality Enhancement

In addition to supporting teachers and administrators in their roles, UPK enhances quality through

- Funding directly to UPK Providers, based on the number of classrooms at the site. UPK Providers have flexibility to spend these quality enhancement dollars in ways



that work best for the needs of their program and community, in approved categories. These dollars MAY NOT be used for purposes related to basic operations.

- Adherence to smaller class sizes and student-to-teacher ratios than are required by state licensing.
- High standards for staff education, which in turn enhance the quality of care and education children receive.
- Commitment to supporting children with special needs and their teachers. UPK Providers will have access to the current Prevention and Inclusion Programs (PIPS) that provide training, technical assistance, and equipment to assist providers in serving children with special medical, developmental and/or behavioral needs. In addition, UPK Providers will also have access to PIPS to assist providers serving children with very severe behavioral challenges. In situations where children are demonstrating severe and challenging behaviors that disrupt classroom instruction, UPK Providers may receive Special Needs Intensive Classroom Services when, as determined in collaboration with Starting Point, a more intensive dosage of technical assistance is needed to successfully address the needs of the child or children in the program.

## Family Support

The OEC/IIC recognizes the critical role families play in their children’s development and the importance of engaging families to support them in this role. The UPK program has been nationally recognized for innovative family engagement practices and has received six awards from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS).<sup>1</sup> The UPK family engagement framework supports meaningful and effective partnerships between parents and teachers and seeks to promote child- and adult-level outcomes through a family-centered preschool experience. This includes:

- **Promoting positive and supportive relationships between program staff and families, caregiver and child, and among families in the program.**
- **Building caregivers’ knowledge, skill, and confidence as a child’s first and most influential teacher and advocate.**
- **Supporting family stability and economic security through appropriate and timely linkages to services.**
- **Supporting family engagement best practices and innovation**

## Increased Access

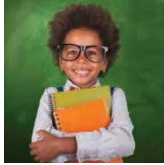
UPK aims to increase access to high-quality early education through scholarships. UPK Providers that charge parents tuition or fees will receive funding to assist low and moderate-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nnps.jhucosos.com>

income families in being able to afford UPK. OEC/IIC will pay a percentage of the parent's regular fee for families under 400% of the Federal Poverty Level. In order to receive this funding, providers will be required to collect family income information and documents from eligible families and submit to OEC/IIC, along with attendance information. Scholarship levels are as follows:

- Families at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level: OEC/IIC will pay 50% of their fee.
- Families at 201% - 400% of the Federal Poverty Level: OEC/IIC will pay 33% of their fee.



## 2. Fiscal Managers

### General Information and Key Provisions

The program year for all UPK contracts will be August 1, through July 31<sup>st</sup>. UPK contracts are legally binding agreements between Providers and Cuyahoga County’s Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children. Providers promise to deliver preschool programs to 3- to 5-year-old children according to defined programmatic and fiscal expectations and OEC/IIC promises to compensate Providers for those services according to defined limits. Contracts are cost reimbursement agreements where providers are reimbursed for actual services delivered. Contracts may be amended or terminated based on budgetary restraints or contract performance.

There are two categories of funding:

- **Program services reimbursement** (“quality dollars”): calculated based on the classroom rate and the number of classrooms at the site. Classroom rates vary based on the type of program (center-based, school district, or family child care home) and classroom hours (full or part day). **If a provider wishes to increase their number of classrooms, approval must be obtained from the UPK Program Manager prior to opening the classroom(s).**

The UPK classroom rates are as follows:

	Each full-day classroom	Each part-day classroom
Community-Based Child Care	\$30,000 per year	\$15,000 per year
School District:	\$24,000 per year	\$12,000 per year
Family Child Care Home (Type B):	\$12,000 per year	\$6,000 per year

The total amount of quality dollars will be paid in equal installments across 12 months.

- **UPK Parent Scholarships:** available for families living in Cuyahoga County with incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level. Scholarships are determined based on the fee the family pays and their gross income.

Your UPK contract spells out many important provisions regarding billing and payment processing. It is essential that you read your contract in its entirety, along with all Exhibits, and be familiar with its provisions. You can find the Exhibits at the end of this handbook; we have included a few of the most important contract provisions here:

- Payments for services are contingent upon the County Council’s appropriation of funds designated for the UPK program. Further, by submitting an invoice, the provider warrants that they are not billing any other entity for these same services. (Article 4, Section A)
- Providers are required to submit invoices and report the use of funds monthly, within sixty (60) days of the close of each billing month, using the forms provided to the Provider by the county. Such forms shall include (but may not be limited to) the monthly UPK Invoice and monthly UPK Expense Report. If invoices are not submitted monthly contract states “Failure to do so may result in forfeiture of payment” (Same section). Moreover, providers who consistently submit invoices beyond 60 days may be placed on probation. (Article 4, Section B)
- After reviewing your invoice for completeness and accuracy, the County will process invoices within thirty (30) calendar days. If an invoice is submitted that is incomplete and/or inaccurate, the OEC/IIC staff will contact you to make corrections. Invoices are subject to adjustment by the OEC/IIC to correct for mathematical errors, incorrect rates, non-covered services, etc. (Article 4, Section B)

Additionally, Providers are prohibited from charging parents of enrolled children any additional fees or tuition for UPK services.

### **Continued Funding**

Provider has no vested right to continued funding from OEC/IIC. Failure of Provider to operate in compliance with its UPK Contract or these Operating Guidelines may be cause for OEC/IIC to terminate the contract or modify funding. A substantial change in UPK’s funding source and/or amount may also be cause for discontinued Provider funding. OEC/IIC will notify Provider as soon as practicable of any changes.



### **Program Budgets and Use of UPK Funds**

*Contact Person: Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574, [joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov)*

UPK program funding is provided to allow the Provider to enhance program quality. **At the beginning of each contract year, providers are required to submit a proposed budget to OEC/IIC for approval.** The purpose of the budget is to develop a yearly spending plan to enhance quality and then to monitor those expenditures throughout the year. Quality dollars may not be related for purposes related to general operations and **MAY NOT BE USED TO SUPPLANT** other public funding sources including, but not limited to, any state or federal funding. All expenditures during the contract period must conform to the approved budget unless permission has been obtained for a change to the budget. If a provider wishes to make changes to the approved program budget, the UPK Program Manager at OEC/IIC should be contacted in order to obtain approval.

## Acceptable Uses of UPK Funds

Acceptable uses of UPK funds for program enhancement include:

1. **Supplements to staff salaries** (Centers and FCCHs only): **increases** to UPK staff wages (administrators, lead teachers, assistant teachers). *\*\*UPK dollars shall not be used to fund whole positions/entire salaries.*
2. **Overtime and Substitutes:** Payment for administrator/teacher overtime to attend UPK activities or perform UPK duties (e.g., data entry), or for substitutes to ensure adequate coverage while attending required UPK activities.
3. **Staff fringe benefits** (Centers and FCCHs only): includes medical, dental, and vision benefits; tuition assistance.
4. **Equipment and Supplies:** includes curriculum; technology and learning devices; consumable classroom supplies; special needs adaptive equipment; outdoor equipment (e.g., playground, gardening).
5. **Training & Professional Development:** includes training courses and conferences for teachers, administrators, and other professionals directly involved with UPK classrooms; travel expenses for UPK-related trainings and meetings.
6. **Enhancement activities:** includes classroom specials (e.g., poets, yoga, language classes, dance, librarians); educational field trips; special learning events; sports.
  - a. **Note:** Any enhancement activity offered as part of the UPK program and paid for with UPK funds must be available free of charge to families, including field trips. Field trips are part of the instructional program and must be available to all children participating in the UPK Program. Field trips must be related to curriculum and must include a lesson plan demonstrating this connection.
7. **Family engagement activities:** includes transportation to offsite UPK family events; family nights, dinners, meetings, guest speakers,
8. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** includes masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes.
9. **Insurance:** OEC/IIC will reimburse Providers for 50% of the increase in insurance premium as a result of higher insurance requirements from the County.
10. **Other:** Must receive prior approval from OEC/IIC to use funds in this category.

## Prohibited Use of UPK Funds

UPK funds MAY NOT BE USED TO SUPPLANT other public funding sources including, but not limited to, any state or federal funding. UPK funds must be treated as restricted income and used solely to enhance the quality of, and to increase access to, a Provider's preschool program. OEC/IIC prohibits the use of UPK funds to cover expenses that are not directly related to the UPK Program. Prohibited expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Travel expenses unrelated to administration of the UPK program

2. Purchase or maintenance of vehicles
3. Bad debts, including losses arising from uncollectible accounts and any related legal costs
4. Costs of amusement or entertainment that does not benefit children in the UPK Program
5. Costs of idle facilities, unless those costs are related to the UPK program, and the costs of idle facilities have been approved by OEC/IIC
6. Costs incurred after the Contract has been terminated
7. Fundraising costs
8. Investment management costs
9. Costs of organization of a nonprofit corporation such as incorporation fees or consultant fees
10. Costs of legal, consulting and accounting services incurred in prosecution
11. Compensation to the members of the board of directors, if applicable
12. Loans or advances of contracted UPK funds to individuals, corporations, organizations, public or private agencies. UPK funds may not be used as collateral for loans.

### **Fraudulent Billing or Misuse of Funds**

Fraudulent billing and/or misuse of funds will result in contract termination and the denial of future participation in the UPK Program. OEC/IIC may use information from other sources to assess Provider's fiscal status. **OEC/IIC will recover UPK funds determined to have been obtained or to have been spent fraudulently.**

- Provider will ensure that expenses charged to the UPK funding source are not concurrently charged to another program fund source.
- Provider will ensure that all UPK expenses charged are documented and adhere to the budget approved by the OEC/IIC.
- Provider will ensure that families receiving scholarship funding have required documentation of income and residency.
- Provider will ensure that NO UPK funds are used to pay penalties associated with adverse actions imposed by licensing or governmental agencies

### **Records Retention and Audits**

The Provider must maintain detailed financial records, including receipts, invoices and all supporting documentation to track UPK Program expenditures. All records must be retained for a minimum of three (3) years.

The Provider will maintain, and OEC/IIC will have the right to examine and audit, the books, records, documents and accounting procedures and practices and other evidence of costs claimed to have been incurred or fees claimed to have been received under the UPK Program.

## **The Monthly Billing Process**

To receive payment for services rendered under this contract, the Provider must submit invoices to the OEC/IIC on a monthly basis. Each month, the Provider will submit two sets of **signed** documents within sixty (60) days of the close of the month: the UPK Invoice and the UPK Expense Report. ChildPlus attendance reports also need to be included. These documents, and the appropriate supporting documentation, should be scanned/emailed to OEC/IIC. at [UPKinvoices@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:UPKinvoices@jfs.ohio.gov). Payment will only be made for those months for which both a UPK invoice and Expense Report have been received.

Please reach out to OEC/IIC staff if budget, expense or invoice documents need to be updated. All other documents can be found on the Office of Early Childhood/Invest In Children website: <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/programs/detail/upk-universal-prekindergarten-program-for-providers>

### **The UPK Invoice**

 **Contact Person: Staci Garlington (216) 698-2214, [staci.garlington@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:staci.garlington@jfs.ohio.gov)**

Each agency or organization will submit one invoice: agencies with multiple UPK sites will submit one invoice packet that includes reimbursement amounts for all of its sites.

Each agency will receive an individualized UPK Invoice to be used each month throughout the program year. The UPK Invoice is an Excel workbook with at least three separate sheets (tabs). Please read these instructions carefully for further details about what information is needed:

- UPK Invoice: All monthly program charges will be listed on this tab. The program's monthly reimbursement amount will be pre-populated.
- Monthly scholarship worksheet(s): List all enrolled children who are eligible for a scholarship on this worksheet, along with the total fee paid by the family for that month and an "X" in the appropriate scholarship column (50% or 33%). The scholarship amounts for each child, and the total for the site, will be automatically calculated.
  - *Note: scholarship eligibility and levels are determined through the UPK Scholarship Application Module in ChildPlus, which is required to be completed and approved before scholarship funding is given. If the OEC/IIC has not received a UPK Scholarship Application in ChildPlus for a given child, the Provider will be given one week to provide it. If after one week it is not received, the scholarship will not be paid.*

- Please refer to ChildPlus' 4300 report to make sure the Monthly scholarship worksheet matches the records of OEC/IIC.

## ChildPlus Reports

 **Contact Person: Subhit Kodapully (216) 575-0061 ext. 515, [kodapullys@starting-point.org](mailto:kodapullys@starting-point.org)**

The ChildPlus system is the management information system, which is administered by Starting Point and must be used by every UPK provider to track enrollment and attendance.

These reports are:

- Report showing monthly attendance for all children receiving scholarships
- Report showing absentee reasons

Training on how to produce these reports is included in the basic ChildPlus training you will receive.

## The UPK Expense Report

 **Contact Person: Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574, [joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov)**

The Expense Report must be submitted with the Invoice and are due (30) days of the close of each billing month. Payment of the Invoice will only be made for those months for which an Expense Report has been received. OEC/IIC recognizes that monthly expenditures will generally not match exactly the amount the Provider is able to bill for that month, which is based solely upon the number of classrooms. Expense Reports document the use of UPK funding to enhance program quality as detailed in the approved program budget. Failure to provide monthly expenditure information may result in program probation or termination. Invoice payments will not be made for those months for which an Expense Report has not been received (Section 4, Article B, 3).

Like the Invoice, the UPK Expense Report is an Excel workbook with several sheets (tabs). Please read these instructions carefully for further details about what information is needed. Each component of the Expense Report must be completed each month. These include:

- Monthly Expense Report: All monthly expenditures will be listed on this report, with current month and year-to-date amounts listed, as well as contract balance, for each category of the Provider's budget.
- Itemized Expense Worksheet: In this worksheet, list each expense individually.
- Staff Compensation Worksheet (centers and FCCH only): In this worksheet, list all staff receiving additional wages and/or benefits using UPK funding.
- School District Coverage Worksheet: In this worksheet, list all staff receiving additional pay for substitute coverage or extended day coverage.



Please ensure that amounts are consistent across forms. For example, the total salaries listed on the Expense Report must match the total wages amount on the Staff Compensation or School District Coverage Worksheet. If during the month the Provider has no expenses of Funds, an Expense Report still must be submitted with an indication that there were no expenses for the month.

## **Scholarship Adjustments**



**Contact Person:**

*Katherine Ramirez, (216) 443-6577, [Katherine.ramirez2@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Katherine.ramirez2@jfs.ohio.gov)*

It sometimes happens that a provider submits an invoice only to discover that it contains an error, most often with the billing for UPK Scholarships. If you determine that an error has been made on a previously submitted invoice, do NOT make adjustments to the next month's invoice. Instead, please submit a UPK Scholarship Adjustment Invoice. Instructions for submitting an adjustment are included as a sheet (tab) in the UPK Scholarship Adjustment Invoice.



## 3. Administrators and Teachers

The UPK Handbook is meant to serve as a useful reference tool to help Providers navigate the requirements and assist in the implementation and delivery of a high-quality preschool program that adheres to all UPK rules. Many different staff may play a role in the successful implementation of UPK in some way from completing required forms to teaching children in the classroom to planning family engagement events, and all staff at a site or in administration should fully understand programs rules and requirements.

### **Program Requirements**

The following requirements were required for eligibility to become a UPK program and must remain true and accurate for the duration of the contract.

#### **Licensing**

UPK sites must remain in compliance with the licensing serious-risk rules or their equivalent, of the appropriate licensing agencies. OEC/IIC reserves the right to review a Provider's licensing records at any time during the Contract Period. Providers are required to inform OEC/IIC within two (2) business days of any licensing serious risk rule violations received during the Contract Period. Failure to provide this information to OEC/IIC may result in termination from the UPK Program.

#### **Step Up To Quality**

UPK Programs must demonstrate levels of quality higher than what is required by licensing, and a commitment to those higher levels as defined by the Step Up To Quality Program Standards of the State of Ohio. Only programs with a 3 star or higher quality rating are part of the UPK program. The OEC/IIC requires that all UPK programs maintain a minimum rating of three (3) stars with the Step Up To Quality rating system. Providers are required to inform OEC/IIC within two (2) business days if their rating is reduced below 3 stars at any time during the Contract Period. Failure to provide this information to OEC/IIC may result in termination from the UPK Program.

## Class Size & Ratio

To ensure that all programs have group sizes and teacher-child ratios that permit personalized and caring interactions between students and teachers, the teacher-child ratio shall not exceed **1:10** in center based programs and public preschools. The group size shall not exceed **20** children. Type B family child care programs shall not exceed the **1:6** teacher-child ratio. The group size shall not exceed **6** children.

## Program Hours

Programs must provide pre-kindergarten services at least 12.5 hours a week, unless the program is a school district with a waiver from the state. Full time services are 25 or more hours a week. Part time services are 12.5-24.9 hours a week.

## Ohio Healthy Programs (OHP)

 **Contact Persons:**

*Brittany Minch (216) 575-0061 ext. 393, [brittany.minch@starting-point.org](mailto:brittany.minch@starting-point.org)*

*Jasmine Price (216) 575-0061 ext. 389, [jasmine.price@starting-point.org](mailto:jasmine.price@starting-point.org)*

The Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) created Ohio Healthy Programs in response to the growing concern surrounding childhood obesity at both state and national levels. Ohio Healthy Programs is funded by the Ohio Department of Health. The project offers early care and education programs the opportunity to earn recognition as an Ohio Healthy Program. **All UPK Providers will be required to participate in Ohio Healthy Programs.** Starting Point will facilitate OHP training and technical assistance through the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

An OHP application is available to Directors and Family Child Care Providers on the Ohio Professional Registry at [www.occrra.org/ohp/](http://www.occrra.org/ohp/).

Steps towards achieving this designation include:

- Completion of *Ohio Early Care and Education Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment* prior to attending an initial training or technical assistance visit.
- Attend Ohio Approved Ohio Healthy Programs Training
- Implementation of at least one **new** policy to ensure practices are maintained in the program.
- Demonstrate adherence to OHP menu requirements in **children's menu**.
- Implement at least one **healthy family engagement activity**.

Programs are designated for two years. To maintain OHP status, programs must ensure that the following steps are met for renewal:

- Ensure current required staff are trained in Ohio Healthy Programs, Session 1, Session 2 and Session 3; Staff do NOT retake the OHP training.

- Submit a current menu that demonstrates adherence to OHP standards
- Submit at least one new healthy policy; policy must be dated
- Submit at least one new healthy family engagement activity
- Submit a new success story

### **Staff Qualification Requirements**

 **Contact Person: Karla Martin (216) 575-0061 ext.364, [karla.martin@starting-point.org](mailto:karla.martin@starting-point.org)**

Each UPK Site is expected to have a skilled and well-trained early childhood workforce. Cuyahoga County UPK established requirements for initial background and educational levels of teaching staff, and over time more stringent requirements will be phased in. All UPK teachers in centers and family child care home providers will meet minimum standards and will be working to advance their qualifications. Starting Point’s Career Development Coordinator will contact each UPK program to review the qualifications of the staff.

#### **Center-based programs and public preschools:**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Must meet or exceed the following</b>	<b><u>And</u> must meet</b>
<b>Administrators</b>	Associate degree in approved related field AND working on bachelor’s degree in approved related field, or	Minimum 2 years classroom experience
	Bachelor’s degree in approved related field, or	
	Bachelor’s degree in unrelated field with at least 24 credit hours in early childhood education	
<b>Lead teachers</b>	All lead teachers must have a minimum of an associate degree in an approved related field and be working on a bachelor’s degree in an approved related field.	
<b>Assistant teachers, Teacher aides, Substitutes, and Paraprofessionals</b>	Current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Public School District Preschools have been waived from this requirement.	Working toward an associate degree in approved related field

#### **Family Child Care Home Programs (Type A and Type B):**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Must meet or exceed the following</b>
<b>Program owner/ Provider</b>	Associate degree in approved related field
<b>Lead teacher (if not program owner)</b>	Associate degree in approved related field

Assistant teachers, Teacher aides, Substitutes, and Paraprofessionals	Current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or
	Career Pathway Level 2 working on a CDA

**Approved Related Fields:** Child Development; Family Studies; Human Ecology; Human Development; Child and Family Community Studies; Elementary Education; School Counselor; Middle or Secondary Education; Physical Education; Elementary Intervention; Early Intervention-ECE or Special Education. Psychology or Recreation Management approved if 12 semester or 18 quarter hours of child development coursework, with a grade of C or better or pass.

### Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® OHIO

 *Contact Person: Karla Martin (216) 575-0061 ext. 364, [karla.martin@starting-point.org](mailto:karla.martin@starting-point.org)*

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® OHIO is a compensation and retention program for child care professionals. T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships to encourage individuals to seek a degree in early childhood education. Under UPK T.E.A.C.H. program, funding is provided to include administrators and teachers to help individuals move from an associate to a bachelor’s degree.

### Out of Country Permits and Qualifications

 *Contact Person: Karla Martin (216) 575-0061 ext. 364, [karla.martin@starting-point.org](mailto:karla.martin@starting-point.org)*

Providers are responsible for ensuring that teachers with permits or qualifications outside the United States submit the documentation to the Ohio Professional Registry, as required by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Department of Education.

### Quality Enhancement and Support

 *Contact Persons:*

*For Centers and Public Preschools, Karla Martin (216) 575-0061 ext. 364, [karla.martin@starting-point.org](mailto:karla.martin@starting-point.org)*

*For Family Child Care, Rosemary Helderman (216) 575-0061 ext. 523, [rosemary.helderman@starting-point.org](mailto:rosemary.helderman@starting-point.org)*

Starting Point’s Early Education Program Specialists provide technical assistance designed to strengthen the caliber of provider instruction, assist in curriculum fidelity, and enhance child-teacher interactions, resulting in high-quality programming that leads to children’s success. With input from the administrators, owners, teachers, and FCCH providers UPK

sites receive tailored technical assistance to meet the needs of each program. The Program Specialist (also known as Technical Assistance or TA's) and the child care staff will develop and review the Continuous Improvement Plan throughout the program year.

### Technical Assistance and Coaching

Starting Point provides significant technical assistance, mentoring, and coaching to UPK sites to ensure successful implementation of the various components of UPK. In order to ensure that UPK sites are appropriately implementing the UPK model, all UPK sites are required to provide Starting Point staff and consultants with access to the classrooms and children in order to conduct the required assessment activities. In addition, UPK sites will make their administrators and staff available to representatives of Starting Point, as needed, to provide the appropriate technical assistance and training required for successful program implementation. The chart below outlines the types and minimum and maximum number of technical assistance visits or sessions that each UPK Program will or can receive during a program year. Technical Assistance may be offered through in-person visits and observations, virtual conference calls, phone calls, and/or email.

Technical Assistance/Support Type	Technical Assistance Activities	Number of Visits (per year)
Quality Enhancement	Reviewing results of the ECCERS/FCCERS (classroom climate/environment)	4 to 8 visits per site
	Daily planning/individualized plans	
	Scheduling of indoor/outdoor activities	
	Completion of Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)	
	Monitoring teacher/child interactions and planning behavior management strategies	
Data Collection and Assessment	Reviewing child pre- and post- assessment results	1 to 2 visits per site or 2-3 visits per classroom
	Reviewing UPK monitoring benchmarks	
	Establishing strategies and goals for benchmarks not currently met	
	Developing strategies to address child and program results	
Career Development Counseling	Developing and reviewing professional development plans to meet UPK staff qualifications	1 to 2 per site
Family Engagement	Implementation of NNPS and ReadyRosie, skill building opportunities related to 2GEN and other effective and innovative family engagement practices	5 per site

<b>Resource Coordination</b>	Assist programs with developing parent resource center and documentation of referrals	<b>2 to 4 per site</b>
	Programs will meet with the Regional Resource Coordinator to support “ <b>No Wrong Door</b> ” policy, wherein families will be linked to any relevant Cuyahoga County programs or services when needed.	

## UPK Continuous Improvement Plan

The UPK Continuous Improvement Plan is a requirement for Step Up To Quality. As a UPK provider, your program has support from Starting Point Tas to assist you while developing the plan for your site. UPK providers must develop, with the assistance of Starting Point staff, a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CIP) for each UPK program which includes the results of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale/Family Child Care Rating Scale. UPK providers should be involved with the development of the plan and should have copies on file. The CIP must be updated annually and more often as needed.

## Professional Development Requirements

Starting Point will provide professional development to providers on a range of topics. Starting Point will post professional development opportunities in the UPK Events Calendar. To register for training, please visit the Ohio Professional Registry and follow the prompts.

- **Orientations and Events**  
OEC/IIC and Starting Point will provide orientations to programs on the different UPK components. The dates, times, and locations will be listed in the events calendar that is distributed beginning of the program year.
- **Professional Development Attendance Requirements**  
OEC/IIC and Starting Point will notify the programs if child care staff must attend training, orientations, or events throughout the contracted period; OEC/IIC and Starting Point will verify attendance at these sessions. Failure of attendance in required events will place the program in noncompliance and may jeopardize future funding.
- **Training Costs and Reimbursement to Staff**  
Provider may use UPK funds to pay for substitutes and local mileage costs associated with staff travel to all required UPK orientations, training sessions, and other UPK related- travel. Local mileage will be reimbursed at the current IRS Rate.

Providers are expected to engage in ongoing training that meets Biennium Professional Development requirements for Step Up To Quality, The Child Development Associate (CDA), and the requirements for UPK Staff Education requirements.

## **UPK Enrollment and Eligibility**

Enrollment in the UPK Program will be open and nondiscriminatory. Providers must not discriminate against a child and/or his or her parent(s) on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

Providers must develop written enrollment policies to meet the needs of children and families in the community. Enrollment policies must state that the preschool program is open and nondiscriminatory. Written enrollment policies must be kept onsite and available to parents (at their request).

### **Age Requirement**

Children ages three to five years of age who are not yet enrolled in kindergarten and not eligible for kindergarten enrollment, are eligible for enrollment in a UPK classroom. Proof of age eligibility, based on acceptable documentation such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from another country, must be on file with the Provider the day the child/children begins the UPK Program.

### **Enrollment Forms**

The most reliable source for the latest versions of all UPK forms are on the OEC/IIC website: <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/programs/detail/upk-universal-prekindergarten-program-for-providers>. Enrollment forms are updated annually for the following program year. Providers will be notified when updated enrollment forms are available.

- UPK Scholarship Worksheet
- UPK Health Screening Resources and Acknowledgement Form
- UPK Notice of Privacy Practices and Acknowledgement Form
- A Guide to Family Centered Preschool Brochure
- UPK Safety Net Scholarship Application

## **Eligibility for UPK Scholarships**

 **Contact Person: Katherine Ramirez (216) 698-6577, [Katherine.ramirez@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Katherine.ramirez@jfs.ohio.gov)**

OEC/IIC will provide a UPK scholarship to families residing in Cuyahoga County in the form of:

1. **Fifty percent (50%)** of parent fees to families whose **gross** income (before taxes and deductions) falls at or below two hundred (200%) of the federal poverty level (FPL) based on the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines as updated and published annual in the Federal Register in January of each year.



**Thirty-three percent (33%)** of parent fees to families whose **gross** income is greater than two hundred percent (200%) of the FPL and up to four hundred percent (400%) of the FPL.

### **Income and Residency Verification**

Eligibility for the UPK Scholarship is based on **family size, income, and residency** in Cuyahoga County. The UPK Scholarship Worksheet can be used by UPK families and sites to summarize information that will be needed to document eligibility for a UPK scholarship.

Family income and residency eligibility must be entered and/or uploaded through the UPK Scholarship Application Module in Child Plus for OEC/IIC review and approval. Documentation used to verify eligibility must be dated within 30 days of the date it is entered into Child Plus.

**Family size** is used, along with income, to determine where a family falls in relation to the Federal Poverty Level. Family size refers to all members of the child's immediate family, including guardians. It can include a biological mother/father who does not live in the home (or is not a resident of the city/state/ county) but DOES contribute financially to the household where the child lives (i.e., pays child support as verified by child support documents). Family Size does NOT include visiting relatives, significant others of parents/ and or guardians who do not live in the home, close family friends, etc.

To demonstrate **income** eligibility parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit documentation of income based on the following guidelines:

- **Earned income (employed, self-employed):**
  - Two most recent pay stubs from employer (required, if employed)
  - Prior year's tax return
  - Statement of self-employment
  - If none of the documents listed above are available, a parent/guardian may provide a current Childcare Subsidy Authorization Letter
- **Unearned income:** Verification statement from SS, VA, Unemployment, etc.
- **Zero Income:** Zero income statement

To demonstrate **residency** eligibility, parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit **one of the following** showing the current home address:

- Most current check stub
- Prior year's tax return
- Current government issued ID (Driver's License or state-issued Identification Card)
- Current Utility Bill
- Current Childcare Subsidy Authorization Letter

If the family receives a co-payment for their Childcare subsidy and a Childcare Subsidy Authorization Letter is not available, please provide documentation indicating the amount the family is receiving for their co-payment in addition to income and residency verification.

**Families who choose not to supply this information are NOT eligible to receive a UPK scholarship. Additionally, families whose income is equal to or exceeds four hundred percent (400%) will remain eligible for UPK services but will receive no reduction in parent fees.**

The OEC/IIC will pay the scholarship amount directly to the Provider monthly after receipt of an itemized invoice. The UPK scholarship will be discontinued for a month for any family who fails to maintain the 80% attendance during the given month due to unexcused absences or, if less than 80%, for whom verified absences are not recorded in ChildPlus.

### **Foster and Kinship Caregivers**

Foster and Kinship Caregivers in Cuyahoga County with gross income up to four hundred percent (400%) of the FPL are eligible for a UPK Scholarship of **fifty percent (50%)** of parent fees. In addition to providing income and residency verification as outlined above, Foster and Kinship Caregivers must submit placement paperwork or other court documentation in ChildPlus for OEC/IIC review and approval.

### **UPK Safety Net Scholarships**

 *Contact Person: Natasha Needs (216) 575-0061 ext. 535, [natasha.needs@starting-point.org](mailto:natasha.needs@starting-point.org)*

UPK Safety Net Scholarships are for hardship circumstances, are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and are limited. This is considered funding “of last resort”. Families who lose eligibility for other child care subsidy programs may become eligible to receive UPK services at a reduced rate using the UPK Safety Net Scholarship Fund. All funding sources available for child care financial assistance (such as Head Start or Ohio Early Childhood Education Grant Funding) **MUST BE** utilized prior to applying for UPK Safety Net Assistance. Application for this assistance is made to Starting Point.

Families who receive publicly funded child care (PFCC) may be eligible to receive a safety net scholarship should they become ineligible for PFCC in certain circumstances. The Safety Net Scholarship will be equal to the subsidy that the family had been receiving and will still be required to pay the parent co-payment, minus the UPK Scholarship.

**Families who are receiving Safety Net assistance should not be listed on the UPK Parent Scholarship Worksheet that is submitted with the monthly Cost Reimbursement Invoice.**

Families who lose eligibility for PFCC because they failed to meet redetermination requirements in a timely manner, are **NOT** eligible. Families who lose eligibility because their income now exceeds the income threshold of 300% FPL (based on gross monthly income) are **NOT** eligible for Safety Net Scholarships but may be eligible to receive a regular UPK scholarship if they meet those eligibility requirements.

UPK Safety Net scholarship dollars may be combined with other sources of subsidy available to pay the cost of care for an approved child, up to the total reimbursement rate set by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS Manual 5101:2-16-10: Appendix A: Weekly Payment Rates for Providers of Publicly Funded Child Care Participating in SUTQ)

Upon approval, families will receive and sign an agreement outlining scholarship requirements, policies and procedures. The UPK site will also receive a copy of the signed agreement which contains the policies and procedures. Families awarded the UPK Safety Net Scholarship must maintain 80% average attendance during each month the scholarship is awarded to remain eligible for funding. The UPK Safety Net attendance policy mirrors the UPK program attendance policy. Safety Net Scholarship dollars are billed directly to Starting Point.

The provider may be reimbursed for days that a child is not in attendance. However, if a child has two consecutive unexcused absences, a reason for the absences must be documented in ChildPlus and in the child's file. Payment will be made through the last week of active attendance when a child is withdrawn from the program, regardless of notice given to the provider. However, the parent may still be liable to the center per their billing policy.

The UPK Safety Net Scholarship shall not be granted to any family whose child fails to attend the program for at least 80% of the days in a billing month with the following exception:

- Hospitalization of the child or parent without appropriate documentation.
- Illness requiring homestay as documented by Ohio Revised Code and/or medical provider
- Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation (i.e., obituary, death certificates)

### **Child Assessment Requirements**



#### **Contact Persons:**

*Lailah Ameer (216) 575-0061 ext.369, [lailah.ameer@starting-point.org](mailto:lailah.ameer@starting-point.org)*

*McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.391, [mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org](mailto:mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org)*

*Connie McGinnis-Loftin (216) 575-0061 ext.368, [connie.mcginnis-loftin@starting-point.org](mailto:connie.mcginnis-loftin@starting-point.org)*

*Holly Conroy (216) 575-0061 ext.366, [holly.conroy@starting-point.org](mailto:holly.conroy@starting-point.org)*

All UPK Providers are required to assess all preschool children using the ASQ and Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA-P2) and report this information in the appropriate web-based data system provided within 60 days of a child's enrollment. Reassessment and follow-up should be provided and reported in the web-based data system as appropriate. OEC/IIC may require other tools and will notify providers accordingly.

## Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA P-2)

	e-DECA Requirements	Pre-Assessment	Mid-Assessment	Post-Assessment
<b>Due Dates</b>	Prior to entering any scores into e-DECA	October 31 <sup>st</sup> –OR- no later than 60 days of child entering program	January 31 <sup>st</sup>	May 1 <sup>st</sup> –OR- immediately following the child’s departure from the center as long as there is 60 days between the pre and post assessment
<b>Procedures</b>	Receive <i>administrator</i> username and password from Starting Point. Administrators will create classrooms, users, and children under “e-DECA management” in e-DECA system. Children’s names and birthdays should be entered with the same spellings as they appear in ChildPlus	<b>Both parent and teacher</b> assessments are entered into the e-DECA system for <b>all children enrolled</b> by the provider/or designee	<b>Mid-year Assessment (Teachers ONLY)</b> complete Mid-year assessments for children who have scored within the “need” range in any scale of the teacher reported DECA-P2 assessment which will be reflected in “red” on the classroom profile. Mid-assessments are to be entered into the e-DECA system by provider/or designee	<b>Both parent and teacher</b> assessments are entered into the e-DECA system for <b>all children enrolled</b> by the provider/or designee  There should be a Post assessment for any child who departs the center. The assessment will be based off of the child’s last 30 days of enrollment and is completed typically by the teacher if the pre and post assessment are 60 days apart.
<b>Technical Assistance</b>	<p>Each classroom will receive up to 3 DECA Technical Assistance (TA) visits.</p> <p>Your DECA Technical Assistant will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe the classroom and offer suggestions for social-emotional activities, classroom set-up, and child specific interventions strategies on assessment results</li> <li>• Assist with developing plans for your classroom and individual children</li> <li>• Assist in making referrals as needed to Starting Point’s Prevention and Inclusion Programs (PIPS), formally Special Needs Child Care, for either child-specific or classroom-specific service, Early Childhood Mental Health</li> </ul>			

	(ECMH) treatment, Bright Beginnings, a local school district, or additional resources as needed
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- To log into e-DECA enter Starting Point provided *administrator* username and password to <http://e-deca2.org/>
- For children enrolling throughout the year, a Pre DECA must be completed by both parent and teacher after knowing the child for **30 days** and no later than **60 days** of the child’s enrollment. **Pre DECAs can be entered at any time during the program year**, however you cannot complete a Post if there is not at least **60 days** to separate the Pre and Post period.
- Post DECA assessments from both parent and teacher are required for every child as long as there is at least **60 days** in between Pre and Post DECAs. Please do not do a Mid or Post unless that child had a Pre DECA.
- If a child transitions to a new classroom during the year, best practice suggests that the new teacher complete a Pre and a Post DECA. When implementing this practice, the previous teachers (Pre) rating must be changed to (Other) because the e-DECA system will only accept one Pre and Post. This practice allows the new teacher to assess the child’s current functioning and allows for individualization based on the assessment results.
- If a child leaves your program, please complete a Post DECA, as long as there has been 60 days after the Pre DECA. If a child had a Mid assessment and leaves your program within 60 days, you can change the Mid assessment to Post assessment in e-DECA.
- It is recommended that a group profile is printed out after the Pre assessments are completed for planning.
- You must **print** the ratings from e-DECA for the child’s records.
- The Group names and spellings in e-DECA should match exactly the Classroom names and spellings in ChildPlus. Example: “Classroom A” in ChildPlus should be named “Classroom A” in e-DECA.

### Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ – 3)

	ASQ Online Requirements	Assessment Requirements
<b>Due Dates</b>	Prior to entering any scores into ASQ online	October 31 <sup>st</sup> , or within 60 days of child entering programs

<p><b>Procedures</b></p>	<p>Receive <i>administrator</i> username and password from Starting Point. Administrator from the UPK programs will create classrooms, users, and child profiles online</p> <p><a href="http://www.asqonline.com/login">www.asqonline.com/login</a></p> <p>Children’s names and birthdays should be entered with the same spellings as they appear in Child Plus and e-DECA.</p> <p>Each child should be assigned to a classroom.</p>	<p>Teacher completes ASQ collaboratively with parent and enters into ASQ online for all children enrolled (except students with a current IEP)</p>
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- **ASQ -3 must be completed by the parent (except for students with a current IEP because they receive an annual developmental assessment).**
- ASQ-3 must be completed after knowing the child for at least 30 days and within 60 days of a child’s start in the classroom.
- If a child’s score falls below the cut-off or in the monitoring range in any developmental domain, apply developmentally appropriate practices and then rescreen as necessary to determine developmental progress.
- Providers must **print out** the summary page report for your child’s records.

### **UPK Prevention and Inclusion Programs (PIPS)**



**Contact Persons:**

*Lailah Ameer (216) 575-0061 ext.369, [lailah.ameer@starting-point.org](mailto:lailah.ameer@starting-point.org)*  
*McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.367, [mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org](mailto:mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org)*  
*Connie McGinnis-Loftin (216) 575-0061 ext.368, [connie.mcginnis-loftin@starting-point.org](mailto:connie.mcginnis-loftin@starting-point.org)*  
*Holly Conroy (216) 575-0061 ext.366, [holly.conroy@starting-point.org](mailto:holly.conroy@starting-point.org)*

Providers offering the UPK Program will make reasonable accommodations for children identified as eligible for special education and/or related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990).

Providers are required to include, as part of their written philosophy statement and parent handbook, an assurance regarding the practice of including children who have identified additional needs or requiring additional resources alongside typically developing children in their program. Providers are expected to make use of the Prevention and Inclusion Programs (PIPS) administered by Starting Point to ensure appropriate practices are implemented in the care and education of children requiring additional resources. Providers should contact Starting Point directly to request child-specific or classroom-specific services to maintain children in their current early care and education placement.

Child-specific consultation services are geared towards the medical, developmental, and/or social-emotional needs of children, and are on behalf of an individual child. The goal of child-specific consultation is to transfer skills from the consultant onto the educator to increase his/her knowledge base and skill set pertaining to the individual child's need to maintain the child in their placement.

In addition, UPK Providers will also have access to the Intensive Classroom Technical Assistance service to assist providers serving multiple children demonstrating challenging behaviors. To receive classroom-specific service, at least 1 child must have a score of 60 or above on their DECA group profile, and they must have previously received child-specific technical assistance. UPK sites will be notified of their eligibility or UPK sites can make a formal request for Intensive Classroom Technical Assistance services through Starting Point's Prevention and Inclusion Programs.

Classroom Technical Assistance offers consultation to teachers and the classroom to support positive social and emotional development and behavior through caregiver skill-building and enhancements to the early learning environment. Consultants will offer teachers strategies and resources that will help children build positive relationships, strengthen self-regulation, and promote self-help skills. This will ultimately prepare them to transition to kindergarten.

### **Child Suspension and Expulsion**



#### **Contact Persons:**

*Lailah Ameer (216) 575-0061 ext.369, [lailah.ameer@starting-point.org](mailto:lailah.ameer@starting-point.org)*

*McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.367, [mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org](mailto:mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org)*

*Connie McGinnis-Loftin (216) 575-0061 ext.368, [connie.mcginis-loftin@starting-point.org](mailto:connie.mcginis-loftin@starting-point.org)*

*Holly Conroy (216) 575-0061 ext.366, [holly.conroy@starting-point.org](mailto:holly.conroy@starting-point.org)*

Over a decade of research demonstrates that the practice of suspension and expulsion in early childhood has profound effects on both children and families. This developmentally inappropriate and exclusionary practice disproportionately affects children of color, particularly boys, and deprives children of valuable learning experiences.<sup>2</sup>

“It is unlawful for the center to discriminate in the enrollment of children upon the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 104 Stat. 32, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.” (ODJFS licensing rule 5101:2-12-07/ appendix C). Furthermore, the program's parent handbook must reflect both suspension/expulsion policies outlined in appendix B, and additionally adhere to UPK policies and procedures for the inclusion of children requiring additional resources. UPK programs must exhaust all reasonable community resources and supports to maintain children within the program for continuity of care and education.

<https://emanuals.jfs.ohio.gov/pdf/pdf-forms/2-12-07APXC.pdf>

<https://emanuals.jfs.ohio.gov/pdf/pdf-forms/2-12-07APXB.pdf>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/ExpulsionBriefImplementingPolicies.pdf>

UPK supports success for all children. **Accordingly, UPK sites shall not suspend or expel a child from a site without consultation from the Prevention and Inclusion team.**

**To reduce the risk of suspension and expulsion, the following guidance should be considered:**

1. UPK sites should adhere to licensing and the Americans w/Disabilities Act (ADA), a safety plan should be developed and implemented.
2. UPK sites should clearly communicate to all staff and parents of enrolled children the site's suspension and expulsion policy within their parent handbook, and have parents sign the policy.
3. Identify child's needs early on during pre-enrollment and or at enrollment.
4. Consider exploring and provide reasonable modifications immediately.
5. Identify and review community resources such as specialists, early intervention providers, or mental and behavioral health consultants.
6. Complete developmental screenings and assessments early within the first 30 days of the child entering your program and request technical assistance through Starting Point's Prevention and Inclusion department.
7. Collaborate by conferencing with parent/caregiver to discuss positive behavior interventions and goals.
8. Once technical assistance has started, the contracted TA Consultant will work in collaboration with the parent, and teacher to write a plan in partnership with the provider to document the action steps and support needed to promote the child's success.
9. The UPK site must document in writing the specific strategies that they have received and implemented.

**When the UPK site is considering suspension or expulsion of a child the following procedure must be adhered to:**

1. The parent will be notified that their child is at risk of suspension/expulsion. The UPK site director or delegated personnel and teacher should hold a suspension/expulsion prevention meeting with the parent to provide information on the precise grounds on which suspension/expulsion is being considered.
2. *If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, a child will not be sent home abruptly.* Notification of suspension must be made to the parents in writing within three (3) working days after following immediate verbal notification. Reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the notification is delivered.
3. When parents have difficulty reading or understanding English due to cultural factors or disability, suspension notification letters are to be available in a family's primary language.



4. In all cases, the notification of suspension must include: the date and probable duration of the suspension; the category and or specific reasons for the suspension, and the importance of parents cooperatively working with the UPK site in resolving the matter.
5. The UPK site will support the child's return to the program continuing with technical assistance services immediately following the suspension.
6. Upon child's return, a designee of the Prevention and Inclusion team will assist the UPK site in developing a written 60-day behavior intervention plan in collaboration with the TA Consultant, UPK site director, teacher, and parent.
7. The case conference meeting will occur via telephone, face-to-face, or virtually depending on the specific situation or circumstance.

**If the child's behavior continues to present a serious safety threat to the child or other children after the Behavior Intervention Plan has been implemented and it is determined that the UPK site is not the most appropriate placement, the Prevention and Inclusion program will assist the child's family in finding the most appropriate early care and education program based on the child's needs**

### **Record Keeping**

Providers must also adhere to the following student record keeping requirements:

1. The Provider will store student records and will be responsible for keeping such records for a minimum of three (3) years per contract. Current student records should be maintained at Provider's program office or at the classroom site.
2. The Provider will maintain student records in a secure location to ensure confidentiality and to prevent unauthorized access.
3. UPK sites will maintain original copies of all forms on site for auditing and monitoring purposes.

Provider will supply copies of children's records to a child's parent(s) upon request or to a third party such as elementary school or other service provider with parental consent.

### **ChildPlus Data System**



**Contact Person: Subhit Kodapully (216) 575-0061 ext. 515,  
[kodapullys@starting-point.org](mailto:kodapullys@starting-point.org)**

The ChildPlus Data System is the management information system, administered by Starting Point that must be used by every UPK provider. ChildPlus is a data management solution for Pre-K used by a wide variety of early care and education providers around the country. UPK providers will use ChildPlus for all administrative record keeping. It is also used to generate

reports that you must submit with your invoice in order to be paid. In addition, an extract from ChildPlus will be used by the program evaluators at Case Western Reserve University to demonstrate the impact of the program. ChildPlus trainers from Starting Point will conduct individualized training with your staff on use of the system. For specific ChildPlus questions, you may contact Julia Garber or William Appling at Starting Point.

Providers MUST adhere to the following ChildPlus System procedures:

1. The provider must maintain accurate monthly enrollment, child assessments results, transition documents, family engagement attendance data, resource coordination data, and related documentation in the ChildPlus data system. This includes entering and updating information in the ChildPlus data system.
2. Any newly enrolled children are to be enrolled into the ChildPlus system within the first full week of enrollment. Failure to enroll a child in the ChildPlus database during the month may result in forfeiture of reimbursement for services rendered on behalf of that child.
3. Provider must ensure that complete student attendance data is entered into ChildPlus WEEKLY.
4. Attending ChildPlus training is mandatory for new UPK providers

### **Provider Participation in UPK Program Evaluation**

 **Contact Person: Megan Foradori (216) 443-6255, [megan.foradori@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:megan.foradori@jfs.ohio.gov)**

UPK Providers play a key role in ongoing evaluation of UPK. Evaluations are instrumental for showing the impact UPK has on children in kindergarten and beyond and for ensuring the UPK program operates efficiently and effectively.

UPK Providers are required to participate completely and provide full cooperation with an independent evaluation to be conducted by the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). This will entail data collection from children, parents and staff with the goal of assessing child outcomes, parent outcomes and satisfaction, staff perceptions and satisfaction, along with other variables. Access to relevant data collected by programs must be provided in a timely manner. Access for the evaluation team to collect data from children, staff and families is required. Results of the UPK program evaluation will be shared with UPK Providers.

### **UPK Notice of Privacy Practices**

All UPK Sites are provided UPK Notice of Privacy Practices. This notice describes how children's data may be used to improve UPK programming. This form must be completed by parent(s)/guardian(s) of child(ren) participating in the UPK Program as evidence that a family has been notified of the UPK privacy practices. Copies of the UPK Privacy Practice Notices should be managed in the following manner:

A copy remains on file at the UPK site

A copy to the Parent/Guardian

A copy to Starting Point, attn: Julia Garber ([Julia.garber@starting-point.org](mailto:Julia.garber@starting-point.org))

## **Marketing and Logo Usage**

 **Contact Person: John Ladd (216) 443-6583, [John.Ladd@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:John.Ladd@jfs.ohio.gov) (email preferred)**

### **Communications**

As a UPK program, you are part of a high-priority initiative to raise the quality of child care and preschool in our community. Being part of UPK provides great marketing opportunities and comes with certain requirements.

Per the terms of your contract, you are required to include language recognizing your participation in UPK in promotional print material, advertising, publicity, and on your webpage. This includes radio spots, and any media where you are highlighting your program and recruiting families. Placement should be of a size and position as to be easily noticeable or heard. Both the Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children and Starting Point are available to assist you in meeting these requirements. These requirements need met not later than 60 days after the start of the contract period, and to remain in place through the end of the contract.

To assist you, we have prepared additional guidance below. What is presented here are *minimum requirements*. You may have ideas and opportunities to go beyond these. We'd be happy to discuss your ideas and see how we could help.

### **Print Material and Webpage**

Includes: Fliers, brochures, posters, postcards, transit advertising, etc.

Required Language: "A Universal Pre-Kindergarten site funded by Invest in Children."  
Can be placed next to the Invest in Children UPK logo, or within other text in the document. Either way the logo needs to be present.

Required Graphics: Invest in Children UPK logo. Minimum size is an overall width no less than 10 percent of the width of the paper laid flat and unfolded, but never less than one inch in width irrespective of paper size.

### **Radio Advertising**

Includes: All audio-only promotion on broadcast radio, streaming radio, podcasts, etc.

Required Language: "We are a UPK site funded by Invest in Children."

Required Length: Enunciated at a normal speed and in not less than 3 seconds.

## Facilities Signage

Placement: Typically, entry points or common areas used by families and visitors.

Required Signage: Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children will, at our expense, provide you with at least two options for onsite signage. Signage will need to be conspicuously placed in an area visible to visiting parents, guests, or the public.

## Social Media

Includes: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Requested Action: Periodic original postings that highlight relationship with the UPK Program and Invest in Children. The periodic resharing of Invest in Children social media content shall meet this requirement.

Failure to comply with these communication requirements within the prescribed time period may result in the delay of payments until the deficiencies are addressed.

## Proofing Requirements

All print or broadcast items that will include the Invest in Children logo and mention of the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program must be cleared through Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children via an e-mail to John Ladd at [John.Ladd@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:John.Ladd@jfs.ohio.gov) well in advance of final print or broadcast deadlines.

The Invest in Children UPK logo. Digital files will be provided upon request.



## Monitoring and Compliance

To ensure fidelity in the implementation of the UPK Program model OEC/IIC will conduct unannounced monitoring visits during the Contract Period to assess compliance with all UPK operating procedures and program requirements. These visits may include review of files for required UPK documents, financial documents, as well as observation of classrooms and review of all required Provider materials.

## Corrective Action Planning

Following on-site monitoring visits, the Provider will receive a copy of the Monitoring Report. In the event of deficiencies, the Provider will be required to develop a Corrective Action Plan, which must be completed and submitted to OEC/IIC within 30 days of the monitoring visit or receipt of the Monitoring Report whichever is later.

### **Access to Records and Other Documentation**

Provider will allow access to OEC/IIC employees and OEC/IIC contracted agency representatives to all records including, but not limited to, student records of children enrolled in the UPK Program; parent applications; registers and roll books of teachers; student absence verification records (parent/doctor notes, telephone logs, and related documents); staff lists and teaching permits and/or educational qualifications; business licenses held; social security numbers; dates of hire and dates of termination; staff timesheets; non-paid staff and volunteer sign-in sheets; transportation and other related service subcontracts; school calendars; documentation relating to parent participation plan; parent handbook; liability and worker's compensation insurance policies; marketing materials; by-laws; list of current Board of Directors, if incorporated; licensing records; tuition rates; statements of income and expenses; general journals; cash receipts and disbursement books; general ledgers, invoices, and supporting documents; payroll ledgers and supporting documents; and bank statements and canceled checks from Provider's UPK account. Provider will make available to OEC/IIC all budgetary information including backup documentation for operating budgets submitted by Provider to OEC/IIC for the relevant Contract Period being audited.

### **Provider Probation**

Should the program be placed on probation, the Office of Early Childhood/Invest in Children may decide to maintain the contract with the provider subject to the following conditions:

1. The provider will work diligently to improve and resolve any issues that contributed to the star rating downgrade.
2. At the first opportunity, the provider will apply to have its star rating (minimum three (3) stars) reinstated.
3. The provider will promptly notify OEC/IIC of the outcome of the application.

If the provider is willing to comply with these terms, they will respond in writing no later than one week after notification from OEC/IIC that they have been placed on probation. Please be aware that OEC/IIC decision to maintain the contract does not constitute a waiver of any of the County's rights under the contract, including, without limitation, the right to terminate the contract for any future breach or to terminate the contract between the date of the provider notification of star rating reduction and when the provider is eligible to reapply for a star rating increase.

OEC/IIC may place a Provider on probation, indicating a serious risk of contract termination. Probation warns a Provider of the possibility of funding loss due to program quality issues,

financial mismanagement, or failure to follow UPK program requirements. Sites may be placed on probation for the following:

- Failure to report a decrease in Star Rating
- Failure to report a violation of a contract agreement
- Failure to follow UPK Program Requirements
- Failure to correct ongoing issues of quality
- Failure to submit timely invoices
- Failure to follow UPK scholarship guidelines
- Staff and/or teachers not meeting specified qualifications for a three (3) month period
- Failure to participate in UPK technical assistance/monitoring visits
- Failure to submit mandatory reports by due dates

### **Reasons for UPK Contract Termination**

Reasons for contract termination include, but are not limited to:

1. The Provider's license is suspended or revoked. (OEC/IIC and/or its contracted agency representatives will immediately report a Provider to licensing/certification authorities in cases where there is belief that a serious care deficit exists, or the health and safety of children is being endangered by the Provider.)
2. The Provider is found to have committed a violation of licensing requirements, which is deemed by OEC/IIC to be a serious deficiency.
3. The Provider's teaching staff is found to have committed a violation of licensing requirements, which is deemed by OEC/IIC to be a serious deficiency.
4. A report of child abuse by Provider is substantiated.
5. OEC/IIC has received three (3) or more substantiated complaints about Provider within the contract period.
6. The Provider is repeatedly uncooperative with OEC/IIC staff and/or OEC/IIC contracted agency representatives (e.g., refuses OEC/IIC unannounced visits, quality monitoring or quality support, non-compliance with reporting requirements).
7. The Provider provides false information to OEC/IIC.
8. It has been determined that Provider has used UPK funds in a fraudulent manner.
9. Serious or repeated instances involving noncompliance with UPK Program requirements.
10. Funding no longer exists or is insufficient to pay for the UPK Program.

11. The Provider is unwilling to make changes to maintain compliance with the UPK requirements and/or in violation of OEC/IIC policies or administrative and statutory guidelines by any state, federal or local governmental agency.
12. The Provider fails to maintain its licensing status or a three-star Step Up To Quality rating.

The Provider will be informed in writing of the basis for OEC's/IIC's action, and the effective date of such action.

### **Notify the OEC/IIC of These Changes**

 **Contact Person: Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574, [joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov)**

#### **Address Change or Change in Ownership**

Provider will notify OEC/IIC in writing of any change in mailing address within ten (10) days of the change. Provider will notify OEC/IIC in writing of any proposed change in operating facility address or ownership at least thirty (30) calendar days in advance of the change. Continuation in the UPK Program after change of ownership will depend on the new ownership successfully completing a due diligence review. Current owners must notify parents and any prospective buyers that continuation in the UPK Program is not guaranteed and that new owners are subject to a due diligence review upon taking possession of the facility if they wish to remain in the Program. If such change is required by an emergency, such as fire, flooding or earthquake, Provider will notify OEC/IIC of a change in operating facility address as soon as possible.

#### **Site Closure**

Provider must notify OEC/IIC at least one month in advance of a planned site closure. OEC/IIC will then terminate the Provider contract to coincide with the last day of service. All requirements related to contract termination must be followed by the Provider. See Contract Termination section.

#### **Classroom Opening/Closure**

Providers must request OEC/IIC approval prior to the opening of any new classroom to ensure the budget increase can be supported. Similarly, Providers must notify OEC/IIC anytime a classroom needs to close. Providers should notify OEC/IIC of the classroom closure as soon as possible, but no later than the following billing cycle, to ensure their budget/invoice can be adjusted accordingly.

#### **Staff and Management Changes**

Provider must document and update in ChildPlus any material staffing and management changes, or extended leaves longer than three (3) weeks including, but not limited to, changes in lead teacher, assistant teacher, site supervisor, program director and senior management personnel. This must be completed within fourteen (14) calendar days of the change.

## **Reduction of Step Up to Quality Star Rating**

The Cuyahoga County OEC/IIC expects to be promptly notified in any change of star rating. In particular, OEC/IIC expects to be notified immediately (no later than (2) business days after they receive notification) in a decrease in star rating

Should the provider receive a decrease in star rating below the minimum three (3) star rating and does not promptly notify The Cuyahoga County OEC/IIC the provider is subject to immediate termination of the contract.

Should the provider promptly notify OEC/IIC, the provider may be placed on probation at the discretion of OEC/IIC.

## **Essential UPK Documents and Forms**

The following documents are available in downloadable format on the OEC/IIC website. The most reliable source for the latest versions of all UPK forms are on the OEC/IIC website: <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/programs/detail/upk-universal-prekindergarten-program-for-providers>

### **Enrollment**

- UPK Scholarship Worksheet
- UPK Health Screening Resources and Acknowledgement Form
- UPK Notice of Privacy Practices and Acknowledgement Form
- A Guide to Family Centered Preschool Brochure
- UPK Safety Net Scholarship Application

### **Family-Centered Preschool**

- Epstein's Framework
- One Year Action Plan Form G-Goals
- One Year Action Plan Form T-Types
- Parent Advisory Committee Nomination Form
- ReadyRosie Family Partnership Plan
- Transition Summary Form

### **Invoicing**

- Scholarship Adjustment Invoice



- *Note: The UPK Monthly Invoice is not posted to the OEC/IIC website. Each agency receives their individualized monthly invoice template at the start of the program year.*

### **Program Budget and Expense Report**

- *Note: These documents are not posted to the OEC/IIC website. Each agency receives their individualized, approved program budget and expense report at the start of the program year. If changes need to be made, please email [upkinvoices@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:upkinvoices@jfs.ohio.gov)*

### **UPK Other**

- UPK Child File Document Checklist



## 4. Family Centered Preschool

The UPK program model recognizes the critical role that families play in their children’s development and the importance of engaging families to support them in this role. From the moment a family enrolls in a UPK site to the day a child graduates from UPK to kindergarten, many different UPK staff, including administrators, teachers, family advocates, and others, will play an important role in ensuring that families feel welcome and valued in their child’s education and in our UPK program.

Engagement with parents at this important time in their life and the life of their family offers an opportunity to go beyond traditional notions of family engagement. UPK Programs provide “family-centered preschool” which means that engagement with parents will not only facilitate children’s development but also support the needs of the entire family.

UPK assists families, empowers teachers, and gives all children the opportunities they deserve. UPK providers will provide Family-Centered Preschool through four important roles:



The OEC/IIC and Starting Point partner together to ensure that all UPK staff have access to the following tools, knowledge, and support needed to provide Family-Centered Preschool.

Family-Centered Preschool promotes positive and supportive relationships between program staff and families, caregiver and child, and among families in the program.



- National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University
- UPK Parent Advisory Committee

### **National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University**

 *Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 361, [catherine.thomas@starting-point.org](mailto:catherine.thomas@starting-point.org)*

Based on more than three decades of research, establishing strong connections between home and school promotes many positive outcomes for children including better attendance, improved social skills and adjustment to school, and better school performance. The UPK Program has adopted the research-based family engagement framework developed at Johns Hopkins University by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein and the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). NNPS offers tools and strategies to organize school, family, and community partnerships to improve schools, strengthen families, and increase children's success. Cuyahoga County UPK is a member of the NNPS and, utilizing funding from OEC/IIC, each UPK site is also a member of NNPS.

With the assistance of the Starting Point Associate Director of Universal Pre-Kindergarten, each UPK site will be responsible for coordinating an Action Team for Partnerships and for creating a year-long Action Plan that incorporates the NNPS philosophy and family engagement opportunities for each type of involvement identified in the model.

An Action Team for Partnership includes UPK caregivers, UPK staff, and community members. The Action Team will develop a one-year Action Plan for Partnership using NNPS tools that gather information from parents, staff, and administrators. This plan supports a variety of activities and opportunities for families through Epstein's six types of involvement:

## THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

### EPSTEIN'S SIX TYPES OF INVOLVEMENT



**PARENTING:** Assist families in understanding child development, and in setting home conditions that support children as learners. Assist schools in understanding families.



**COMMUNICATING:** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.



**VOLUNTEERING:** Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school or in other locations to support students and school programs.



**LEARNING AT HOME:** Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including curriculum-related activities, Kindergarten readiness and other program decisions.



**DECISION MAKING:** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, action teams, the UPK Parent Advisory Committee and other parent organizations.



**COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY:** Coordinate resources and services for students, families, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community.

The Starting Point Associate Director of Universal Pre-Kindergarten will assist each site in the development, implementation, and evaluation of its Action Plan.

Providers will be required to document attendance for all family engagement meetings, events, and activities using the Child Plus system.

Throughout the program year, regular Ohio Approved trainings and meetings will be held for sites to meet and discuss their progress with their Action Plans and present examples of "Best Practices" and success stories in family engagement. Each site will be expected to send at least one member of its Action Team to each of these required trainings/meetings. If a Provider adopts another research-based model, the Starting Point Associate Director of UPK will assist the Provider in aligning its model with the six types of involvement.

## UPK Parent Advisory Committee

 **Contact Person: Alyssa Swiatek (216) 348-3971, [alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov)**

The UPK Parent Advisory Committee is a leadership group of UPK caregivers from across the UPK system that provide direct input on the policies, programs, and practices needed to support a stronger, family centered, UPK community. This parent-driven committee will meet regularly throughout the program year and work alongside OEC/IIC and Starting Point staff to help shape family centered programs and policies at a community level.

UPK agencies will be required to nominate one UPK caregiver representative according to the procedure set forth by the OEC/IIC.

**Family-Centered Preschool builds caregivers' knowledge, skills, and confidence as a child's first and most influential teacher and advocate.**



- Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement
- ReadyRosie Family Engagement Curriculum

## ReadyRosie Family Engagement Curriculum

 **Contact Person: Alyssa Swiatek (216) 348-3971, [alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov)**

UPK providers are required to implement ReadyRosie, an early education tool that leverages the power of mobile technology and video modeling, to help UPK teachers enhance classroom-to-home and home-to-classroom connections and partner with parents in the education of their child. This web-based parent education program allows UPK teachers to select 2-minute ReadyRosie videos that align with weekly lesson plans and learning objectives from the Ready Rosie library of videos and send them to parents via a playlist. UPK caregivers will receive this playlist directly on their computer, tablets or smart phones.

Each UPK site will complete a ReadyRosie Family Partnership Plan to support successful ReadyRosie implementation. ReadyRosie "Just the Basics" Ohio Approved training, Office Hours, and technical assistance will be offered to UPK teachers, administrators, and other staff to ensure that ReadyRosie goals are met for the UPK program year.

Family-Centered Preschool supports family stability and economic security through appropriate and timely linkages to services.



- Resource Coordination
- 2GEN

## Resource Coordination



### *Contact Persons:*

*Brittany Minch (216) 575-0061 ext. 393, [brittany.minch@starting-point.org](mailto:brittany.minch@starting-point.org)*

*Jasmine Price (216) 575-0061 ext. 389, [jasmine.price@starting-point.org](mailto:jasmine.price@starting-point.org)*

UPK Providers are expected to support families in accessing any needed supports or services in coordination with the UPK Regional Resource Coordinators and the “No Wrong Door” policy. “No Wrong Door” means that families initially involved with a specific OEC/IIC program or service will be linked to any additional relevant OEC/IIC and Cuyahoga County programs or services. Each program is required to have a parent resource center, a resource manual, the UPK statement about Resource Coordination in their orientation process, and information posted regarding United Way’s 2-1-1 Help Center.

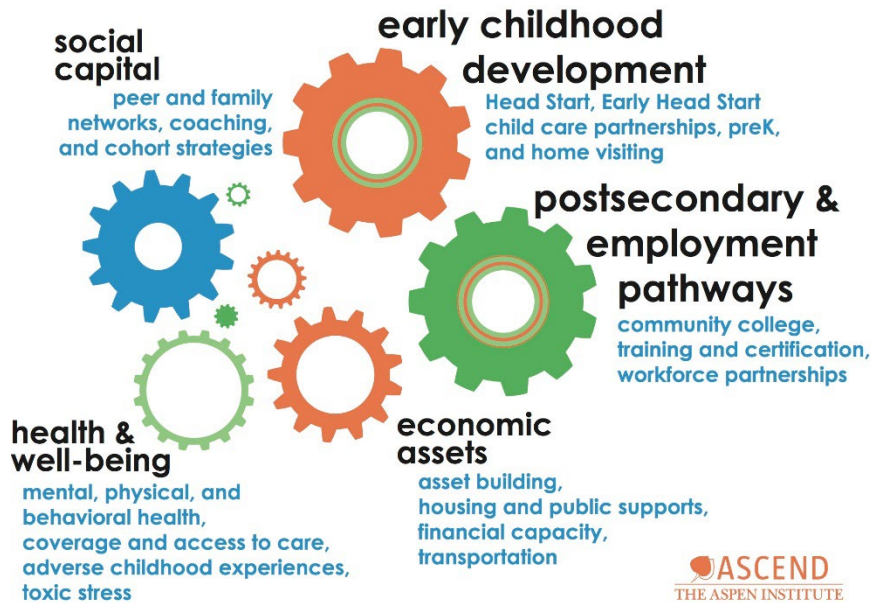
Providers are required to document referrals for services, as well as any follow-up, using the Child Plus system.

In the interest of promoting and supporting the No Wrong Door Policy, sites are expected to send representatives to Resource Information Training (RIT) Sessions organized by the UPK Regional Resource Coordinators. Representation should include the director or alternate administrator and/or a classroom teacher. Parents are always encouraged to attend RIT sessions.

## 2GEN

 **Contact Person: Alyssa Swiatek (216) 348-3971, [alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov)**

A 2GEN approach, as described by the Ascend at the Aspen Institute, recognizes that the well-being of children and adults are directly interconnected.



The UPK program uses a holistic, family-centered lens to understand the strengths and needs of families. Using the 2GEN approach, UPK sites will provide resources, services, and opportunities for UPK parents and caregivers with a focus on pathways to adult education and employment.

All sites will receive professional development and skill building opportunities, including Ohio Approved training, related to 2GEN.

Family-Centered Preschool supports family engagement best practices and innovation.



- **Family Engagement Support**
  - Professional Development
  - Family Engagement Coaching
- **Family Engagement Best Practices**
  - Transitions

## **Family Engagement Support**

### **Professional Development**



*Contact Persons:*

*Alyssa Swiatek (216) 348-3971, [alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov)*

*Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 535, [catherine.thomas@starting-point.org](mailto:catherine.thomas@starting-point.org)*

*Brittany Minch (216) 575-0061 ext. 393, [brittany.minch@starting-point.org](mailto:brittany.minch@starting-point.org)*

*Jasmine Price (216) 575-0061 ext. 389, [jasmine.price@starting-point.org](mailto:jasmine.price@starting-point.org)*

All sites will receive professional development and skill building opportunities, including Ohio Approved training related to Family-Centered Preschool, family engagement, resource coordination, and other effective and innovative practices.

UPK staff should refer to the training calendar distributed by Starting Point at the beginning of each program year for all mandatory and optional trainings. UPK Administrators are responsible for sending appropriate UPK Staff to all mandatory trainings. For questions related to specific trainings, please contact the appropriate OEC/IIC or Starting Point staff as indicated on the training calendar.

### **Family Engagement Coaching**



*Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 361,*

*[catherine.thomas@starting-point.org](mailto:catherine.thomas@starting-point.org)*

Starting Point UPK Family Engagement Specialists will support family engagement efforts in UPK classrooms. Each site will have an assigned Family Engagement Specialist who will review program policies and practices related to family engagement and provide family engagement technical assistance visits to UPK program staff. The Family Engagement Specialist will act as an ongoing resource to UPK teachers and program staff and teachers in the implementation of the NNPS Framework and other Family Centered-Preschool practices including the 2GEN approach and ReadyRosie.



## **Family Engagement Best Practices**

### **Transitions**

Recognizing that families will be transitioning into the UPK program from a number of other settings (e.g., home visiting, early intervention, infant/toddler classrooms, home), UPK sites should support a seamless transition and ensure families understand each site's administrative policies in addition to the specialized support they receive as a member of the UPK community.

As required by Child Care Licensing rules, a Parent Handbook that includes the program's administrative policies in writing must be distributed to all UPK Families upon enrollment.


"A Guide to Family-Centered Preschool" brochure was developed to help families understand the UPK program and the special services and support that is available for UPK Families. This guide must be distributed along with the Parent Handbook.

For additional copies of the "A Guide to Family-Centered Preschool" please contact the OEC/IIC.

 **Contact Person: Alyssa Swiatek (216) 348-3971, [alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:alyssa.swiatek@jfs.ohio.gov)**

The move from preschool to kindergarten is one of the most significant changes in a child's life and the life of the family. UPK sites work closely with the public schools to help families understand what they need to do to enroll their children in kindergarten and help the schools and kindergarten teachers understand the needs of the UPK children that they will soon be seeing. The UPK program will support a seamless transition experience from UPK to kindergarten through the following:

1. Each site will develop and implement a plan for year-round kindergarten transition experiences for children who will be kindergarten-eligible in the following school year.
2. UPK staff complete a Transition Summary form for each child transitioning to Kindergarten in collaboration with each child's family. The UPK site also facilitates the transfer of a copy of that form to the school where the child will attend Kindergarten and keep a copy on file for the duration of the contract at the UPK site for review by UPK personnel.
3. Document all activities related to transitions for children and caregivers using the Child Plus data system. This includes entering the transition summary form information per instructions that will be provided by Starting Point.
4. Engage in efforts to support the March into Kindergarten campaign to raise awareness of the importance of on-time kindergarten registration.

 **Contact Persons:**  
***Brittany Minch (216) 575-0061 ext. 393, [brittany.minch@starting-point.org](mailto:brittany.minch@starting-point.org)***  
***Jasmine Price (216) 575-0061 ext. 389, [jasmine.price@starting-point.org](mailto:jasmine.price@starting-point.org)***

# Appendix A: Contract Exhibits

## EXHIBIT I SCOPE OF WORK

### FOR THE UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (UPK) PROGRAM Contract Period: August 1, 2021 thru July 31, 2024

#### PROGRAM PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program is to assure that all 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in a participating public or private child care center, preschool, or family child care home receive high quality care that promotes their development and readiness for kindergarten.

#### SCOPE OF WORK (PROVIDER Deliverables):

The PROVIDER agrees to provide UPK services and provide a gold standard of early care and education to all children served by the PROVIDER, ages three (3) to five (5) years old **not** in kindergarten and not kindergarten eligible, and living in Cuyahoga County.

The PROVIDER will administer the UPK Program in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and Starting Point and shall provide and/or meet the following nine (9) programmatic objectives as a part of its scope of work to achieve a high-quality UPK Program for children ages 3 to 5 years old:

#### A. Management Information System

To facilitate payments to programs, track program enrollment, and other program information, PROVIDER is required to utilize the ChildPlus online information management system. PROVIDER is responsible for entering enrollment, attendance and other program data into ChildPlus. Data must be entered into ChildPlus on a weekly basis. Access to ChildPlus as well as training and ongoing support on the use of ChildPlus will be provided by Starting Point at no cost to PROVIDER.

Reporting requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Child and family background
- Child attendance and enrollment
- Assessment results
- Teacher qualifications
- Resource referrals and status for children and families
- Family engagement events and attendance
- Other data as requested by OEC or Starting Point

## B. Quality Settings

The aim is to assure that all 3- to 5-year-olds enrolled in a participating public or private child care center, preschool, or family child care home receive a high-quality early childhood education experience that promotes their development and encourage their love of learning.

The PROVIDER is expected to display competence in serving linguistically and culturally diverse children, as well as, children with special needs and adhere to the following standards:

1. Group sizes and teacher-child ratios must permit personalized and caring interactions between students and teachers. In center-based and school-based programs, this is defined as a 1:10 teacher-child ratio, with group size not to exceed 20 children. In Type B Family Child Care Homes, this is defined as a 1:6 teacher-child ratio, with group size not to exceed 6 children. These are minimum requirements.
2. UPK classrooms must engage in developmentally appropriate practices that foster positive relationships among teachers and children, children and their peers, teachers and their peers, and teachers and families. UPK classrooms are boy-friendly, free of implicit bias, and welcoming of all types of children and families.
3. UPK classrooms must use research-based curricula that are aligned with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and demonstrates its alignment to assessment.
4. Written individualized child-specific lesson plans must be developed reflecting the specific goals, objectives and content areas of Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and posted in each classroom.
5. The PROVIDER must promote and assist families in acquiring health-related diagnostic screening and examinations to ensure children are able to fully engage in and receive optimal benefit from the UPK Program. PROVIDER will work with Parent(s)/Caregiver to complete the UPK Health Screening Requirement Acknowledgment Form. PROVIDER and Parent(s)/Caregiver will sign the form; PROVIDER will give original to the Parent(s)/Caregiver and keep a copy in their files. OEC recommends diagnostic screening and examinations be completed within sixty (60) days of enrollment and annually thereafter with appropriate referrals for service completed within ninety (90) days of identification of need. Referrals for health-related services must be documented using the ChildPlus data system described above. Recommended diagnostic screening and examination includes:
  - Dental examination
  - Blood lead level
  - Speech, language, and hearing screening
  - Vision screening
  - Hematocrit and hemoglobin
6. The PROVIDER must ensure that the program environment is inclusive in accommodating a variety of children's needs and stimulates learning across social, emotional, cognitive, and physical domains. This includes children with special behavioral, developmental, and medical needs.

7. PROVIDERS licensed by ODJFS MUST accept publicly funded child care subsidies and encourage families with subsidies to enroll through PROVIDER's recruitment activities.
8. The PROVIDER must assess children's learning and development using the ASQ-3 (Ages & Stages Questionnaire) and the DECA (Deveraux Early Childhood Assessment) and/or any instrument specified in the future by OEC. In addition, PROVIDER may also use an instrument mandated by the State of Ohio. The results must be used to inform adults about children's learning and development and to tailor instruction to meet individual children's needs. Assessment results must be shared with each child's parent/guardian and documented using the data system that is associated with each assessment instrument. The strategies and activities, based on assessment results and used to inform instruction for individual children, as well as the group, must be documented in writing.
9. The PROVIDER agrees to engage in the development and implementation of a program improvement plan based on assessment conducted by Starting Point to ensure that the above standards are met. Activities involved in the development and implementation of the plan include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - The administration of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) for center-based programs or Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R) for home-based programs.
  - Technical assistance (TA) visits
  - Training and professional development

The plan must be updated annually. Note: the program improvement plan is also a requirement of Step Up to Quality.

10. UPK program funding is provided to allow the PROVIDER to enhance program quality. At the beginning of each contract year, PROVIDER will submit a proposed budget for program dollars to OEC for approval. The purpose of the budget is to develop a spending plan to enhance quality. All expenditures of UPK program funds during the contract period must be reported monthly and conform to the approved budget unless permission has been obtained for a change to the budget. The expenditure report is separate from the invoice, which must be submitted monthly.
11. Prohibited Expenditures: UPK program funds MAY NOT BE USED TO SUPPLANT other public funding sources including, but not limited to, local school district funds and any state or federal funding. UPK funds must be treated as restricted income and used solely to enhance the quality of a PROVIDER'S preschool program. OEC prohibits the use of UPK funds to cover expenses that are not directly related to the UPK Program.

### **C. Qualified Staff and Professional Development**

The UPK Program cannot succeed without a skilled and well-trained early childhood workforce. UPK establishes requirements for initial background and educational levels of teaching staff, and, over time, phases in even more stringent requirements. All UPK teachers will meet minimum standards and will work toward advancing their qualifications. To this end, the following is required:

1. Center-based and school-based PROVIDERS must require all personnel who work with 3- to 5-year-olds to possess the education and background required to facilitate children's development and readiness for school:
  - a. Center administrators must have a minimum of 2 years classroom experience and one of the following:
    - a. Bachelor's degree in an approved related field, or
    - b. Bachelor's degree in unrelated field with at least 24 credit hours in early childhood education, or
    - c. Associate degree in an approved related field and be working toward a bachelor's degree in an approved related field. Administrators who have not obtained a bachelor's degree must enroll in coursework, with a goal of enrolling by January 2022.
  - b. All lead teachers must have a minimum of an associate degree in an approved related field and be working toward a bachelor's degree in an approved related field.
  - c. Assistant teachers, teacher aides, substitutes, and paraprofessionals must have a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and be working toward an associate degree in an approved related field. (This requirement is waived for public school district preschools.)
2. Type B Family Child Care Home PROVIDERS must require all personnel who work with 3- to 5-year-olds to possess the education and background required to facilitate children's development and readiness for school:
  - a. Program owners and lead teachers must have an associate degree in an approved related field.
  - b. Assistant teachers, teacher aides, substitutes, and paraprofessionals must have a current CDA, or Current Pathway Level 2 and be working toward a CDA. Staff in this category who have not obtained a CDA must enroll in a program to receive a CDA credential, with a goal of enrolling by January 2022.
3. Degrees must be in one of the following approved related fields: Child Development; Family Studies; Human Ecology; Human Development; Child and Family Community Studies; Elementary Education; School Counselor; Middle or Secondary Education; Physical Education; Elementary Intervention; Early Intervention-ECE or Special Education. Psychology or Recreation Management approved if 12 semester or 18 quarter hours of child development coursework, with a grade of C or better or pass.
4. Upon execution of this contract, any new personnel hired by PROVIDER to serve in the UPK program must meet the qualifications relative to the position for which he/she is hired.
5. The PROVIDER must require that all personnel who work with 3-to 5-year-olds submit their qualifications to the Ohio Professional Registry. Information obtained in the registry must be updated annually or as staffing changes are made. The PROVIDER must consent to allow OEC to access information contained in the registry.
6. The PROVIDER must ensure that personnel pursuing advanced qualifications are adequately supported to meet the educational requirements of UPK.
7. The PROVIDER, in collaboration with personnel, shall complete an individualized professional development plan for all UPK personnel and document all activities related to professional development using this plan. This plan must be updated annually.

8. The PROVIDER must provide Starting Point staff and consultants with access to the classrooms and children in order to conduct the required assessment activities.
9. The PROVIDER must make their administrators and staff available to representatives of Starting Point, as needed, to provide the appropriate technical assistance and training required for successful program implementation. Providers will be notified of required trainings at the beginning of each program year.
10. The PROVIDER must provide representation to all UPK Director's Network meetings.
11. The PROVIDER is required to participate in Ohio Healthy Programs (OHP). If the Provider is not already designated as an OHP, it must obtain the designation by July 31, 2022. Current OHP designees are required to maintain the designation. OHP training and technical assistance will be facilitated by Starting Point and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

#### **D. Family-Centered Preschool**

The UPK program recognizes the critical role families play in their children's development and the importance of engaging families to support them in this role. In addition, engagement with parents at this important time in their life and the life of their family offers an opportunity to go beyond traditional notions of family engagement. UPK Programs provide "family-centered preschool" which means that engagement with parents will not only facilitate children's development but also support the needs of the entire family.

Family-centered preschools support meaningful and effective partnerships between parents and teachers and seeks to promote child- and adult-level outcomes. This includes:

- Promoting positive and supportive relationships between program staff and families, caregiver and child, and among families in the program.
- Building caregivers' knowledge, skill, and confidence as a child's first and most influential teacher and advocate.
- Supporting family stability and economic security through appropriate and timely linkages to services.
- Supporting family engagement best practices and innovation.

Family-Centered Preschool for UPK across all sites will be led by the Family Engagement Manager in the OEC in collaboration with Starting Point staff. With their support, the PROVIDER must implement a family-centered preschool approach through the following:

1. Provide families with "A Guide to Family-Centered Preschool" to support a seamless transition into the UPK system from various other settings (e.g., home visiting, early intervention, infant/toddler classrooms, home).
2. Convene and support an Action Team for Partnership, composed of staff, family members, and community members.
3. Develop and implement a one-year Action Plan for Partnership for engaging parents and families.
4. Maintain membership in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) by complying with all end of the year reporting requirements of the NNPS.
5. Maintain records in the data system of family participation in the classroom and in family engagement activities and events.

6. Maintain a Family Resource Center or Family Resource Manual containing information for families on relevant supportive services and resources in the community.
7. When parents and children have needs for health or social services, collaborate as needed with the UPK Regional Resource Coordinators at Starting Point to link families to community services and supports as identified.
8. Document all activities related to facilitating services, linkages and referrals for children and caregivers using the ChildPlus data system.
9. Attend all training and meeting events pertaining to the provision of linkages and services to families in the UPK program.
10. Implement ReadyRosie, a web-based family engagement curriculum, to support effective partnerships between UPK staff and families. Sites are required to meet or exceed UPK goals for ReadyRosie as set by the OEC and family engagement team. Classroom teachers will be required to select videos relevant to classroom curriculum from the Ready Rosie library of videos and send them to parents via an email on a regular basis. Training will be provided to PROVIDER on Ready Rosie implementation and evaluation and there is no additional cost to the PROVIDER for this component.
11. Participate in annual skills training related to effective interactions and communications with families.
12. Receive coaching and technical assistance from Family Engagement Coaches at Starting Point to support positive family engagement policies and practices consistent with family-centered preschool. Coaches will review program policies, observe classroom and program practices related to family engagement, and act as an ongoing resource and support to program staff.
13. Identify and nominate parent leaders to the UPK Parent Advisory Committee according to processes outlined by the OEC.

## **E. Transition to Kindergarten**

The move from preschool to kindergarten is one of the most significant changes in a child's life and the life of the family. The UPK program will support a seamless transition experience from UPK to kindergarten through the following:

1. Facilitate transitions to kindergarten, working closely with the public schools to help families understand what they need to do to enroll their children in kindergarten, and helping the schools and kindergarten teachers understand the needs of the children that they will soon be seeing.
2. In collaboration with each child's family, complete a Transition Summary form for each child transitioning to Kindergarten. PROVIDER will facilitate the transmission of a copy of that form to the school where the child will attend Kindergarten. Also, a copy will be kept on file for the duration of the contract at the UPK site for review by UPK personnel.
3. Document all activities related to transitions for children and caregivers using the ChildPlus data system.
4. Attend all training and meeting events pertaining to the provision of transitions in the UPK program.

## **F. Child Suspension and Expulsion**

UPK sites shall not suspend or expel a child from a site without consultation from the Manager of the Special Needs Child Care program or his/her designee. When the UPK site is considering suspension or expulsion of a child the following procedure must be adhered to:

1. The UPK site must have made a referral for SNCC technical assistance or contacted one of the SNCC contracted agencies in a timely fashion and in advance of the decision that the child should transition to another program.
2. The UPK site must document in writing the specific strategies that they have received and implemented.
3. Once documentation has been reviewed by the Manager of the Special Needs Child Care program or his/her designee, a case conference team meeting will be convened including the Director or Administrator of the UPK site.
4. The case conference meeting will occur via telephone or face-to-face depending on the specific situation or circumstance.
5. The Manager of the Special Needs Child Care program will assist the UPK site in developing a plan to provide additional support and services on behalf of the child.
6. In cases where it is determined that the current placement is not appropriate for the child, the Manager of the Special Needs Child Care program will assist the family in locating an appropriate setting that meets the needs of the child.

Each UPK site's ability to serve children with special needs, including data related to suspensions and expulsions, will be evaluated during the monitoring process. The ability of each site to provide high-quality services to all children enrolled in UPK is integral to the program's success.

## **G. Monitoring and Accountability**

A core element of the UPK program is tracking of fiscal and operational components to monitor performance. OEC will examine and monitor services provided by the PROVIDER to ensure adherence, implementation and demonstration of compliance with the UPK Program. To achieve the desired outcome, the following is needed:

1. The PROVIDER is expected to adhere to monitoring and evaluation processes established by OEC. OEC will conduct fiscal and monitoring audits including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a. Unannounced site visits to observe program operations
  - b. Participation in both self-assessment and outside assessment
  - c. Review of program records including, but not limited to, child files, staff files, licensing/certification compliance reports, corrective action plans, and evidence of Step Up to Quality participation.
  - d. Review of attendance records against invoices
  - e. ReadyRosie utilization
  - f. Compliance with contract requirements
2. The PROVIDER is responsible for ensuring that monitors representing OEC have access to documentation needed to complete monitoring for program compliance. Any non-compliance identified through monitoring or auditing will result in the development of a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) or other action as deemed appropriate for the non-compliance.
3. The PROVIDER is required to submit a Corrective Action Plan within 30 days of OEC notifying PROVIDER of non-compliance and will be required to resolve any non-compliance issues.



4. The PROVIDER must maintain a Step Up to Quality rating of at least a 3-star (three) level. Should PROVIDER's star rating be reduced below three stars, or should PROVIDER lose their star rating altogether, they must notify the OEC immediately (no later than two (2) business days after they receive notification).

## **H. Independent Evaluation**

PROVIDER is required to participate completely and provide full cooperation with an independent evaluation to be conducted by the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). This will entail data collection from children, parents and staff with the goal of assessing child outcomes, parent outcomes and satisfaction, staff perceptions and satisfaction, along with other variables. Access to relevant data collected by programs must be provided in a timely manner. Access for the evaluation team to collect data from children, staff and families is required.

## **I. Communications**

The PROVIDER will collaborate with both OEC and Starting Point as requested to support broader UPK outreach, recruitment, and awareness efforts in the community. Accordingly, the PROVIDER will:

1. Acknowledge their UPK participation to the following minimum standards not later than 60 days after the start of the contract. A UPK Participation Branding Guide with specific details will be provided at the start of the contract period. UPK Participation Acknowledgement will Include:
  - a. Visible webpage acknowledgement according to the provided guidance
  - b. Prominently display provided signage on site recognizing UPK participation
  - c. UPK logo inclusion on all printed site promotion materials
  - d. Participation acknowledgement in all broadcast media according to the provided guidance
2. Distribute "A Guide to Family-Centered Preschool" to families upon registration.

Failure to comply with these communication requirements within the prescribed time period may result in the delay of payments until the deficiencies are addressed.

## EXHIBIT II

### FAMILY ELIGIBILITY & PARENT FEE REDUCTION GUIDELINES FOR THE UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (UPK) PROGRAM Contract Period: August 1, 2021 thru July 31, 2024

The Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Program is available to all children ages three (3) to five (5) years old **not** in kindergarten and not kindergarten eligible and living in Cuyahoga County. Parents will choose the UPK setting in which to enroll their child.

Following are the family eligibility and parent fee reduction guidelines for the UPK Program:

1. The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) agrees to provide a UPK scholarship to families residing in Cuyahoga County in the form of:
  - a. 50% of parent fees to families whose gross income falls at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) based on the 2021 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines as published in the Federal Register in January 2021 and updated annually thereafter; and
  - b. 33% of parent fees to families whose gross income is greater than 200% FPL and up to 400% of the FPL.
2. OEC will pay this amount directly to the PROVIDER on a monthly basis after receipt of an itemized invoice.
  - a. The UPK scholarship shall be discontinued for a month for any family who fails to maintain 80% attendance during any given month due to unexcused absences.
3. The PROVIDER shall not increase its parent fees to families eligible for the UPK scholarship in the middle of the program year without the consent of OEC.
4. Families whose incomes exceed 400% will remain eligible for UPK services, but will receive no reduction in parent fees.
5. The PROVIDER agrees to assist families in determining their eligibility for the reduction in fees using processes and procedures developed by OEC. The PROVIDER will notify parents in writing of their eligibility for a UPK scholarship and the amount of scholarship received. The PROVIDER agrees to store eligibility information and documentation in a secure location at the PROVIDER'S site.
6. In order for a family to receive the scholarship and for the PROVIDER to be reimbursed, there must be a UPK Scholarship Income and Residency Verification Form completed by the PROVIDER, signed by the parent, and submitted to Invest in Children along with required documentation of family income and residency.
7. Families who lose eligibility for other child care subsidy programs or experience another significant event affecting their income may become eligible to receive UPK services at a reduced rate using the Safety Net Scholarship Fund. Application for this assistance is to be made to Starting Point.

**EXHIBIT III**  
**CONTRACT TERMINATION PROCESS**  
**FOR THE**  
**UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (UPK) PROGRAM**  
**Contract Period: August 1, 2021 thru July 31, 2024**

Criteria for Termination of Provider

OEC reserves the right to terminate a Provider's contract in the UPK Program for any of the following reasons:

1. Provider's license is suspended or revoked. (OEC and/or its contracted agency representatives will immediately report a Provider to licensing/certification authorities in cases where there is belief that a serious care deficit exists, or the health and safety of children is being endangered by the Provider).
2. A Provider is found to have committed a violation of licensing requirements, which is deemed by OEC to be a serious deficiency.
3. A Provider's teaching staff is found to have committed a violation of licensing requirements, which is deemed by OEC to be a serious deficiency.
4. A report of child abuse by Provider is substantiated.
5. OEC has received three (3) or more substantiated complaints about Provider within the contract period.
6. Provider is repeatedly uncooperative with OEC staff and/or OEC contracted agency representatives (e.g., refuses OEC unannounced visits, quality monitoring or quality support, non-compliance with reporting requirements).
7. Provider provides false information to OEC.
8. It has been determined that Provider has used UPK funds in a fraudulent manner.
9. Serious or repeated instances involving noncompliance with UPK Program requirements.
10. Funding no longer exists or is insufficient to pay for the UPK Program.
11. Provider is unwilling to make changes in order to maintain compliance with the UPK requirements and/or in violation of OEC policies or administrative and statutory guidelines by any state, federal or local governmental agency.
12. The Provider fails to maintain its licensing status, or at least a three-star Step Up To Quality rating.

The Provider will be informed in writing of the basis for OEC's action, and the effective date of such action. Review procedures are outlined below.

Obligations of Terminated Provider

After receiving notice of OEC's decision to terminate the UPK contract, the Provider will submit to OEC all of the following:

1. A current inventory of equipment purchased in whole or in part with Contract funds. If practical, all equipment purchased using contract funds shall be returned to the County.
2. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of all families served by the Provider.
3. Monthly enrollment and attendance reports until the Contract is actually terminated.
4. Any other documents determined necessary by OEC.
5. A portion or all of future payments may be withheld pending the outcome of the termination process.