

UPK Program Implementation Handbook



Revised 2/18/2026

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

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:

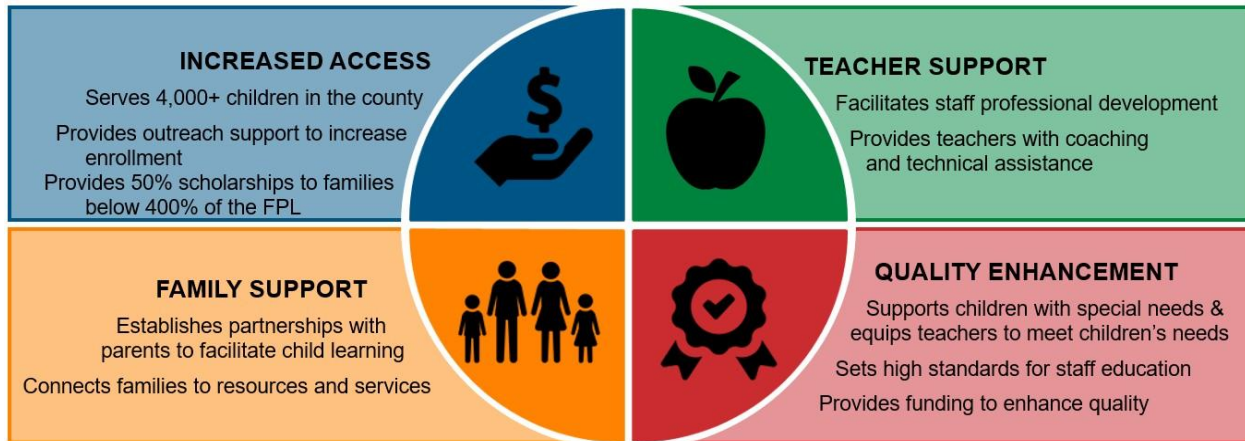
- The quality of early care and education at the UPK sites improved substantially as reflected in a significant increase of 18% on a standardized measure (ECERS).
- Children enrolled in UPK, who were most at-risk at baseline (below the 50th percentile), showed a significant improvement.
- The magnitude 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 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.

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 enhances 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 been nationally recognized for innovative family engagement practices and has received six awards from the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS).¹ 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

One way UPK aims to increase access to high-quality early education is through scholarships. UPK Providers that charge parents tuition or fees will receive funding to assist low and moderate-income families in being able to afford UPK. OEC/IIC will pay 50% 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.

UPK also aims to increase access by providing dedicated outreach and enrollment support through Starting Point. These services include outreach and engagement with families and your organization, marketing, and messaging about the value of high-quality preschool programs, specialized referrals to UPK sites, participation in community events and activities, and annual enrollment and outreach planning to help ensure programs can fill their classrooms.

¹ <http://nnps.jhucosos.com>



2. Fiscal Managers

General Information and Key Provisions

The program year for all UPK contracts will be August 1, through July 31st . 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:

Program Type	Each full-day classroom	Each part-day classroom
Community-Based Child Care	\$30,000 per year	\$15,000 per year
School District:	\$20,000 per year	\$10,000 per year
Family Child Care Home:	\$16,000 per year	\$8,000 per year

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

- UPK Parent Scholarships: 50% scholarships are available for families living in Cuyahoga County with incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level. Scholarship eligibility is based on the number of family members in the household and their combined 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 methods provided to the Provider by the county. Such methods shall include (but may not be limited to) the Health and Human Services (HHS) Provider Portal to create monthly invoices and the 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**

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 used 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, lease 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

Holdover of UPK Program Funds

All UPK program funds must be expended during the contract year for which they were allotted unless permission has been obtained by the PROVIDER to holdover their UPK program funds. The PROVIDER can submit a request to the OEC/IIC to holdover UPK program funds within the three (3) year contract period for one of the following reasons:

- Anticipated expense
- Multi-year project completion
- Unforeseen circumstances that will prevent timely expenditure

Failure to spend down UPK program funds or to submit required monthly Expense Reports with proof of spending may result in forfeiture of future payments and/or recoupment of previous amounts paid.

The Monthly Billing Process

UPK billing is based on a 12-month program year, August 1st through July 31st. To be reimbursed for costs associated with enhancing their high-quality programs, under this contract, Providers must submit invoices to the OEC/IIC on a monthly basis (school districts and other Providers that close seasonally must still adhere to the 12-month billing process). Every UPK Provider will receive instructions on how to create an account in the HHS Provider Portal, where invoices must be submitted within sixty (60) days of the close of each billing month. Other required documentation such as the monthly UPK Expense Report and ChildPlus Attendance Reports, should be uploaded into the Provider Portal. Payment will only be made for those months for which both a UPK Invoice and Expense Report have been received. Providers will be given ten (10) days after notice by the County of unapproved status, in which to update a faulty invoice and resubmit, or submit a past due invoice. Failure to comply will result in nonpayment of that invoice.

Please reach out to staci.garlington@jfs.ohio.gov if there are questions about your monthly invoice. Instructions for submitting Invoices and Expense Reports in the HHS Provider Portal can be found on the [UPK for Providers website](#).

The UPK Invoice

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

Each agency or organization will submit one invoice: agencies with multiple UPK sites will submit one invoice that will include monthly reimbursement amounts for all its sites. Providers will be given ten (10) days after notice by the County of unapproved status, in which to update a faulty invoice and resubmit, or submit a past due invoice. Failure to comply will result in nonpayment of that invoice.

UPK invoices will be generated in the HHS Provider Portal. UPK Providers should log into the Portal monthly to create and submit their invoice along with any supplemental documentation. Invoices are broken into two areas of reimbursement for Providers, quality dollars and scholarships:

- **Quality Dollars:** Quality dollars are designed to cover the higher costs associated with enhancing high quality programs. These dollars are the fixed amount that Providers will be reimbursed on a monthly basis, based on their annual award amount. When creating the invoice in the HHS Provider Portal, the Provider's monthly quality dollar reimbursement rate will automatically generate based on their provider type (community based child care center, school district or family child care home) and their number of UPK classrooms, divided by 12. For example, the annual UPK award for a community based child care center is \$30,000 per classroom, so a community based child care center with two classrooms would have an annual UPK award of \$60,000. The Portal would then automatically generate a \$5000 monthly reimbursement rate by dividing \$60,000 by 12.
- **Scholarship Dollars:** Scholarship dollars are designated to make high-quality preschool affordable for eligible families. UPK scholarships allow Providers to offer income-eligible families 50% off the cost of tuition or 50% off the cost of their copay (if receiving publicly funded child care). Providers are reimbursed for the discounted portion of tuition offered to families through the UPK invoice. Unlike quality dollars, the reimbursement rate for scholarship dollars may change from month-to-month, based on the number of children receiving scholarships and/or fluctuations in tuition. When creating the invoice in the HHS Provider Portal, the number of children receiving scholarships and their tuition amount will automatically generate based on the information provided in ChildPlus, so please refer to the Scholarship Report (4300) in ChildPlus to ensure this information is accurate prior to generating your monthly invoice in the HHS Provider Portal.
 - *Note: scholarship eligibility is 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 approved a UPK Scholarship Application in ChildPlus for a given child, the invoice will not include that child.*

ChildPlus Reports

Contact: dat@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:

- Monthly attendance report (2305) for all children receiving scholarships
- Monthly absentee report (2309) showing reasons for absences

Training on how to produce these reports is included in the basic ChildPlus training Providers receive at the beginning of each contract cycle.

The UPK Expense Report



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

The Expense Report must be submitted with the Invoice and are due within sixty (60) days of the close of each billing month. Expense Reports document the use of UPK quality dollar funding to enhance program quality for UPK students, staff and classrooms. Each Provider will receive, annually, a Proposed Budget Worksheet, which will allow them to submit their plan for how quality dollars will be allocated in UPK's ten approved expense categories during the program year. OEC/IIC must review the Proposed Budget submitted by each site for approval. Upon approval, an Expense Report will be created and distributed to the Provider based on the expense amounts they provided in each category on their approved budget. This Expense Report must be submitted monthly with the UPK Invoice. 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).

Unlike the Invoice, which is generated in the HHS Provider Portal, 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. Year-To-Date and remaining balances in each category will populate automatically based on the Provider's approved budget.
- Itemized Expense Worksheet: In this worksheet, list each expense individually, the expense category it is attributed to, the vendor's name, the total receipt/invoice amount and the dollar amount of that total that UPK will be billed to UPK. For example, a Provider may hold an event for their entire center which has 10

classrooms but only 2 of those classrooms are UPK. Then only 20% of the total bill for that event can be billed to UPK.

- Staff Compensation Worksheet (child care 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 tabs. 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.



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 higher quality levels than required by licensing and a commitment to those higher levels as defined by Ohio's Step Up To Quality Program Standards. Only programs with a silver or gold high-quality rating are part of the UPK program. The OEC/IIC requires that all UPK programs maintain a minimum silver rating with the Step Up To Quality rating system. Providers must inform OEC/IIC within two (2) business days if their rating is reduced below a silver rating at any time during the contract period. Failure to provide this information to OEC/IIC may result in termination from the UPK progra

Class Size & Ratio

To ensure 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. **Classrooms shall not have a capacity below 12 children unless the classroom provides special needs supports.** Providers must submit written justification to the office of OEC/IIC if classroom capacity is lowered beyond their licensed capacity. Family child care programs shall not exceed the 1:6 teacher-child ratio. The group size shall not exceed 12 children for Type A homes and 6 children for Type B homes.

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 UPK. 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 Person:

Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@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/.

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

Program Accountability Measures

OEC/IIC and Starting Point are committed to equipping you with the essential tools for success. The UPK handbook and orientation outline the critical expectations and guidelines for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) initiative, ensuring that all participants are aware of the necessary standards. To foster transparency and enhance the effectiveness of the UPK program, Starting Point and Invest in Children have established accountability measures to guarantee that each program meets required obligations. These measures clarify responsibilities, boost overall performance, increase transparency, promote growth and improvement, and ensure alignment with the UPK objectives. This approach is not intended to be punitive; rather, it empowers programs to assess their progress and realign with UPK's goals. We remain dedicated to providing further clarification and support throughout this process.

We will evaluate accountability through several key measures:

- Attendance: we will track participation to ensure engagement and commitment in all training sessions and meetings.
- Engagement: we will track timely completion of projects and documents to assess productivity, and engagement in the UPK program i.e., Family engagement action plans.
- Scheduling: we will track whether TA visits are being scheduled in a timely manner, including being available at the time of the visit or reaching out prior to the visit to reschedule.
- Evaluation: we will conduct regular evaluations of data records to maintain accuracy and accountability in our processes.

Resources and Support:

- Reminders: to promote effective participation, we will send reminder emails for mandatory training sessions and meetings to all participating UPK sites.

- Technical Assistance (TA): we offer comprehensive Technical Assistance for all aspects of the UPK program. For further details about your Technical Assistants, please refer to the staff listing.
- Communication and Outreach: to provide additional support, we will reach out to programs that appear to be consistently encountering barriers that prevent them from meeting the expectations of the UPK program.

1. Mandatory Meetings (at least one site representative is required to attend)

UPK Orientation Refresher (choose one session)

Contact Persons:

Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574, joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov

Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

- August 28, 2025, 9:00am-12:00pm
- August 28, 2025, 1:30pm -4:30pm

UPK Directors' Network Meetings (see UPK Calendar for more information)

Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

Meetings will be held from 1pm-3pm on the following dates:

- September 17, 2025
- November 12, 2025
- January 14, 2026 (virtual)
- March 18, 2026
- May 13, 2026

1. Mandatory Trainings (at least one site representative must attend- see UPK Calendar for dates/times)

Family Engagement Trainings Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

- Action Team Orientation/Refresher Training
- Involving Fathers in Partnership Training
- Best Practices in Family Engagement
- Preparing for NNPS Evaluation

Resource Coordination Trainings Contact Person: Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@starting-point.org

- Resource Information Sessions
- Plan Your Own Resource Fair Session

Quality Enhancement Trainings-Contact Person: Meghan Scott (216) 575-0061 ext. 251, meghan.scott@starting-point.org

- Building Strong Foundations: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
- Building Strong Foundations: High Quality Supportive Environments
- Building Strong Foundations: Social Emotional Supports

Scholarship/Invoice Training (multiple sessions-see UPK Calendar)

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

2. Required Training for NEW site directors/teachers or other persons responsible for data entry

ChildPlus Data Entry Trainings (multiple sessions-see UPK Calendar)-Contact: dat@starting-point.org

Building Resiliency in Children Using the e-DECA System- Contact person: McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.367, mcKenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

ASQ-3 Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3rd Edition - Contact person: McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.367, mcKenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

3. Data Entry Deadlines

ChildPlus- Contact: dat@starting-point.org

- All attendance, referrals and family engagement activities must be entered into the Child Plus database each month no later than the 9th or before if the 9th falls on the weekend.

Invoices and Expense Reports – Contact Persons: Staci Garlington staci.garlington@jfs.ohio.gov (216) 698-2214 and Joy Welch-Bey joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov (216) 443-7574

- All invoices and expense reports are due no later than 60 days from the close of the billing month.

Screening and Assessments- Contact Persons:

Lailah Ameer (216) 575-0061 ext.212, lailah.ameer@starting-point.org McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext.250, mcKenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

- Pre-DECA Assessments- October 31, 2025

- ASQ Assessments Due-October 31, 2025
- Post DECA Assessments- May 1, 2026

4. Due Dates

- Quarterly UPK Enrollment Update- Contact Person: Patti Jelinick (216) 575-0061 ext. 284, patti.jelinek@starting-point.org
 - September 15, 2025
 - December 15, 2025
 - February 15, 2026
 - May 15, 2026
- Kindergarten Transition Plans- October 24, 2025
 - Contact Persons:
 - Kourtney Blasko (216) 575-0061 ext. 244, kourtney.blasko@starting-point.org
 - Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@starting-point.org
 - Tammi Seifert (216) 575-0061 ext. 272, tammi.seifert@starting-point.org
- Family Engagement Action Plans- October 31, 2025
 - Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

Staff Qualification Requirements



Contact Person: Katie Theobald (216) 575-0061 ext. 242, kathleen.theobald@starting-point.org

Each UPK site is expected to employ a skilled and well-trained early childhood workforce. All UPK teachers in center-based programs and family child care home providers must meet minimum qualification standards and are encouraged to continue advancing their skills, education, and credentials. Starting Point’s Career Development Coordinator will contact each UPK program to review staff qualifications.

Center-based programs and public preschools:

Position	Must meet or exceed the following:	<u>And</u> must meet:
Administrators	Associate degree in approved related field, CPL III, or	Minimum 2 years classroom experience
	Bachelor’s degree in unrelated field with at least 24 credit hours in early childhood education or CPL IV	

Lead teachers	All lead teachers must have at least an associate degree in an approved related field or CPL III. 50% of lead teachers must have a bachelor's degree in an approved related or CPL IV	
Assistant teachers, Teacher aides, Substitutes, and Paraprofessionals	Current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or CPL II.	

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

Position	Must meet or exceed the following
Program owner/ Provider	Associate degree in approved related field or CPL III.
Lead teacher (if not program owner)	Associate degree in approved related field or CPL III.
Assistant teachers, Teacher aides, Substitutes, and Paraprofessionals	Current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or CPL II.

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: Katie Theobald (216) 575-0061 ext. 242, kathleen.theobald@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. 210, 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: Centers and Public Schools - Meghan Scott (216) 575-0061 ext. 251
meghan.scott@starting-point.org

Family Child Care – Rosemary Helderman (216) 575-0061 ext. 262
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 Specialists (also known as Technical Assistants 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 purposeful technical assistance, mentoring, and coaching to UPK sites to ensure successful implementation of the various components of UPK. 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 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
	DECA Classroom Support	
	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	
Outreach and Enrollment Planning	Create and annually review Outreach and Enrollment Plan.	1 visit per site or organization – more as requested
Career Development Counseling	Developing and reviewing professional development plans to meet UPK staff qualifications	1 to 2 per site
Family Engagement	Skill building opportunities related to 2GEN and other effective and innovative family engagement practices	4 per site
Resource Coordination	Assist programs with developing parent resource center and documentation of referrals	2 per site
	Programs will meet with the Regional Resource Coordinator to support “No Wrong Door” policy, wherein families will be linked to any relevant Cuyahoga County programs or services when needed.	

UPK Continuous Improvement Plan

As a provider participating in the Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program, developing and maintaining a comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) is required. The CIP serves as a roadmap for enhancing the services provided to children and families. It encompasses well-defined goals for improvement, strategies to elevate group instruction, and initiatives to foster collaboration with community partners. To meet this criteria, feel free to utilize and expand upon the SUTQ CIP.

Should you require assistance formulating and executing your CIP, the Starting Point technical assistants are readily available for guidance and support. They will work alongside you to ensure your program's goals are clearly outlined and actively pursued.

Furthermore, the technical assistants will conduct annual reviews of the CIP to assess its completion status and to gauge the progress made toward reaching the specified goals. This ongoing evaluation process is designed to offer constructive feedback and help steer the program toward continued improvement and success.

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 annual 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.

“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

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 UPK website](#). 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

Enrollment and Outreach Support

 Contact Person: Patti Jelinek (216) 575-0061 ext. 284,
Patti.Jelinek@starting-point.org

Starting Point's UPK Enrollment Specialist offers technical assistance to support programs with enrollment and marketing efforts. Through targeted outreach and engagement, the Enrollment Specialist helps raise awareness of UPK, its high-quality educational offerings, and available scholarships for families.

Each program will collaborate with the Enrollment Specialist to develop and annually review an Outreach and Enrollment Plan tailored to the program's goals.

To ensure continued support and track progress, all programs are required to complete a Quarterly Program Update, available at: starting-point.org/updateupk

Eligibility for UPK Scholarships

 Contact Person: Staci Garlington staci.garlington@jfs.ohio.gov 216.698.2214

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

Fifty percent (50%) of parent fees to families whose gross income (before taxes and deductions) falls at or below four hundred (400%) of the federal poverty level (FPL) based on the Federal Poverty Level Guidelines as updated and published annually in the Federal Register in January of each year.

Income and Residency Verification

Eligibility for the UPK Scholarship is based on family size, income, and residency in Cuyahoga County. Family income and residency information must be entered and uploaded through the UPK Scholarship Application Module in Child Plus for OEC/IIC review. 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. Documentation used to verify eligibility must be dated within 60 days of the date it is entered into Child Plus

Scholarship applications are processed in the order in which they are received, but an application must be complete upon submission (complete application includes income and residency verifications that are dated within the last 60 days). Providers should continue to check the ChildPlus Scholarship Module for status updates, as applications that are incomplete will be put in a pending status, and not processed until a completed application is received.

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 pay 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 are automatically eligible for UPK Scholarships, provided they meet residency requirements. In addition to providing 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. 256,
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 before 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 has been receiving, and will still be required to pay the parent co-payment, minus the UPK Scholarship.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- **LOSE OF BENEFITS:** Families that lose publicly funded child care benefits or other subsidies due to no longer meeting the requirements of the program, or up to 300% the federal poverty level. Families over 300% should be reviewed for the UPK Scholarship.
- **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:** Families' private pay with a child enrolled for over 2 months, who has paid for those services. The family must be able to document and prove a hardship that has changed their ability to pay out-of-pocket. Please note that these applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and require approval from Invest in Children.
- Must meet all other requirements of UPK enrollment.

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE?

- Families who lose eligibility for publicly funded child care because they did not meet the application deadline for redetermination.
- Families who lose eligibility for publicly funded child care due to fraud or other noncompliance with the Ohio administrative code.
- Private pay families who have not made payment for services provided before application.

HOW TO APPLY:

- Application available on the Invest in Children website
- The Safety Net Scholarship period is up to one (1) calendar year from their initial application date, regardless of circumstance.
- Program submits the application (including referral form from program and family application) to Starting Point.
- FOR BENEFITS TERMINATION: Application must be made within 15 business days of termination of publicly funded child care.
- All applications will be processed within 30 days.
- All required documents must be received within 30 days of submission of the application to be eligible for the scholarship.
- Payments are not backdated before the application unless approved by Invest in Children.
- UPK Site will be notified of approval or denial by Starting Point's Senior Manager of Family Services. Follow-up with payment and agreements will occur within 15 days.

PAYMENT:

- Payment rates are equal to the rates set by the Department of Children and Youth: Weekly Payment Rates for Providers of Publicly Funded Child Care, including appropriate increases for Step Up To Quality Rating, or private pay rate, whichever is less.
- 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 approved rate for your program.
- Children receiving Safety Net assistance will not be listed under your Service Authorizations on the Provider Portal. Safety Net assistance is paid directly from Starting Point.

AGREEMENT/ATTENDANCE:

- Approved families and programs will receive an agreement outlining scholarship requirements, policies, and procedures for electronic signature.
- All approved applications must be reviewed every six months.
- Three (3) attempts will be made to reach the family (phone, email, and text).
 - If the family is not responsive, their UPK site will be notified that the Safety Net funding will end 60 days from the current date.

- If the family is responsive, but it is determined that their hardship no longer exists, they (and their site) will be notified that the Safety Net funding will end 60 days from the current date.
- If the family is responsive and the hardship still exists, they can continue the Safety Net program for the remaining six (6) months.
- Families **must** respond to Starting Point/Invest in Children requests for information. Providers cannot provide updates on behalf of families.
- Offboarding
 - Families will be offboarded from Safety Net for the following reasons:
 - Failing to respond to the six-month (6) review
 - Their year on Safety Net has ended
 - It is established that hardship no longer exists (can happen at any point during the scholarship period)
 - Offboarding begins when the family and provider are notified in writing, via email, that they have 60 days remaining on Safety Net
 - The family will be referred to the traditional UPK scholarship application process and/or any other assistance that may be available at their income level
- 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 when 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 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 parents 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% in a billing month, with the following exception:
 - Hospitalization of the child or parent without appropriate documentation.
 - Illness requiring homestay as documented by the 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:

McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0060 ext .250 mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

Lailah Ameer-Haynes (216) 575-0061 ext. 212 lailah.ameer@starting-point.org

All UPK providers must screen all enrolled children in UPK classrooms using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3 (ASQ-3) and the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA-P2). Programs must administer the screenings and report the results in the web-based data system within 60 days of the child’s enrollment.

Assessment and follow-up should be provided and reported in the web-based data system as outlined in the tables below:

Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA P-2)

e-Deca Preparation	
Due Date	Prior to entering any score into e-DECA
Procedures	Request administrator password from mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org or lailah.ameer@starting-point.org if applicable. The program’s designated DECA administrator creates classrooms, users, and adds children under “e-DECA management” in the e-DECA system . All child and classroom/group names and information, including spelling and birthdates, must match exactly with the information in ChildPlus.
Pre-Assessment	
Due Date	October 31 st or within the first 60 days of the child’s entry into the program
Procedures	Teachers complete a DECA for each child enrolled in UPK. See guidance below in notes on screening children with IEP. The program collects parent assessments from parents/caregivers. The program administrator or designee enters assessments into the e-DECA system for all enrolled children by the due date.
Mid-Assessment	
Due Date	January 31 st
Procedures	The teachers complete mid-DECAs only for children who have scored within the “need” range in any scale of the teacher-reported pre-assessment. This is reflected in red on the classroom profile. Parents are not required to complete a mid-assessment The program administrator or designee enters the completed mid-assessments into the system by the due date.
Post-Assessment	
Due Date	May 1 st or immediately following the child’s departure from the center, as long as 60 days have passed between the pre- and post-assessment
Procedures	Post-assessments are completed by teachers and parents (except for students with a current IEP). The program administrator or designee enters the assessment.

	The teacher conducts a post-assessment for any child who leaves the center, provided that the pre- and post-assessments are 60 days apart. The assessment will be based on the child’s last 30 days of enrollment.
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DECA Additional Notes:

- o If a child transitions to a new classroom: The new teacher completes a new pre and post DECA. When implementing this practice, change the previous teacher’s “pre” rating to “other,” as the system will accept only one Pre and Post score. This allows the new teacher to access the child’s current functioning and individualize based on the assessment results.
- o If the child leaves the program within 60 days of the mid-assessment: Change the mid-assessment to a post-assessment in e-DECA.
- o A child must have a pre-assessment in order to do a mid or post-assessment.
- o Teachers use the group profile (printed or otherwise accessed) and use it for planning purposes.
- o Each child’s ratings from e-DECA should be available as part of the child’s records.
- o Programs are not required to screen children with an IEP but may choose to do so.
- o Programs that have an existing policy to screen all children, regardless of IEP status, are welcome to continue to do so.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)

	ASQ Online Preparation
Due Date	Prior to entering any scores into ASQ Online
Procedures	Request username and password from Mckenzie.Fulton@Starting-Point.org . The program administrator or designee creates classrooms, users, and child profiles in ASQ Online . All child and classroom/group names and information, including spelling and birthdates, must exactly match the information in the ChildPlus and e-DECA systems. Ensure that each child is assigned to a classroom in the system.
	ASQ Online Assessment Completion
Due Date	October 31st, or within the first 60 days of the child’s entry to the program
Procedures	The teacher completes an ASQ-3 assessment in collaboration with the parent/caregiver for each child enrolled in UPK. See guidance below in notes on screening children with IEP. The program enters each child’s assessment results into the ASQ Online system by the due date.

ASQ-3 Additional Notes:

- o If a child's score falls below the cut-off or in the monitoring range in any developmental domain, provide activities to foster development and rescreen those domains.
- o Each child's summary page should be available as part of the child's records.
- o Programs are not required to screen children with an IEP but may choose to do so.
- o Programs that have an existing policy to screen all children, regardless of IEP status, are welcome to continue to do so.
- o See ASQ guidance on screening children with IEPs [here](#).

Special Needs Child Care Programs and Services (SNCC)

Contact Persons:

To Access SNCC Services: Connie McGinnis-Loftin, (216) 575-0061 ext. 223,
connie.mcginnis-loftin@starting-point.org

For assistance with Individualized Education Plans: McKenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext. 250, mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

As a part of UPK, participating programs 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 require additional resources alongside typically developing children in their program.

The Special Needs Child Care Technical Assistance (SNCC TA) Program at Starting Point is available to ensure that appropriate practices are implemented in the care and education of children requiring additional support in UPK programs.

SNCC TA from Starting Point has been a trusted resource for families and providers for over 25 years. Designed to support early childhood educators, parents, and guardians in addressing the unique needs of children with medical, developmental, or social-emotional challenges, our goal is to equip educators and families with the tools they need to stabilize and maintain children in their early care and education settings, ensuring school success and promoting staff retention.

How The SNCC Program can support you:

- o Expert Technical Assistance: Tailored guidance for providers and parents/guardians to support children with special needs, including medical care planning and linkage to additional community resources
- o Ohio Approved Trainings on a range of specialized Special Needs Child Care topics.
- o Adaptive equipment and materials to support effective care for children with specific needs (subject to availability of funding).
- o Support through SNCC Partnerships Coordinator in obtaining Individualized Education Plans for children (when applicable).

Child Suspension and Expulsion

Contact Persons:

Diane Stuart, (216) 575-0061 ext. 227 diane.stuart@starting-point.org

Mckenzie Fulton (216) 575-0061 ext. 250 mckenzie.fulton@starting-point.org

Lailah Ameer-Haynes (216) 575-0061 ext. 212 lailah.ameer@starting-point.org

“Expulsion in early childhood education is not an intervention. Over a decade of research and data tell us that the policies and practices of suspension and expulsion in early childhood, which disproportionately affect children of color, are causing harm to children and families. Over 30 national organizations came together to create a [joint statement](#) that amplifies and elevates the issue. It's time to heed the calls to prevent, limit, and eliminate suspensions and expulsions in early childhood education.”

-The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

UPK supports success for all children. UPK sites must consult with the Special Needs Child Care Programs and Services (SNCC) team prior to any suspension or expulsion. This is crucial to ensure that every child gets the care and resources they need to succeed. To prevent expulsions UPK programs will engage in the following:

- o When a program observes a child displaying social-emotional/behavioral, medical, or developmental difficulties, **contact Starting Point's SNCC Department immediately**. Early intervention is crucial to provide the support the child needs before issues escalate.
- o UPK programs, in consultation with Starting Point's SNCC team, must exhaust all reasonable community resources and support to ensure continuity of care and education.
- o The SNCC team will proactively lead in connecting providers with these resources, ensuring they receive the support needed to achieve these goals effectively.

If after these steps occur, an expulsion takes place, **the program must contact the SNCC team to complete an expulsion report** to ensure that every child gets follow up care and resources they need to succeed.

Data Requirements and Record Keeping

Contact Person: Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574; joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov

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.

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.

Data Requirements

Contact: Pooja Gupta Sheth, dat@starting-point.org

To support strong program outcomes, accurate reporting, and continuous improvement, UPK sites are expected to maintain complete and timely data within the ChildPlus system. Consistent documentation helps ensure that children and families receive the highest-quality support, and that programs remain aligned with funding and monitoring requirements. For specific ChildPlus questions, you may contact

Adrienne Williams email – Adrienne.williams@starting.point.org

Sites are expected to enter and maintain the following information for **all enrolled children (3-5)** in the UPK program:

1. Child Demographics

All required demographic information should be completed at enrollment and reviewed for accuracy. Maintaining current demographic data supports reporting, equity analysis, and informed decision-making.

2. Attendance (Ages 3–5)

Attendance for children ages 3–5 should be entered on a weekly basis. Accurate attendance records help monitor participation trends, inform family outreach, and ensure appropriate funding documentation.

3. Termination/Withdrawal Information

When a child exits the program, a termination or withdrawal of reason should be entered in a timely manner. Clear documentation supports accurate enrollment reporting and future planning.

4. Family Engagement Activities

Family engagement efforts should be documented in ChildPlus, including the date and type of activity. Recording these interactions helps highlight the important partnerships between families and programs.

5. Transition to Kindergarten Summary

A transition summary should be completed for each child prior to exiting the program. This documentation supports continuity of care and helps reflect the child’s readiness journey.

6. Mandatory Training

Attending ChildPlus training is mandatory for new UPK providers. These procedures ensure that data management is consistent and reliable across all UPK providers, facilitating effective program evaluation and timely reimbursements.

Commitment to Data Quality

Timely and accurate data entry helps ensure:

- Reliable reporting
- Meaningful program evaluation
- Smooth monitoring and reimbursement processes
- Continuous program improvement

We appreciate your partnership in maintaining strong, consistent documentation practices that support children, families, and the broader UPK community.

Access to Records and Other Documentation

The 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 Participation in UPK Program Evaluation

- Contact Person: Eric Jett eric.jett@jfs.ohio.gov (216)443-6255

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

Marketing and Logo Usage

 Contact Person: Carli Cichocki (216) 443-6583 carli.cichocki@ifs.ohio.gov

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 well in advance of final print or broadcast deadlines.

The Invest in Children UPK logo is below. 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.

Provider Suspension

Should the program be suspended, 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 SUTQ rating downgrade.
2. At the first opportunity, the provider will apply to have its SUTQ rating (minimum silver rating) 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 suspended. 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 a rating reduction and when the provider is eligible to reapply for a rating increase.

OEC/IIC may suspend a Provider, indicating a serious risk of contract termination. A suspension warns the Provider of the possibility of contract termination 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 SUTQ 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

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 /Relocation – Temporary or Permanent

The PROVIDER must notify the OEC/IIC of any site closure or relocation, whether temporary or permanent, at least ten (10) business days prior to said closure or relocation of its preschool program site(s). Should the closure or relocation be the result of an emergency, the OEC/IIC must be notified immediately upon the PROVIDER'S decision to close or relocate. UPK designation shall follow the ODJFS, ODCY, or ODE license of any relocated site. The OEC/IIC will need to receive the following information from the Provider:

- a. Permanent or Temporary closure:
 - i. Reason for closure
 - ii. Last date of operation
 - iii. Planned reopen date (for temporary closures)
 - iv. Plan for providing services during closure period (for temporary closures)
- b. Permanent or Temporary relocation:
 - i. Reason for the relocation
 - ii. Location of new site
 - iii. Date of ODCY, ODE, or ODJFS licensing approval of the new site
 - iv. Planned return date to previous site (for temporary relocations)

Classroom Opening /Closure – Temporary or Permanent

Providers must request OEC/IIC approval prior to the opening of any new UPK classroom. Quality dollars for additional classrooms beyond those specified in the Provider's contract are dependent on available funding and are not guaranteed. Classroom requests should be sent, via email, directly to the UPK Program Manager, Joy Welch-Bey joy.welch-bey@jfs.ohio.gov. The OEC/IIC will review classroom requests quarterly to verify whether funding exists to support the requested classrooms. Providers must also notify OEC/IIC anytime a classroom needs to close.

- a. Provider must notify OEC/IIC immediately upon the decision to temporarily or permanently close a UPK classroom. OEC/IIC will need to receive the following information from the Provider:
 - i. Reason for closure
 - ii. Date of closure
 - iii. Planned reopen date (for temporary closures).

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 Rating

The Cuyahoga County OEC/IIC expects to be promptly notified of decrease in rating. In particular, OEC/IIC expects to be notified immediately (no later than (2) business days after the Provider receives notification) of their rating decrease.

Should the provider receive a decrease rating below the minimum silver 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 UPK website](#).

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
- Transition Summary Form

Invoicing

- Scholarship Adjustment Invoice
- *Note: The Excel version of the UPK Monthly Invoice will no longer be available. Please log into the HHS Provider Portal each month to complete your invoice.*

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 notify Joy Welch-Bey joy.welch-bey@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 transitions to kindergarten 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



Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208,
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.

With the assistance of the Starting Point 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



Type 1

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



Type 2

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



Type 3

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.



Type 4

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



Type 5

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.



Type 6

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 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 Director of UPK will assist the Provider in aligning its model with the six types of involvement.

UPK Parent Advisory Committee

Contact Persons:

Catherine Thomas 216-575-0061 x208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org
Joy Welch-Bey (216) 443-7574, joy.welch-bey@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.



- Family Learning Labs

Family Learning Labs

 Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 x 208,
catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

UPK providers are required to implement Family Learning Labs, curated early literacy and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) family activities created to strengthen the home to school connection and to enhance family engagement activities at the UPK site. The Family Learning Labs include a book of the month (QR Code), learning objectives, an activity, and a reflection survey. UPK site administrators will receive a copy of the Family Learning Labs monthly to be distributed to UPK Caregivers. Caregivers will complete the activities with their children and bring the finished product back to their UPK site. UPK administrators along with the action team will determine how to incorporate the Family Learning Labs into family engagement activities/events hosted at the site and document these activities on their site's action plan.

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



- Resource Coordination
- 2GEN

Resource Coordination



Contact Person:

Kourtney Blasko (216) 575-0061 ext. 244, kourtney.blasko@starting-point.org

Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@starting-point.org


Tammi Siefert (216) 575-0061 ext. 272, tammi.seifert@starting-poit.org

UPK Providers are expected to support families in accessing any needed supports or services in coordination with the UPK Family Engagement and Community 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.

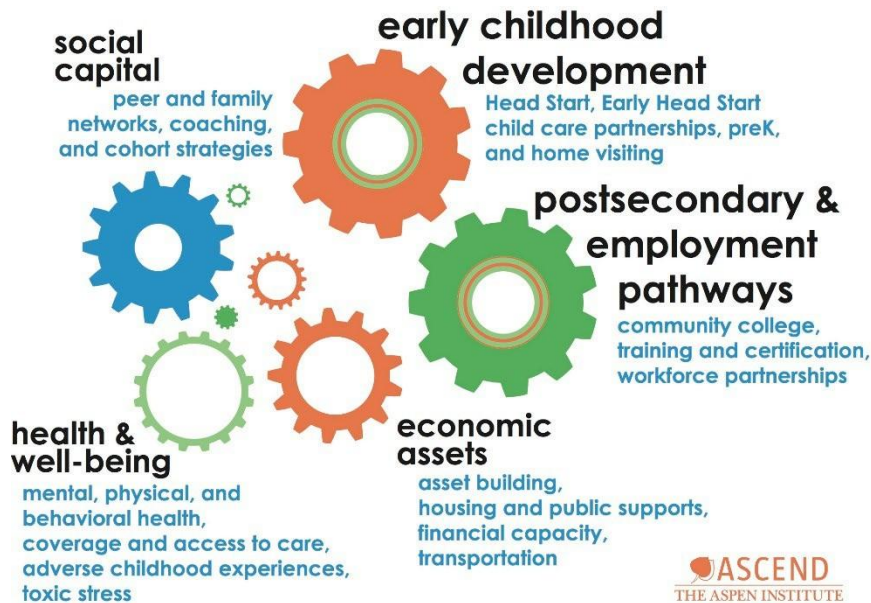
Providers are required to document referrals for services, as well as any follow-up, using the Child Plus system.

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

2GEN

 Contact Person: Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 x208,
catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

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

Contact Persons:

Catherine Thomas (216) 575-0061 ext. 208, catherine.thomas@starting-point.org

Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@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 Persons:

Kourtney Blasko (216) 575-0061 ext. 244, kourtney.blasko@starting-point.org

Rachel Herring (216) 575-0061 ext. 261, rachel.herring@starting-point.org

Tammi Siefert (216) 575-0061 ext. 272, tammi.seifert@starting-point.org

Starting Point Family Engagement and Community Resource Coordinators will support family engagement efforts in UPK classrooms. Each site will have an assigned Family Engagement and Community Resource Coordinator 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 and Community Resource Coordinators 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.

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 Persons:

Kourtney Blasko (216) 575-0061 ext. 244, kourtney.blasko@starting-point.org

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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.

Appendix A: Contract Exhibits

EXHIBIT I SCOPE

OF WORK

FOR THE

UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN (UPK) PROGRAM

Contract Period: August 1, 2024 through July 31, 2027

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 children 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/Invest in Children (OEC/IIC) and Starting Point and shall adhere to 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/IIC 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 Family Child Care Homes, this is defined as a 1:6 teacher-child ratio, with group size not to exceed 12 children for Type A Homes and 6 children for Type B Homes. 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 at enrollment. 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/IIC 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 service 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 and/or ODCY 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 (Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment) and/or any instrument specified in the future by OEC/IIC. 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 continuous quality 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 continuous quality improvement plan is also a requirement of Step Up to Quality.

10. UPK Invoicing: The PROVIDER is required to submit monthly 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. Providers should be given ten (10) days after notice by the County of unapproved status, in which to update a faulty invoice and resubmit, or submit a past due invoice. Failure to comply will result in nonpayment of that invoice.

11. 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/IIC 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 with the UPK invoice and conform to the approved budget unless permission has been obtained for a change to the budget. The expense report is separate from the invoice.

12. Holdover of UPK Program Funds: All UPK program funds must be expended during the contract year for which they were allotted unless permission has been obtained by the PROVIDER to holdover their UPK program funds. The PROVIDER can submit a request to the OEC/IIC to holdover UPK program funds within the three (3) year contract period for one of the following reasons:
 - Anticipated expense
 - Multi-year project completion
 - Unforeseen circumstances that will prevent timely expenditure

13. 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/IIC prohibits the use of UPK funds to cover expenses that are not directly related to the UPK Program. UPK program funds may not be used as the sole funding for any position or role within a PROVIDER'S preschool 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. Therefore, 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. Associate degree in approved related field, CPL III, or
 - b. Bachelor's degree in unrelated field with at least 24 credit hours in early childhood education or CPL IV.
 - b. Lead Teachers must have at least an associate degree in approved related field or CPL III. Fifty percent (50%) of lead teachers must have a bachelor's degree in an approved related field or CPL IV (by August 1, 2025)
 - c. Assistant teachers, teacher aides, substitutes, and paraprofessionals must have a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or CPL II.

School Districts may request a waiver through OEC/IIC if union rules prevent personnel from meeting minimum requirements listed above.

2. 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 approved related field or CPL III.
 - b. Assistant teachers, teacher aides, substitutes, and paraprofessionals must have a current Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or CPL II.
3. 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/IIC 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. All administrators and staff will be

required to abide by technical assistance meeting norms as defined by Starting Point and ensure staff engagement during all technical assistance meetings and trainings. Providers will be notified of required trainings and meeting norms 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, 2025. 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 Starting Point staff. With Starting Point 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 records in the data system of family participation in the classroom and in family engagement activities and events.
5. Maintain a Family Resource Center or Family Resource Manual containing information for families on relevant supportive services and resources in the community.
6. 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.
7. Document all activities related to facilitating services, linkages and referrals for children and caregivers using the ChildPlus data system.
8. Attend all training and meeting events pertaining to the provision of linkages and services to families in the UPK program.
9. OEC/IIC Participate in annual skills training related to effective interactions and communications with families.
10. Receive coaching and technical assistance from Family Engagement and Community Resource Coordinators at Starting Point to support positive family engagement policies and practices consistent with family- centered preschool. Family Engagement and Community Resource Coordinators will review program policies, observe classroom and program practices related to family engagement, and act as an ongoing resource and support to program staff.
11. Identify and nominate parent leaders to the UPK Parent Advisory Committee according to processes outlined by the OEC/IIC.

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

The PROVIDER shall not suspend or expel a child from a site without consultation from the Director of the Prevention and Inclusion program (PIPs) or his/her designee. The PROVIDER must adhere to the Suspension and Expulsion policy as defined in the UPK Program Implementation Handbook when considering potential suspension or expulsion of a child.

The PROVIDER'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, inclusive, 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/IIC 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:

2. The PROVIDER is expected to adhere to monitoring and evaluation processes established by OEC/IIC. OEC/IIC 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. Compliance with contract requirements
3. The PROVIDER is responsible for ensuring that monitors representing OEC/IIC 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 noncompliance.
4. The PROVIDER is required to participate in the development of the Corrective Action Plan and will be required to resolve any non-compliance issues within the time frame established by OEC/IIC.
5. The PROVIDER must maintain a high-quality rating as defined by Ohio's Step Up to Quality rating system. Should a PROVIDER's quality rating be reduced below a high-quality rating, or should PROVIDER lose their quality rating altogether, they must notify the OEC/IIC no later than two (2) business days after they receive notification.
6. The PROVIDER must notify the OEC/IIC of any site closure or relocation, whether temporary or permanent, at least ten (10) business days before said closure or relocation of its preschool program site(s). Should the closure or relocation be the result of an emergency, the OEC/IIC must be notified immediately upon the PROVIDER'S decision to close or relocate. UPK designation shall follow the ODJFS, ODCY, or ODEW license of any relocated site. The OEC/IIC will need to receive the following information from the PROVIDER:
 - a. Permanent or Temporary closure:
 - i. Reason for closure

- ii. Last date of operation
 - iii. Planned reopen date (for temporary closures)
 - iv. Plan for providing services during closure period (for temporary closures)
 - b. Permanent or Temporary relocation:
 - i. Reason for the relocation
 - ii. Location of new site
 - iii. Date of ODCY, ODE, or ODJFS licensing approval of the new site
 - iv. Planned return date to previous site (for temporary relocations)
- 7. The PROVIDER must notify OEC/IIC immediately of any classroom openings or closure.
 - a. PROVIDER must notify OEC/IIC prior to the opening of any new classroom. Quality dollars for additional classrooms beyond those specified in the PROVIDER's contract are dependent on available funding and are not guaranteed.
 - b. PROVIDER must notify OEC/IIC immediately upon the temporary or permanent closure of a UPK classroom. OEC/IIC will need to receive the follow information from the PROVIDER:
 - i. Reason for closure
 - ii. Date of closure
 - iii. Planned reopen date (for temporary closures)

H. Independent Evaluation

PROVIDER is required to participate completely and provide full cooperation with independent evaluation conducted by the Center on Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU). This may entail data collection from children, parents, and/or 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/IIC 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 OEC/IIC-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 the “Family’s 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, 2024 through July 31, 2027

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/IIC) 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 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL) based on the 2024 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines as published in the Federal Register in January 2024 and updated annually thereafter; and
 - b. 50% of fees to families providing foster care or kinship care regardless of income.
2. OEC/IIC 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 in any month where the family fails to maintain 80% attendance due to unexcused absences.
3. The PROVIDER shall provide the OEC/IIC and parents/families with sixty (60) days' notice of any increase in tuition or fees.
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/IIC. The PROVIDER agrees to store eligibility information and documentation in a secure location at the PROVIDER'S site.
6. 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 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, 2024 through July 31, 2027

Criteria for Termination of Provider

OEC/IIC 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/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. A Provider is found to have committed a violation of licensing requirements, which is deemed by OEC/IIC 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/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. Provider is repeatedly uncooperative with OEC/IIC staff and/or OEC/IIC contracted agency representatives (e.g., refuses unannounced visits, technical assistance visits, quality monitoring, or quality support, non-compliance with reporting requirements).
7. 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. Provider is unwilling to make changes in order 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 loses their high quality Step Up To Quality rating.

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

Obligations of Terminated Provider

After receiving notice of OEC/IIC's decision to terminate the UPK contract, the Provider will submit to OEC/IIC 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 termination date.
4. Any other documents determined necessary by OEC/IIC.
5. A portion of or all future payments may be withheld pending the outcome of the termination process.