



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

**Guidance Related to COVID-19:
Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP)
2020-21 School Year
August 3, 2020**

Background

As part of the District of Columbia's ongoing response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is sharing updated guidance regarding the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) regulations.

Scope

The guidance is specific to PKEEP providers in response to [OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), outlining all health and safety requirements and recommendations for District child care providers that are operating during the public health emergency.

Date Issued

This guidance was issued on August 3, 2020 and will remain in effect through the end of the public health emergency.

Guidance

OSSE is issuing this guidance to clarify the operating requirements for PKEEP participants as they relate to OSSE's updated health and safety guidance for child care providers and the PKEEP eligibility criteria and high-quality standards. This document also contains details on the process to request a waiver of specific PKEEP high-quality standards during the ongoing public health emergency. Please see the waiver application on the next page for the specific high-quality standards for which OSSE may consider granting a waiver during the ongoing public health emergency.

OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers During the COVID-19 Recovery Period

All PKEEP participants **must follow the requirements** included in [OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). **All provisions in the guidance document are required** except those provisions classified as "where feasible" or "developmentally appropriate." The COVID-19 guidance supersedes any other requirements for PKEEP.

PKEEP Eligibility Criteria

OSSE will not enforce the following PKEEP eligibility criteria as these directly conflict with the requirements in [OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

- a. 5A DCMR § 3500.3(e) Enroll and maintain a class size of no fewer than 15 and no more than 16 children in classrooms where the youngest child is 3 years old or a class size of no fewer than 16 and no more than 20 in classrooms where the youngest child is 4 years old;
- b. 5A DCMR § 3500.3(g) Operate Monday through Friday beginning no earlier than 7 a.m.; provide at least six and a half hours of pre-K education services; at least 39 weeks a year for a total of at least 180 days; and follow the holiday and closing calendar schedule of the District of Columbia Public Schools; and

PKEEP High-Quality Standards

OSSE understands that compliance with COVID-related health and safety guidance may make compliance with PKEEP high-quality standards challenging or impractical for PKEEP providers. Pursuant to 5-A DCMR § 3501.3, which outlines OSSE's authority to grant waivers from high-quality standards, OSSE has initiated a high-quality standards waiver process for a pre-K CBO's during this time.

To request a waiver, a pre-K CBO must submit a written waiver request to OSSE using the below template. OSSE will review and process any waiver requests using the [PKEEP COVID-19 Waiver Request Form](#) within two business days of receipt of the PKEEP COVID-19 waiver. Waiver requests should be submitted to Christina Crayton, early childhood education policy officer, at Christina.Crayton@dc.gov.

We understand that most PKEEP programs currently have an OSSE-approved closure date and are adhering to the policies published in [OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). **Please note the above notice regarding requests for waivers for PKEEP providers only applies to PKEEP classrooms.** Child development providers are not to apply the above waivers to any non-PKEEP or other infant and toddler classrooms housed in your facility.

Questions?

If you have questions relating to this guidance please contact Eva Laguerre, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning and Director, Licensing & Compliance, Division of Early Learning, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) at (202) 741-5942 or Eva.Laguerre@dc.gov.

Authority:

Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program Act of 2008, effective July 18, 2008 (D.C. Law 17-202; D.C. Official Code §§ 38-272 et seq.), as amended, and its implementing regulations.



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The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) plans to respond in two business days to a PKEEP participant that follows this template and submits all necessary information.

Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) COVID-19 Waiver Request

I am writing to request waivers of the requirement(s) enumerated below on behalf of the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program community-based organization (CBO). I am requesting this waiver due to the inability to meet both the PKEEP regulations and the requirements outlined in [OSSE's Guidance for Child Care Providers and Families Related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) (OSSE guidance) because of a direct conflict between the requirements and/or a negative economic impact would occur where compliance with both is possible. OSSE will grant a waiver for the length of the time the public health emergency declared by the Mayor due to COVID-19 is in effect plus 45 calendar days. At which point, the provider must come into compliance with each grant requirement waived. **Note:** OSSE has the authority to extend the waiver as needed.

CBO Name and Address:	CBO License Number:
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Please check the PKEEP high-quality standards that are requested be waived:

	3501.1(a) An adult-to-child ratio of one-to-eight (1:8) for children thirty (30) months to three (3) years of age and of one-to-ten (1:10) for children four (4) years of age or older. When children of different ages are combined in one group; the adult-to-child ratio for the youngest child shall apply
	3501.1(b) The consistent use of a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with the District of Columbia's early learning standards.
	3501.1(c) Accreditation by a national accrediting body approved by OSSE
	3501.1(d) Utilization of child assessment tools that are aligned with the curriculum selected by the program. Assessing children using this tool at least three (3) times during the program year and share the assessments with families at least two (2) times during the program year.
	3501.1(e)(1) Employ at a minimum one (1) teacher and one (1) teacher assistant who meet the following minimum educational requirements-Teacher: (a) Hold at least a bachelor's degree in child development; early childhood education; early childhood special education or child and family studies; or (b) Hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than child development; early childhood education; early childhood special education; or child and family studies and have earned eighteen (18) credits in early childhood education; (c) Hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than a child development; early childhood education; early childhood special education or child and family studies and successful completion of applicable Early Childhood Praxis Exams

	3501.1(e)(2) Assistant teacher: (a) Hold an associate degree in a field other than child development; early childhood education; early childhood special education; or child and family studies and have earned nine (9) credits in early childhood education;
	3501.1 (f) Teachers and assistant teachers shall be paid wages equivalent to District of Columbia Public School pre-K teachers or assistant teachers respectively based on years of experience: (1) A teacher that holds a bachelor’s degree in early child development; early childhood education
	3501.1(g) A professional development and training plan for pre-K teachers and assistant teachers
	3501.1(h) Provide opportunities for the parents of children to participate in and support the program’s educational mission as active partners in their child’s learning and development. Plan educational workshops for parents; hold two (2) parent-teacher conferences a year; and provide other activities that foster family partnership over the program year.
	3501.1(l)A plan that meets OSSE’s requirements to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in accordance with federal law.
	3501.1(j) Provide and maintain at all times safe; secure; and developmentally appropriate space for use as classrooms. The classrooms shall be of sufficient size to provide a minimum of thirty-five (35) square feet of interior; usable space per child which space shall be accessible to children with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
	3501.1(k) Ensure that the daily active play for each pre-K age child includes; at a minimum two (2) hours of active play time including a minimum of forty-five (45) minutes of outdoor play time; weather permitting. In inclement weather, active play shall be encouraged and supported in a safe indoor play area
	3501.1(m) Maintain a process for continuous improvement; ongoing classroom assessments; and the collection of authentic child assessment data at least three (3) times a year
	3501.1(n) Provide comprehensive health and support services for all children enrolled in the program. High-quality pre-K programs shall ensure all children receive within forty-five (45) days of enrollment a developmental screening that includes assessments of social and emotional development. High-quality pre-K programs shall also ensure children receive vision and hearing screenings

In seeking these waivers, I assure that:

	Compliance with both the PKEEP regulations and the requirements outlined in OSSE guidance is not possible because of a direct conflict between the requirements or, where compliance with both is possible, a negative economic impact would occur.
	The pre-K CBO will continue to meet the intent of the high-quality standards by delivering high-quality early care and education that results in positive program outcomes.

Any waiver is at the discretion of OSSE pursuant to 5-A DCMR § 3501.3 and may be revoked by OSSE at any time, either upon violation of any condition attached to it or upon the determination of OSSE that continuance of the waiver is no longer in the best interest of children receiving care at the pre-K CBO. 5A DCMR § 3501.5. A determination by OSSE that the pre-K CBO is not in compliance with the terms of the waiver shall void the waiver, require the pre-K CBO to become compliant with the standard, and may be the basis of additional enforcement action. 5A DCMR § 3501.6.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Signature

Title

Printed Name

Date

Please submit completed form to Christina Crayton, early childhood education policy officer, at Christina.Crayton@dc.gov.