



2880 Pottsville-Minersville Highway  
Suite 210  
Minersville, PA 17954  
570-544-8959 • 800-433-3370  
FAX: 570-544-6915

---

## Public Hearing – Child Care Access in Rural Pennsylvania Tuesday, February 13, 2024

### Mary Ann Devlin, Executive Director, Child Development, Inc. – Schuylkill County

- **Background - Personal**

- 37 years with Child Development Inc.
- 34 in a leadership position, the last 22 as Executive Director

**A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting and when you are gone, attend to those things which you think are important.**

**He will assume control of your cities, states, and nations. He is going to take over your churches, schools, universities, and corporations. The fate of humanity is in his hands.**  
*Abraham Lincoln*

- **Child Development, Inc. – Non-profit, 501c3**

- We provide the following program options for children and families: Head Start Federal - 312, Head Start State - 41, PA PreK Counts – 216 and 18 enrolled with our partner, The Perception Learning Center, wrap-around child care – 50
  - ❖ 8 centers (30 classrooms) – 3 centers are licensed/certified for child care - all with Keystone STAR 4 Designation.
- We receive Schuylkill United Way and EITC funding to assist as many families as we can to afford a quality program for their child.
  - ❖ Head Start and PKC families work and need wrap-around child care – provide continuity and stability.
  - ❖ 95% of our PreK Counts families are working – it serves as an alternate form of child care.
  - ❖ 65% of our Head Start families are working – it serves as an alternate form of child care.
- At one time (more than 20 years ago) we had a robust child care option, providing infant, toddler, preschool and before/after school-age child care
  - ❖ Increasingly difficult and then impossible to continue to operate with inadequate, subsidized funding to provide a quality, comprehensive child care option
  - ❖ We had no choice but to stop providing before and after school age programs
  - ❖ Then stopped infant care and finally toddler care
  - ❖ Subsidy reimbursement did not keep pace with basic operating costs, compensation and benefits for our team members
  - ❖ Becoming involved with the Keystone STARS program improved the quality of our program and provided some additional funding; but not enough to sustain our child care option on its own.
  - ❖ Our priority became and is preschool-age children.
- Benefits of multi-funding:
  - ❖ maximize resources
  - ❖ meet the diverse and changing needs of children/families
  - ❖ 46% of PA PreK Counts providers in PA are child care providers

- Challenges:
  - ❖ Developing a cost-allocation plan with very different cost per child based upon the funding source (\$12,000 to \$10,000 to \$7800)
  - ❖ Navigating differences in eligibility requirements, policies and regulations
  - ❖ **Recruitment and Retention of Teachers – *we are the workforce behind the workforce***
    - ✓ 16 teachers with BS in ECE Level 1 and/or Level 2 Certification have left our Program; 10 since 2020
    - ✓ 14 to public school districts, 1 for a new career path, and 1 retirement
    - ✓ Teachers are being offered \$57,000+ starting salaries with sign-on increases in the \$10,000 range
    - ✓ Caring for and educating young children from families takes more than a bachelor's degree and certification to be a good fit for the position. It takes a special person with the right heart and disposition, compassion, empathy, and love. Teaching young children includes being a nurturer, care-giver, surrogate parent, nose wiper, diaper/pull-up changer, head lice checker, temperature taker. Our teachers are required to administer health plans and give medications, serve as trauma-informed and behavior therapists, and plan for and provide services to children with disabilities and early intervention needs.
    - ✓ Current Team Member Composition
      - Average of 11 years of service
      - 13% of our team members are Child Development Alumni
      - 53% are current or former parents of enrolled children
      - 48% have achieved professional development goals while working for the Program – *Child Development Credential, AA in ECE, BA/BS in ECE, Level 2 Teacher*
      - 56% have advanced within the Program

- **Schuylkill County - The Need for Quality Early Care and Education Programs**

- **February 2023 - 2795** preschool children (ages 3-5).
  - ❖ **67.5% or 1887** live in families with income **at or below 300% of the federal poverty level** (family of 3 earns \$77,460).
  - ❖ **23% or 642** live in households **at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines** (family of 3 earns \$25,820).
  - ❖ **Only 32%** have access to publicly funded, high-quality, early education programs.
- **February 2024**
  - ❖ 3 Head Start Federal classrooms closed – 51 children and families
  - ❖ 2 PA PreK Counts classrooms closed – 36 children and families
  - ❖ No waiting list for Child Care Works (subsidized child care funding)
  - ❖ Approximately 70 children/families eligible for funding have been suspended waiting for openings with a child care provider.
  - ❖ More than 300 applications are typically received every month, with approximately ½ of those are determined ineligible. (Reasons can be over income, didn't complete the paperwork, not meeting the work requirement or other requirements. Approximately 80 families each month are discontinued from CCW that were receiving it due to many different reasons (voluntary, no longer meeting the requirements).
  - ❖ We all have wait lists, but cannot accept new children because we do not have staff.

***where are the children....***

***what will happen to them?***

- **90% of a child's brain is developed before kindergarten**
- **Children Who Attend High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Enter School**
  - ✓ more prepared
  - ✓ achieve greater success
  - ✓ receive less remediation
  - ✓ do not need costly early intervention in elementary school
  - ✓ have fewer grade retentions
  - ✓ have higher standardized test scores
  - ✓ more likely to graduate high school
  - ✓ less likely to get involved with law enforcement and be incarcerated
  - ✓ more likely to become a qualified worker and contributing citizen

**For every \$1 invested in high-quality, early childhood program, there is a  
\$7 To \$17 Return on Investment (ROI) ...  
(based upon longitudinal economic research studies)**

**The purpose of life is to listen –  
to yourself, to your neighbor,  
to your world, and to God,  
and, when the time comes,  
to respond in as helpful a way as you can find...  
from within and without.**

**Please think of the children first.**

**If you ever have anything to do with their entertainment,  
their food, their toys, their custody, their day or night care,  
their health care, their education –**

**Think of the children first.**

***Mister Rogers***