§4271. Start-up funding for public preschool programs

1. Start-up funding. To the extent the State provides adequate start-up funding, school administrative units may operate public preschool programs or provide for students to participate in such programs in accordance with the requirements of this Title. For the purposes of this subchapter, "start-up funding" means a one-time, start-up grant awarded to a qualified school administrative unit that submits an implementation plan that is approved by the department for the operation of a new or expanded public preschool program.
[PL 2013, c. 581, §3 (NEW).]

2. Allowable costs; children 4 years of age. Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year and for each subsequent school year, the State may provide start-up funding for the allowable costs to operate public preschool programs for children 4 years of age under this subchapter.
[PL 2025, c. 633, §6 (AMD).]

2-A. Allowable costs; children 3 years of age with disabilities. Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year and for each subsequent school year, in addition to the funding permitted pursuant to subsection 2, the State may provide start-up funding for the allowable costs to operate public preschool programs for children who are 3 years of age and have been identified as a child with a disability pursuant to section 7001, subsection 1-B.
[PL 2025, c. 633, §7 (NEW).]

3. Grant funds. Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year and for each subsequent school year until the 2026-2027 school year, the commissioner may provide start-up funding to qualified school administrative units to operate public preschool programs for children 4 years of age and, beginning with the 2026-2027 school year and for each subsequent school year, public preschool programs for children 3 or 4 years of age. Grants provided for allowable costs for approved public preschool programs must be provided from state, federal or private funds appropriated, allocated or authorized by the Legislature for that purpose.
[PL 2025, c. 633, §8 (AMD).]

3-A. Phase-in procedures for new or newly expanded public preschool programs. Beginning July 1, 2018, for new or newly expanded public preschool programs, the commissioner shall make a preliminary calculation of total allocation pursuant to section 15674 based on the following:

A. Estimated public preschool program student counts not to exceed the school unit's most recent kindergarten enrollment; [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. C, §6 (NEW).]

B. Estimated rates and weights based on statewide averages; and [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. C, §6 (NEW).]

C. The preliminary calculation of total allocation, which must be replaced with actual student data once students have been enrolled for the new school year. The new or newly expanded public preschool programs shall enroll new students no later than August 1st in a student information system maintained by the department. [PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. C, §6 (NEW).]
[PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. C, §6 (NEW).]

4. Qualifications; rules. To qualify for a grant under this section, a school administrative unit must submit an implementation plan to the department for the operation of a new or expanded public preschool program. The qualifications established for implementation plans must contain standards and best practices for public preschool programs and must encourage a school administrative unit to demonstrate coordination with other early childhood programs in the community to maximize resources and provide comprehensive services to meet the needs of children 3 or 4 years of age in accordance with this subchapter and rules adopted by the commissioner. In awarding grants under this section, the commissioner shall give priority to a qualified school administrative unit that has a greater percentage of economically disadvantaged students as determined pursuant to section 15675, subsection 2 than

other qualified school administrative units under this subsection and in accordance with the following order of preference:

A. The first preference must be to award grant funds to a qualified school administrative unit that does not operate a public preschool program and that submits a plan for the development and operation of a new public preschool program; and [PL 2013, c. 581, §3 (NEW).]

B. The 2nd preference must be to award grant funds to a qualified school administrative unit that operates a public preschool program and that submits a plan for the development and operation of an expanded public preschool program. [PL 2013, c. 581, §3 (NEW).]

The commissioner shall adopt rules that establish criteria for the approval of implementation plans and for the awarding of start-up funds for the allowable costs of operating public preschool programs. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.
[PL 2025, c. 633, §9 (AMD).]

5. Application for federal public preschool funds. The department may apply for assistance from the Federal Government for the development of public preschool programs for children 3 or 4 years of age on behalf of school administrative units in the State. The department shall administer any federal funds received for the benefit of public preschool programs in the State. As the designated state agency authorized to administer federal funds, the department shall develop a state plan and application for funding public preschool programs and shall disburse federal funds as authorized and required by applicable federal law. Beginning in fiscal year 2015-16, the department shall provide any federal funds received to qualified school administrative units as part of the start-up funding provided for the development and operation of public preschool programs under this section. If federal funds are used as part of the start-up funds to operate new or expanded public preschool programs, the students enrolled in these programs must be considered subsidizable pupils for purposes of state subsidy calculations pursuant to chapter 606-B, except that students who have not attained 4 years of age and have not been identified as a child with a disability pursuant to section 7001, subsection 1-B may not be considered subsidizable pupils for the purposes of state subsidy calculations made pursuant to chapter 606-B.
[PL 2025, c. 633, §10 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2013, c. 581, §3 (NEW). PL 2017, c. 284, Pt. C, §§5, 6 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 633, §§6-10 (AMD).

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