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News from the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund



May 2019 eNews

Update on the 2019 Early Learning Facilities Assessment

Facilities have a dramatic impact on access and quality in early learning. The 2019 [Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment](#) funded by [Rhode Island's Preschool Development Grant](#) will focus on better understanding space issues and on recommending concrete strategies to improve existing infrastructure while also getting new quality spaces developed and online. One key component of this assessment is hearing from all of you! Over the last several weeks the LISC team has been reaching out to survey early care and education providers across Rhode Island.



We want to extend a huge thank you to the 164 community based centers and schools who participated in the survey! You may recall, the survey included an opportunity to apply for one of fifteen \$1,000 mini-grants for “Out of the Sandbox” creative, low-cost ideas for improving your space. Awardees were selected through a competitive process led by a committee of stakeholders. There were a variety of great ideas ranging from a multi-generational garden space and a mist-walk, to acoustical classroom tiles and lighting modifications to create a more welcoming entrance for families. A full list of grantees can be found on our website [here](#) .

We will continue to outreach for your feedback and creative ideas. We sincerely appreciate your partnership to help offer solutions that address the facilities challenges facing the early learning community!

2019 Outdoor Play Intervention Project

We are so excited to share an update on the *Outdoor Play Interventions Project* (OPIP), our strategy to aid in the development of low-cost, high-value simple design interventions for outdoor spaces utilizing architectural design, LISC technical assistance, fundraising, and volunteer coordination. As of right now, two child care programs have been selected through a [rolling application](#) to participate in our third year of OPIP.

Site visits are currently being scheduled with the design team and ideas are starting to flow. We are excited to introduce the following participants at their “before” stage and hope you continue to follow the project (or apply for yourself!) throughout the year:



Heritage Park YMCA - Pawtucket

In a center licensed for 300 children, a playground gets a lot of use! To maximize the use of space and enhance experiences for the children, Heritage Park is hoping to add additional activity zones to their outdoor space. Stay tuned for plans that may incorporate everything from a shaded outdoor reading area to an outdoor mathematics adventure zone.



The Children's Workshop - Warren

After addressing all their safety issues, including removing some aged and potentially hazardous equipment a few years back, this center was left with a great open (nearly) blank slate! Their plan will focus on loose parts, a variety of interactive play elements, and gross motor opportunities painted on a sloped asphalt surface for both individual and group play.

While these sites are unique they share equally in their desire and potential to offer more valuable play opportunities for Rhode Island’s children. We appreciate their enthusiastic

commitment and we hope as this project continues you are also inspired to make some quality changes to your space!

From the Ground Up: Improving Child Care and Early Learning Facilities



Safe and developmentally-appropriate child care and early learning facilities are crucial to helping children thrive. Yet, the physical infrastructure of these spaces has been long neglected. Existing data show the prevalence of potentially hazardous conditions in child care settings, such as broken gates, exposed nails, and high levels of environmental toxins. Moreover, many of these settings lack features that support children's development, such as child-sized sinks and adequate lighting. To create safe spaces in which children can learn, play, and grow, providers need access to financial investments that support facility improvements – to move them beyond good enough. To help address this, the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#) recently released their issue brief ***From the Ground Up: Improving Child Care and Early Learning Facilities***, which details financing programs for supporting facility quality and provides examples of federal-, state-, and local-level models that focus on child care facility-related challenges.

Download the Issue Brief

Additionally, on May 22nd, the Bipartisan Policy Center hosted an event exploring the scope of the facilities problem, as well as opportunities for financing facility renovation and construction through community partnerships, capacity building, innovation, and philanthropic engagement. This event also featured LISC's very own Policy Director, Nicole Barcliff. A recording of this event can be viewed [here](#).

So You Think You Want to Open a New Center? Here's What You Need to Do.



2019 has brought with it lots of buzz from businesses, organizations and individuals interested in opening new early learning centers. The process of opening a new center can quickly become overwhelming, but, if you take the time to research and plan carefully you will be setting yourself up for greater success.

We recommend groups move forward with a project only **after** they clearly assessed the market need, developed a solid business plan (including sound financial projections), determined their fiscal readiness to take on a project, and taken the time necessary to find a suitable site. For more information on developing and financing a child care center, including tools to help you in the planning process, refer to our [Developing Early Childhood Facilities resource guide](#) and our [Development and Financing online module](#).

The Child Care Licensing unit at the [Department of Children Youth and Families \(DCYF\)](#) has generated the below step-by-step starting list for groups interested in opening a new center. DCYF steps are as follows:

1. Have a [formal floor plan](#) developed. **LISC NOTE:** *"Formal" generally means developed by a design professional like an architect or engineer*
2. Complete a [floor plan review](#) with DCYF. *Make adjustments to floor plan as necessary. DCYF will send application materials after this point*
3. Contact the office of the [State Fire Marshal](#) to obtain an official plan review:
4. Once you have a "stamp" of approval (this will be a stamp on your official floor plan) from state fire, please contact DCYF to conduct a walk through and provide any [further guidance](#), if required
5. **Begin construction**, as needed
6. Submit the [application form and fee](#) to DCYF Child Care Licensing (via mail or drop box in the lobby of 101 Friendship Street; Providence). This will allow DCYF to review and create you as a 'pending' applicant. This is a requirement to go on the list of applicants submitted to law enforcement, which will allow you to obtain the background checks required
7. Once you receive confirmation that your application has been received, start the process to complete necessary [background checks](#) on your staff
8. Review and complete the rest of the [supporting material for the application](#). *As a note, the longest delays experienced for applicants are as a result of incomplete application materials, or application materials that are not well organized, as this requires extra review time*
9. Submit supporting documentation for application – [review of an initial application packet](#) can take 1-2 weeks
10. **Complete construction** and obtain all required inspections. Your contractor and/or architect can help guide you through this process
11. **Complete program set up**
12. **Submit final inspections** and request [formal measurement](#) visit by DCYF for the purposes of determining compliance with the regulations and determining an official licensed capacity
13. Without any issues, DCYF will issue a [provisional license](#)

If you have space-related questions or concerns, we would like to help! Our technical assistance includes guidance on the following:

- Navigating physical space challenges related to DCYF licensing and quality improvement as well as the CECE regulations required by state pre-K classrooms;
- Creating financing and fundraising plans to turn project dreams into realities;
- Assessing the feasibility of proposed construction and renovation projects; and
- Obtaining playground audits and priority improvement plans.

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About RICCELFF

The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.

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