

WITH FULL-DAY PRE-K FUNDED, HOW WILL IT IMPACT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS?

Partnering with public schools to provide Pre-K

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HIGHLIGHTS

As the state increases funding for full-day public Pre-K, child care providers worry that they will lose child care subsidy clients to the public school system. There are several strategies providers can use to ensure they are able to continue to fill their openings, even if they lose some children to public Pre-K.

HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

Through House Bill 3, the state legislature recently expanded funding for full-day Pre-K to eligible 4-year-olds. Eligibility includes children from low-income families, which includes many of the 4-year-olds served through the subsidized child care program. However, it is important to remember some key items when assessing the magnitude of this issue:

1. This only impacts 4-year-old children, and the child care subsidy program serves children birth through age 12.
2. “Full-day” Pre-K is not a full work day, and child care providers are often needed to cover before- and after-school time.
3. About half of all school districts already offer full-day Pre-K to eligible 4-year-old children, so the impact will not be the same across the state.
4. School districts who expands from half- to full-day that have facilities constraints will be required to attempt to partner with child care providers before seeking a waiver for that year.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Given that the districts are in charge of Pre-K (and partnerships with child care providers are not widespread), child care will lose 4-year-old children. It likely won't be an abrupt mass exodus since our Pre-K is not universal and over half the districts are already offering full-day Pre-K, but it will have an impact for child care providers in some communities. Texas Education Agency (TEA) can survey school districts to see if they will move from half-

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to full-day Pre-K, what year they will do this, and which school districts will need to partner with child care providers in order to deliver full-day Pre-K. School districts that do not have the facilities to expand to full-day without serving fewer children will be allowed a temporary waiver from offering full-day if they attempt partnerships first. These waiver districts will naturally show where the need for partnerships will be.

Understanding the communities that will be impacted can help the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) develop a plan. TWC (with the support of TEA) can address the impact with any of the following strategies.

1. Embrace diverse delivery. The state Pre-K program can be delivered in public schools or by child care providers; creating further opportunities for partnerships between agencies and providers. TEA and TWC could work together to ensure that some of this full-day Pre-K funding is used to support an expansion of partnerships, particularly in the impacted areas. TWC and TEA could dedicate a facilitator to help guide collaborative planning and decision-making and provide a communication strategy to school districts.

TEA could assign school district staff, who have expertise in early childhood education (ECE), with implementing and managing Pre-K across all settings. TWC and its 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards) could identify where 3-year-old children on the subsidy are most concentrated and focus TRS and partnership efforts to those providers to draw down half-day Pre-K funds. Finally, TWC and TEA could disperse blended funding at the state level so as not to burden school districts with being the pass-through for funds.

2. Improve and focus on infant/toddler strategy within Texas Rising Star. Because of Pre-K pressure, TWC has the opportunity to pivot toward infants/toddlers by increasing reimbursement rates, reducing co-pays for their parents, adding extra incentives like stipends for infant/toddler teachers, or providing contract agreements to quality infant/toddler programs. This strategy can make it possible for providers to meet quality TRS standards and serve more infants/toddlers. This solution can increase TRS participation, pay fairer rates for infant/toddler care, and begin to guarantee slots for eligible infants/toddlers just like Pre-K does for eligible 3



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- and 4-year-olds.

3. Strengthen opportunities for child care providers to deliver **after-school programs**. Working parents of Pre-K children will likely need extended care to cover the workday. TWC and Local Boards can talk to child care providers about creating an after school Pre-K market, either be on-site in child care or at a school. TWC can implement contract agreements in order to guarantee slots for children who are in after-school Pre-K programs at TRS providers, allowing TWC to target funds where full-day Pre-K will have the greatest impact.

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