



ECHO York County Virtual Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program – 2026 GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

Program Timeline:

February 6, 2026 (12:00 am) – Applications Open
February 12, 2026 (1:00 pm) – Virtual Information Session
February 27, 2026 (5:00 pm) – Applications Close
March 20, 2026 – Program Participants Announced
March 27, 2026 – Mentor Leadership Conference at HACC York Campus 8:30 am – 3:30 pm (Optional)
April 1, 2026 – Mandatory Virtual Orientation/Community of Practice-6:00 pm-7:30 pm
April 8, 2026 – First Day of Virtual CDA Course Via Zoom (Offered by HACC)
April 21, April 29, May 12 and May 19, 2026: Mentor Leadership Training Coaching with Powerful Interactions (Virtually) 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm via Zoom.

Background:

Every Child Has Opportunities (ECHO) is an early childhood education initiative in York County, Pennsylvania, intended to expand access to affordable, high-quality childcare. Led by Community Connections for Children and York County Economic Alliance, ECHO serves as a catalyst for innovation and collaboration and provides a blueprint for addressing the issues that limit opportunities for children, families, early childhood educators, and business owners.

Major funders include J. William Warehime Foundation, Powder Mill Foundation, and WellSpan Health. Additional funders include The Kinsley Foundation, United Way of York County, and York County Community Foundation.

This program recognizes the critical role of early childhood education in York County, Pennsylvania.

Additional Funding Eligibility

In addition to ECHO-supported stipends and program incentives, participants may be eligible for Workforce Investment funding through the South-Central Workforce Investment Board (SCWIB). By applying to this program, applicants acknowledge a commitment to the highest and best use of available funds. When public funding is available, it will be utilized prior to ECHO funds.

Eligibility for Workforce Investment funding is not guaranteed and is determined on an individual basis by SCWIB and CareerLink, based on participant eligibility criteria and the availability of funds.

ECHO staff will coordinate directly with SCWIB and local PA CareerLink partners to support referrals and facilitate the process when applicable; however, final eligibility determinations and funding decisions are made solely by the Workforce Investment Board and CareerLink.

Registered Apprenticeship Program Participation Overview

Early childhood education programs may choose to participate in the Registered Apprenticeship Program as an extension of their involvement in the ECHO Teacher Aide Program. It is important to note that both programs follow the same training criteria, mentoring expectations, and quality standards. Teacher aides and apprentices receive aligned coursework, on-the-job learning, and mentoring supports regardless of pathway.

Participation in the Registered Apprenticeship Program offers additional benefits and funding supports beyond the Teacher Aide Program. These additional resources are intended to help offset administrative and compliance costs associated with operating a state-recognized Registered Apprenticeship, including documentation, reporting, and coordination requirements.

- Complete Apprentice Virtual Interview
- Complete Appendix B- Apprentice Agreement and Appendix E- Employer Acceptance Agreement for Registered Apprenticeship program
- Formal training for On-the-Job Learning (OJL) hours logged in ApprentiScope
- Bi-monthly employer meetings with Workforce Development Coordinator
- Follow state and federal Registered Apprenticeship standards

To participate as a Registered Apprenticeship employer, an early childhood education program must complete the following steps:

- The employer certifies that it has been provided a copy of the Registered Apprenticeship State Standards, has read and understands these standards, and formally requests certification to train apprentices under the provisions of those standards.
- The employer certifies that a fully executed Employer Acceptance Agreement (Appendix E) has been completed and is maintained on file with ECHO and Community Connections for Children, as required.
- Registration and participation in the Registered Apprenticeship Program cannot be finalized or approved without a completed Employer Agreement on file. This agreement confirms the employer's understanding of the program requirements and their commitment to meeting all state and program expectations.

ECHO staff will provide guidance and technical assistance throughout this process to support employers in successfully transitioning from the Teacher Aide Program to participation in the Registered Apprenticeship pathway, when desired.

Program Description and Details

The Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program aims to support early childhood education programs in York County, Pennsylvania, with talent attraction and retention. It supports the provider with

salary reimbursement for the teacher aide/apprentice position, provides the teacher aide/apprentice and paired mentor teacher/journeyworker with stipend pay, and, in addition to the virtual CDA class, it offers wrap-around support for both the teacher aide/apprentice and mentor teacher/journeyworker. Details below.

In this program, up to 30 teacher aides and/or BLOOM recipients will be selected to participate in weekly virtual sessions via Zoom on most Wednesday evenings 6:00 pm-9:00 pm and one Saturday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm and independent study work for the Child Development Associate course offered in partnership with HACC. See the course calendar for details.

Goals of the Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program include:

- Attract and retain qualified early childhood educators.
- Enhance quality of care and education at existing providers.
- Strengthen the early childhood education ecosystem in York County.
- Increase capacity for low-income children and families who have access to high-quality early childhood education. [*Note: Low-Income is defined by existing early childhood education programs: Child Care Works (CCW), Head-Start, Early Head-Start, Pre-K Counts, and/or Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)*]

General Provider Eligibility:

To be eligible for the ECHO Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program, the provider must meet the following requirements at the time of application and throughout the program period (through December 2026).

- Have an early childhood education program located in York County, Pennsylvania.
- And be a full-time childcare program with a regular Department of Human Services (DHS) Certificate of Compliance, OR hold an Early Head Start/Head Start, and/or Pre-K Counts OCDEL approved grant.
- If DHS Certified, be designated as and meet all Keystone STARS Performance Standards associated with a STAR 2 (or higher) designation and not in a Keystone STAR suspension status. OR be a STAR 1 program that is actively working with a CCC STARS Coach to move up to a STAR 2. If you are a STAR 1, your STARS Coach will reach out directly to you with more information.
- Maintain or move up your STAR level designation during the approval and payment phase of the award. If a STAR level move-down occurs during this process, the program may no longer be eligible for the award amount. It is expected that the program will make a commitment to maintain their STAR designation.
- Programs approved for a BLOOM Start-Up Grant or the BLOOM Forgivable Loan Program that are in the process of opening and **do not yet hold a provisional DHS certificate** may participate in the CDA course at **no cost**. However, additional financial support is not available until the program has obtained the appropriate DHS certification. This approach ensures responsible use of funds while supporting foundational learning and workforce preparation in emerging early childhood programs.
- The provider does not owe funds for any previous OCDEL or CCC grant.
- The provider does not owe liens/liabilities to the County of York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and/or federal government, including tax liabilities.
- To participate as a Registered Apprenticeship Program, the employer certifies that it has been provided a copy of the Registered Apprenticeship State Standards, has read and

understands these standards, and requests certification to train apprentices under the provisions of these standards. The employer further certifies that a fully executed Employer Acceptance Agreement (Appendix E) is completed and maintained on file as required. Registration and participation in the Registered Apprenticeship Program cannot be finalized or approved without a completed Employer Agreement.

- If you are unsure if you are eligible, reach out to khengst@cccforpa.org with questions.

Successful applicants will be able to communicate the following:

- An applicable teacher aide or registered apprentice with clearances.
- An experienced mentor teacher to pair with the teacher aide (minimum requirement is a CDA with a minimum of 1 year of early childhood education experience). For registered apprentices, the mentor will be titled journeyworker. For BLOOM fund recipients, ECHO staff will work to assign an experienced mentor.
- A realistic sense of what it will take to execute this program successfully.
- An intent for increased capacity for low-income children and families in York County.
- A commitment to high-quality early childhood education.

Program Roles & Definitions:

Teacher Aide/Apprentice: a mentee or apprentice, someone who is new (less than six months) to the early childhood education field is preferred.

Requirements & Commitments:

- The teacher aide/apprentice will participate in a weekly virtual CDA class and monthly virtual community practice session – [See HACC's Course Calendar](#)
- The maximum number of absences for the CDA course is nine (9) hours total, per HACC's attendance policy. If a teacher aide misses more than nine hours, they will be removed from the program. No additional funds will be paid to the ECE provider, teacher aide, or mentor teacher.
- This CDA course will articulate to 9 credits at HACC towards an associate degree.
- Successful completion of the CDA course does not grant or guarantee a CDA certificate by the CDA Council. Upon completion of the course, it will be necessary for the teacher aide or registered apprentice to submit an application and fee to the CDA Council, complete a national exam, and successfully participate in a CDA Verification Visit which includes review of your CDA Portfolio.
- The teacher aide/apprentice is an hourly employee of the applying provider and, in addition to the hourly pay, will receive up to a \$4,500 stipend paid over the course of the program while actively participating.
 - The stipend will be \$500 per month if working over 30 hours a week from April 2026 – December 2026. First payment will be disbursed at the end of May.
 - The stipend will be \$300 per month if an employee is working between 20-30 hours per week.
 - PLUS, a CDA completion stipend of \$500 for the teacher aide if the CDA credential is achieved within 6 months (by June 2027). Submit proof of completion to Kim Hengst at khengst@cccforpa.org for confirmation and payment.
 - Programs who have successfully received BLOOM Start-Up Child Care Funding who are in the process of opening and do not yet hold a provisional DHS certification may participate in the CDA course at no cost if progress towards opening is

demonstrated. To participate, BLOOM Start-up programs must demonstrate measurable progress toward opening their program, including documentation showing at least 50% of BLOOM award funds expended toward approved start-up costs and least two of the following:

- Documented submission of a child care certification application to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)
 - Participation in DHS certification orientation, virtual, in-person or both, and two or more documented meetings with a CCC Provider Specialist
 - Evidence of progress toward facility readiness, such as:
 - Certificate of Occupancy or zoning approval
 - Required inspections scheduled or completed
 - Other documented actions that clearly demonstrate forward progress toward certification and program opening
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- At a minimum, the teacher aide/apprentice must work an average of 20 hours per week, not to exceed 40 hours per week, or is a BLOOM recipient without a current provisional DHS certificate of compliance actively pursuing opening an early education program.
 - Will receive weekly one-on-one coaching from a mentor teacher, at least 30 minutes per week, to be logged and documented. BLOOM recipients without a current provisional DHS certificate of compliance will receive one-on-one coaching from an assigned experience mentor.
 - BLOOM providers opening a program will not have, or work directly with, an on-site mentor teacher within their program. Instead, these providers will be connected with an experienced mentor for guidance, coaching, and additional support as they progress through coursework and program development.
 - Attend an End-of-Program Recognition Ceremony (to be scheduled)
 - Selected teacher aides/apprentices must complete a Commitment of Understanding and Registration Form through HACC for the CDA Course by April 8, 2026. Forms will be provided.
 - Teacher aides/apprentices must commit to staying in early childhood education for at least one year after completing the teacher aide/apprenticeship program.
 - Must have all clearances as required by the employer.
 - Must select their CDA credential; options include Infant/Toddler, Birth – Five, Preschool and Family Child Care. School-age credentials are not included in this program.
 - Must have a laptop or tablet to bring to CDA classes. Cell phones are not to be used as an electronic learning device. ECHO can provide a laptop and user agreement will be signed by the teacher aide/apprentice.

Mentor Teacher/Journeyworker: an experienced early childhood educator with a minimum of a CDA and five years' experience. A teacher aide/apprentice will be paired with the mentor teacher/journeyworker in her/his/their classroom for coaching and onboarding.

Requirements & Commitments:

- Participate in four 2-hour virtual “Coaching with Powerful Interactions”. April 21, April 29, May 12 and May 19, 2026: Mentor Leadership Training Coaching with Powerful Interactions (Virtually) 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm via Zoom.
- Participate in a 1-hour one-on-one coaching call at the convenience of the mentor teacher/journeyworker and ECHO Workforce Development Coordinator, and 3 hours of

asynchronous training. PQAS hours will be offered. Attend a Mentor Teacher/Journeyworker in person 6-hour conference on March 27, 2026 from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm at HACC York Campus (optional).

- Receive a \$2,250.00 stipend paid over the course of the program:
 - Receive monthly stipend payment of \$250 from May 2026 through January 2027, contingent upon the paired teacher aide/apprentice maintaining active participation in the program. Stipends will be disbursed the following month (e.g., the April stipend will be paid at the end of May).
 - If the teacher aide/apprentice withdraws from the program, the mentor teacher/journeyworker may continue to receive coaching support to build skills and earn PQAS training hours; however, stipend payments will no longer be provided.
- Must dedicate 30 minutes each week to one-on-one coaching with the teacher aide and document the topics discussed. This coaching time is considered paid work time for the provider. CCC will supply a Coaching Log, which must be submitted monthly to Kim Hengst at khengst@cccforpa.org and/or uploaded to the online Apprenticeship Database for those enrolled in the Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- Selected mentor teachers must complete a Commitment of Understanding Form by April 8, 2026. The form will be provided following notification of selection.
- Must have access to a computer for virtual learning sessions.

Early Childhood Education Provider – the program applicant and employer of both the teacher aide and mentor teacher.

Requirements & Commitments:

- Create an environment for the mentor/journeyworker and teacher aide/apprentice to have at least 30 minutes of dedicated one-on-one weekly coaching time.
- Support the teacher aide/apprentice to participate in weekly, virtual CDA course (April-December 2026), monthly community of practice, and end-of-program recognition ceremony which may be held during normal working hours. Notify Kim Hengst, ECHO Workforce Development Coordinator, if the teacher aide/apprentice needs a laptop for CDA coursework and credential.
- Allow teacher aide to select their credential: Infant/Toddler, Birth - Five, Preschool, Family Child Care, and will work to pair them with a mentor/journeyworker as best as possible.
- Schedule four hours per month of release time for teacher aides to complete studies, complete one on one coaching sessions with their mentor teacher (30 minutes weekly) and attend a once a month, a one-hour virtual Community of Practice held from 12:30pm – 1:30 pm on designated Wednesdays. Please reference [HACC Program Calendar](#).
- Allow mentor teacher to participate in four, two-hour virtual “Coaching with Powerful Interactions” Training, a one-hour one-on-one coaching call at the convenience of the mentor teacher and ECHO Workforce Development Coordinator and three hours of asynchronous training. Mentor Teachers will also attend an in person leadership conference TBD. Mentor Teacher will receive PQAS training hours on the PD Registry.
- Must support the teacher aide and mentor teacher in the success of the program.
- If the teacher aide/apprentice or mentor teacher/journeyworker has a change of employment, the provider must communicate it to ECHO staff within five working calendar days.
- ECHO covers the cost of the Teacher Aide’s/Apprentice’s CDA Class and materials and the Mentor Teacher’s/Journeyworker’s Professional Development.

- Will receive salary reimbursement for teacher aide position in monthly installments-based hours worked, between 20-40 hours per week:
 - For a total reimbursement up to \$9,500 over the course of the 9-month program at a rate of \$1,000 a month if enrolled in the ECHO Teacher Aide Program
 - Or for a total reimbursement up to \$13,500 over the course of the 9-month program at a rate of \$1,500 a month if enrolled as a Registered Apprenticeship Employer. Registered Apprenticeship Program must complete the additional requirements:
 - Complete Apprentice Virtual Interview
 - Complete Appendix B- Apprentice Agreement
 - Complete Appendix E- Employer Acceptance Agreement
 - Formal training for On-the-Job Learning (OJL) hours logged in ApprentiScope
 - Bi-monthly employer meetings with Workforce Development Coordinator
 - Follow state and federal Registered Apprenticeship standards
- Will receive stipend reimbursement; see Funding Terms for details.
- Selected providers must complete a Program Agreement and Commitment of Understanding by April 8, 2026. Forms will be provided.

Program Requirements and Compliance:

- Providers are the applicants and must submit a separate application for each teacher aide/apprentice. Teacher Aide/apprentice must complete a required application, essay and interview if participating in the Registered apprenticeship program.
- If the teacher aide/apprentice or mentor teacher/journeyworker has a change of employment, the provider must communicate it to ECHO staff within five days.
- Stipend pay and salary reimbursement will cease if the teacher aide/apprentice is no longer employed or participating in the CDA Class.
- Expenses incurred prior to program notification are not eligible as program expenses.
- All program funds must be spent by March 1, 2027.
- Successful applicants will be asked to sign a Program Agreement to receive payment.
- Non-compliance with all the requirements of the ECHO York County Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program and the Program Agreement will result in the provider being required to return funds to CCC.
- Funds attributed to this award must be expended within the program timeline and as specified in the signed Program Agreement.
- Programs must keep documentation of stipend payments for their records for review by CCC and for funders who may need to review documents for auditing/monitoring purposes.
- Stipends to the teacher aide and mentor must be paid through the provider's regular payroll processes.
- All program-related documents must be maintained for seven years.
- **Important: Any unexpended funds must be returned to CCC.**

Funds May Only Be Used For:

- Salary reimbursement for the teacher aide/apprentice position.
- Stipend payment for the selected mentor teacher/journeyworker with active participation in the leadership series and ongoing coaching of the teacher aide/apprentice.
- Stipend payment for the selected teacher aide/apprentice with participation in the weekly in-person CDA class and monthly community of practice.

- When a BLOOM recipient becomes certified as a Child Care Center, they are eligible for expanded financial support, including salary reimbursement at a rate of \$1,000 a month and monthly teacher aide stipend if the participant is employed as a teacher aide and not the business owner.
- When a BLOOM recipient becomes certified as a Family Child Care (FCC) Providers, they are eligible to receive a monthly stipend only and are not eligible for salary reimbursement.
- Additional financial support for BLOOM recipients is not available until the program has obtained the appropriate DHS certification.

See the commitment to understanding HACC's attendance policy. If the teacher aide/apprentice is no longer in the CDA course, stipend pay for both mentor teacher/journeyworker and teacher aide and salary reimbursement payments to the provider will immediately stop.

Funding Terms:

BLOOM recipients who do not hold a provisional DHS certificate may attend the CDA course at no cost. Additional financial supports will not be available until the program has obtained the required DHS certification. Participants are responsible for providing proof of certification to Kim Hengst, ECHO Workforce Development Coordinator, at khengst@cccforpa.org.

Once certification is verified, programs will have 30 days to sign the Grant Agreement for financial supports to begin. Retroactive payments will not be issued.

Funding provided by the ECHO York County Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program shall not exceed \$20,750 per participant, paid monthly over the course of a nine-month program.

- Up to \$4,500 stipend for teacher aide/apprentice, PLUS \$500 CDA completion stipend
- Up to \$2,250 stipend for mentor teacher/journeyworker
- Up to \$9,000 in salary reimbursement for a teacher aide program or \$13,500 as a Registered Apprenticeship.

Program disbursement schedule:

- Initial payment will be issued 30 days after completion of the first month of programming and upon receipt of a signed Program Agreement.
- Monthly payments will be distributed from May 2026 through January 2027 and include:
 - Teacher aide/apprentice stipend: \$300–\$500 per month
 - \$300 for participants working 20–30 hours per week
 - \$500 for participants working 30–40 hours per week
 - Mentor teacher stipend: \$250 per month
 - Salary reimbursement for the teacher aide/apprentice:
 - Up to \$1,000 per month through the Teacher Aide Program, or
 - Up to \$1,500 per month with a signed Registered Apprenticeship Employer Agreement on file

A grant Final Expense Report with monthly stipend payment confirmation must be completed on the grant portal and follow-up grant report must be completed and submitted by March 31, 2027. Failure to submit the Final Expense report and follow-up report may disqualify you from receiving future funds or grants.

Marketing:

Submission and acceptance of a grant assume a willingness to make the project available for ECHO's use and inclusion for informational, marketing, and/or public relations purposes. This may entail social media posts, press releases to local papers and other media outlets, a feature on the ECHO website, photos, and information at event presentations by ECHO or any of ECHO's partners.

Program Announcements, Public Reports, and Use of the Grantor's Name and Logo. If you wish to issue a press release or announcement regarding this program, you must obtain advance approval from ECHO of the press release and the date of release. You also agree to obtain advance approval from ECHO for any other use of ECHO's name or logo. Please contact the ECHO Director prior to any press release, announcement, or other publication, or proposed use of its name or logo. This program is being funded by ECHO and should be noted in any presentations or publications resulting from this program.

Selection Process:

This is a competitive program application with a maximum capacity of 30 teacher aides/apprentices. Priority consideration will be given to teacher aides/apprentices with less than six months' experience in early childhood education, but teachers with less than two years' experience will be considered, and experienced mentor teachers/journeyworkers with coaching capacity and demonstrate commitment to high-quality early childhood education. Applicants will be assessed to verify eligibility of workforce investment funds through Career Link and the South-Central Workforce Investment Board.

To successfully submit your program application, submit a complete application by 5pm on February 27, via the Grant Portal: <https://www.grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=cccforpa>.

ECHO York County Teacher Aide/Registered Apprenticeship Program Application includes Provider Information, Teacher Aide/Apprenticeship Information, Mentor Teacher/Journeyworker Information, Access & Inclusion, Sign & Submit Form, your DEI Statement, if you have one, and a signed Attestation.

If participating as a Registered Apprenticeship Program, the employer certifies that it has been provided with a copy of the Registered Apprenticeship State Standards, has read and understands these standards, and requests certification to train apprentices under the provisions of these standards. The employer further certifies that a fully executed Employer Acceptance Agreement (Appendix E) is completed and maintained on file as required.

Registration and participation in the Registered Apprenticeship Program cannot be finalized or approved without a completed Employer Acceptance Agreement (Appendix E).

For more information, visit www.echoyork.org or contact Kim Hengst, ECHO Workforce Development Coordinator, at khengst@cccforpa.org or 717-870-6387.