



For Immediate Release

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BrightStars Awards Nearly \$100k to Child Care and Early Learning Programs

With support from the RI Department of Human Services BrightStars increases the amount of available funds to child care programs to help improve program quality.

PROVIDENCE, RI, July 14, 2011 – BrightStars, Rhode Island’s Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs, has awarded over \$96,000 to child care centers, preschools, and family child care homes since April 2010. Programs have used these funds to improve in areas such as the learning environment, indoor space, health and safety, staff professional development, and more. More than 2,000 children are enrolled in these programs throughout the state.

“We are pleased to support programs as they identify areas of improvement, implement changes in these areas, and continue their commitment to providing quality care,” says Sheila Grant Orphanides, Quality Improvement Specialist at BrightStars.

The funds are part of the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and are administered by the RI Department of Human Services. The funds BrightStars received are granted to programs that have earned a quality rating from BrightStars. Each program that participates in BrightStars receives an incentive payment of \$250 and is awarded additional funds for quality improvement. In May 2011, BrightStars was approved to award additional dollar amounts to programs, ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,500.

Upon hearing of the increase in fund amounts, Deborah L. Morelle, Director of Dr. Pat Feinstein Child Development Center at the University of Rhode Island said, “This is excellent news! Our recent purchases have made a wonderful difference in both classrooms. Parents are so pleased with the addition of gross motor materials for indoor play. I will be working with teachers to develop a new program improvement plan.”

Research indicates children who attend high quality child care and early learning programs are more likely to enter school ready to learn and achieve greater academic and social success. Studies have found that high quality child care programs have certain characteristics in common such as low staff-child ratios and teachers with formal education and professional preparation. The additional funds will help Rhode Island child care programs make quality enhancements and implement best practices related to quality. BrightStars hopes to make these funds available to as many programs as possible. The ARRA funds are limited and are to be spent by September 30, 2011.

About BrightStars

BrightStars is Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care and early learning programs. All licensed child care centers, preschools, center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family child care homes, and school-age programs can participate in BrightStars. BrightStars funding partners include United Way of Rhode Island, CVS Caremark Charitable Trust, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation.

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BrightStars is managed by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (RIAEYC), a non-profit organization and the state affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Visit www.BrightStars.org for more information.