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### **Grant Program Aids CenClear Child Services in Enhancing Classrooms**

*Pets in the Classroom provides financial support to teachers for the purpose of enhancing the classroom learning environment*

[Pets in the Classroom](#), a grant program that provides funding to teachers to purchase and maintain classroom pets, has provided [Cen-Clear Child Services](#) with 73 grants over the last 5 school years, 25 in this school year alone, aiding the organization in providing a valuable tool to the teachers of their educational programs.

While many teachers across the country are discussing ways to build empathy, encourage compassion, teach responsibility, and advance character education, Cen-Clear Child Services is reaping the benefits of a tool they found to have an impact with their students: classroom pets. This multi-faceted agency that provides diverse services to disadvantaged children, adults, and families is encouraging its teachers to have pets in their classrooms because ECERS, a classroom assessment tool, suggests that it is beneficial for living things to be present in the room for students to care for and observe.

Amy Wible, the Child Development and Disabilities Coordinator at Cen-Clear Child Services, stated, "It is something we promote because there are so many skills that children learn by having a class pet: self-regulation, compassion, empathy, observation skills, responsibility, etc., etc., etc. I could find child goals in every area of the standards related to caring for pets."

Cen-Clear Child Services provides services to over 4,700 children and families annually in Central Pennsylvania. Through its Preschool Division, the agency provides Head Start, Early Head Start, Family Centers, Early Intervention, and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts in Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Elk, Huntingdon, and Jefferson Counties. With a focus on supporting the mental, social, and emotional development of children, Cen-Clear Child Services' partnership with Pets in the Classroom provides teachers with funding to aid in this development through classroom pets.

Confirming what ECERS suggests, studies have shown that caring for pets has a positive effect on children: improving school attendance, increasing interest in the classroom, teaching children responsibility, encouraging nurturing, building self-esteem, and more. Thousands of Pets in the Classroom grant recipients have witnessed these benefits of classroom pets, including the teachers of CenClear Child Services:

*My experience with the classroom pets have been wonderful. The children get very excited when it is their turn to feed and care for our pets. They love to watch the crabs come out of their shells and walk around. Having a pet in our classroom has taught some students that were having some sharing problems about taking turns and working together.*

Jennifer Kitko  
West Branch Head Start

*Kids are excited every day they enter the room to check on the animals. It is several students' favorite part of our classroom and also to care for them is a favorite classroom job. One student in our class used our pet part of science as a calming area for himself when his behavior was too wild.*

Melinda Houser  
Harmony Head Start

*We have several children who have difficulty following directions or sitting still at circle time. The children love getting the hermit crab out so it can join us at circle time. Our rule is "sit quietly on your bottom so we don't scare the crab". All children in the class will sit on their square trying their best not to wiggle or talk too loudly. The children will remind each other, "we have to be quiet so Lalaoopsy (the hermit crab) will come out of her shell".*

Karen Jacobs  
Matternville Head Start

Helping teachers provide students with the benefits of having small animals in the classroom is why the Pets in the Classroom grant program began in 2011. The program was established by the Pet Care Trust with the knowledge that, while they are a valuable teaching tool, many teachers have very limited resources for the support of classroom animals. Through this educational grants program, teachers can obtain a grant for the purchase of new pets, pet environments, or pet food, and supplies for existing classroom pets through a direct, no-hassle grant application on the Pets in the Classroom website ([www.PetsintheClassroom.org](http://www.PetsintheClassroom.org)).

The grant program, which has provided over 50,000 grants to teachers, impacting the lives of approximately 2.5 million students, continues to support teachers across the country in providing the benefits of classroom pets to their students. To learn more about Pets in the Classroom, visit [www.PetsintheClassroom.org](http://www.PetsintheClassroom.org).