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TITLE 218 – RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

CHAPTER 20 – INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

SUBCHAPTER 00 – N/A

PART 13 – Child Care Assistance Program for Child Care Educators and Child Care Staff Rules and Regulations

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13.1 Authority and Purpose

- A. Passage of the Fiscal Year 2024 Rhode Island State Budget authorized a pilot program allowing the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide funding for child care for eligible child care educators and child care staff with family income up to three hundred percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), who work in a licensed child care center, licensed family child care home, or a licensed group family child care home.
- B. R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-12-23 designates the DHS as the principal agency of the State responsible for the planning and coordination of State involvement in the area of child care, including responsibility for State programs subsidizing child care services provided to families receiving benefits from the Rhode Island Works Program (RI Works) and low to moderate income eligible working families. Funding for this Pilot program is authorized from August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2024.

13.2 Definitions

- A. For the purposes of these Rules and Regulations, the following terms shall have the following meanings:
1. “Approved child care provider” means an individual or program that:
 - a. Has met the requirements established by the DHS Services to participate in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP); and
 - b. Entered into a signed and valid agreement with the DHS specifying the terms and conditions for enrolling eligible children and receiving payment for the CCAP allowable child care expenses.
 2. “Authorized child care services” means the child care a CCAP eligible child is approved to use in a given time period based on the DHS's assessment of the family's need for services. The CCAP authorized child care is categorized as full-time (FT), three-quarter time (3QT), half-time (HT), or quarter-time (QT).
 3. “Child Care Assistance Program” or “CCAP” means the program administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services that provides financial assistance for authorized child care services rendered to eligible children by approved child care providers. The CCAP consolidates the DHS child care subsidy programs for RI Works recipients, income eligible working families (formerly known as the Low Income Child Care Program), families where the parent(s) is participating in an approved education and training program, families where the parent(s) are in enrolled in an Associate’s degree or Bachelor’s degree program at a Rhode Island public institution of higher education, teens participating in the Teen and Family Development Program (formerly known as Youth Services).

4. “Child care center” means a facility operated on a regular basis which receives children, not of common parentage, and provides non-residential care in a location separate from the children's parents during the day.
 - a. R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 42-12.5 requires child care centers to obtain a license from the DHS.
5. “Child care educator” means an employee at a child care center, family child care home or group family child care home who is directly involved in the care, development and education of children ages six (6) weeks to thirteen (13) years for any portion of the day.
6. “Child care staff” means any adult employed by a child care center, family child care home or group family child care home for any portion of operating hours.
7. “Eligible child” means a dependent child that meets the requirements of the Child Care Assistance for Child Care Educators and Staff Pilot and receives authorized child care services from a CCAP approved child care provider.
8. “Employee” means a person on the payroll and/or receiving a paycheck specifically from the child care center, family child care home or group family child care home they are doing work for.
9. “Family child care home” means a licensed residence where the resident can provide child care for up to six (6) children, or up to eight (8) children with an approved assistant.
 - a. Family child care home shall not mean a private residence used for an informal cooperative arrangement among neighbors or relatives, or the occasional care of children with or without compensation.
 - b. R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 42-12.5 requires family child care home providers to obtain a license from the DHS.
10. “Family share” means the amount a family is expected to contribute in copayments to the cost of child care services.
11. “Financial unit” means the dependent children, including both applicant and non-applicant child(ren), and the parent(s) and the legal spouse(s) of the parent(s) who live with them in the same household. The financial unit may also include applicant children that the DHS has determined, upon verification, to be a relative of acceptable degree to the parent(s) requesting the CCAP authorized services. The financial unit determines family size for the purposes of determining income.

12. “Group family child care home” means a child care program located in the provider's home residence in which child care services may be offered at the same time for up to nine (9), but no more than twelve (12) children unrelated to the child care provider.
 - a. R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 42-12.5 requires group family child care home providers to obtain licensure from the DHS.
13. “Income” means any money, goods or services available to determine eligibility for the purpose of this pilot, which is limited to paystubs (or other proof of income) for the child care educator or staff and the second parent in a two parent household.
14. “One-parent home” means a family in which there is only one (1) parent living in the household with financial responsibility for the eligible child(ren).
15. “Parent” means any person in the household who is legally and financially responsible for the routine care of the applicant child(ren) including, but not limited to, providing income, resources or other forms of support.
 - a. A person seeking the CCAP authorized services for a dependent child is considered to be a parent for the CCAP eligibility purposes if so deemed for any other DHS program(s).
 - b. The term parent is used broadly in this Rule to refer to biological, adoptive, or stepparents, as well as legal guardians or caretaker relatives of an acceptable degree as defined in Subchapter 00 Part 2 of this Chapter, the Rhode Island Works Rules and Regulations.
16. “Two-parent home” means a family in which the two (2) parents live in the same legal household as, and share financial responsibility for, the applicant’s dependent child/children.

13.3 General Criteria for Eligibility

- A. For the purposes of this pilot, separate and apart from eligibility guidelines in the Child Care Assistance Rules and Regulations, the following must apply:
 1. Child(ren) receiving the CCAP services
 - a. Shall be over six (6) weeks old and below the age of thirteen (13) years;
 - b. Must live in the home of the parent requesting the CCAP services;
 - c. Must be a resident of the State of Rhode Island; and

d. Shall be either a citizen of the United States or a qualified immigrant as defined in the Child Care Assistance Program Rules and Regulations, Subchapter 00 Part 4 of this Chapter.

2. Parent applying for CCAP services

a. The applicant parent must be employed as a child care educator or child care staff, as defined in § 13.2 of the Part;

b. In a one (1) parent family, the applicant parent must be working at least twenty (20) hours a week in a licensed child care center, family child care home or group family child care home.

(1) If at any time average weekly hours in a four (4) week span are less than twenty (20) hours, the employee and provider must notify the DHS. In this circumstance the employee will no longer be eligible for this pilot program.

(2) Applicant parent must be working at least twenty (20) hours a week in a licensed child care center, family child care home or group family child care home through the duration of the pilot to qualify.

c. For there to be an acceptable need for services in a two (2) parent home, one (1) or both parents shall be employed as a child care educator or child care staff working at least twenty (20) hours a week in a licensed child care center, family child care home or group family child care home. ~~If one parent is employed as a child care educator or child care staff working at least twenty (20) hours a week, the other parent must be participating in approved education or training activities or employed for an average of twenty (20) hours per week in a month.~~

(1) One (1) parent in a two (2) parent family must be working at least twenty (20) hours a week in a licensed child care center, family child care home or group family child care home through the duration of the pilot to qualify.

~~(2) In addition, any parent with earned income outside of the approved education and training program shall earn, per hour, an average of the greater of either the State or Federal minimum wage.~~

d. The applicant parent may be self-employed as a child care provider

(1) Self-employment income must be verified.

(2) Children of a self-employed child care provider eligible for CCAP benefit under this pilot can enroll with an approved CCAP Provider other than their parent's approved CCAP Program. They cannot enroll in the program run by their parent.

e. Must have household income at or below three hundred percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Limit. The income limit can be found on the DHS website <https://dhs.ri.gov/programs-and-services/child-care/child-care-assistance-program-ccap-head-start/ccap-family>.

13.4 Applying for Child Care Assistance for Child Care Educators and Staff Pilot

13.4.1 Application

A. The application for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot consists of the required application which is separate and apart from other DHS programs, verification of certain eligibility criteria, and the need for services. Families seeking eligibility for the CCAP shall apply to the DHS in accordance with the following:

1. Point of Application

a. Families interested in the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot may apply online or may obtain a printable application on the DHS website at <https://dhs.ri.gov/programs-and-services/child-care/child-care-assistance-program-ccap-head-start>. Completed printed applications can be mailed to or dropped off at Office of Child Care, 25 Howard Ave, Building 57 Cranston RI 02920.

b. Applications will be accepted through ~~June 1~~ July 31, 2024.

2. Application Packet

a. The completed application form signed by the applicant (in a two (2) parent home both parents must sign the application), along with the documentation required to verify eligibility and the need for services must be submitted to the DHS to initiate a child care application.

(1) Any applications that are incomplete or have incorrect information will be immediately denied.

(AA) If an application is denied, the applicant is responsible for payment to the provider for any child care services provided.

B. If parent who meets the requirements for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot is already eligible and receiving CCAP benefits, they must apply for this pilot to receive the waiver of copayment.

1. Participation in this pilot has no other impact to the existing CCAP case.

C. If more than one works for a child care program, the family can only apply for this pilot once.

13.4.2 Application Processing

A. The date a signed application is date stamped as received by the DHS office, or the date an application is submitted online, is the application date.

B. The application period is the period when eligibility for the CCAP is determined by the DHS staff.

1. The application period can take up to thirty (30) days.

13.4.3 Reporting Requirements

A. Applicant and recipient parents shall report to the DHS any changes in the information or documentation included in, or submitted in conjunction with, the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot application related to the requirements in § 13.3 of this Part within ten (10) days from the date the change occurs.

1. The duty to report begins on the application date and remains in effect during the certification period.

2. Failure to report changes in a timely manner may be grounds for denying eligibility to an applicant or discontinuing authorized services for the CCAP beneficiaries.

B. Families are required to report the following:

1. Changes to income that exceed three hundred percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level.

2. A cessation of employment as a child care educator or child care staff.

3. A decrease in work hours if the average weekly hours in a four (4) week span are less than twenty (20) hours for the parent who is employed as a child care educator or staff.

4. A change in address.

5. The child(ren) no longer resides in the household.

6. Changes in the household composition.

C. Child Care Employers are required to report to DHS any time an employee participating in the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot ends employment at their program.

13.4.4 Notice Requirements: Notice of Approval, Notice of Denial, Right to Appeal and Hearing

A. Applicants for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot shall receive timely and adequate notice of the DHS eligibility determinations and the right to appeal (see § 10-00-1.7 of this Title, Complaints and Appeals Process).

B. The DHS shall also provide timely and adequate notice of any adverse decisions terminating or reducing benefits.

1. All correspondence for the pilot program will be through email.

a. Providers and applicants must have a valid email.

C. The notice of approval can be used to enroll the eligible child with an approved CCAP provider or, if already enrolled with an approved CCAP Provider, to provide proof of pilot participation.

13.5 Authorization and Enrollment

13.5.1 Authorization

A. Families found eligible for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot will be authorized to receive benefits from the date a complete application is received ~~through the end of the pilot period, July 31st, 2024~~ for a period of twelve (12) months.

1. ~~At the end of the pilot period, July 31, 2024 approved CCAP providers shall not submit attendance for any future payments on behalf of families participating in the pilot no applications will be accepted for this program.~~

2. ~~Families will be responsible for their own child care expenses as of July 31, 2024 at the end of their twelve (12) month certification period.~~

B. Families found eligible for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot will be authorized to receive benefits from the date their completed application was received by the DHS.

C. Families found eligible for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot will not be required to pay a family share.

D. Authorized child care will be approved based on number of hours the parent needs to maintain employment as a child care educator or staff.

1. The categories for time authorized are as follows:

a. Three quarter time: twenty to twenty-nine (20-29) hours per week.

b. Full time: Thirty (30) hours or more per week

13.5.2 Limitations of Authorized Child Care

A. ~~Authorization will end prior to the pilot end date under the following circumstances:~~Child care educators and staff shall provide the following changes to the Department during their participation in this pilot:

1. Parent is no longer employed as a child care educator or child care staff.

a. Parents can reapply for this pilot program if they begin employment at a different licensed child care program.

2. If at any time the parent working as a child care educator or staff works less than an average of twenty (20) hours per week in a four (4) week span.

3. The family moves out of Rhode Island.

4. The child(ren) no longer resides in the home.

5. The household income increased above three hundred percent (300%) the Federal Poverty Level.

13.6 Enrollment for CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff Pilot Authorized Services

A. Enrollment and attendance records for this pilot will not be processed through the CCAP Provider Portal.

1. Providers shall submit attendance records for children eligible for the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot through an online system separate and apart from the CCAP Provider Portal as designated by DHS.

B. Providers must immediately report to the DHS any children participating in this pilot who disenroll from their program.

13.7 CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff Pilot Payment to Approved Child Care Providers

- A. Payment under the pilot program will be made directly to the Approved Child Care Provider who is providing care to the eligible child.
- B. The CCAP absence policy as described in the Child Care Assistance Program Rules and Regulations, Subchapter 00 Part 4 of this Chapter, applies to the CCAP for Child Care Educators and Staff pilot.