

Child Care Development Block Grant Reauthorization Act

In November 2014, Congress reauthorized the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), a law that outlined many new provisions aimed at strengthening programs accepting child care subsidies. Below are some key highlights of those changes/requirements. New Jersey currently is developing policies that will provide more specifics on these provisions.

Health and Safety Requirements for Child Care Providers

- Establishment of health and safety requirements, and pre-service and ongoing training in 10 different topic areas, such as prevention of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), first-aid and CPR.
- Criminal background checks for all child care staff members, including staff members who don't care directly for children but have unsupervised access to children. The act also specifies disqualifying crimes.
- Child abuse reporting requirements.
- Pre-licensure and annual unannounced inspections of all providers who accept child care subsidies.

Transparent Consumer and Provider Education Information

- Provider-specific information that is easily accessible to the general public, showing results of monitoring and inspection reports, as well as the number of deaths, serious injuries and instances of substantiated child abuse that occur in child care settings.
- A state website describing the process for licensing and monitoring child care providers, and the process for conducting criminal background checks as well as listing the offenses that prevent individuals from being child care providers.

Family-Friendly Eligibility Policies

- 12-month eligibility re-determination period for families receiving child care subsidies.
- Graduated phase-out of assistance for families with a temporary change in their circumstances.
- Enrollment procedures for homeless children.

Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care

- Professional development and training requirements.
- Ongoing annual training and progression to improve knowledge and skills of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) providers.
- Early Learning and Development Guidelines requirements.
- Consumer and provider education about developmental screenings for children at risk of cognitive or developmental delays.
- Providing policies regarding expulsions of children from early care and education programs.

For more information - <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization>

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Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

November 19, 2014, President Obama signed bipartisan legislation that reauthorizes the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act through 2020. The new law makes many important statutory changes to protect the health and safety of children in child care, promote continuity of access to subsidy for low-income families, better inform parents and the general public about the child care choices available to them, and improve the overall quality of early learning and after-school programs.

What is CCDF Reauthorization?

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act is the law that authorizes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). CCDF is the primary federal funding for New Jersey Child Care Subsidy Program. This program is devoted to providing low-income families who are working or participating in education and training with help paying for child care as well as improving the quality of child care for all children.

Who is affected by the new law?

- Child care programs and providers serving CCDF children and receiving child care subsidy payments administered through the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs).
- Children and families in receipt of a child care subsidy.

What are the purposes of CCDF?

- To improve the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing health, safety, and licensing, standards along with training;
- To improve child care and development of participating children;
- To support parents who are working or in training or education;
- To increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings; and
- To promote parental choice, empowering working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suits their family's needs.

How will the new law impact health and safety?

The law establishes minimum standards, training, and monitoring requirements to ensure children receiving care by CCDF provider's health and safety are protected.

For example the law requires:

- States to establish requirements and standards protecting the health and safety of children to all CCDF providers in the 10 required health and safety topic areas (including CPR, First Aid, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Administration of Medication)-described in the Act;
- Pre-license monitoring and annual unannounced monitoring;
- Standards for group size limits and appropriate child-staff ratios;
- Programs and providers to meet and comply with state and local health, fire and building code requirements;
- Programs and providers to comply with Child Abuse Reporting requirements of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act;
- Programs and providers use the same set of comprehensive background checks for all child care teachers and staff; (state criminal, federal and national sex offender registry, child abuse and neglect registry, national crime information center, and FBI).

How often must background checks be conducted?

A comprehensive background check on a child care staff member must be conducted at least once every 5 years.

Does the background check requirement apply to family child care providers?

Yes, the definition of child care provider in the law includes family child care providers. For family child care homes, this includes the provider or caregiver requesting a check of herself/himself, as well as any other individuals in the household that may have unsupervised access to children.

Do CCDF health and safety requirements apply to license-exempt child care providers?

Yes, if a child care provider that is otherwise exempt from licensing by the state provides services to a child receiving CCDF assistance, that child care provider is subject to the health and safety requirements in the CCDF law.

How will the new law improve the development of participating children?

The law requires:

- Training and professional development requirements to improve the knowledge and skills of the individual teacher and staff working with children;
- Dissemination of research-based and best practices to help those working with young children promote their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development; and
- Implementation of Early Learning and Development Guidelines.

How will the new law improve the overall quality of programs?

- Higher health and safety standards;
- Ongoing professional development trainings requirements;
- Incrementally raising the minimum quality spending requirement of CCDBG from 4% to 9% over a five year period; and
- Evaluation of programs using a Quality Rating and Improvement System.

How will the new law better support parents who are working or in training or education?

The law requires:

- An initial eligibility period of not less than 12 months under the conditions specified by the Act, including a graduated phase-out of care for increased income or temporary change;
- Three-month job search period allowing parents to engage in job search, resume work, or to attend an education or training program; and
- Processes that take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

How does the new law help parents make more informed child care choices?

For example, the law requires States to provide consumer and provider education information to help them make the best child care choice for their families, such as:

- Availability of child care and other financial assistance programs;
- Provider-specific information, including processes for licensing child care providers; conducting background checks, and monitoring of providers;
- The quality of providers, based on a state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), New Jersey's Grow NJ Kids (www.GrowNJKids.com); and
- Results of monitoring and inspection reports available by "electronic means."

What effective dates are specified in the law?

- Priority services for underserved populations: September 30, 2016;
- Monitoring of licensing and regulatory requirements for providers serving CCDF children: November 19, 2016;
- Raising the minimum quality spending requirement from 4 to 9%: Phased-in over a 5-year period beginning in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2016 and incrementally rising thereafter;
- Additional 3% quality set-aside for infants and toddlers: Starting in FY 2017 and each succeeding fiscal year thereafter.
- Criminal background checks for all child care providers: September 30, 2017; and
- Posting results of monitoring and inspection reports on a public website: 1 year after implementation of required monitoring policies or, at the latest, November 19, 2017.

What provisions in the new law are effective upon enactment?

Where the law did not specify an effective date, provisions are considered to be effective upon enactment.