



# DC CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

POLICY MANUAL:  
SUMMARY AND  
OVERVIEW

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Office of the State  
Superintendent of Education

WE ARE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
GOVERNMENT OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

On Oct. 1, 2024, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) published an updated DC Child Care Subsidy Program Policy Manual, updating policies and procedures for the District of Columbia's Child Care Subsidy Program. This summary and overview is intended to highlight some of the program's key policies and recent changes. For a detailed explanation of all policies, please see the DC Child Care Subsidy Program Policy Manual at [osse.dc.gov/subsidy](https://osse.dc.gov/subsidy).

## Background

The DC Child Care Subsidy Program, administered by OSSE, provides financial assistance to families with eligible children so that they can work, attend education or training programs, or look for work. Applicants may also qualify through special circumstances of the child or family. This overview is intended to help families, child care providers, and other stakeholders understand key policies and updates to the DC Child Care Subsidy Program.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for child care subsidies, a child must:

- Be younger than age 13 or younger than age 19 if the child has special needs;
- Be a citizen or qualified immigrant to the United States;
- Have a qualifying need as determined by:
  - Residing with a parent(s) or guardian(s) who is working, attending an education or training program; or looking for work; **or**
  - The special circumstances of the child, as described below;
- Reside in a household with a family income under 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), based on family size; and
- Be a DC resident.

**NEW:** Applicants must participate in work, training, education, or other qualifying activity, but no longer need to meet a minimum hour requirement to be eligible for subsidies.

**NEW:** The following children are considered to have a qualifying need through the following special circumstances and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are **not** required to participate in work, training, education, or other qualifying activity:

- Children under protective services, which includes children under court supervision or protective supervision of the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), children in out-of-home/foster care; and children whose parent(s) are in the custody of CFSA;
- Children with special needs;
- Children of adult(s) with a disability;

- Children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or the Quality Improvement Network (QIN);
- Children in families experiencing homelessness;
- Children of teen parents;
- Children of elder caregivers;
- Children in families experiencing domestic/family violence; and
- Children with a parent(s) or guardian(s) participating in addiction recovery programs.

**NEW:** Children participating in the QIN or the Pre-Kindergarten Enhancement and Expansion Program (PKEEP) are eligible regardless of citizenship or immigration status.

## Application Process

Families can apply for child care subsidies online or in person at the Department of Human Services (DHS) or at a Level II child care provider. Families experiencing homelessness may also apply in person at the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center.

**NEW:** Applicants participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) program are no longer required to apply in person at DHS.

**NEW:** Applicants are no longer required to participate in an interview as part of the application process.

## Eligibility Verification

OSSE has simplified the documentation requirements for families to demonstrate eligibility. Once an application is received, eligibility staff may request missing documentation, which the family must provide within 30 days of the request.

**NEW:** Documentation may be original or legible copies, including electronic copies. In most cases, accepted documents may be dated within 45 calendar days of the application.

**NEW:** Working families are only required to provide one pay statement to demonstrate earnings, but may *choose* to provide two or more statements from the preceding six months if the most recent pay statement is not representative of the family's regular income (i.e., the period includes overtime or additional pay).

# Expanded Access for Child Development Facility Employees

**NEW:** When calculating family income to determine subsidy eligibility, OSSE will **exclude** any income earned from employment in a child development facility licensed by OSSE and any income earned from the operation of a child development home by an individual who is the holder of the license. As such, DC residents working in licensed child development facilities will qualify for child care subsidies provided that any additional household income earned outside of a child development facility is under 300 percent of the FPL and they meet all other eligibility requirements.

## Eligibility Period

Once determined eligible, children will receive at least 12 months of child care subsidies. Children participating in the QIN will receive child care subsidies for up to 36 months or until they are eligible to attend the DC pre-K program.

Temporary changes in the status of a parent(s) or guardian(s)' work or participation in education or training do not impact eligibility. Any non-temporary cessation of work or participation in education or training that is longer than three months will result in program termination following an additional three-month period. If the parent(s) or guardian(s) resumes a qualifying activity during this time, the termination will be voided.

**NEW:** If a new child is added to a family, through birth or adoption, the child will receive a full 12 months of eligibility and the redetermination date for all other children in the household unit will be extended such that all children in the household have the same redetermination date.

## Child Care Placement

Families may choose a licensed or in-home care provider (who cares for a child in the child's own home). Applicants requesting child care in a licensed child development facility must select a child care provider that has an agreement with OSSE to serve children in the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Child care is provided in part-time or full-time increments and may be provided during traditional work hours (7 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday through Friday) or during non-traditional hours (early morning, evening, overnight, or weekends).

Families may self-attest to the schedule of care needed, which may include sufficient time to cover travel, study time, or other relevant needs. The hours of authorized care do not need to match the work, education, or training schedule of the parent(s) or guardian(s).

**NEW:** The use of in-home care is no longer considered a “last resort,” and families are not required to attempt enrollment at a licensed facility prior to selecting in-home care. Families are also not required to work non-traditional hours to use in-home care.

## Family Co-payments

Families must pay a co-payment based on the sliding fee scale, established by OSSE, in accordance with their selected child care provider’s payment policies. Co-payments cannot be increased during the eligibility period. Families may self-report changes that may result in a decrease in the family co-payment.

Co-payments are adjusted for full-time and part-time enrollment and there is no additional co-payment required when there are more than two children.

The following families are exempt from co-payments:

- Children qualifying under protective services;
- Children with disabilities;
- Children of adults with disabilities;
- Children in families experiencing homelessness;
- Children of teen parent(s);
- Children of elder caregivers;
- Children in families experiencing domestic/family violence;
- Children with parent(s)/guardian(s) participating in addiction recovery programs;
- Children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or the QIN;
- TANF recipients and TANF payees;
- Children of parents engaging in job search activities; or
- Children in families with income below 150 percent of the FPL.

## Attendance

Children are expected to attend child care during the time child care is authorized. Families must notify child care providers in writing if their child is absent from care and provide documentation of excused absences. Unexcused or unreported absences will be recorded by the provider.

Child development facilities may close on holidays and other days and must provide advance written notice of the closures to families.

**NEW:** Provider payments will not be adjusted based on days a child is absent, regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused.

**NEW:** After 30 consecutive unexcused absences, a child's subsidy will be discontinued.

## Eligibility Redetermination

Before the end of the eligibility period, families will be provided notice of the redetermination process. All families must provide documentation of a qualifying need category; income earned during the last 45 days (if not otherwise exempt), and any changes in family size, residence, or custody arrangements since the initial application. Families that fail to submit the required documentation will be terminated from the program at the end of the eligibility period.

Applicants whose family income is above 300 percent of the FPL but below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) at redetermination may continue to receive child care subsidies provided they have a qualifying need and continue to meet other eligibility requirements. The income eligibility thresholds are posted on OSSE's website.

Applicants whose family income is above 85 percent of SMI at redetermination will continue to receive child care subsidies for three months, after which time the subsidy will be discontinued unless the family income has fallen below 85 percent of SMI.

## Finding Care Child

DC Child Care Connections (DC CCC) is available to help families select a child development facility. DC CCC can be reached at [OSSE.DCchildcareconnections@dc.gov](mailto:OSSE.DCchildcareconnections@dc.gov) or (202) 829-2500. DC CCC also offers a resource center that families can visit in person.

Families can also visit My Child Care DC ([mychildcare.dc.gov](http://mychildcare.dc.gov)) to search for facilities that participate in the Child Care Subsidy Program. Using My Child Care DC, families can explore, compare, and connect with child care facilities.