



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

## **A Brief Summary of the District of Columbia's DRAFT Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan for FY 2016 – FY 2018**

### **Introduction**

The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) was created to ensure that nearly 1.5 million children from low-income working families have access to affordable early care and education each month. In addition to sponsoring child care subsidy programs across states, CCDF works to raise the bar for quality by supporting licensing efforts, funding system improvements, and subsidizing training and technical assistance that benefit child care providers.

On November 19, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law. The Act reauthorizes and significantly revises the CCDF program and the requirements placed on states to receive this funding. For example, the Act requires health and safety standards and training for child care providers, national fingerprint background checks for child care providers, on-site monitoring by qualified inspectors, and 12-month eligibility redetermination periods for the Child Care Subsidy Program. It also mandates family-friendly eligibility policies and deeper family engagement through outreach and education.

The federal government requires states to explain how they will use their CCDF dollars in a state child care plan, and gives a very detailed outline of the specific information to be included in this plan. The District's three-year plan covers Federal Fiscal Year 2016 through Federal Fiscal Year 2018.

### **The District's Draft CCDF Plan**

The following summary is a snapshot of the eight (8) main sections in DC's draft plan. Please note that this summary does not address every element of the Plan or the Act.

#### **Section 1 - Define CCDF Leadership & Coordination with Relevant Systems**

This section demonstrates how stakeholders participated in the development of the plan, which agency has the authority to make policy decisions and programmatic changes and which agencies are responsible for implementing key aspects of the plan.

- The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is the lead agency in the District of Columbia responsible for implementation of the CCDF plan. The State Early Childhood Development Coordinating Council (SECDCC), a public private partnership, serves as an advisory council to the Mayor on early childhood development.
- OSSE will partner with public and private agencies to increase the supply and quality of early care and education in the District.
- The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires a statewide Child Care Disaster Preparedness Plan. OSSE has developed an implementation strategy to ensure compliance with this requirement by September 2016.

#### **Section 2 - Promote Family Engagement through Outreach & Consumer Education**

This section demonstrates how child care related information is communicated to parents, and explains how providers and agencies in DC support and reinforce the ability of parents to support their children's development.

- A new goal of the CCDBG Act is to "promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings."

- OSSE uses print, electronic, and digital media to increase community awareness of subsidized child care opportunities in the District. Also, OSSE partners with community-based organizations to co-sponsor events such as Let's Move and Read Across DC.
- The Act calls upon states to provide detailed provider information to the public (including monitoring and inspection reports, and the number of District-wide cases of death, serious injury and child abuse in child care centers). OSSE will take concrete steps to share more detailed information with the public regarding centers' quality and monitoring results and ensure improved usability of the child care finder and.

### **Section 3 - Provide Stable Child Care Financial Assistance to Families**

This section describes the District's current eligibility policies for subsidized child care along with actions OSSE will take to fully comply with the requirements of the Act to ensure continuity of care for vulnerable populations.

- The District will take action to address the requirements in the Act to expedite enrollment of children in families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care by providing a grace period to comply with immunization and health requirements.
- The District has a 12-month eligibility period and by March 1, 2016 policies will be in place that ensures families in seasonal employment and families experiencing temporary job loss or temporary change in participation in a training or education activity remain eligible for 12 months.
- The District already has policies that provide for a job search of not less than three (3) months. It also has a graduated phase-out of assistance.

### **Section 4 - Ensure Equal Access to High Quality Child Care for Low-Income Children**

This section explains how the District's practices ensure that low-income and vulnerable children have equitable access to high-quality care.

- The District used a cost estimation model to inform subsidy payment rates and policies for child care providers; this is the first year this option was available to states. Based on preliminary findings, OSSE is exploring both rate and policy changes to address the needs of infants and toddlers, children with special needs, enrollment efficiencies and program size.
- The District provides tiered reimbursement rates to child development facilities (center and homes) based on the level of quality and the type of care provided.

### **Section 5 - Establish Standards & Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health & Safety of Care Settings**

This section demonstrates how the District will ensure the health and safety of child care facilities including the establishment of emergency preparedness and response planning guidelines, pre-service training for all child care providers and enhanced training for licensing inspectors

- The District will do the following to meet new health/safety requirements of the Act:
  - Establish new health and safety requirements in a number of topic areas (e.g., preventing shaken baby syndrome, storing and disposing hazardous materials, etc.)
  - Establish emergency preparedness and response planning guidelines and hold providers accountable for meeting them
  - Enhance pre-service and ongoing child care provider training in health and safety areas
  - Enhance training for licensing inspectors
  - Enhance criminal background processes and procedures
- Appropriate standards are already in place in DC for child care ratios and group sizes.

### **Section 6 - Recruit & Retain a Qualified & Effective Child Care Workforce**

This section describes actions that the District is taking to develop a competent, skilled and stable child care workforce.

- The District has a professional development system that educates providers on all aspects of early childhood development, from birth to eight (8) years old. Early learning professionals have access to higher education coursework through scholarships and OSSE's Trainer Approval Program provides evidence-based best practices in 11 Core Knowledge Areas, which cover the specific knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with all young children and families.
- The District will expand its professional development options to incorporate the ten required health and safety topics outlined in the Act.

### **Section 7 - Support Continuous Quality Improvement**

This section describes the District's plan for improving the quality of child care services and increasing parental options for accessing high quality child care.

- In its effort to improve the quality of child care in the District, the Quality Improvement Network (QIN) has been established. The network establishes and expands three neighborhood-based hubs that provide technical assistance and support to child development centers and homes in providing high quality, comprehensive, early childhood development services to at-risk children.
- The Act mandates the development of a statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). The District is enhancing its current QRIS to ensure a common measure of quality across DC Public Schools, public charter schools and community based organizations. A pilot will launch in 2016, with full implementation in 2017.
- The District currently meets the quality spending requirements in the Act.

### **Section 8 - Ensure Grantee Accountability**

This section describes accountability measures the District will use to ensure program integrity and identify fraud or other program violations.

- OSSE's fiscal, program, attendance and eligibility monitoring activities are consistent with Act requirements.
- Current accountability measures identify fraud and other program violations.