



Division of Early Learning

**Summary of the feedback provided by providers, parents and advocates at
Child Care Subsidy Eligibility Town Hall Meetings
June 24, 25, and 26, 2015**

The Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) and the Economic Services Administration (ESA) at the Department of Human Services (DHS) hosted three Town Hall Listening Sessions to gather feedback and generate ideas on how to improve the District of Columbia’s child care subsidy system. OSSE and DHS staff presented a PowerPoint outlining the concerns and issues they had heard about and offered some short- and long-term solutions to address these concerns. Participants were then asked to share any additional issues and concerns and offer their solutions to OSSE and DHS for the issues identified. Outlined below are the issues and concerns with proposed solutions identified from providers, parents and advocates at the three listening sessions organized into four categories: Communication, Documentation/Requirements, Technology, and Policy/Programmatic issues.

Below you also will find immediate/upcoming resolutions to the concerns and issues posed. Additional feedback will be provided at a later date.

<p align="center">Communication Issues/ Concerns Proposed Solutions Raised by Providers, Parents and Advocates</p>	<p align="center">Response and Feedback From OSSE and DHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor customer service from DHS and OSSE staff. Provide customer service training to staff (DHS and OSSE). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSSE and DHS staff will receive a refresher training that will include role playing and proper escalation procedures. We also will institute a secret shopper approach at DHS offices and Level II providers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult for parents to connect with someone at the Economic Services Administration (ESA) voucher office, no one answers the phone and customers are not able to leave a message. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DHS has assigned a staff worker to answer the telephone during “down times” at CCSD. DHS will set up a message tree for the phone line that will include options for English and Spanish. Customers will be directed through a menu that will include options for receiving general information, making appointments, and leaving messages. Calls will be returned within 24 hours. DHS will set up an email for parents to make appointments with an eligibility worker.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty about new regulations. Provide a refresher training session at least twice a year for providers to come up to speed on any changes in policies and regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSSE will offer quarterly refresher trainings for Level II providers beginning in FY16. OSSE will provide eligibility information sessions for Level I providers. OSSE will provide promotional materials for

	providers (posters, brochures).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service appears to be limited to English speaking providers and parents. Make sure all updated and/or new policies and regulations and forms are created both in English and non-English formats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS and OSSE are working on updating all current materials and all materials will be translated into Spanish, Amharic and French.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not easy to access information about the program on the website or through other information sheets. What are the facts consumers need to know about the program? Create and market a one-pager about the subsidy program that includes information on how to apply and key contact information. Update OSSE website to be more user friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The websites at OSSE and DHS are being updated and information about child care eligibility will be more accessible and user friendly. Additionally, we are developing posters and a one pager that can be shared with families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no technical assistance before an audit. Offer technical assistance to providers before an audit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE provides ongoing technical assistance to Level II providers regarding eligibility and audit questions. However, OSSE will formalize the audit process and communicate in advance with providers the schedule along with a checklist of what to expect during an audit. OSSE also will give providers a checklist of required documents that will be audited.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of opportunities for collaboration between providers. Promote more collaboration with Level I and Level II providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE will update our list of Level II providers on the website and place them in an easy to access location.
<p>Additional issues/ concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed notification of termination (providers often find out a child is terminated from an error report), which delays notification to the parents. • Absence policy is not clear and easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS sends a copy of terminations to the providers and to OSSE's child care eligibility team. • OSSE is revising the attendance policy to simplify requirements and process.
<p>Additional proposed solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular events (quarterly) during non-working hours for parents where DHS, OSSE and providers are present. • Create a complaint line for parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In FY16, OSSE and DHS will develop an outreach and engagement strategy for parents that utilize the child care subsidy program. • OSSE has established osse.childcareconcerns@dc.gov e-mail for providers and parents.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate to providers and stakeholders when there is a shift in staff, particularly at OSSE. • Craft a smooth transition for Level I providers to become a Level II. • DHS workers located onsite at some of the Level I sites on certain days/times to support families. • Increase communication between agencies, providers and parents during the eligibility process. • Offer orientation on rules and regulations of subsidy program for parents. • Allow key stakeholder groups to be more involved in process and decision-making. • Create focus groups to address challenges and issues. • Create a one- stop shop with everything in one building (DHS, OSSE) or one individual who can provide all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE shares staff changes through our E-learning Bulletin that is published monthly. • OSSE currently provides trainings for Level I providers to learn about becoming Level II providers. • OSSE/DHS will send staff to community events to provide information.
<p style="text-align: center;">Documentation and Requirements Issues/ Concerns</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Proposed Solutions Raised by Providers, Parents and Advocates</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Resolutions and Feedback From OSSE and DHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residency requirements are cumbersome Change regulations on determination of residency requirements (eg: use one piece of mail vs. two, or provide guidance on other ways to prove residency). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eligibility policy manual is under revision and the new eligibility policies will be available October 2015.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excused absences are not accepted for the sibling of a sick child. If one child is sick a parent can't bring the other child to the center, the absence should apply to both. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE is revising attendance policy. The new attendance policy will be released in October 2015.
<p>Additional issues/ concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immunization compliance is difficult to access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a regulatory requirement of DOH and we are working with DOH on improving compliance and communication with parents about what is required.
<p style="text-align: center;">Technology Issues/ Concerns</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Proposed Solutions Raised by Providers, Parents and Advocates</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Resolutions and Feedback From OSSE and DHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Tracking System in not user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers currently receive a confirmation

<p>friendly and there is poor communication in delivering messages about the system. There needs to be a better way to upload absences. Currently providers have to enter each excused absence separately.</p> <p>Develop an attendance system that generates immediate confirmation when attendance reports have been submitted on time, and send out a reminder at least two days in advance of due date.</p>	<p>when their attendance reports have been submitted. Providers have until the fifth of the following month to submit attendance. OSSE prefers that providers enter attendance in OATs on a daily basis.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are too often assigned in the data system to the wrong site, especially in programs with multiple sites/campuses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE is developing an upgrade to the OECD module system. However, this is a longer term solution. We recognize the limitations of the existing database but until we have an upgraded data system, providers will need to complete reconciliations that correct for the data system's limitations.
<p>Policy and Programmatic Issues/ Concerns Proposed Solutions Raised by Providers, Parents and Advocates</p>	<p>Resolutions and Feedback From OSSE and DHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no startup funds for accreditation. Provide startup funds for accreditation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE is considering a scholarship award for providers to apply to accreditation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level II providers not able to conduct eligibility for families seeking non-traditional hour care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE is considering implementing non-traditional eligibility training for Fiscal Year 2017.
<p>Additional issues/ concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Learners and adult education parents only qualify for subsidy while in school, but not during summer months and breaks. • Professional development being offered is not relevant to Out-of-School Time Programs. • Out-of-School Time regulations, (e.g., amount of required professional development hours when sites are only open four hours a day). • Poor reimbursement rates for before and after care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are now certified for 12-month eligibility. • OSSE is reviewing our professional development offerings to ensure relevance for OST providers. As part of the CCDF plan, OSSE will be reviewing and setting rates for Fiscal Year 2017
<p>Additional proposed solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow TANF vendors to determine child care eligibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSSE is focused on improving and streamlining our eligibility and attendance policies. These solutions will be considered

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow alternatives to accreditation as a measure of quality (Head Start performance standards).• Improve submission of error reports to reduce repeats.• Allow for a grace period in the attendance policy report.	in our planning efforts.
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