

CCDBG — CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

The 2014 reauthorization of the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) - the main source of funding for services related to child care in the state - requires a number of updates to state administrative policies. These changes will happen in two ways that will impact both providers and children across Kansas. First, CCDBG requires updates to administrative rules and regulations governing child care. Second, CCDBG requires changes to a range of services (including child care assistance) through the child care fund state plan. These new requirements provide a rare opportunity to improve child care to benefit kids, families, and the Kansas economy.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT FUND (CCDF)— Primary means for funding child care in Kansas

\$42.2 M in federal CCDBG funds
+ \$20.4 M in federal TANF funds
+ \$16.0 M in state funds

\$78.6 M

What it funds: CCDF funds a number of valuable programs, including the statewide resource and referral network, child care workforce development and quality initiatives supporting children and families.

REVISING CHILD CARE RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) will draft regulations to meet updated health and safety requirements. The Kansas Legislature will then review KDHE's proposed regulatory changes. These revisions present an opportunity to improve children's health through changes related to nutrition and physical activity including: *healthier beverages, support for breastfeeding, reduced screen time, and clearer guidance on rewards and punishment.* Improving policy in these areas can significantly impact children's health, building healthy habits for life and reducing the incidence of overweight and obesity among Kansas children.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

In addition to creating healthier, safer environments for children, CCDBG also has an opportunity to expand high-quality child care to low-income Kansas families. Many families live in or just above the poverty line, making child care difficult to afford. A single mother earning the median income in Kansas pays **47 percent** of her earnings on average to infant child care costs.¹ In Kansas, eligibility for the program applies to families with incomes up to 185 percent of the poverty level. Currently, only eight percent of eligible children receive child care assistance.

WHY CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE MATTERS

Child care assistance is a critical step in helping low-income families get off welfare rolls, onto payrolls, and out of poverty. If Kansas children do not have child care, their parents cannot work. Without access to child care assistance, parents in poverty must choose between their work and the wellbeing of their children. However, administrative and legislative changes have made this program inaccessible to the Kansas families who want to find employment and become self-sufficient. Today, only eight percent of Kansas' 211,000 eligible children receive child care assistance from the state.



CCDF STATE PLAN—DUE MARCH 1, 2016

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) must prepare the state plan, encompassing a range of policy recommendations related to child care, including child care assistance for poor and low-income families. The state plan presents a rare opportunity to improve child care assistance, thereby improving access to quality care and helping low-income parents work. As part of reauthorization, the state's child care assistance program must include *12-month continuous eligibility* and *graduated phase-out of income eligibility*.

STRENGTHENING 12-MONTH ELIGIBILITY

CCDBG requires that once a child has been determined eligible for subsidies, he or she receive subsidies for the following 12 months, even if the family experiences a change in circumstance related to work. The new law also requires that parents who lose their job can continue to participate in the child care assistance program for three months while they search for work. Although Kansas currently offers 12-month authorization, requirements for maintaining assistance present unnecessary administrative burdens and limit the effectiveness of this work support. Currently, parents looking for employment are not eligible for child care assistance, and parents who lose employment lose child care after just 10 days.

Stronger continuous eligibility ensures access to *consistent, high-quality care* - maximizing benefits for healthy development. Additionally, continuous eligibility would allow the program to support working parents who experience employment and scheduling changes. Currently, job loss, maternity and short-term disability, or pursuing education can cause a family to lose eligibility. Parents need access to child care even when circumstances change.

CREATION OF A GRADUATED PHASE-OUT OF INCOME ELIGIBILITY

CCDBG requires states to provide a graduated phase-out of income eligibility for participating families, protecting the eligibility of a family whose income increased after finding a job. This policy strongly promotes work, ensuring families are not punished (by the sudden loss of child care assistance) for increasing their income. Rather, graduated phase-out allows parents to work for higher wages, with the amount of assistance provided tapering off.

The reauthorization of CCDBG presents Kansas with a unique opportunity to improve the early care and education system so more children access high-quality care and more parents find jobs, eventually transitioning off public assistance. Although state agencies will drive many of the coming changes, families, providers, policymakers, and advocates can insist on smart policies to better serve Kansas communities.

¹Parents and the High Costs of Child Care: 2015 Report. Child Care Aware of America.
<http://www.usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/reports-and-research/costofcare/>