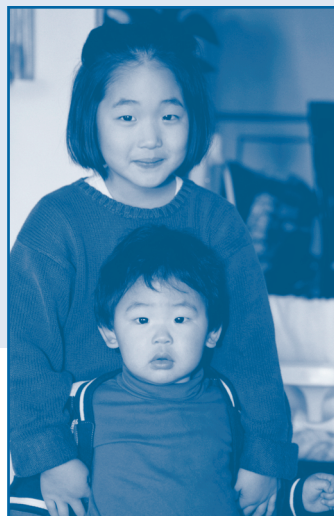




A Parent's Handbook to Subsidized Child Care

Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare
Office of Child Development and Early Learning

In partnership with
Child Care Information Services
A PARTNERSHIP OF CARING



MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN A CARING WAY



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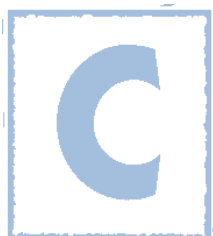
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pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
AND EARLY LEARNING

Office of Child Development & Early Learning
333 Market St., 6th Floor
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126

Dear Parent/Caretaker:

We welcome you to Pennsylvania's subsidized child care program, a partnership between parents, providers, the Child Care Information Services, CCIS, and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

The children of Pennsylvania are the keys to tomorrow. We prepare our children during the early years so that they are ready for each stage of learning.

Each county in Pennsylvania has a CCIS Office. The staff members are trained to help you as you make your child care decisions. Your county's CCIS office is listed on the back of this handbook.

We hope that this Parent Handbook will answer your questions about subsidized child care. We look forward to working with you and your family.

Office of Child Development and Early Learning



I need help finding and paying for child care.

1. What is subsidized child care?

The subsidized child care program helps low-income families pay their child care fees. The state and federal governments fund this program, which is managed by the Child Care Information Services, CCIS, located in your county.

If you meet the guidelines:

- The CCIS will pay a part of your child care fee. ***This is called a subsidy payment.***
- You will pay a part of the fee. ***This is called the family co-pay.***
- The ***subsidy payment*** and the ***family co-pay*** go directly to the child care program.

Note: If your child care subsidy does not pay the full amount that your child care program charges, the provider may ask you to pay the difference between the subsidy payment and their private charges.

2. What is the Child Care Information Services, CCIS?

The Child Care Information Services, CCIS, office is the center for child care information and child care help in your county. You can call or visit the CCIS office for a subsidized child care application. You can also apply for subsidized child care on-line at www.compass.state.pa.us.

The CCIS will:

- Review your application to see if you meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program.
- Help you find a child care program.
- Provide information and ideas about how to select the best possible early learning program or setting for your child.

If you receive TANF cash assistance benefits and attend an approved employment/training activity ask your county assistance caseworker to refer you to the CCIS for child care assistance.

3. What are the guidelines for the subsidized child care program?

You must submit an application to the CCIS office to see if you meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program.

The following are the basic guidelines:

- You must live in Pennsylvania
- Have a child or children who need child care while you work or attend an education program
- Meet income guidelines for your family size
- Work 20 or more hours a week -or-
- Work 10 hours and train 10 hours a week
- Have a promise of a job that will start within 30 days of your application for subsidized child care
- Teen parents must attend an education program

- The child who needs care must be a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residency.
- Have proof of identification for each parent or caretaker in the home.
- Have proof that each person on your application is a member of your family.

4. How do I show that I meet the guidelines?

You must submit a subsidized child care application to the CCIS.

You may call the CCIS in your county to request an application. The CCIS will mail the application to you. You can also visit the CCIS to pick up an application or apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.

Make sure that you read the directions on the application carefully. If you have any questions, call the CCIS. Complete all sections of the application and make sure that you sign and date the application before you return it to the CCIS. You may file your application in person, by mail, by fax or apply online.

Note: Please note that certain items that are needed to see if you meet the subsidized child care guidelines are based on your word and some require outside proof.

If you are having problems getting the needed information let the CCIS know right away. The CCIS will help you get the information you are unable to obtain.

The CCIS will ask you to sign a consent form so that they can help you get the needed information.

The information you provide will be kept confidential. The information in your file will be used for your participation in the subsidized child care program.

- **You may self-certify information** - this means the CCIS will accept a statement from the parent or caretaker as proof of the following information:
 - (1) Age of Child
 - (2) Citizenship or immigration status
 - (3) Immunization status (shot records)
 - (4) Days and hours that a child needs care (former TANF client)
 - (5) Former TANF status
 - (6) Extended time frame for a face-to-face meeting based on a hardship
- **You may self declare information** - this means you do not have to submit information right away. You can tell the CCIS the information that is needed. You will then have 30 days to submit the proof. You will need to sign a form given to you by the CCIS.

*The CCIS will send you a notice to let you know if you meet the guidelines. This notice is called a **Child Care Eligible Notice**. If you do not meet the guidelines, the CCIS will send you a notice called a **Child Care Ineligible Notice**.*

5. What if I have a special case - can I get subsidized child care?

Maybe. The CCIS will let you know what you will need to submit for each special case.

The following are examples of special cases:

- **Disabled Child** - If you have a child between the ages of 13 and 19 who is physically or emotionally-disabled and unable to care for himself, that child may be eligible for the subsidized child care program.
- **Disabled Spouse** - If you have a disabled spouse who cannot care for your children while you work, your family may still meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program. Your spouse will need to submit proof from their doctor or licensed psychologist.
- **Domestic Violence** - If you are a victim of domestic violence, you can request a waiver from the CCIS. A waiver means some of the guidelines will be delayed for a period of time. You will need to complete a form. The CCIS will never contact the person who is causing the domestic violence.
- **Shared Custody** - If you share custody of your child and you need child care while you work you may meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program. If you meet the guidelines, you will receive subsidy on the days that you have your child.
- **Foster Parent** - If you have a foster child and you need child care while you work, submit a subsidized child care application to the CCIS along with a letter from the county's Children and Youth Agency explaining that you are a foster parent and that the foster child needs child care.
- **Head Start Child** - If you have a child who is enrolled in a Head Start program and you need child care to continue working, submit proof of enrollment from the Head Start program.
- **Pre-Kindergarten Child** - If you have a child attending Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts or a pre-kindergarten program that is certified by the area school district and you need additional child care hours beyond the Pre-kindergarten program to continue working you will need to submit proof of enrollment from the school.

Please talk to your CCIS if you think you have a special case that is not listed.

6. When will my subsidized child care begin?

Once you meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program, this is what will happen:

The CCIS will send you a Child Care Eligible Notice.

- a) **If funds are available**, you will need to do the following within 30 days:
- I. Meet with the CCIS worker for a face-to-face interview
 - II. Select a child care program that meets the Provider Standards of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning
 - III. Enroll your child in a child care program

If funds are available, subsidized child care payments may begin from the date that your application was received in the CCIS Office. The CCIS will let you know the start date of subsidized child care payments on the enrollment summary.

- b) **If funds are not available**
- I. Your name will be placed on a waiting list
 - II. The CCIS will send you a letter when subsidized funds are available
 - III. When you receive the letter you will have 30 days to:
 - A. Meet with the CCIS worker for a face-to-face interview
 - B. Select a child care program which meets the Provider Standards of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning
 - C. Enroll your child in a child care program

7. When my TANF cash ends, can I get subsidized child care?

If you receive TANF cash assistance benefits within the last six months and you have a child who needs care while you are working, you may meet the guidelines for continued subsidized child care.

The CCIS will send a letter to TANF families when their cash benefits end. The letter will let you know what you need to do to continue receiving subsidized child care or to begin receiving subsidized child care.

If you were getting child care assistance while you received TANF and are working, your case will be transferred to the CCIS office when your TANF benefits end. This means your child care funding will continue from the date your cash closed.

If your TANF cash assistance benefits were closed and you did not receive a letter from the CCIS and you need child care, contact the CCIS office right away.



*“A partnership of
caring - leads to
successful outcomes.”*



Now that I meet the guidelines - What do I need to know?

1. Will I have to help pay for my child care?

Yes. All families in the subsidized child care program pay a family co-pay amount. The co-pay is based on your family size and income. Your family co-pay will start on the first day that subsidized child care payments begin.

Important family co-pay information:

- Your family co-pay will not increase for a six month period.
- If your income decreases you can notify the CCIS. Your co-pay may be lowered based on the new information.
- Your first family co-pay must include one week and a deposit equal to the first co-pay amount.
- The family co-pay is due on the first day of each week.

2. How can I get help finding child care?

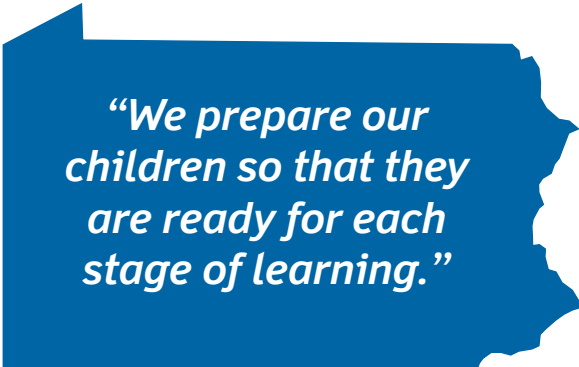
Call the CCIS office. A parent services staff will talk to you about child care options. You will get a list of child care programs that you can call or schedule an appointment to visit. You can also do your own provider search through the online childcare provider search located on the COMPASS website.

3. What types of child care programs are there?

There are over 9,000 certified child care programs in Pennsylvania. These include center, group and family day care homes. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning inspects all certified centers and group day care homes once a year. Unannounced visits are also made to those certified programs. A sample of registered family day care homes are selected each year for an on-site inspection.

Each teacher, assistant teacher and aide in a certified or registered child care program must:

- meet educational guidelines
- participate in on-going professional development
- pass Federal and State clearances which include fingerprinting, criminal history and child abuse clearances,
- have a health assessment



***“We prepare our
children so that they
are ready for each
stage of learning.”***

Child care centers and group day care homes must have a Certificate of Compliance to operate in Pennsylvania.

The Certificate of Compliance must be posted at the location. It will show the name and address of the program, the number of children they are allowed to care for and the expiration date of the certificate.

Family Day Care Homes must have a Certificate of Registration to operate in Pennsylvania.

The Certificate of Registration must be posted in the home. It will show the name of the provider and the expiration date of the registration. A Family Day Care program can only care for up to six children at one time who are unrelated to the provider.

The following provider types are uncertified and unregistered. To receive subsidized child care payments, these providers must pass Federal and State clearances which include fingerprinting, criminal history and child abuse clearances.

The uncertified unregistered providers include:

- Relative/Neighbor Provider (R/N)

A R/N provider can only care for up to three children at any one time.

- In-home Provider

This provider cares for your child in your home. You are considered the employer. You must pay this provider at least the minimum wage and pay all required federal and state taxes as an employer.

Subsidized child care payments can only be made to an in-home provider under the following special conditions:

- If you work between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. or
- If care outside the home is a risk to the child's health. (The child's health condition must be documented by a licensed physician or psychologist. The letter must also explain why the child needs in-home care.)



Pennsylvania offers a special program called Keystone Stars to certified and registered providers. Keystone Stars is a quality improvement program that helps child care providers develop and train staff to support a child's development, early learning and school readiness.

Providers who have a Keystone STARS rating have met additional quality standards established by the Department of Public Welfare.

4. What if my information changes?

Call your CCIS office. Some changes must be reported within 10 days of the change, other changes are helpful to report just in case the CCIS needs to contact you.

The CCIS will work with you whenever there are changes in your information.

CHANGES THAT MUST BE REPORTED WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE CHANGE:	
If you lose your job, including a layoff or strike	Your hours of work or training drop below 20 hours per week
Start of disability and the date you return to work	Start of maternity, paternity or adoption leave and the date you return to work
A change in the days and hours child care is needed	A change in family size
Change of address	
CHANGES THAT ARE HELPFUL TO REPORT	
A decrease in pay	A new job
A new home telephone number	A new job telephone number

5. What if I lose my job or become disabled?

If you lose your job, call the CCIS office right away. The CCIS will explain to you what you will need to do. If you were laid-off or fired from your job while receiving subsidized child care, funding will continue for up to 60 days, giving you time to find a new job. If you quit your job you will be given 13 days of continued subsidized child care funding.

If you become disabled while receiving subsidized child care and are unable to continue working call the CCIS office. If you are unable to care for your child during your disability, subsidized child care funding will continue up to six months from the date you stopped working. You must submit proof from your doctor or psychologist. If you go on Family leave or Maternity leave subsidized child care may continue for 12 weeks from the date that your family or maternity leave started.

You must submit:

- A letter from your employer or doctor which states the date family or maternity leave started.
- Income information (Your family co-pay may be lowered based on the new information)

Talk to the CCIS about your child care options when you go on Family leave, Disability or Maternity Leave.

- You may continue to send your child who is receiving care to the child care program -or-
- You may suspend subsidy for up to 90 days or until you return to work within the 12 week period.

***Note for parent/caretakers on Maternity Leave** - Let the CCIS know if you will need child care for your newborn. If funds are available, care may begin once you return to work. If funds are not available, your newborn will be placed on the waiting list from the date of your request.*

6. What if I move to a new county?

If you move to a new county, your subsidized child care funding will continue based on your new information. The CCIS will transfer your records to the CCIS office in the new county. You should let the CCIS know before you move so that subsidized child care payments will continue. The CCIS in the new county will also help you locate a new child care program.

7. How often will the CCIS review my case?

Once you complete your application and meet the guidelines for the subsidized child care program, the CCIS will review your case every six months. This process is called a redetermination of eligibility.

A **redetermination** means the CCIS will review your family income, work and training status and your continued need for subsidized child care. You must provide up-to-date proof of your family's earned income at each redetermination.

You will not need to provide any other proof unless there has been:

- A change in unearned income received by your family
- A drop in your hours of work, education or training below an average of 20 hours per week
- A new job
- A change in your family size

The CCIS will mail a Redetermination Summary to your home address. It will include the date that you will need to submit your up-to-date information. You may fax, mail or bring your information to the CCIS office or complete your redetermination online at www.compass.state.pa.us.



What are my rights and responsibilities in the subsidized child care program?

Parent/Caretaker Rights:

You have the right to be treated fairly and with respect

1. **You have the right not to be discriminated against.** You and your family may not be discriminated against in the subsidized child care program on the basis of age, race, sex, color, religious creed, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, sexual preference or physical or mental disability
2. **You have the right to examine your file.** The family file contains information that is used to determine your eligibility for the subsidized child care program. A parent/caretaker or his/her representative, or a person who was given permission by the parent/caretaker has a right to examine his or her file in the CCIS office.
3. **You have the right to a timely decision.** You have the right to file your signed application online at any time or on any day that the CCIS office is open for business. The CCIS will review your application right away to make sure that you have all of the needed documents.

If information is missing you will receive a **Missing information letter** telling you what you need to submit.

The CCIS must make a determination of eligibility within 10 days of the date that all required information is received.

The CCIS may not delay a decision on your application beyond 30 days from the date your completed application was received.

4. **You have a right to a written notice.** You have the right to receive a written notice from the CCIS office whenever a decision is made that affects your eligibility for the subsidized child care program. This includes decisions denying subsidy, terminating subsidy, setting or changing co-payments, denying a domestic violence waiver, suspending or disrupting subsidy.

There are several types of notices:

- Child Care Eligible Notice
- Child Care Ineligible Notice
- Child Care Confirmation Notice
- Notice of Adverse Action
- Notice of Overpayment
- Notice Confirming Voluntary Withdrawal

5. **You have the right to appeal any decision or action made by the CCIS.** You have the right to appeal any decision, action or failure to act by the CCIS office that affects your family's eligibility for the subsidized child care program. This includes denial of subsidy, termination of subsidy, computation of the co-payment, denial of a domestic violence waiver, failure of the CCIS agency to act upon a request for subsidy within the required time limits, or suspension or disruption of subsidy.

6. **You have the right to have your subsidy continue pending a hearing** whenever you get a Notice of Adverse Action proposing to terminate your subsidized child care.

A **Notice of Adverse Action** is the type of notice that is used if the CCIS plans to end (terminate) or suspend your subsidy.

The Notice of Adverse Action lists:

- The proposed date that subsidized funding will end
- The regulation that you have failed to meet
- How to file an appeal
- The deadline date to file your appeal
- The address and telephone number of the County Legal Services Office.

Note: If you appeal within 10 days of the date of the Notice of Adverse Action, you may continue to receive subsidized child care until your appeal is decided.

If subsidized funding continues during the appeal and the appeal is decided in favor of the CCIS, you will have to pay back the amount of the subsidy that you received during the appeal, unless the hearing officer determines that paying the amount back would create a hardship for your family.

7. **You have the right to choose care from any provider who agrees** to abide by the Provider Standards of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

Each provider must sign a provider agreement before the CCIS will subsidize the child care cost at their site. The CCIS will notify the provider to let them know when subsidized child care payments will begin.

8. **You have the right to view the Rules and Regulations for subsidized child care.** The rules and regulations for subsidized child care eligibility can be viewed and printed from the internet. If you do not have a computer you can get a copy of the regulations from your CCIS office.

1. Go to www.pacode.com
2. Click on Browse (a menu will appear)
3. Select 55-Public Welfare
4. Scroll down to Chapter 3041 - Subsidized Child Care Eligibility

Title 55 - Public Welfare
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
[55 PA.CODE CHAPTER 3041]
Subsidized Child Care Eligibility

Parent/Caretaker Responsibilities:

As a parent/caretaker who receives subsidized child care the following are your most important responsibilities:

1. **Submit true information to the CCIS.**
2. **Report changes in a timely manner.**
3. **Pay your family co-pay on time.**

Helpful Hints

Attend	Your child should attend the child care program on all days assigned. If your child is absent or ill, please call your provider.
Call	Call your CCIS office if you have any questions.
Changes	If there are changes that may affect your child care needs call the CCIS office.
Pay	Always pay your family co-pay on time.
Read	Read all information that you receive from the CCIS office. If you do not understand or have questions call the CCIS.
Save	Save your pay stubs or the information that you get showing how much money you earn monthly. This will help you when it is time to show proof of income earned.
Tell	Tell your friends about the subsidized child care program.
Transfer	If you want to transfer to a new child care program call the CCIS.

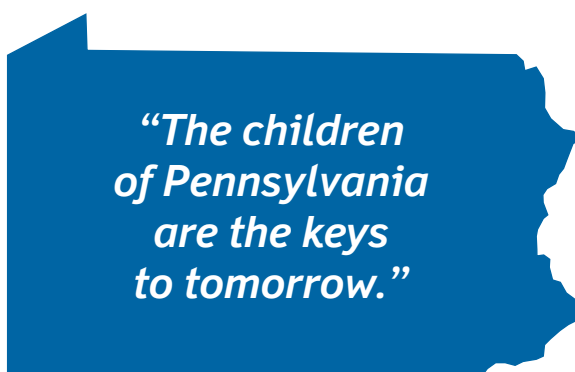
More Questions ...

Who can I call if I have child care concerns?

- CCIS Concerns** If you have questions about child care subsidy, call your CCIS. If you are not satisfied, ask to speak to a supervisor. Your CCIS number is listed on the back of this handbook.
- Subsidized Child Care Concerns** Call the Regional Office of Child Development and Early Learning. The numbers are listed below.
- Legal Services** If you need help with an appeal, a fair hearing or you need legal advice about your eligibility for subsidized child care call the legal services office. The number is listed on the back of this handbook.
- Provider Concerns** If you think something is wrong with your child care program or if you see mistreatment of a child, call the Regional Office of Child Development and Early Learning. The number is listed below.
- Keystone Stars** If you would like to locate a Keystone STARS provider in your area, call your CCIS. The CCIS number is listed on the back of this handbook.

OFFICE	REGION	TOLL FREE NUMBER
Office of Child Development and Early Learning	North/Central Harrisburg	1-800-222-2117
	North/Central Scranton	1-800-222-2108
	Southeast Region	1-800-346-2929
	Western Region	1-800-222-2149
Legal Services	Statewide	1-800-322-7572
CCIS Office	Listed on the back of this handbook	

Important Telephone Numbers ...



CCIS Office

For Legal Services call:
1-800-322-7572

The Web address is:
www.palegalservices.org

This program is made possible by the



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www.dpw.state.pa.us