



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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Table with header 'DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT' and rows for 'PROGRAM INSTRUCTION', 'SUBJECT: Return-to-Normal Policies for the Child Care Assistance Program', 'ISSUE DATE: May 19, 2022', 'DFDI No.: 22-05-01', 'IMPACTED PROGRAMS: Child Care Program', and 'HISTORY: Rescinds DFDI No.: 20-04-05'.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Instruction is to inform the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) of the return-to-normal policies for the Child Care Assistance Program following the COVID-19 public health emergency.

This DFDI rescinds DFDI No.: 20-04-05.

II. AUTHORITY

Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 9857 et seq.; American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-2); 45 C.F.R. Part 98; Executive Orders Nos. 103 and 292.

III. OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division of Family Development (DFD) issued DFDI No.: 20-04-05, which modified multiple requirements of the Child Care Assistance Program in order to maintain the continuity of child care assistance services during the pandemic.

IV. POLICY

- A. Effective May 1, 2022, the Child Care Assistance Program policy modifications established by DFDI No.: 20-04-05 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, except for those listed in C. of this section, expired, and as of that date, the corresponding general emergency policies in DFDI No.: 20-05-02 ceased to apply with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- B. Standard policies have resumed with respect to the following policies which were modified in response to COVID-19:
- 1) **Priority Criteria Classification.** Families impacted by COVID-19 shall no longer be considered a priority population. CCR&Rs shall resume the prioritization of admissions for child care assistance services in accordance with DFDI No.: 19-05-04.
 - 2) **Redetermination Timeline.** The redetermination timeline shall no longer be extended for an additional three (3) months. The standard twelve (12) month redetermination timeline shall apply, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 10:15-10.1(d)(1) and DFDI No.: 21-04-01.
 - 3) **Application/Documentation Submission and Timeline.** The application/documentation submission timeline for families whose initial applications are in pending status shall no longer be extended for an additional three (3) months. The standard submission timeline shall apply.
 - 4) **Document Verification.** Alternative document verification shall no longer be accepted. The parent/applicant shall submit the required documentation with their completed application in accordance with DFDI No.: 15-08-01.
 - 5) **Agreement Flexibility.** Families with school-age children shall no longer be able to change their agreements from part-time to full-time due to COVID-19 related school closures.
 - 6) **Bridge Payments.** CCR&Rs shall no longer issue bridge payments to providers when families change providers due to closures prompted by COVID-19.
 - 7) **Tracking and Reporting Cases.** CCR&Rs no longer need to submit monthly reports relating to services provided during the public health emergency. Regular reporting schedules shall resume.
- C. The following Child Care Assistance Program policies adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic shall continue:
- 1) **Enrollment-Based Payments.** DFD shall continue to pay providers based on enrollment rather than attendance through August 31, 2022, or until further notice is provided by DFD.

- 2) **Differential Payments.** DFD shall continue to provide Differential Payments for licensed child care centers and family child care providers through December 31, 2023, in accordance with DFDI No.: 22-01-01.
- 3) **Copayments.** DFD shall continue to pay the total reimbursement rate to providers, including the families' copayment portion through October 31, 2023, in accordance with DFDI No.: 21-10-01.
- 4) **Adverse Actions.** All referrals to the State's Set-Off of Individual Liability (SOIL) system shall continue to be suspended until further notice is provided by DFD.

V. PROCEDURES

A. Application

CCR&Rs shall allow parents/applicants to apply in-person, but may continue to encourage parents/applicants to mail, email, or fax their applications and documents, to minimize in-person contact to the extent possible.

CCR&Rs shall resume screening applications for priority of service criteria based on the Priority Group Ranking as outlined in DFDI No.: 19-05-04.

B. Documentation

CCR&Rs shall no longer provide a ninety (90) day grace period for the parent/applicant to provide required documentation to determine eligibility. The parent/applicant shall provide the required documentation within the standard ten (10) day timeline.

CCR&Rs shall no longer accept a sworn written declaration of identity, residency, and household composition in lieu of required documentation. CCR&Rs shall resume guidance on obtaining reasonable verification of employment, school, and/or training hours as detailed in DFDI No.: 15-08-01 and IT No.: 20-03 to evaluate and make an assessment of a family's eligibility.

An existing parent/applicant shall provide the appropriate income verification document to continue eligibility, and may no longer submit the work verification form completed by their employer.

C. Agreements

CCR&Rs shall no longer authorize temporary changes to agreements allowing families with school-age children to change from part-time to full-time care during the school year for COVID-19 related school closures.

CCR&Rs shall ensure that staff are authorizing agreements in accordance with this Instruction.

D. Adverse Actions

CCR&Rs shall continue to suspend forwarding any new cases to the SOIL system until further notice. The reason for the suspension action shall be documented in the case file.

E. CCR&R Ongoing Responsibilities

CCR&Rs shall ensure staff are aware of the policies and procedures within this Instruction and shall periodically conduct quality assurance reviews to verify staff are correctly authorizing care.

CCR&Rs also shall provide general consumer education about this Instruction, and engage in ongoing communication and collaboration with families, providers, and communities to ensure that they are informed of its policies.

VI. SYSTEMS

N/A

VII. FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

N/A

If you need additional guidance, please contact your Child Care Supervisor assigned to your county.

Sincerely,
Natasha Johnson
Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner