

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Commissioner

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July 7, 2017

IMPORTANT
Information Regarding Changes for the DHHS Child Care Scholarship Program

Dear Child Care Provider:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of important changes in the Child Care Scholarship Program, which will become effective July 10, 2017, except where noted*. These changes could directly affect you or the families you serve, so please read this letter carefully. These changes will help to raise the health, safety and quality of child care programs. The eligibility changes are family friendly and provide easier access and continuity of child care for a longer eligibility period.

CHANGES REGARDING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

• **Background Checks and Fingerprints**

Current: FBI fingerprint background checks are done only once when the child care provider enrolls with DHHS.

Change: FBI fingerprint background checks will be done every 5 years.

Current: State background checks are done every 3 years for DHHS currently enrolled child care providers.

Change: State background checks will be done every 5 years.

• **Use of electronic Web Billing Application**

Current: Child care providers bill on paper invoices or electronically via the DHHS web billing application to receive Child Care Scholarship payment.

Change: Beginning August 7, child care providers can only bill for Child Care Scholarship payment by using the DHHS electronic web billing application. No paper invoices will be allowed for payment.

See attached letter sent to providers dated March 27, 2017 and attached Form 2679.

• **Age change for child care providers**

Current: Minimum age of DHHS enrolled child care provider is age 16.

Change: Child care providers must be 18 years of age or older to enroll as a DHHS child care provider.

• **Health and Safety Training**

Current: There are no training requirements for DHHS enrolled license exempt child care providers.

Change: All current providers (licensed and license-exempt) must complete and have documentation of child development and 11 health and safety topics, including pediatric infant and child first aid and cardiopulmonary (CPR). These trainings must be completed by **September 30, 2017**.

- ✓ To meet the new training requirements, please visit www.prosolutionstraining.com/nh to access the FREE NH Web-Based Health & Safety Training Program.
- ✓ For a list of local First Aid & CPR trainers go to <http://nh.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CPR-and-First-Aid-Training-List.pdf> .

Beginning July 10, 2017, new license-exempt providers and staff must complete the training prior to enrollment with DHHS.

Individuals need to print out the certificate at the end of each module.

- **NH Professional Registry**

Current: There is no requirement to utilize the NH Professional Registry.

Change: All child care providers and staff in licensed and license-exempt programs must create an individual account in the NH Professional Registry at: <https://nhportal.naccraware.net/nh/>.

License-exempt providers and staff at license-exempt centers must upload certificates of required training to each individual's account in the NH Professional Registry.

If you need help learning how to complete the trainings or enroll in the NH Professional Registry, please see the attached flyer regarding "Learning Communities: Online Health and Safety Technical Assistance Support"

- **Health and Safety Monitoring**

Current: Licensed providers are required to be monitored annually. There are no monitoring requirements for DHHS enrolled license-exempt child care providers.

Change: No change for licensed providers. License-exempt providers enrolled with DHHS will be required to participate in an initial and an annual monitoring inspection conducted by the NH Child Care Licensing Unit. It is anticipated that new license-exempt monitoring rules will be effective in the fall. More information will be provided in the future.

CHANGES IN CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY

- **12 Month Child Care Scholarship Eligibility**

Current: Eligibility periods for child care were aligned with other DHHS programs of assistance.

Change: Child Care Scholarship eligibility has been changed to 12 months for all eligible families.

- **Expedited Child Care**

Current: There is no rapid eligibility determination for children experiencing homelessness.

Change: When a family is experiencing homelessness and meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness a parent can apply for Expedited child care. This means a rapid eligibility determination for Child Care Scholarship will be made within 7 days of the application date when a child is linked to a DHHS enrolled child care provider. No verification is required at the time of application. DHHS will pay the enrolled child care provider during this 30 calendar day period. In order for Child Care Scholarship to continue past the 30 day Expedited child care period, families must provide all required verification within 30 days from the start date of the child care provider link. If families do not provide all the verification, the child care case will close. Any DHHS payment made during this time will not be considered an improper payment.

- **Fluctuating Income**

Current: Family income is calculated based on current pay stubs or the previous year's tax return.

Change: We can now annualize family income. If, at the time of application, a family's income does not reflect the total income of the next 12 month period or if the family's income varies from season to season, income can be annualized to better reflect the income over the 12 month eligibility period. This means a family could be eligible for a lower Step or be determined eligible even if the income is over the initial eligibility level at the time of application.

- **Steps 1-6 Initial Eligibility and Step 7 Graduated Phase Out (GPO)**

Current: Family gross income eligibility is at or below 250% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG).

Change: We will now have a two tier income eligibility threshold.

Tier 1 – The initial eligibility levels consists of family income at Step 1 – Step 6.

The initial income eligibility levels have been reduced to less than or equal to 220% of federal poverty guidelines (FPG); and

Tier 2 is a graduated phase out (GPO) eligibility period for eligible families already receiving Child Care Scholarship who have income greater than 220% and less than or equal to 250% of FPG at redetermination. Under GPO the family receives a graduated phase out eligibility period to continue Child Care Scholarship for one additional period of 12 months. GPO is only available at redetermination because it is an exit threshold only. The GPO period allows the family time to transition off of the Child Care Scholarship program.

- **Resources**

Current: Resources are not counted when determining Child Care Scholarship eligibility.

Change: The combined assets of an assistance group, shall not be equal to or greater than one million dollars. Resources include both personal and real property.

- **Job Search**

Current: Job search is limited to 40 days of paid child care in a 6 month period.

Change: The job search period will now be up to 92 calendar days, no matter how many days a child attends. If a parent does not find a job or enroll in an approved training or educational program by the end of the job search period, the child care case will close on the 92nd day. If a parent needs to job search again, a new job search period can only be approved **after** the parent has been employed or has participated in an approved training or educational program. Job search cannot be authorized back-to-back. A parent must engage in employment, an employment related training or educational program, NHEP or basic education activity or six months must pass before a new job search can be authorized as a new activity. If at the end of the 92 calendar job search period, the parent does not find a job or start a training or educational program, the child care case will close. Job search is no longer limited to half time. However, the service level will continue to drop or absentee days will be used (after September 11, 2017-see below), if the child does not attend at the authorized service level.

- **A child turning age 13**

Current: Child Care Scholarship ends when a child turns age 13.

Change: A child turning age 13 will now remain eligible for Child Care Scholarship through the current eligibility period. The Child Care Scholarship will no longer end on a child's 13th birthday.

- **Changes that **MUST** be reported**

Current: Parents are required to report all changes in their household circumstances or change in child care provider within 10 days of the date the change occurred.

Change: Parents now **only** have to report the following changes within 10 calendar days that occur during the 12 month eligibility period:

- A parent starts a job or experiences a permanent job loss;
- A parent starts or stops a training or educational program;

- The family's gross income exceeds 85% of State Median Income (SMI)*;
- Combined assets of the family's assistance group are equal to or greater than one million dollars; or
- There is a change in child care provider.

***The New Hampshire DHHS 85% State Median Income chart by household size is indicated on the reverse side of Form 2532 "Child Care Scholarship Income Eligibility Levels". This form is available on the DHHS/DCYF/Child Development Bureau's Forms Library at:
<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyl/cdb/forms.htm>**

- **Changes that MUST be reported while on the wait list**

Current: Parents are required to report all changes within 10 days.

Change: If a child is on the wait list parents must report, within 10 calendar days if:

- A parent has a permanent job loss;
- A parent stops a training or educational program; or
- The family's gross income exceeds 220% of FPG.

- **Cost Share**

Current: The cost share is re-evaluated whenever there is a change in income or household size.

Change: The family cost share will be calculated at initial eligibility and at redetermination. When the family reports a change in employment or a change in household size, the cost share may increase or decrease. However, during the 12 month eligibility period, the cost share cannot increase above the cost share calculation that was determined at initial eligibility.

- **Service Level**

Current: The child's service level increases or decreases when there is a reported change in employment related activities (employment, job search or training/education) plus commute time.

Change: The child's service level will be calculated at initial eligibility and at redetermination. The child's authorized service level will not change during the 12 month eligibility period unless the change would benefit the family. However, a family may request a decrease in service level at any time.

- **Absentee Hours – Effective September 11, 2017***

Current: No absentee hours are paid for Child Care Scholarship when a child is absent from child care. The parent is responsible to pay the child care provider, if the provider charges.

Change: We will now allow Child Care Scholarship payment to a linked child care provider when a child is absent. Each child will receive a DHHS determined annual allotment (January 1st through December 31st) of absentee hours based on the child's authorized service level. A new annual allotment will become effective on January 1st each year. These absentee hours belong to the child and stay with the child even when the child changes child care providers. The absentee allotment will be used whenever a child is absent until the annual allotment is exhausted. Annual absentee allotment hours are as follows:

- 62 hours per child for full-time service level;
- 32 hours per child for half-time service level;
- 2 hours per child for part-time service level.

When enough absentee hours are available, it may prevent the DHHS child care payment from dropping below the authorized service level hours. When not enough absentee hours are available to meet the authorized service level hours, or when the absentee allotment is exhausted, the parent is responsible to pay the child care provider the difference between the authorized service level and the actual service level for that week, plus any co-payment you charge as a provider. Note: If a child uses all the allotted absentee hours at the beginning of the calendar year, there will be no more absentee hours left for the remainder of the calendar year and payment will be made at the service level at which the child attends each week. Absentee hours will be prorated from 9/11/2017* through 12/31/2017. A full annual absentee allotment will begin on January 1st.

- **Continued Eligibility for Child Care Scholarship**

Current: Child Care Scholarship is only paid when the parent is actually at work, looking for work (job search), attending a training or educational program or commuting to and from an employment related activity.

Change: A child will continue to be eligible for Child Care Scholarship as long as the parent is still considered employed by their employer or still considered currently enrolled in a training or educational program by their institution even when the parent is:

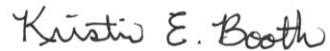
- On a medical leave due to their own health or caring for another family member living in the household;
 - Experiencing a seasonal break in employment according to regular industry work seasons;
 - On a student holiday or semester break while participating in a training or educational program;
 - Experiencing any other reduction in work, training or educational hours as long as they are still working or attending a training or educational program.
- Payment to the child care provider will be made when the child attends or is scheduled to attend the program up to the annual absentee allotment.
- Families must complete a redetermination even when experiencing one of the circumstances above.

The Child Development Bureau realizes that there are many significant changes described in this letter. We anticipate providing more detailed training through webinars in the coming months.

We believe that these changes will benefit the children, families and child care providers of New Hampshire.

We thank you for your commitment to the children and families you serve.

Sincerely,



Kristin E. Booth, M.S.
Administrator
DHHS/DCYF Child Development Bureau