



## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHILD CARE

### 1) Who is eligible for child care assistance from the state?

- Low-income working families;
- TANF clients in education, training, or other work-related activities approved by their caseworkers
- Teen parents (under age 20) in elementary or high school, or a GED program;
- Low-income families who are in school or training and are not receiving TANF cash assistance. (Must work at least 10 hours per week if they are in a college degree program.) Occupational, vocational training, GED, ABE, ESL, and other below post-secondary education programs do not have a work requirement for the first 24 months. High school does not have a work requirement.

### 2) What should I do if my circumstances change?

The parent or provider should call us when any changes occur:

- Change Providers
- Stop working or change jobs
- Stop attending school or training
- Change family size
- Change income
- Change address
- Stop receiving TANF
- Have medical/maternity leave
- Have any other changes that may affect your eligibility

Failure to report any changes within **5 days** may result in pay back of overpayments and/or loss of child care benefits. If you stop working, you may be able to continue to receive a child care subsidy up to 30 days after the loss of your job while you look for work.

### 3) When will I find out if I'm approved for child care assistance?

You and your provider will be notified of approval or denial within 30 days after we receive your completed application.

### 4) What does "low-income" mean?

Your family's countable income must be below the following guidelines:

<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Monthly Income Must Be Below</u>	<u>Family Size</u>	<u>Monthly Income Must Be Below</u>
2	\$1,885	6	\$3,658
3	\$2,328	7	\$3,741
4	\$2,772	8	\$3,825
5	\$3,215		

To determine your countable income, the gross wages paid by an employer are added to your other income (such as any government benefits, child support you receive, or self-employment income). Any child support you pay is subtracted from your income.

### 5) Must I be the child's parent to qualify for the program?

No. A child's legal guardian or other relatives caring for the child are also eligible and should fill out an application form. Foster parents can receive child care assistance from the Department of Children and Family Services.

**6) How old can the child be?**

All children under age 13 are eligible. Children 13 or older are eligible if they are under court supervision or have written documentation from a medical provider stating that they are physically or mentally incapable of caring for themselves.

**7) Is there a waiting list for child care assistance?**

No. Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements may receive a child care subsidy.

**8) How long can I continue to receive child care assistance?**

There is no time limit. As long as you are low-income and need child care to work or participate in an approved activity, you remain eligible. Your Approval Letter will list the first and last months that you are eligible for assistance. Usually, you will be approved for 3 or 6 months at a time. Before your approval period ends, you will have to renew your child care case in order to continue receiving assistance. You will do this by filling out a "redetermination" form. This form will be automatically mailed to you in the in the month before your approval period ends. For example, if you are approved through April, you should receive your redetermination form in March. If you don't return you redetermination form and all required documents -OR- if you no longer meet the eligibility guidelines of the program, your case will be canceled.

**9) If I receive child care assistance from the State will I still have to pay something?**

The State requires all parents to pay a monthly "co-payment" directly to their provider. The amount of your monthly co-payment is determined by IDHS and the amount may vary from parent to parent. Monthly co-payments are based on income, family size, number of children in child care, and the number of hours your children are in care. The amount of your monthly co-payment will be listed on your Approval Letter. The Department will pay the provider directly for the remaining child care charges up to the maximum rate.

**10) Can my provider charge me more than my co-payment amount?**

Yes. If your provider charges private paying parents a higher rate than the IDHS program pays, your provider can ask you to pay the difference by requiring a fee in addition to your co-payment. Be sure that you and your provider discuss what you are expected to pay before care for your child starts.

If your provider's costs are too high for you, your CCR&R may be able to help you find a child care provider who is more affordable. Call them for help finding a new child care provider.

**11) Does my child care provider have to be licensed?**

No. Certain home child care providers are not required to have a license. A provider without a license must be at least 18 years old and may not care for more than 3 children, including their own children, unless all of the other children are from the same household.

**12) Will the State pay relatives to take care of my child?**

Yes. Relatives can be paid to provide child care even if they live in the home with the child. TANF clients can be paid child care providers; however, earnings must be reported to their IDHS caseworkers. Exception: the State will not pay a child's parents, stepparents, or relative included in the child's TANF grant to care for the child.

**13) Does the State do any kind of background check on child care providers?**

Illinois law states that all providers paid by the state who are not licensed must agree to a Child Abuse and Neglect background check every two years. This background check will match your provider's name to other pertinent information - as well as that of anyone age 13 and older in his or her household (if that is where care is provided)- against the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) maintained by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

**14) What if I am still looking for a child care provider?**

You may call a parent counselor at your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) at 1-877-202-4453 (toll-free) to get help finding child care for your child. You must have a child care provider **before** you submit your application.

**15) How much will the child care provider be paid by the State?**

The most the State will pay depends on the age of the child, the region of the state, the type of child care provider, and whether the child is in full-time or part-time care. A copy of the rates is attached to this application or can be obtained by calling the CCR&R. All providers are considered self-employed (NOT employees of IDHS or the CCR&R). Taxes can not be taken out of payments. Providers are required by law to report all Child Care payments to the IRS as earned income. If your provider is not a corporation or governmental unit (public school or park district), and earns over \$600 within a calendar year, your provider will receive a copy of the 1099 Miscellaneous Form from the Office of the Comptroller reporting his or her income to the IRS. Your provider should receive the form by February 15<sup>th</sup>.

**16) Can I receive child care assistance for the time I travel to or from work or school/training?**

Yes. You can receive child care assistance for reasonable time you spend traveling to and from your child care provider to your job or school/training, as well as for the time you are working or attending school/training.

**17) When will my provider get paid?**

It can take 4 to 8 weeks for your provider to receive the first payment. After your provider receives the first payment, regular payments will arrive on a monthly basis. The reason the first payment takes longer is your provider's name and social security number must be recorded with the Office of the Comptroller before any payments can be made. To do this, the CCR&R will mail your provider a W9 tax form. The sooner he or she neatly completes and returns the W9 form to the CCR&R, the sooner he or she gets paid.

After the Office of the Comptroller has your provider's information on file, we can send him or her the first "billing certificate." This is the form that you and your provider complete each month to tell IDHS how much to pay your provider.

**18) How can I check status of payments?**

IDHS has a toll free number clients and providers can call to find out payment information. If you have a touch-tone phone, you can call 1-800-804-3833 to find out if your payments have been entered by the CCR&R and approved for payment by IDHS. This toll free number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**19) Should my provider consider direct deposit?**

Absolutely. Payments can be deposited directly into your provider's bank account. This can be especially helpful if your provider has been having trouble with mail. Call 217-557-0930 to set up direct deposit. For purposes of record keeping, your provider may want to ask the bank what kind of receipt information they can pass on, as the provider will not receive payment information from IDHS or the Comptroller's office when using direct deposit.

**20) What if my child's other parent or stepparent lives in my home?**

If the child's other parent or stepparent lives in your home, he or she also needs to be working or in school, training, or a TANF-required activity in order for you to receive a child care subsidy. The other parent or stepparent also needs to complete page 3 of the application and submit the same kinds of documents as you do, which are listed in the application instructions. If the other parent or stepparent is not working or in school, training, or a TANF-required activity, you will need to write and sign a statement about why he or she cannot care for the child.