

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Overview - Best Beginnings Child Care
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**Human & Community Services Division ECSB
Organizational Chart**

Supersedes: Child Care (11/1/10)

The Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS]
Human and Community Services Division Early Childhood Services Bureau
[ECSB] organizational chart is on the Bureau's website at
www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

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References: Section 52-2-703, MCA.
Sections 37.80.101, .102, .103, .201, .202, .205, .206, .301, .302, .305,
306, .315, .316, .501, 37.95.304 ARM
45 CFR 98.2 and 98.33
Child Care Fund State Plan, Appendix 2.

A

Absent Days are intended to assist families to pay child care facilities requiring payment when a full time child is temporarily absent. Absent Days can only be used for times of temporary absence, including illness and holidays, and are limited to 24 days in a state fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th). A limit of 10 consecutive days of Absent Days can be billed at one time.

Absent Parent means a natural or adoptive parent, or stepparent who is separated or divorced from the child's residential parent, or who was never married to the residential parent. An absent parent does not share family income, resources, or obligations with their child's household, except by paying child support or alimony. In contrast, see 'Parents Living Apart,' below.

Abuse/Misuse of funds is defined as administrative violations of departmental, agency, or program regulations which impair the effective and efficient execution of programs. These violations may result in losses or they may result in denial or reduction in lawfully authorized benefits to participants.

Administrative Review is the first step in the Fair Hearing process. During an administrative review, a person with a complaint has an opportunity to have his/her case examined by the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] staff, in a formal attempt to resolve a grievance prior to a Fair Hearing, as outlined in Section 1-11.

Adverse Action means a decision to deny, decrease, or to terminate benefits and includes:

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- a failure of the Department or of the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency to provide a parent an opportunity to make an application or reapplication for a child care scholarship;
- a failure of the Department or of the [CCR&R] agency to act with reasonable promptness on a parent's application for a child care scholarship - (reasonable promptness is 30 days, see Section 2-1);
- a failure of the Department or of the [CCR&R] agency to provide timely or adequate notice when an adverse action will be taken;
- an action by the Department or the [CCR&R] agency denying, suspending, reducing, or terminating the scholarship of a parent or payment(s) to a provider, or an action by the Department demanding repayment of an overpayment;

Affordable Child Care means the total parental (caretaker, relative, or person acting in loco parentis) co-payment and 'above and beyond' obligation does not exceed 25% of gross family income.

Applicant means an individual applying for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program.

Application Date means the date the child care resource and referral agency receives and date stamps the completed application form, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application or the Legally Certified/ In-home Care Provider Application form. The application date establishes the beginning of the time span in which the application process must be completed.

Appropriate Child Care means the child care provider must meet applicable state licensing standards or those established for Legally Certified Providers [LCP] or Legally Certified In-home Providers [LCI].

Approved training institution means an institution that is accredited by the U.S. Department of Education [<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation>]

Attending (a Job Training or Educational Program) A person is considered to be attending, whether part-time or full-time, if they remain in good standing as defined by the institution, with either the job training or education program in which they are enrolled. Child care is allowed for scheduled class time and the time necessary to commute between the parent's home, the child care facility and the education or training facility.

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Authorization to Release Information means the part of the child care application packet used to assist the applicant/participant in obtaining information necessary to determine eligibility. It explains the client's rights to confidentiality and gives the participant/applicant the option of authorizing the release of information or declining to authorize the release of information. Unless the release is temporary, it is generally good for one year.

Authorization of Service means the span of time, number of hours per week, and schedule that an eligible child is approved for care at a particular provider's facility. In addition, it indicates the monthly payment amount that the family is approved to receive for the indicated child at the indicated facility. The authorization of services is used to create the Certification Plan.

B

Bi-weekly means the time frame for converting income into a monthly figure when the pay date occurs every other week regardless of the actual date totaling 26 pay periods each year.

C

Certification Plan means a notice issued through the Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] system by the Child Care Resource & Referral [CCR&R] agencies which authorize child care assistance and which specifies the eligibility of the family and the children's authorization for care. It includes the number of children for whom child care assistance is authorized, the number of hours per week for which assistance is authorized, the number of months for which authorization is granted, the name of the child care provider, and the amount of the monthly copayment which the parent must pay to the provider. Certification plans are subject to change based on circumstances affecting eligibility or the provision of child care assistance.

Certified Provider [see "Legally Certified Provider"] means a special designation for providers not required to be registered or licensed because they care for fewer than three children [two children of separate

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families or all from the same family] and are certified only for payment purposes by the state of Montana.

Child Care means care for children provided by an adult other than a parent of the children or other person living with the children as a parent, on a regular basis for daily periods of less than 24 hours, whether that care is for daytime or nighttime hours. In addition to the previous defined language found at 52-2-703, MCA, the term also means care to a child up to the age of 13 years, except as indicated otherwise in these rules. The term does not include care by a relative, unless registration or licensure as a day care facility is required to receive payments as provided in 52-2-713, MCA.

Child Care Center means an out-of-home place in which child care is provided to 13 or more children on a regular basis.

Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) or resource and referral agency means the agency or organization with which the department contracts to administer the child care assistance program, including determination of eligibility for child care scholarship assistance, certification of legally certified providers to receive payments, and payments to providers.

Child Care Scholarship means the monthly benefit amount that is awarded to a qualifying parent for assistance in paying child care costs while they work, attend school, or participate in TANF Family Investment Activities/Employability Plan.

Child Care Under the Big Sky (CCUBS) is a child care program management computer system implemented in March 2002. The Oracle based computer system integrates licensing, subsidy, and contract management functions.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Child Care is available for children in protective care because of the danger of neglect or abuse. The need for protective services child care is determined by community social workers.

Child with Special Needs means a child who is age 18 or younger who requires additional assistance because of an emotional or physical disability and/or cognitive delay that is verified by medical records or other appropriate documentation such as written verification of the physical, emotional, or mental disability from the appropriate authority.

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Collateral Contact means knowledgeable individuals or sources who serve to support or confirm information provided by the applicant/parent.

Combination Full/Part Time Child Care means care provided in excess of 10 hours per day. The full-time child care rate is paid for the first 10 hours; additional hours beyond 10 hours/day are paid for at the hourly rate up to 16 hours/day. If the certification plan specifies service exceeding 16 hours of care during a calendar day, the state will pay twice the daily rate for each day in which care exceeds 16 hours.

Common Law Marriage - A common law marriage has all of the same rights & duties as a ceremonial marriage. Therefore, if the income and availability of a step parent, married by ceremony is considered, then the same applies to a step parent married by common law. There is no “benchmark” at which a couple is deemed married by common law. However, if they present themselves husband and wife, then they are married by common law for all intents and purposes.

Copayment means the portion of child care expenses which the parent is responsible for paying to the child care provider in accordance with the sliding fee scale as established in Section 1-5.

Corporation means a business type that exists separately from the individual who owns interest in it. Must file a separate corporate tax return. Two types: C-Corporation and S-Corporation.

Corporation: C-type means a business where shareholders receive profits in the form of dividends. The dividends must be reported on the shareholder's individual tax return and are counted as unearned income to the client and use the individual wages and dividends instead of the self-employment figures to compute income.

Corporation: S-type means a small business corporation of 35 or fewer shareholders taxed only at the shareholder level, is similar to a partnership in that each partner separately reports his or her share of the income, deductions, loss, and credits on their personal tax forms, and must file a tax return on form 1120-S. Note: Farm S-corporations must file a form 1120-S and are not required to file a Schedule F. However, some farm corporations may file both forms.

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D

Dependent Child means a child under the age of 18 who lives in the household of a natural or adopted parent, foster care parent, or an adult serving in loco parentis.

E

Earned Income refers to income that is the monthly equivalent of all earnings received [before taxes and other deductions], no matter when it was earned.

Education Program refers to a program that is accredited by the State of Montana. Educational programs include, but are not limited to, vocational-technical schools, business colleges, junior colleges, universities, and/or special classes, which may be classified as "employment related training." It also includes those out-of-state programs that meet the criteria stipulated in Section 2-3 such as distance learning.

Eligibility Period refers the time period for which a family has been determined to be eligible to receive child care assistance.

Express Eligibility refers to the procedure used to determine income eligibility for SNAP participants who apply for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program.

F

Fair Hearing – means a proceeding in which a determination of legal rights, duties, or privileges of a party is required by law. Parties affected by an adverse action must send a written request to the Department for a fair hearing in a timely manner. See Fair Hearing Process, as outlined in Section 1-11.

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Family Child Care Home means a private residence in which day care is provided to three to six children on a regular basis. In addition to the previous defined language found at 52-2-703, MCA, the term also means: a day care facility providing care to no more than three children who are under two years of age unless care is provided exclusively for children under age two. For facilities providing care only exclusively for children under age two, family day care home means a place in which supplemental parental care is provided for up to four children under age two. No other children shall be in attendance.

Fill-the-Gap allows WoRC Case Managers and Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialists to provide a child care scholarship to a TANF family who needs child care because circumstances have changed and the child care disregard has not been prospected. See Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6.

Fraud is a legal term which encompasses the intentional, wrongful obtaining of either money or some other advantage or benefit from government programs or commercial operations. Fraud includes theft, embezzlement, false statements, illegal commissions, kickbacks, conspiracies, obtaining contracts through collusive arrangements, and similar devices.

Full-time Child Care means six to ten hours per day and thirty or more hours per week on a regular basis.

Full-time Field Experience and Class Time means 30 hours per week combined of field experience and class time accrued by a post secondary education student, not including home study time.

G

Good Cause Not To Cooperate with Child Support Enforcement means a parent may be exempted from the requirement due to endangerment issues. See Non-TANF Household Requirements, as outlined in Section 2-2.

Grace Period - Families who lose employment, therefore fail to meet the minimum hourly work requirement, will be given child care for 90 days, to actively look for work. See Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6.

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Graduated Eligibility means eligibility for a family that has been deemed over-income for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship at annual re-determination, but whose income does not exceed 185% of the federal poverty level used by Montana for a six-month eligibility period.

Group Child Care Home means a private residence or other structure in which day care is provided to seven to twelve children on a regular basis. In addition to the previous defined language found at 52-2-703, MCA, the term also means a day care facility providing care to seven to twelve children with no more than six children under two years of age, unless care is provided exclusively for children under age two. For facilities providing care only exclusively for children under age two, group day care home means a place in which child care is provided for up to eight children under age two. No other children shall be in attendance.

(a) Facilities caring exclusively for children under age two shall maintain a staff/infant ratio of one caregiver for each four infants in attendance.

(b) Facilities may not provide care to more than three children under the age of two years while also caring for children over two years of age when only one caregiver is present.

H

Hardship means a state of misfortune or adversity. May be temporary.

Homeless means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and includes:

- (a) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (b) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

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(c) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(d) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (a) through (b). refer to the section.

Household means a family unit living together, related by marriage or parentage. Unrelated individuals may choose to be considered part of the household for child care eligibility purposes. See Child Eligibility and Parent Eligibility, as outlined in Section 2-2.

Household Size means the number of household members including the parents, as the term is defined in this section, and the children of the parents, but not including adults living in the household other than the parents, unless the income of such adults is counted in computing the household's monthly income under Section 2-4.

I

Improper Payment - An improper payment is a payment requested or made to a parent or provider in error regardless of how the error occurred.

Individual with a Disability means a person with a physical, mental, or emotional defect, illness, or impairment diagnosed by a licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist which is sufficiently serious as to eliminate or substantially reduce the individual's ability to obtain and retain employment for a period expected to last at least 30 days.

Irregular Income means income that differs in amount from month to month.

In-Compliance with Child Support – The parent has an open case and maintains an open case while receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship with the Montana Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) or has complied with all requests by CSED to open a case or, the parent is receiving child support through a court order, and this can be verified by documentation of receipt of court ordered child support payments, or the

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parent must have appropriate reasons and documentation to apply for good cause not to pursue child support as outlined in the Child Care Policy Manual Section 2-2a.

Infant means a child under 19 months of age. For the purpose of child care scholarship rates, the child moves from the 'infant rate' to the 'child (2+)' rate' on their second birthday.

Informal Care means care that does not meet applicable state licensing/registration standards, even though it may be the choice of the parents.

Intact Family means a household with two parents who may not be living together for a specific reason, but the family considers themselves one unit. Income and availability to care for the children are to be considered for both of the parents in determining eligibility.

Invoice is a signed daily attendance list used by providers use to bill for child care scholarship services.

In-Home Relative Caregiver means a person must be related to the child and the relationship to the child must be verified.

J

Job Training is a program designed to assist eligible families to become self-sufficient by providing needed employment-related activities and supportive services. Job training programs include, but are not limited to, WoRC and special classes which may be classified as "employment related training."

L

Legally Certified Provider [LCP] means an individual who has been certified by the Department to provide child care to two separate children of separate families or all the children in one family, for the sole purpose of receiving state payment. LCPs are not required to be registered or licensed

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as a child care facility and are not preschool or drop-in facilities, including providers whose child care services are provided in the home of the parents, for which a payment number (PV) has been established.

Legally Certified In-Home Provider [LCI] means a legally certified provider caring for children in the parent's home by a person living with the child who is a relative of the child in one of the following ways:

- Aunt or Uncle;
- Grandparent;
- Great-grandparent; or
- Step-Grandparent or Step-Great Grandparent.

Parents selecting LCI providers are the employer of the provider, not the state.

Limited Liability Company [LLC] means a business structure allowed by state statute, owners have limited personal liability for debts and actions of the LLC, is owned by "LLC members," and is not recognized by the federal government as a classification for federal tax purposes. An LLC must file as a corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship tax return.

M

Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse means any person required by the state of Montana to report possible incidences of abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services.

Medical Emergency means an unexpected medical condition of an immediate household member which is expected to last less than three months, as verified by a medical doctor. See Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6.

Monthly Pay Period means the time frame for converting income into a monthly figure when the pay date occurs only once each month regardless of the actual pay date.

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Naturalization means the formal [as defined by the federal government] granting of U.S. citizenship to a foreigner.

Net Income means the income amount after expenses have been deducted regardless of the amount of income.

Non-eligible parent means the absent parent, who shares the cost of child care as stipulated in the Parenting Plan but is not eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Authorization of Services hours of care is based on the non-eligible parent's work schedule when the child is in the care of the non-eligible parent.

O

Out-of-State Rate means the rate established for payment to out-of-state facilities based on the 75th percentile of the Market Rate Survey for the entire state. See Section 1-4.

Over Claim means a provider has made a willful action to charge for child care services that were not approved on the Certification Plan or for child care that was not provided.

Over Payment means the provider received payment in excess of what was owed to them. Over payments may result from:

- actions resulting in an over claim;
- provider error;
- Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] error;
- child care that was not approved; or
- child care claimed and not provided by the caregiver.

P

Paid Legal Labor means the amount an individual earns divided by the hours worked equals at least minimum wage as defined in Montana.

Parent means a parent by blood, marriage, or adoption and a legal guardian, or other person acting in loco parentis.

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Parents Living Apart means the couple considers themselves intact. Income and resources and household obligations are shared, although the individual parents may reside in separate locations. In contrast, see 'Absent Parent', above.

Participant means an individual already receiving assistance through the Best Beginnings Scholarship program.

Partnership means a business owned by two or more individuals, must file a return on federal form 1065, but not taxed as a separate entity, each partner also receives a Schedule K-1 showing his/her share of income, gain, loss, deduction, or credits. Profits are counted as earned income. Partners may receive differing shares depending on original partnership agreement and, if not working for the business, still receive Schedule K which counts as unearned income.

Part-time Child Care means less than six hours per day, billed at an hourly rate or less than 30 hours per week.

Prospective Income means determining what the family's earnings should be in future months in order to determine if a family is eligible to receive scholarship assistance. In the event that a family is determined eligible, the prospected income is also used to determine the family's copayment. -It is the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] policy to determine eligibility prospectively. Changes should be applied to the future benefit month(s), not the current month. See Prospective Income as outlined in Section 2-5.

Provider means a licensed or registered child care facility chosen by the parent(s) to care for their child(ren). For the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program this would include Legally Certified Providers [LCP] or Legally Certified In-home Providers [LCI].

Q

Qualifying Specified Relative is a TANF term, which means any blood relative including those of half-blood, including first cousin, nephews, or nieces, and persons of preceding generations as indicated by prefixes of grand, great, or great-great; stepfather, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister; those who legally adopt the child or his/her parent as well as the

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natural and other legally adopted children of such persons; spouses of anyone named in the above groups even after the marriage is terminated by death or divorce; and person(s) acting in loco parentis.

Qualified Aliens means an individual lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence under various sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)

R

Reasonable Distance means:

- a. If the family is without either their own (or arranged) transportation and there is no public transportation, then their home or work site must be no more than 1 mile from the child care provider.
- b. If the family has their own (or arranged) transportation, their home or work site is within one-hour travel distance, one-way, from the child care provider.

Regular Basis means providing child care to children of separate families for any daily periods of less than 24 hours and within three or more consecutive weeks. In addition to the previous defined language found at 52-2-703, MCA, the term also means the child must be in attendance four or more days a week for six hours a day or more.

Request for Fair Hearing is any clearly written statement to DPHHS by the person denied a benefit stating that they want to present their claim to a higher authority. The request must be made within 10 days of receipt of the notice of the Department's adverse action.

Required Household Members - (for Non-TANF)

- Natural, adoptive parent or stepparent of an intact family, regardless of living arrangements
- Parent by common law marriage
- Parent joined by a common child
- Minor sibling, age 17 and under, including stepbrother, stepsister, half brother and half sister
- Child receiving Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship
- Child receiving TANF Cash benefits, or other subsidy, as a member of the household

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Refer to section 2-2.

Residing with - A child must live in the same household as the parent, other specified relative, or persons acting in loco parentis during the period for which the child care scholarship is requested, as outlined in Section 2-1 of this manual.

Residential Parent means the parent with whom the child resides.

S

Scholarship Reimbursement Rates are child care scholarship rates as listed in Section 1-4 of the Child Care Policy Manual, available from the DPHHS Early Childhood Services Bureau.

Self-Employment means earning one's livelihood directly from one's own trade or business rather than as an employee of another.

Semi-Monthly means the time frame for converting income into a monthly figure when the pay date occurs only twice each month regardless of the actual pay date.

Short-term Emergency means a break in employment which does not exceed three months and which is caused by an unforeseen medical condition of a parent or a child, excluding a normal pregnancy or normal delivery of a child.

Significant Other means domestic partner; a person, not necessarily a spouse, who is in a co-habiting relationship.

Single Parent means only one parent living with a child who is legally/financially responsible for the child and there is no other adult legally/financially responsible for the child in that eligible family. If there is someone else in the household who does not have legal/financial responsibility for the child, then the legal/financially responsible applicant is still considered a single parent.

Slot means full time care, 6-10 hours per day, 30 or more hours on a regular basis.

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Sole Proprietorship means the business is owned and controlled by one individual, is not required to file a separate tax return, must include the profit or loss from all sole proprietorships on the client's federal 1040 tax forms, and must file a separate tax schedule for each business operated under this type: Farm must file a separate Schedule F; nonfarm must file a separate Schedule C.

Special Circumstances means those circumstances that might influence equal access or cultural challenges that, if not granted, would interfere with continuity of care for children.

Suspending a Scholarship means keeping a child care case open temporarily even though child care assistance is not needed. A scholarship may be suspended for up to 30 days. If the assistance is not needed for more than 30 days, the child care scholarship must be closed.

T

Taxable Gross Income [TGI] means the amount of income subject to income taxes; found by subtracting the appropriate deductions (IRA contributions, alimony payments, unreimbursed business expenses, some capital losses, etc.) from adjusted gross income. For self-employed parents, taxable gross income is calculated by subtracting verified business expenses from gross receipts as defined in Section 2-4a.

Teen Parent means a parent through their 20th birthday who is attending high school. The Non-TANF minimum hourly work requirement is waived for teen parents attending high school. The month following the 20th birthday or the month they leave high school the minimum hourly work requirement applies to their eligibility for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child care Scholarship.

Toddler means a child who is 24 months of age to 36 months of age.

Training means instruction that is done to improve the skills or learning of an individual. Examples of training include on-the-job (OJT) training, truck driving, or computer skills training.

Tribal TANF families participate in a tribal-run TANF program on their Indian reservation. These families are dually eligible for Tribal Block Grant

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child care and State CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. If the Tribal TANF program exhausts child care funding or if Tribal Block Grant families find they are covered for additional activities under State CCDF child care rules, families may apply for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

U

Unearned Income means an individual's income derived from sources other than employment, such as interest and dividends from investments, or income from rental property. It is the participant's responsibility to provide verification of this type of income.

U.S. Citizen means citizenship in the United States as a status given to a legal member of the U.S. It entails specific rights, duties, privileges, and economic benefits including types of federal assistance. Citizenship is typically granted to those born on U.S. soil.

U.S. National means an individual who owes his sole allegiance to the United States, including all US citizens and including some individuals who are not US citizens. For tax purposes, "the U.S. National" refers to individuals who were born in American Samoa or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

W

Work - An individual is working when [s]he performs any paid type of legal labor on either a full or part time basis and has documents to show income received. Evidence of workers' compensation or a waiver from workers compensation is also further proof of employment.

Working Caretaker Relative means a TANF-based program available for individuals caring for child[ren] of TANF-child only grant recipients through the Public Assistance Office. These caretakers are eligible to receive a Best Beginnings Scholarship to cover their work activities.

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Work-Study – An employment program designed to assist students to earn while attending a post-secondary education program. For the purpose of child care eligibility, work-study earnings are counted as income and work-study hours count toward meeting a minimum hourly work requirement.

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Subject:

Scholarship Rates

Supersedes: Child Care 1-4 (4/9/16)

References: Sections 37.80.101, 37.80.102, 37.80.206, 37.80.305, 37.80.306,
37.80.316 ARM.
52-2-704 & 53-4-601 MCA
45 CFR Part 98.43

General Rule The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program is designed to assist low-income families to access and afford quality child care. The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program helps families pay for child care while they are working, attending high school, a post-secondary institution or participating in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Family Investment Agreement [FIA] Employability Plan [EP] activities.

**Child Care
Provider Market
Rate Survey** The Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] conducts a market rate survey of child care providers following standards outlined in the 2014 Child Care Development Fund Act. Depending on funding levels, the market rate survey is used as a basis for determining child care reimbursement rates.

If funding is available, the ECSB provides families with a level of Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship that allows access to 75% of the child care facilities in their district.

**ECSB Pays the
Lower Rate** Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship payments are made at a rate determined by the ECSB, through a market rate survey, or the provider's rate, whichever is lower. Child care providers may not charge the State a higher rate than they charge the public. See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for processing.

Parents are responsible for any costs, including co-payments, not covered by the Best Beginning Scholarship or additional fees that a provider may charge.

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Provider Must Report Rates And Associated Changes Participating child care providers must report their current rates for private-pay families to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R]. Rate changes, for scholarship payments, become effective the first of the month following the date the change is made. Any change a provider makes in regards to their license does not automatically result in a rate change for the provider. Any exceptions will be considered by the Early Childhood Services Bureau on a case-by-case basis.

Infant Care The infant care rates apply to children under the age of 2 years. Rates for children age 2+ apply beginning on the child's second birthday. The child under 2 rate will pay through the end of the month in which a child turns 2 years old.

Out-of-State Rate The out-of-state rate indicated in the rate table is used when child care occurs in a facility located outside Montana.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS]
Human and Community Services Division Early Childhood Services Bureau
[ECSB] Scholarship Rates are on the Bureau's website at
www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

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Subject:

Children with Special Needs

Supersedes: Child Care 1-4 (2/1/11)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule Families of children with special needs are not placed on a waiting list, thereby guaranteeing a priority status for a child care scholarship. Child care providers are required to make a reasonable accommodation for children with special needs. If care requirements increase the cost of the care, one-time or ongoing costs may be paid from the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Additional funding for special needs care is provided solely at the discretion of the Early Childhood Services Bureau.

Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] The Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA] requires that businesses (including child care providers) make “reasonable accommodations” in order to include individuals with disabilities in their place of business. Montana’s policy regarding special needs care and scholarship program must not supplant ADA requirements. Child care programs must first comply with the ADA, then access all other available resources and finally utilize the special needs scholarship enhancement.

Eligibility Families must meet eligibility requirements for a Best Beginnings child care scholarship, as outlined in Section 1-7 of this manual.

Child Care Resource and Referral Early Childhood Specialist’s Role 1. Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist assists the family in determining eligibility and completing paperwork required in order to receive a Best Beginnings Scholarship. As part of the initial eligibility determination process, the CCR&R staff determines if it is appropriate to apply for a special needs scholarship.

This determination is based on:

- The diagnosis and documentation of a disability, which must include written verification of the physical, emotional or mental disability from the appropriate authority;
- The parent’s description of the child’s needs; or
- Observation based on past difficulty maintaining a child care placement.

In order to qualify for the special needs scholarship program, a child must

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require special modifications/accommodations in the child care setting and may or may not have an identified disability. The family must provide permission for the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] to pursue a Special Needs Scholarship reimbursement rate by signing the Family Consent Form. Each Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] will designate an Early Childhood Specialist to complete the Special Needs Services process.

2. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Early Childhood Specialist schedules and conducts an observation of the child. This observation is ideally completed in the child care facility that the child is attending. This observation should be scheduled with the child care provider, but also the CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist should keep the parent informed when the observation is scheduled.

3. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Early Childhood Specialist and the family complete the Special Needs Rating Scale to identify the areas in which accommodations are required.

4. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Early Childhood Specialist completes the Scoring Worksheet to determine the amount of additional special needs subsidy to be paid to the child care provider.

**Individual Child
Care Plan**

The family, child care provider, and other professionals working with the child complete the Individual Child Care Plan. This plan provides documentation of the child's needs, identifies required accommodations (and estimated costs), identifies additional resources which may be available, and suggests at least two individuals who could provide additional information if needed. The Individual Child Care Plan must be written with the team that completed the Rating Scale for the child. The Individual Child Care Plan is reviewed by the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator.

The Child Care Plan, Rating Scale, and other documentation is then submitted to the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator

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Recertification

A Recertification Form is submitted to the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator every three months from the initial Special Needs approval date. The Rating Scale is part of the Recertification Form and is evaluated on a quarterly basis. The Child Care Plan must be revised and re-submitted at each recertification period. The Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator will review to determine if the Plan is sufficient to meet the child's needs and supports continued need for additional funds.

**Child Protective
Services [CPS]
Care**

The scholarship rate for a child with special needs under Child Protective Services [CPS] care is requested by the Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Social Worker and must include documentation from a physician, psychologist, or licensed social worker. The CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist must offer help to the Social Worker to complete the Rating Scale and Individual Child Care Plan. The special-needs child rate is subject to approval by the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator.

**Limits on Rate
Approval
Amounts**

Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator may approve a special needs rate of up to double the regular daily or hourly rate for the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] district, type of facility, and type of care.

**Entering a
Final Amount**

Approval of a special needs rate will be made by the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator with the special needs rate and applicable hourly and daily rates for the child care provider identified in the Individual Child Care Plan and be sent to the CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist. Each CCR&R will identify a staff to create the child care authorization which includes the special needs rate for a child in CCUBS.

**One-Time
Expenses**

The Individual Child Care Plan may indicate that there is no need for on-going subsidy support however there may be one-time expenses Which will be required in order for the child to be successfully enrolled in a child care program. These costs might include a physical modification, positioning device, special training, or other cost that is unlikely to be required on an on-going basis.

One-time payments may cover the cost of accommodations that go beyond the "reasonable accommodation" required by the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]. All other resources need to be accessed before this option can be authorized.

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The child care special needs subsidy may be used to cover the cost of one-time payments up to \$1,000 per child. The Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator must approve any request for a one-time payment.

- The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist should direct the provider to pay expenses and then submit all receipts to the CCR&R for reimbursement.
- Receipts should be forwarded to the Early Childhood Services Bureau Special Needs Coordinator for final approval.
- ECSB should be notified in case of any overpayments for one-time payments to providers.

NOTE: Best Beginnings mini-grants may be used to support this need for children who are not eligible for a Special Needs Subsidy.

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Subject:

Child Care Sliding Fee Scale

Supersedes: Child Care 1-5 (2/1/11)

References: 52-2-713 and 53-4-611 MCA
Section 37.80.202 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.42

General Rule For fiscal purposes of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship programs, the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] uses the State of Montana fiscal year calendar, which is July 1 through June 30 of the following year.

Sliding Fee Scale The Child Care Sliding Fee Scale is a guide to determine the family's monthly co-payment obligation to the child care provider. A family, whose income falls below approximately 95.5% of the federal poverty level of the federal poverty index in use by the state, pays a \$10.00 monthly co-payment. Higher co-payments are a product of the family's Non-TANF gross monthly income [GMI] multiplied by the respective co-payment factor:

$$\text{Monthly Co-payment} = \text{GMI} \times \text{Percentage assigned to the Income Range.}$$

The column headings at the top indicate family size. The row headings on the left indicate 1) the family's gross monthly income [GMI] level, as a percentage of the federal poverty guidelines and, 2) the co-payment percentage, for each income range.

Go to www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov to view the sliding fee scale.

Co-payment is Required Parents must pay their monthly co-payment to their child care provider to remain eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. See Co-payment Requirements in Section 6-4.

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Subject:

Child Eligibility - Overview

Supersedes: Child Care 1-8 (2/1/11)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule The child, the parents, and the child care provider must qualify to participate in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. Child eligibility requirements are detailed in this section.

US Citizenship or Naturalization When a family applies for a Best Beginnings child care scholarship the child receiving assistance must be a U.S. citizen, national or qualified alien. Child Protective Services [CPS] Exception: Foster children who are not legal citizens or qualified aliens may be able to receive child care assistance regardless of citizenship status. This is determined by the state agency.

Montana administers the Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF], through the private non-profit Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies. These agencies are assigned the task of verifying the citizenship or naturalization status of all children during eligibility determination for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship [BBCCS] under CCDF or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Child Care.

To qualify for a BBCCS, a child must be a United States citizen, national or qualified alien. A U.S. citizen is someone born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands or the Northern Mariana Islands. A U.S. national is someone born in American Samoa or Swain's Island. The verification of Social Security numbers, birth certificates, or a U.S. Passport will serve as verification of citizenship for U.S. citizens and U.S. nationals.

People who are not U.S. citizens by birth may acquire citizenship by naturalization. In some cases, alien children become U.S. citizens when a parent is naturalized. These children might have their own separate naturalization records or papers; if so, their citizenship can be verified the same as an adult. If not, the situation should be referred through the USCIS status verifier. Children may also become citizens under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. (See below.)

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Citizenship acquired by naturalization can be verified in the county where naturalization occurred. Each county Clerk of Court has an index of all individuals naturalized in that county. A copy of written verification of naturalization should be included in the child's file. If the person's record cannot be located or the county of naturalization is unknown, verification can be obtained from United States Citizen and Immigration Service [USCIS].

**Child Citizen Act
of 2000**

A child born outside of the U.S. to citizen parents or adopted from abroad by U.S. citizen parents automatically becomes a citizen of the U.S. when all of the following have been met on or after February 27, 2001:

1. At least one parent of the child is a U.S. citizen, whether by birth or naturalization.
2. The child is under 18 years of age.
3. The child is lawfully admitted for permanent residence to the U.S. and is residing in the legal and physical custody of the citizen parent.

The child will have either a permanent resident (i.e. green) card or an I-551 stamp on his/her passport. The child may or may not have a certificate of citizenship.

Qualified aliens are those who are lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence under various sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act [INA]. The status of the qualified alien must be verified with the USCIS, who can be contacted at the following address:

Status Verification of Citizenship
US Department of Homeland Security
300 North Los Angeles 2031
Los Angeles, CA 90012

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

**Montana
Residency Child
(& Parent)**

To receive Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships, the parent and the child must be living together in Montana.

CPS Exception: *Montana foster care children who reside outside of Montana and need child care, may use Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships.*

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Residency is established when the child and parent are living in Montana voluntarily with the intention of making a home here and not for a temporary purpose. A child is a resident of the state in which the parent, or person acting in loco parentis, is a resident. Residence does not depend on the reason for which the parent entered the state. There is no durational requirement, such as having to reside in Montana for six months prior to obtaining a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. A copy of a valid MT Driver's License or ID card with a current address or utility bill or lease agreement in the name of the applicant will determine Montana residency.

All adults in the household who are identified as household members to establish eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship must meet the residency requirements outlined in the policy. This documentation must be kept on file.

NOTE: Parents in the military, even though they may claim residency in another state, are considered to meet the residency requirements for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship purposes, since they are employed and are here for more than a temporary purpose.

Child Must Live with Parent The child must live with the parent, or the individual serving in loco parentis, applying for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship on behalf of the child.

Child's Age A child is eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, under Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF], when the child meets any one of the following age categories:

- A child is eligible from birth through the day before the child's 13th birthday.
- A child, who has special needs, is eligible through the day before the child's 19th birthday.
 - The special needs must be verified by appropriate documentation from a physician, psychologist or licensed social worker.
- A child, who is under supervision of a court is eligible through the day before the child's 18th birthday.

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Child Eligibility - Overview

**Child's
Relationship to
Care Provider**

Not every care arrangement qualifies for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. A child is NOT eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship if the child is related to the child care provider in any of the following ways:

- The child care provider is the child's parent.
- The child care facility is owned, entirely or in part, by the parent.
- The child's care provider is a member of the child's TANF Cash assistance unit.
- The child's care provider is a member of the child's Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship eligibility unit.

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Subject:

Parent Eligibility - Overview

Supersedes: Child Care 1-9 (11/1/10)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule

The child, the parents, and the child care provider must qualify to participate in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. Eligible parents must:

- Earn less than 150% of the determined Federal Poverty Guidelines for their family size;
- Need child care in order to work or work and attend school or participate in Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan [FIA/EP] activities;
- If an absent parent exists, cooperate with Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] or have in place a court approved parenting plan [See Section 2-2a for additional parenting plan information].
- Meet minimum work requirements and display a need for child care to meet the participation requirements based on family size, composition, and circumstance.

A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is not available for parents to care for their own children. Parents may not concurrently care for each other's children to obtain a child care scholarship.

US Citizenship US Citizenship is not required by the parent.

Montana Residency The child and the parent must be living together in Montana. Refer to Child Eligibility in Section 1-6 for Montana residency requirements

Parent – Overview of Eligibility Categories The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] provides Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships for parents participating in the following programs:

1. Families who work and have a low income, but earning less than 150% of the determined federal poverty guidelines [Non-TANF].

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2. Families who receive TANF Cash Assistance and are participating in Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan [FIA/EP] activities requiring child care.
3. Eligible tribal families, if they are not being served by their Tribal Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] program.
4. Families participating in a Tribal TANF program, if their Tribal CCDF program is not serving them.
5. Child Protective Services [CPS] children in need of child care because the children are in danger of abuse or neglect.
6. In extreme cases of verifiable medical, financial, and physical hardship, a decision to approve a case not otherwise meeting all of the required eligibility standards can be made by either the Child Care Program Manager or the Bureau Chief of the Early Childhood Services Bureau. Approval decisions will be based on how the risk of harm impacts the family and whether the family would likely meet the eligibility criteria for child care assistance once the hardship is no longer present.

**Tribal Families
Dual Eligibility**

Tribal families are dually eligible for Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF], to support coordination of the two programs and services, families must provide written confirmation that they are not being served by their Tribal CCDF program.

**Non-TANF
Parent Overview–
See Section 2
for Details**

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships for low-income families whose income falls below 150% of the determined federal poverty guidelines:

1. Low-income working families must meet one of the following minimum hourly work requirements each month:
 - 120 hours per month for two-parent families; or
 - 60 hours per month single parent families; or
 - 40 hours per month for single parent families, while the parent attends education/training full time.
 - Single parents attending school/training part-time as defined by the institution, shall work a minimum of 60 hours per month.

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are provided for employment time and out-of-home classroom time, when attending school or training. Note: Disabled parents who are not able to care for their children are not included when determining the minimum hourly work requirement for the family.

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2. Disabled parents who work, but are not able to meet the minimum hourly work requirement each month, may be eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship only during employment time. In a two parent household, if one parent is disabled and unable to work, the remaining parent must meet the single parent work requirement.

3. Low-income teen parents (through age 19) attending high school, GED or an equivalency program do not have a minimum work requirement.

- A child care scholarship is provided for out-of-home classroom time and employment hours.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash Assistance Parents Overview – See Section 3-1 for Details

The local County Offices of Public Assistance [OPA] determine eligibility for families seeking Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF]: Parent receiving TANF Cash assistance may receive a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for employment and Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan [FIA/EP] activities, which require child care. Parents negotiate FIA/EP activities with their OPA or WoRC Case Manager. Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are determined according to the family's need for child care while participating in the Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan.

Tribal TANF Parents See Section 3-2 for Details

Montana's Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] State Plan supports all TANF parents in the State. Both Tribal and Montana TANF families are guaranteed child care in support of Family Investment Activities/Employability Plan [FIA/EP] activities. Currently, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai tribes of the Flathead Nation, the Fort Belknap Indian Community, and the Rocky Boy Indian Community are operating their own Tribal TANF program in Montana. Tribal TANF families who:

- find they are not eligible for Tribal CCDF benefits, or
- find their Tribal CCDF has been used, may apply for Montana CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships through their district Child Care Resource and Referral agency.

A parent must provide written verification their Tribal CCDF is not able to serve their family, before a State CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will be approved.

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Child Protective Services [CPS] Child Care Eligibility Overview - See Section 4 for Details

Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] social workers identify children in need of child care for protective services. Social workers evaluate the risk of child abuse and neglect in determining a child's eligibility for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships:

1. A Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] Social Worker determines eligibility.
2. The child care provider may be selected by the Social Worker.
3. There is no income eligibility requirement for the CPS child that is eligible for a scholarship.
4. There is no co-payment obligation for the CPS child that is eligible for a scholarship.

The Non-TANF Child Protective Services [CPS] child care budget is limited. If a child is temporarily eligible for TANF benefits or eligible for Non-TANF child care, CPS child care needs may be served under either one of these Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship options.

Food Stamps Employment & Training

For parents participating in the Food Stamp Employment & Training [FSET] job-seeking activities are not covered under the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. The parent's FSET Case Manager may be able to help parents with child care expenses.

Food Stamp Employment & Training requires:

- Parent is receiving Food Stamps,
- Parent cannot be receiving TANF, and
- Parent must reside in Lewis & Clark, Missoula, Silverbow or Yellowstone county.

Other Child Care Options

Parents may contact their local Child Care Resource and Referral agency to explore other child care subsidy options within their community (i.e. Employer sponsored flex spending, local community funds, supportive services).

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Supersedes: Child Care 1-8 (1/27/12)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule The child, the parents, and the child care provider must qualify to participate in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. Child care providers must be licensed, registered or approved for state payment purposes as a Legally Certified Provider [LCP].

Parental Access to Child in Care The provider must allow unlimited parental access to the parent's children and to the child care facility during normal hours of the facility's operation, whenever the children are in the provider's care.

No Discrimination The child care provider may not discriminate against children based on race, national origin, ethnic background, sex, religion, or handicap.

A child care provider must be a licensed facility, a registered facility, or a certified facility as a Legally Certified Provider [LCP] and comply with all state regulations pertaining to their facility type. Facilities must follow the appropriate staff to child ratios and group sizes as outlined in the Administrative Rules of Montana [ARM] 37.95.

While the parent has the right to choose who their child care provider shall be, the provider cannot receive child care scholarship payments if they are related to the child in any of the following ways:

- The child care provider is the child's parent.
- The child care facility is owned, entirely or in part, by the parent.
- The child care provider is a member of the child's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash assistance unit.
- The child's care provider is a member of the child's Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship eligibility unit.

Child's Relationship to Care Provider This is child care that is provided by a person living with the child who is a relative of the child in one of the following ways:
Aunt or Uncle;
Grandparent;

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Great-grandparent; or
Step-grandparent or Step-great grandparent.

Providers Shall Maintain Their License, Registration or Payment Number

Parents may choose care from the following license types:
Licensed Child Care Center (*details in QAD licensing addendum*)
Registered Family or Group Home (*details in QAD licensing addendum*)
Legally Certified Provider –LCP See Section 6-2 for more information.
Out-of-State Facilities who have obtained a “For-Payment-Purposes-Only” number from the Quality Assurance Division [QAD] Child Care Licensing Program

Facilities licensed solely for drop-in, irregular, intermittent, and occasional care are excluded including all types of permissive licenses.

Providers Licensed by Another Entity

Out-of-jurisdiction providers must complete Montana's child care licensing paperwork and send a copy of their licensing/registration credentials. Once the Child Care Licensing Program determines that the licensing/registration criteria meet or exceed Montana standards, a provider number may be issued. Out-of-jurisdiction providers seeking approval to serve Montana families under a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship shall contact the Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Quality Assurance Division [QAD] Child Care Licensing Program:

DPHHS QAD Child Care Licensing Program
PO Box 202953
Helena, MT 59620-2953
Office: (406) 444-7770
FAX: (406) 444-1742

Montana currently recognizes select providers in the following political boundaries:

- The state must be granted permission to register or license any child care facility located on tribal reservations.
- Malmstrom Air Force Base, near Great Falls

Providers Shall Maintain Sign-in/Sign-out Sheets

All child care providers (including Legally Certified Providers [LCP]) shall maintain current sign-in/sign-out records for each child receiving child care assistance and utilize them as follows:

- Each time the child enters or leaves the facility

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identified on the Child Care Service Plan, the parent or other individual authorized to deliver or pick up the child shall sign the sign-in/sign-out sheet. An electronic signature system may be used if it employs a unique and confidential identification process for individuals. With electronic systems, providers must ensure verification that records are not able to be changed without parental involvement. If records can be changed, providers must have a policy in place which parents manually sign off on that the sign in and out sheets are true and correct.

- Sign-in/sign-out records must indicate the facility name and location, the child's name, the date, the hour, and the minute when the child enters and leaves the facility identified on the Child Care Service Plan. All children in attendance on a given day must be on the same sign-in/sign-out record and not be divided by family.
- The provider shall make their sign-in/sign-out records available to child care resource and referral agency staff and state and local government health, safety, or law enforcement representatives upon request.
- The provider shall keep sign-in/sign-out records for five years beyond the date of attendance.
- The provider shall manage sign-in/sign-out sheets in a manner which protects the identity of families receiving scholarship assistance but does not single them out.

**Providers Shall
Allow Access
to Facility and
Records**

A child care provider shall allow access to their child care setting and child records during business hours to the following personnel:

- employees or other agents of state or local government;
- Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] personnel investigating Child care services; and
- Health, building or fire officials investigating child care facility health and safety issues.

**Providers Shall
Bill for Actual
Attendance
within Limits
of the Child Care
Certification Plan**

The provider's claim must be for actual care provided at the facility designated on the child care certification plan and subject to the limitations of continuity-of-care policies outlined in Section 6-6 of this manual. The provider may not bill for care subcontracted to another individual or facility.

1. The claim must indicate the child's actual attendance, within one quarter hour as it relates to approved activities. The provider's claim may be rounded to the nearest quarter hour of total daily attendance.
2. The claim must be verifiable through the provider's sign-in/sign-out records as noted above.

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**Providers Shall
Submit Invoices
Within 60 Days**

Child care providers have 60 calendar days to submit claims for services:

1. Providers must submit invoices to their district Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] within 60 calendar days of the service month to be eligible for payment.
2. If the child care certification plan is not available during the service month, the invoice, is due at the district Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] within 60 days of when the invoice was generated as identified in the CCUBS system.
3. If corrections or adjustments to a submitted invoice are necessary, they must be received by the CCR&R within the 60 calendar day period prescribed.

**Providers Losing
Their Status
Shall Notify
Parents**

Child care providers shall maintain their License, Registration, or Legally Certified Provider [LCP] status. If they lose their provider status for any reason, they shall immediately notify the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship families with children in their care. A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is not paid to a provider who is not licensed, registered, or legally certified by the State of Montana. The provider may not bill the household for payments denied by the department due to the provider's failure to comply with the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program policy and licensing, certification or registration requirements.

**Provider Rights
and
Responsibilities**

Child care providers serving Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship families shall read and submit a "Provider Rights & Responsibilities" Agreement" form online at www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov. The local CCR&R shall ensure that Rights and Responsibility forms have been submitted for each provider serving a scholarship family. Providers may not be approved to provide services or may experience a delay in payments until the form has been received electronically.

When policy changes require revisions to the "Provider Rights & Responsibilities Agreement" form, the ECSB will update the form on the web site and - notify all programs statewide that are currently receiving scholarship payments. All providers will have to re-submit the revised form. Meanwhile, Child Care Resource and Referrals [CCR&Rs] shall discuss the "Provider Rights & Responsibilities Agreement" form with new providers as they become licensed, registered, or certified and instruct them how to submit "Provider Rights & Responsibilities Agreement" on line at www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

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Confidentiality

Supersedes: Child Care 1-7 (9/1/06)

References: 37-80-103 ARM
MCA 41-3-201, 41-3-205
Montana Constitution, Art II, Sections 9 & 10

General Rule

The Department of Public Health & Human Services [DPHHS] and its contractors may share client information for purposes directly connected with the administration of the public assistance programs with other federal programs and certain entitled entities. Confidential information concerning the applicant or participant, without notice to or permission of the individual, may be provided and used for the following purposes:

- Reporting child abuse and neglect to the appropriate authority (Montana Codes Annotated [MCA]) 41-3-205];
- Conducting child support activities;
- Conducting child care licensing activities;
- Establishing eligibility and administering (including audits, investigations, prosecutions, etc.) federal programs or federally assisted programs, which provide assistance (cash, in-kind, or services) directly to individuals based on need.

Requests for information about current or past participants, which do not meet the above criteria must be submitted in writing to the ECSB:

Early Childhood Services Bureau
PO Box 202925
Helena, MT 59620-2925
444-2547 FAX

When there is a question about a breach of confidentiality, the Early Childhood Services Bureau will refer the request to the Office of Legal Affairs.

**Health Insurance
Portability &
Accountability Act
[HIPAA]**

Federal Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act [HIPAA] Privacy Policy regulations were implemented by the Department and its contractors in April 2003. Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies received training in HIPAA regulations and practices. CCR&Rs received HIPAA policy materials developed by the Department and the Early Childhood Services Bureau at that time. As contractors, CCR&Rs are subject to HIPAA confidentiality policies. This includes

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training current and new CCR&R personnel in HIPAA regulations and practices.

Subpoenas

When a subpoena is served, the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] will refer the request to the Office of Legal Affairs. Send or FAX the subpoena to the Early Childhood Services Bureau.

Emergency Situations

When information is needed to provide emergency medical care, the information must be released. As soon as possible thereafter, the applicant or participant must be notified of the release of information.

Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect, A Statutory Requirement

Montana Codes Annotated [MCA] 41-3-201 [portions relevant to child care services]: When the professionals and officials listed in subsection 1 [below] know or have reasonable cause to suspect, as a result of information they receive in their professional or official capacity, that a child is abused or neglected, they shall report the matter promptly to the Department of Public Health and Human Services or its local affiliate [see "Where to Report . . ." below].

- (1) Professional and officials required to report are:
 - (a) school teachers, other school officials and employees who work with children during regular school hours;
 - (b) a social worker, operator or employee of any registered or licensed day-care or substitute care facility, staff of a resource and referral grant program organized under 52-2-711 or of a child and adult food care program, or an operator or employee of a child care facility;
 - (c) an employee or owner of an entity that contracts with the department to provide direct services to children. [i.e. Legally Certified Provider]
- (2) Any person may make a report under this section if the person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused or neglected.
- (3) (a) Except as provided in subsection (1)(b) or (1)(c), a person listed in subsection (1) may not refuse to make a report as required in this section on the grounds of a physician-patient or similar privilege.
- (4) The reports referred to under this section must contain:
 - (a) the names and addresses of the child and the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care;
 - (b) to the extent known, the child's age and the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries;

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(c) the facts that led the person reporting to believe that the child has suffered injury or injuries or willful neglect, within the meaning of this chapter.

MCA 41-3-203: Immunity from liability. (1) Anyone investigating or reporting any incident of child abuse or neglect under 41-3-201 or 41-3-202, participating in resulting in judicial proceedings, or furnishing hospital or medical records as required by 41-3-202 is immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed unless the person was grossly negligent or acted in bad faith or with malicious purpose or provided information knowing the information to be false.

**Where to Report
Child Abuse &
Neglect**

Child abuse and neglect may be reported in Montana by dialing the following toll free telephone number:

1-866-820-KIDS (5437)

If the child is in immediate danger,
call 911 or the local law enforcement agency.

**Agency
Personnel**

Only qualified program employees who are restricted from disclosing confidential information shall conduct the required interviews.

NOTE: Non-program employees may conduct interviews or certify applicants when specifically allowed under federal regulation (e.g., federally declared disaster).

Contractors

Violation of Department policy confidentiality by a contractor may result in cancellation of that contract with the Department.

Through the contracting process, contractors agree to protect the confidentiality of any material and information concerning a participant provided under the auspices of the contract and are subject to the same confidentiality requirements as Department employees.

All materials and information, whether verbal, written, or otherwise provided to the contractor by the State or acquired by the contractor on behalf of the State will be regarded as confidential information.

Reasons for policy:

This policy is established to provide general information requirements

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regarding the safeguarding of participant information in all matters relating to the Department. The Department or its agents generally provides information which individuals request about themselves. This policy describes how individuals gain access to their own records as well as the procedures that the Department or its agents use to decide whether to release information about program participants upon request. Information that cannot be associated with an individual's identity is generally available for release to the public.

Volunteers

Volunteers or others who are not employed by DPHHS or its contractors may not determine eligibility. However, they may assist in related activities such as:

- Obtaining necessary information; and
- Helping applicants complete the application form.

Volunteers are restricted from disclosing confidential information.

**Child Care
Resource and
Referral
[CCR&R]
Practices**

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies have the responsibility of maintaining confidentiality of family and provider information. Examples of maintaining confidentiality in the Child Care Resource and Referral setting include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The name or any identifying information is not available in a public location, of a family receiving service.
- The CCR&R maintains confidentiality when a non-custodial parent requests the location of their children, without approval from authorities.
- An applicant's or a participant's personal information remains confidential when a child care provider inquires about eligibility.
- The CCR&R maintains confidentiality when a provider seeks the location of a previous customer.

**Release to Child
Care Licensors
& Child and
Family Services
Investigators**

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency staff and child care providers shall release information relevant to authorities participating in child care licensing or child protective services investigations.

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**Release to Law
Enforcement**

Only the participant's address can be released to a federal, state or local law enforcement officer who presents a written request for information which includes the participant's name and specifies that the individual:

- is fleeing to avoid prosecution, custody or confinement for a felony, or;
- is violating a condition of parole or probation; or
- has information necessary for the officer to conduct official duties.

**Release to
Participant**

The applicant/participant may review all information, which was considered when making the eligibility determination in the case file. Privileged information, such as the name of individuals who have disclosed information about the household without the household's knowledge or the nature or status of pending criminal prosecution, may be withheld. The agency must also make available, without charge, the specific materials necessary for a household or its representative to determine whether a fair hearing should be requested or to prepare for a hearing.

**Release to
Others**

Case file information may be released in situations other than those already described only if the head of the household, the spouse or other person authorized by the household provides a written authorization to release information which includes:

- The date the authorization expires, and;
- The name of the person or agency to whom the information will be released,
- Information which can be released:
 - itemizing specific items;
 - items dated within a certain time frame; or
 - general release.
- A dated signature of the authorizing individual.

**Authorization
to Release
Information**

The **Authorization to Release Information** form is used to assist the applicant/participant in obtaining information necessary to determine eligibility. It explains the client's rights to confidentiality and gives the participant/applicant the option of authorizing the release of information or declining to authorize the release of information.

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The authorization expires one year from the date of signature, so must be completed at application and yearly thereafter. The participant/applicant always has the right to rescind the authorization in writing. Because one cannot waive another individual's right to confidentiality, each adult household member should be given the opportunity to review and sign the **Authorization to Release Information** form.

**Refusal to
Authorize
Release
Of Information**

Signing the **Authorization to Release Information** form is not a condition of eligibility. However, if the participant/applicant does not wish to sign the form it should be case noted that they were given the opportunity, refused, and intend to provide eligibility related information without assistance.

Although a participant may not authorize a release of information, the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency may contact the caseworker, who determines eligibility, when serving the family's child care needs in support of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Child Protective Services [CPS], or Full Day/Full Year Head Start programs. The information shall be limited to a need-to-know basis regarding the child care schedule required for the family. Refer back to the general rule for this, as outlined in Section 1-7.

**Authorization
to Release
Information**

The **Authorization to Release Information** form is used for incident specific releases of information on a case-by-case basis. The participant/applicant should be very specific about what information they are authorizing for release. Not every participant/applicant would need to sign the form. The participant/applicant sets the amount of time for which the authorization is in effect and can rescind the authorization at any time in writing.

**Child Care
Providers**

Child Care Providers shall keep all information pertaining to the family confidential, except for the following circumstances:

- All child care providers are mandatory reporters for suspected child abuse or neglect. These concerns shall be reported to the Department's Child Protective Services Intake Unit.
- Child care providers shall share information with Department child care licensing personnel.
- The provider shall share attendance information with the

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- Department or the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R]with regard to the child care scholarship program.
- A provider may provide documentation indicating service to subsidized families to qualify for related ECSB programs:
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - Child Care Licensing/Registration Programs

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Subject:

Timely Notices and Termination

Supersedes: (5/1/05)

References: Sections 45-6-301(4), 52-2-713, and 52-2-726, 53-4-611, MCA;
Sections 11.2.201 – 220, 37.5.103, 37.5.307 ARM;
45 CFR 98.50 and .66

General Rule

Parents and providers who are subject to an adverse action taken by the Department or by the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency, as defined in Section 1-3 of this manual, are entitled to timely notice. Timely notice means that the CCR&R has mailed written notification to the parent or provider 15 calendar days prior to the adverse action.

**Termination
for Parents**

Reasons for termination, reduction, or denial of Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The CCR&R agency does not recertify the household or the certification plan expires.
2. A parent terminates the employment or training that made the parent eligible for child care assistance.
3. The parent no longer needs child care to allow the parent to participate in an approved work or training activity.
4. The parent voluntarily makes a written request to the child care resource and referral eligibility specialist that the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship be closed.
5. The child is over the age limit.
6. A parent who was participating in a TANF or WoRC Program is no longer a participant in that program and is not otherwise eligible for a Best Beginnings child care scholarship.
7. The child no longer receives care at the child care facility specified in the certification plan and there is no indication that the child will be receiving care at the facility in the near future.
8. The Child Protective Services [CPS] case plan or treatment plan no longer requires child care be provided.
9. DPHHS or Child Care and Development Fund institute budget restrictions.

**Termination
for Providers**

Reasons for termination, reduction or denial of Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships include, but are not limited to the following:

1. The child care provider no longer meets respective licensing, registration, or legally certified provider qualifications; or
2. The child care provider has received three strikes in accordance

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- to the over claim policy, as outlined in Section 6-9.
3. A parent has chosen to end a child's care with one provider and begin with another.

Providers Shall Allow Access to Facility and Records

A provider's eligibility to receive state payment under a state assisted child care program may be terminated if:

1. the provider willfully misrepresents services provided with respect to sign-in/sign-out records or attendance billed on invoices; or
2. the provider refuses access to the child care setting and child records during business hours to the following personnel:
 - employees or other agents of state or local government, investigating child care services or child abuse or neglect;
 - child care resource and referral agency personnel investigating child care services; or
 - health, building, or fire officials investigating child care facility health and safety issues.

Notice when State/CCR&R Reduce Benefits (Timely Notice)

If the State or Child Care Resource and Referral agency terminates or reduces the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship before the end of the certification plan, the parent and the provider will be given written notification of termination/reduction of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship at least fifteen [15] calendar days before the termination date. The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may continue for the notice period.

The following situations require that a 15 calendar day notice be provided:

- A parent terminates the employment or training that made the parent eligible for child care assistance;
- The parent no longer needs child care to allow the parent to participate in an approved work or training activity;
- The child is over the age limit;
- The parent failed to make the required co-payment; or
- DPHHS or Child Care and Development Fund institute budget restrictions.

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When a parent, who was participating in a TANF funded cash assistance program or WoRC Program, is no longer a participant in that program and is not otherwise eligible for a Best Beginnings child care scholarship will be given a **ten calendar day** notice to remain consistent with the TANF closure policy".

No Advance Notice for the Parent/Provider (Adequate Notice)

The certification plan end-date serves as written notice of termination of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. If a parent fails to re-certify, no additional notice must be given to either the parent or the provider.

No advance notice of termination of a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to a parent or provider is required in the following instances:

- The Child Care Resource & Referral [CCR&R] agency does not recertify the household or the authorization expires;
- The parent voluntarily makes a written request to the child care resource and referral eligibility specialist that the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship be closed;
- The child care provider no longer meets respective licensing, registration, or legally unregistered provider qualifications;
- The child no longer receives care at the child care facility specified in the authorization and corresponding certification plan and there is no indication that the child will be receiving care at the facility in the near future.

Generally, the parent is responsible for informing the provider of any changes in their child care requirements. However, the provider is responsible for notifying the CCR&R agency if a child is absent five (5) consecutive days without explanation and/or the family's whereabouts are unknown.

The CCR&R shall mail a closure notice to the parent and child care provider 15 calendar days prior to closing the case. (See Section 6-7 Unexplained Absences for additional information). Scholarship payments will be honored up to the closure date for days authorized according to the certification plan during the notice period.

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Subject:

Fair Hearing Process

Supersedes: Child Care 1-6 (1/1/05)

References: Sections 45-6-301(4), 52-2-713, and 52-2-726, 53-4-611, MCA;
Sections 11.2.201 – 220, 37.5.103, 37.5.307 ARM;
45 CFR 98.50 and .66

General Rule

Actions taken by a Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency must conform to applicable laws, regulations and policies. Parents and providers who are subject to any adverse action, [as defined in section 1-3 of this manual], by the CCR&R agency are entitled to a fair hearing. However, there is no right to a fair hearing if denial or termination of benefits is based solely on depletion of Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] funding.

Parents have ninety calendar days [90] from the mailing date of a notice informing them of an adverse action to request a fair hearing.

Providers have thirty calendar days [30] from the mailing date of a notice informing them of an adverse action to request a fair hearing.

**Request for
Fair Hearing**

A request for a fair hearing is any clear, written statement to the Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS], or its agent, by the person denied a benefit stating that they want to present their claim to a higher authority.

The request must be made within the time limits stated below, following the mailing date of the notice of the Department's adverse action:

- 90 calendar days – Parent, whose benefits are reduced or terminated
- 30 calendar days – Provider, who has been notified of overpayment
- 15 calendar days – Provider termination or denial [license, registration, or certification]

**Assisting the
Claimant**

The right to request a fair hearing must not be limited or interfered with in any way. Upon request, DPHHS shall assist the claimant in submitting the request for a fair hearing. The hearing officer shall provide information necessary for the claimant to prepare for a fair hearing.

If a CCR&R staff member receives a written request for a fair hearing,

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they should forward it as soon as possible to the following address:

DPHHS – Office of Fair Hearings
P.O. Box 202953
Helena, MT 59620-2953
(406) 444-2470 Office
(406) 444-3980 FAX

**Administrative
Review**

The first step in the Fair Hearing Process is an Administrative Review. When the DPHHS Office of Fair Hearings receives a request for a hearing, the hearings officer notifies the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] that such a request has been made. The ECSB will schedule a time for an administrative review with the aggrieved party within 20 calendar days of the notification.

The ECSB Child Care designated staff will conduct a telephone interview with the parent or provider in order to hear their side of the story. The parent or provider may have an attorney present at this time but it is not necessary. The ECSB designated staff will also review the case in the Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] system and interview the CCR&R eligibility specialist or supervisor involved in the case.

The ECSB designated staff will make a determination either in favor of the claimant or the Department/CCR&R agency based upon the circumstances revealed during the administrative review and issue a written report citing applicable rule, policy and findings. The Administrative review report is sent to the parent or provider. It includes form *Administrative Review Report*, that is to be signed and returned to the Office of Fair Hearings indicating that the issue has either been resolved or that they would like to proceed to the Fair Hearing.

A copy of the Administrative Review narrative is sent to the CCR&R agency. If the administrative review was in favor of the claimant, the narrative will include instructions to the CCR&R agency regarding the appropriate adjustments and/or payments needed to resolve the issue.

If the ECSB designated staff determines that the Department/CCR&R agency acted in accordance with the appropriate rules and policies, the claimant may request a more formal Fair Hearing.

Fair Hearing

If the parent or provider wishes to proceed with a Fair Hearing, or if they do not respond to the administrative review report, the Office of Fair

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Hearings will set a telephone hearing date and notify the ECSB, the CCR&R agency and the Claimant. Generally, the Claimant will be instructed to go to the CCR&R office to participate in the telephone hearing.

Once a hearing date has been set, the ECSB Child Care designated staff and the CCR&R agency will meet via telephone to review the facts; determine what evidence will be submitted as exhibits into the record; and determine who will testify during the Fair Hearing.

The parent or provider shall have adequate opportunity to examine the contents of his case file [except for those portions that the Claimant is precluded from examining by state or federal law], and all documents and records to be used by the department at the hearing at a reasonable time prior to the hearing, as well as during the hearing.

The CCR&R agency is responsible for assembling and mailing a packet containing this information, to the Claimant, the hearings officer and the ECSB Child Care designated staff [if needed] before the time scheduled for the hearing.

The ECSB Child Care designated staff or the Department's Attorney will present the Department/CCR&R's case during the hearing process. The CCR&R caseworker and/or supervisor are to attend the hearing via telephone and provide testimony.

The Fair Hearing is presided over by a "Hearings Officer" who is responsible for:

- Conducting the hearing
- Listening to the department's case and entering evidence into the record
- Listening to the Claimant's case and entering evidence into the record;
- Reviewing the testimony and physical record and issuing findings based on the law, rules and policies governing the child care program in question.

Adverse Actions

Adverse Actions include:

- a failure of the Department or of the CCR&R agency to provide a parent an opportunity to make an application or reapplication for a child care scholarship;

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- ❑ a failure of the Department or of the CCR&R agency to act with reasonable promptness on a parent's application for a child care scholarship [reasonable promptness is 30 calendar days from the date of application];
- ❑ a failure of the Department or of the CCR&R agency to provide timely or adequate notice when an adverse action will be taken;
- ❑ an action by the Department or the CCR&R agency denying, suspending, reducing or terminating a scholarship of a parent or payment[s] to a provider, or an action by the Department demanding repayment of an overpayment;
- ❑ an action by the CCR&R to deny, suspend, reduce, revoke or terminate certification or enrollment of a provider or to fail to renew certification, enrollment, of a provider who has applied for renewal [pertains to LCP/LCI provider].

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Supersedes: Child Care 2-1 (1/27/12)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA; Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302, 37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM;
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule

Applications for Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship assistance are voluntary and initiated by the person in need, his/her authorized representative, or if incompetent or incapacitated, someone acting responsibly on his/her behalf.

The family contacts the district Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency. The agency provides the following information to the family:

- Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application packet which includes, at a minimum
- Scholarship Application
- Child Support Compliance Checklist
- Child Care Service Plan
- Work Verification form
- Training/School Verification Form [if applicable]
- Self-Employment Income Verification Form [if applicable]
- Child Care Scholarships brochure
- Information on selecting quality child care; and
- Information on child care resource and referral services.

A family participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash Assistance program may apply for Non-TANF child care scholarship, if the family believes that a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will alleviate the need for the TANF Cash benefit.

Place of Application

A family may apply for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship in person, by mail, or by fax through one of the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies within the state. If an application is submitted to a CCR&R other than the CCR&R which has been designated to the applicant, the agency receiving the application must notify the family of the agency in the family's district and allow the family the option of having the

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case transferred to the local CCR&R agency or of having it remain at the place of application. No matter where a family applies, if the family prefers services from a specific agency, the agency shall serve them. [see section 1-4 for CCR&R Agency locations].

Parents may select the option of submitting their application for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship on-line. Once the application is completed and submitted, the Child Care Resource and Referral agency will send a letter requesting documentation needed to complete the process. On-line applications can be located at <https://app.mt.gov/ccubs/>.

CCR&R Business Processes

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for CCR&R Business Processing.

Eligibility Begin-Date

The eligibility begin date occurs when a completed application is on file. See Section 6-2 for eligibility dates pertaining to LCP/LCI providers.

All applications must be entered into Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS].

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Gathering Information

Eligibility Specialists must use investigative interviewing skills and application materials to make a decision on eligibility. Information provided by the family must be verified with corroborative documents and/or statements from third parties (i.e., employers, landlords, relatives, etc.).

Collateral Contact

The Eligibility Specialist must assist the client in obtaining information if necessary i.e. obtaining work verification or providing resources to clients on how to obtain necessary information. The collateral contact must be willing to put the information in writing and sign to the validity of the information.

Application

Application is made by completing the **Best Beginnings Child Care**

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Scholarship Application Packet and submitting it to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency.

In completing and signing the application, the individual attests to the truth, accuracy, and completeness of the information provided and declares that he/she understands the penalty for misrepresenting the family's circumstances either by false statements or omission of information.

Each adult household member must sign the last page of the application unless he or she is incompetent or incapacitated. If that situation exists, then the application must be signed by someone acting as the applicant's authorized representative in order for it to be considered a completed application.

Some individuals who do not have an authorized representative may need help in completing the application and accompanying forms. Any portion of the form completed by a person other than the applicant or the authorized representative must be initialed by the person taking the action.

Timely Processing – 30 days

At the time the initial application is submitted, the parent completes the application and returns it to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] office by appointment or by mail. The CCR&R staff must review the application packet within 7 calendar days of submission to ensure timely processing. The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application Form is good for 30 calendar days from the date it is received [date stamped] in the CCR&R office. A completed application packet with verifications must be received by the 30th calendar day unless an extension has been provided.

15 Day Extension

The CCR&R must automatically offer the applicant one 15 calendar day extension to submit required documentation when that documentation is in the possession of a third party. This extension may be used more than once per calendar year on a case-by-case basis determined by the Eligibility Specialist.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

If the application packet is not complete in the time allotted, the CCR&R shall

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**Incomplete
Applications**

deny the application and document the facts in case notes. The applicant will not have to complete a new application form if the missing documents are provided within 30 calendar days after the denial. The CCR&R must ensure that applicable extensions are offered to the applicant. All applications, whether approved or denied, shall be entered into Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS].

**Presumptive
Eligibility**

When a waiting list is not in effect, families will be presumed eligible during the 30 calendar day application period while application information is verified. Presumptive eligibility is not allowed for Legally Certified Providers [LCP] due to the background checks and other administrative requirements. Presumptive eligibility will begin the day the application is date stamped in the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] office. Presumptive eligibility provides the child care provider some assurance of payment for initial services. Presumptive eligibility is an option at any time an application is submitted and a case is not already open. Presumptive eligibility is not available during routine re-certification. Should the Eligibility Specialist not completing the application process is repeated in subsequent application submissions, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist has the option of denying presumptive eligibility based on the apparent misuse of the benefit. No overpayment is due if the family is determined ineligible. However, if the household provides false information for the purpose of receiving child care assistance from a presumptive eligibility determination, the household will be responsible for repaying the overpayment. A family is presumed eligible only when they complete the following forms:

1. Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application form;
2. A completed authorization to release information form; and
3. The Child Care Service Plan or the name of the child care provider on the application sufficient to set up the authorization of services.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

**Complete
Application
Packet Contents**

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Packet is considered complete when the following portions of the application are present [if presumptive eligibility, see that section above]:
Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application Form

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- Date Stamp
- Name / Address
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Signed and dated

Rights and Responsibilities Form initialed

Release of Information Form

Child Support Compliance Checklist Form

Work Verification Form

Training Verification Form [if applicable]

Self-Employment Income Verification Form [if applicable]

Child Care Service Plan

Work Verification Form

The Work Verification Form is required for each working household member, completed and signed by each employer. If a family member cannot obtain work verification from their employer, the last two months of consecutive wage stubs will be accepted with a self statement of their work schedule. Applicants who are self-employed will use the **Self-Employed Income Verification** form.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Training Verification Form

Training Verification Form is required for each household member participating in a School/Training program. School/Training may be verified by completing this form and having it signed by the training institution at initial application or by providing a copy of the student's official schedule payment at the time of redetermination.

Social Security Numbers & Birth Certificates

Verify Social Security numbers and birth certificates of all eligible household members. [The CCR&R must make an effort to obtain Social Security Numbers of all household members, but should not deny eligibility based on not receiving this information in and of itself.]

NOTE: If the Office of Public Assistance [OPA] has entered this information into CHIMES, accept this information as verified. Do not require it again.

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If verification is accepted from another agency, the verification needs to be case noted which agency verified this information.

**Citizenship or
Naturalization**

Verify citizenship or naturalization status of all children during eligibility determination for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship [BBCCS] under Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Child Care. [See Section 1-6: page 1 of 5 – 4 of 5].

**Child Support
Verification**

See Section 2-2a.

**Child Care
Service Plan**

Parents are responsible for selecting their child care provider and must indicate the schedule for care needed on the Child Care Service Plan in order for the form to be considered complete. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist may utilize CCUBS information to complete the provider section on the Plan.

**Child Care
Certification Plan**

When Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are approved, the parent and the child care provider each receive a copy of the child care certification plan issued by the Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] database, which reflects the span of time the family is eligible to receive child care services.

For details, see Issuing the Certification Plan as outlined in Section 6-3.

**Limitation of
Best Beginnings
Child Care Scholarship**

Moved to Section 2-3

**Legally Certified
Provider [LCP]
Application Date**

If the provider is not licensed or registered but wants to receive state payment for child care services, a **Legally Certified Provider-[LCP] Application** form must be completed by the provider and submitted to the centralized Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency for approval before a child care certification plan can be completed. A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship cannot be provided before the receipt date of the completed LCP application or the parent's approval date, whichever is later. See Section 6-2 for additional information.

Express Eligibility

Individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program

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[SNAP], may qualify for express processing to determine income eligibility for participation in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. All SNAP recipients will have the opportunity to indicate on their application or at the time of re-determination for Scholarship assistance that they are enrolled in SNAP.

When reviewing the application or re-certification mini-application, the Eligibility Specialist will move to the procedure outlined in the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing. Earned and unearned income designated in the CHIMES database will be used to determine income eligibility. If no earned income is noted, the traditional method for determining income eligibility will be used. Express Eligibility can be applied to both employed wage earners and self-employed applicants.

When using Express Eligibility to qualify a SNAP recipient for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program, the Eligibility Specialist must review with the applicant the Scholarship criteria to maintain eligibility as these may differ from those used by SNAP. Such criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Change reporting;
- Certification periods; and
- Re-certification

See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

Waiting List

When the demand for Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships exceeds the resources, the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) maintains a statewide waiting list. The Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) will select children from the Non-TANF waiting list, based on budget projections.

As a budget management strategy, the ECSB may serve families up to a specified level of poverty. Families participating in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may remain in the program up to the upper limits of the sliding fee scale, subject to change reporting and redetermination policies.

Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] will send a notice to families of children selected from the waiting list. The family must respond within the 15

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calendar day timeframe to re-determine eligibility and secure their child care scholarship

The Child Care Resource & Referral agency [CCR&R] shall close the following cases:

- Families who do not respond within the 15 calendar day time-frame; and
- Families who are determined ineligible after being selected from the waiting list.

Stopgap Subsidy

Some local charitable organizations and churches may offer stopgap child care subsidies while families wait for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. This stopgap subsidy does not preclude the family's eligibility for child care scholarship by eliminating the need for care, if the stopgap subsidy is designed to end when a child care scholarship becomes available.

Priorities

A priority system is in place for Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships. Families who have children with special needs are given priority and are not subject to the waiting list. Among other Non-TANF applicants, priority is determined according to the following:

- Teen parents attending high school, GED, or equivalency programs;
- Families with lower income, relative to family size.

If families are equally eligible, the family with the earliest eligibility begin-date will be given priority.

Waiting List Begin Date

When the department has instituted a Waiting List for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships, a family's begin date will be determined by the following:
Full Income Eligible Waiting List: All families must wait until funding is available:

- If selected from the waiting list during the family's application month, the child care scholarship may begin on the application date.
- If selected from the waiting list after the family's application month, the child care scholarship may begin on the first of the month in which the family is selected from the waiting list.

Partial Income Eligible Waiting List – Families may enter the Best Beginnings Scholarship program if they are income eligible, under a specified level of poverty:

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- If families are being served up to a specified level of poverty and the only delay involves waiting list processing which happens to cross the month end, an eligible family may begin a scholarship on the application date.

Waiting List Exceptions

Children with special needs are guaranteed child care assistance. Other policy exceptions will be managed as they arise.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ESCB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Children With Special Needs

If you have an application with a child(ren) with special needs, 'Special Needs' is outlined in Section 1-4a of the child care manual. A child may have 'special needs' status with respect to waiting list priority even though the 'special needs rate' is not applicable for the child.

Unusual circumstances may occur which create a non-TANF waiting list. Examples of unusual circumstance include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A non-TANF 'Application' date more than 30 calendar days prior to the 'Status Date' on the CCUBS 'Program Funding Waitlist' screen;
- Retroactive changes resulting from a fair hearing; or
- Worker error.

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Supersedes: Child Care 2-2 (2/1/11)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.78.215 (3), 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206,
37.80.301-302, 37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
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General Rule Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are available to families who work and to teen parents attending high school or equivalency programs, whose gross income does not exceed 150% of poverty. [See policy 1-5]

A waiting list may occur should funding be limited [See Policy 2-1]

Parents must demonstrate a need for child care and must meet activity hour requirements. In addition, the following also apply:

- A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is not available for parents to care for their own children.
- If a parent is available to care for the child, there is no need for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. However, a need may still exist if the available parent is unable to provide suitable care for the child[ren].
- If child care is available at no cost, there is no need for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.
- If child care is available to the parent at a reduced cost, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is based on the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by the parent.
- Parents of separate families may not concurrently care for each other's children to obtain a child care scholarship.

See Section 2-2a for policy on Child Support.

Household Membership Eligibility is based on the income and activities of Non-TANF household members. Individuals living in the child's home may be 'required household members' or 'optional household members,' depending upon their relationship to the child[ren] for whom a scholarship is requested.

If the family chooses to include an optional household member, all eligibility requirements apply to the optional household member. Once the family elects to include an optional member individual, the optional

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member may not be removed from the eligibility household, unless the individual physically leaves the home.

Required

Required Household Members, as related to the child(ren) for whom a scholarship is requested:

- Biological, adoptive parent or stepparent of an intact family, regardless of living arrangements. This would include incarcerated parents or parents working and living out of town.
- Parent by common law marriage;
- Parent joined by a common child;
- Adult acting in loco parentis;
- Minor sibling[s], age 17 and under, including stepbrother, stepsister, half brother and half sister;
- Child receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash benefits, or other subsidy, as a member of the household.

Optional

Optional Household Members: Once the family elects to include an optional household member, the optional member may not be removed from the eligibility household unless the individual physically leaves the home. As related to the child[ren] for whom a scholarship is requested:

- Adult Sibling, age 18 and over [no Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] requirement];
- Aunt or Uncle;
- Grandparent;
- Great Grandparent;
- Parent's Significant Other.

Generally Excluded

Generally Excluded Household Members, as related to the child[ren] for whom a scholarship is requested:

- Absent biological adoptive parent or stepparent is generally excluded. If an absent parent maintains parental rights, child support requirements apply.
See Section 1-3 for definition of Absent parent.
- Exchange Students.

Corroborative information such as rent receipts or lease agreements can be used by the eligibility specialist should there be a question on household membership.

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**Common Law
Marriage**

In Montana, a man and woman who have not gone through a formal marriage ceremony may enter into a legally binding common law marriage. For a common law marriage to exist, three [3] elements must be present:

1. Consent and agreement – the man and woman must have mutually agreed and consented to enter into a marriage relationship. **NOTE:** a common law marriage is NOT created simply because a man and woman live together and act as if they are married, even if they have children in common. The parties must INTEND to enter into marriage.
2. Competency – both adults were legally competent to enter into a marriage, and **NOTE:** each of the parties must be old enough to marry and not be married to anyone else in order to enter into a valid common law marriage.
3. Cohabitation and holding themselves out as married – the parties must live together and hold themselves out to relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and the public as being married. Merely living together or having children together is NOT indicative that a common law marriage exists. There must be evidence that the parties hold themselves out as a married couple. Such evidence may include:
 - a. Using the same last name;
 - b. Referring to each other as husband and wife when introducing each other or talking to others;
 - c. Listing each other as spouse on health or life insurance policies, loan or credit applications, tax returns, and other documents. **NOTE:** Owning property such as a house or car jointly with another person is NOT evidence that they are holding themselves out as married unless the deed, title, or other proof of ownership indicates that they own the property as husband and wife.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS– If the three elements are present, request a written statement from the parties attesting to these facts. Document action in Case Notes. If the three elements are not present in the alleged relationship, do not establish common law marriage. Document the status in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] Case Notes

**Joint Custody
Arrangements/
Shared Custody**

Parents whether separated or divorced who live apart and divide residential time with their children may each apply for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship regardless of the percentage

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of time the child lives with each parent. Eligibility will be determined by evaluating the need of each application. Child support compliance must still be verified either by a Parenting Plan or compliance with the Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Child Support Enforcement [CSED].

The preferred form of verification of the visitation schedules is to obtain statements from both custodial parents, because of child support issues. The statement should provide details about the visitation schedule, including specifically the days which each parent is scheduled to spend with the child.

If the percentage of time spent in each household changes, the parent will need to report the change to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R].

NOTE: If the filed parenting plan is not reflective of the actual child care arrangement, the plan must be amended prior to determining eligibility for assistance OR an application must be filed with the DPHHS Child Support Enforcement [CSED].

If a child temporarily leaves a residence for a period of time, such as the summer months, the absence needs to be reported to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Agency.

**Prospecting a
Temporary
Household**

Prospected absences, such as a change in residence for a child during the summer months, will be considered in determining the child care eligibility period. Eligibility and needs shall be evaluated when a household change is anticipated.

**Anticipating
Changes**

If the parent anticipates changes in household membership or changes in the reason for child care eligibility for the family should only be determined up to the date of the anticipated change. Once eligibility is correctly determined, income fluctuations alone will not change eligibility for the duration of the eligibility span.

**Evaluating the
Non-TANF
Household**

The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist evaluates the following factors in determining household eligibility:

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- ❑ The need for child care, based on the ability and availability of adults to care for the child[ren];
- ❑ The financial eligibility, based on the income of each household member, including children;
- ❑ Maintaining child support requirements;
- ❑ Citizenship requirements;
- ❑ The minimum hourly work requirement, based on the activities and schedule of each household member.
- ❑ Any anticipated changes in the household, such as
 - A change in a parent's school/training schedule,
 - A change in a child's school/training schedule,
 - An anticipated change in the child's residence.

Child Support

See Section 2-2a for Child Support Information.

Homelessness

Assistance may be provided to otherwise eligible individuals who may be temporarily homeless having no fixed address nor live in permanent dwellings. The individual must declare his/her intent to reside in Montana and meet the criteria stated above. Lack of a permanent dwelling or lack of a fixed home or mailing address does not mean a home does not exist for purposes of determining whether a child lives with a specified relative in a setting maintained as a home.

We may provide child care assistance to help families when the family meets the following criteria:

- a. Referral by a recognized agency known to work with homeless populations. The family must present a referral for child care assistance from an agency known by the local office to be an agency that works with homeless families, including shelters for abused women and children, verifying that the family needs child care to resolve an emergency crisis. This referral will serve as proof of their homeless state. Local offices will define recognized homeless agencies in their area.
- b. If there is not a local agency as identified in a. above, two [2] letters of referral are necessary from other local groups that work with homeless populations.
- c. If the family has no affiliation with local organizations, then two [2] collateral contacts from individuals can be used to verify the family's living location. However, this documentation must be used to verify living arrangements only.

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The family must meet all other relationship and income criteria for Non-TANF child care eligibility.

A family that reports homeless status is eligible for 90 calendar days of eligibility to meet all Non-TANF requirements.

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Child Support

Supersedes: Child Care 2-2a (1/27/12)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.78.215 (3), 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206,
37.80.301-302, 37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
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General Rule

Compliance with child support policies is a basic condition of eligibility for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. In Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship households where one or both of the child's parents is absent from the home, the parent or guardian with whom the child resides, must cooperate in establishing paternity, and obtaining court-ordered child support. In addition, the participant must receive court-ordered child support or must maintain cooperation with the Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED]. When a parent or parents refuse to cooperate in establishing paternity or obtaining child or medical support, the family will be ineligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. In such cases, eligibility specialists will deny the scholarship application or close the scholarship case with appropriate notice.

Child Support Enforcement information and applications are available by calling the Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] at 1-800-346-KIDS (5437). CSED services include the following:

- Application materials;
- Informational materials;
- Establishing paternity;
- Establishing child support orders for separated or divorced parents; and
- Parents receive a letter acknowledging application.

**Out-of-state
Child Support
Documentation**

Written documentation must be provided by a parent to verify receipt of child support from another state.

Four Exceptions

A single parent is exempt from meeting the child support compliance policy under the following circumstances.

- In cases of single-parent adoption or where the absent parent has terminated parental rights, the parent is not required to cooperate in establishing paternity or obtaining child support. A court filed document is necessary to verify compliance.
- An adult acting in loco parentis, as designated in a military

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parent's family plan, is not required to pursue child support while the child's parent is deployed. The military family plan substitutes for child support arrangements. A copy of the military family plan must be submitted.

- ❑ The requirement of cooperation in establishing paternity and obtaining child support may be waived if good cause is shown
- ❑ The parent who is applying for child care assistance is under the age of 18.

Parents dissatisfied with Child Support Enforcement Division determinations must appeal through Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED].

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Child Support Enforcement Division offers payment information online at <https://app.discoveringmontana.com/csed/index.html>. The site requires the child support case number and the parent's Social Security Number in order for parents to verify compliance and payments received.

Separation and/or Divorce

During the application process for a Best Beginnings Scholarship or in the middle of an eligibility period, the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist may become aware of a parent who is in the process of separating from their spouse or in the middle of divorce proceedings. In these situations, the parent must be in compliance with the child support requirement within 30 calendar days of the change. The parent can be in compliance with the child support requirement in one of the following ways:

- ❑ The parent must apply with Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] and demonstrate they are in compliance through written documentation, and must keep their case open with CSED while receiving child care assistance if a case is established;
- ❑ The parent must have a Montana District court order on record be receiving child support payments and provide the CCR&R with a copy. If the parent is not receiving payments established through the court order, the parent must apply with CSED;
- ❑ The parent must have appropriate reasons and documentation to apply for good cause.

If compliance is not met after the thirty [30] calendar day period, the case is closed until compliance is verified. A fifteen [15] calendar day notice is required.

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**Incarcerated
Parent[s]**

If one parent of an intact family is incarcerated, a child support order is not required. The family should report when the incarcerated Parent is released and when they return to the household.

If an absent parent is incarcerated and the family does not consider themselves intact, cooperation with child support policy is required by the parent applying for child care assistance.

If both parents are incarcerated, the family is not intact and a child support order is required for the person acting in loco parentis.

**Child Support
Verification**

The Child Support Compliance Checklist Form is required as part of the completed Best Beginning Scholarship application packet. In order to grant good cause for not cooperating with child support with the Child Care Program, the Notice of Requirement to Cooperate and Right to Claim Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate in Child Support Enforcement form must be completed. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] must obtain verification when granting good cause [see the good cause section below].

Families, who have an absent natural or adoptive parent must verify one of the following:

- ❑ The parent receives child support payments under a child support order recognized by a District court for each child with an absent parent and can verify payments received with written documentation. A copy of the order must be in the parent's file at the CCR&R.
- ❑ The parent applies for services with Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] for each child for whom court-ordered child support is not received. Cooperation with DPHHS Child Support Enforcement must be maintained while receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Cooperation with DPHHS Child Support Enforcement means that the parent has completed the required application and any other documents requested from CSED. The application and any other documents requested by CSED are to provide CSED enough information to determine whether child support can be established and at what amount child support will be established.

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Note: If CSED determines that child support is uncollectible, the CCR&R must receive a statement from CSED stating the parent is in compliance with CSED even though the child support is uncollectable.

- The parent demonstrates and has supporting evidence for good cause to be determined for not cooperating with DPHHS Child Support Enforcement.
- The parent is acting in loco parentis under a Military Parenting Plan.
- The parent is receiving child support from another state and this can be verified by written documentation.

**Documenting
Child Support**

Case notes should be done within the 30 calendar day application period. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

**Child Support
as Unearned
Income**

Child Support received by the applicant for the support of members of the household is considered unearned income. Whether support payments are made regularly or sporadically, a monthly average should be calculated and added to other unearned income for the household. Irregular child support income shall be averaged over the same time period as the income determination period of time.

Good Cause

A parent may apply for good cause for not meeting the child support requirement, at the time of application, during a report change, or at re-determination. A child care scholarship will not be denied, delayed, or discontinued pending a determination of good cause for refusal to cooperate if the parent has complied with the requirements listed below. However, if it is ultimately determined that good cause does not exist and the recipient continues to refuse to cooperate, the department may recover child care scholarship amounts paid. The effective date is the date in which good cause was applied for.

The requirement of cooperation in establishing paternity and obtaining child support may be waived if good cause is shown. Good cause exists if one of the following circumstances exists and, as a result of that circumstance, cooperation would be detrimental to the child:

- cooperation is likely to result in substantial danger, physical harm, undue harassment or severe mental anguish to the child or the parent;
- the child was conceived as a result of forcible rape or an

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- incestuous relationship;
- the absent parent is planning to relinquish or has relinquished the child to a public or licensed social agency for the purpose of adoption;
 - legal proceedings for the adoption of the child are pending before a court of competent jurisdiction;
 - the parental rights of absent parents to the child have been terminated by a court of competent jurisdiction;
 - a situation that makes cooperation with child support requirements detrimental to the child; or
 - Circumstances that might warrant an extreme hardship on the family. This circumstance is deemed appropriate only by the Early Childhood Services Bureau Child Care Manager which may occur in extremely rare situations.

A parent who claims to have good cause for refusing to cooperate must:

- provide evidence to support the claim based on the above criteria; or
- provide sufficient information to permit an investigation to determine whether good cause exists.

Evidence provided to support the good clause claim may include any of the following types:

1. Birth certificates or medical or law enforcement records that indicate that the child was conceived as the result of incest or forcible rape;
2. Court documents or other records which indicate that legal proceedings for adoption are pending before a court of competent jurisdiction;
3. Court, medical, criminal, child protective services, social services, psychological, or law enforcement records that indicate that the putative [assumed to be such] father or non-custodial parent might inflict physical or emotional harm on the child or caretaker relative;
4. Medical records which indicate emotional health history and present emotional health status of the caretaker relative or the child;
5. Written statements from a mental health professional indicating a diagnosis or prognosis concerning the emotional health of the caretaker relative or the child;
6. A written statement from a public or licensed private social agency

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indicating that the applicant or participant is being assisted by the agency to resolve the issue of whether to keep the child or relinquish him for adoption;

7. Sworn statements from individuals, other than the applicant or participant, with knowledge of the circumstances that provide the basis for the good cause claim may be provided in addition to the documentation listed in items 1-6 above.

Parents selecting number seven [7] above, must include another type of corroborated evidence from the remaining types listed above. If the reason for claiming good cause is fear of substantial danger, physical harm, undue harassment, or severe mental anguish to the child or the parent and it is impossible to obtain medical records, law enforcement records or court documents as evidence, the child care resource and referral agency may still be able to make a good cause determination. This will be accomplished by collecting notarized statements or affidavits from individuals who possess knowledge of the circumstances that provide the basis of the parent's good cause claim. The parent must clearly indicate why obtaining the above-noted evidence is impossible to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency.

Good cause for not cooperating with child support enforcement is approved by Early Childhood Services Bureau. Parents receive a Child Care Program – Notice of Requirement to Cooperate and Right to Claim Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate in Child Support Enforcement form when applying for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship and at recertification.

In cases where good cause has been found, a review must be held at each re-determination to determine whether there has been any change in circumstances such that good cause no longer exists. [Section 2-7]

The CCR&R will promptly notify the child support enforcement division of all open cases in which it has been determined that there is good cause for refusal to cooperate in establishing paternity or obtaining child support.

Refer to ECSB Procedure Handbook for Processing.

**Parenting
Plans**

If an absent parent exists, scholarship applicants may be considered to be in compliance if they have in place a court approved parenting

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plan rather than an open child support case with the Child Support Enforcement Division.

If the parenting plan stipulates that both parents will share the cost of child care and only one parent is eligible, the scholarship may cover the non-eligible parent's child care costs if the following criteria is met:

1. The non-eligible parent must be working during the child care hours needed;
2. The provider must be a registered or licensed facility or a Legally Certified Provider [LCP];
3. The Authorization of Services must be based on the non-eligible parent's work schedule;
4. A current Child Care Service Plan must be in place; and
5. The co-payment must be paid as stipulated in the certification plan based on the income of the eligible parent.
6. In cases where the Parenting Plan states that the non-custodial parent must cover child care costs, the scholarship is awarded to the non-custodial parent [if eligible], but is based on the custodial parent's work schedule.

See Section 1-3 for definition of "non-eligible" parent.

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Supersedes: Child Care 2-3 (1/27/12)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule	<p>Parents qualifying for Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships participate in one of these general activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Employed and meeting a minimum hourly requirement; or <input type="checkbox"/> Employed and attending school or a training program part time and meeting a minimum hourly requirement; <input type="checkbox"/> Attending school or training program full time which meets the school requirement of a degree obtained more than 5 years before the application date; or <input type="checkbox"/> A teen parent attending high school, General Educational Development [GED], or equivalency program. <p>Detailed activity requirements for each category follow below.</p>
Minimum Hourly Work Requirement	<p>To be eligible for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, parents must be employed at paid legal labor or self-employed [See Section 2-2a on self-employment] earning minimum wage, and meet a minimum hourly work requirement each month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Two-parent families shall work a minimum of 120 hours per month with either/or both parents working any combination of hours. <input type="checkbox"/> In two-parent families where one or both parents attend(s) school or training, care will be based on the parent with the least amount of hours outside the home. This means there is no work requirement for either parent when both are attending school full time. <input type="checkbox"/> In two-parent families where one parent is a full time student and one parent is a part-time student, the work requirement is 60 hours a month. <input type="checkbox"/> Single-parent families shall work a minimum of 60 hours per month. <input type="checkbox"/> Single-parent families may qualify for child care while the parent

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	<p>attends school or training full time; where full time is based on the school's guidelines. Full time students will not be required to meet a work activity requirement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Single parents attending school/training part-time as defined by the institution, shall work a minimum of 40 hours per month. <input type="checkbox"/> When one parent of an intact family is incarcerated or in a pre-release program ordered by the court, the other parent must meet the minimum hourly work requirement of 60 hours until the time the incarcerated parent returns to the household. Should this parent be a full time student, then the parent would not have to meet a work requirement. <p>When the parent's employer is a licensed or registered child care facility, the parent must be on the approved caregiver list for the facility or associated with the facility by the Quality Assurance Division Licensing Bureau at the time of Scholarship application.</p> <p>Examples of employment verification include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wage stubs; <input type="checkbox"/> Work Verification forms; <input type="checkbox"/> Tax returns; <input type="checkbox"/> Business ledgers; <input type="checkbox"/> Work schedules; and/or <input type="checkbox"/> Worker's Compensation Exemption (self-employed).
<p>Initial Partial Month of Employment</p>	<p>The current month's income may be less than that anticipated in future months for the parent. Eligibility may be determined for the current month and may be re-determined for subsequent months based on prospected income. This avoids an unnecessarily high co-payment during the parent's first partial month of employment.</p>
<p>Parent with a Severe Disability</p>	<p>The minimum hourly work requirement for a parent unable to provide care for the child may be waived if the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A working parent who has a severe disability which prevents them from meeting a minimum hourly work requirement or the parent is unable to provide care for the child is not required to meet an hourly work requirement to qualify for Best Beginnings Child Care

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Scholarship for employment hours. In a two parent household, if one parent is disabled and unable to work, the remaining parent must meet the single parent work requirement.

All of the following restrictions apply:

- A licensed physician, psychologist or psychiatrist must determine that the parent with a disability is unable to work the number of hours required or is unable to provide care for the child to receive a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.
- The family must otherwise qualify for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.
- If the parent does not meet the minimum hourly work requirement, outlined above in the Minimum Hourly Work Requirement, they are not eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship during school/training time.

In a two-parent household, if one parent has a disability and is unable to care for his/her child[ren], the work requirement for the disabled parent may be waived. The following restrictions apply:

- A licensed physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist must determine the parent to be unable to care for their child[ren] or unable to work, or both.
- The family must otherwise qualify for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship
- The able-bodied parent shall meet a single parent minimum hourly work requirement.

**Employed and
Attending
School/Training**

If the family meets the eligibility requirements for employment, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be available to parents attending post-secondary education, vocational training, high school or General Educational Development [GED] equivalency programs which will lead to a recognized occupation for which jobs exist within Montana. [Refer to Department of Labor information regarding employment in Montana]. All of the following restrictions apply:

- Parents must achieve satisfactory training progress as defined by the approved training institution and as defined in Section 1-3. Number of credits parent is enrolled in must be verified through class schedule and fee receipts.

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- See Distance Learning/Online Course Work section below.
- Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available to pursue post-secondary education above a bachelor's degree. Master's and doctoral students' school hours do not qualify for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.
- Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for training and education activities if a parent has earned a post-secondary education degree or training certificate within the last five years.
 - **NOTE:** A student who enrolls in a continuous four-year program, which happens to issue a two-year certificate or degree at the midpoint of the student's intended educational goal, is not subject to this five-year limitation.
- If the parent received the last post-secondary education degree or training certificate over five years ago, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be allowed for a second certificate or bachelor's degree.

Distance Learning/Online Coursework

Distance Learning/On-line coursework a student receives from a college or university accredited by the U.S. Department of Education [<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation>] is acceptable if, in addition to fulfilling all other eligibility requirements outlined in this section, the student is formally enrolled in the college or university and has an educational plan and projected graduation date.

All other eligibility requirements as outlined in 2-3 must be met in order to have Distance Learning/On-line coursework approved. Students must maintain satisfactory training progress as defined by the approved training institution. Satisfactory training progress can be verified through grade slips or a status notification letter signed by an advisor or the registrar's office for which the parent is enrolled.

If eligible, child care may be authorized for up to 3 hours per credit per week of class time. Students may use the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to complete out-of-home lab work. The need for out-of-home lab work must be verified.

Two exceptions apply to the work requirement for Non-TANF Best

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	<p>Beginnings Child Care Scholarship parents attending post-secondary education or short term training:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A post-secondary education student may find that clinical or student teaching requirements become a barrier to finishing school, while meeting the minimum hourly work requirement. The minimum hourly work requirement may be waived while a parent participates in a full-time field experience, practicum, on the job training, or a full-time combination of field experience and course work required for graduation in the parent's curriculum. The institution must identify the field experience or practicum as such. Generally speaking laboratory classes do not constitute field experiences and do not qualify for work requirement waivers unless identified as a field experience, practicum, on the job training, or a full-time combination of field experience and course work required for graduation in the parent's curriculum by an institution official such as the registrar or class/major advisor. 2. The work requirement may be waived during a period of short-term, full time training, which leads to a high probability of employment. All of the following restrictions apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The training may last no more than six weeks. <input type="checkbox"/> The training must be required for employment. <input type="checkbox"/> The applicant shall provide a written training verification signed by the approved training institution. <input type="checkbox"/> The applicant shall have a letter from a potential employer stating that there is a high probability of employment upon completion of training.
Teen Parents	<p>A teen parent who needs child care in order to attend high school, General Educational Development [GED], or an equivalency program may be eligible for a child care scholarship. The student's work requirement is waived while attending high school, GED, or an equivalency program. If the teen parent lives with their parents, they may be considered a separate household from their own parents for the purposes of eligibility and co-payment determination. The teen parent must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be under the age of 20; and <input type="checkbox"/> Be attending high school, GED, or an equivalency program; and <input type="checkbox"/> Need child care to attend high school, GED, or an equivalency program; and

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Meet financial eligibility requirements; and <input type="checkbox"/> Pay a co-payment. <p>Teen parents intending to return to high school, GED, or an equivalency program may receive a child care scholarship while working during breaks in the school schedule.</p> <p>Parents in their teens who do not attend high school, GED, or an equivalency program are subject to work requirements.</p> <p>See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.</p>
<p>Limitation of Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship</p>	<p>The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship hours approved must mirror the approved parent's and child's activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parent's work, school, & Family Investment Agreement [FIA] activities requiring child care, allowing for travel time. <input type="checkbox"/> The child's schedule, e.g., school, the child's nap time, or alternative care arrangements. <p>Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not intended for respite care, unless services are provided under Child Protective Services. A parent may not provide reciprocal care for the sole purpose of meeting work program requirements or collecting scholarship payments. Parents in a reciprocal care arrangement must demonstrate that their schedules complement each other's need for child care.</p> <p>See from section 2-1.</p>
<p>Family Loses Eligibility</p>	<p>Families may lose eligibility during a child care certification plan. Evaluate the circumstances in an effort to offer continuity of care for the child and family. See Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6.</p> <p>See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook processing.</p>

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Subject:

Household Income

Supersedes: **Child Care 2-4 (4/9/16)**

References: **45 CFR 98.20; 52-2-701 - 704; 52-2-713 MCA
ARM 37.80.201 - 202**

General Rule The gross monthly income of all adult and minor household members is evaluated in determining household eligibility. Please refer to Household Membership in Section 2-2 'Household Requirements' of this manual. Households with assets that exceed \$1,000,000 are not eligible for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program. Families must indicate on the application that they meet this requirement.

The gross monthly income is calculated for the entire household and is defined as the sum of earned and unearned gross monthly income received in a calendar month regardless of when it was earned, less any verified court-ordered child support payments made for children outside of the household as outlined in Section 2-2a.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Family Shall Obtain All Income As a condition of eligibility, each household must actively seek all income for which the household has legal claim, unless they can show good cause for not doing so. However, eligibility may not be denied if the individual did not make income information available because he/she was unaware of its existence and/or availability. All household income must be verified and summarized in case notes. The applicant's written or verbal statement alone is not verification.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Earned Income The term earned income is defined as the monthly equivalent of all earnings received [before taxes and other deductions], no matter when it was earned. Earned income encompasses cash or in-kind income earned by an individual through the receipt of wages, salary, commissions, or other income sources from activities in which he/she is engaged as a self-employed individual or as an employee. Earned income is measured as gross earned income before any deductions such as FICA, taxes,

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garnishments, and cafeteria plans, etc., the individual receives. It includes earnings over a period of time for which settlement is made at one given time, as in the instance of sale of farm crops, livestock, poultry, or logging.

With reference to commissions, wages, or salary, earned income means the total amount, irrespective of personal expenses, such as income tax deductions, lunches, and transportation to and from work, and irrespective of expenses of employment which are not personal, such as the cost of tools, materials, special uniforms, or transportation to call on customers.

Earned income divided by the number of child care hours requested must equal the current Federal Minimum Wage to remain eligible for child care assistance. In order for salaried employees to be exempt, an employee must a) be paid at least \$23,600/year (\$455 per week), and b) be paid on a salary basis. and also c) perform exempt job duties. A list of exempt job duties can be found on the Fair Labor Standards Act web site: www.flssa.com. The current Federal Minimum Wage can be located at: www.dol.gov/dol/wages/. Individuals receiving a salary must still meet a minimum hourly wage equivalent to qualify for the Best Beginnings Scholarship Program.

**Verifying Earned
Income**

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide verification of his/her earned income. The applicant's income and work schedule shall be provided to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] on the Release of Information/Request for Verification form. If the employer refuses to complete the form or if the work schedule is variable, Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R]s may corroborate the parent's statement with the following information:

- Employer's payroll records;
- Employer's verbal/written statement of earnings [can be verified by the Eligibility Specialist];
- Employment service records;
- W-2 forms; and/or
- Wage/salary stubs.

For self-employment income information, see Section 2-4a.

Unearned Income

Unearned Income means an individual's income derived from sources other than employment such as interest and dividends from investments, child support or income from rental property.

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**Verifying
Unearned Income**

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide verification of his/her unearned income. This verification is not limited to, but may include, any of the following sources:

- Attorney Statement;
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Records;
- Cash Income Records from Rental Property, Farm Produce,
 - o Boarders-lodgers, etc.
- Child Support Enforcement Division;
- Child Support Receipts;
- College and University Financial Aids Records;
- Correspondence on Benefits;
- Correspondence on SSA Benefits;
- County Clerk of the Court Records;
- Divorce Decree (may include child support, medical support, child
 - o care, alimony);
- Financial Institution Records;
- Income Tax Record - State & Federal;
- Insurance Company Records;
- Lodge, Club, or Fraternal Organization Record;
- Current Parenting Plan (must include child support; may include
 - o medical support, child care; and must be signed by a judge)
- Pension Award Notice;
- Personal Records of Contributions--Money orders or, canceled
 - o checks;
- Railroad Retirement Award Letter;
- Recipient's statement from person making a contribution (a
 - o current child support order is required for child support payments);
- RSDI Benefit Check or Award Letter;
- Social Security Administration Bendex interface (TEAMS);
- Social Security Administration Records;
- Unemployment Compensation Award letter;
- Union Records;
- Veteran's Administration;
- Veteran's Administration Award Notice;
- Workmen's Compensation Benefits Award Notice; and/or
- Workmen's Compensation Records.

Calculating When calculating gross monthly income, unearned income is included for:

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Unearned Income

- All parents in the household
- All children in the household
- All other countable members of the household [See Income Table in Section 2-6]

When calculating gross monthly income for a teen parent[s], unearned income is included for:

- The teen parent applicant
- Teen spouse or significant other [unrelated individual]
- The child[ren] of the teen parent applicant

Unearned income is **NOT** included for the adults with whom the teen parent applicant is living if the teen parent does not include them as part of the household.

For applicants who receive more than one type of unearned income, the unearned income is calculated for each source and then totaled to arrive at the gross monthly unearned income. Gross monthly unearned income is calculated by:

- Determining the gross amount received each period; and
- Using the appropriate formula to translate this amount into a monthly figure [See **Income Determination Method** below].

Child Support As Unearned Income

See Section 2-2a Child Support.

Irregular Income

Irregular income is income that differs in amount from month-to-month. Examples of irregular income are when the parent or income earner:

- Is not paid regularly or works on commission
- Receives overtime pay or a bonus
- Does not have a regular work schedule
- Works part-time or "on-call" hours
- Receives unearned income at irregular intervals such as child support

See Section 2-5 to calculate irregular income.

Seasonal Income

Seasonal income should be averaged in a way that provides the best picture of the parent's annual income. Any calculation should include payroll/income information from both high and low earning months. See Section 2-5 to calculate seasonal income. Employment such as farming,

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logging, construction, etc. may be calculated most accurately over a 12-month average to include summer [high], spring and fall/winter [low] seasons

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Subject:

Household Income – Self-Employment

Supersedes: Child Care 2-4 (9/1/06)

References: 45 CFR 98.20; 52-2-701 - 704; 52-2-713 MCA
ARM 37.80.201 - 202

General Rule Self-employment is earning one's livelihood directly from one's own trade or business rather than as an employee of another. To be self-employed, an individual is normally highly skilled in a trade or has a niche, product or service for his or her local community.

Employee or Self-Employed? An individual is not self-employed if performing services that can be controlled by an employer. If an employer-employee relationship exists (no matter what the relationship is called), the individual is not self-employed. The source of the income and the individual's involvement in the activity from which the income is generated will determine whether it is self-employment income.

Self-Employment Verification Written verification of self-employment status must be submitted at the time of application. For applicants who claim to be self-employed, the Child Care Resource and Referral CCR&R Specialist must verify their self-employment status. This can be done through several types of documentation. The applicant may possess a business license issued by the city or state or have a Federal Employer Identification Number [FEIN] issued by the Internal Revenue Service or some other verification from the Internal Revenue Service [IRS] that they are self employed or both.

Regardless of whether they possess a business license, self-employed persons must file specific tax forms with the IRS. The IRS requires that self-employed persons file Schedule C, Profit or Loss from business. Some self-employed persons may be able to file Schedule C-EZ if their business had gross receipts of under \$25,000 and expenses of \$2,000 or less and they had no employees. If the applicant filed either of these forms for the previous year, copies would document the self-employment status of the applicant.

The IRS also requires that persons with \$400 of net earnings file a Schedule SE, Self-Employment Tax. This form would show the amount

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of self-employment tax paid for the previous year. In addition, some persons are required to estimate and pay their tax liability in advance. This is done on Form 1040-ES, Estimated Tax for Individuals. If a self-employed person calculates and pays estimated taxes on self-employment earnings, that would verify their self-employment status.

Tax returns must show all schedules, tax preparer signature and date complete to be considered. Stand alone Schedule Cs [Profit and Loss] statements are not allowable without the filed tax return it was included with.

**Earned
Income**

The term earned income for the self employed individual encompasses all income derived from activities in which he/she is engaged as a self-employed individual. Earned income is measured as gross earned income before any deductions that the individual receives. Net taxable income of a self-employed person is reported on Schedule C of IRS Form 1040. Self-employment income may be generated by freelance work, royalties, consulting, or income from sole proprietorship businesses. Social Security taxes must be paid on self-employment income. An individual receiving self-employed income may either pay taxes during the taxable year or make a lump sum payment with their tax return on April 15 of each year.

**Verifying
Earned
Income**

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide verification of his/her earned income. The applicant's income and work schedule shall be provided to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] on the **Self Employment Verification** form. In addition, Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] eligibility specialists may corroborate the applicant's statement using the following information:

- Bookkeeping records;
- Employment service records;
- Income tax returns - state/federal – must show proof of filing;
- Receipts for work-related expenses [Sole proprietorship, Partnership, S-corporation];
- Sales/services receipts;
- State Department of Revenue;
- W-2 forms [as may apply to employees] or 941 forms; and/or
- Proof of payroll payments or draws from the business checking/savings account.

An applicant/participant may self-certify that he/she had no self-

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employment earnings or a negative income during the relevant months; however, those with no income or negative income are not eligible for child care assistance.

Self-Employment Structures

While there are many types of self-employment structures, some of the more common structures typically include the following:

- Sole Proprietorship is a self-employed business that is not incorporated and has one owner. The business income and liabilities are the responsibility of a single owner.
- Partnership is a self-employed business that is set up with two or more partners. In addition to personal income tax forms, partnerships are also required to file 1065 and K-1 forms. The business income and liabilities are the responsibility of all the partners with the partnership defining shares of ownership and responsibility. Partnership income is determine in the same way as other self-employment.
- Independent Contractor is an individual who pays their own employment taxes and does not have an employee/employer relationship.

Corporations

Corporations are business entities in which the corporation receives the profits. The income individuals receive from the corporation is not considered self-employment income. Individuals working for corporations are considered employees and monies received are consider wages/earned income. Wages paid to corporate officers are considered earned income. Fees paid to corporate directors are considered self-employment earnings.

Any corporate income reported on Schedule E, Line 31 as income received from a corporation must be annualized and used as countable unearned income even if the household did not receive the money. Any loss reported on Schedule E, Line 32 as loss received from a corporation is NOT used in any budget calculation.

Limited liability companies [LLCs] and limited partnerships are treated like corporations for eligibility purposes, regardless of what tax documents may be filed with the IRS. Income other than “guaranteed salaries” received from a limited liability company or partnership is unearned income.

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**Unearned
Income**

Unearned Income means an individual's income derived from sources other than employment, such as interest and dividends from investments, or income from rental property. It is the applicant or participant's responsibility to provide verification of this type of income.

**Verifying
Unearned
Income**

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide verification of his/her unearned income to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] on the **Self Employment Verification** form. See Section 2-4 for a list of unearned income sources.

**New
Self-employment
Business**

If the self-employment is new and not reflected on a previous income tax return, the applicant shall be required to submit business records [bank statements, income contracts, allowable expense receipts] from prior months showing income and expenses. Income will be prospectively verified from these records until an income tax return reflecting the self-employment is available.

If self-employment is too new for business records, a statement of **estimated** income and expenses must be submitted with the scholarship application. Eligibility will be determined for no more than a 3 month period to allow actual income and expense receipts to be gathered.

**Determining
Self-Employment
Income**

Once self-employment status has been verified, the self-employed person must prove that [s]he is earning a positive net income [income minus allowable expenses]. Reviewing bookkeeping records, an auditor's report, or a balance sheet can do this. Regardless of the information reviewed, self-employed persons must maintain an average income that exceeds their business expenses [positive net income] to remain eligible. Net income means income that exceeds expenses regardless of the amount.

See section 2-5 to convert net income to a monthly figure. The second section of Table 1 will most frequently be used to convert self-employment net income to a monthly figure.

If child care is provided for employment activity, then the net income from self-employment divided by the number of child care hours must equal

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the current Federal Minimum Wage to remain eligible for child care assistance. The current Federal Minimum Wage can be located at: www.dol.gov/dol/wages/. Self-Employed applicants at the time of application may choose one of three expense options: 1) 35% of their gross income for expenses, 2) actual expenses as indicated on the Self-Employment Income Verification Form, or 3) no expenses. Only one option may be selected with the application. If option one [1] is selected by the applicant and they are determined to be ineligible, the applicant may request to submit expense receipts instead. If applicants select option two [2] or [3] and are found ineligible, they may not then request option one.

Self-employment status can be verified with copies of federal tax forms for self-employed persons. The dollar amount of gross self-employment income is determined by using as many sources as necessary to determine gross income and expenses, such as the following:

- Tax returns or business records which cover the relevant period;
- Applicant/Participant's statement of estimated earnings;
- Receipts for business expenses;
- Receipts of income goods and services provided [signature of the person receiving the goods and services must be affixed to the receipts]; and
- A signed statement from the bank.

Any misrepresentation of IRS tax return information may result in loss of eligibility and an overpayment. See Section 6-9

If both parents in the household are self-employed, income is combined, expenses subtracted, and net income divided by the number of child care hours to equal the Federal Minimum Wage as outlined above.

**Allowable
Business
Expense**

Allowable business expenses are subtracted from the gross receipts to determine taxable gross income. Most costs of doing business are allowable expenses and may be accepted as listed on the income tax form with few exceptions. Self-employment income for Best Beginnings Scholarship purposes is computed the same as it is for the Internal Revenue Service. IRS forms are used only for verification purposes. Expenses must be current, not due from a previous fiscal period, and are allowed when they are billed or otherwise come due. Allowable expenses must directly relate to the production of income. If an expense is incurred for the business and for personal purposes, it must be divided according

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to principles outlined by the IRS. Receipts must be attached.

**Expenses
Not Allowed**

The following expenses are not allowable as a deduction when determining eligibility:

- Expenses derived from capital investments:
 - Depreciation (generally derived from equipment, buildings, and building improvements);
 - Schedule 179 Expense Deduction [generally equipment];
 - Amortization [generally derived from land, business start-up costs, organizational costs for partnership or corporation];
 - Non-Sufficient Fund charges
 - Depletion (generally derived from mineral property or Standing timber);
 - Business Start-up Costs - The cost of starting a business is not allowed as an expense for eligibility purposes. The IRS considers start-up costs a capital expense and allows the business to amortize the expense over a period; and
- Payments on the principal portion of loan payments used to purchase capital assets or durable goods. [The interest portion of the loan is an allowable expense.]
- Personal expenses should not be claimed as business expenses:
 - Personal business and entertainment expenses and
 - Personal transportation.

A business typically has many different kinds of costs during the year. Some of these costs are counted as part of the investment in the business. They must be "capitalized," and are not allowable business expenses, and are known as **capital expenditures or capital expenses**. Generally, three kinds of costs must be capitalized:

1) **Going into business.** The costs of getting started in a business before actually beginning business operations are all capital expenses. This may include the cost of such things as advertising, travel, utilities, repairs, and employees' wages. These are often the same kind of expenses that could be deducted if they occur after the business is opened.

2) **Business assets.** The cost of any asset that will be used in the business for more than one year is a capital expense. There are many

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different kinds of business assets - for example, land, buildings, machinery, trucks, books, computer and accounting systems, furniture, patents, and franchise rights.

3) **Improvements.** The costs of making improvements to a business asset are also a capital expense, if the improvements add to the value of the asset, appreciably lengthen the time it can be used, or adapt it to a different use. However, **normal repair costs are deducted as business expenses** and not capitalized. Examples of improvements are:

- new electric wiring;
- a new roof;
- new floor;
- new plumbing;
- bricking up windows to strengthen a wall;
- lighting improvements;
- abatement of hazardous substances such as asbestos.

Business motor vehicles. The cost of a motor vehicle purchased to use in the business [vehicle title must be in the business name] is usually capitalized. Its cost can be recovered through annual deductions for depreciation. Depreciation is **NOT** an allowable business expense under program policy.

NOTE: Repairs made to the business vehicle are allowable expenses. However, amounts paid for reconditioning and overhaul of business vehicles are capital expenses.

Roads and driveways. The cost of building a private road on the business property and the cost of replacing a gravel driveway with a concrete one are capital expenses which may be able to depreciate. **The cost of maintaining a private road on the business property is allowable as an ordinary and necessary business expense.**

Tools. Amounts spent for tools used in the business are deductible expenses if the tools wear out and are thrown away within one year from the date of purchase.

Machinery. The cost of replacing short-lived parts of a machine to keep it in good working condition and not to add to its life is **allowable as an ordinary and necessary expense.**

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Heating equipment. The cost of changing from one heating system to another is a capital expense and not a deductible expense.

**Other
Expenses**

Business Employees. In order to deduct wages paid for employees of the business, payroll records showing employee name, gross wages, taxes deducted, and net wages must be provided in addition to a record showing the employee's signature to receive a check or cash for wages paid.

Gasoline Expense. For business owned vehicles [title is in the name of the business], 100% of this expense is allowable if odometer and mileage records are kept and are accompanied by fuel receipts. For a personal vehicle used for business, expenses are allowed **ONLY** if odometer and mileage records are kept and accompanied by fuel receipts.

If the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] eligibility specialist is using filed tax returns and this expense is a part of the return, mileage records and receipts will only be required at subsequent recertification or with the next filed tax returns. Tax returns must show all schedules, tax preparer signature and date complete to be considered. Although stand alone Schedule Cs [Profit and Loss] statements are not allowable without the filed tax return it was included with, the CCR&R eligibility staff may review a non-filed Schedule C if used to provide income and expenses because the self-employment business is **NEW**. In some businesses [logging, farming, construction, etc.] gas receipts may exceed mileage/odometers readings. These must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Credit Card Expense. If the card is in the business name, a copy of the monthly bill accompanied by receipts for purchases showing the items paid for by the business card are allowable. If the card is in the name of the self-employed person, the allowable expense is proportional to usage as defined by the IRS and the accompanying receipts must provide enough information to discern that items purchased were for business use. Interest charged and late fees to cards for balances carried forward are **NOT** allowable.

Use of Family Residence. If the home is used in the business, expenses can be deducted only for that part of the home that is **used both**

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regularly and exclusively for the business. Applicant/participant must use IRS guidelines to determine division of use.

See Section 2-5 for the method to use in converting the income into a monthly figure.

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CHILD CARE	Subject: Prospective Income

Supersedes: Child Care 2-5 (1/27/11)

References: ARM 37.80.201 – 202;
45 CFR 98.20; 52-2-701 - 704; 52-2-713 MCA

General Rule Eligibility is based on the income anticipated in future months. Prospected income is applied to future scholarship months. Prospected income is applied to the current month only when it applies to a new application.

The current month's income may be less than that anticipated in future months. Eligibility may be determined for the current month based on the current month's income and eligibility may be issued for subsequent months based on prospected income. This avoids an unnecessarily high co-payment during the parent's first partial month of employment.

Assuming income eligibility is prospected correctly, income fluctuations will not affect eligibility during the current certification plan eligibility period. If eligibility is determined with incorrect information, the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist shall proceed with a correction process.

See Section 2-4 on income verification.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for specifics regarding how to case note income determinations.

**Income
Determinati
on Method**

Table #1 Convert Income into Monthly Figure	
Pay Period	Formula
Monthly [same amount each month]	Use gross income
Monthly [amount differs each month]	Add gross income from 2 consecutive months ÷ 2 [Average may be for up to 12 consecutive months]
Semi-monthly [2 times per month]	Gross income x 2
Bi-weekly	Gross income x 2.15

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[Every 2 weeks]	
Weekly	Gross income x 4.33
Semi-monthly [13-week Calculation]	Hourly wage x hours per week x 13 weeks ÷ 3 months

The last formula in Table 1 [Semi-monthly 13-week calculation] cannot be used for the following:

- A full month's income is not expected because the individual will not be working or getting paid for at least one pay period during the month (e.g., new employment, unpaid extended sick leave, or
- Unpaid vacation); or
- Income is from a terminated source (e.g., lay-off or other job termination); or
- Income history is not reliable; or
- Significant income change is expected in the future (e.g., promotion, part-time to full-time or vice versa, additional job, transfer, etc.).
- Income history shows a pattern of high and low earning months from seasonal type employment.

Salaried income divided by the number of child care hours requested must equal the current Federal Minimum Wage to remain eligible for child care assistance. In order for salaried employees to be exempt, an employee must a) be paid at least \$23,600/year (\$455 per week), and b) be paid on a salary basis, and also c) perform exempt job duties. A list of exempt job duties is available on the Fair Labor Standards Act web site: www.flssa.com. The current Federal Minimum Wage can be located at: www.dol.gov/dol/wages/.

Calculating Income The Monthly amount [differs each month] will be used to calculate self-employment and contractual income.

Table #2 How to Calculate an Average Gross Monthly Income	
1.	Add gross income received from previous 2 months before taxes and other deductions. Wage stubs must be consecutive. ** All forms of income must be counted [i.e. holiday, sick time] except over time if irregular.
2.	Convert the income into a monthly figure using formulas from Table 1
3.	Add unearned income

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4.	Subtract child support payments made for children outside of the household from previous 2 months [Section 2-6]
5.	Divide by the number of months used in number 1. Above which equals the average gross monthly income

**If the applicant is unable to secure copies of wage stubs from their employer and more than one wage stub is missing, Eligibility Specialists should certify the applicant for 30 days until additional wage stubs can be produced. Consecutive wage stubs mean those which show earned income for the previous 60 days of work.

Calculating Irregular Income An average gross monthly income must be calculated for the parent who has an irregular income. See Section 2-4 for a description of Irregular Income. Irregular income should first be averaged on a two month basis. If an accurate computation cannot be made on a 2 month basis, then the parent's income can be calculated by averaging up to a 12-month basis. Re-determinations are conducted at the time of re-certification

Calculating Seasonal Income Seasonal income should be averaged in a way that provides the best picture of the parent's annual income. Any calculation should include payroll/income information from both high and low earning months. Employment such as farming, logging, construction, etc. may be calculated most accurately over a 12-month average to include summer [high], spring and fall/winter [low] seasons.

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References: ARM 37.80.201 - 202
52-2-701 - 704; 52-2-713 MCA
45 CFR 98.20;

Income Table for Non-TANF Child Care Scholarships	Income Type	Count
Adoptive Support Services:	Excluded	No
Agent Orange Settlement Payments:	Excluded	No
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Tax Exempt Payments:	Excluded	No
Alien Sponsor Deemed Income:	Excluded	No
AmeriCorps VISTA: The living allowance (stipend) received by participants in the AmeriCorps Program is counted as earned income.	Employment	Yes
Annuity Income: Cash received, and available earnings, from an annuity are countable. Dividends and interest available to individuals are countable, even though these earning may be reinvested.	Interest, Dividend, Royalty	Yes
Assistance Payment from Other State:	Cash Assistance	Yes
Bonus Income:	Tips or Bonuses	Yes
Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance Benefits:	Cash Assistance	Yes
Capital Gains from Sale of Personal Property: Capital gains income, resulting from the sale of real or personal property, such as a primary residence, is treated as a lump sum payment.	Lump Sum	Yes
Capital Investment Returns: Returns from capital investments are counted. If the individual is actively	Interest, Dividend,	Yes

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engaged in the management of the investment, this may be "Self-employment Income."	Royalties	
Cash Contributions: Cash contributions directly available to the applicant or participant, regardless of the intended use, are counted as unearned income.	Other Income	Yes
Child's Income (see Dependent Child's Earned Income)		
Child Support "In Excess" Payments:	Child Support	Yes
Child Support Arrearage Amount:	Child Support	Yes
Child Support: Child support income retained by the parent is counted. Prospect the net amount and disregard CSED fees withheld from child support payments. If child support income is irregular, average the income over a period.	Child Support	Yes
Child-Only TANF Cash Grant:	TANF Cash Assistance	Yes
College Work Study: Work-study hours count toward the minimum hourly work requirement. NOTE: CCR&Rs count the work hours and the income, while OPA may exclude this as educational income	Employment	Yes
Commissions, Salary or Wages:	Employment	Yes
Community Spouse Income Maintenance Allowance: (Not likely seen in child care families.)	Other Income	Yes
Contract for Deed: The income received, whether principal and/or interest, is counted as unearned income.	Other Income	Yes
Dependent Child's Earned Income – Attending School: The earned income of a dependent child who is attending elementary or high school, regardless of age, is excluded.	Excluded	No

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Dependent Child's Earned Income – Not Attending School: A dependent child's income is counted, unless the child is attending school.	Employment	Yes
Disability Benefits:	Disability Benefits	Yes
Disabled Children of Female Vietnam Veterans: Veterans Administration payments to disabled children (now adults) of females who served in Vietnam between February 1961 and May 1975 are excluded.	Excluded	No
Disaster Relief Act: Payments issued because of a Presidential emergency declaration or major disaster, as amended, are excluded. This applies to government and disaster assistance organization payments to individuals.	Excluded	No
Dividend, Interest & Royalty Income: Personal interest, dividend, and royalty income are countable.	Interest, Dividend, Royalty	Yes
Divorce Settlement: A divorce settlement is the division of a couple's assets or resources; it is not income. (However, ongoing child support or alimony payments are counted as income.)	---	No
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): The applicant or participant may receive the EITC with his/her regular wages. The EITC amount should be noted on the wage stubs. EITC may also be received with the individual's annual federal tax refund.	Excluded	No
Educational Income: Educational grants, loans, scholarships, and VA educational payments are not countable income. If the amount is received in a large sum, reduce the income to a monthly amount for the intended period on Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS]. NOTE: See 'College Work Study' regarding the minimum hourly work requirement.	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No

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<p>Employer Paid Insurance or Child Care Benefits Employer contributions toward health or group life insurance, medical expenses, and child care expenses. This includes employer paid flexible benefits, which are not cashable to the employee. EXAMPLE: State Share Credit</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Family Saving for Tomorrow Program (Asset for Independence Act): Family Saving for Tomorrow Program payments are made to a vendor on behalf of the participant. Participants agree to chose set a specific savings goal, either a down payment on a house, start-up costs of a business, or tuition for post-secondary education. The family makes monthly savings deposits, from earned income, for up to three years and receives a two-to-one match on their savings. The match is not counted as income in determining child care scholarship eligibility.</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Farm Income:</p>	Self-Employment	Yes
<p>Farm Loss: A farm loss may not reduce income from other sources, so the amount must be zero.</p>	Self-Employment	No
<p>Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Retraining Funds: TAA supplements Unemployment Insurance benefits to retrain participants and move them back into the workforce. The participant's job skills are evaluated. Retraining benefits are paid directly to a school for a participant's tuition and books. Benefits are also available to cover the participant's rent and utilities, if the participant must maintain a second residence while attending school. While away from the main household, the participant may receive subsistence per diem, based on CONUS rates. NOTE: Unemployment compensation is separate and countable income.</p>	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No
<p>Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Supportive Services: TAA supplements Unemployment Insurance benefits to retrain participants and move them back into the workforce.</p>	Excluded	No

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<p>Job Search Funding: Travel expenses are reimbursed based on receipts, for the participant to interview for a new position. Reimbursement is limited to \$1,250 per participant.</p> <p>Relocation Funding: Moving expenses, up to \$1,250, are reimbursed for the participant, and their family, who relocates to take a new job or attend school.</p> <p>Relocation Benefit: A \$1,250 benefit is available to assist in establishing the family after relocating.</p> <p>TAA Supplemental Discretionary Grant: A TAA participant may apply, based on financial need, for emergency assistance. The emergency assistance must be for, or directly related to the participant, not the participant's family members. Examples include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rent (emergency) <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Repair <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Need <input type="checkbox"/> House Repair <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care (e.g. training for the participant) <p>NOTE: Offer a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, if possible. Child care benefits should be coordinated to ensure correct payment.</p> <p>NOTE: Unemployment compensation is separate and countable income.</p>		
<p>Flexible Benefits – Employee Option: Flexible benefits, which are voluntarily withheld for a paycheck, are countable wages. The employee exercises the option of contributing to a flex plan or taking the wages in cash.</p>	Employment	Yes
<p>Food Stamp Benefits: The Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] requires states to report Food Stamp participation on the ACF-801. Record the amount of the food stamp allotment. The amount is not counted as income for eligibility purposes. ⇒ Verify Food Stamp Benefits on the TEAMS TAFS/TAF3 screen 'AMT' column.</p>	Food Stamps	No

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Foster Care Income and Supportive Services: Payments that are specified in the appropriate foster care plan. TEAMS income code 'FC CI' (child in) or 'FC CO' (child out)	Excluded	No
Garnishment: A garnishment is not subtracted from the individual's gross income. Use the income code that corresponds to the source of the garnished income. EXAMPLE: Garnishment amounts from unemployment benefits are coded "Unemployment Compensation." EXAMPLE: A child support garnishment of a paycheck is coded "Employment" income.	See Examples	Yes
GI Bill (or Veterans' Administration Education Payments) : are excluded, provided the participant is attending an institution of higher education/training.	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No
Gifts - \$50/Individual or Less: Small cash gifts, up to \$50 per gift per individual, may be excluded. A gift presented to the entire assistance unit is considered as equally divided among the members.	Excluded	No
Gifts - Over \$50/Individual: Large Gifts over \$50 per individual shall be considered contributions.	Other Income	Yes
Government Pension:	Pension or Retirement	Yes
Housing Voucher or Cash: CCDF requires states to report housing subsidy participation on the ACF-801. The amount is not included as income for eligibility purposes. (Do not enter student housing.) NOTE: It is not necessary to verify the client's statement regarding housing participation. NOTE: While Montana does not count housing benefits when determining eligibility, the federal ACF-801 report asks about housing participation. If	Housing Voucher	No (\$1)

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the family receives housing benefits, enter one dollar (\$1) in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] as 'Housing' to identify the family's participation. This will cause the ACF-801 to report this benefit in a Yes/No format, while not counting the income for eligibility purposes.		
HUD Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Escrow Account Interest:	Excluded	No
Incentive Payments: Designed to encourage participation in Public Assistance Programs:	Excluded	No
Indian (Native American) Countable Income: Countable income includes, but is not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) income <input type="checkbox"/> Farm and grazing lease income <input type="checkbox"/> Interest income <input type="checkbox"/> Mineral rights income <input type="checkbox"/> Oil and gas royalties income <input type="checkbox"/> Transfers of countable monies from other Indian agencies 	Other Income	Yes
Indian (Native American) Excluded Income: Exclude the following income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Income derived from sub marginal lands <input type="checkbox"/> Interest earned on excluded funds <input type="checkbox"/> Judgment claim income <input type="checkbox"/> Per capita payment income, from funds held in trust distributed to enrolled members (a.k.a. BIA check) <input type="checkbox"/> Up to \$2,000 per year of income received by individual Indians which are derived from leases or other uses of individually-owned trust or restricted lands 	Excluded	No
In-Kind Income – Earned or Obligated for Housing or Food: The value of earned, or obligated, in-kind income is the current value of the service provided. An earned, or obligated, third party vendor payment is counted as in-kind income if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The value of the payment is earned and contributes housing or food to the employee, or; <input type="checkbox"/> The value of the payment is legally obligated to the family. And; <input type="checkbox"/> A third party pays a vendor, benefiting the family. <input type="checkbox"/> Cash is not available to the family. 	In-Kind (Earned/ Obligated)	Yes

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Income Evaluation Table

Income Table for Non-TANF Child Care Scholarships	Income Type	Count
This does not include employer paid benefits unrelated to housing or food, such as health insurance premiums or child care benefits.		
<p>In-Kind Income - Unearned: A third party payment made as gift to the family may be excluded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The value of the payment is not legally obligated to the family, or; <input type="checkbox"/> The benefit is not tied to the employee's earnings, such as the value of uniforms, group health insurance, or child care benefits available to all persons employed. <p>And:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A third party pays a vendor, benefiting the family. <input type="checkbox"/> Cash is not available to the family. 	Excluded	No
<p>Insurance Settlement: Proceeds of Fire or Casualty Insurance Claim used to recoup for the loss or casualty within three months of receipt. The insurance money must be signed over to the person or company who will do the repairs or otherwise disposed of within this period.</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Interest, Dividend or Royalty Income: Personal interest, dividend, and royalty income are countable.</p>	Interest, Dividend, Royalty	Yes
<p>Internship: The hours required to complete an internship may count toward the minimum hourly work requirement if the internship is required for graduation.</p>	Employment	Yes
<p>Irregular or Infrequent Income:</p>	Other Income	Yes
<p>Jury Duty: The income received, less per diem allowance, is counted. EXCEPTION: If the individual provides verification that the payment was given to his/her employer, "Exclude" the income.</p>	Employment	Yes
<p>Lease Income:</p>	Rental or Lease Income	Yes
<p>Life Insurance – Annuity Income, or Payments Over Time: Cash received, and available earnings, from an annuity are countable. NOTE: Dividends and interest available to individuals are also countable, even</p>	Other Income	Yes

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Income Table for Non-TANF Child Care Scholarships	Income Type	Count
<p>though these earning may be reinvested. NOTE: See Life Insurance – Lump Sum Payment</p>		
<p>Life Insurance – Lump Sum Payment: If prospected, a life insurance payment is countable in the month received or may be averaged over a 12 month period and the average is added to each month's income. Amounts spent to cover illness, medical expenses, or medical expenses may be deduction if parent provides the necessary expense receipts. NOTE: See Life Insurance – Annuity Income, or Regular Payments</p>	Lump Sum	Yes
<p>Loans: A valid loan is a loan for which the lender must deliver a sum of money to a borrower. The borrower must express or imply, either orally or in writing, an obligation to repay. The obligation to repay must be absolute and not contingent on the occurrence of an uncertain event. EXCEPTION: Educational loans are identified as "Educational Grant or Loan Assistance."</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Low Income Energy Assistance Payment (LIEAP) Income:</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Legally certified In-Home Provider [LCI] Legally certified Provider [LCP]</p>	Self-Employment	Yes
<p>Lump Sum Payment: Non-recurring lump sum payments are counted. The income must be prospected when determining eligibility. Payments may be included as income in the month is was received or can be averaged up to a 12 month period. Examples include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Capital gains <input type="checkbox"/> Crop insurance proceeds <input type="checkbox"/> Rebate or credit refunds <input type="checkbox"/> Settlements from Social Security, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash, Tribal TANF, railroad retirement or insurance claims <input type="checkbox"/> Severance pay or sick leave payout 	Lump Sum	Yes
<p>Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980:</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Military Allotment: A military allotment is not subtracted from the service member's gross income.</p>	Employment	Yes

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An allotment is used to send money back to the family or pay a third party. EXAMPLE: Child support might be paid through a military allotment.		
Military Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH): A stipend paid to military personnel, whether cash or payments in-kind. Employer paid housing and food benefits are countable.	In-Kind (Earned/ Obligated)	Yes
Military Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS): A stipend paid to military personnel, whether cash or payments in-kind. Employer paid housing and food benefits are countable.	In-Kind (Earned/ Obligated)	Yes
Non-Cash Employee Compensation - Food or Shelter: Earned employee compensation benefit, which is either food or shelter, counts as earned in-kind income.	In-Kind (Earned/ Obligated)	Yes
Non-Cash Employee Compensation – Other than Food or Shelter: Employer compensation benefits that are not available in the form of cash, food or shelter, are not included as income. If the employee may take any of these benefits as cash, the benefits are countable. The following examples may not be countable income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Child care benefits paid by the employer <input type="checkbox"/> Flexible spending benefits paid by the employer <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance premiums (medical, life, disability) paid by the employer <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles, used for employment purposes. 	Excluded	No
Nutrition Program for the Elderly: Any benefits received under Title VII, Nutrition Program for the Elderly, of the Older Americans Act of 1965 are not counted.	Excluded	No
Pension Annuity Payments:	Pension or Retirement	Yes
Personal Injury Settlement Payments: This income is evaluated as a possible lump-sum payment. If the income does not meet lump sum policy, only the amount actually released and received by the participant is counted as “Disability Benefits.”	Lump Sum	Yes

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Radiation Exposure Compensation Income:	Excluded	No
Railroad Retirement:	Pension or Retirement	Yes
Refugee's Sponsor's Income:	Excluded	No
Reimbursements:	Excluded	No
Relocation Payments: Payments, received under Title II of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, are not counted.	Excluded	No
Rental Income:	Rental or Lease Income	Yes
Retirement Income:	Pension or Retirement	Yes
Royalty, Dividends or Interest Income: Personal interest, dividend, and royalty income are countable.	Interest, Dividend, Royalty	Yes
Salary, Wages or Commissions:	Employment	Yes
Sale of Blood: Income from the sale of whole blood or blood plasma is considered self- employment income.	Self- Employment	Yes
Scholarship: See educational income.	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No
Section 8/HUD Utilities Payments . . . regardless of the payee.	Excluded	No

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Self-Employment Income:	Self-Employment	Yes
Severance Pay: Severance pay represents a non-recurring compensation outside of regular earnings. It is treated as lump sum earned income.	Lump Sum	Yes
Shelter Workshop/Rehabilitation Center Income: Handicapped individuals often work in sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centers performing services/work for therapeutic or rehabilitative purposes. These earnings are totally excluded. Although their wages are subject to taxes, etc., IRS rules treat them as non-employees. (Revenue ruling 65-165.)	Excluded	No
Social Security Benefits (SS): Social Security benefits are paid to an individual, to the family of an individual, based on the individual's earnings. They may be in the form of retirement benefits or survivor's benefits.	Other Federal Cash Income Program	Yes
Social Security Disability Income (SSDI): SSDI benefits are paid to a disabled individual or a disabled individual's family. The payments are based on the disabled individual's past earnings.	Other Federal Cash Income Programs	Yes
Striker Income: Income from union strike activity is countable income.	Other Income	Yes
Student Housing: Student housing is not considered Federal Housing Voucher or Cash' assistance for federal reporting purposes. NOTE: By policy, all income is entered whether countable in determining eligibility or not. However, there is no need to enter student-housing benefits as income in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS].	N/A	No
Supplemental Food Assistance: Received under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 and the National School Lunch Act.	Excluded	No
Supplemental Security Income (SSI): Eligibility specialists may use the following guidance to identify supplemental security income:	Supplemental Security Income	No

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<p>SSI payments are made to individuals unable to earn income due to a disability or other qualifying cause. SSI benefits are not based on past earnings and are limited in amount. Verify the client's statement regarding SSI participation, since this may be confused with SS or SSDI.</p> <p>EXCEPTION: If the SSI recipient clearly uses the monetary resource to provide income to another household member, then the other household member would include the respective contribution (Other Income).</p>		
<p>Supportive Services Which are specified in a public assistance program.</p>	Excluded	No
<p>TANF Bridge-the-Gap Benefit (Work Support Payment): TANF Cash benefit to support the family leaving the TANF program and going to work.</p>	TANF Cash Assistance	No
<p>TANF Cash Benefits: Enter the TANF Cash benefit for each individual.</p>	TANF Cash Assistance	Yes
<p>TANF Cash Recoupment Amount (Fraud): Do not reduce TANF Cash benefits by any recoupment amount.</p>	Excluded	No
<p>TANF Cash Supplement – FS Countable:</p>	Excluded	No
<p>TANF Cash Underpayment – Exempt:</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Tax Refund:</p>	Excluded	No
<p>Tips: Tips coincide with employment hours. NOTE: If an individual works only for tips, they are self-employed.</p>	Tips or Bonuses	Yes
<p>Training Allowance – Not a Reimbursement: EXAMPLE: An employer pays a training stipend, as set amount. This may occur before employment or during employment.</p>	Tips or Bonuses	Yes

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Training Related Reimbursement: EXAMPLE: An employer pays for a current employee's training expenses.	Excluded	No
Tribal TANF:	Tribal TANF	Yes
Trust Fund Income: Cash received, and available earnings, from a trust fund are countable. Dividends and interest available to individuals are countable, even though these earnings may be reinvested.	Interest, Dividend, Royalty	Yes
Unemployment Insurance Compensation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment Insurance (UI) [State – 26 weeks]. <input type="checkbox"/> Federal Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) [Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance - 26 weeks]. <input type="checkbox"/> Extended Federal TRA. [Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance - 26 weeks]. 	Unemployment Compensation	Yes
Vendor Payment - Earned or Obligated: See In-Kind Income – Earned or Obligated.	Employment	Yes
Vendor Payment - Unearned: See In-Kind Income – Unearned.	Excluded	No
Veterans' Administration Education Payments (or GI Bill): are excluded, provided the participant is attending an institution of higher education/training.	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No
Veterans' Pensions and Benefits:	Pension or Retirement	Yes
Victims Compensation Program : Payments to victims of crime for medical/therapy costs incurred as the result of criminal acts, paid after all other insurance, etc. fulfills their obligations.	Excluded	No
Vietnam Veterans, Disabled Children of Female Vietnam Veterans See "Disabled Children of Female Vietnam Veterans"	Excluded	No

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VISTA Income:	Employment	Yes
Vocational Rehabilitation Income:	Excluded	No
Wages, Salary or Commission:	Employment	Yes
Weatherization: One-time payments for weatherization and replacement or repair of heating or cooling devices are excluded.	Excluded	No
Women, Infant's & Children (WIC):	Excluded	No
Workers' Compensation Benefits:	Worker Compensation	Yes
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as Educational Income: If the parent does not need the WIA hours to meet the minimum hourly work requirement, the income may be coded as "Educational Grant or Loan Assistance." Also, see "Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as Work."	Educational Grant or Loan Assistance	No
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as Work: When the participant needs work hours to meet the minimum hourly work requirement, code WIA income as "Employment." On-the-job training may be long term (6+ months) or short term WIA/WEX training. Participants receive a paycheck from their employer, or from a WoRC contractor. There may be no indication the employee is a WIA participant. WIA replaces the JTPA program. Also, see "Workforce Investment Act (WIA) as Educational Income."	Employment	Yes

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Redetermination

Supersedes: Child Care 2-1 (4/9/16)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM;
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule Redetermination is conducted annually. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] and Child Protective Services [CPS] cases may have shorter eligibility periods. The impending impact of household changes should be discussed at annual redetermination time.

Redetermination Parent/Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] sends out a an eligibility reminder notice 45 calendar days before the end of the eligibility period, reminding parents to re-apply for scholarship benefits. It is the parent's benefits. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] in order to re-apply. Families will receive a closure notice 15 calendar days before the end-date of the eligibility period.

CCR&Rs shall close the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship effective the eligibility period end-date if families have not re-applied. See Section 2-1 regarding use of incomplete applications.

Forms must be kept current, within one year old. If eligibility factors change or a form will become over one year old during the new eligibility period, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist shall request updates for the following:

- Work Verification
- School/Training Verification
- Child Support compliance

Work Verification **The Work/ Verification** form must be completed and signed by the employer if the participant has changed jobs. If no change has occurred, consecutive wage stubs for the previous 60 days of employment must be provided with the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application. See Section 2-5 for processing.

School Training Verification **The School/Training Verification** form must be completed and signed by the school or training institution or other documentation showing number of enrolled credits must be submitted. Additionally, confirmation

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of fee payment must be submitted; documentation of a payment is sufficient to show fee payment for a semester. [See Section 2-3 for the definition of school attendance].

Child Support Verification

Verification of receipt of court-ordered child support for each child, cooperation with child support enforcement or grant good cause for not cooperating with child support with the **Child Care Program – Notice of Requirement to Cooperate and Right to Claim Good Cause for Refusal to Cooperate in Child Support Enforcement** form. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] must obtain verification when granting good cause, as outlined in Section 2-2a.

As long as the parent is in compliance with Child Support Enforcement Division [CSED] at application and redetermination time, there is no adverse case action, unless there is a pattern of continual change between an open and closed case.

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Application form must be completed for every participant at annual redetermination, even if the household information has not changed.

Legally Certified Providers

All current Legally Certified Providers will receive one letter from the Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] system or Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] 45 calendar days before their period of certification ends, reminding them that they need to renew their certification. This will be sufficient notice to Legally Certified Providers that their renewal time is near.

Graduated Eligibility

Graduated eligibility continues eligibility for Non-TANF families that may be deemed over-income to the Non-TANF program of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship [BBCCS], at 185% of the federal poverty level used by the state. The only difference between Non-TANF and graduated eligibility is in income level. All other BBCCS requirements must be met by the household. Eligibility in graduated eligibility is limited to a six-month eligibility period. A family must have been on BBCCS and deemed over-income at the time of annual re-determination to be eligible to graduated eligibility.

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OPA, WoRC, CCR&R Coordination

Supersedes: Child Care 3-1 (2/1/11)

References: 52-2-701 – 704 & 52-2-711 – 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305-306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule

Parents participating in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash Assistance program administered by the State of Montana contact their WoRC Case Manager to arrange for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for Family Investment Agreement/WoRC Employability Plan [FIA/EP] activities that require child care. The WoRC Case Manager makes an electronic referral to the Child Care Resource & Referral [CCR&R] agency and the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application will be available to TANF parents in each local WoRC office. Child Care assistance will not start until an electronic referral form is received at the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may begin on the date the CCR&R receives the electronic referral form. The parent then has 30 calendar days from the date of the WoRC referral to submit a completed Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application to the CCR&R.

The CCR&R issues the Child Care Certification Plan based on the FIA/EP activities that require child care. When the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship begins, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist mails a copy of the Child Care Certification Plan to the WoRC Case Manager.

**Application &
CCUBS
Processing**

A family participating in the TANF cash program completes the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application. The CHIMES interface may be used to verify TANF participation, activity hours, and income for each family member. The application notifies the family of their rights and responsibilities.

The application must be completed and submitted to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] within 30 calendar days of the child care referral by the WoRC Case Manager or the case will be closed.

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It is important that all income and activity information is entered in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] because the following processes are dependent on the information:

- The family may choose to be eligible if there is a Non-TANF waiting list.
- Data is used for federal reporting purposes.
- Data is used in aggregate form to profile the population served by the program.

In the first 30 calendar days of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] a participant's application process and TANF Cash benefits cannot be verified on CHIMES, the CCR&R eligibility specialist must follow the procedure outlined in the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Qualifying Families & Children Participating in TANF Cash

Parents who need child care to perform Family Investment Activities/ Employability Plan [FIA]/[EP] activities are eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Children are not required to be part of the TANF Cash assistance unit.

Additionally, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be provided for a teen parent, living with a specified caretaker relative, if needed for secondary school attendance hours.

Parents and children are subject to general eligibility requirements, as outlined in Child Eligibility in Section 1-6 and Parent Eligibility in Section 1-7.

Child Only Grant

Children who receive a child-only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] Cash grant may participate in a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. The parent must apply and be eligible for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

Qualified Child Care Provider

Families receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship must use either a licensed, registered or legally certified provider [LCP] approved for payment purposes, as outlined in Provider Eligibility in Section 1-8.

WoRC Refers Family to CCR&R

The WoRC Case Manager will not refer a family to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency before TANF Cash Assistance benefits are authorized. The need for child care usually begins when the

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TANF Cash Assistance eligibility process is pending and TANF benefits are pending. The CCR&R will authorize child care for 30 calendar days until TANF Cash Assistance has been authorized. The TANF family will not incur an overpayment if benefits are denied during this 30 calendar day period.

A family may need assistance in finding a child care provider. In these situations, the WoRC Case Manager may request the family to contact the CCR&R to receive a listing of possible child care providers.

If a child care scholarship is recommended, the WoRC Case Manager refers the family using an electronic referral form to the CCR&R according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Coordination of services is accomplished according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook. If the family decides to use a legally certified provider, the CCR&R in charge of this centralized service will process the LCP application according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

**CR&R Notifies
WoRC Case
Manager**

When the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship begins, the Eligibility Specialist mails a copy of the Child Care Certification Plan to the WoRC Case Manager.

**Re-certifying
Child Care for
TANF
Participants**

A re-certification reminder is mailed to the family six weeks before their child care certification plan expires.

NOTE: If the certification plan is less than six weeks, CCUBS may not automatically generate a re-certification reminder. The CCR&R is responsible for generating appropriate notices for the parent and the provider.

**WoRC Case
Manager
Notifies
CCR&R**

For a family transitioning from TANF to Non-TANF child care assistance, the WoRC Case Manager shall notify the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist if the family is eligible for the Fill-the-Gap child Section 6-6.

**Family Loses
Eligibility**

Families may lose eligibility during a child care certification plan. Evaluate the circumstances in an effort to offer continuity of care for the child and family, as outlined in Continuity of Care in Section 6-6. The family loses Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship eligibility if they lose eligibility for TANF, they fail to pay the required co-payment fees within

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the month due, there is no qualifying child in the home, or the parent has been sanctioned and there is no longer a need for child care during FIA/EP activities.

**Loss of TANF
Cash Eligibility**

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will process the case according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Sanctions

If a parent is sanctioned, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be offered if the participant is complying with portions of the FIA/EP agreement.

- Child care assistance may still be available in two situations:
 - Partial FIA/EP compliance - if the parent and WoRC Case Manager agree to continue some FIA/EP activities.
 - A need is established when one parent is participating in TANF Cash and the other parent is disqualified. The WoRC Case Manager will determine if there is a need for child care.

After the sanction period has been served, the family has the option to leave the TANF Cash Assistance program and apply for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

**TANF Work
Support
Payment**

When a family's TANF is closed due to earned income, they may receive a TANF Work Support payment. The TANF Work Support payment is money to help the participant bridge the gap between the closure of TANF Cash Assistance and the receipt of employment income into the household.

The TANF Cash Assistance Program does not consider the family to be categorized as TANF during this month and the month does not count towards the family's 60-month time clock for receiving TANF Cash Assistance. The ECSB does consider the TANF Work Support payment to be TANF assistance and therefore the CCR&R should continue to keep the family categorized as TANF until the end of the month in which the Work Support payment was received.

**Dependent Care
Disregard**

OPA Eligibility Case Managers determine TANF eligibility. A dependent care disregard for out-of-pocket dependent care expenses is used when determining income available to TANF participants. The portion of the family's income used to pay for dependent care, up to \$200 per individual per month, is excluded from the family's income when determining TANF

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eligibility.

**Co-payment
Requirement**

Each family receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is required to contribute toward the cost of the child care scholarship based on the family's ability to pay. The co-payment is based on a sliding fee scale. Families eligible for TANF Cash benefits have a \$10 monthly co-payment.

**TANF Families
Require
Affordable,
Appropriate,
Suitable Care
Within a
Reasonable
Distance**

CCR&Rs, in conjunction with the WoRC Case Manager, shall inform the families participating in the TANF Cash Assistance program that they are exempt from penalties for non-participation in required activities if they need child care and cannot find child care for children under age six that is appropriate, affordable, suitable, and within a reasonable distance. See Section 1-3 for definitions of the following terms: Affordable Child Care, Appropriate Child Care, Reasonable Distance, and, Unsuitable Informal Care.

Serving the Family

Families may lose eligibility for a brief period during a transition. Policies are available to maintain continuity of care for the child and maintain an established relationship with the child's provider, as outlined in Section 6 of this manual. Additional Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship management issues are addressed in the same section.

**Family
Transitioning from
TANF to Non-
TANF Child Care
Assistance**

When TANF is closed, the family must apply for Non-TANF Child Care assistance at the local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency. The CCR&R will interview the family to determine if the Fill-the-Gap policy should be applied to insure the continuity of care for the children and follow the procedures outlined in the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services	Section: TANF Child Care Eligibility & Coordination
CHILD CARE	Subject: Tribal TANF Coordination

Supersedes: Child Care 3-1 (9/1/06)

References: 52-2-701 – 704 & 52-2-711 – 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305-306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] families are dually eligible for Tribal Block Grant child care and the State CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. CCR&Rs must verify that the family is not receiving Tribal Block Grant child care before determining eligibility for State CCDF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] currently contracts with each Child Care Resource & Referral [CCR&R] agency to determine eligibility for families receiving TANF. If the Tribal TANF program exhausts child care funding or if Tribal Block Grant families find they are covered for additional activities under State Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF] child care rules, families may apply for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

Application & CCUBS Processing A family participating in the Tribal TANF cash program completes the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application. During the application process the family is notified of their rights and responsibilities. Each Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] must work with their local Tribal TANF programs, to determine how much child care assistance is required to complete Tribal Activity Plan (TAP) activities. All income and activity information is entered in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS] for the following purposes:

- The family may wish to be eligible for the Non-TANF waiting list
- Data is used for federal reporting purposes
- Data is used in aggregate form to profile the population served by The program.

Qualifying Families & Children Participating Parents who need child care to perform Tribal Activity Plans (TAP) activities are eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. Children are not required to be part of the TANF Cash assistance unit. Parents and children are subject to non-tribal Best Beginnings

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TANF Child Care Eligibility & Coordination

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Tribal TANF Coordination

In TANF Cash	Scholarship eligibility requirements, as outlined in Child Eligibility Section 1-6 and Parent Eligibility in Section 1-7.
Qualified Child Care Provider	<p>Families receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship must use either a licensed, registered or legally certified provider [LCP] approved for payment purposes, as outlined in Provider Eligibility in Section 1-8.</p> <p>If the tribe runs their own child care licensing program and the state has an agreement to recognize that program, the Department would pay for care in that program.</p>
CCR&R Manages Child Care	<p>The Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) will manage the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for the family. The family must contact the CCR&R to approve the child care scholarship.</p> <p>A family may need assistance in finding a child care provider. In these situations, the family must contact the CCR&R to receive a listing of possible child care providers.</p>
Re-certifying Child Care for TANF Participants	<p>A re-certification reminder is mailed to families six (6) weeks before their child care certification plan expires.</p> <p>NOTE: If the certification plan is less than six (6) weeks, CCUBS may not automatically generate a re-certification reminder. The CR&R is responsible for generating appropriate notices for the parent and the provider.</p> <p>The family shall notify the CCR&R of any schedule changes occurring under the TAP that affect the need for child care.</p>
Loss of Eligibility	The family loses Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship eligibility if: they lose eligibility for Tribal TANF, they fail to pay the required co-payment fees within the month due, there is no qualifying child in the home, or the parent has been sanctioned and there is no longer a need for child care during TAP activities.
Sanctions	<p>If a parent is sanctioned, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may Be offered if the participant is complying with portions of the TAP agreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Child care assistance may still be available in two situations:

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- Partial TAP compliance - if the parent and Tribal TANF Case Manager agree to continue some TAP activities.
- A need is established when one parent is participating in Tribal TANF Cash and the other parent is disqualified. The Tribal TANF Case Manager will determine if there is a need for child care and communicate with the CCR&R.

The family has the option to give up Tribal TANF Cash benefits and apply for a Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

**Co-payment
Requirement**

Each family receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is required to contribute toward the cost of the child care scholarship based on the family's ability to pay. The co-payment is based on a sliding fee scale. Families eligible for Tribal TANF Cash benefits have a \$10 monthly copayment.

**TANF Families
Require
Affordable,
Appropriate,
Suitable Care
Within a
Reasonable
Distance**

CCR&Rs, in conjunction with the Tribal TANF Case Manager, shall inform the families participating in the Tribal TANF Cash program that they are exempt from penalties for non-participation in required activities if they need child care and cannot find child care for children under age six that is appropriate, affordable, suitable, and within a reasonable distance. See Section 1-3 for definitions of the following terms: Affordable Child Care, Appropriate Child Care, Reasonable Distance and, Unsuitable Informal Care.

Serving the Family

Families may lose eligibility for a brief period during a transition. Policies are available to maintain continuity of care for the child and maintain an established relationship with the child's provider. Refer to Section 6 'Serving the Family', in this manual, for details. Additional Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship management issues are addressed in the same section.

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TANF Child Care Eligibility & Coordination

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Working Caretaker Relative Child Care

Supersedes: Child Care 3-3 (1/27/12)

References: 52-2-701 – 704 & 52-2-711 – 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302, 37.80.305-306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.20 – 47

General Rule

This program is to support the cost of child care for working caretaker relatives participating in the child-only Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] cash assistance program administered by the State of Montana for children ages 11 and under. The working caretaker relative must contact their Office of Public Assistance [OPA] Case Manager to arrange for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship when work activities require child care. The OPA Case Manager makes an electronic referral to the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agency. The OPA Social Service Specialist must also provide the non-TANF childcare packet to the specified caretaker relative.

The packet includes: Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application, Request for Work Verification, Request for Training Verification, Child Care Service Plan Information, and information outlining the steps the specified caretaker relative must take in order to be determined eligible for this program. The OPA Social Service Specialist must inform the specified caretaker relative that the completed forms must be submitted to the CCR&R within 30 calendar days. Child Care assistance will not start until an electronic referral form is received at the local CCR&R agency.

For some families, it may be more cost effective and appropriate for the family to qualify for and utilize the regular Non-TANF Best Beginnings Program. The Public Assistance Office will provide notification of this option to the client. There may be an occasion when the family already qualifies for the Best Beginnings Scholarship and already pays a co-payment. It may be more prudent, in these cases, for the family to remain on the non-TANF Best Beginnings scholarship instead of taking advantage of the Working Caretaker Relative program.

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may begin on the date the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] receives the electronic

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referral form. The applicant then has 30 days from the date of the OPA referral to submit a completed Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application to the CCR&R.

The CCR&R issues the Child Care Certification Plan based on the caretaker relative's work schedule that requires child care. Care is only provided for the child who the child only TANF is matched to.

**Application &
Child Care Under
the Big Sky
[CCUBS]
Processing**

A caretaker relative participating in the child-only TANF cash program completes the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application and work verification form. The application notifies the family of their rights and responsibilities.

The application must be completed and submitted to the CCR&R within 30 calendar days of the child care referral by the OPA Case Manager or the case will be closed.

**Qualifying Families
& Children
Participating in
child-only TANF
cash**

Caretaker relatives who need child care for work activities are eligible for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. The caretaker relative can not be part of the TANF Cash assistance unit.

Caretaker relatives and children are subject to general eligibility requirements, as outlined in Child Eligibility in Section 1-6 and Parent Eligibility in Section 1-7, except for Working Caretaker Relative Child Care can only be provided for children age 11 and under.

**Qualified Child
Care Provider**

Families receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship must use either a licensed, registered or legally certified provider [LCP] approved for payment purposes, as outlined in Provider Eligibility in Section 1-8.

**Office of Public
Assistance [OPA]
Refers Family to
Centralized Child
Care Resource and
Referral**

The Office of Public Assistance [OPA] Case Manager may refer a caretaker relative to the centralized Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency while child-only TANF cash assistance benefits are authorized. A family may need assistance in finding a child care provider. In these situations, the OPA Case Manager may request the family to contact the centralized CCR&R to receive a listing of possible child care providers. If a child care scholarship is recommended, the OPA Case Manager refers the family using an electronic referral form to the CCR&R:

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Coordination of services is accomplished according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

**Re-certifying
Child Care for
child-only TANF
Participants**

A re-certification reminder is mailed to the family six weeks before their child care certification plan expires.

NOTE: If the certification plan is less than six weeks, CCUBS may not automatically generate a re-certification reminder. The CCR&R is responsible for generating appropriate notices for the parent and the provider.

**Family Loses
Eligibility**

Families may lose eligibility during a child care certification plan. The CCR&R will evaluate the circumstances in an effort to offer continuity of care for the child and family, as outlined in Continuity of Care in Section 6-6. The family loses Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship eligibility if:

- They lose eligibility for child-only TANF;
- They fail to pay the required co-payment fees within the month due;
- There is no qualifying child in the home; or
- There is no longer a need for child care during work activities.

**Loss of child-only
TANF Cash
Eligibility**

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will receive a notification from the OPA Case Manager and process according to the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

**Co-payment
Requirement**

Each family receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is required to contribute toward the cost of the child care scholarship based on the caretaker relative's eligibility for the program. Caretaker relatives eligible for child-only TANF Cash benefits have a \$150 monthly co-payment per family.

Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services	Section: Child & Family Services Child Care Management
CHILD CARE	Subject: CFSD & CCR&R Coordination

Supersedes: Child Care 4-1 (2/1/11)

References: Sections 37.80.101, 37.80.202, 37.80.203, 37.80.205, 37.80.206, 37.80.301, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule To qualify for Child Protective Services [CPS] child care, the child must need care because of the danger of neglect or abuse. The physical or emotional risk to the child needs to be documented in the case record. Some families may be required to pay for child care services, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Age Requirement A child is eligible for a Child Protective Services [CPS] Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship through the day before the child's 18th birthday. When approving a child older than age 12, see the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Child Care Providers Child care providers must either be licensed or registered in order to care for Child Protective Services [CPS] children. An exception may be granted by the Regional Administrator to allow a Legally Unregistered child care provider to serve a [CPS] child, however, IV-E funds cannot be used to pay a Legally Certified Provider or Legally Certified In-home Provider [LCP/LCI].

Eligibility A Social Worker with the Department of Public Health and Human Services [DPHHS] Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] determines a family's need for child protective services Child Protective Services [CPS] child care. The Social Worker may have several options for child care. All CPS child care is administered by the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies. When the Social Worker selects a CPS child care scholarship through the CCR&R, a referral is made for each individual child.

Two Funding Options at the [CCR&R]: Two funding options are available for child care scholarships administered through Child Care Resource and Referrals [CCR&R]: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] and non-TANF.

Referral Form A Social Worker, who selects the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program, refers each child who needs care to the centralized Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] using the Child Care Referral – Electronic Form, Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] Child Care Referral [date].doc Use

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CHILD CARE

Subject:

CFSD & CCR&R Coordination

the form as follows:

- Tab to each grey box to type in the blanks. Click on each drop-down box to view choices.
- Complete one referral for each sibling. (Save the file, edit, and then use 'File: Save-As' for siblings.)
- E-mail the completed form as an attachment to the centralized Child Care Resource and Referral agency.
- Save this document file for future child care updates, and print this document, as needed.

**Child Protective
Services [CPS]
Temporary
Assistance for
Needy Families
[TANF] Child Care**

Child Protective Services [CPS] Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] child care may follow a child who is removed from a TANF household for up to 90 days. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

NOTE: A child-only TANF Cash grant alone does not qualify a child for CPS TANF child care. The child may qualify for CPS Non-TANF child care. (See non-TANF Child Care Scholarship eligibility requirements.)

**Child Protective
Services [CPS]
Non-TANF
Child Care**

A child in need of Child Protective Services [CPS] child care who does not qualify for other child care scholarships may be referred to the CPS Non-TANF Child Care program. Funding for this program is very limited.

- Set up one case per CPS Child, with the child as the head of household.
- Select program type: Child Protective Services.
- Select fund account: Non-TANF State General Fund -or- CCDF.
- Select reason for child care: Child Protective Services.
- Select single parent family: Not applicable [CPS].

**Child and Family
Services Division
[CFSD] Child Care
Options**

The Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] may have other CPS child care options that are managed on the Child and Adult Protective Services [CAPS] computer system:
- Emergency Assistance Child Care.

**Rate for a Child
with Special
Needs**

To qualify for a special needs rate, the Social Worker must include a reference to the special need in the child's approved case plan. The Social Worker will work with the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Early Childhood Specialist to complete the Special Needs Subsidy Rating Scale to recommend an appropriate rate for child care and the Individual Child Care Plan. The process may involve gathering documentation and consulting with medical professionals.

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CFSD & CCR&R Coordination

- Foster Children** The department may pay for CPS child care during the time foster parents spend at work, in training, counseling, or similar activities which are directly connected to their ability to care for foster children in their home.
- Refugee Children** Eligibility for Child Protective Services [CPS] child care of refugee children is determined by the same procedure as for all other recipients.

Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services	Section: Child & Family Services Child Care Management
CHILD CARE	Subject: Tribal IV-E Child Protective Services

Supersedes: Child Care 4-2 (2/1/11)

References: Sections 37.80.101, 37.80.202, 37.80.203, 37.80.205, 37.80.206, 37.80.301, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule To qualify for Tribal IV-E Child Protective Services [CPS] child care, the child must need care because of the danger of neglect or abuse. The physical or emotional risk to the child needs to be documented in the case record.

Age Requirement A child is eligible for a Tribal IV-E CPS Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship through the day before the child's 18th birthday. When approving a child older than age 12, see the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Child Care Providers Child care providers must either be licensed or registered in order to care for Tribal IV-E CPS children. IV-E funds cannot be used to pay legally certified or legally certified in-home providers [LCP/LCI].

Eligibility A Social Worker with the DPHHS Child and Family Services Division [CFSD] determines a family's need for Tribal IV-E child protective services [CPS] child care. Tribal IV-E CPS child care is administered by CFSD.

Funding Funding is only available for child care scholarships administered through the CFSD. Tribal IV-E child care must be selected as the funding source in Child Care Under the Big Sky [CCUBS].

Referral Form The Child and Family Services Division Central Office, who selects the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program, refers each child who needs care to the local CCR&R using the Child Care Referral – Electronic Form, CFSD Child Care Referral.

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Subject:

Tribal IV-E Child Protective Services

**Rate for a Child
with Special
Needs**

To qualify for a special needs rate, the Social Worker must include a reference to the special need in the child's approved case plan. The Social Worker will work with the CCR&R Early Childhood Specialist to complete the Special Needs Subsidy Rating Scale to recommend an appropriate rate for child care and the Individual Child Care Plan. The process may involve gathering documentation and/or consulting with medical professionals. See Section 1-4a for additional information for a child with special needs.

CCR&R Process

The CCR&R Eligibility Worker must enter each child into CCUBS as an individual case event. The CCR&R Eligibility Worker will use the address information for the child from the referral. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

Serving the Family

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Child Care Referrals

Supersedes: Child Care 6-1 (4/9/16)

References: 52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM 45
CFR Part 98.20 – 47

Referral Process In Montana, referral assistance to families needing to locate child care is with the regional Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies. The referral service is available to all families in the state and is separate from the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program. A computerized matching of the family's needs with the profiles of child care providers in the area where the family resides or works provides an objective referral.

Families seeking child care referrals may do so by contacting the referral agency using the agency's toll free telephone number, by mail, by e-mail, by visiting the agency in person, or through online search at www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

Referral listings shall be distributed through a method requested by the parent, to include:

1. Mailing to the parent at no charge
2. Picking up by the parent
3. Faxing to the parent
4. E-mailing to the parent

Referral requests for immediate care (within two weeks) shall be processed and distributed to the parent within two (2) working days. Referral requests for future care (two+ weeks away) shall be processed and distributed to the parent within five working days.

Parents who rely on a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship shall not receive referrals for providers ineligible for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program.

Referrals Referrals shall be provided to participants in and families who are eligible for the following programs:

- Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship
- TANF Cash Assistance
- Other public assistance programs
- Child Protective Services

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CHILD CARE	Subject: Child Care Referrals

At their discretion, the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency may include additional groups to expand the availability of basic referrals.

No Fee for a Referral

No fee shall be charged for referrals. A family eligible for a referral shall be given a password and the public referral URL that allows them to perform Internet searches without a fee.

Information Provided in a Referral

At a minimum, a basic referral shall include the following:

- Provider [first and last name] or facility name
- Location (address is optional)
- Telephone number
- Age range of children
- Facility type
- Days/hours of business
- Consumer education material

The agency has the option of providing an enhanced referral, with additional information and service. Families that do not meet the eligibility criteria for basic referrals and families interested in additional service may request an enhanced referral.

Unbiased Referrals

All referrals must be unbiased. To ensure unbiased referrals, Referral Specialists use NACCRRAware to select providers who meet the majority of the family's preferences. Referral Specialists shall be trained to refine their queries so that at least 3 providers come up in the query. An exception for a minimum number of matches will be made for hard to find care or for locations that do not have 3 providers with vacancies. Referral Specialists should use good judgment in determining a maximum number of matches. Larger queries should have additional criteria such as quality level of provider or environment added to narrow the list. Queries with less than 3 results should have the search broadened.

Child care referrals for families who have children with disabilities must not be discriminatory. A provider search for these families shall include the full range of child care providers available, not just those who indicate they serve children with disabilities.

Intake – 'Child Care Need' Form

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies will conduct an initial meeting with the parent by phone, e-mail, mail, or in person to gather information regarding the family's child care needs and preferences. CCR&R's should complete or have the parent complete the Child Care Need form to obtain the information needed for a referral.

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Data Entry

Information from the Child Care Need form must be entered into NACCRRAware and used to match the family with a child care provider who meets their needs. Information must be complete and accurate, to ensure effective referrals and to provide accurate statistics. The Early Childhood Services Bureau and the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency will query NACCRRAware to obtain statistics needed for reports.

Consumer Education Material

Consumer education material must be professional in appearance and at a minimum include the following information:

- Guidance on how to select a quality child care program that has a checklist of items to be aware of when selecting quality care;
- A local phone number to file a complaint:
<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/earlychildhood/index.shtml> or
- To check for substantiated complaints:
<http://ccubs-sanswrite.hhs.mt.gov/MontanaPublic/ProviderSearch.aspx>
- Information about the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program;
- Information on child development; and
- Information on the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency in the area where the provider lives or works.

Additional information must be available on request including:

1. Local market rate information;
2. Licensing and registration requirements;
3. Information about Child Care Tax Credits;
4. Guidance about standard child care business practices such as contracts, rates and fees, etc.; and
5. Information about transportation policies of facilities.

Consumer education material must be available in a variety of formats that allow the material to be faxed, attached as an e-mail in PDF or Text format, or viewable through a link to the Child Care Aware website:

www.childcareaware.org.

Disclaimer

A disclaimer must be printed on each referral and must read as follows; "Thank you for contacting the specific Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency. The information on the child care providers you receive is a referral and does not imply an endorsement for a particular child care provider or facility. It is your responsibility to screen and evaluate the child care providers on your list. It is recommended that you follow the guidelines outlined in the enclosed pamphlets when interviewing and make your decision based on those findings.

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Child Care Referrals

**Licensed &
Registered
Providers**

Providers are encouraged to contact the regional Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency that provides referrals to participate in the referral process.

**No LCP
Referrals**

Legally Certified Providers [LCP] do not qualify for referrals. Providers who convert to [LCP] status must be coded 'Inactive' on NACCRRAware.

**Non-licensed
Providers**

Non-licensed, legally operating programs will be added to NACCRRAware. These programs include legally operating facilities in which no licensing standards exist:

- After-school programs that are exempt from licensing
- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Preschools
- Sick-child care
- Summer programs

**Provider
Updates**

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies are responsible for maintaining and updating the NACCRRAware database. Common updates include changes in vacancies, demographic information, adding new providers, and changing a provider's status. Provider information in NACCRRAware should be as current and accurate as possible. Accurate provider information is critical for providing good referrals, generating statewide statistics and making on-line referrals a success. Parents need to be able to retrieve the same information from the database as referral counselors without knowing all the details of the provider information.

Providers must submit the Child Care Referral Program Provider Information Form annually to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies that provides referrals. Providers who do not submit the Child Care Referral Program Information Form shall be listed as "No Referrals" and "No Web Referrals."

Providers who have elected to participate in the referral program must be contacted for updates. Providers who consistently do not have vacancies, maintain an internal waiting list, and indicate that they will contact the Referral Specialist when they have a change annually to update information and waiting list status. Completion of the annual Child Care Referral Program Provider Information form will count as the update. Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies must indicate providers who meet these criteria in the comment section of the Provider General screen.

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Child Care Referrals

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies shall make inquiries to providers who have indicated that they have vacancies or who periodically have vacancies a minimum of every quarter. Updates may be conducted by phone, e-mail, and mail or through personal interviews. Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies must make a consistent good faith attempt to obtain updates but are not responsible if the provider does not respond to the inquiry. Vacancy information for slots that are in great demand, such as infant vacancies, needs to be updated more often. Updates need to be documented in the action log. The action log can be queried to see which providers have received a recent update.

Providers are encouraged to contact the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies that provides referrals whenever they have a change in their vacancy status.

<p>Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services</p> <p>CHILD CARE</p>	<p>Section: Serving the Family</p> <hr/> <p>Subject: Issuing the Authorization of Services and Certification Plan</p>
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Supersedes: Child Care 6-3 (1/27/12)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule

Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are issued through a child care Authorization of services and corresponding certification plan which authorizes care for up to six months. The child care hours approved must mirror the approved parent and child's activities:

- Parent's work, school, & Family Investment Agreement/ Employability Plan (FIA/EP) activities requiring child care, allowing for travel time.
- The child's schedule, school, or alternative care arrangements, including the child's nap time.

The authorization certification plan is mailed to the parent and the provider with the following information:

- The name(s) of the children authorized for care.
- The name of the child care provider authorized to provide care.
- The number of hours per week for which Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is authorized.
- The number of months for which authorization is granted.
- The amount of monthly co-payment, which the parent must pay to the provider.

**Prospect the
Length of the
Child Care
Authorization**

Prospect eligibility based on the information known at the time of application or re-determination. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] Eligibility Specialist must take into account whether the family is participating in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], Non-TANF or Child Protective Services [CPS]. If no change, determine eligibility for six months for TANF or CPS and twelve months for Non-TANF and set up the authorization and corresponding certification plan.

CCR&R Eligibility Specialists should create an authorization and corresponding certification plan which closely matches the parent's work and/or school schedule if there is a need for care during these hours. If the parent is on a regular schedule, the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan should be set up using a daily time frame. If

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**Issuing the Authorization of Services and
Certification Plan**

the parent is on a varied schedule, the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan should be set up using a weekly-approved amount of time.

Travel Time

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will consider travel time for the parent to and from work on a case-by-case basis in determining the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan. Additional time for travel may be included when circumstances create a hardship for completing approved activities. Reasons for approving additional travel time must be case noted.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing travel time.

If the household anticipates a change in the reason or the need for child care, set the length of the child care authorization to end when the household change is expected to occur.

Once eligibility is correctly prospected, a child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan should be issued as soon as possible. If a delay occurs, such as waiting for Legally Certified Provider [LCP] background checks, create an authorization of services and corresponding certification plan based on the date eligibility was determined.

NOTE: Should the eligibility specialist find out the family was not actually eligible when the determination was made, due to misinformation of some type, an authorization and corresponding certification plan would not be issued. In the event that an authorization of services was already created, it will be terminated and the family will be informed that the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan is no longer valid.

A child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan may be modified or terminated at any time. Fifteen calendar days before any reduction of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, a new child care certification plan or closure notice, is mailed to the parent and the provider.

See Change Reporting, as outlined in Section 6-5 of the manual.

Maximum Hours

Child care may be authorized for up to 20 hours per day. (24-hour care will be paid as two full-time days.) However, care in excess of ten hours/day may be approved only when the parent's activity exceeds ten hours/day. Verification

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of the work/school/FIA schedule must be received from the employer before care in excess of ten hours/day will be approved. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure and Resource Manual for processing.

Minimum Hours

In an effort to increase billing accuracy, child care authorizations of services and corresponding certification plans shall represent the most accurate amount of child care needed by each child and each family. CCR&Rs have the ability to override invoices when the family exceeds the amount of care authorized. Reasons must be documented in file. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook.

Extending Child Care Hours – Meeting the Parent’s Need for Child Care

A family may have a need to temporarily extend hours beyond the current authorization of services and corresponding certification plan. The Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] eligibility specialist may approve additional hours beyond the limit of the child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan if the need is verified. Document the need for more hours with written verification. The need for additional care must be verified.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

When an invoice requires an override, the reason for the override will be entered on the invoice upper comment line before it is overridden.

Keep hardcopy documentation on file:

- Case file: written notes from parents, employers, or school officials;
- Invoice file: hand written comments;
- General File: School calendars, or similar materials, or documentation of community events that affect a number of families.

CCR&Rs shall keep hardcopy records as reference for three years to fulfill audit requirements.

No Need for Child Care

An employment or household change relieves the need for child care.

See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.

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Private & Home School

Any licensed or registered child care provider is not eligible for child care assistance for children who fall within the age groups traditionally serviced by the public school system. The department will not pay for child care during normal school hours when a child is home schooled or in public or private school.

Change in Provider

Parents are responsible for notifying the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R], within one business day, when changing or adding a child care provider. Notification may be in the form of a telephone call, in writing through the mail, or hand delivered in person to the CCR&R office. Parents must be able to demonstrate that notification was made. If the parent fails to notify the CCR&R of a provider change, but begins to use the new provider, the "new" provider is not eligible for payment until the date the family notifies the CCR&R.

The following table lists possible reasons for parental eligibility and the requirements associated with that eligibility.

Policy	Requirements
Parent is Unavailable	A parent must be participating in approved work/school/FIA activities when using their Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. In very limited circumstances, it may be determined that a parent is temporarily unavailable to care for their children, because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The parent is unable to provide a safe environment for the child(ren), due to a mental, addictive or physical limitation; or ❑ The parent is tending to the medical emergency of an immediate family member; or ❑ The parent may be working in a different city for a temporary period of time. See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.
Rehabilitation? - Only if Working	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for rehabilitation activities, when the family does not meet a work requirement.
Respite Care? - Only if CPS	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for respite care unless a social worker from the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) refers the family for Child Protective Services and authorizes (CPS) child care.

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Policy	Requirements
Split Work Shift	<p>A Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may span the break in a split work shift, if it is impractical for the parent to pick up their children during the break. At a minimum, the following factors should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Length of break; <input type="checkbox"/> Travel time and travel arrangements; and <input type="checkbox"/> Child's schedule while in care (e.g. nap time?). <p>See the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] Procedure Handbook for processing.</p>
Study Time	<p>Eligibility workers must obtain documentation for credits enrolled and paid fees for the classes they registered for from the parent.</p> <p>See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing</p>
Maintaining Continuity of Care	<p>As a family's circumstances change, eligibility issues may interrupt the child care authorization and corresponding certification plan and the child's continuity of care, see Absent Day Policies and Continuity of Care, as outlined in Section 6-6 of this manual:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Enrollment <input type="checkbox"/> Extending Child Care Hours <input type="checkbox"/> Fill-the-Gap <input type="checkbox"/> Grace Period <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Appointments <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Emergency <input type="checkbox"/> Nap Time <input type="checkbox"/> Suspending a Case

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Subject:
Co-payment Requirements

Supersedes: Child Care 6-4 (5/1/05)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule: Each family receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship pays part of the cost of child care. Each family is obligated to pay a co-payment to their child care provider by the end of the service month. The co-payment is based on their family size and gross income as illustrated on the Montana Child Care Sliding Fee Scale as outlined in Section1-5.

The required co-payment is considered the initial down payment for the child care scholarship each month. A family loses eligibility for further child care scholarships if they do not pay the co-payment, or make satisfactory arrangements with their child care provider.

NOTE: There is no co-payment obligation when the reason for care is CPS.

Cost of Care is Less than the Co-payment If the month's cost of child care is less than the monthly co-payment obligation, the family is obligated to pay only the cost of care, not the full co-payment indicated on the child care authorization and corresponding certification plan.

More Than One Provider There are times when a parent may need to use two or more child care providers. In these circumstances, the family's co-payment is attached to the provider providing the majority of the care. In the case where two providers provide an equal amount of care, the parent may choose which provider should receive the co-payment. If the child, for some reason, does not attend the primary facility during a month, then the co-payment will default to the secondary provider

Co-payments Parents who fail to pay their co-payment by the end of the service month will lose the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship until the co-payment is paid. The child care provider indicates the amount of co-payment received on the monthly invoice.

For the purposes of determining a family's eligibility for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, the first payment(s) made to the provider will be counted toward satisfying the parent's co-payment obligation. Any other unpaid fees

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(over-and-above rates, late charges, etc.) are not considered for the purpose of maintaining the parent's eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship and are solely the responsibility of the parent and the provider.

**Notice of
Unpaid
Co-payment**

Parents receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship shall pay their co-payment by the end of the service month. If the parent does not pay their co-payment or make satisfactory arrangements with their provider, the CCR&R Specialist shall:

- Request verification within 15 calendar days, notifying the parent and provider.
- Provide notice to the parent and provider 15 calendar days before case closure.
- If verification of payment (or satisfactory arrangement) is not received, close the case.
- Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure and Resource Manual]
- If the family provides written verification from their provider that they have paid the co-payment by the deadline, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may continue.
- If the parent does not provide written verification by the deadline, the eligibility specialist shall close the scholarship. Fair Hearing rights are included on the closure notice. The CCR&R shall notify the provider the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is closed.
- If the parent pays their co-payment after the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is closed, the family may be eligible beginning on the day the co-payment was paid or verified, under the following conditions:
 - o Eligibility must be re-determined; and
 - o Child Care and Development Funds must be available.

**Satisfactory
Arrangements
in Lieu of Cash
Co-payment**

A parent may compensate a child care provider with goods or services in lieu of paying the co-payment in cash. The child care provider indicates their satisfaction with the arrangement by marking the co-payment as paid-in-full on the monthly invoice.

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Subject:

Change Reporting

Supersedes: Child Care 6-5 (2/1/11)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-6ten MCA;
Sections 37.80.ten1-ten3, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

**Change
Reporting
Requirements**

Income eligible families receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship based on work/school/FIA activities shall report any change in circumstance, which may affect their eligibility or their need for child care to the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency within ten calendar days of knowing the change. Changes reported to the CCR&R by telephone shall be followed up in writing by the parent within ten calendar days.

Reporting changes to other DPHHS or State entities is not adequate. The report must be made to the CCR&R. However, the CCR&R may accept a copy of the participant's written change notice submitted to another agency, in lieu of the **Change Report Form**, if the information satisfies the CCR&R's need for information.

If the change is reported by telephone, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist shall follow up by sending the **Change Report Form** to the parent to confirm the change, sign, and return it to the CCR&R.

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for processing.

Families should use the **Change Report Form**, to report changes to their CCR&R Eligibility Specialist. The form reminds parents of the reporting requirements:

- Change in employment of any household member;
- Loss of employment to less than the minimum hourly work requirement;
- The addition or loss of a household member;
- A change in mailing or residence address;
- A change in school attendance;
- A change in child care provider (report immediately); and
- Entering or leaving the TANF Cash program.

A child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan may be modified or terminated at any time. When the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist makes a change in a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, the parent shall be notified in writing within 15 calendar days of the change. When the

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CCR&R or State takes an adverse action, a notice is mailed to the parent fifteen [15] calendar days before the action.

**CCR&R
Evaluates the
Change**

If any change in circumstance is not prospected when eligibility is determined, the change must be evaluated when reported to the CCR&R. Depending on the change circumstances, the family may:

- Make adjustments to allow Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to continue for their child:
 - Change in child care provider;
 - Child moves to another Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship household; or
- If the family moves within a different Montana CCR&R District. Benefit from a change which increases their Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship:
 - Request more child care hours;
 - Request a lower co-payment, because income decreased or household size increased.
- Postpone some changes which decrease their Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship:
 - A change in income is not to be considered until re-certification unless it benefits the family; or
 - The loss of a household member unless a child moves to another Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship household.
- Lose eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship:
 - Loss of TANF Cash eligibility;
 - A teen parent is no longer attending high school (or meeting the work requirement);
 - The parent is not meeting the minimum hourly work requirement;
 - A household change relieves the need for child care;
 - A change in work schedule relieves the need for child care;
 - The child care provider is not certified for payment; or
 - Parent fails to pay co-payment.

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for case noting.

What-If Scenario

The net effect of some Non-TANF household changes may not be clear. For example, a parent may return to the household, bringing a nominal amount of income to the household. The Child Care Resource and Referral Eligibility Specialist may present options to the family:

- Run a what-if scenario by entering the household change(s), including the income and the proposed child care hours.

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- Present the family with the option of keeping the current arrangement or incorporating the changes.
- If the household change benefits the family, the family may choose to re-determine eligibility and a request a new child care certification plan, which will have the same end-date as the original certification plan.
- If the change is not favorable to the family, the CCR&R should counsel the family regarding the pending impact of the household change at re-certification time.

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.

Failure to Change Report

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist shall evaluate changes that were not reported in a timely manner. While the parent has an obligation to report changes within ten calendar days, the consequence of not reporting depends on whether the change causes a loss of basic eligibility. Failure to report, in itself, does not cause eligibility to be lost. Income changes generally do not create basic eligibility issues during the eligibility span. However, the failure to meet the work requirement does create a basic eligibility issue. If the work requirement is not being met, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist should communicate to the family the Continuity of Care Policies as outlined in Section 6-6.

Assuming income was prospected correctly when eligibility was determined, the increase in income does not affect the family's eligibility during the eligibility span. The family maintains basic eligibility when income fluctuates during the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan. Failure to report the income change before recertification may simply result in a family losing eligibility, under short notice, when the family recertifies.

The change in employment does raise a question about basic eligibility. A family no longer meeting the work requirement loses eligibility, however, we allow ten calendar days for change reporting.

- If the parent reports an employment change within ten calendar days, and:
- income decreases, the parent may be eligible for a lower co-payment; or
 - if income increases, the parent may be counseled regarding a future increase in co-payment or future eligibility loss occurring at recertification time; or
 - if employment is lost, the parent may be eligible for a Grace Period.

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If the parent fails to report an employment change within ten calendar days, and:

- the parent takes another job to meet the work requirement within ten calendar days, the parent still maintains basic eligibility; the parent is re-employed before the allowed reporting period expires. The employment change does not cause eligibility to be lost. Nor does failure to report cause eligibility to be lost. In this situation, the parent would not be subject to overpayment for this period, assuming child care is used for appropriate activities; or
- If unemployment extends beyond ten days without a change report, the parent loses eligibility. The parent also loses the opportunity to apply for the grace period. The parent's failure to report unemployment delays the CCR&R's knowledge of the family's ineligibility; the child care scholarship must be closed. After eligibility is lost, any further use of the child care scholarship is subject to overpayment. Any subsequent employment does not rekindle eligibility unless the family reapplies.

The following table lists possible changes and the applicable procedures for processing the change.

Change	Policy
Child is Temporarily Absent	<p>Remove a child's needs from the household if he/she is gone from the home for more than 30 calendar days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the only eligible child in a child care scholarship is gone from the home for 30 calendar days, close the child care scholarship. <input type="checkbox"/> If one child, of two or more eligible children, in a household is gone for more than 30 calendar days, end the child's authorization of services. <p>Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]</p>
Child Moves In or has Newborn	<p>A new child may join a participating household without being placed on the Non-TANF waiting list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify household membership; <input type="checkbox"/> create an authorization of services for the child if needed; <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate to determine if a change in copayment needs to be made; and <p>Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]</p>
Child Moves Out	<p>A child who moves to another household for more than 30 calendar days shall be removed from the previous child care scholarship household and considered part of the new household. If the new household needs help with child care, a new separate scholarship application is required.</p>

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Change	Policy
	<p>NOTE: A child may concurrently participate in two households.</p> <p>Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]</p>
Child Support	<p>A change in the CSED case, whether it is open or closed during eligibility must be reported to the CCR&R within 10 calendar days of the date it happened. A change in the amount of support received through a court order must be reported within 10 calendar days of the date it happened. A change in any circumstances related to the parent's Good Cause must be reported within a 10 calendar day time period of the change.</p>
Family Moves	<p>A family that moves to another location in Montana may maintain eligibility during the move. All reporting requirements apply, however, the move, in itself, does not cause a family to lose eligibility. If a parent changes jobs within the ten-day reporting period, the parent may maintain eligibility.</p> <p>The child care scholarship may be transferred to a new Eligibility Specialist within Montana. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist must evaluate the move and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify and update new address; <input type="checkbox"/> CCR&R Eligibility Specialists shall contact each other to coordinate the move; and <input type="checkbox"/> See the ESCB Procedure and Resource Manual for case noting. <p>NOTE: A family who moves out of Montana loses eligibility for Montana's Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.</p>
Head-of-Household Change	<p>A change in the head-of-household does not create a break in eligibility, as long as all other eligibility factors are maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify household membership; and <input type="checkbox"/> Case note household changes in both cases. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]
Household Member Moves Out	<p>A decrease in household size, which was not prospected when eligibility was determined, does not affect eligibility or the co-payment until redetermination time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify household membership; <input type="checkbox"/> File the change report form for reference at redetermination; and

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Change	Policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> See the ESCB Procedure Handbook..
Income Decreases	<p>If a Non-TANF family's income decreases and they request to have their co-payment lowered, evaluate the family's work hours and income. Prospect the next month's co-payment accordingly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify income change; <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the authorization of services to coordinate with the need for child care based on family's work hours; <input type="checkbox"/> Reevaluate the family's income to prospect a lower co-payment; <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a Change Report form to the family to request a grace period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the grace period is applicable, maintain the child care hours for 30 calendar days <input type="checkbox"/> If the grace period does not apply, reduce the child care hours to reflect the new work & school schedule; <input type="checkbox"/> Notify the parent and the provider of the change or closure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the family no longer meets the work requirement, close the child care; and <input type="checkbox"/> Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]
Income Increases	<p>An increase in income, which was not prospected when eligibility was determined, does not affect eligibility or the co-payment until re-certification time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> File the change report form for reference at re-certification; <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the certification plan, if needed, to coordinate with the need for child care based on family's work hours and schedule; and <input type="checkbox"/> Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.] <p>NOTE: If income was not prospected correctly, the eligibility specialist shall reevaluate eligibility based on the correct information.</p>
Parent Moves In	<p>When a parent is added to the household, the family size increases and household income may increase. The Eligibility Specialist may run a what-if scenario and present options to the family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Run a what-if scenario by entering the household change(s), including the income and the proposed child care hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Present the family with the option of keeping the current arrangement or incorporating the changes.

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Change	Policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ If the household change benefits the family, the family may choose to re-determine eligibility and a request a new child care certification plan. ❑ If the change is not favorable to the family, the CCR&R should council the family regarding the pending impact of the household change at re-certification time. ❑ Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]
Parent Moves Out	<p>When a parent moves out of the household, the need for a child care scholarship may increase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Re-determine eligibility, if a lower co-payment is desired; ❑ Adjust the child care authorization of services, if needed, to coordinate with the need for child care based on the family's work hours and schedule; and ❑ Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.] <p>Parents in the process of divorce or separation may individually continue participation under separate households, as long as all other eligibility factors are maintained.</p> <p>NOTE: A child may concurrently participate in two households.</p>
Provider Change	<p>The parent may choose a new child care provider at any time. The child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan links the child/family to the child care provider. The child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan must list the child's current provider before a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship authorization of services and corresponding certification plan can be issued. The parent should plan ahead when changing child care providers and notify the CCR&R prior to the provider change or within one business day of the change. The CCR&R may accept child care provider changes done by phone, if the parent is the person noticing the CCR&R by phone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Adjust the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan to reflect the new provider, maintaining the same end-date and eligibility information; ❑ Cancel authorizations of services and corresponding certification plans with the old provider and create authorizations of services and

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Change	Policy
	<p>corresponding certification plans with the new provider;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist should write the new provider change on a Child Care Service Plan, date the effective date of the change, date when notice of the change was received, initial the change and keep a copy in the family's file; ❑ The new certification plan will serve as notification to the parent and to the new provider ; and ❑ Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.] <p>NOTE: The parent & the child care provider are responsible for notifying each other of changes. They are responsible for any notice obligations or agreements between them.</p> <p>If the parent fails to notify the CCR&R of a provider change within one business day, the parent is responsible for the cost of care at the new provider/facility until such change is reported to the CCR&R. The CCR&R will not make changes to the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan until notified either by phone or in writing by the parent, of the new provider change. Provider changes on should not be backdated to the actual date of the change if the CCR&R did not receive appropriate notice of the change. The authorization of services and corresponding certification plan should reflect the date the CCR&R was notified by the parent or the effective date of the change in provider; whichever is later. Case note the circumstances.</p> <p>NOTE: In a situation where the parent failed to notify the CCR&R of a change in provider, the existing provider may bill Certified Enrollment days for the period between when care stopped at the existing provider and the parent reported the change of a new provider to the CCR&R if the existing provider thought the child would return to their facility. The parent is responsible for any notice or payment obligation to the previous child care provider.</p>
Provider Not Certified for Payment	<p>The provider is not certified to receive State payment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ End the authorization of services and corresponding certification plan;

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Change	Policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Notify the parent and provider; <input type="checkbox"/> If TANF Cash, notify WoRC Case Manager via e-mail; and <input type="checkbox"/> See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for case noting.
Teen-Parent No Longer in School	<p>A teen-parent, participating in the Non-TANF program, who no longer attends school may continue receiving a child care scholarship if he/she meets the work requirement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the parent is meeting the work requirement, change the reason for care to 'Working'. <input type="checkbox"/> If the parent is not meeting the work requirement, close the child care scholarship. <input type="checkbox"/> Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]
Teen-Parent On Summer Break	<p>A teen-parent may maintain eligibility for child care scholarship if they meet the work requirement during summer break.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use 'Working,' as the reason for care for the summer. <input type="checkbox"/> Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.] <p>The child care scholarship will be closed for the teen-parent who does not meet work requirements during the summer. The teen-parent may reapply when returning to school.</p>
Work Requirement Not Met	<p>A reduction in work hours to less than the minimum hourly work requirement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a Change Report form to the family to request a grace period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> If the grace period is applicable, set the certification plan to end in 30 days following employment loss. <input type="radio"/> If the family no longer meets the work requirement and the grace period is not applicable, close the child care. <input type="checkbox"/> Notify the parent and provider of the closure date. <input type="checkbox"/> Case note. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]

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Absent Days & Continuity of Care

Supersedes: Child Care 6-6 (4/9/16)

References: Sections 52-2-701-704, 52-2-711-713, 53-4-610 MCA;
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 ARM
45 CFR Part 98

General Rule After the child care authorization and corresponding certification plan is issued, a family's schedule may vary. While a family's child care authorization and corresponding certification plan may be modified or terminated at any time, the following policies are useful in avoiding temporary gaps in eligibility and services to children. The policies can be grouped under the following intentions:

- Maintain Parent's Eligibility;
- Meet the Parent's Need for Additional Child Care; and
- Stabilize Child Care Arrangement.

While all of these policies benefit the family, some are focused on the needs of their child care providers who would not be available without adequate compensation. The relationship of the child with their provider depends on the stability of the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. The CCR&R, the family, and the provider all have an interest in maintaining continuity of care during transition periods.

Absent Day Policies	Description & Requirements
<p>Absent Days– Stabilize Child Care Arrangement</p>	<p>Absent Days are a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship benefit provided to the parent who is responsible for paying their child care provider when a child is temporarily absent from full-time care in a licensed, or registered child care facility. Legally certified care does not qualify for this benefit. Part-time child care authorizations and corresponding certification plans do not qualify for this benefit.</p> <p>Explained absence means that parent has stated or notified the provider why the child is not in care, for example: sick child or family is on vacation. Absence days may also be used for holidays if the child care provider is open but the child does not attend.</p> <p>Unexplained absences means the child care provider does not know why the child is absent from care. The parent did not notify the provider as to why the child is absent.</p>

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Absent Day Policies	Description & Requirements
	<p>The following restrictions apply for Absent Days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The provider shall be licensed or registered. <input type="checkbox"/> The child shall be authorized for full time care in the facility [30+ hours/week on a regular basis]. <input type="checkbox"/> Provider shall be open for business while the child is absent. <input type="checkbox"/> The provider must charge non-scholarship families when their children are absent. <input type="checkbox"/> Absent Days claimed for payment must reflect the time the child was scheduled to be in attendance. <input type="checkbox"/> The provider believes the child will return to the facility following the absence. <input type="checkbox"/> Absent Days are not to be claimed for payment when a parent/child does not intend to return to full time placement in the child care facility. <input type="checkbox"/> No more than 24 Absent Days may be claimed during one State fiscal year [July 1 – June 30]. <input type="checkbox"/> Absent Days can only be used as a full days (six to ten hours in a 24 hour period). <p>The provider claims Absent Days on the invoice, when billing for absent time. Absent Days are reported on the provider's monthly Statement of Remittance [SOR] and the parent's monthly Explanation of Benefits [EOB].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> When a child is authorized for full time child care at one facility, CCUBS will automatically assign Absent Days to their record.
<p>Suspending a Case – Maintain Parent's Eligibility</p>	<p>When a family temporarily loses eligibility, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be suspended for up to 30 calendar days. The case remains open, however the scholarship is not paid. Following the suspension, the family may continue under current eligibility and the child care scholarship may continue. If the family loses eligibility past 30 calendar days, issue the 15 calendar day closure notice and close the case.</p>

Continuity of Care Policies	Description & Requirements
<p>Fill-the-Gap – Maintain Parent's Eligibility</p>	<p>If the family is in transition from one assistance program to another, basic eligibility may be temporarily jeopardized. CCR&R Eligibility Specialists may extend a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to the end of the benefit month in an effort to maintain continuity of care to bridge the gap between programs.</p> <p>Case note the period of transition and the need for care during the transition. [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]</p>

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Continuity of Care Policies	Description & Requirements
<p>Grace Period – Maintain Parent’s Eligibility</p>	<p>When a parent loses employment, eligibility for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is jeopardized. The purpose of the Grace Period is to support the parent’s effort to look for work while maintaining continuity of care for the child[ren] and to stabilize the relationship with the child care provider. The Grace Period allows the current Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship to continue for 90 calendar days following the job loss, based on the date the employment change occurred [not the date reported to the CCR&R].</p> <p>Additionally, if the family experiences a reduction in child care hours, the grace period allows current child care arrangements to continue for 30 calendar days.</p> <p>If the parent reports the employment reduction or job loss to the Child Care Resource & Referral, the parent is given a grace period. The job loss must be documented in writing. The parent can report the job loss in writing or by phone. If the parent reports by phone, the CCR&R will send out a written confirmation.</p> <p>All of the following restrictions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The parent must report the job loss, or reduction in employment hours, to the CCR&R. <input type="checkbox"/> The CCR&R will continue child care eligibility period during the Grace Period. <input type="checkbox"/> The parent shall be actively looking for employment <input type="checkbox"/> Only one grace period may be granted per job loss; grace periods may not be granted consecutively. <input type="checkbox"/> There is no explicit limit to the number of times a parent may use the grace period. <input type="checkbox"/> Grace Period cannot be given at annual redetermination. <input type="checkbox"/> Grace Period is only granted for job loss. <input type="checkbox"/> Grace Period can be used during Graduated Eligibility. <p>See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.</p> <p>If the parent does not return to work, the parent and provider must be given a 15 calendar day notice to the closure of the case. No overpayment will be due.</p> <p>Eligible parents using the grace period for the Non-TANF Child Care Scholarship may receive one month of TANF Cash benefits while seeking employment to regain eligibility for the Non-TANF Scholarship. Two specific limitations apply:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The parent shall have new employment starting before the end of the grace period, which maintains their Non-TANF eligibility. <input type="checkbox"/> The parent's TANF Cash case will close when the Non-TANF grace period ends. <p>If the parent's TANF Cash case does not close at the end of the grace period, the family will lose eligibility for Non-TANF child care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The WoRC Case Manager may refer the family for child care. <input type="checkbox"/> Upon referral, the CCR&R may open the family on TANF child care.
Jury Duty – Maintain Parent's Eligibility	<p>A parent's eligibility for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may be interrupted when they are called to jury duty. All of the following restrictions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The parent must be receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship when the jury selection occurs. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a need for child care during jury duty. <input type="checkbox"/> The parent must report the jury duty as soon as possible, but within 10 calendar days. <input type="checkbox"/> The parent's current employer shall verify that the parent can return to their job following jury duty. <p>If jury duty extends for more than 30 calendar days, the CCR&R shall assess changes due to the jury duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Verify the parent's continuing participation in the jury. <input type="checkbox"/> Verify the need for child care. <input type="checkbox"/> Verify that the employer is keeping the job open for the parent. <input type="checkbox"/> Prospect eligibility using the family's current circumstances. For example, the family's income may be lower due to jury duty. <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan to manage the time committed to jury duty. <input type="checkbox"/> Income and co-payment adjustments must be managed prospectively.
Maternity Leave Not Covered, Unless . . .	<p>Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are not available for normal maternity leave. However, one of the following policies may apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Enrollment; <input type="checkbox"/> Hold-the-Slot; <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Emergency; or <input type="checkbox"/> Suspending a Case
Medical Appointments – Meet the Parent's Need for Child Care	<p>Parents who meet activity/work requirements may receive a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship when they leave work to attend a medical appointment. Additionally, if a medical appointment requires child care and is necessary to increase the parent's ability to work, a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship may assist the parent with child care during the appointment.</p>

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<p>Medical Emergency – Maintain Parent’s Eligibility</p>	<p>A parent’s eligibility for a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is jeopardized when they fail to meet their work requirement during temporary, unforeseen interruption due to a parent’s or their child’s medical emergency.</p> <p>All of the following restrictions apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The parent must be receiving a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship when the medical emergency occurs. ❑ There is a need for child care during the medical emergency. ❑ The medical emergency involves the parent or their child[ren]. ❑ The medical emergency must be unforeseen. ❑ The parent must report the medical emergency to the CCR&R within ten days of beginning of the medical emergency. Exceptions to this reporting requirement shall be considered on a case-by-case basis. ❑ A physician shall verify the parent is unable to care for the child(ren) during the medical emergency. ❑ The parent’s current employer shall verify that the parent can return to their job following the medical emergency. ❑ Medical emergency Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are limited to three months. <p>The CCR&R shall assess changes due to the medical emergency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Request a physician's statement to verify the individual’s condition. ❑ Verify the need for child care. ❑ Verify with the employer that the parent intends to return to work. ❑ Prospect eligibility under the family’s current circumstances. For example, the family’s income may be lower due to the medical emergency. ❑ Set up child care for the periods of time when the parent cannot care for his/her child(ren) because of his/her medical condition or a child’s medical condition. ❑ Use ‘Medical Emergency’ as the reason for care. ❑ Re-determine eligibility for the medical emergency span. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create authorizations of services and ○ corresponding certification plans for the medical emergency span (3 months, or less). ❑ When the parent returns to work, re-determine eligibility. ❑ If the medical emergency is managed retrospectively, income and co-payments cannot be changed retrospectively.

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Refer Back to “Issuing the Child care Certification Plan”	<p>Maintaining continuity of care may involve redefining the intent of the current child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan or issuing a new child care authorization of services and corresponding certification plan. Refer back to Issuing the Child care Certification Plan as outlined in Section 6-3 for additional policies, which may be useful when setting up a new authorization of services and corresponding certification plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Parent is Unavailable; <input type="checkbox"/> Split Shift; or <input type="checkbox"/> Study Time.

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Supersedes: Child Care 6 (1-27-12)

References: 37.80.315-316, 37.80.502 ARM

General Rule

The child care authorization and corresponding certification plan indicates the benefit available for approved activities. If additional care is needed, documentation must support claims. Child care scholarship payments are limited to actual daily attendance, within one-quarter hour, and must be for approved activities only within the limits of the child care authorization and corresponding certification plan. Sign-in/sign-out records must support claims, including corrections and adjustments.

Invoices expire 60 calendar days after the last day of the calendar month in which the service was provided. Invoices and adjustments must be received by the CCR&R within this period in order to be paid.

If an authorization and corresponding certification plan is not completed until after the calendar month in which the child care is provided, the claim will be considered to be filed timely if a completed invoice is received by the CCR&R within 60 calendar days after the invoice is sent to the provider.

Invoices are submitted to the local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for processing.

**IRS W-9, AWACS
& IRS 1099**

Individuals and businesses receiving child care payments must submit an IRS W-9 form to the DPHHS Fiscal Bureau for Agency Wide Accounting Client System (AWACS) payment processing. Generally, IRS W-9 forms are forwarded to DPHHS Fiscal through the Child Care Licensor or the CCR&R. Put the CCUBS 'Person' or 'Organization' number on the IRS W-9 form. IRS W-9 address information must be kept up-to-date in AWACS to avoid payment delays.

NOTE: The tax ID number and the name indicated on the W-9 must match IRS records. To meet this requirement, a provider with a social security number must use their personal name on the W-9 document for payment purposes. A provider who has an employer identification number [EIN] registered under a business name must use their business name on the W-9 document for payment purposes.

Providers who receive \$600.00 or more in child care subsidies and other payments during the calendar year should receive a 1099 tax statement from the State of Montana. The due date for mailing 1099s is January

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31st. The State reports 1099 information to the United States Internal Revenue Service.

LCP in-home provider payments should not generate a 1099. These payments are issued directly to the parent who employs the in-home LCP.

**Scholarship Will
Not Pay More
Than Others Pay**

In all cases, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will not pay more for services than non-scholarship parents pay for the same service. Child care provider policies must treat all families equally with regard to the following Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship policies

**Scholarship Will
Not Pay Twice**

In all situations, the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will not pay twice for the same care. When a parent chooses to move to a new child care provider, the Child Care Scholarship follows the child. The parent is responsible for any notice or payment obligation to the previous child care provider.

EXCEPTION: In the circumstance where a child is already authorized for full-time care with a LCP and a registered/licensed child care provider, and the child cannot attend the registered/licensed child care facility because of illness, yet care is provided by the a LCP; both providers are eligible for payment. The a LCP can claim the day as a regular day and the registered/licensed provider can claim a CE day.

**Sign-in/Sign-out
Records**

All child care providers (including Legally Certified Providers [LCP]) shall maintain current sign-in/sign-out records for each child receiving child care assistance and utilize them as follows:

- Each time the child enters or leaves the provider's care, the parent or other individual authorized to deliver or pick up the child shall initial or sign the sign-in/sign-out sheet. If a parent is not available to sign the child in or out, the parent may submit the child's schedule to the provider indicating the child's attendance and the alternate mode of transportation. The provider shall note the child's time-in and the child's time-out. The parent shall sign the next time the child is signed in or signed out.
- An electronic signature system may be used if it employs a unique and confidential identification process for individuals. With electronic systems, providers must ensure verification that records are not able to be changed without parental involvement. If records can be

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changed, providers must have a policy in place in which parents manually sign off that the sign in and out sheets are true and correct.

- Sign-in/sign-out records must indicate the child's name, the date, the hour, and the minute when the child enters and leaves the provider's care. All children in attendance on a given day must be on the same sign-in/sign-out record and not be divided by family.
- The provider shall make their sign-in/sign-out records available to child care resource and referral agency staff and state and local government health, safety or law enforcement representatives upon request.
- The provider shall keep sign-in/sign-out records for six years beyond the date of attendance.

A bus driver may sign children in or out.

Incomplete or inaccurate sign-in/sign out records may cause the delay or the denial of scholarship payment. The CCR&R may request sign-in/sign-out records to verify invoices if questions arise.

**Actual Daily
Attendance
Supported by
Sign-in/Sign-out
Records**

Invoices must reflect actual daily attendance and be supported by the child care authorization and corresponding certification plan, the parent's approved activity schedule, the child's school schedule, and by sign-in/sign-out records.

If child care is provided outside the parent's schedule of approved activities, the provider may make a personal arrangement with the parent. The provider shall not bill the State for care provided when the parent is not participating in approved activities.

**Quarter Hour
Billing**

In an effort to maintain consistency across the state, ECSB will use quarter (1/4) hour increments as a standard for reimbursement purposes. While a provider's attendance records should reflect actual arrival and departure times as indicated by approved activities, total attendance hours may be rounded to the nearest quarter (1/4) hour when providers bill for care.

EXAMPLE: 5 hours, 35 minutes rounds down to 5.5 hours
5 hours, 40 minutes rounds up to 5.75 hours

CCR&Rs should direct providers to bill for actual time the children were in care for the parent's approved activities.

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**Accurate
Invoices**

Provider shall clearly note any billing exception on the comment lines provided on the invoice. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Certified Enrollment;
- Early Release from School; and
- School Holiday (requiring full day of child care).

Timely Invoices

Timely claim filing is a prerequisite for payment:

- Invoices and any invoice corrections must be submitted to the CCR&R within 60 calendar days of the end of the service month or within 60 calendar days of the date the invoice is issued if the certification plan was issued in the month following the month of service. Generally, expired invoices are NOT eligible for payment.

**Alternate Invoice
Format**

Upon approval by the CCR&R, child care providers may use an alternate invoice. The CCR&R approval must be done before the alternate invoice is used.

**Unexplained
Absences**

Child care providers are required to notify the CCR&R of unexplained absences (five or more consecutive days) and are asked to notify the CCR&R of irregular attendance within three working days.

If the provider fails to notify the CCR&R after five or more consecutive days of unexplained absences, the CCR&R will not pay for child care during the time period after the 5th day of unexplained absence. The provider is not eligible to receive a paid 15 calendar day closure notice period for days authorized according to the authorization and corresponding certification plan during the notice period. The provider may use CE days for the child's first five days of unexplained absences if the child is eligible for CE days.

When the provider notifies the CCR&R of a child's unexplained absence, the CCR&R shall attempt to contact the parent either at the parent's residence or at the parent's place of employment. After attempts to contact the parent by phone or mail fail, the CCR&R shall begin procedures to close the case.

- Fifteen calendar days case closure notice is sent to both the parent and to the provider. Case note all attempts to contact the family. [See the ESCB Procedure and Resource Manual]

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- In the case that the provider has charged CE days for any unexplained absences, the CCR&R may pay the first five unexplained absent days as Certified Enrollment days unless the child has been attached to a different provider. Any days after the 5th unexplained absence day and prior to the fifteen calendar days case closure notice period will not be paid to a provider who failed to report the unexplained absences by the 5th day. If the provider failed to report the unexplained absences to the CCR&R by the fifth day, no closure notice will be paid to that provider.

The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist will pay the fifteen calendar days closure period as regular scheduled days according to the authorization and corresponding certification plan.

**Co-payment –
Failure to Pay**

When a parent fails to pay their co-payment, review Co-payment Requirements, as outlined in Section 6-4.

**Payment
Address Errors**

If the payment address is not current, the payment will be sent by return mail back to DPHHS Fiscal. Anticipate a delay of one to three weeks while the payment is returned to the State, the correct address located, and the payment re-mailed. Providers may avoid payment delay by notifying and sending an updated W-9 upon changing their address.

**Change to
Payment
Address**

Licensed & registered providers [LCPs] and parents who receive a payment must notify the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency when a change of address has occurred to ensure that payments are sent to the proper address. The provider or parent will be required to complete a W-9 form before information will be changed in CCUBS.

**Batch Payments,
Warrants, SORs,
and EOBs**

Invoices are batch processed for cost effectiveness. Child care providers serving several families generally receive one combined payment. CCUBS processes invoices and requests payment through AWACS at 1:30 p.m. on the following days:

- 5th business day of the month;
- Subsequent Tuesdays; and
- The second to the last business day of the month.

Warrants (payments) are issued and mailed the morning after the day of the batch process and come in an automated mailer format with a brief

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explanation. Direct Deposit payments are generated the morning after a batch process, are sent to the Automated Clearing House [ACH], and issued to the recipient's bank the 2nd day after the batch process. A payment advice is mailed to confirm each Direct Deposit. Later in the month, providers receive a detailed Statement of Remittance (SOR). Parents receive a similar statement for their family called an Explanation of Benefits (EOB).

The timing of child care payments is not guaranteed by the Department.

Direct Deposit

Direct Deposit service for payments to providers is available.

1. The provider completes a 'Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form' (Standard Banking Form 1199A) at their bank or completes the Direct Deposit information at the bottom of the DPHHS W-9 form, or attaches a voided check to the bottom of the DPHHS W-9 form. The provider should return the form to their CCR&R who will add the correct OG# or PS# on the right side of the form. (OG# for licensed or registered providers and PS# for LCP or HOH.)
2. Complete the 'Payee' (1) and 'Government Agency' (2) portions of the form using the DPHHS Fiscal Bureau address listed below.
3. The provider's bank provides the 'Financial Institution' (3) information, or a provider may want to securely attach a voided blank check in the financial information area. Deposit tickets will NOT be accepted because the routing information is different than the checks.
4. CCR&Rs will mail the completed Direct Deposit form to the following address:

DPHHS Fiscal – AWACS
111 North Sanders
PO Box 4210
Helena, MT 59604-4210

- After direct deposit arrangements are made, the first payment will still come in the mail. This allows DPHHS and the provider's bank to test the direct deposit arrangement without jeopardizing delivery of the payment.
- The Department will mail a confirmation of each Direct Deposit transaction to the provider. This will have a "settlement date." This is the date the Direct Deposit should be at your bank.
- If, after trying Direct Deposit, a provider wants to return to receiving payments by mail, contact the ECSB to change the payment method with an e-mail to the HHSCCUBSPayments@mt.gov mailbox.

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**Missing
Payments**

Send an email to HHSCCUBSPayments@mt.gov with the PV number and check/Direct Deposit number of the missing payment. ECSB will research the transaction and respond with solutions to assure payment is received depending on post office return times. The same email address may be used to report dysfunctional payments that did not process to payment.

**Online Invoice
Processing**

Providers may select the option of submitting their invoices online through a web portal. Once providers opt into the online invoicing process, they will only receive invoices and statements of remittance electronically rather than through the mail. Providers have the option to discontinue using online invoicing at any time.

Adjustments to invoices must be done in conjunction with CCR&R staff – invoices may not be adjusted electronically by providers. When facility directors leave a program, electronic invoicing will be suspended until a new director is in place. For security purposes, passwords used by providers to access the online invoicing portal must not be shared with others. If at any time, providers are deemed to have misrepresented information to the Bureau, online invoicing may be suspended pending a review.

Corrections

If inaccuracies result in an underpayment or overpayment, follow policies outlined in Corrections & Overpayments, as outlined in Section 6-9 of this manual.

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Investigating and Auditing

Supersedes: Child Care 6-8 (2/1/11)

References: 37.80.315-316, 37.80.502 ARM

General Rule The department expects that child care certification plans will be authorized accurately, however, if a household or provider receives any amount of child care assistance to which they were not entitled, they shall repay all child care assistance if an audit of the case shows that monies received fall under the criteria identified in Section 6-9, pages 4-5 Intentional Program Violation. The CCR&R must perform an audit when it appears an invoice was paid or billed inaccurately.

Indicators to Initiate an Investigation CCR&R Eligibility specialists shall review a provider's sign-in/sign-out records when questions of accuracy arise. The following situations are indicative that a provider's records need to be reviewed:

- Parent/provider dispute;
- Employee Report;
- Block Billing - no deviation in attendance;
- Billing above the certification plan without explanation or parent request;
- Varied schedule that does not vary;
- Billing 5.5 or 5.75 hours per day, when the child is certified for full time care;
- Parent Report; and
- Whistle-blower type reports.

Steps to Complete an Audit If the attendance reported on the invoices appears to be inaccurate, the CCR&R must following the procedure outlined in the ESCB Procedure Handbook.

Providers must Receive an Opportunity to Correct Inaccuracies An audit means the entire review of records for one provider during the time period the CCR&R has chosen to examine.

If a problem of inaccurate billing is identified, the CCR&R should immediately begin providing technical assistance to the provider in order to stop continuous errors from occurring.

The CCR&R must allow the provider an opportunity to correct inaccuracies and provide technical assistance to the provider before initiating a

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subsequent investigation of corrective action. Technical assistance should include the correct method of completing whatever the investigation is in reference to. Technical assistance may include some or all of the following:

- Training the provider on keeping accurate sign-in/sign-out records;
- Training the provider to bill for approved activities in which the family is eligible;
- Training the provider to bill on a quarter hour basis; and
- Explaining to the provider what a willful action is and the penalties that are assessed with such action.

If new information is obtained by the CCR&R while the provider is under investigation, this information must be included and the CCR&R must provide the appropriate technical assistance.

An investigation may result in reviewing several months of invoices and several scholarship families. If the CCR&R is completing an investigation of a provider, the CCR&R must complete the entire process before issuing any results, whether these results are determined to be an overpayment, or underpayment.

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Supersedes: Child Care 6-9 (1/27/12)

References: 37.80.315-316, 37.80.502 ARM, 37.80.503, ARM, 37.80.504 ARM,

General Rule Providers or parents who have reason to believe an overpayment or under-payment of child care assistance has occurred shall notify the Early Childhood Services Bureau [ECSB] within 10 calendar days.

If an error is made when determining eligibility or paying child care for authorized activities, the case shall be re-worked making corrections, as it should have been managed had the error not occurred. The correction may result in an underpayment or an overpayment. Once an error is identified, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist shall research and pursue the entire correction.

In limited situations, overpayments due to agency error may not be pursued in limited circumstances identified below, under 'Agency Error' with prior Bureau approval.

CCR&R Eligibility Specialists adjust CCUBS invoices and notify Accounts Receivable of all overpayments, that are not completed through invoice reduction, with the correct electronic form.

Underpayments If a family or provider has not received the amount due to them, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist may adjust invoices in order for the additional payment to be processed.

- Case note the circumstances and the calculation of the underpayment [See the ESCB Procedure Handbook.]

Agency Error Results in Overpayment Sent Directly to Parent In limited situations, when scholarship payments are sent directly to the parent and an agency error results in overpayment, the Department **does not collect an overpayment**. All of the following criteria must apply:

- Payment is made directly to the parent, not to the provider; and
- The Department or CCR&R error causes the overpayment; and
- The overpayment is less than 150% of the monthly benefit.

NOTE: If the overpayment period extends beyond three months and is over 150% of the monthly benefit, the recovery

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period shall be limited to three months.

When an overpayment meets the criteria for non-collection, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist shall calculate the amount of the overpayment, case note, and e-mail the overpayment amount to the ECSB Fiscal Officer.

**Calculating an
Over Claim or an
Overpayment**

An adjustment is calculated by re-determining eligibility or attendance with the new information. The difference in the amount of child care scholarship issued under the error and the amount of child care scholarship which should have been issued, becomes the amount of the adjustment.

If the family loses eligibility, the period used to calculate the overpayment begins when the family first loses eligibility. All subsequent payments are subject to overpayment. Eligibility specialists cannot assume a participant might have reported periods of basic eligibility requirements (e.g. employment or unemployment) following the initial loss of eligibility.

An underpayment/overpayment waiver will be granted for any charges that do not exceed \$100.00. This will apply to providers and parents. All underpayments/overpayments will be resolved in the system if possible.

**Creating
Provider
Overpayments**

A provider overpayment may be created when an invoice is adjusted. See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

Overpayments outstanding for any program types whose business structure is Sole Proprietorship, Partnership, or Corporation and the business dissolves or otherwise becomes defunct and the Department is unable to collect monies owed, the principals, shareholders, officers, or other individuals involved with the business at the time of dissolution are disqualified from receiving CCDF funds under any other business name or entity.

**Household
Overpayments**

A household overpayment may be created when an invoice is adjusted.

See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

NOTE: The parent writes the payment out to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (MT DPHHS).

A parent who is not making monthly payments on outstanding child care overpayments is not eligible for further child care assistance. Any parent who misses a payment as required by the terms of a repayment agreement or

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Fair Hearing order and who does not become fully current in making all payments required under the agreement or order within the times described below will not be eligible to receive child care assistance until the parent has become fully current in making all payments required under the agreement or Fair Hearing order, or unless the Department has agreed to modify the payment schedule under the repayment agreement or order.

**First Missed
Payment**

Unless the Department has agreed to a modified repayment schedule, a parent will cease being eligible to receive child care assistance if the parent has not become fully current in making all required payments on or before the ninetieth (90th) calendar day following of the first missed payment. The period of ineligibility will begin on the ninetieth day following the first missed payment and will end when the parent has become fully current in making all payments required under the repayment agreement or order.

**Second
Missed
Payment**

Unless the Department has agreed to a modified repayment schedule, a parent will cease being eligible to receive child care assistance if the parent has not become fully current in making all required payments on or before the sixtieth (60th) calendar day following of the second missed payment. The period of ineligibility will begin on the sixtieth day following the second missed payment and will end when the parent has become fully current in making all payments required under the repayment agreement or order.

**Third
Missed
Payment**

Unless the Department has agreed to a modified repayment schedule, a parent will cease being eligible to receive child care assistance if the parent has not become fully current in making all required payments on or before the thirtieth (30th) calendar day following of the third missed payment. The period of ineligibility will begin on the thirtieth day following the third missed payment and will end when the parent has become fully current in making all payments required under the repayment agreement or order.

**More than three
Missed Payments**

Unless the Department has agreed to a modified repayment schedule, a parent will cease being eligible to receive child care assistance when the parent has missed more than three payments, and the parent will not be eligible to receive further child care assistance until the parent has become fully current in making all payments required under the repayment agreement or order.

**Inactive
Overpayments**

In-active overpayments, where the provider or the household is not active on CCUBS, should be transferred to Accounts Receivable.

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**Negotiating a
Repayment
Amount**

Generally, a repayment period should not exceed one year. Suggested minimum repayment amount is 10% of the total repayment. If there is no response from attempts to negotiate a repayment agreement, enter the amount suggested. Additionally,

- notify ECSB of repayment agreements exceeding one year; and
- notify ECSB of overpayments totaling \$1,000 or more.

**Overpayment
Procedure**

See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

**Accounts
Receivable
Procedure**

See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

**Intentional
Program
Violation**

An intentional program violation occurs when:

1. A parent or guardian receives, or attempts to receive, child care assistance based on a false or misleading statement, misrepresentation, concealment or withholding of relevant facts or information;
2. A parent or guardian knowingly fails to comply with the requirements for receiving child care assistance;
3. A provider receives, or attempts to receive, a child care assistance payment based on a false or misleading statement, misrepresentation concealment or withholding of relevant facts or information; or
4. A parent or provider knowingly fails to comply with the requirements of the Montana Child Care Act, this chapter or chapter 95 of this Title.

The Department will evaluate what conduct constitutes an intentional program violation on a case by case basis. Examples of conduct that constitutes an intentional program violation are:

1. Failure to notify the department of changes in address, household membership, employment, or income;
2. Providing false employment information, including concealing employment;
3. Providing false information regarding wages or other income;
4. Misrepresenting or failing to disclose household membership;
5. Failing to disclose a criminal conviction;
6. Claiming child care assistance for care provided by an ineligible provider;
7. Misrepresenting the amount of child care needed or used;
8. Falsifying sign in/sign out records;
9. A provider caring for more children than authorized by provider's license, registration, or certification;

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10. A provider not in compliance with applicable licensing, registration, or certification requirements; and
11. Attempts to undermine or circumvent program requirements designed to ensure child safety, including background checks and child/staff ratios.

**Intentional
Program
Violation
Sanctions**

The Department has the discretion, based on the circumstances of the violation, to determine the appropriate sanction for the first intentional program violation. The department may impose any of the following sanctions on a parent/guardian or provider for a first intentional program violation:

1. issue the intentional program violation even if there is no overpayment due;
2. require repayment of child care assistance payments related to the program violation; or
3. require repayment of child care assistance payments related to the program violation and terminate the parent/guardian or provider, or both, from the Best Beginnings Program.

If a parent or guardian receives a second intentional program violation, the Department will require the repayment of all child care assistance payments related to the violation and the parent will be terminated from the child care assistance program.

If a provider receives a second intentional program violation, the Department will require the repayment of all child care assistance payments related to the violation and may terminate the provider from the program if appropriate.

A notice of an intentional program violation is an adverse action of the Department. The department will send timely notice of this adverse action, including the terminated parent or guardians fair hearing rights under ARM 37.80.104 and ARM 37.5.103.

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Section:

Best Beginnings Quality Initiatives

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Stars to Quality Program

Supersedes: **Section 7-1 (09/01/06)**

References: **52-2-701 - 704 & 52-2-711 - 713 MCA**
Sections 37.80.101-103, 37.80.201-202, 37.80.205-206, 37.80.301-302,
37.80.305 -306, 37.80.315-316, 37.80.501 37.95.620 ARM
45 CFR 98.20 – 47

**Background
Information**

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is the quality rating improvement System (QRIS) for early childhood care and education settings in Montana. Since 2007 the Montana Early Childhood Advisory Board has been guiding the development and implementation of the new STARS system.

Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) are essential for improving child care quality and later educational outcomes for all children. The Montana Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program uses the quality rating systems to create quality improvement plans, provide coaching support, and offers financial incentives to reward programs for continual quality improvement and to support quality improvement initiatives within the individual programs.

Montana's Best Beginnings STARS to Quality program is a voluntary 5 star quality rating improvement system, which uses a research based matrix to drive quality improvement in the early childhood care and education settings in Montana. The Matrix is composed of five research based categories which have been shown to improve and maintain quality in early childhood care and education settings. These five categories are; Education qualifications and training, Staff/Caregiver to child ratio and group size, Family/Community partnerships, Leadership and Program Management, and Environments for care and Learning. The Matrix may be viewed at www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is being field tested at this time. The Early Childhood Services Bureau's has chosen to field test the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Initiative on a limited bases for two years; the field test will enable us to test the effectiveness of the quality initiative, collect data on outcomes, and make informed decision on future funding. The field test, as well as, any future quality programs are dependent on funding. Due to the nature of the field test, it is likely that policy will be generated during the testing phase.

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**Field Test
Composition**

The proposed quality system for Montana has several arms:

- 1) Workforce Development - Workforce support will be managed through the Montana Early Childhood Project, encouraging professional development along a continuum of training.
- 2) Quality Rating Improvement System - The QRIS is based on two foundations, improvement and assessment. Assessments will be conducted by use of Environment Rating Scales, and Program and Business Administration Scales. Improvement will be supported by the Center on Social & Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) training and tools including TPOT and TPITOS in addition to supporting individual program needs and identified quality improvement steps in accord with the criteria outlined in the 5 STARS matrix.
- 3) Infrastructure to administer the program – The infrastructure is designed to provide training, coaching and technical assistance, and to validate the stars system. Resources, Help, and Support will be provided to providers to move them through the Levels. Infrastructure will be provided by Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, the Early Childhood Project, and other state determined resources.

**Selection of
Field Test sites
Not Receiving
incentives**

Specific selection criteria of field test sites can be found on the website:
www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov.

A provider cannot participate in STARS if:

1. they are on the National Disqualified List for the Child and Adult Care Food Program,
2. they have a negative licensing action, or
3. they or anyone related to the business have had three strikes in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program due to fraud. See Section 6-9 regarding “strikes.”

Providers with licensing deficiencies on their last licensing inspection will be subject to further review by Department staff to determine the severity and resolution of the deficiencies in relation to participation in the STARS program.

Providers with negative licensing action will not be able to participate in the STARS to quality program. Or providers may be placed on a hold status depending on the severity of the reasons for negative licensing action. This will be determined by further Department review

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Incentives for Field Test

During the field test, some programs have been randomly selected to receive incentives and some have not. STARS incentives are to be used for continuous quality improvement, staff support and salaries, professional development, equipment, etc. Anything that would assist a program in moving to the next level and maintaining the STAR level achieved. STARS incentives must be used in accord with a quality improvement plan.

Workforce incentives are available in a variety of forms and are not tied directly to the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, and have separate eligibility criteria. These incentives are being administered in partnership with the Montana Early Childhood Project [ECP] at MSU-Bozeman, www.mtecp.org

All incentives are based on available funding and are subject to change.

Rating Changes

1. A rating may be terminated or reduced because a program has not maintained the necessary items listed in the criteria for participation in the STARS program or within a STAR level. Depending on the issue, a program may, at the discretion of the Department, be placed on hold status to address the issue causing the program to not be meeting STAR criteria such as, but not limited to a staff position turnover and obtaining required training.
2. CCUBS will issue a notice of change in level status to the facility.
3. The facility is not operational.
4. A licensed or registered child care provider will lose eligibility to participate in the Star Quality Program if the provider is on the National Disqualified List for the Child and Adult Care Food Program, they have a negative licensing action, or they or anyone related to the business have had three strikes in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program due to fraud.

Changes in a facility's star rating level status decreasing the reimbursement payment will be effective the first day of the month following the change in CCUBS.

Field Test Appeal

No appeal may be taken from any decision related to selection or non-selection into the STARS field test.

Actions and decisions related to a provider's license are governed by the program policies of the Quality Assurance Division.

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**Appeal Process
of Assessment
Scores**

Child care providers may contest assessment scores resulting from an Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R) assessment and/or a Program Administration Scale (PAS) or a Business Administration Scale (BAS) assessment by submitting a written review request setting forth specific reasons for contesting the scores to the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) assigned staff. The Early Childhood Services Bureau staff will review the record related to the assessment scores, including assessment reports, assessor notes, assessment tools and supporting guidance in considering the reasons the providers set forth for contesting the assessment scores.

**Other Related
STARS Appeals**

Related to ERS and PAS/BAS assessments, if the ECSB determines the record supports the assessment scores, the assessment scores will be affirmed. If the ECSB determines the record does not support the assessment scores, the provider will be re-assessed by either the contracted Assessment Specialist or other ECSB staff with two weeks of the determination. The assessment score determination by the ECSB Staff is the final determination of contested assessment scores, due to the reliability requirements of the rating scales as defined by the scale authors.

Requests for appeals must be made through the Child Care Resource & Referral Agency STARS coach who will forward the request to the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Fair Hearings. Requests can also be made directly to the Office of Fair Hearings.

Upon receiving the request, the Office of Fair Hearings will log the request and notify the Quality Assurance Reviewer at the Early Childhood Services Bureau of the request.

The Quality Assurance Reviewer will conduct an administrative review with the claimant, reviewing case documentation, interviewing necessary parties, and gathering information to make a decision. A decision will be determined and mailed to the claimant and the Office of Fair Hearings.

If the claimant wishes to appeal the Administrative Review decision, a fair hearing will likely be scheduled by the Office of Fair Hearings.

All other policies in accord with Fair Hearings and Administrative Reviews for the Child Care Block Grant program are in place, related to further appeal steps.

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Subject:

Career Development

Supersedes: Child Care 7-2 (5/1/05)

References: 45 CFR Part 98.51(b)(2)(ii)

Background Information

Montana has developed a comprehensive coordinated career development system for practitioners working in every type of early childhood setting. Career development programs are administered by The Early Childhood Project at Montana State University in collaboration with state partners. The Early Childhood Project also administers workforce incentives through the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program. The Early Childhood Project shall have specific program policy and procedures available to the public upon request, beyond the basic information described below.

The goals of career development are to:

1. Define what practitioners need to know.
2. Develop a formalized multi-leveled education and training system for early childhood.
3. Ensure that training is high quality and meets the needs of practitioners.
4. Provide equal access to education and training through innovative delivery and a coordinated system of planning, promoting and implementing learning opportunities.
5. Promote recognition and increased compensation by formal documentation of practitioners' professional development.
6. Celebrate cultural and developmental diversity of practitioners, children, and families.
7. Help parents make informed decisions about early care and education options for their children.

Knowledge Base

The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base defines what practitioners who work with young children and families need to know, be able to do and understand and includes content areas that define the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for early childhood practitioners.

Content Areas

- cultural and developmental diversity
- health, safety, and nutrition
- child growth and development
- environmental design
- child guidance
- family and community partnerships
- program management

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- curriculum
- observation and assessment
- professionalism
- personal dispositions

The primary purpose of the Knowledge Base is to provide a basis for self-assessment and reflection and help practitioners determine areas of professional competence and further growth.

Early Care & Education Career Path

The Early Care and Education Career Path is intended to promote professional development for early care and education practitioners by providing a framework for recording and recognizing experience, training, and educational accomplishments.

It describes ten levels of professional development based on training, education and experience in the field. The Career Path charts a course for any individual developing a plan for professional growth in early care and education

As information becomes more available to parents and communities about the strong links between quality early care and education and practitioner training and education, the demand for well-trained child care providers and program staff will grow.

Practitioner Registry

Early Childhood practitioners are called teachers, caregivers, child care providers, educators, trainers, and advocates. Their diversity and that of the families they serve is recognized and supported by Montana's Career Development programs. Career development applies to all practitioners – those in entry-level positions without prior training to those with advanced degrees. Early Childhood Practitioners work directly or indirectly with young children ages birth to 8 in a variety of settings:

- family and group child care homes
- child care centers
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs
- preschools
- public and private schools - preschool through 3rd grade
- higher education - community and tribal colleges and universities
- community and state agencies serving children and families

The Practitioner Registry is designed to help practitioners accumulate a record of their training, education and work experience and place them on the Career

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Path. Enrollment on the Practitioner Registry is voluntary and will afford practitioners recognition for their dedication to ongoing professional development. This information may also be helpful to supervisors, employers, and parents. Each practitioner listed on the registry will receive:

- a certificate that recognizes professional achievements of training, education, experience, and placement on the Career Path.
- a complete and updated online professional development record that includes early childhood college coursework that has been verified with transcripts.

The Practitioner Registry is linked to Montana's Best Beginnings Quality initiatives, many of which require individuals to be current on the Registry for eligibility. Incentives, awards and scholarships are available to support professional development and program accreditation.

Training Calendar The Training Calendar lists all approved training opportunities statewide open to the public and is updated daily through a web-based database. The calendar may be accessed at www.mtecp.org the web site for the Early Childhood Project. Practitioners may search the calendar in a variety of ways to locate trainings necessary to meet their professional development needs. Special events, courses and conferences are also listed on the calendar page of the website.

Online Training Records and Procedures for Person Number (PS#) Cards

The Early Childhood Project database tracks approved training for all licensed and registered practitioners. Montana QAD Child Care Licensing assigns Person Numbers (PS#s) to all staff in licensed and registered child care facilities when new staff are reported to them. If a staff person is designated by licensing in a role type (works directly with children more than 160 hours per year) that requires the person to complete eight hours of approved training annually, their name, residential mailing address, unique identifier, and PS# are electronically added from QAD Child Care Licensing to the Early Childhood Project (ECP) database on a weekly basis.

Contact the Early Childhood Project for questions on processing or for specific program policy and procedures.

Professional Development Specialist/Trainer Directory

The Professional Development Specialist (PDS) Directory identifies approved trainers and instructors based upon their career path level, adult learning coursework and training experience. All approved training events will be linked to an approved PDS or Specialty Trainer.

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**Training Approval
System**

The Training Approval System is designed to promote quality by approving non-college credit training available that relates to the Knowledge Base, Montana Early Learning Guidelines and the Career Path. All agencies, organizations, and individuals offering non-credit training for early childhood practitioners must apply for approval to be included on the Training Calendar and for acceptance for child care licensing and Practitioner Registry required training hours.

The Early Childhood Project approves training for early care and education practitioners who are required to complete eight hours of annual training as required by QAD Child Care Licensing and additional training hours for the The Montana Practitioner Registry.

Contact the Early Childhood Project for questions on processing.

For further information regarding Career Development:

Montana Early Childhood Project

Montana State University
PO Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540

406-994-4746
1-800-213-6310
Fax 406-994-2013

ecp@montana.edu
www.mtecp.org

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Subject:

Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver

Supersedes: Child Care 7-3 (5/1/05)

References: 45 CFR Part 98.51(b)(2)(ii)

Background Information

The early interactions between an infant and a primary caregiver are instrumental in shaping the child's brain, laying the foundation for future learning and emotional growth. When that relationship changes frequently or is suddenly discontinued, the development of the child's brain is also interrupted. It is vital that infants and toddlers receiving care outside of their homes get high quality care from the same knowledgeable, reliable and nurturing caregiver over an extended period of time.

In 1998 Congress earmarked a portion of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for infant/toddler care. States were mandated to implement activities that are designed to increase the supply of quality care for infants and toddlers.

In light of the recent research on infant brain development, Montana's Early Childhood Advisory Council continues recommendation that the Montana Infant/Toddler program be focused on developing a high quality training system and certification program for infant/toddler caregivers. This curriculum was approved and has been available statewide for child care providers and other early care and education practitioners who wish to become certified infant toddler caregivers for the last fourteen years.

Infant/toddler care is in high demand across the state. Parents are faced with the difficult task of finding high quality and affordable care for their infants and toddlers in a market where the demand exceeds the supply. Child care providers report that they have a difficult time opening more slots for infants and toddlers because the staff to child ratio is low and the cost to provide care to an infant is high. It is fiscally difficult at best to operate this type of facility.

Through data collected from Montana's I/T Demonstration Project and from the second phase of the Montana Infant/Toddler program which includes the Infant/Toddler Mini Grant Program and the Infant/Toddler Stipend program, it has been shown that there is a direct correlation between the compensation level for staff and turnover rate and additional funding to programs does make a difference in meeting quality indicators for infants and toddlers.

Montana's Early Childhood Advisory Council recommends that these programs continue to allow focused on higher quality of care for as many infants and toddlers as possible in-group settings.

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**Infant/Toddler
Caregiver
Certification**

The state has established an Infant/Toddler Caregiver Certification. In order to be certified as an infant/toddler caregiver, a child care provider must complete at least one of the following training requirements:

- A current Infant/Toddler CDA
- A current Family Child Care CDA that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work
- The complete, four-module, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (minimum of 60 hours of instruction).
- Completion of a Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship, that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.
- An Associate Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.
- A Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler instruction.

**Process for
Becoming
I/T certified**

For a provider who becomes a certified infant/toddler caregiver by completing:

- A current Infant/Toddler CDA
- A current Family Child Care CDA that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work
- An Associate Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler course work.
- A Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood/Child Development that includes 30 hours of documented infant/toddler instruction.

The provider must notify the Quality Specialist and provide documentation of one of the above. Once this is done the Quality Specialist will check the Infant Toddler certified box on the Montana Person screen in CCUBS. The Quality Specialist will then notify the Contract monitor to send a Montana Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and an application for the Infant Toddler Stipend Program to the caregiver.

For a provider who becomes a certified infant/toddler caregiver by completing:

- The complete, four-module, Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (minimum of 60 hours of instruction).

The Infant Toddler instructor will send a class list of participants who successfully complete the above coursework to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will check the Infant Toddler certified box for each caregiver

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on the Montana Person screen in CCUBS. The Quality Specialist will then notify the Contract monitor to send a Montana Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and an application for the Infant Toddler Stipend Program to each caregiver.

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Subject:

Preschool Teacher Certification

Supersedes: New

References: 45 CFR Part 98.51(b)(2)(ii)

General Information

Due to the success of the Infant Toddler Certification Program, and the inclusion of professional development criteria in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, Montana created a Preschool Certification Program. The intent of the program is to provide specific research based professional development focused on professionals working with children age 3-5. Individuals completing the Montana Preschool Certification course work are eligible for Preschool Certification Professional Development Incentive Awards. Montana does NOT have a continuity of care stipend for Certified Preschool Teachers.

Preschool Teacher Certification

The state has established a Montana Preschool Teacher Certification. In order to be certified as a preschool teacher, a child care provider must complete the 60 hour Montana approved and developed preschool certification course.

For purposes of the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, individuals working with preschool aged children must be certified preschool teachers under the Montana program, or must qualify as a Level 4 or higher on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry.

Preschool Teacher Certification Process

The provider shall complete the Montana Certified Preschool Teacher Course. The approved instructor will send a class list of participants who successfully complete the above coursework to the ECSB. ECSB will check the Preschool certified box for each individual on the Montana Person screen in CCUBS. and will send a Montana Certified Preschool Teacher Certificate.

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Subject:

Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend

Supersedes: Child Care 7-3c (2/1/11)

References: 37.95.102, 37.95.1001-1021 ARM
45 CFR Part 98.51 (b) (2) (ii)

**General
Information**

The Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program is offered to help reduce the turnover of infant toddler certified caregivers in early childhood programs. The goal of this stipend is to maximize the continuity of care for as many infants and toddlers as possible in child care settings. Research shows that a child's ability to develop a healthy attachment to parents and other caregivers is critical for overall development. The early interactions between an infant and a primary caregiver are instrumental in shaping the child's brain, laying the foundation for future learning and emotional growth. When that relationship changes frequently or is suddenly discontinued, the development of the child's brain is also interrupted. It is vital that infants and toddlers receive responsive and nurturing care from a knowledgeable caregiver over an extended period. This is also important for parents and caregivers because building trusting relationships takes time and is the key to high quality infant toddler care.

Who May Apply

Montana Certified Infant Toddler caregivers (as defined in Section 7-3a Infant/Toddler Certification) may apply for a Certified Infant Toddler stipend by meeting the following criteria:

1. Work a minimum of 5 hours per day (M-F);
2. Provide direct care to infants and/or toddlers;
3. Care must be provided in a licensed/registered facility; and
4. Be an active participant of the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry at any level on the Career Path.

Any provider in or owner of a child care program may not apply for the CIT Stipend if they been disqualified for cause from the Child and Adult Care Food Program [CACFP].

NOTE: Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipends are awarded to individuals, not facilities. Employment at a facility that has been disqualified for cause from the CACFP does not preclude participation in this program.

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Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend

**Application
Process**

Once an individual has successfully completed the appropriate training required to become a certified infant toddler caregiver (see section 7-3a for more information) they will be awarded a certificate.

Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipends are awarded twice per year. Applicants will be notified within 30 calendar days of the application due date if their application has been accepted or denied.

**Application
Evaluation and
Selection Process**

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Applications and W-9s must be complete and signed.
- Applicants must be active participants on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry. A copy of their registry certificate must be attached to the application form.
- Priority for acceptance into the infant toddler caregiver stipend program will be given in the following order:
 1. Highest priority will be given to applicants who are employed in licensed or registered child care facilities who are participating in the STARS to Quality field test.
 2. Second highest priority will be given to applicants who are employed in licensed or registered child care facilities that serve children receiving Best Beginnings child care scholarship assistance at a rate of fifty percent or more of their license capacity.
 3. The third highest priority will be given to applicants who have earned a Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and are employed in a facility that does not meet the criteria outlined in priorities one and two above.
 4. The fourth highest priority will be given to applicants who have previously completed the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program.

The Department reserves the right to deny any or all applications based on availability of funding.

**Program
Description &
Expectations**

The begin date for participants accepted into the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend program will be either January 1 or July 1. Program participants must maintain continuous employment with the same licensed or registered child care facility for the 18-month period beginning either January 1 or July 1 to receive the total stipend of \$1,600.

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Stipends are awarded in six-month increments and paid directly to the Montana certified infant toddler caregiver. A stipend is paid following the completion of each six-month period and must be requested within 30 calendar days of the end of each six-month period.

Participants must provide direct care to infants/toddlers in the same licensed/registered child care facility for the majority of time the infants or toddlers the caregiver is responsible for attends.

Stipend Forfeiture

Participation in the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program will be terminated and the stipend forfeited if any of the following occurs:

- ❑ The participant terminates their employment at any time during the 18-month stipend period.
- ❑ The facility closes at any time during the 18-month stipend period.
- ❑ CITC stipends are not transferable if a caregiver changes jobs or moves from one licensed or registered facility to another even if multiple licenses or registration certificates are under the same ownership.
 - Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis by contacting the Early Childhood Services Bureau Program Specialist.
- ❑ Fair hearing rights will be mailed with any termination notice.

Accepted into the program <i>January 1st</i>	Payment must be requested:	Stipend Amount:
After 6 months	July year-one; 30 th or closest business day	\$300
After 12 months	January; 30 th or closest business day	\$500
After 18 months	July year-two; 30 th or closest business day	\$800
Total one-time stipend		\$1,600

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Accepted into the program <i>July 1st</i>	Payment must be requested:	Stipend Amount:
After 6 months	January year-one; 30 th or closest business day	\$300
After 12 months	July; 30 th or closest business day	\$500
After 18 months	January year-two; 30 th or closest business day	\$800
Total one-time stipend		\$1,600

**Submitting
a request
for payment**

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for processing.

The participant must complete the form and return it to the ECSB by the end of the month following the completion of the six-month segment. This report includes:

- A listing of the names and birth dates of the infants and toddlers in their care;
- An attestation of employment completed by the director/owner of the facility at which the participant works; and
- Verification that the participant remains an active member of the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry.

NOTE: Participation on the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry may be verified on line through the Early Childhood Program's website www.mtecp.org A hard copy of the registry certificate is not required at this time. If a participant has allowed their registry participation to lapse, the stipend payment will be delayed until participation in the registry has been renewed.

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for Processing Information

If the applicant has not completed the requirements to become a Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver, the application will be denied. If the applicant is not working for a licensed or registered child care facility, the application will be denied. If the facility at which an applicant is employed is not licensed or registered, the application will be denied.

- If a program participant is not currently associated with the same*

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Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend

provider as was entered on the application, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the participant has changed jobs and is now working for a different provider. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.

- *If a program participant is not currently associated with a provider*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the participant has quit their job. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.
- *If a program participant is not currently associated with a Licensed or Registered Provider*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the facility at which a CITC participant was employed, lost their license or registration certificate, or went out of business. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.

Ratios: Facilities must follow the appropriate staff to child ratios as outlined in the Administrative Rules of Montana [ARM] for infant care 37.95.1000-1021 – INFANT ONLY FACILITIES -

- Each facility caring for infants shall maintain a staff ratio of one caregiver for each (4) four infants in attendance.
- Each infant shall be assigned one primary caregiver.
- There shall be sufficient staff so that an adult is always present and supervising.

See Section 1-3 for definitions of family and group day care homes.

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Mini-Grants

Supersedes: Child Care 7-3 (1/27/12)

References: 45 CFR Part 98.51(b)(2)(ii)

General Information

The Best Beginnings Mini Grants are administered by each Resource and Referral agency for their service delivery area and are funded by Best Beginnings Quality dollars.

Mini Grant Use

Mini grants are intended to allow for localized application and to ensure flexibility in awarding amounts consistent with the needs of providers.

Generally, mini grants should be used for the purposes of:

- New providers to become registered/licensed;
- Licensing compliance such as balance of funds needed for full year of insurance, egress windows, play equipment, etc.;
- Professional Development, particularly courses taken in preparation to meet STAR One requirements and to assist with year one professional development plans, etc.;
- Practitioner Registry fees for caregiver not in STARS on a formal basis;
- Assistance for providers affected by natural disasters;
- Business equipment such as a computer to manage CACFP claims and customer billing;
- To assist in continual quality improvement or to meet additional requirements; and
- It is a reasonable expectation that purchases including shipping and handling are covered as part of the awarded funds; or
- Meet regulatory requirements for caring of infants and toddlers, e.g. install sink next to diaper changing area.

Mini Grant Limitations

Mini grants are not to be used for programs formally enrolled in STARS for incentives because STARS incentives can be used for like purposes. Providers who have received incentive monies through STARS and are no longer enrolled in STARS will have to wait one year from the date of STARS payment to apply for a mini grant.

Providers who have been disqualified with cause from the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) or if they or anyone related to the business have had 3 strikes in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program due to fraud may not receive Mini Grants. Each CCR&R can develop additional requirements that do not compromise the intent mentioned in the RFP (Request for Proposal) or PMP (Program Management Plan) and shall

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maintain a review team and determine the appropriate review/scoring process, keeping in mind there should not be a perceived or real sense of favoritism and/or conflict of interest.

**Mini Grant
Awards**

Mini grants are available in a single grant award for a total not to exceed \$2,000 for a group/family provider and \$3,000 for a center provider. Providers must be in business for the duration of the grant, or will refund the State in full. A provider is eligible to receive another mini grant only after an existing grant period (1 year) comes to an end. They must wait until their previous grant end date passes until they are eligible to apply again. CCR&R agencies have the flexibility to determine the frequency they will award and process applications. Allocations of funding will be made quarterly to the CCR&R agencies from the State.

**Mini Grant
Form**

CCR&R agencies will use the mini grant application form and information page as posted on the Best Beginnings web site making it available to providers electronically and on paper – whichever the provider prefers. CCR&R agencies may still provide technical assistance to providers in completing the forms, but the individual/department providing technical assistance should not be part of the mini grant review team.

See the ECSB Procedure Handbook for processing.

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Subject:

Professional Development Incentive Awards

Supersedes: Child Care 7-5 (2/1/11)

References: *USCS (658G, 658E (C) (3) (B))*
ARM 37.80.602

**General
Information**

Professional Development Incentive Awards are developed with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to young children, by supporting early childhood professionals participating in an early childhood/child development training and education. The following categories are available for Professional Development Incentive Awards:

- Regular Professional Development Incentive Awards
- Higher Education Professional Development Incentive Awards
- Infant Toddler Professional Development Incentive Awards
- Preschool Professional Development Incentive Awards

All applications are reviewed independently; therefore, each qualifying staff person in a licensed or registered child care facility may be eligible to receive an award.

This program is administered by Montana's Professional Development agency - The Early Childhood Project at MSU-Bozeman. Contracts and payments will be made by ECSB. For specific program information, the Early Childhood Project shall have policies and procedures outlining each of the subprograms listed.

See the ESCB Procedure Handbook for processing.

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Provider Training

Supersedes: Child Care 7-6 (5/1/05)

References: ARM 11.14.301 (10)
ARM 11.14.401 (10)
ARM 11.14.609 (6) (d)
USCS (658G, 658E, (c) (3) (B))

**Basic Child Care
Orientation**

Family and group child care family home providers are required by the Administrative Rules of Montana [ARM] to attend an orientation training within the first 60 calendar days of certification. There are no limits to the amount of hours required for orientation, but sufficient proof that the topics are covered in depth. This orientation must include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- health;
- safety;
- child development and well being;
- discipline and guidance;
- nutrition and food safety; and
- business aspects of a child care program.

CCR&R agencies will coordinate the licensing orientation on behalf of the QAD licensing staff specific to health and safety, with some emphasis on child development, discipline/guidance, and nutrition/food safety every other month. The QAD licensing staff will provide the licensing applications and training materials for the licensing orientation. The CCR&R is responsible for coordinating orientation on behalf of the QAD licensing staff and working with the QAD licensor regarding scheduling. Providers will be eligible for approved training hours for participation in orientation.

**Specialized
Training
Child Care**

The Department of Public Health and Human Services contracts with organizations or individuals wishing to provide Specialized Training in Early Childhood Development for Early Care and Education Practitioners.

Specialized Training in Early Childhood Development, and related fields, is defined as education/training (including business training related to operation of a child care business) that:

1. leads to certification or degree
2. advances a participant along the career path; or
3. is innovative and not currently available in a community; or
4. focuses on a special population of early care and education

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practitioners, or special areas of interest to such practitioners.

**The Knowledge
Base and Career
Path**

All training funded through the Best Beginnings project must be approved through the Montana Early Care and Education Training Approval System. In addition, training must be related to the Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base and Early Care and Education Career Path.

**Training
Opportunities**

Training opportunities are available and offered statewide by a variety of training providers. These training providers include but are not limited to the following:

1. CCR&R agencies
2. MSU Early Childhood Project
3. U of M Child Care Plus+
4. Montana colleges and universities
6. Montana Child Care Association
7. Montana Association for the Education of Young Children

A complete listing of the approved training may be found on the Early Care and Education Career Development office at MSU may be found at the following web site: www.mtecp.org

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