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Updates & Communication for Child Care Providers

The following are updates that may affect child care providers in Montana that serve families receiving the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. This is not an inclusive list of all Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship policies. Policies can be found in both the Montana Child Care Manual and in the Administrative Rules of Montana. This document is effective 10/1/18.

To view the [Child Care Policy Manual](#), please visit our website, www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov, and choose “Child Care Policy Manual” in the Quick Links section.

The Administrative Rules of Montana are located on the Secretary of State’s website. The Administrative Rules of Montana for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship are in Chapter 37, Section 80.

Child Care Providers

Child care provider payment rate changes

The 2016 Montana Child Care Market Rate Survey was conducted to meet requirements of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Reauthorization Act of 2014. The federal government requires a market rate survey to help align child care assistance payment practices and rates with business practices of child care providers in a state. The Market Rate Survey surveyed all types of child care providers across the state. The survey requested information about child care provider fees and charges, as well as other information. Data, findings, and recommendations from the 2016 Market Rate Survey were used to determine provider reimbursement practices that followed business practices of child care providers in Montana.

Age Increments

The age increments for reimbursement of services have been updated to reflect the following:

- Infant/toddler: An infant/toddler is defined as a child from birth through the end of the thirty-fifth (35th) month of age.
- Preschool-age child: A preschool-age child is defined as a child from thirty-six months (36) up to their sixth (6th) birthday.
- School-age child: A school-age child is defined as a child from six (6) years old up to their thirteenth (13th) birthday.

Provider Reimbursement Rates

The 2016 Montana Market Rate Survey recommended a statewide reimbursement rate. Provider reimbursement rates were previously based on Child Care Resource and Referral regions. The federal government recommends reimbursement rates be set at the 75th percentile for child care private-pay rates determined from responses to the Market Rate Survey. Provider reimbursement rates are set at the 75th percentile, meaning these are the private-pay rates charged by 75 percent of the child care providers in MT.

Half-time and Full-time

Federal regulations require payment rates to be paid on a part-time or a full-time rate, rather than paying for hours of service or smaller increments of time.

- Full-time day is defined as more than six hours and up to 12 hours during a calendar day.
- Half-time day is defined as six or less hours during a calendar day.

Approval for Care Over 12 Hours

If child care is approved under the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship for over twelve hours, payment differs from the half-time day and full-time day rates.

- Care approved for more than 12 hours but less than 18 hours per day in a calendar day is paid at the full-day rate multiplied by 1.25.
- Care approved for more than 18 hours in a calendar day is paid at the full-day rate multiplied by 1.5.

Registration fees

The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will pay for reasonable, mandatory registration fees per child that the provider also charges to private-paying parents.

- A registration fee, up to thirty dollars, will be paid to a registered family, registered group, or licensed child care center if the registration fee is charged to all who enroll in the facility.
- The child care provider must indicate on an invoice that a registration fee is being requested.

Scholarship Payments and Public Preschool

Child care, before and after a public preschool day (defined below), will be eligible for the scholarship. This supports a parent's choice in preschool services for their child. Child care services will not be eligible for payment by the scholarship during the operating hours of a public preschool day.

- The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship will reimburse any licensed or registered child care provider for wraparound care, including before and after school care, at the half-time day rate.
- The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship **will not** reimburse child care services during preschool program hours in any of the following settings:
 - public school preschool settings;
 - State funded preschool programs,
 - Head start or other federally funded preschool programs.
- A non-profit or private child care provider who provides a pre-school option will continue to be reimbursed for child care services through the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.

Overpayment of Best Beginnings Scholarship funds

A child care provider that has received a payment that is deemed to be in excess of what is owed to them, must enter into an agreement to repay the excess amount. Failure to be current in this process will make the provider ineligible to receive Best Beginnings Scholarship funds (child care assistance).

Preventing and Reducing Expulsion and Suspension

Child care providers must have a policy on Preventing and Reducing Expulsion and Suspension that includes: reasons for expulsion, procedures for expulsion, how the provider will assist the child and parent with transitions, and the types of referrals the provider will make such as those to a community agency that could offer additional supports to the family. It is recommended that the policy on preventing and reducing expulsion and suspension should be included in a parent handbook or child care enrollment agreement.

- If you, as a child care provider, have questions on how to develop this policy please contact your Professional Development Specialist (PDS) at the regional CCR&R Agency.