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## Updates & Communication for families receiving the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship

The following are updates that may affect families in Montana that receive 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](http://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.

### Families and Parents

#### Requirement to Report Changes in Family Information

- A parent can report any change to their regional Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) agency.
  - The name and contact information of their Eligibility Specialist will be on any notification received by the parent.
- Families must report the following changes to your regional CCR&R agency within 10 calendar days:
  - A change in work, training, or educational status;
  - Increase in the income; or
  - A change in mailing address, residential address, or phone number.
- A change in child care provider must be reported within one business day.
- When a change is reported, the regional CCR&R agency will evaluate the reported changes.
- Failure to report required change reporting does not necessarily cause a loss of eligibility, but a parent may be liable for child care charges when required changes are not reported.

If eligible for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship (BBCCS), how am I authorized for child care?

- A family will be determined eligible for a 12-month period for the BBCCS. An authorization for child care services will be created for the child care provider selected by the parent. The authorization for child care services will align with the family’s eligibility period.

#### Temporary change to a family’s circumstance

- If a family has experienced a temporary change in their circumstance they will remain eligible for the BBCCS and continue to have the same authorization for child care. A temporary change is less than three months in duration and includes the following circumstances:
  - Providing care for an immediate family member who is ill,
  - An interruption in work for a seasonal worker,
  - A holiday or summer break for a parent attending school part-time or full-time,
  - A reduction in work, training, or education hours, and
  - Moving within the state of Montana.
- Temporary changes may not include mandatory change reporting. A parent can report any change in the family’s circumstances to their regional CCR&R agency. The Eligibility Specialist

working with the family will help the parent evaluate possible changes to the case with each unique situation.

### 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.

### What is Graduated Eligibility?

- At annual re-determination, if a family's circumstances have changed and is considered to be over the income threshold for the program, per the [Sliding Fee Scale](#), a family may qualify continued eligibility under the Graduated Eligibility program.
  - A family under Graduated Eligibility must meet all eligibility requirements.
  - The intent of Graduated Eligibility is to assist families with gradually planning for transitioning to paying for child care expenses without the support of the scholarship. The monthly copayment will be higher under the Graduated Eligibility program.

### Grace period for families experiencing a loss or cessation in work, job training, or education

- A Grace Period of 90 calendar days is granted for a family experiencing a loss or cessation in work, job training or education. This means that if a family loses their job or is no longer attending a job training or education program, they will be given 90 calendar days to seek meet activity requirements. If new employment or education/job training is gained that meets all scholarship eligibility requirements, then the family's scholarship remains in-tact. If it is not gained, then the scholarship will end.
  - A parent must report a change in work, job training, or education within 10 calendar days. A parent agrees to this on the BBCCS application in the Parent's Rights and Responsibilities.

### Age of child at the time of determining eligibility in the program

- The scholarship is intended for children within the ages of birth up to age 12. However, if a child is 12-years old at the time that their family is deemed eligible to receive the scholarship, or the child turns 13 during the 12-month eligibility year, they are still eligible through the end of the family's 12-month eligibility period. The Specialist review all circumstances and support the family with the correct plan of action per the scholarship requirements.
  - A parent should check with a child care provider to see if the child care provider is licensed for their child's age.

### Overpayment of Best Beginnings Scholarship funds

- A parent 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 parent ineligible to receive Best Beginnings Scholarship funds (child care assistance).