

## OVERVIEW - BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIPS

### CHILD CARE 1-6

#### Child Eligibility - Overview

**Supersedes:** Child Care 1-8 (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

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#### General Rule

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.

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.

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. When a child is referred by Child and Family Services Division (CFSD), the child may reside outside of Montana.

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 prior to obtaining a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship.

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 if birth to twelve years old at the time of eligibility determination.
- A child has been approved by the Early Childhood Services Bureau under the definition of child with child with special needs or child with disabilities.
- A child, who is under supervision of a court is eligible through the day before the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**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 provider is a member of the child's Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship household unit that is determined eligible.