

## **NON-TANF CHILD CARE ELIGIBILITY**

### **CHILD CARE 2-1**

#### **Application Process**

**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

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#### **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.

Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agencies provide a Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship application to the family:

Additional paperwork is provided depending on the family as follows:

- Child Support Compliance Checklist
- Child Care Service Plan
- Work Verification form
- Training/School Verification Form [if applicable]
- Self-Employment Income Verification Form [if applicable].

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, online, 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 region and allow the family the option of having the case transferred to the 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. Agency locations can be found at [www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov](http://www.bestbeginnings.mt.gov).

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/>.

### **Gathering Information**

Eligibility Specialists must use 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 Scholarship Application Packet* and submitting it to the Child Care Resource and Referral [CCR&R] agency. The eligibility begin date occurs when a completed application is on file.

### **Timely Processing – 30 days**

At the time the initial application is submitted, the parent completes the application and returns it to the CCR&R office by appointment or by mail. The CCR&R staff must review the application packet within 7 business 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Incomplete Applications**

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

### **Presumptive Eligibility**

Presumptive eligibility will begin the day the application is date stamped in the 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 annual redetermination. If the Eligibility Specialist finds out that the applicant has not completed the application process in repeated, subsequent application submissions for purposes of receiving presumptive eligibility, the CCR&R Eligibility Specialist has the option to deny presumptive eligibility based on the apparent misuse of the benefit with approval by their supervisor. ECSB must be notified if presumptive eligibility is denied by a CCR&R for repeated misuse. No overpayment is due if the

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family is subsequently 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 (Pages 1-5);
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.

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.

### **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

- 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 or documentation showing enrolled credits and receipt of fees paid [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**

A Training Verification Form or documentation showing enrolled credits are 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 enrolled credits and receipt of fees paid.

### **Social Security Numbers & Birth Certificates**

A Social Security Number is not required for the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship. A birth

certificate may be required to meet eligibility requirements outlined in Policy Section 1-6 or 1-7.

### **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.

### **Child Support Verification**

See Policy\_Section 2-2a.

### **Child Care Service Plan**

Parents are responsible for selecting their child care provider, indicating the schedule for care needed, and indicating whether the child care provider is related to the child on the Child Care Service Plan in order for the form to be considered complete. The parent can communicate the same information in writing to the CCR&R. The CCR&R Eligibility Specialist may utilize CCUBS information to complete the provider section on the Plan.

### **Child Care Authorization Plan**

When Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships are approved, the parent and the child care provider each receive a copy of the child care authorization 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 Authorization Plan as outlined in Policy Section 6-3.

### **Express Eligibility**

Individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program [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.

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.

### **Waiting List**

When the demand for Non-TANF Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarships exceeds the resources, the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) may implement a statewide waiting list. The Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) will follow the list in ARM 37.80.201.

### **Children with Special Needs**

If a parent indicates a child has a special need on the application, a referral to the Professional Development Specialist will be made.