

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)



The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is the primary federal grant program that provides child care assistance for families and funds child care quality initiatives. CCDBG is administered to states in formula block grants. States use the grants to subsidize child care for low-income working families. Most of this assistance is administered through vouchers or certificates, which can be used by parents for the provider or program of their choice. In addition, the law requires no less than 4 percent of CCDBG funding in each state to be used for activities to improve the overall quality of child care for all children within a community. CCDBG also funds Child Care Resource and Referral services and quality projects for infants and toddlers.

Child Care Aware® of America recommends that Congress review the condition of child care in the United States, paying special attention to the lessons learned from the military child care program. Twenty-three years ago, Department of Defense (DoD) child care was not accountable, quality was poor, and the safety of children was compromised. Congress passed the Military Child Care Act in 1989 to ensure that funds would be spent in an accountable manner, that care would be of quality, and that child care would be provided in an affordable manner for families. Child Care Aware® of America calls on Congress to use the lessons of the military to reauthorize and strengthen CCDBG so that civilian families have access to affordable, quality child care in all communities.

Recommendations:

Congress:

- Reauthorize CCDBG in the 113th Congress and appropriate sufficient funding to ensure that eligible children are able to receive assistance and that states can meet quality improvement goals.

Protect children's safety

- Require states to conduct comprehensive background checks on all paid child care providers who regularly care for unrelated children.

- Require federal minimum health and safety protections for children for receipt of federal subsidies.
- Require states to share information with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies about license revocations and suspensions and other information that will help parents select safe, quality child care for their children.
- Require states to include child care in disaster planning, response and recovery efforts.
- Require all child fatalities in child care settings to be reported to both the state licensing agency and the state child care administrator's office within 48 hours.
- Require states to provide an evidence-based rationale for any child care that is exempt from licensing and to post such information on the Internet.

Promote accountability

- Require regular, unannounced inspections of licensed providers at least once a year, more frequently as warranted.
- Include a specific set-aside for licensing-related activities to promote the safety and healthy development of children.

Promote quality child care

- Increase the federal quality set-aside immediately to 12 percent of the basic block grant, moving toward 25 percent over time, bringing child care on a parity with Head Start.
- Establish quality child care as a goal for any use of related federal funding (i.e., funds used for child care through CCDBG, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF] program and the Social Services Block Grant [SSBG]).
- Set clear expectations about what quality means and establish a floor for what is minimally acceptable.
- Require all paid child care providers who care for unrelated children on a regular basis to complete 40 hours of initial training (primarily CPR and other basic safety and health training in addition to child development) as well as 24 hours of annual training.

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- Require community-based training that is intentional, sequential, competency-based, tied with coaching and tied to outcomes.
- Require states to not only conduct current market rate studies but to use them in setting subsidy levels to ensure that families can access no less than 75 percent of providers in the community and to provide higher subsidy rates for nontraditional hour care, care for infants and toddlers, and care in under-served communities (rural or urban).
- Require states to create or strengthen Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to tier provider payment rates based on quality indicators and to ensure that low-income children are in quality care.
- Permanently authorize the set-aside for infant-toddler care, school-age care, Child Care Resource and Referral services, and Child Care Aware® and increase funding for these programs.
- Authorize funds for pilots in rural communities in areas of high poverty to enable braiding of early childhood funding to better meet the child care needs of parents (meeting the criteria of the strongest funding stream to ensure safe, quality care for children).
- Require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in conjunction with the National Academy of Sciences, to determine the cost of quality child care by setting and report back to Congress.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

- Permanently authorize a Department of Early Care and Learning within HHS, which encompasses the Office of Child Care and the Office of Head Start, providing sufficient administrative funding to ensure adequate oversight and technical assistance to the States.
- Authorize the Office of Child Care to impose penalties when state plans fail to meet minimum protections for children, including poor state monitoring practices.
- Establish definitions and specific qualifications for child care paid for by federal funding.

- Support state efforts to create an infrastructure through which quality improvement projects can be systematically supported.

States:

Protect children's safety

- Require comprehensive background checks, including federal and state fingerprint checks, on all paid adult child care providers who regularly care for unrelated children.
- Require child care paid for with federal funds to meet minimum health and safety protections for children.

Promote accountability

- Require all paid child care providers who regularly care for unrelated children (as a business) to obtain a state license.
- Require transparency in licensing and ensure parents have access to information about licensing and violations (i.e., require states to post inspection reports and substantiated complaints on the Internet).
- Require regular unannounced inspections at least once a year, more frequently as warranted.

Promote quality child care

- Require all paid child care providers who care for unrelated children on a regular basis to complete 40 hours of initial training (primarily CPR and other basic safety and health training in addition to child development) as well as 24 hours of annual training.
- Raise provider payment rates or reimbursement rates to at least the current 75th percentile of market providers and allow families to receive assistance for 12 months without recertification, similar to Head Start eligibility.
- Require states to have more effective sliding fee assistance phase-out plans to ensure parents who receive a modest raise do not lose all child care assistance.
- Require states to apply early learning standards (for children from birth through age 5) to all types of early care and education settings including child care.
- Require that the input of parents be sought as states make child care public policy decisions (through public forums, the Internet or other means).