Child Care Financial Assistance Program

Helping Families Pay for Child Care

VERMONT

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
CHILD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Agency of Human Services

CHILD DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Department for Children and Families
Vermont Agency of Human Services

Our Mission

The mission of the Child Development Division is to improve the well-being of Vermont's children.

We do this through partnerships with families, communities, schools, providers and state and federal agencies that increase access to high-quality, sustainable child development services.

Our Vision

All Vermont children are healthy and successful. Vermont is a great place to be a child and raise a family.

Introduction

This booklet describes the Child Care Financial Assistance Program and how it works. It explains your rights and responsibilities as a family getting help paying for child care from the Child Development Division (CDD) of the Department for Children and Families.

The goals of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program are:

- To support a system of good quality child care services that is readily available to Vermont's children and families; and
- To help eligible families pay for early care and education and schoolage care that meets their needs and promotes the best possible development for their children.

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What is the Child Care Financial Assistance Program?

The Child Care Financial Assistance Program helps eligible families pay for child care services for children from age 6 weeks up to age 13 (or up to age 19 if the child has special needs).

The program is administered by the Child Development Division (CDD), Department for Children and Families, Vermont Agency of Human Services. It is funded through a combination of state and federal funds.

Families may choose any provider willing to accept payments from CDD. CDD pays all or part of an established state rate directly to the provider. Families are responsible for paying their portion of the charges (as co-payments) directly to the providers they choose.

CDD pays higher rates to programs that participate in STARS (Vermont's quality recognition and improvement system) to help families afford these programs.

Who is eligible for assistance?

To be eligible, your family must:

A. Have a reason to use child care services (called an *approved service need*);

B. Meet the income guidelines; and

C. Live in Vermont.

The child receiving child care services with assistance from the program must be a legal resident of the United States.

A. Approved Service Needs:

Each primary caretaker[1] in your household must have at least one of the following reasons for needing child care:

- Has a job;
- Is self-employed;
- Is actively looking for work;
- Is attending school or training;
- Is participating in Reach Up activities;
- Has special health needs and is unable to provide care for the child;

OR

- The child receiving services has significant health or specialized developmental needs; or
- The child receiving services has an open case with the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families and child care is part of the safety plan;

OR

- The family is experiencing significant stress in areas such as shelter, safety, emotional stability, substance abuse, children's behaviors, and parenting issues.

B. Income Guidelines:

Use the table on the next page (*Child Care Financial Assistance Sliding Fee Scale*) to see if your family meets the income guidelines, which are in effect June 29, 2014.

1. Find your family size. Family size means children and their parents living in the same household. A family of 3 may be one parent and two children or two parents and one child.

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1 *Primary Caretaker means a biological, adoptive or foster parent; legal guardian; or other person legally responsible for a child's welfare.*

2. Find your monthly income (how much all primary caretakers earn before taxes and other deductions, plus other income like child support or business income).
3. Follow the line over to column B. If assistance is approved, CDD will pay this percentage of the CDD reimbursement rate to your provider.

Child Care Financial Assistance Sliding Fee Scale

Column A Gross Monthly Income by Family Size				Column B % Paid by State
3 or less	4	5	6 +	
1,649	1,988	2,326	2,664	100%
1,691	2,038	2,385	2,732	99%
1,733	2,089	2,444	2,800	98%
1,776	2,139	2,504	2,870	97%
1,818	2,191	2,565	2,937	96%
1,874	2,259	2,644	3,029	95%
1,951	2,353	2,754	3,154	90%
2,030	2,445	2,861	3,279	85%
2,113	2,548	2,982	3,416	80%
2,199	2,650	3,100	3,552	75%
2,283	2,752	3,221	3,689	70%
2,368	2,855	3,339	3,825	65%
2,452	2,955	3,459	3,962	60%
2,537	3,058	3,577	4,098	55%
2,622	3,160	3,698	4,236	50%
2,706	3,263	3,816	4,371	45%
2,791	3,363	3,936	4,508	40%
2,877	3,465	4,055	4,646	35%
2,960	3,568	4,175	4,783	30%
3,044	3,670	4,293	4,918	25%
3,129	3,771	4,413	5,055	20%
3,214	3,874	4,532	5,193	15%
3,298	3,975	4,652	5,328	10%

NOTE: You may be responsible for a co-payment (the remainder of the CDD rate, and more if your provider charges more than what CDD pays).

How do I apply?

You may request an application for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program from the Community Child Care Support Agency in your area (see back inside cover). Ask for the eligibility specialist.

Parents/primary caretakers must submit all verification documents requested by the eligibility specialist so he/she can determine their eligibility. For example, if you and your spouse are working, you must both submit two current, consecutive pay stubs to verify employment.

What happens after I apply?

Once a determination has been made, you will receive either:

1. A **denial letter** if you do not meet the eligibility requirements of the program;

OR

2. If you are approved for assistance, a **Child Care Financial Assistance Program Certificate** (see sample on next page). It includes important information, such as the start and end dates for authorized services, how much care has been authorized, your provider's recorded rate, your provider's STARS rating, the amount CDD will pay on your behalf, and the maximum co-payment your provider may charge for the child care services CDD has authorized (your co-payment). Your provider will also receive a copy of the certificate.

VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

Department for Children and Families
Child Development Division
103 South Main Street
Waterbury, VT 05671-5500

CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CERTIFICATE			
Certificate #XXXXX			
Payment Start Date	**XX/XX/XXXX**	**Payment End Date**	**XX/XX/XXXX**

[Today's Date]

Parent Name
Mailing Address
City, State, Zip

Provider Name
Mailing Address
City, State, Zip

Dear [insert Parent name],

The Child Development Division (CDD) within the Department for Children and Families has determined you are eligible for child care financial assistance. Payment will be made directly by the CDD to your provider after your provider submits a bill for the services she/he delivers.

VERY IMPORTANT!

- You may have to pay a co-payment for the difference between the amount covered by this Certificate and the amount your child care provider charges. (See **Maximum Co-payment** below.)
- Co-payments are paid directly to your child care provider. ***Not all providers charge the full co-payment to families receiving Child Care Financial Assistance.***
- CDD will **only pay** for the authorized hours in this Certificate. If you use additional hours, you are responsible for paying for those hours.
- It is important that you review the actual co-payment that you will be charged with your child care provider and understand what you are responsible to pay.
- Please report any changes that may affect your eligibility as soon as they happen to the Eligibility Specialist listed below. Changes include a change in family income, address, marital status, household size, or employment/training, etc.
- For more information regarding the Child Care Financial Assistance Program visit http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child_care

(**Insert name**) is eligible for **(full time/part time or extended time**), at a **(% of the Total State Rate**) benefit. Your provider is (enter provider type) and has (0-5 Stars).For more information on STARS, visit http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars

Provider rate	$XXXXX
CDD Base Rate	$XXXXX
STARS Quality Factor	$ XXXX
Total CDD Rate	$XXXXX
X% Benefit (total paid by CDD)	**$ XXXX**
Maximum Co-payment *	**$XXXXX**

**Be sure to discuss your co-payment with your provider.*

Contact Information

Parent Contact phone:
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Provider Contact Phone:
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Eligibility Specialist: **Telephone #:** **Email:**

_____ XX-XX-XXXX _____

How to Appeal this Decision

If you are not satisfied with this decision, you may request an appeal. Mail your **written request** for an appeal to the CDD at the address on the top of this Certificate. The request for appeal must be sent within 30 days of this letter. The appeal will be reviewed by the Financial Assistance Unit of the CDD. If you are not satisfied with the decision CDD makes, you may then choose to submit a written request for a Fair Hearing by filing an appeal, with the Human Service Board (State Office Building, Montpelier, VT 05602) within 30 days of the Financial Assistance Unit's determination.

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Duration of Authorized Services:
Assistance is usually approved for a period of twelve months but in certain circumstances a shorter period is approved. The start and end dates on your certificate tell you how long you have been approved for assistance.

The end date on your child care certificate is the last date CDD will assist with payments. To continue receiving assistance, you must re-apply before that date.

May I appeal a decision?

If your application is denied or you are not satisfied with the assistance you receive, you may request an appeal. *Appeals should be mailed to the address below within 30 days of the eligibility determination.*

Child Development Division
Department for Children and Families
103 South Main Street, 3 North
Waterbury, VT 05671-5500

1. The Child Care Financial Assistance Unit at CDD will review your appeal and notify you of a decision.

2. If you are not satisfied with CDD's decision on your appeal, you may request a Fair Hearing with the Human Services Board. *This must be filed in writing within 30 days of the CDD decision on your appeal.*

What if my situation changes?

It is your responsibility to immediately report any change that may affect your eligibility for assistance to the child care eligibility specialist at your local Community Child Care Support Agency (see inside back cover). This includes any change in household size, marital status, unemployment/employment/training status, address, or income.

How much assistance can I receive?

If you are eligible for assistance, the Child Care Financial Assistance Program helps you pay for child care by paying the child care provider on your behalf. Child care assistance payments do not always cover the full cost of the child care services your children receive. The amount of assistance your family receives is based on your family size and your gross monthly income (before taxes are taken out). Families with lower incomes, or with particular authorized service needs, receive more assistance.

If your application is approved, the state pays a percentage of the reimbursement rate established by CDD directly to your provider. You can find the percentage that CDD pays on the Child Care Financial Assistance Sliding Fee Scale (see page 6). The percentage CDD will pay is included on your child care certificate.

Payment rates are based on the child's age, the type of provider you choose (e.g., licensed center, family child care home, and legally exempt provider), and the number of authorized hours your child is in care (see CDD established rates on pages 12 to 16).

The rate established by CDD may be less than your provider's rate. In that case, even with a 100% benefit, you may have to pay more to your provider.

For programs participating in STARS, CDD may pay more than your provider's usual rate – the provider keeps all of what CDD pays to support the quality of services that are provided.

An example:

- Your infant attends a licensed center program with a three-star rating;
- She attends full time;
- You are eligible for 80% of the weekly base rate paid by CDD (and are responsible for 20% of that rate); and
- Your provider's rate for a full-time infant is $180 a week.

Provider rate	$180.00
CDD base rate	$141.25
STARS quality factor (20% for 3 STARS)	$28.26
Total CDD rate	$169.51
Total paid by CDD (80% benefit)	$135.61
Maximum co-payment (20% of base rate, plus any difference between what the provider charges and what provider receives)	$44.39

What am I responsible to pay?

You are responsible for paying the provider your share of the rate (the difference between the rate paid by CDD and what your provider usually charges). This is called your co-payment. A maximum co-payment is shown on the child care certificate you receive; however, not all providers charge this maximum co-payment.

You may arrange to purchase additional services that CDD has not authorized from your provider. Providers may also charge program fees that are not covered through the Child Care Financial Assistance Program. *It is important that you talk to your provider and understand what co-payments you have to pay and any other fees you may be responsible for.*

How are CDD payments made?

CDD pays reimbursements for child care services directly to your provider. Payments will start as soon as your eligibility is approved. CDD will help pay for services delivered on or after the start date on your certificate (usually the date you applied for help). Your provider submits an attendance report to verify that your child is receiving services, and CDD pays the provider on your behalf every two weeks.

What are CDD's established provider rates?

The tables on pages 14 to 16 show the Child Care Financial Assistance maximum provider rates at 100% benefit—effective November 3, 2013.

Important Definitions:

Authorized Hours of Care:

Part-Time Daily	- 1 to 5 hours a day
Part-Time Weekly	- 1 to 25 hours a week
Full-Time Daily	- 6 to 10 hours a day
Full-Time Weekly	- 26 to 50 hours a week
Extended Time	- more than 50 hours a week

Child's Age:

Infant	- birth up to 24 months old
Toddler	- 2 up to 3 years old
Preschool	- 3 up to 5 years old
School Age	- 5 up to 13 years old (child with special needs may be eligible up to age 19)

Provider Types:

Licensed Early Childhood Programs—often referred to as child care centers or preschools—are regulated by CDD and required to follow CDD standards for safe and healthy care that contributes to a child's development.

Licensed Afterschool Programs are regulated by CDD and located in public buildings, often public schools. Care is provided to school-age children before and/or after school and sometimes during school vacations.

Registered Family Child Care Programs are in-home child care businesses regulated by CDD. The person providing child care must live in the home where the care is provided. Child care can be provided to six children younger than school age, including two children younger than age two and up to four part-time school-age children.

For more information about licensed and registered programs: *http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child_care_licensing.*

Legally Exempt Child Care Providers are not regulated, but they must be approved by CDD before they can be reimbursed for services. Families who have been approved for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program may choose a relative, neighbor or friend to care for their children. This is called legally exempt child care; it is limited to child care for no more than two families in the provider's home or the children of one family in the family's home.

Legally exempt providers and their household members are screened against the Child Protection Registry, Adult Abuse Registry, and Vermont Criminal Information Center. They must have clear records to be approved. *Applications for legally exempt providers are available from the eligibility specialist at the Community Child Care Support Agency in your area.*

Reimbursement Rates for Licensed Programs

Effective November 3, 2013

Weekly Rates at 100% - Part Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	77.69	81.57	85.46	93.23	101.00	108.77
Toddler	75.59	79.37	83.15	90.71	98.26	105.82
Preschool	73.42	77.09	80.76	88.10	95.44	102.79
School Age	71.21	74.78	78.34	85.46	92.58	99.70

Weekly Rates at 100% - Full Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	141.25	148.32	155.38	169.51	183.63	197.76
Toddler	137.43	144.30	151.18	164.92	178.66	192.41
Preschool	133.49	140.16	146.84	160.19	173.53	186.88
School Age	129.48	135.96	142.43	155.38	168.33	181.27

Weekly Rates at 100% - Extended Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	192.11	201.71	211.32	230.53	249.74	268.95
Toddler	186.91	196.25	205.60	224.29	242.98	261.67
Preschool	181.54	190.62	199.70	217.85	236.01	254.16
School Age	176.09	184.90	193.70	211.31	228.92	246.53

Reimbursement Rates for Registered Homes

Effective November 3, 2013

Weekly Rates at 100% - Part Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	64.75	67.98	71.22	77.69	84.17	90.64
Toddler	62.32	65.43	68.55	74.78	81.01	87.24
Preschool	56.00	58.80	61.60	67.21	72.81	78.41
School Age	55.14	57.89	60.65	66.16	71.68	77.19

Weekly Rates at 100% - Full Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	117.72	123.60	129.49	141.26	153.03	164.81
Toddler	113.30	118.97	124.63	135.96	147.29	158.62
Preschool	101.83	106.92	112.01	122.19	132.37	142.56
School Age	97.99	102.89	107.79	117.59	127.39	137.19

Weekly Rates at 100% - Extended Time						
Age Category	Base Rate	1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
Infant	160.10	168.10	176.11	192.12	208.13	224.14
Toddler	154.09	161.79	169.50	184.91	200.31	215.72
Preschool	138.48	145.41	152.33	166.18	180.03	193.88
School Age	133.27	139.94	146.60	159.93	173.25	186.58

Reimbursement Rates for Legally-Exempt Providers

Effective January 3, 2010

Daily Rates at 100%			
Age Category	Base Rate		
	Part Time	Full Time	Extended Time
Infant	9.16	16.03	22.40
Toddler	9.16	16.03	22.40
Preschool	7.84	13.39	18.44
School Age	7.84	13.39	18.44

May I use any provider?

Yes. You are responsible for choosing a provider to care for your children. However, CDD can only make Child Care Financial Assistance Program payments to providers who have signed Provider Rate Agreements. Make sure the provider you choose has an agreement to accept payments from CDD before your child is enrolled.

Provider types are defined on page 13. Regulated programs include:

- Licensed Early Childhood Programs;
- Licensed Family Child Care Homes;
- Licensed School-Age Programs;
- Registered Home Child Care Programs; and
- Licensed Non-Recurring Child Care Programs.

Legally-exempt providers are approved by CDD to provide care for specific eligible children or families (usually relatives, friends, or neighbors).

How do I select the best provider for my child?

The Child Development Division (CDD) offers you three ways to find a child care provider that meets your needs and provides good experiences for your child:

1. **Talk to your local child care referral specialist at the Community Child Care Support Agency in your area.** CDD contracts with local Community Child Care Support Agencies (see inside back cover) to help families choose child care providers that are right for them. Each agency has a child care referral specialist who is specially trained to help you find a child care provider in your area. The referral specialist will help you find a provider, based on your child's needs and your preferences.

2. **Use the STep Ahead Recognition (STARS) Program to help you find a child care provider committed to providing high quality services.**
   STARS is Vermont's quality recognition and improvement system for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs. A list of providers in STARS is available on our website (*dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars*) or by calling the Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642. The Child Care Financial Assistance Program will pay a higher rate if you use a provider that participates in STARS.

3. **Search for regulated child care providers online at *dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/families/find_child_care.***
   Make your choice carefully. Take the time to visit and talk to each provider you are considering before deciding which program to use. You should ask for a provider's parent handbook and /or parent contract and ask lots of questions so that you are sure you understand the program, what it offers you and your child, and your responsibilities as a parent using the program.

What if I decide to change providers?

It's important for children to develop strong positive relationships with child care providers; staying with the same provider over time is recommended. But if your circumstances change, or you feel the relationship between the provider and your child is not working, you have the right to change providers and continue to receive financial assistance. Tell the provider you are making a change—at least two weeks notice is usually expected—and make sure you have a new arrangement in place. *You must notify the eligibility specialist named on your certificate so a certificate for your new provider is in place before the change.*

The referral specialist will continue to work with you to find a provider that works well for you and your children.

What if my child has special health or developmental needs?

Some providers take specialized training—over and above the training usually required—to learn how to care for children with special needs. You may want to choose a specialized child care provider if your approved service need is one of the following:

- You or your child has significant health or specialized developmental needs; or
- Your family is experiencing significant stress in areas such as shelter, safety, emotional stability, substance abuse, children's behaviors, and parenting issues.

You must choose a specialized child care provider if your child is involved with the Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families and child care is part of the safety plan. For help finding a specialized child care provider, call your local child care referral specialist.

Other Resources

Children's Integrated Services Program (CIS):
CDD also administers the Children's Integrated Services Program—a resource for families who have questions or concerns about their child's development during pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood. For more information dial 2-1-1 to get connected to the Children's Integrated Services team in your community. Or check it out online at *http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cis.*

Child Development Division's Publications:
Ask your local Community Child Care Agency (see inside back cover) for a copy of the following publications:

- ***Child Care and You***
  Explains what to look for when choosing child care.

- ***Children's Integrated Services Booklet***
  Describes the information and services that may be available if you have questions or concerns about your child's development—during pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood.

- ***Using Regulated Care in Vermont: A Booklet for Parents***
  Explains the regulatory expectations of child care providers regulated by CDD.

- ***Specialized Child Care Handbook***
  Helps parents and child care providers understand specialized care.

Community Child Care Support Agencies

ADDISON Mary Johnson Child Care Services (802) 388-4304	**BENNINGTON** Bennington Child Care (802) 447-3778
CALEDONIA/ESSEX Kingdom Child Care Connection (802) 748-1992	**CHITTENDEN** Child Care Resource (802) 863-3367
FRANKLIN/GRAND ISLE Family Center of Northwestern Vermont (802) 524-6554	**LAMOILLE** Lamoille Family Center (802) 888-5229
ORANGE/WINDSOR (N) **For Financial Assistance:** The Family Place 1-800-639-0039 **For Child Care Referrals:** Child Care Project 1-800-323-5446	**ORLEANS/ESSEX (N)** NEKCA Parent Child Center (802) 334-7316
RUTLAND Child Care Support Services Vermont Achievement Center (802) 773-4365	**WASHINGTON** Family Center of Washington County (802) 262-3292
WINDHAM Windham Child Care Assoc. (802) 254-5332	**WINDSOR (SOUTH)/ WINDHAM (NORTH)** Springfield Area Parent Child Center (802) 886-5242