



RI Department of Human Services

Responses to CEC November 2023 Follow-Up Questions

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

- What is the Department's plan to sunset the CCAP for Child Care Worker's pilot?

Answer: The Department plans to approve 12-month subsidies through July 31, 2024 as stated in Article 9. The pilot's official start date was August 25th, 2023 and as of October 4, a total of 215 unique applications were received. The majority of applications received (69.7%) were approved, which is a total of 150 approved applications and 211 children. All denials were due to being above the income threshold of 300% FPL. About 26% of approved applications are already participating in the traditional CCAP program. Applying for this pilot is beneficial to traditional CCAP participants who are educators as the pilot will cover the cost of the family co-payment.

Based on the data received thus far in the short time the pilot has been launched, the Department has identified opportunities to collect more data for the evaluation of the program and develop workflows to better report caseload and costs:

- Beginning to survey families who reported income under 200% FPL (the entry point for traditional CCAP) to understand why they have not applied for traditional CCAP. Based on survey responses, we will determine next steps to assist potentially eligible families through the traditional CCAP application process.
- In this established workflow, DHS will expedite applications as they apply for traditional CCAP so the cost for the family comes from regular caseload projections as they are within the traditional FPL limits, as opposed to pilot funding.
- Per federal guidelines, a family, once approved, must be eligible for a 12-month certificate. As part of this new workflow, DHS will work with its federal partners to ensure there is a smooth transition for the family from the pilot to traditional CCAP that provides continuity of coverage with no gap in benefits and maintains a minimum 12-month benefit period. For applications moving forward, we are adding a step to the application workflow. If an employee is approved and looks like they would be eligible for traditional CCAP based on income eligibility guidelines, we will reach out prior to approval to inquire.

A total of \$4 million and 376 subsidies was added to May CEC adopted estimates for FY 24 for this pilot. However, the language in Article 9 is as follows:

(k) Effective from August 1, 2023, through July 31, 2024, the department shall provide funding for child care for eligible child care educators, and child care staff, who work at least twenty (20) hours a week in licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes as defined in the department's rules and regulations. Eligibility is limited to qualifying child care educators and child care staff with family incomes up to three hundred percent (300%) of the applicable federal poverty guidelines and will have no copayments. Qualifying participants may select the child care center or family child care home for their children. The department shall promulgate regulations necessary to implement this section, and will collect applicant and participant data to report estimated demand for state-funded child care for eligible child care educators and child care staff. The report shall be due to the governor and the general assembly by November 1, 2024.



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In terms of sunseting the pilot, based on the language above, the only option would be to approve through July 31, 2024 as Article 9 states. Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding beyond the \$4 million enacted for this pilot is available should the total costs exceed the current budget. Additionally, it is possible to shift funding between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and CCDBG across traditional caseload and the pilot. The current focus has been on collecting and understanding the data in order to start identifying those eligible for traditional CCAP and removing those barriers of entry, while at the same time beginning to identify payment trends to project the overall cost of the pilot. This approach will keep families informed of the current rollout process and how to continue to receive appropriate benefits from DHS once the pilot is completed. The Department will ensure providers understand well in advance of the sunset of the pilot with a thoughtful communication plan as we near the end of the pilot period.

Early data based on assumptions that all approved children would be enrolled by the end of October project the cost of the current caseload at approximately \$1,656,101. However, only 62% of approved children are enrolled to date. The certificate is valid for 12-months based on approval date, not enrollment date. While the costs for the pilot will go into FY 2025, due to the 12-month certificate granted, the enrollment period is only one-year. The Department will continue to get weekly cost projections, as well as work to establish new workflows based on the data received from the first 8 weeks of the pilot. A more accurate projection can be prepared by the end of this calendar year, but more time to observe the application intake rate, approval rate, and percentage of children eligible for traditional CCAP is needed to analyze the full fiscal impact of this initiative.

The Department will continue to monitor the enrollment activity through July 2024 to best project the total pilot cost and share associated data with the early education provider community.

State Supplemental Payment (SSP)

- Please verify if Charlesgate is a current Assisted Living Facility.

Answer: Yes, Charlesgate closed its nursing home, but its assisted living facility remains open.