

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 Bicameral, Bipartisan Agreement Highlights September 13, 2014

In Brief: The bicameral, bipartisan, agreement reached to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) improves the quality of child care by requiring basic health and safety protections for children whose care is paid for by taxpayer dollars. The funds set-aside for state activities to improve the quality of care will require more accountability for the use of those dollars. In addition, more emphasis will be placed on strengthening the child care workforce, the cornerstone of quality child care.

Child Safety:

- **Provider Background Checks.** The measure requires comprehensive background checks for child care providers who are licensed, regulated, or registered under state law or who are non-relatives who receive federal subsidies to care for low income children. A comprehensive background check includes a fingerprint check against state and federal records, a check of the state child abuse registry and a check of the sex offender registry.
- **State Accountability for Unlicensed Care.** If a state uses federal funds to support unlicensed child care with taxpayer dollars, states would be required to explain how such care will not endanger the health, safety, or development of children.
- **Provider Inspections.** Child care programs would be subject to an inspection before a license is granted and conduct at least one unannounced annual inspection for licensing compliance, health, safety, and fire standards. Unlicensed providers that receive federal subsidies to care for low income children would be subject to at least one unannounced annual inspection for health, safety and fire standards.
- **Health & Safety.** To protect the health and safety of children in child care, states would be required to ensure that child care providers have training in the following topics: prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations); prevention of sudden infant

death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices; administration of medication; prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; building and physical premises safety (including identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic); prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma; emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies; the handling and storage of hazardous materials; for providers that offer transportation, if applicable, appropriate precautions in transporting children; first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR); and minimum health and safety training to be completed pre-service or during an orientation training.

State Accountability:

- The measure requires at least one annual unannounced inspection (including inspections for unlicensed providers who receive a subsidy to care for low income children). Inspection results are required to be posted on the internet so that parents can make informed decisions when selecting child care.

Parent Resources:

- The measure requires that states disseminate information in a manner so that parents can better understand the quality of care when they look at potential child care options. States would be required to make public: information about child care licensing, background checks,

inspections (including corrective action plans), programs participating in state quality rating systems and their level of quality.

- Parents would also receive information about other federal and state programs for which they might qualify, demystifying some of the programs that once navigated could really make a difference to a family with young children, including information about developmental screenings so that children with a disability or developmental delay can be identified earlier to receive services.
- States may use funds to establish or support a system of local or regional child care resource and referral organizations to provide parents with consumer information concerning child care options, particularly to assist parents in enrolling children in high quality care.

Child Care Quality:

- The current 4 percent quality set-aside would be increased to 9 percent over 5 years with an additional 3 percent for quality activities related to infant and toddler care.
- States would be required to have a set of workforce and competency standards for child care providers that incorporate knowledge and application of the state's early learning guidelines and the state's child development and health & safety standards. Such policies would be developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care and would support a statewide progression of professional development designed to strengthen the child care workforce. States are required to report on the number of annual training hours required.
- States would be required to have policies with regard to child:staff ratios, group size, and qualifications of providers.
- The measure requires states to conduct a market rate survey of child care prices every

two years, requires that the survey be statistically valid and reliable and reflect variations in the cost of child care by geographic area, type of provider, and age of the child. States would be required to use the survey in setting child care subsidy rates, taking into consideration the cost of providing higher quality care and to the extent practicable, increase rates without reducing the number of families served. States would be required to have policies that pay providers in a timely manner.

From the quality set-aside, states would be required to engage in at least one of the following activities:

- Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce;
- Improving upon the development or implementation of state early learning guidelines;
- Developing, implementing, or enhancing a tiered quality rating and improvement system;
- Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers;
- Establishing or expanding a statewide system of child care resource & referral services;
- Facilitating compliance with state requirements for inspection, monitoring, training and health and safety with state licensing;
- Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care programs, including how programs positively impact children;
- Supporting child care providers in obtaining accreditation;
- Supporting state or local efforts to develop or adopt high quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development; and
- Carrying out other activities that a state determines improves the quality of care for which measurement of outcomes related to improve provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being or school readiness is possible.

Protections for Working Parents:

- The measure requires a 12 month eligibility period for child care assistance before eligibility is re-determined.

- States are required to have policies to allow for more gradual phase-out of subsidies as parents earn higher wages as long as income does not exceed 85% of state median income.

Child Care Provider Fairness & Support:

- **Payment Continuity.** Low income children will be eligible for a subsidy for 12 months regardless of a parent’s changes in employment, wages, job training or education status. This provision is important to working families but also is important so that providers will no longer have an incentive to avoid enrolling children on a subsidy whose unpredictability could result in vacant slots that undermine a program’s fiscal operations.
- **Payment Practices.** Payment practices on behalf of low income families are to reflect generally accepted payment practices among private pay parents and to the extent practicable, states are required to implement enrollment and eligibility policies that support the fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider reimbursement rates from an eligible child’s occasional absences due to holidays or unforeseen circumstances such as an illness.
- **Timely Payments.** Provider payments by states are to be made on a timely basis.
- **Business Technical Assistance.** Child Care State Plans shall describe how the state will develop and implement strategies to strengthen the business practices of child care providers to expand the supply and improve the quality of child care services.
- **Public Private Partnerships.** Child Care State Plans shall describe how the state encourages partnerships among state agencies, other public agencies, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and private entities, including faith-based and community-based organizations, to leverage existing service delivery systems and to increase the supply and quality of child care services, such as by

implementing voluntary shared services alliance models.

National Toll-Free Hotline and Web Site:

The Secretary shall operate directly or through the use of grants or contracts, a national toll-free hotline and web site to:

- Develop and publicly disseminate child care consumer education information for parents and help parents access safe and quality child care services in their community, with a range of price options, that best suits their family’s needs; and
- To allow individuals to anonymously report suspected child abuse or neglect, or violations of health and safety requirements, by an eligible child care provider that receives subsidies to care for low income children.

The hotline and web site shall meet the following requirements:

- a) **Referral to local child care providers.** The web site shall be hosted by “childcare.gov” and shall enable child care consumers to enter a zip code and obtain a referral to local child care providers.
- b) **Information.** The web site shall provide links to: a localized list of all eligible child care providers – differentiating between licensed and license-exempt providers, QRIS information or other quality indicators, compliance with licensing and health and safety requirements, referrals to local resource and referral organizations from which consumers can find more information about child care providers, and state information about child care subsidy programs and other financial supports available to families.
- c) **Services in Different Languages.** The web site shall ensure the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English.
- d) **Consumer Education.** The web site shall ensure that families have access to easy to understand child care consumer education and referral services.

Evaluation and Technical Assistance:

- The Secretary shall provide technical assistance to states, including business technical assistance. (e.g., child care programs are a small business and business TA can help promote more efficient and cost effective business best practices).
- ½ of 1 percent for technical assistance to the states.
- ½ of 1 percent for research and demonstration activities, as well as periodic external, independent evaluations.

Effective date:

No later than 2 years after the date of enactment, States are required to have policies and practices in place applicable to licensing or regulating child care providers who serve low income children receiving a subsidy.

Effective date for Background Checks. No later than the last day of the second full fiscal year after the date of enactment.



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