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MEMORANDUM

To: Families and Child Care Providers

From: Office of Child and Family Services

Date: February 20, 2024

Subject: **Child Care Affordability Program Transition Plan**

The Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) released a [Child Care Affordability Program \(CCAP\) Transition Plan memo](#) on January 9th, 2024 that included language referencing state statute changes, but did not clearly explain our process, from the steps we have taken so far, to our timeline and what to expect next. We are issuing this updated memo to clarify our transition from the Maine Child Care Subsidy Program to the Maine Child Care Affordability Program.

The following work began last fall after funding from the supplemental state budget became available for the CCAP transition in late October 2023.

- We began the process of renaming and rebranding the Child Care Subsidy Program to the Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP). We have been making website updates and are working with internal and external partners on updating all links and language that connect families and child care programs to CCAP.
- We began preparing for hiring additional staff for the expanded scope of the Child Care Affordability Program.
- The law creating CCAP stated that child care programs that are serving children and families in CCAP receive reimbursement payments within 15 days. We have been working with providers on any technical assistance needed to make sure we receive complete and accurate invoices. Payments go out on a biweekly cycle and ensuring accurate invoices that can be quickly approved supports timely payments within the 15-day window.

The following transition work is taking place this winter.

- We are completing the process of hiring four new staff for the Child Care Affordability Program.
- We are focusing on our internal processes and timelines for eligibility decisions. Staff in the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) work to determine if a child/family is eligible for child care financial assistance within a couple of weeks after receiving a

completed application. We will be fully operational soon with additional staff hired to quickly turn around completed applications and consistently meet the 15-day window passed into law.

- We are making updates to our database and processing systems to be prepared to implement the changes in moving from the child care subsidy program to the child care affordability program, including being able to increase the income eligibility for families.
- Rules are being drafted and reviewed to focus on proper, effective, and equitable implementation of CCAP. To learn more about agency rulemaking in Maine, please visit <https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/guide.html>

The work continues this spring and summer.

- This spring we will prepare multiple ways for providers and families to learn about and navigate the new program, from a recorded webinar, to updated brochures and outreach, to training and technical assistance.
- As everything comes together in late spring and early summer, from the newly hired and trained personnel in our office, to the database and payment system updates, to the new rules in effect, and the outreach to families and child care programs in place, we will be able to fully implement all aspects of the program, including:
 - More families will be able to access financial assistance with an increased eligibility for child care subsidies from 85% of the State's median income to 125% of the State's median income.
 - Employees of a licensed child care center or family child care provider will be able to access child care financial assistance for their children who are enrolled in licensed child care.
 - When a child care program has been providing financial assistance to a family while waiting to find out from OCFS if a child is eligible for CCAP, the child care program will receive retroactive reimbursement after the CCAP application from the family is approved.

Stay tuned for more updates as the transition unfolds. We are committed to rolling out all changes thoughtfully and effectively.

Sincerely,

Tara Williams
Associate Director of Early Care and Education
Office of Child and Family Services, DHHS

For questions or concerns please contact us by email at CCAP.DHHS@maine.gov or by phone Toll Free 1-877-680-5866 or 624-7999.