

EEC Newsletter

December Updates

Proposed Transformative Changes to Rates for Providers

At the December Board of Early Education and Care meeting, EEC proposed transformative changes to how the state reimburses early education and care providers who accept child care financial assistance, known as rates. These proposed changes would invest \$65 million from the state's fiscal year 2024 budget to set Massachusetts up to make significant progress on covering the true cost of care, make sure that providers are being paid a fair rate regardless of where they are located, and address rising operational costs for programs. Learn more about the proposal in [our press release](#).

\$850,000 Investment in Early Literacy for Preschoolers

The Administration announced in December that \$850,000 is being awarded to four organizations to increase access to evidence-based and culturally responsive literacy supports for Massachusetts preschoolers, enhancing school readiness and future academic achievement. These initiatives include coaching and professional development for districts focused on universal preschool, identifying preschool language and literacy assessments for districts to use, as well as creating a Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Toolkit to support children of all abilities. Learn more in [our press release](#).

FY23 Close-out Supplemental Budget – Permanent Price Limitation Exemption

Governor Healey's fiscal year 2023 supplemental budget included a provision for a permanent exemption for child care programs from the state's price limitation clause that was included in the final signed budget. The price limitation clause had limited early education and care programs' ability to offer discounts or privately funded scholarship to families or staff members unable to afford the state rate. EEC has received a year-by-year exemption from this rule since 2021. This permanent exemption recognizes the importance of this flexibility for access and affordability, as well as the unique challenges for families and providers within the child care market.

Launching Optional Certification for Teacher, Lead Teacher

EEC launched optional certification for Teacher and Lead Teacher in Western Massachusetts on December 6. Additional regions will be rolled out over time. Optional Director certification remains open statewide. To-date, over 200 educators across the state have been granted a Director certification. Educators are able to [apply for Lead Teacher and Teacher using an online application](#) as we continue to build on our modernization efforts.

\$14.3 Million Available for Center-Based Child Care and Out-of-School Time Program Renovations

The Administration announced in November a total of \$14.3 million was available in capital opportunities for early education and out-of-school time facilities that serve low-income families to support renovations and construction projects that expand capacity and improve the quality and accessibility of learning environments for children. As part of the Administration's whole-of-government approach to addressing the climate crisis, EEC is prioritizing projects that focus on clean energy and

decarbonization. Projects that include security enhancements to prevent and respond to potential threats, such as active shooters and installation of security cameras and access control systems, are also prioritized. The capital applications close January 23. Learn more in our [press release](#).

Capital Funding for FCC Educators

EEC is working to design a program to bring capital grants to Family Child Care (FCC) programs across the Commonwealth, similar to what we have for center-based programs. The grant is not yet available to FCC educators, but more information will become available as dates and application processes develop. To do this well, EEC is interested in identifying partners to support FCC educators in receiving funding. The agency opened [a Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) in November to formally receive feedback on potential partners and how best to support FCC's getting access to capital.

Providing Families Receiving Emergency Assistance with Winter Essentials

The Administration announced in November a collaborative initiative by Horizons for Homeless Children, Neighborhood Villages and Cradles to Crayons to provide winter coats, hats, gloves, diapers, multilingual books, school supplies, and play kits to an estimated 10,000 children 12 and under currently housed with their families in the Massachusetts Emergency Assistance system. This will ensure our youngest learners are not only warm and safe but also have access to culturally appropriate educational materials, books and toys. You can learn more about this initiative in the [Administration's press release](#).

Massachusetts Apprenticeship Week

Massachusetts Apprenticeship Week, in conjunction with National Apprenticeship Week, was November 12 - 18, 2023. Apprenticeship models are a key part of strengthening the early education and care pipeline – supporting people to earn while they work and learn. Apprenticeships support the advancement of early career professionals through a combination of classroom instruction, coaching, professional networking, pay increases when benchmarks are reached, and, upon graduation, professional certifications. EEC celebrated and recognized apprenticeship programs along with our partners from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and others through events and social media to highlight how they are working to support the early education workforce and the economic mobility of educators.

Comment on TANF as a Safety Net and Work Program Proposed Rule

EEC signed onto the Department of Transitional Assistance's [public comment](#) in response to the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Proposed Rule on *Strengthening Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as a Safety Net and Work Program*. The Administration provided recommended changes to the rule to allow continued flexibility around TANF supports for child care financial assistance.

Free Nutrition Classes for FCC Programs

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with Framingham State University has created [free on demand trainings](#) on the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) for FCC programs. Topics include: Choosy Eaters, Culturally Competent Foods, Milk and Milk Alternatives, Offering Whole Grains in the CACFP, Serving Infants: Introducing Solid Foods, and Vegetarian and Vegan Diets.

Reminder: Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Administrative Changes Effective January 1

The following administrative changes will take effect on January 1, 2024 for the C3 grant program:

- Funding request deadlines will occur 4 times a year. That means all requested funds from a particular quarter must be submitted before the end of the month following (see schedule below). Also, at the end of a quarter, providers who have two or more uncashed checks may have payments placed on hold.
 - Please note: Programs may continue to submit monthly recertification requests. Programs who wait to submit recertifications beyond a single quarter will no longer be able to submit those recertifications.
 - To support you during this change in administration, providers will have until April 5, 2024 to submit the final fund requests for the months of July 2023 – December 2023 in which they were open and serving children.

Quarter Timeline:

Quarter	Months in 2024	Due Date for Fund Requests
1	January, February, March	April 5, 2024
2	April, May, June	July 5, 2024
3	July, August, September	October 5, 2024
4	October, November, December	January 5, 2025

- Please ensure you keep the necessary documentation. EEC may hold or adjust future grant awards if the required record keeping documentation is unavailable when requested.
 - You can find example spending list templates and printable grant expenditure trackers, as well as training videos online at [Mass.gov/C3Grants](https://www.mass.gov/C3Grants)