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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Early Education and Care

EMB FY 2010-05

EEC Management Bulletin

- Subject:** EEC Financial Assistance Policy Releases: Continuity of Care Update
- Date Issued:** May 12, 2010
- Effective Date:** Immediate
- For Use By:** EEC Contracted Providers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), and Head Start Programs
- Synopsis:** Creates new a “Continuity of Care category of “Approved Break in Service” that replaces “Child Left Within Three Months”
- Supersedes:** Section 2.0.1.A, Table 2.0.1.A “Continuity of Care: Child Left Within Three Months”
- Further Info:** bulletinquestions@massmail.state.ma.us

Introduction

As you may be aware, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) Financial Assistance Manual is in the process of being updated and restructured. Before the release of the new manual, EEC solicited feedback from internal and external stakeholders in order to prioritize policies requiring immediate updates.

Based on these discussions, a new continuity of care policy, “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” is replacing the category “Continuity of Care: Child Left Within Three Months.”

The policy identified above, and described in greater detail below, is effective as of the date of this EEC Management Bulletin (EMB). Once issued, the new EEC Child Care Financial Assistance Manual will incorporate this policy in full. The Department has also created an amendment log, which will be posted with the current EEC Financial Assistance Guide on EEC’s website and updated, as necessary, with the announcement of any future changes to EEC financial assistance policy. Until the new manual is finalized, please use this EMB and the amendment log, along with the existing Policy Guide in conducting child care subsidy management decisions, including assessments, reassessments and any decisions to terminate or reduce child care subsidies.

You will also note that the immediate changes to the Policy Guide are included in a “red-lined” version of the Guide, which will also be available on EEC’s website:

http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/regs_policies/20100512_fa_policy_guide.pdf

The former policies will be highlighted with the “strikethrough” effect and changed to a “red” font. The new policies will be highlighted as a “blue” font.

The following explains the immediate changes and contains the actual text of each updated policy, as it will be included in the “red-lined” policy manual. A new continuity of care category “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” has been created, replacing the “Child Left Within Three Months” category.

New Policy: Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service

Parent/guardians already receiving EEC Financial Assistance who fall into the following circumstances will be allowed a break in service of up to 90 days, subject to available funding:

- Predictable and verifiable breaks in work schedule which include:
 - Parent/guardian working in a school system (e.g., bus drivers, teachers, aides, janitors, cafeteria workers, etc.), who do not work during summer vacation; and
 - A parent/guardian experiences predictable seasonal employment;
- Parent/guardian participating in education/training activity with a summer break;
- Parent/guardian who chooses to un-enroll their child from EEC financial assistance to allow for travel or alternate care (e.g., to care for a sick relative, a non-custodial parent visitation, etc.) for a specified period of time not to exceed 90 days; and
- Children enrolled in programs that only operate on the school calendar.

Documentation: Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service

Parents/guardians meeting the above definition are required to provide two weeks written notice to the CCR&R/provider with a return date of no more than 90 days. Further, families must provide the documentation to the CCR&R/provider, in order to receive an approved break in service, as described below. Copies of parent’s written notice and documentation must be kept in the child’s file for auditing purposes.

Approved Break In Service	Documentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/guardian working in a school system (e.g., bus drivers, teachers, aides, janitors, cafeteria workers, etc.) who do not work during summer vacation • Parent/guardian experiences predictable seasonal employment 	Letter from employer (on company letterhead) confirming that the parent/guardian is employed by an entity that is closed during the specific period, not to exceed 90 days. Statement must confirm end date and return date from employment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/guardian participating in education/training activity with a 	Written statement or schedule from high school, GED, vocational training program,

summer break	ESL, or college/university to verify enrollment in education and duration of the break, and expected date of re-enrollment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent/guardian who chooses to un-enroll their child from EEC subsidized child care to allow for travel or alternate care (e.g., to care for a sick relative, a non-custodial parent visitation, etc.) for a specified period of time not to exceed 90 days. 	Written statement of alternative care arrangements, date of un-enrollment, and date of re-enrollment. EEC may request additional documentation, including but not limited to: documentation reflecting travel out of the state/country with date of departure and date of return or for non-custodial visitation, copy of the divorce order or settlement agreement reflecting visitation schedule.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children enrolled in programs that only operate on the school calendar 	Written statement that the child is enrolled in a program that does not operate during the summer months.

Implementation of EMB FY 2010-05

Implementation instructions regarding EMB FY 2010-05 follow and are also available in release notes in eCCIMS.

Wait List

In order to track the demand and conduct appropriate cost and caseload projections, CCR&Rs and contracted providers must terminate the children experiencing an approved break in service, then place them on the EEC wait list using the Priority Code “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” as appropriate. These families must seek to re-enroll in their child(ren) in their respective programs within 90 days of the initial service break. This code should be available on eCCIMS for your use on May 18, 2010. For families experiencing an approved break in service prior to the availability of the eCCIMS code, CCR&Rs, EEC, and providers should wait until the codes are available to do the data entry.

CCR&Rs/EEC/providers shall place children whose families demonstrate that they meet Approved Break in Service criteria through submission of required documentation as detailed above on the EEC wait list using the priority code “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” with a future date of care not to exceed 90 days from the service break. Families who fail to re-enroll within the approved break in service period shall no longer be coded “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” and shall be placed back on the wait list with a new date and under their appropriate child priority wait list code (i.e., General Priority).

Table 2.0.1.A of the EEC Financial Assistance Guide has been updated accordingly to reflect the new “Continuity of Care” category of “Approved Break in Service.”

Contracts

Contracted providers must track slots for families who are expected to re-enroll within 90 days in accordance with this policy. Contracted providers who approve a family’s break in service must make reasonable efforts to plan for the re-enrollment of that family. Provided a contracted slot is available, families with an approved break in service who re-enroll within the approved break in service period must demonstrate continued eligibility for EEC Financial Assistance, in accordance with existing EEC Financial Assistance Policy.

If a contract slot is unavailable upon the family’s return to care, a provider may allow the family to enroll in their flex pool, provided they are under their 5% flex pool allocation. A new flex pool Child Priority Code “Continuity of Care: Approved Break in Service” should be available for use on May 18, 2010. If a contracted or flex pool slot is not available upon the family’s return, the family shall be placed back on the wait list with their original wait list date.

Vouchers

When a family terminates care for the 90 day Approved Break in Service, the CCR&R shall use a CCIMS voucher termination code, "Approved Break in Service," which should be available for use on May 18, 2010. Using this code, CCR&Rs can identify those families who were approved to take a break in service and reissue a voucher, subject to funding. If funding is available, families with an approved break in service who re-enroll within the approved break in service period must demonstrate continued eligibility for EEC Financial Assistance, in accordance with existing EEC Financial Assistance Policy.

Consistent with other Voucher Management Pilot Program procedures, the CCR&R must assist pilot contracted providers with use of this code. The pilot provider shall contact the CCR&R in order to terminate the family using the "Approved Break in Service" code until further development of the next phase of the Voucher Pilot Program.

Note

EEC is retiring the following codes:

- Wait List Child Priority Status: Child Left Care Within 3 Months; and
- Flex Pool Continuity of Care: Returning to Subsidized Care, Within 3 Month Break.

No new families may be placed in either of these codes.