



## POLICY ADVISORY

*Field Operations 2024 - 4*

**Policies:** Child Care Financial Assistance - Income Eligible Flex Pool

**Effective Date:** February 16, 2024

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### OVERVIEW

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) amended the child care financial assistance (CCFA) Income Eligible Flex Pool policy during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist providers with the enrollment of new children in response to the changing needs of families and providers. EEC is grateful for your hard work in ensuring access to families at the most critical times. Your diligence has allowed our caseload to grow, reaching our goal of serving 58,000 children through child care financial assistance. As we continue to move through pandemic recovery, EEC is reviewing interim policies and procedures and making needed changes based on current program needs and funding appropriations. Through this process of rolling back policies it is EEC intention to ensure there are no disruptions in care for currently served children.

Effective immediately, EEC will be re-instituting the pre-COVID cap on the number of slots in the Income Eligible Flex Pool. This change means that the Income Eligible Flex Pool funding may only be utilized for continuity of care purposes. EEC defines continuity of care as the continuation of child care financial assistance services for a child already receiving assistance as they transition between age groups, providers, and programs as well as sibling access for any other child in the household. Please see IE Flex Pool Reasons below.

As outlined in the contract, EEC reserves the right to change the “flex pool” guidelines from time to time based on the current needs of the population and/or funding limitations.

### APPLICABILITY

This policy only applies to the Income Eligible Flex pool and contracted child care financial assistance providers, including Family Child Care systems, with an Income Eligible contract.

**NOTE: There is no change to the DCF-Supportive Expansion Flex Pool.**

### KEY UPDATES

The re-instituted cap on the number of slots in the Income Eligible Flex pool means:

- Income eligible flex pool funding may be accessed up to 5% over the original contract slot award to support continuity of care for children in a contracted



slot as a child ages up or transitions from one provider to another or one type of child care financial assistance to another (e.g. DCF contract to Income eligible) or sibling access.

- Providers currently over the 5% maximum flex pool cap will be allowed to continue care for current children in the flex pool and will be able to utilize the flex pool for continuity of care purposes. As contracted slots become available IE flex pool slots will transition into IE contract slots.
- Accessing this funding will not reduce or increase the number or age distribution currently allowed by the terms of the contract.
- Any family that has been notified of funding or slot/placement availability verbally or in writing prior to the issuance of this advisory may be enrolled under “Expansion Flex Pool.”
- IE Flex pool slots will continue to be limited by region and program types listed in your current Income Eligible contract. Please consult with Contract Specialist Barbara Boyd [barbara.boyd@mass.gov](mailto:barbara.boyd@mass.gov) if you wish to realign the program types listed in your Income Eligible contract.
- Providers shall not issue any new notifications of funding unless authorized by EEC. Requests must be submitted to [EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov](mailto:EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov)
- Only under certain circumstances will EEC approve the enrollment of new children. Requests may be submitted to [EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov](mailto:EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov).

There are currently seven available “IE FLEX Pool reason” codes that can be used:

<b>CCFA FLEX Pool Reason</b>	<b>Reason Defined (i.e. when to use it)</b>
Aging OUT/UP	Child has aged out of the program type.
Approved break in care	A written request, approved by EEC or Family Access Administrator, to place a child care placement in inactive status for up to 90 consecutive days.
Geographic Relocation	The parent moves or a change in providers is necessary due to a change in job or to the location of an education or training program. The parent may also change child care by identifying a new child care educator/provider within your admin/umbrella where the new program is in a different region.
Transition from Homeless Contract to IE	Parent seeking to continue eligibility when the service need of experiencing homelessness has ended or is no longer needed.
Transition from Supportive Contract to IE	Parents seeking to continue eligibility at the closure of the Family’s DCF-Related Child Care may continue to receive financial assistance through the Income Eligible Child Care.



Transition from TEEN Contract to IE	Parents seeking to continue eligibility at the end of the Family's Young Parent Child Care services may continue to receive financial assistance through the Income Eligible Child Care.
Expansion Flex Pool	EEC approved enrollment of a new child in an IE flex pool slot when your regular contact slots are full. Request must be sent to <a href="mailto:EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov">EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov</a>

**RESOURCES**

If you or your staff have questions about this policy or need additional support, please contact [EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov](mailto:EECsubsidymanagement@mass.gov).

**OBSOLETE**

This policy replaces any previous policies related to the child care financial assistance income eligible flex pool.