

POLICY ADVISORY

Title: Interim Income Eligible Child Care Financial Assistance Policies

Policy Number: CCFA-26-01

Release Date: January 7, 2026

Effective Date: January 1, 2026

OVERVIEW

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has been working to improve its Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) programs. In October 2023, EEC revised its CCFA regulations and they went into effect. Since then, EEC has released numerous policies, procedures, and guidance to provide administrators and families with more details and clarity around the regulations.

EEC has now updated the CCFA regulations again to comply with new requirements included in the FY25 Outside Sections of the state budget. These statutory changes take effect on **January 1, 2026**, and require updates to both CCFA regulations and related policies. This Policy Advisory explains these changes and outlines how they will be implemented in practice.

Key Regulation Changes

- Expand initial eligibility to families with incomes at and up to 85% of State Median Income (SMI) and allow the Department to go beyond 85% SMI if the federal government allocates additional funding to do so
- Add priority access for families at or below 50% SMI
- Codify existing priority access for early education and care staff working in programs, disability, families experiencing homelessness, young parents, and individuals facing domestic violence.
- Codify that state governmental assistance (TANF, CCFA, etc.) does not count as income for the purposes of determining eligibility for state governmental assistance

APPLICABILITY

These policies apply to families receiving child care financial assistance, families on the Child Care Financial Assistance waitlist and provides guidance to Family Access Administrators.

KEY UPDATES

INCOME ELIGIBLE UPDATES

Income

Families must have a total gross household income at or below 85% of the SMI at the time of their initial authorization. Families may remain eligible for child care financial assistance if their total gross household income remains at or below 85% of the SMI.

- Two additional sources of income to exclude when determining eligibility:
 - Income of siblings who are not receiving child care financial assistance, and
 - Earned income of any minor child

Reminder:

- Voucher access for Income eligible families is limited to continuity of care and sibling access.

Waitlist Management

Priority Access

The following families will be given equal priority access to funding:

- Families with a household income not more than 50% of the State Median Income (SMI)
- Families in which a parent or caregiver is working in the field of early education and care and whose household income is not more than 85% of the State Median Income (SMI)
- Families with children who have a documented disability and whose household income is not more than 85% of the State Median Income (SMI)
- Families experiencing homelessness
- Families with a young parent (younger than 24 years old)
- Families with a parent experiencing a situation of domestic violence

Placement on the Waitlist

- Families with one or more of the above statuses will be assigned the respective priority status code(s) in the waitlist management system

- No other priority status codes shall be used for waitlist placement, nor for offers of funding

Authorizations

- Eligible children shall receive their assistance either through a contract or a voucher, not both.
- When a child reaches the maximum age for eligibility (turns 13 years old or a child with a disability turns 16 years old) during the school year, the child remains eligible for child care services until the end of the school year in which they reach maximum age or until the end of the current authorization, whichever comes later.
 - For example, if a child turns 13 (or a child with a disability turns 16) in January and the family's reauthorization occurs in March, the authorization should be extended to June 30th.
 - Family Access Administrators will extend the current authorization to end June 30th of that school year by submitting a help desk ticket.

RESOURCES

This Policy Advisory replaces the relevant sections of “[Interim Income Eligible Child Care Financial Assistance Program](#),” effective October 1, 2023, and “[Interim Income Eligible, Department of Children and Families \(DCF\), and Department of Transitional Assistance \(DTA\) Child Care Financial Assistance Policies](#),” effective April 30, 2024. The specific content that is now obsolete is as follows:

[Interim Income Eligible Child Care Financial Assistance Program Policies, effective October 1, 2023:](#)

- INCOME ELIGIBLE – WAITLIST – PRIORITY ACCESS (pages 3-4)
- INCOME ELIGIBLE – WAITLIST – IMMEDIATE ACCESS – FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (pages 4-6)
- INCOME ELIGIBLE – ELIGIBILITY – DOCUMENTATION: Total gross household income (page 10)
- INCOME ELIGIBLE – ELIGIBILITY – AGE OF CHILD: Second sentence of the first paragraph (page 11)
- INCOME ELIGIBLE – ELIGIBILITY – INCOME (page 12)
 - First sentence is now out-of-date
 - Add two additional sources of income to exclude when determining eligibility

Interim Income Eligible, Department of Children and Families (DCF), and
Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) Child Care Financial
Assistance Policies, effective April 30, 2024:

- INCOME ELIGIBLE – WAITLIST MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (pages 2-3)
 - Under the bullet about “redefined baseline criteria for offering child care financial assistance,” the second and third sub-bullets about Waitlist Priority Statuses are now out-of-date. (Bottom of page 2 and top of page 3).

Please visit EEC’s online [Hub for Child Care Financial Assistance Programs Changes](#) for most recent regulations, interim policies, policy advisories and training resources on child care financial assistance

For assistance with the implementation or interpretation of these interim Child Care Financial Assistance policies, contact EEC at eecsubsidymanagement@mass.gov.