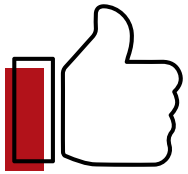
The Family Journey

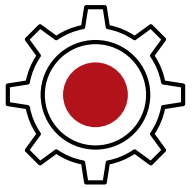
Welcome!

While waiting for others to join, check your Zoom settings and drop your full name, role and organization in the chat.



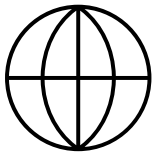
Find "Raise Hand"

- In meeting controls, click “Reactions”
- Click raise hand to ask a question or answer a prompt



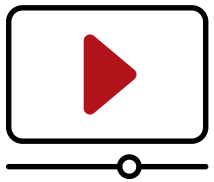
Update Your Name

- In meeting controls, click “Participants”
- Hover over your name, click "..."
- Click "rename" to update to your First Name & Last Name



Utilize Live Translation

- Select the globe icon on the bottom of your screen
- Click your preferred language



Technical Trouble?

- Send a message to the EEC Host: Meaghan Blanton

Housekeeping



Please feel welcome to place questions in the chat

Questions will be gathered for a holistic FAQ document that will be distributed after every Family Journey training is completed



When asked for feedback or comments by facilitators throughout the session, please “raise your hand” to be called on



Please keep your microphone on mute to reduce feedback until you are looking to make a statement or ask a question

Today's Agenda

Welcome

CCFA Overview

Steps in a family's journey

Waitlist

Eligibility

Initial Authorization, Parent Fees

Attendance and approved break in care

Change reporting

Reauthorization

Policy Variances

Denials and Terminations

DTA/ DCF

Introductions: EEC Team

- **Tyreese Nicolas**, Deputy Commissioner of Family Access & Engagement
- **Bethanie Glass**, Director of Child Care Financial Assistance
- **Carmen Quiñones,** Subsidy Policy & Technical Assistance Specialist

- **Financial Assistance Team**
  - Johanna Gonzalez
  - Brenda Hodziewich
  - Brenda Santiago
  - Charline Vaughan
  - Jackeline Fernandez

Learning Objectives

- ❑ **Understand the changes** to the regulations and policies connected to the family journey: Intake, Waitlist, Eligibility, Initial Authorization, and Reauthorization
- ❑ Learn how to **reduce burden on families** and improve and simplify communication with families as they navigate Child Care Financial Assistance programs
- ❑ Understand how to **execute the new policies and processes** associated with Intake, Waitlist, Eligibility, Initial Authorization, and Reauthorization to drive the policies and regulations forward
- ❑ Identify the **materials, resources and supports** available for successful family engagement as a family accesses child care financial assistance
- ❑ **Broaden understanding** on how the new regulations, policies, and procedures impact how you work with families, and how families will work with our various partners – you!



CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - OVERVIEW

Background and Context: Child Care Financial Assistance

- The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a federal and state partnership authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG).
- States use CCDF to provide financial assistance to low-income families to access child care so they can work or attend a job training or educational program.
- States also use CCDF to invest in quality initiatives, including building the skills and qualifications of the workforce, supporting programs to achieve higher standards, and providing consumer education to parents.
- EEC's child care financial assistance programs are primarily funded by CCDF.

Federal policies establish the basic requirements for eligibility for CCDF-funded child care subsidies

- Children must be under 13 years of age (up to 16 years with a disability)
- Family's income cannot exceed 85% of state median income and countable assets cannot exceed $1M
- Parents or guardians must be working or attending a job training or educational program, with some options for states to grant exceptions

EEC must follow these policies to use CCDF funding for its child care financial assistance programs.

EEC develops its regulations and policies accordingly.

Child Care Financial Assistance System - Constructs

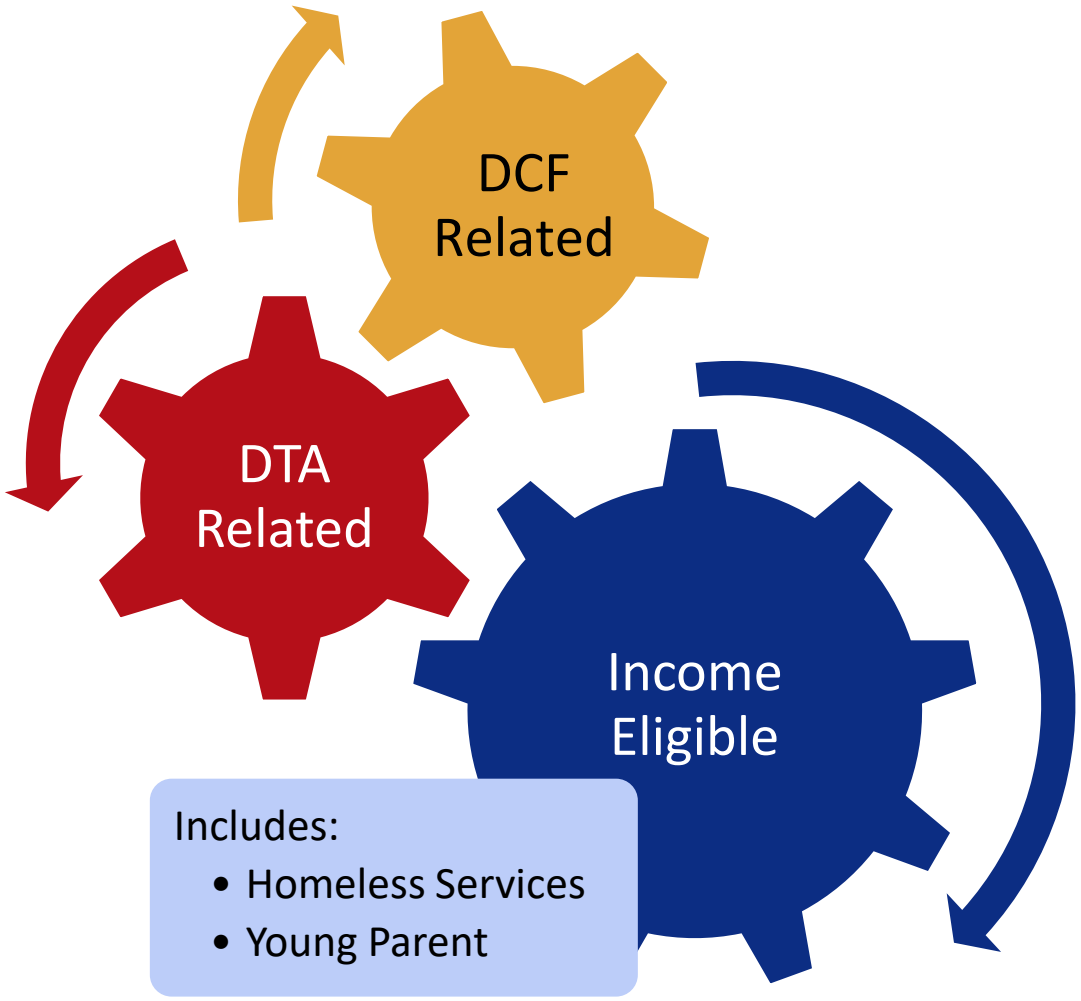
The child care financial assistance system is governed by federal and state statute and regulations

	Purpose	Role of EEC
Federal Statute (CCDBG)	The Child Care Development and Block Grant (CCDBG) establishes the baseline eligibility requirements for child care financial assistance	Determine policies & processes, define terms, decide on methods for eligibility and care
Appropriations	State Appropriations dictate how we can use funds earmarked for the child care financial assistance	Ensure spending is in accordance with the law
State Statute (MGL)	Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 15D, § 2, articulates responsibilities for administering child care financial assistance	Administer federal funds, child care financial assistance waiting list, and rate structures

Child Care Financial Assistance Programs

EEC administers three child care financial assistance programs accessible to families in the form of vouchers or contracted slots.

Families access these programs through the EEC centralized waitlist or by referral from an authorized state entity.



Forms of Assistance

Voucher	Contracted Slot
• May be used at any program that accepts child care financial assistance • Administered and managed by CCR&Rs only	• Contracted provider (center-based site or FCC system) with a specific number of children to enroll • Receive additional funds to provide added supports to children who meet certain criteria (homeless, DCF, young parent) • Each contracted provider manages their own contracted slots

Contracts and vouchers are paid the same EEC daily reimbursement rate. Contracted providers receive an additional add-on rate for supportive services for DCF-related, young parent and homeless child care services.

Parent Journey Map: Income Eligible Program



Parent determines need for child care.



Parent joins waitlist by calling CCRR, Mass 211, or contracted provider. Parent self-identifies any status, like homelessness or disability status, that may allow for prioritization of care.



Parent receives Funding Availability Notice (FAN) from CCRR or contracted provider and list of documents they need to verify eligibility in verification meeting.



After identifying child care placement, parent participates in eligibility verification meeting with CCRR or contracted provider.

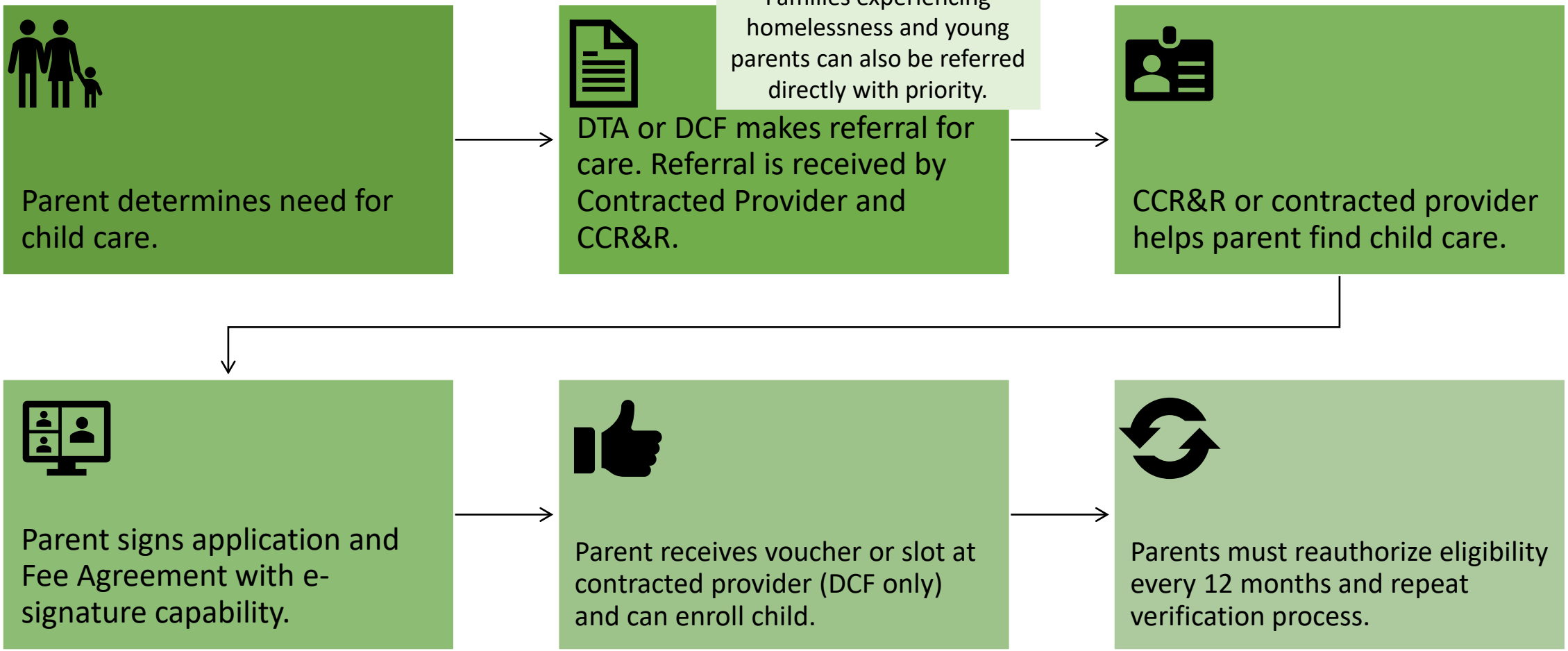


If deemed eligible, parent receives voucher or slot at contracted provider and can enroll child. Parent fee is determined (~7% of income or less).



Parents must reauthorize eligibility every 12 months and repeat verification process.

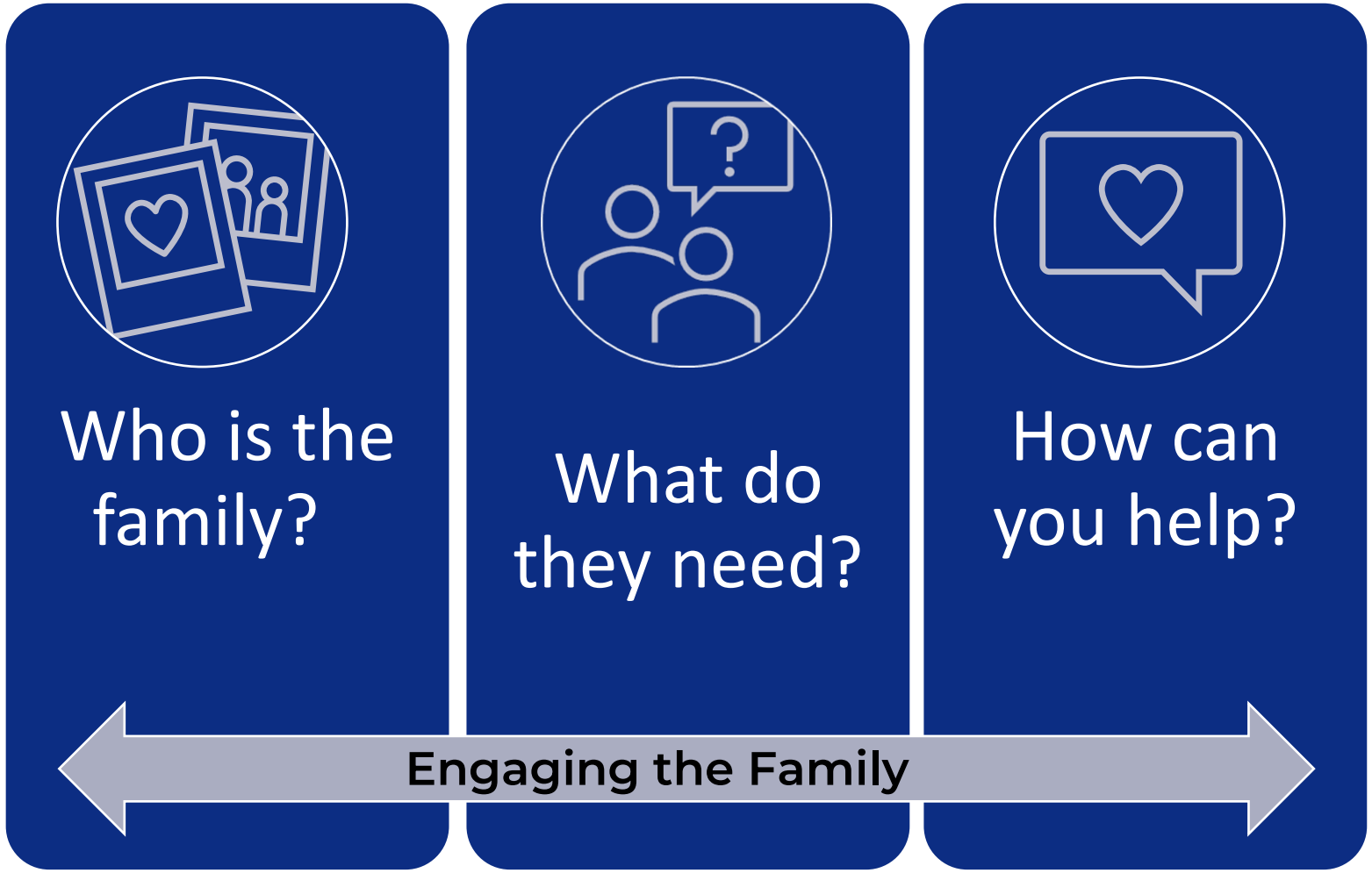
Parent Journey Map: DCF & DTA-Related





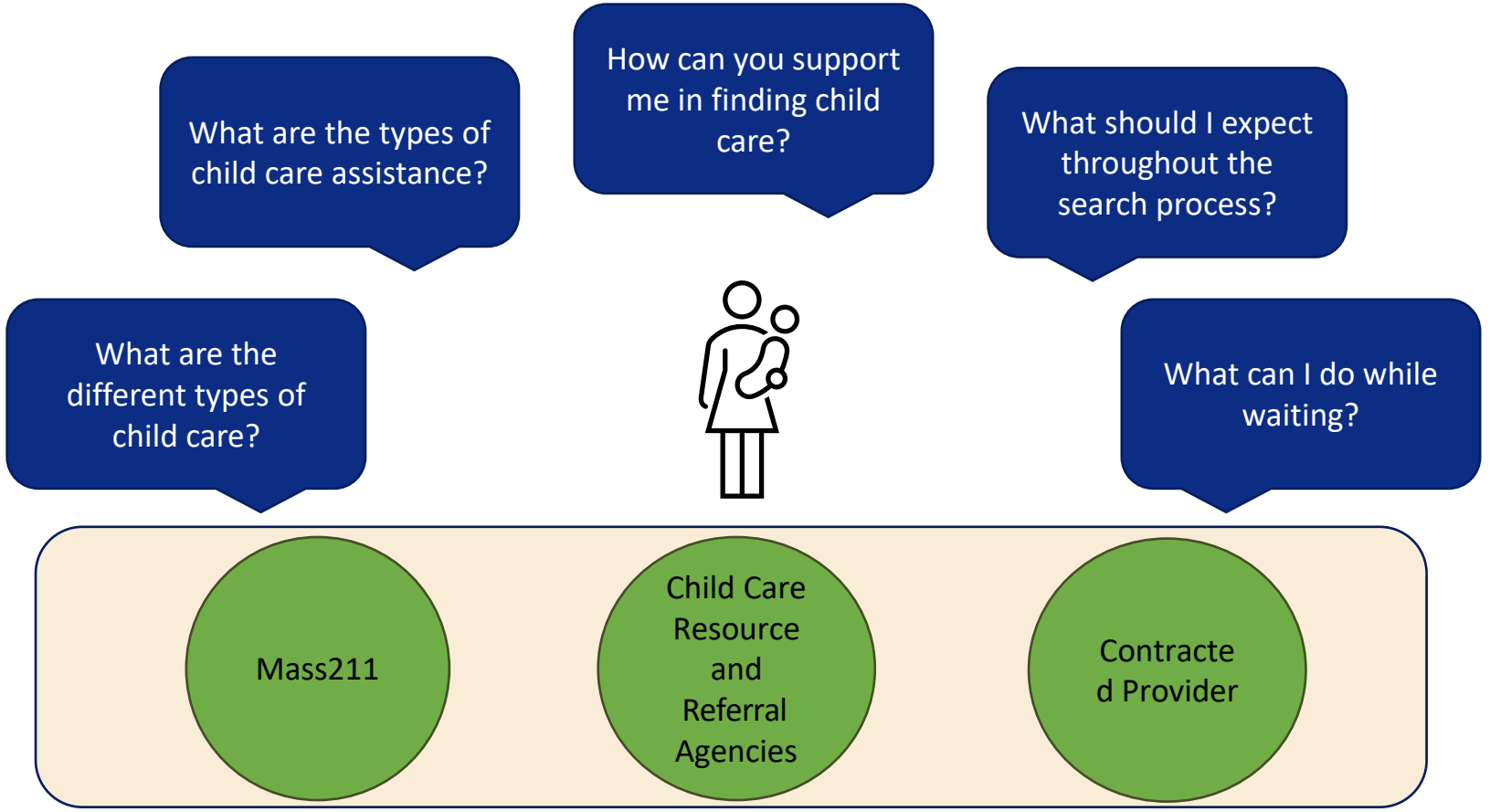
WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN A FAMILY'S JOURNEY?

Understanding the Family



Offering Support & Information

Child care is one of the most critical supports for all families and can be difficult to navigate without the proper information and supports. Family Access Administrators should make sure families understand the resources available to them and how the process works.





ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES & WAITLIST PLACEMENT

Waitlist – What's New



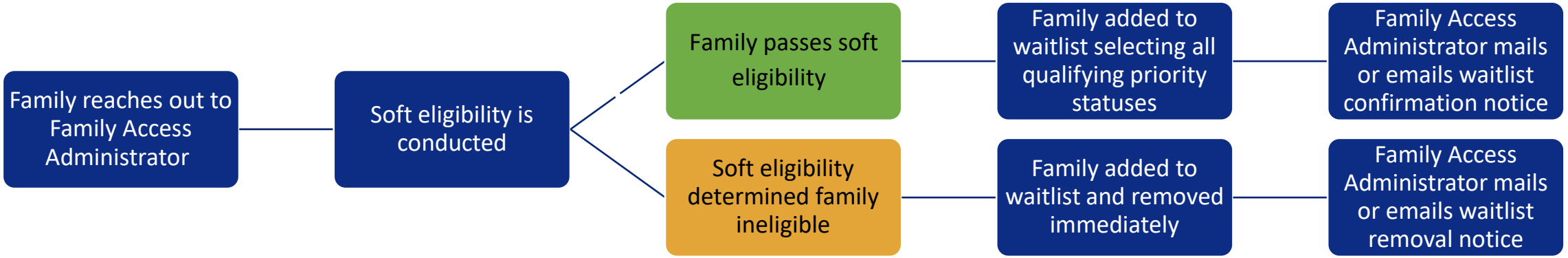
- **Screening**
  - Waitlist Soft Eligibility screening questions
  - Expanded options for what type of care a family is interested in: Preferred Program Codes (Voucher Only, Center Based, Family, Informal) (coming soon)
- **Priority Statuses**
  - Redefined statuses and baseline criteria for offering assistance due to priority status
  - Addition of priority codes for substance abuse and domestic violence
- **Communication**
  - Utilization of notices to confirm placement status on waitlist (Confirmation, Renewal, Removal)
    Previously referred to as Letters (e.g. FAL) now Notices (e.g. FAN)
  - Use of multiple modes of communication for sending of Funding Availability Notice (email, mail and/or text)
  - Requirements around how many times and ways you communicate with families
  - Funding availability refusals defined as "no longer needing care" or "not interested in care" when notified of funding

CCRR Only

- Use of Financial Assistance Case Tracking System (FACTS) when offering FAN

Waitlist: Process Overview

The EEC centralized waitlist for financial assistance is the first step in the process for families to access EEC financial assistance. Families may be added to the waitlist by a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRR), a Contracted Child Care Provider or by calling Mass 211 (dial "2-1-1" from a phone).



Families must not be determined ineligible due to citizenship status alone. If a family requests to stay on the waitlist, the Family Access Administrator must place the family on the waitlist and document in KinderWait.

Waitlist: Soft Eligibility Screening

All families should receive a “soft eligibility” screening prior to being placed on waitlist

The screening consists of a short set of questions to collect the minimum amount of information necessary to determine if a family likely qualifies for child care financial assistance

Families will complete screening by their preferred method of communication

Families must be asked if they need any special accommodation

The soft eligibility asks questions regarding:

Contact Information
- Name
- Residency
- Citizenship status of the child(ren)

1

Status
- Immediate
- Priority
- General

2

Income/Household
- Average monthly income
- Household composition

3

Example: Soft Eligibility Questions

1. What is your first and last name?
2. Do you live in Massachusetts?
3. How many people are in your family? How many parents/children? Ages?
4. Is the child(ren) for whom you are seeking care a US citizen or a legal resident of the United States?
5. Are you single or married? Married but separated?
6. Do the child(ren) for whom you are seeking care have a disability?
7. How would you describe your living situation? **See additional questions on slide 24*
   - If family is homeless, bypass income questions
8. Are you employed? Seeking employment? In school or a training program? Disabled? (obtain service need requirement)
   - If employed: ask hourly rate and how many hours a week are worked
   - If salaried: ask for annual salary and divide by 12 to get monthly amount OR ask if they have their gross pay amount weekly or biweekly
   - If self-employed: ask for average monthly gross income

Use SMI Chart to Check Eligibility

- 50% SMI for most families
- 85% SMI for:
  - Families with child(ren) with a disability; OR
  - Families where one parent works for an EEC funded or licensed program (Early Childhood Educator Priority)
- Income requirements are waived for homeless families
- Chart online: Mass.gov/guides/child-care-subsidy-management-and-ccfa

Tips for talking with families:
Talk about SMI as their **Maximum Monthly Income (before taxes)**

Child Care Financial Assistance Eligibility Chart

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income (before taxes)	Maximum Monthly Income if your child has a disability (before taxes)
2	$4,122	$7,008
3	$5,092	$8,657
4	$6,062	$10,306
5	$7,032	$11,955

If eligible: “Your family does qualify for financial assistance. I just need to ask you a few more questions to add you to the waitlist.”

Additional Waitlist Questions

All families should be informed that certain family circumstances may qualify them for priority access status. It should be explained that this may impact child care financial assistance requirements to make accessing child care easier and expedite the waitlist process.

Additional questions include:

- Within the last 24 months, has your family had an open DCF case?
- Within the last 24 months, has your family had an open cash case with DTA or been receiving SNAP benefits?
- Is your family homeless, including but not limited to: staying in a shelter, living in a motel/hotel, sharing housing?
- Have you (or are you) experiencing domestic violence?
- Is a parent working in an early education and care program?
- Is a parent younger than 24 years old?
- Is either parent actively deployed to military duty?
- Is the caretaker a legal guardian or foster parent, including a grandparent?

Waitlist Communications

Family Access Administrators must ensure that families receive written communication informing them of waitlist placement status

1. **Confirmation Notice**
   To be sent within 24 hours of adding family to waitlist
   - Confirms the number of children placed on the waitlist
   - Confirms the date each child's name was placed on the waitlist
   - Provides the family with a household ID (HHID) to be used when referring to their application
   - Requests the family to review the information they have provided and to contact a Family Access Administrator to report any changes
2. **Renewal Notice**
   Sent to all families on waitlist longer than 12 months with no updates
   - Requests the family to update information within 15 days
   - Requires a response from family to prevent removal from list
3. **Removal Notice**
   Informs family they are no longer eligible for waitlist due to failing to update waitlist record, exceeding income eligibility or failing to respond to funding availability
   - When families are sent a removal notice they should also be sent a request for review form
4. **Funding Available Notice**
   Informs the family that they funding is available and starts the process to receive care

REMINDER:
You Do Not Need Parent Immigration Information



Family-friendly language on immigration and public charge when speaking with families:

- Getting CCFA will not hurt your immigration status. Applying for or receiving child care financial assistance will not put you at risk of being considered a public charge. All information given to EEC is confidential and is not shared with immigration officials.

- Child care financial assistance is considered a benefit for children, not adults. Even if you, as a parent or caregiver, are not a U.S. citizen or eligible immigrant, it is safe for you to apply for and receive child care financial assistance for an eligible child. Parents do not have to provide proof of citizenship status for themselves as part of the application process.

Public Charge is a rule for some people applying for Lawful Permanent Residence (Green Card) or certain other visas to enter the U.S. **Child Care Financial Assistance does not fall under public charge.**

Waitlist Priority Statuses

Immediate

- Families experiencing homelessness
- Families with a young parent
- Families experiencing domestic violence
- Families with a parent working in early education and care program
- Families with a sibling already receiving child care financial assistance

Priority

- Families with a child or parent with a disability including parents participating in substance abuse treatment and/or rehabilitation
- Families whose eligibility for another child care financial assistance program is ending
- Families with a legal guardian, including a grandparent
- Families with a parent who is actively deployed to military duty

General Priority

- Families with no priority code

Continuity of Care

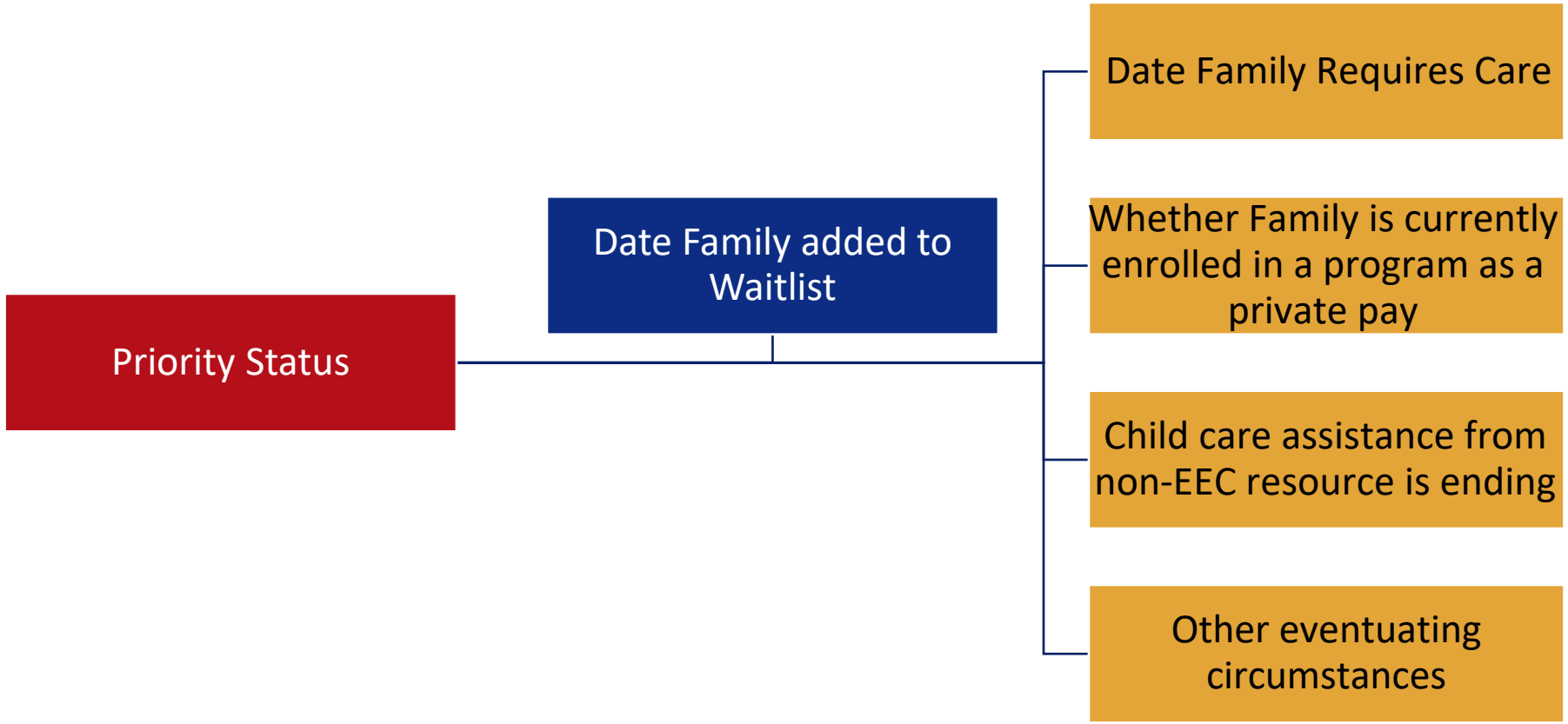
Families who are ending child care financial assistance for a particular EEC program (DCF/ DTA) but still qualify for assistance

What does Immediate Access Mean?

- Expedited enrollment
- Immediate notification of funding availability sent via email
- Assessment of families' immediate needs
- Scheduling 1st available appointment

Offering Funding from Waitlist

When funding becomes available, Family Access Administrators will offer child care financial assistance to families based on the families preference and then pulling a query from the waitlist based on:



Family Access Administrators must ensure equitable distribution of Funding Availability Notices across priority and general priority populations unless otherwise directed by EEC

Discussion

What are some ways you ensure equity when offering funding?



ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility – What's New



New Eligibility Criteria

- Full time care defined as 25 hours or more a week
- Income requirement waived for Homeless Families and no longer limited to 2 years
- The term Teen Parent changed to "Young Parent" and initial eligibility increased to under 24 years of age
- Homeless, Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse treatment qualifies as service need/service activity

Provisional

- Provisional is 12 weeks with a maximum of 2 in a 12-month period
- Families may submit income within the last 26 weeks (ANY 4 if weekly, 2 if bi-weekly/bi-monthly or 1 if monthly out of 26 weeks)
- Child support/in-kind child support, TAFDC, SSI and SSDI are not countable income sources
- Self-employed families only need to report 1 month of income and proof of receipts and expenses no longer required
- Employment Verification Form and/or employment letter are acceptable verification for new and current employment and 12-month authorization
- Newly employed families may request a Provisional authorization, so the fee doesn't start right away
- Active military deployment is a service need/activity for the parent being deployed as well as the caretaker (parent/guardian) of the child

Service Needs

- Graduate school is a service need ONLY at reauthorization AND if previous service need was education
- 10 college credits is considered full time (10 x 2.5=25 hours)
- Parental Leave (was Maternity/Paternity leave) is a service need with a 12-month authorization
- Disability of parent can be combined with another service need

Eligibility – What's New cont.

NEW

Documentation

- Forms updated (Disability of Parent, Disability of Child, Change Form, EVF. etc.) and added Self Attestation
- Removal of Household Composition, Household Income Statement and Third-Party Verification form
- Disability of parent documentation changed from form and letter to either one
- Google maps to verify 5 hours of travel time is no longer required
- Expanded list of acceptable forms of verification, if photo ID is not available, 2 other forms accepted (see exhaustive list)
- Expired Photo ID is acceptable verification for identity

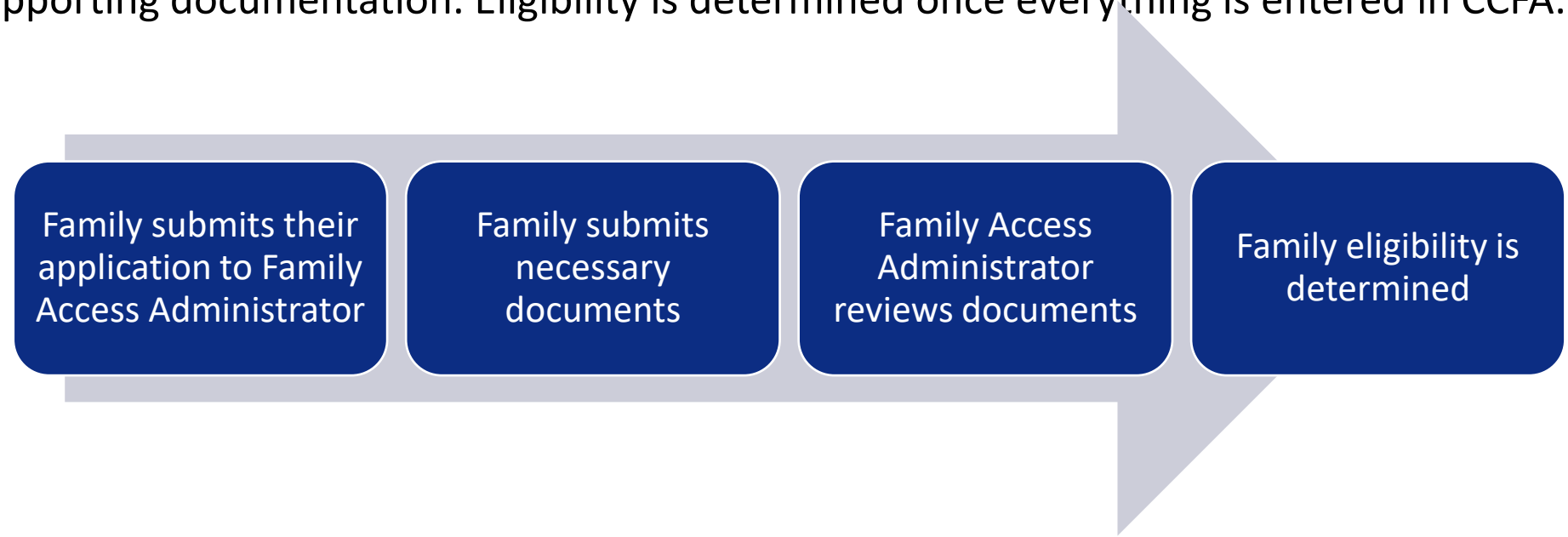
Terminology

- Disability of parent (was Special Need of Parent) approval increased to up to 3 years
- Disability of child (was Special Need of Child)

Trust and believe what families put in front of us

Eligibility Overview

Family Access Administrators must determine and document an income eligible family's eligibility for child care financial assistance after a family has responded to the FAN. Family Access Administrator completes a soft eligibility check and then verifies the information through a review of supporting documentation. Eligibility is determined once everything is entered in CCFA.



Determination of a family's eligibility must be made no later than 10 business days following the day the family provides ALL necessary documents. The first business day following the Family Access Administrator's receipt of complete documentation is day 1 of the 10-day processing timeframe.

Eligibility Verifications

1. Verification of Identify of Parents
2. Verification of Household Composition and Size
3. Verification of Massachusetts Residency
4. Verification of Citizenship or Immigration Status of the Child Seeking Care
5. Verification of Assets
6. Verification of Income
7. Verification of Age of Child

1 Identity of Parents

Documentation of each parent's identity in the household must be provided at initial authorization. Proof of identity only needs to be reviewed once, even if the family changes programs or has a break in authorizations.



Any ONE with Photo

- US passport
- US or foreign driver's license
- Employment Authorization card
- Work ID
- School ID
- Any other ID with a photo



Any TWO without Photo

- US or foreign birth certificate
- Public benefits award letter
- School ID or school records
- Medical records

Family Access Administrators will accept an expired document as proof of identity if the document is otherwise sufficient to establish a parent's identity, regardless of when the document expired. To be otherwise sufficient, the information on the document must match the information on at least one other document used for verification of the parent's eligibility.

2 Household Composition and Size

Household composition refers to the person(s) living in the residence whose combined income determines the family's income eligibility and parent fee amounts, including:

- All parents or caregivers;
- All dependent children (including both applicant and non-applicant children); and
- All dependent relatives who reside in the same household.

A family's household composition will be **determined by what the family reports** in their Child Care Financial Assistance application

Families must provide documentation to verify the relationship of the parent(s) applying for child care financial assistance to each child under the age of 18, or under the age of 24 if the child(ren) is a full-time student and is financially dependent on the parent(s)

Examples of allowable verifying documents:

- Birth certificate
- Guardianship documentation
- Court documents

***In most cases the documentation verifying relationship also verifies age of child**

3 MA Residency

Child care financial assistance is only available to residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Proof of Massachusetts residency must show the parent's or caregiver's current primary address is located within MA.

Post Office Box addresses are not accepted as proof of residency.



Some acceptable verifications:

- Utility bills
- Current Lease
- Tax documents
- Housing documentation
- Vehicle documents
- Document of homelessness
- Health Insurance documents
- Other documents

4 Citizenship & Immigration Status Of The Child

To qualify for child care financial assistance, each child for whom care is requested must be a U.S. citizen or an eligible immigrant. Families must provide documentation to verify that the child(ren) for whom care is requested is a U.S. citizen or an eligible immigrant.

No family will be denied child care financial assistance based only on their inability to demonstrate the child's citizenship or immigration status without final review by EEC. **Please send questions to EECSubsidyManagement@mass.gov.**

Examples of allowable verifying documents:

- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Green card

Parents will NOT be required to provide proof of citizenship or immigration status for themselves.

5 Assets

A family's assets must be below $1 million dollars to be eligible.

- This is verified through self-declaration on the Child Care Financial Assistance application.
  - No other documentation is needed from the family.
- Asset limit applies to all households, including those headed by caregivers.
  - *This does not apply to families experiencing homelessness or working with DTA and DCF.*
- Any family certifying that they possess $1 million or more in assets shall be denied child care financial assistance.

6 Countable vs Non-Countable Income

Only countable income sources are used when calculating a family's income.

Countable Income

- Wages
- Self-employment income
- Alimony
- Lottery earnings
- Retirement income
- Unemployment benefits
- Workers' Compensation
- Net rental income
- Dividends or income from trusts or estates

Non-Countable Income

- Child support, in kind support
- Social Security Income or SSDI
- Income from legal guardians, foster parents, caregivers, dependent children
- Income from household members not included in the reported household composition
- Income from relatives or unmarried partners that do not share a common child
- DTA benefits (SNAP/TAFDC)
- Rental allowance and other rental assistance or housing stabilization funds
- Income from scholarships, grants and loans
- Federal and state tax credits
- Restitution payment earnings

Full list will be included in the procedure's manual

6 Household Income & Calculation Overview

Family Access Administrators will determine income eligibility by measuring the household's countable gross monthly income and family size against the percentage of the state median income (SMI).

Families whose countable gross monthly income for their family size is **at or below 50% of the SMI** are income eligible for child care financial assistance. Families may remain eligible for child care financial assistance if the total gross household income remains at or below 85% of the SMI.

- Gross income is income before any deductions.
- All gross earned and unearned income received by the household are included in determining eligibility.

Families with a child with a disability and families with a parent who is working in an early education and care program may be eligible for financial assistance if their household income at the time of their initial authorization exceeds 50% of the SMI but does not exceed 85% of the SMI.

Family Access Administrator must work with families to present their household income in a way that is in accordance with EEC policy and allows flexibility for a family's unique circumstances.

6 Calculating Income with Paystubs

Gross Monthly Income if paid WEEKLY:	Gross Monthly Income if paid BIWEEKLY:
Step 1: Add pay stubs (4 pay stubs out of most recent 26-week period)	**Step 1:** Add pay stubs (2 pay stubs out of most recent 26-week period)
Example: Paystub 1: $750 + Paystub 2: $800 + Paystub 3: $750 + Paystub 4: $800 Total: = $3,100	Example: Paystub 1: $1,500 + Paystub 2: $1,550 Total: = $3,050
Step 2: Divide total by 4 to get the average weekly income	**Step 2:** Divide total by 2 to get the average biweekly income
Example: $3,100 / 4 = $775	Example: $3,050 / 2 = $1,525
Step 3: Multiply by 4.33 to get the gross monthly income	**Step 3:** multiply by 2.17 to get the gross monthly income
Example: $775 x 4.33 = $3,355.75	Example: $1,525 x 2.17 = $3,309.25
If all weekly paystubs are the same, take ONE gross weekly paystub and multiply by 4.33 (use 4.33 because there are additional pay periods through the course of a calendar year)	*If all biweekly paystubs are the same, take ONE gross biweekly paystub and multiply by 2.17 (use 2.17 because there are additional pay periods through the course of a calendar year)*

Additional examples for different paystub time frames included in the procedure manual.

6 Calculating Income with Minimum Wage

Family Access Administrators must confirm that a parent is making minimum wage as part of a review of income documentation. Under EEC regulations, eligible paid employment is a position that pays no less than the minimum wage in the state wherein the employment takes place.

Please note: Family Access Administrator should refer to the current state minimum wage guidelines to verify, including the state where the parent works if different.

Payment Method	FAA Action	Example
Pay Stubs	Ensure parent is receiving minimum wage based on dates of employment covered by paystub	A parent is paid $300 by paystub for 20 hours of work. $300/20 = $15 is minimum wage.
Cash or Personal Check	Divide total value of cash or personal check by minimum wage to get to number of service hours	A parent is paid $300 by personal check for 30 hours of work. $300/30 = $10 is below minimum wage. Therefore, the value of the check must be divided by the minimum wage to calculate the service need ($300/$15 = 20 service hours)
Tips	Review paystub which show the full minimum wage when tips and wages are combined	A weekly paystub from employment in a restaurant in June 2023 shows 30 hours at the tipped employee rate of $4.95 per hour for a total of $148.50. The paystub also shows $234 in tips.

If the parent's minimum wage is not meeting state guidelines, a 12-week authorization should be issued under Seeking Approved Activity. The Family Access Administrator should work with EEC and the family to resolve the issues during authorizations.

Service Need

Service need is the amount of time a parent needs child care in order to participate in an employment, education, or training activity or for another service need reason. Each parent residing in the household must demonstrate a service need.

Full Time Service Need

An average of 25 hours or more per week

Full time care is up to 50 hours per week

+

Part Time Service Need

An average of 20-24 hours per week.

Part time care is up to 30 hours per week

Travel Time

Families with a service need of at least 20 hours *may add up to 5 hours of travel time*

Parents who do not have an approved activity and who do not meet the service need requirement at time of initial authorization or reauthorization may be granted a provisional authorization of 12 weeks to seek and certify an approved activity and will be eligible for full time care.

Combining Service Need Activities

If the family has more than one service need, the total of the service need hours from all service needs combined will determine if the family qualifies for full or part time care.

Example 1: 2 jobs

- Job A: averages 15 hours a week
- Job B: averages 10 hours a week
- Service need =25 hours a week and the family qualifies for full time

Example 2: 1 job and education

- Job: average hours 10 hours a week
- Education: 10 hours a week, i.e., enrolled in 4 credits (4 x 2.5 = 10 hours)
- Service need = 20 hours a week and the family qualifies for part time care

A Seeking Approved Activity service need may only be combined with other service need activities when the other activities average less than 20 hours per week. Additionally, combining Seeking Approved Activity with other service need activities may only be used to grant a family a 12-week provisional authorization.

Example:
A parent working an average of 18 hours per week may combine 7 hours Seeking Approved Activity to allow the parent a provisional authorization for full-time care while they seek an additional eligible service need activity or an increase of activity hours.

Types of Service Need

To receive child care services, parent(s) must be

Working part or full-time, attending school, or participating in job or educational training

Employment
- Employed, Self Employed
- Active Military

Education
- High School Program
- High School Equivalency Program
- College or University Program

Training
- Vocational Training Program or Work Study

Parental Leave (previously called maternity or paternity leave)

Families with life experiences or working with other state agencies can use this as their service need

Families who are
- Experiencing domestic violence (or has experienced)
- Experiencing homelessness

Families with a disability
- Disability of a parent
- Substance abuse (and seeking treatment)

Disability of a child (combined service need)

Or seeking an approved activity

Documentation & Communication with the Family

Communicating with the family throughout the eligibility determination process is important. Family Access Administrators should:



Set up time to meet with parents



Maintain a communication log in the parent's file



Have all documents signed

Parents should always be given a copy of the documents they sign



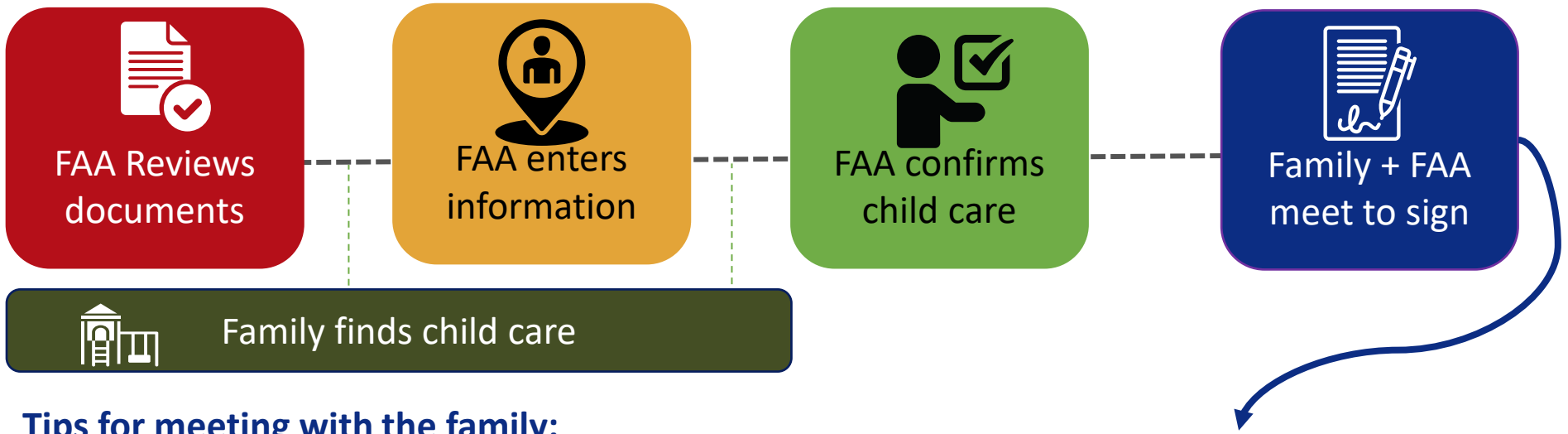
Assist families as needed throughout the process



INITIAL AUTHORIZATON

Initial Authorization

Family Access Administrators must work with families to ensure they submit all required documentation to meet the authorization documentation requirements



Tips for meeting with the family:

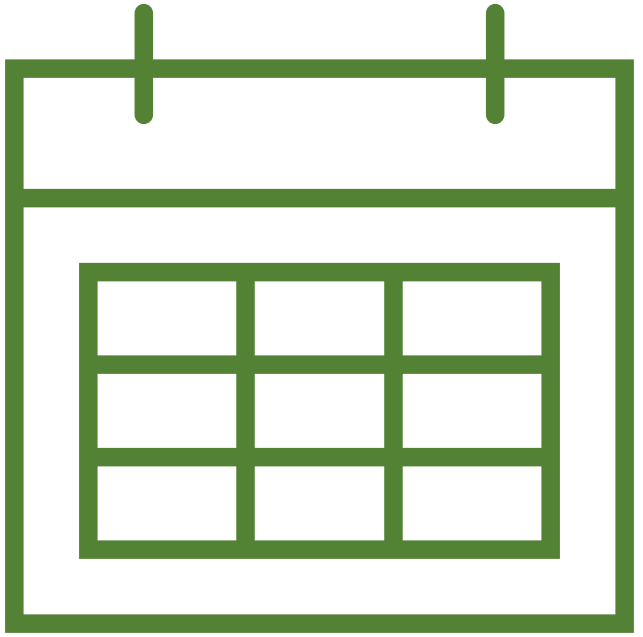
- Authorizations can be completed in person or virtually (per the parents' preference)
- Take time to explain the process and answer questions
- Parents can submit documentation in advance or bring the documents to the appointment (if parents forget a document, they can submit it after the appointment)
- Ensure all documents submitted electronically are fully legible, printed and included in the family's file
- Have flexibility in receiving documents (e.g., email, fax, drop-off and more)
- A wet signature is not required on any document

Authorization Period

An authorization period is the length of time that a family is authorized for child care financial assistance.

The standard authorization period is 12 months. A family will generally remain eligible for the entire 12 months, unless they move out of state or request the closure of their case.

Families who provide documentation to verify they meet all relevant eligibility requirements will qualify for a standard 12-month authorization for child care financial assistance.





PARENT FEES

Parent Fee Scale – Key Points

A **parent fee** is the amount of money a parent may be required to contribute to the cost of child care, supplementing the financial assistance they receive from the state.

Families with income less than the federal poverty line, experiencing homelessness or with provisional assistance do not pay a parent fee.

Exemptions

- Families receiving DTA-Related and DCF-Related child care are exempt from parent fees
- Families headed by non-parent caregivers or guardians are exempt from parent fees

Part-Time Care

- Families with children enrolled part-time only pay 50% of the full-time fee amount

Siblings

- Fees are discounted when there are multiple siblings enrolled

Re-Assessment

- Families are assessed a fee at authorization and reauthorization. The fee cannot exceed the original assessed value until the parent's next reauthorization

Parent Fees – What's New

- Families will not be charged an initial weekly deposit their first week (charged 2 weeks in total to start) to cover their last week of care.

- Programs will have their own policy on collection of parent fees.

Changes to Parent Fees

Once a parent fee amount is determined at authorization or reauthorization, the parent fee amount cannot be increased before the next reauthorization unless there was an error in the prior calculation.

The parent fee can be decreased in the period between authorization and reauthorization:

- If the family's gross income decreases
- If there was an error in the prior calculation
- If a family reports a change that affects their parent fee

Family Access Administrators will follow instructions for each kind of parent fee change scenario. Changes in parent fees take effect the business day following the day all documentation is received.



ATTENDANCE & APPROVED BREAK IN CARE

Attendance & Approved Break in Care

NEW

- Billing is enrollment based
  - The policy for Enrolled not attending is being removed. The code will be redefined under the new policy for Enrollment based attendance.
- Non-Approved Break in Care defined as child care placement that has been inactive (not used) for more than 30 consecutive days during a 12-month authorization, or more than 20 days during a 12-week provisional authorization, unless the family has requested and received an approved break in care.
- Providers must create policies that include how to counsel families when absences are excessive

Attendance

An absence is defined as any day that a child is authorized to attend an early education and care program but is not in attendance. The family must inform the provider when a child will be absent.

Children are expected to attend their early education and care program in accordance with the selected program's attendance policies. Providers must create policies that include how to counsel families when absences occur.

Providers are required to implement methods of tracking child's attendance and maintain these records at their program. Attendance must be recorded in accordance with the child's enrollment schedule.

Approved Break in Care

An Approved Break in Care is available to assist families who receive child care financial assistance if their child(ren) will not attend care due to an event of more than 10 billable days in length, including but not limited to:

- An extended illness or medical procedure;
- A break in care for the summer;
- A visit to a non-custodial parent; or
- An extended vacation.

An Approved Break in Care is available to families authorized for 12 months of child care financial assistance. Families authorized for a 12-week provisional authorization are not eligible for an Approved Break in Care.

During an Approved Break in Care:

- Child care services and child care financial assistance are put on hold for more than 10 billable days and up to 90 days.
- The family does not continue paying their parent fee.
- EEC will not continue to pay for children on an Approved Break in Care.
- The provider is not required to hold the child(ren)'s child care slot.
- If the slot is no longer available at the family's current provider, the family will be allowed to transfer their financial assistance to a new provider of their choosing and resume care without having to place their name back on EEC's income eligible waitlist.
- Once a Family Access Administrator is informed by a provider or family that the child(ren) will be absent from care for an extended period of more than 10 days, the Family Access Administrator must reach out to the family to inform them of all options available to meet their needs, including offering an Approved Break in Care
- The Family Access Administrator must counsel family based on their decision

Returning from an Approved Break in Care

If a family is returning prior to the end date of their authorization:

- The family will resume under the current authorization and is not required to reauthorize
- The family will return to care using the same service need and income on the authorization prior to the Approved Break in Care
- The Family Access Administrator will ask the family if there have been changes from the prior authorization, before the Approved Break in Care

If the family reports a change, it will be entered in CCFA on the family's current authorization

- The Family Access Administrator will counsel the family on the change and how it may or may not affect the family's authorization
- If a family is returning at or after reauthorization:
  - The family must reauthorize before the 90-day break ends
    - The family will be allowed a 12-week provisional authorization when returning from a break if provisional authorizations have not been exhausted
- Families who left the child care program owing a parent fee balance cannot return from an Approved Break in Care unless there is an active repayment agreement

Non-Approved Break in Care

Non-approved break in care is defined as

child is absent for 30 consecutive days during a 12-month authorization

or

child is absent for more than 20 consecutive days during a 12-week provisional authorization

+

Absence is documented on the attendance records
&
the provider has not been able to communicate with the family

Non-Approved Break in Care

Family Access Administrator's Communication with Families:

- The Family Access Administrator should reach out to the family after one week and every week thereafter of consecutive absences, and counsel the family on the option of an Approved Break in Care.
- When Family Access Administrator contacts the parent(s) to assess the family situation and discuss available options.
  - An Approved Break in Care can be offered to a family before the end of the 30 consecutive days for a 12-month authorization.
  - If communication with the family continues to be unsuccessful, the provider can issue a termination in accordance with EEC's Denial and Termination policies and procedures

Family Access Administrator should also:

- Document the family's file of the number of times and types of communication made with the family.



CHANGE REPORTING

Change Reporting – What's New



- Non-temporary change is **renamed to changes to report within 30 days**

- Temporary change is **renamed to changes to report at reauthorization**, but can be reported anytime during the authorization period, especially if beneficial to the family

Changes that must be reported within 30 days



The family's income exceeding 85% SMI



A change to an out of MA address



A change in the family's contact information



Changes in household composition for more than 30 total days in a 12-month authorization. This does not include the birth of a child.



Changes in child custody arrangements



Loss of employment or cessation of attendance at a job training or educational program that lasts for more than 12 weeks

Changes that can be reported at any time during the authorization period or at reauthorization



Income changes that do not exceed 85% SMI



Service need change or ending that is not expected to last for more than 12 weeks, including but not limited to:

- Any time-limited absence from a parent's approved activity due to an illness or need to care for a family member
- Any interruption in work for a seasonal worker who is not working between regular industry work seasons
- Any reduction in work, training, or education hours, as long as the parent is still working or attending training or education
- Any semester or holiday breaks for a parent participating in education or training
- Any other cessation of a family's approved activity that does not exceed 12 weeks

Voluntary Reporting

Parents may report changes that benefit the household, such as an increase in the level of care or a reduction in the parent fee.

If a parent who is authorized for part time child care, reports a change in service need that would allow full time child care, AND wishes to change to full time care:

- A 12-month authorization shall not be shortened for anything less than the issuance of a new 12-month authorization.
- The parent must present full documentation showing a full-time service need as well as all other documents required for reauthorization.
- Once all required documentation has been received, a new full 12-month reauthorization of the household will be issued.

The parent fee is established as a part of the reauthorization process.

Once the parent provides documentation to show full time service need, the 12-month part-time authorization can be ended; and a new 12-month full time authorization can be entered



REAUTHORIZATION

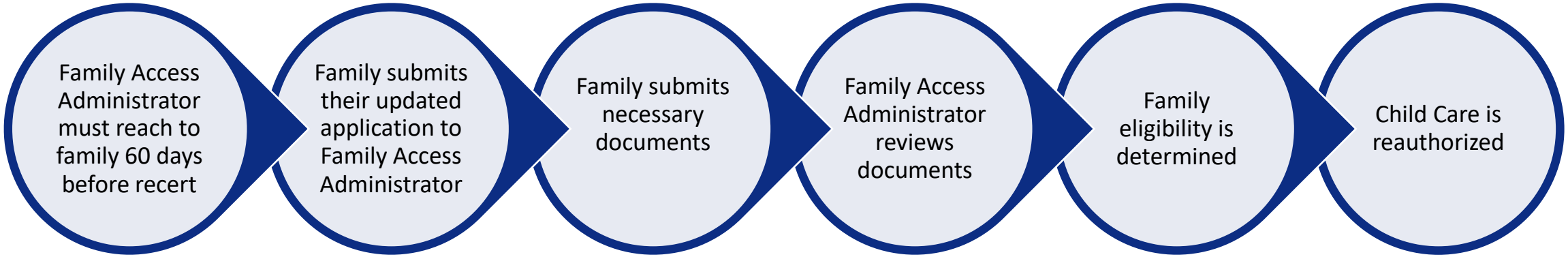
Reauthorization

NEW

- Reauthorization letters are sent 60 days before the family's reauthorization ends (by email or mail, family's preferred method)
- FAA must reach out to the family for 2nd outreach (phone/text with follow up email)
- If the family doesn't respond to Reauthorization Notice, a Notice of Denial will be issued at least 14 days before expiration *(Coming soon)*
- Proof of residency is only required if there is a change
- If a family fails to reauthorize or if care ends during an authorization, the family only has 30 days to reauthorize or reinstate their placement
- A Foster parent's child qualifies for sibling continuity
- Graduate school is a service need ONLY at reauthorization AND if previous service need was education

Reauthorization Overview

The Family Access Administrator is responsible for working with the family to complete their reauthorization for continued Child Care Financial Assistance. Reauthorization is required to verify continued eligibility for EEC financial assistance, and that failure to submit documentation required to determine their continued eligibility will result in the expiration of financial assistance



Preparing a family for Reauthorization

Family Access Administrator must review the information in the current authorization once contact is made with the family for changes and what current documentation will be needed.

- Send a list of documents the family needs to submit along with a date the documents are due by.
  - If contact is made verbally, then send a follow up e-mail with the information discussed with the family.
- Send EEC forms to the family by the most convenient method for EEC forms to be completed.

The Family Access Administrator must work with the parent to submit the required to present the documentation at Reauthorization:

- ✓ **Family's income** as detailed Initial Authorization
- ✓ **Service need** as detailed in Verification of Service Need
- ✓ **Family composition** This will be documented through documentation submitted previously. New documentation will be required to add or remove a household member.
- ✓ **Residence:** as detailed in Eligibility

For each Reauthorization, families must demonstrate that their income does not exceed 85% SMI and that they continue to meet all other requirements detailed in the Eligibility Chapter

Continuity of Care

Continuation of child care financial assistance for an **eligible** child already receiving a contracted slot or voucher.

If a child is still eligible for financial assistance AND **ages up or ages out** of an EEC-funded **contract** slot, refer the family to the local CCRR to obtain a voucher.

- Children turning 13 during an authorization or children with disabilities turning 16 during a current authorization may remain in care through the end of the current authorization.

Children enrolled in **priority populations contract** slots are **allowed to remain in care** through an income eligible voucher (or contract) if the family meets the eligibility requirements. This includes:

- DTA-related child care program authorization or termination of transitional TAFDC care
- DCF-related child care authorization or transitional care
- Young parent child care
- Homeless child care



POLICY VARIANCES

What is a Policy Variance?

In certain situations, a family may request an exception to an EEC child care financial assistance policy requirement. Variances are an option for families when lack of access to or loss of child care financial assistance would result in extreme hardship for the family or would place an already at-risk child in greater harm.

Types of Variances

- **Extraordinary circumstances** include but are not limited to: death, severe illness of an immediate family member, or other family crisis that impacts the family's ability to comply with EEC financial assistance policy
- **Extenuating circumstances** where loss of EEC financial assistance would jeopardize a child's kinship care arrangement who otherwise would be in the care and custody of the Department of Children and Families; or
- **Unforeseen catastrophic event or natural disaster**, such as flood or fire, that results in a family's immediate need for temporary assistance to stabilize the family or comply with EEC financial assistance policy

Request
Completed policy variance form sent to EEC

Reviewed
EEC will review and approve/deny

Questions? Contact EEC by emailing EECSubsidyManagement@mass.gov



DENIALS & TERMINATIONS

Denials & Terminations

NEW

Changes to the reasons for denials and terminations

- Notice of Denial
  - Additions:
    - Non-Approved Break in Care
    - Exceeding Income or Asset Limits
    - Insufficient Documentation of Eligibility
  - Removals:
    - Failure to Meet Financial Eligibility
    - Abandonment of Subsidy
    - Excessive Absences
    - Failure to Submit Required Documentation
    - Did not follow this EEC Subsidy Administrator, or Provider policy
  - Notice of Denial may be extended with continuation of care

Change to intentional action by families

- "Substantiated Fraud" must be intentional by the parent to be considered as a reason

How we work with families

- The FAA must review the information on the Denial or Termination with the family
- The FAA must counsel and support the family and make certain the Denial/Termination is warranted and there are no other options (family qualifies for another program, submit different stubs, qualify under a different service need, etc.)
- The FAA will explain the Request for Review process, how to fill out the appeal completely, how to submit the form with all documentation and what to expect for next steps

Reasons for Denials & Terminations

Families can be denied or terminated for the following reasons. Before a family is at risk of a negative action FAAs are required to reach out in at least 2 ways to share the information and inform the family of their appeal rights.

Denials	Terminations
Lack of service need	Lack of service need
Exceeding income or asset limits	Income exceeding 85% SMI
Outstanding unpaid parent fee balance*	
Insufficient documentation of eligibility	
Substantiated Fraud	Substantiated Fraud
Disqualification pursuant to 606 CMR 10.12	
Non-approved break in care	Non-approved break in care
Residency outside of the Commonwealth	Residency outside of the Commonwealth
	Intentional Program Violation

**Parents are only responsible for 3 weeks of outstanding payments.*

Notice of Denial or Termination of Financial Assistance

A family may be issued a notice of denial when they are initially applying for Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA), or at reauthorization.

A family may be issued a notice of termination within an authorization period or at reauthorization.

All families have the right to request a review by EEC of the Family Access Administrator's decision. During this review the family will have an opportunity to explain their circumstances.

Request for Review Process

1. FAA issues a notice to the family
2. Parent fills out the Request for Review Form
3. Review of decision to Deny or Terminate Financial Assistance
4. Decision issued

During the review process the family may continue their child care financial assistance to ensure continuity of care. This will be confirmed by the EEC Financial Assistance Specialist.

Appeals Process

1. A Parent that would like an informal hearing must submit a written request to the EEC General Counsel within **14 days of the date** of the written decision from the EEC.
   If the request for the hearing is submitted within 14 days, child care can continue.

2. The family will be informed of the right to have special accommodations made for the hearing process.

3. Parent must complete the **Request for Hearing Form** that was included with the upheld decision.

4. The informal hearing will be **held within 60 days** of EEC's receipt of the Request for Hearing.
   The family will be given the option of choosing whether the hearing will be in person (either at the EEC Central Office in Boston or at an EEC Regional Office), virtual, or telephonic.



DTA & DCF

Parent Journey Map: DCF & DTA-Related

Parent determines need for child care.

DTA or DCF makes referral for care. Referral is received by parent and CCR&R.

Families experiencing homelessness and young parents can also be referred directly with priority.

CCR&R or contracted provider helps parent find child care.

Parent signs application and Fee Agreement with e-signature capability.

Parent receives voucher or slot at contracted provider (DCF only) and can enroll child.

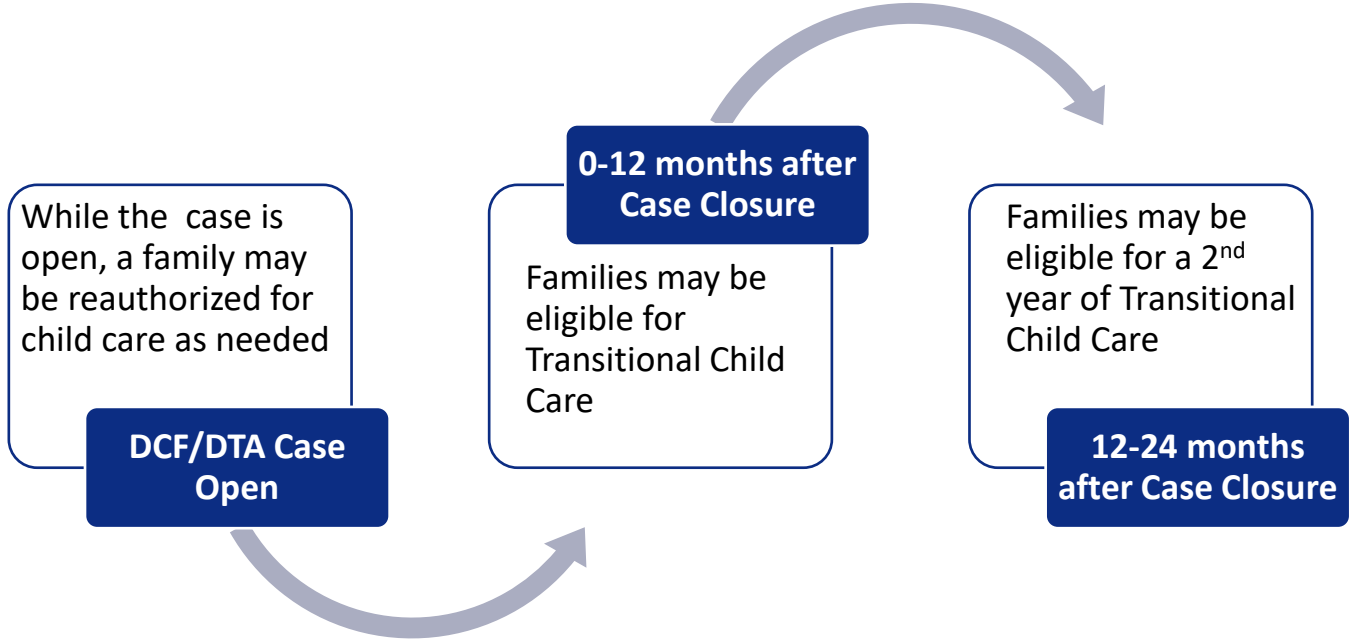
Parents must reauthorize eligibility every 12 months and repeat verification process.

What is required for families?

Eligibility: referral by DTA/ DCF

Service Need: the family's referral from DTA/ DCF

Attendance and Change Reporting: when a family's case closes with DTA/DCF



Before the risk of any negative action for families, FAA are required to reach out with 2 different modes of communication (e.g. call, email, letter)

Transitional Child Care (TCC):

Families are eligible for up to 24 months of Transitional Child Care (TCC) after the closure of their case. TCC may be authorized for families:

Who have a child currently enrolled in DCF/ DTA related child care

Who have not received related child care while their case was open

Whose case is no longer open, but they had care and it is within the 24-month period after their case closure

If a Family Access Administrator becomes aware of a family's DCF case being reopened or a family left at any time during this process or after, the Family Access Administrator should have the family reach out to their DCF Social Worker to see if they are eligible for a referral for a DCF Related Slot or voucher.

DCF families living outside of Massachusetts at the time of their DCF Case Closure are not eligible for TCC. A 2-week notice should be issued to the family.

Processing DCF/DTA TCC

1st 12-Month Transitional Child Care (months 1-12):

Transitional Child Care authorizations will not be assessed a parent fee during the initial 12-month transitional period.

- When DCF/DTA is authorizing TCC prior to the Reauthorization end date:
  - The Family Access Administrator should enter the initial TCC period to start in CCFA on the day after the Reauthorization end date for no less than 12 months.
  - The Family Access Administrator will inform the family of the receipt of the TCC authorization from DCF/DTA and its starting date.

2nd 12-month Transitional Child Care: (months 13-24):

Transitional Child Care authorizations will be assessed a parent fee during 2nd TCC transitional period. The Family Access Administrator will follow Income Eligible Guidelines

For example:

DCF/DTA Case Closure		
Current Auth 6/1/23-5/31/24	**1st TCC- 6/1/24-5/31/25**	**2nd TCC- 6/1/25-5/31/26**

When DCF/DTA is authorizing child care for a family that has not been previously enrolled in child care The Family Access Administrator should enter the initial TCC period to start in CCFA on the day that care will begin for no less than 12 months.

When a DCF/DTA family is not eligible for the 2nd TCC, the Family Access Administrator should issue a Provisional while the family is seeking an activity. Do not shorten authorizations.

1st TCC- 6/1/24-5/31/25	**12 weeks of Provisional**	**12 weeks of Provisional**	**2nd TCC**



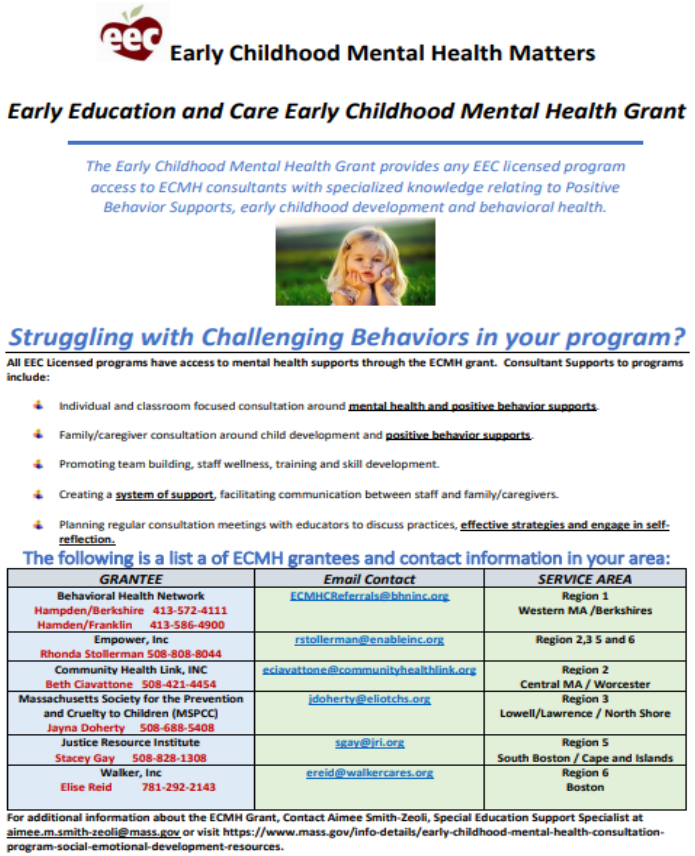
Additional Resources

Early Education and Care Early Childhood Mental Health Grant

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program (ECMHC) network provides consultation services that help support the social-emotional development and behavioral health of children in early education and care programs.

ECMH Consultation Services may include:

- Classroom observations and strategies for creating supportive learning environments.
- Training and coaching for educators.
- Guidance for developing ongoing partnerships with families.
- Individual observation and assessments of children (with parental consent).
- Help with individualized behavior support plans for children, using input from parents and educators to prevent concerning behaviors.
- Referrals to community-based services that meet the basic needs of children and family (with parental consent).



Early Childhood Mental Health Matters

Early Education and Care Early Childhood Mental Health Grant

The Early Childhood Mental Health Grant provides any EEC licensed program access to ECMH consultants with specialized knowledge relating to Positive Behavior Supports, early childhood development and behavioral health.

Struggling with Challenging Behaviors in your program?

All EEC Licensed programs have access to mental health supports through the ECMH grant. Consultant Supports to programs include:

- Individual and classroom focused consultation around mental health and positive behavior supports.
- Family/caregiver consultation around child development and positive behavior supports.
- Promoting team building, staff wellness, training and skill development.
- Creating a system of support, facilitating communication between staff and family/caregivers.
- Planning regular consultation meetings with educators to discuss practices, effective strategies and engage in self-reflection.

The following is a list a of ECMH grantees and contact information in your area:

GRANTEE	Email Contact	SERVICE AREA
Behavioral Health Network Hampden/Berkshire 413-572-4111 Hamden/Franklin 413-586-4900	ECMHCReferrals@bhninc.org	Region 1 Western MA /Berkshires
Empower, Inc Rhonda Stollerman 508-808-8044	rstollerman@enableinc.org	Region 2,3 5 and 6
Community Health Link, INC Beth Ciavattone 508-421-4454	eciavattone@communityhealthlink.org	Region 2 Central MA / Worcester
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention and Cruelty to Children (MSPCC) Jayna Doherty 508-688-5408	jdoherty@eliotchs.org	Region 3 Lowell/Lawrence / North Shore
Justice Resource Institute Stacey Gay 508-828-1308	sgay@jri.org	Region 5 South Boston / Cape and Islands
Walker, Inc Elise Reid 781-292-2143	ereid@walkercares.org	Region 6 Boston

For additional information about the ECMH Grant, Contact Aimee Smith-Zeoli, Special Education Support Specialist at aimee.m.smith-zeoli@mass.gov or visit https://www.mass.gov/info-details/early-childhood-mental-health-consultation-program-social-emotional-development-resources.

Coordinated Family & Community Engagement (CFCE)

CFCE programs are locally-based programs in your community that provide child development services and resources to families with young children. There are over 80 CFCE programs across the state, and in total, the CFCE network provides services to 350 cities and towns in Massachusetts.

The CFCE network helps to promote and support:

- Parent education and family engagement
- Early literacy and child development
- Collaboration between local early education and care partners
- Transitions between early education and care settings, home and school
- High-quality programs and service delivery

https://eeclead.my.site.com/apex/EEC_FamilyResourcesChildCare

Flexible Funding Program

EEC may have flexible funding available on a case by case basis to provide temporary financial support to programs to successfully transition and include a child with disabilities that receives child care financial assistance.

- Appropriate use of funds may include:
- consultation to identify necessary supports for the child
- training for program staff
- specialized equipment
- a temporary aide position to enhance staffing.

EEC considers this funding as a temporary and preparatory step and expects a program to integrate any funded accommodations into its regular practice to enhance the program's ability to better meet the child's needs.

Child Care Educators must complete a Flexible Funding Application Request and provide the required documentation that shows the necessity of the funding.

EEC Reform Training Program Overview – What to Expect

To complete the EEC Reform Training Program, you will need to attend all four courses:

1. ***Principles of Engagement***
   Training Dates:
   October 30th – November 6th

2. **Family Journey**
   Training Dates:
   November 9th – November 29th

3. **Provider Experience**
   Training Dates:
   December 5th – December 21st

4. **Program Integrity & Administrative Procedures**
   Training Dates:
   December 12th – December 15th

In addition to these live courses, we will be providing additional resources to support your learning:

Virtual Office Hours
Fridays

Recorded Trainings
to reference on your own

THANK YOU

For your time today and your ongoing commitment to the families of the Commonwealth!