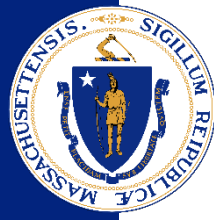




# Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

## Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) Kick-off Session

September 28, 2023

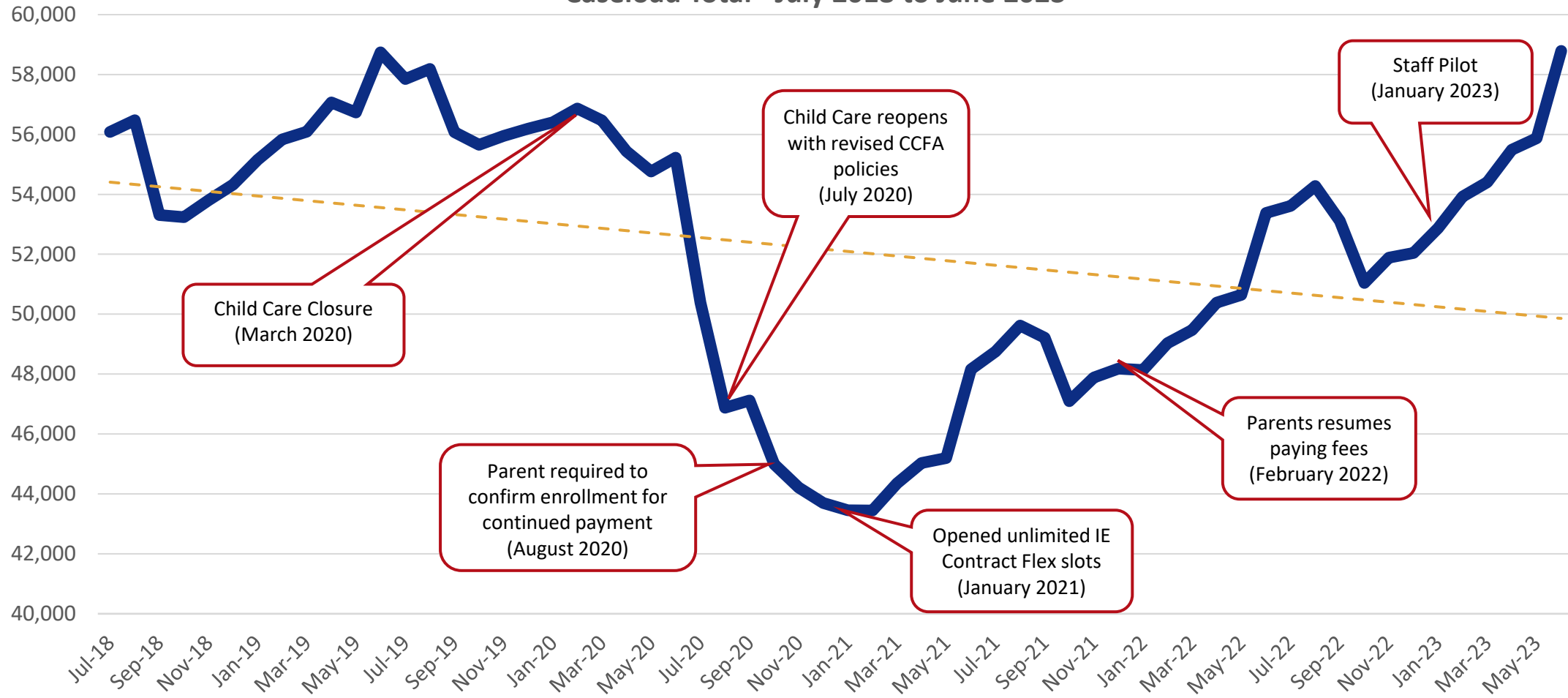


# Agenda

01. **Welcoming Remarks**
02. **Landscape**
03. **Current Initiatives Overview**
04. **Aligning Regulations & Policies**
05. **Changes in Policies & Procedures**
06. **What's Different**
07. **What's Next**

# Child Care Financial Assistance Caseload: Total

Caseload Total - July 2018 to June 2023



# Child Care Financial Assistance Reform



## Why are we changing?

- Increased **labor market participation** and **economic mobility** for families
- Greater **equity in access to high quality early education** and **extended learning opportunities** to support children's school and life success



## What is changing?

- **CCFA regulations, policies, and procedures**
- **Contract structure** for CCR&Rs and providers
- Modernization of the **digital experience**
- Improving and expanding ways **families can interact with EEC**



## How are we going to achieve this?

- **Engaging internal and external stakeholders** throughout the change process
- Increased **flexibility, dignity and stability** for children and families
- **Reduced complexity** and **administrative burden** for providers serving or interested in serving families with child care financial assistance



## When will this change be happening?

- **End-to-end review** of the child care financial assistance system launched in April of 2022 to identify opportunities to update, improve and modernize
- New regulations, contracts, various reform initiatives, and their associated rollout efforts are going into effect on an ongoing basis for the next 6-12 months.
- This is a **long-term mindset, process, and culture shift** - it will take time to fully implement the changes

# Current Initiatives



## CCR&R Re-procurement

CCR&R Re-procurement  
Releasing new Request for Response (RFR) for Child Care Resource and Referral organizations (CCR&R's)

**Effective Summer 2023**



## Contracted Provider Re-Procurement

Contracted Provider Re-procurement  
Releasing new Request for Response (RFR) for contracted providers

**Effective July 2024**



## Policy/ Procedural Changes

Updating Financial Assistance policies & procedures to modernize system and re-orient around the family experience

**Implementation Starting October 2023**



## Regulatory Changes

Updating Financial Assistance regulations to modernize system and re-orient around the family experience

**Approved March 2023 and effective October 2023**



## Family Engagement

EEC/EOTSS engaging families through user research to learn about the experiences of families who use CCFA and find opportunities to improve the digital service experience.



## Waitlist Clean up Project

Updating and remediating the Financial Assistance Waitlist so that it accurately captures active families who are seeking care.

Effective June 2023



**14, 866 total families contacted from waitlist**

- 10,154 by email
- 4,712 by mail



**10, 154 families contacted by email**

- 6,100 responses
- 60% response rate



**4,712 families contacted by mail**

- 699 responses
- 15% response rate

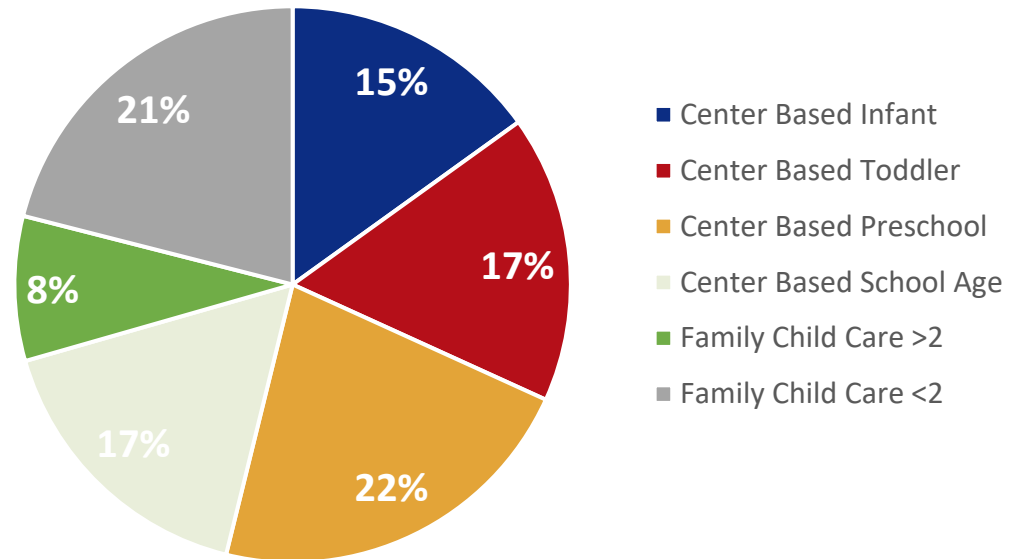


## Early Childhood Educators' Pilot

Supporting access to affordable child care  
Early Childhood Educators

Effective January 2023

### Enrollment by Age Group



- **2,552 children reached** with the ECE priority so far!
- 1,253 children enrolled in care
- 503 children are on the waitlist or in the eligibility determination process



## Digital Application & Case Tracking (FACTs)

Modernizing the intake and application process using digital tools and IT improvements; in partnership with CCR&Rs and Mass211.

**Effective October 2022**

- Financial Assistance Case Tracker , identifies data points along a family journey from intake to enrollment to placement
- Focuses on families on waitlist working with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRRs) agencies
- Goal to reach families faster and move them through application process with visibility on the parent journey and experience
- Incorporates a human touch and “warm hand off”
- Provides digital, fillable application
- Automated sending application to the parents, filling out applications and recording signatures through adobe sign

- Over 1000 families managed through FACTs



## SMS Texting Pilot

Modernizing communications to families through touchpoints throughout the journey via SMS text message; Exploring Waitlist use case currently as a pilot

**Effective May 2023**

- Goal to improve the family experience applying for and maintaining child care financial assistance
- Focuses on reducing wait times and improving communication by delivering time-sensitive text messages and nudges during key points in the family journey

- 5,425 # of total opt in text
- 415 waitlist families received texts

# Priorities & Approach: Aligning Policy to Regulatory Reforms

## 1. Prioritize family needs and experience



## 2. Increase Overall System Efficiency



## 3. Modernize and update system

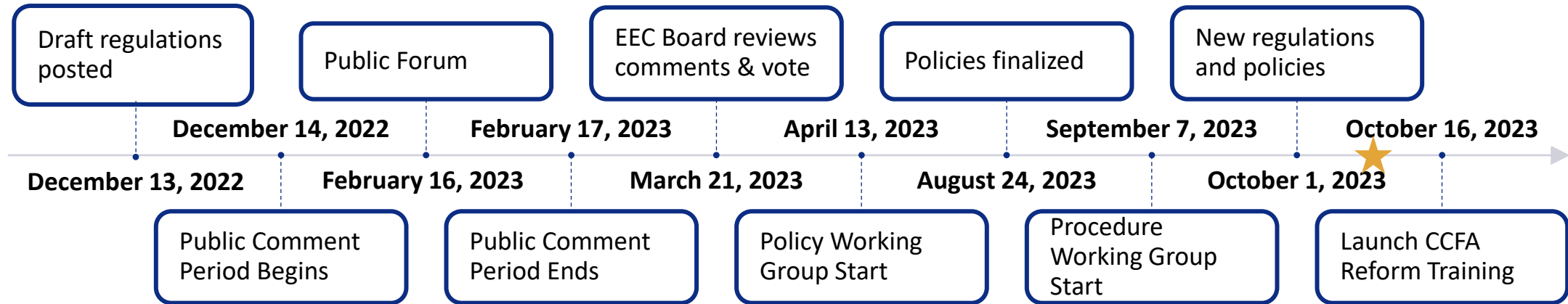


- **Proactive communication** and new supports for families to alleviate barriers
- **Extend timelines** to ensure stability of care
- Reduce rigidity and **increase flexibility**
- Streamline and **clarify roles** and responsibilities
- **Reduce documentation** burdens
- Use more inclusive and **accessible language**
- Improve **options** to include online applications, email and text notifications and remote appointments
- Facilitate access for **priority populations** (Families experiencing homelessness, families with disabilities, families involved with DTA & DCF, and families facing domestic violence)
- Evaluate and retain or modify COVID flexibilities



# Child Care Financial Assistance Reform

## Timeline



## Participants



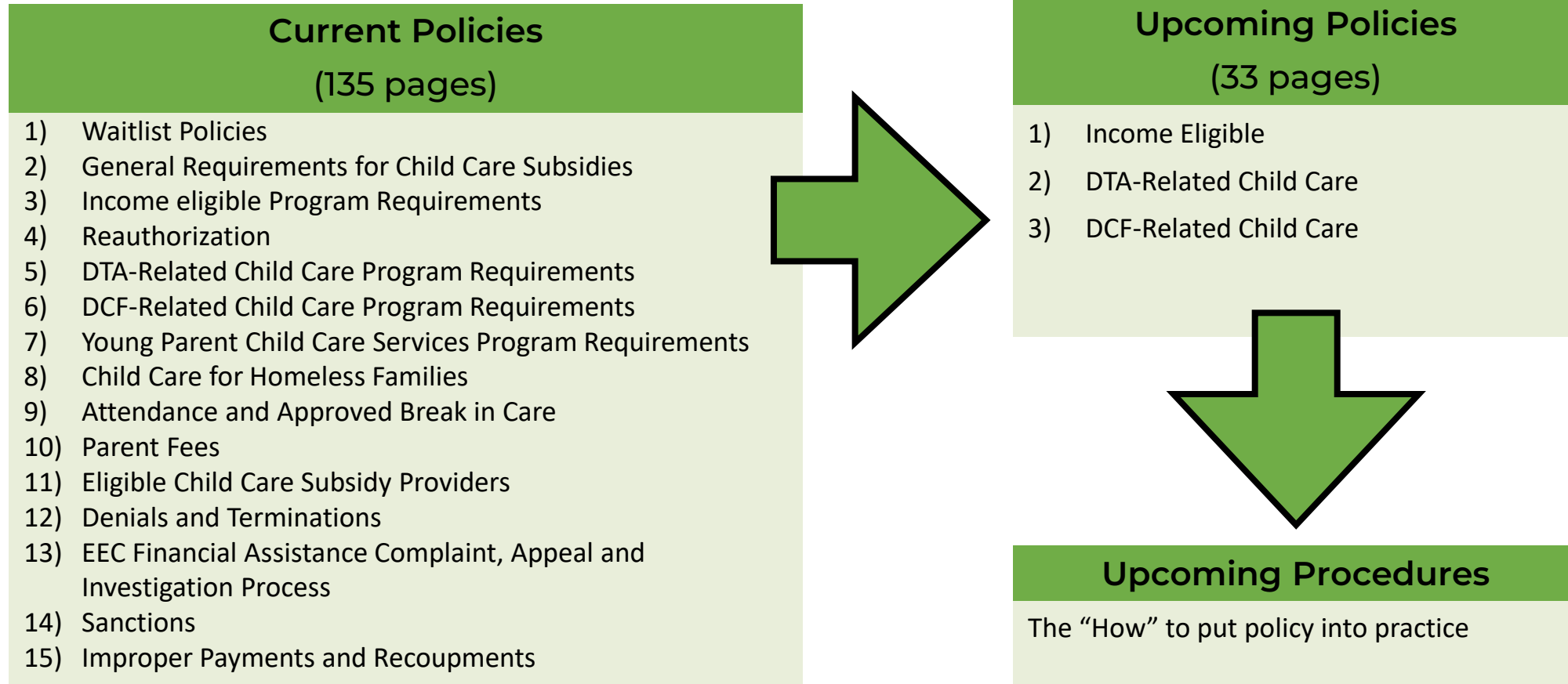
**Public Forum**  
215 Participants  
40+ Comments



**Policy Working Group**  
13 Organizations  
11 Working Sessions

# Changes in Policies/Procedures

The new policies, organized by key program/population, will guide the development of detailed procedures and technical changes to align with the new regulations and focus on the family journey



# KEY AREAS OF CHANGE



## INCOME ELIGIBLE

Changes for families accessing Child Care  
Financial Assistance through Income Eligible



## DTA/ DCF

Changes for families accessing Child Care  
Financial Assistance through our partner  
agencies DTA/ DCF

- Family Access
- Expanded Access for Priority Populations
- Waitlist Management
- Changes to Countable Income
- Parent Fee Changes
- Expanded Service Need/ Authorizations
- Attendance/ Enrollment
- Billing and Payments

Changes will be implemented through a phased in approach

The new regulations and some policies will go into effect starting **October 1**.  
Additional policy and procedure changes will go into effect following trainings and as other resources are available in **additional upcoming phases**.

# Highlights of What's Changing Starting 10/1



## Income Eligible

### Family Access

- Families experiencing homeless as defined under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (See 42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)) are eligible for priority access from the waitlist (no wrong door):
  - Eligibility can be verified through a referral form, shelter letter, or other documentation as defined
  - Families will be eligible for full-time care; this means that there is no additional service need required (service need and activity is entered in CCFA as “homeless” and weekly hours = 30)
  - No collection of income is required, and **no income should be entered in CCFA**
  - Families will not be assessed a parent fee
  - Families are allowed up to 6 months to comply with immunization and other enrollment paperwork requirements
- Early education and care staff formalized as a priority status
- Families with new employment are now eligible for 12-month authorization with employment letter or employment verification form (EVF) and should be entered as “employment,” **not “new employment”**
- Family child care providers and assistants are eligible to care for their own children if meeting certain conditions
- Providers will no longer collect initial deposit from families

# Highlights of What's Changing Starting 10/1



## Income Eligible

### Communication

- Require use of multiple modes of communication to reach families (e.g., mail, email, text, phone)
- Funding availability notifications must be sent via email
- Before a family's child care financial assistance can be terminated, the family access administrator must make two separate attempts using different modes of communication to reach the family (e.g., phone call one day, email the next day)
- Families must be sent a reauthorization notice within at least 60 days prior to the end of their authorization period

### Verifications

- SSI, SSDI, child support, and TAFDC benefits are non-countable income
- Formalize expanded ID verification policy that makes expired IDs acceptable verifications, and if no ID is available, families can use two other forms or any other document that can determine identity
- Third-party verification form (2<sup>nd</sup> parent not in home) is eliminated and will no longer be used- - **family access administrators do not need to verify this information any more**
- Proof of address is only required at initial authorization, unless a family has a change
- Parents are now able to submit 4 (non-consecutive weeks of wages within the last 26 weeks (6 months; most reflective of their income)

# Upcoming Phases Highlights



## Income Eligible

### Family Access

- Standard digital/fillable child care financial assistance application
- Families experiencing domestic violence and substance abuse are eligible for a full-time service need under special need of parent
- Maternity/paternity leave changed to parental leave and authorized for 12 months
- Families in active deployment in the military will now be able to use "military" to meet full time service need for "active duty"
- Families will no longer pay parent fees for excessive absences which are defined as more than 45 non-attended days, including any unexplained absences, within a 12-month authorization period, or more than 15 non-attended days during an initial 12-week provisional authorization period
- Notices and other CCFA communication in 14+ languages

### Eligibility

- Full time care is defined as 25 hours or more a week
- The term teen parent is changed to "young parent" and eligibility increased from and defined as up to 24 years of age

### Waitlist

- Incorporation of waitlist screening questions to determine soft income eligibility and any priority status for all family access administrators
- Formalizing utilization of notices to confirm status on waitlist (confirmation, removal, renewal)

# Upcoming Phases Highlights



## Income Eligible

### Continuation of Care

- If a family's care has ended because of a non-approved break in care, families can be reinstated within 30 days

### Verifications

- Parents with self-employment are only required to submit 1 month of income within the last 26 weeks (most reflective of income)
- Certain eligibility requirements and service needs can be self-attested as a form of verification, as well as acceptable verifications expanded
- Household income statement and household composition forms will be eliminated and incorporated into the new child care financial assistance application

### Provider Payments

- Formalize enrollment-based payment process in CCFA

# What's Changing



## DTA / DCF

### Starting October 1

- Families seeking child care within 24 months of their DTA or DCF case closure are eligible for immediate access to child care
  - Parent fees will not be assessed during the first 12 months of transitional child care
- Family Access Administrators are now required to reach out to a family within 3 business days of receiving a DTA or DCF referral

### Upcoming Phases

- Formalizing coordination with DTA and DCF to support families navigating through transitional child care periods



# What's Next....



## Regulations and Policies

### October 1:

Effective Date of Regulations/Policies

Launch of webpage

Launch Child Care Financial Assistance reform page to provide one place to access new regulations, policies, procedures and up to date information on reform, trainings and resources.

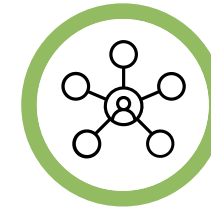


## Phased Training Deployment

### October 16:

Training Begins

Meaningful implementation over 6-12 months to operationalize and execute changes that recognizes IT system changes and time needed for actual change in practice.



## Collaboration and Partnership

### Throughout:

Collaborate and partner to provide thoughtful support to minimize any disruption to families and day to day operations for Family Access Administrators

Change Impact Assessment to identify families impacted by changes and provide communication to families and providers.

[CCFA Webpage: https://mass.gov/info-details/hub-for-child-care-financial-assistance-programs-changes](https://mass.gov/info-details/hub-for-child-care-financial-assistance-programs-changes)

Questions: [eecsubsidymanagement@mass.gov](mailto:eecsubsidymanagement@mass.gov)

# Tentative CCFA Reform Training Outline

## Principles of Engagement

- Welcome
- Training Learning Objectives
- Family Engagement Framework
- Purpose of CCFA Changes
- A Customer Service Based Approach

**Target : October**

## Family Journey

- What are the steps of the family journey?
- Intake
- Waitlist
- Eligibility
- Initial Authorization
- Change Reporting
- Reauthorization

**Target :  
October/November**

## Provider Experience

- Enrollment and Attendance
- Reimbursement Based on Enrollment
- Attendance and Approved Break in Care
- Transportation

**Target : November**

## Program Integrity

- Denials and Terminations
- Improper Repayments and Recoupments
- Complaints & Investigations

**Target: December**

## Administrative Procedures

- PTO
- PFML

**Target : December**