



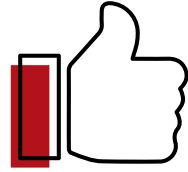
Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) Policy Refresher

May 2024



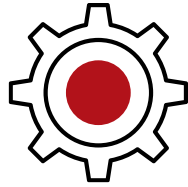
Welcome!

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



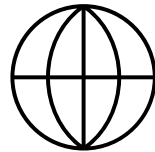
Find "Raise Hand"

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



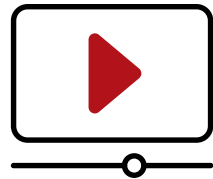
Update Your Name

- 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: Elyse Tibbetts

Housekeeping



Please feel welcome to place questions in the chat



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

Introductions: EEC Team

- **Tyrese Nicolas**, Deputy Commissioner of Family Access & Engagement
- **Bethanie Glass**, Director of Child Care Financial Assistance
- **Carmen Quiñones**, Subsidy Policy & Technical Assistance Specialist
- **Elyse Tibbetts**, Priority Access Manager
- **Financial Assistance Team**
 - Johanna Gonzalez
 - Brenda Hodziewich
 - Brenda Santiago
 - Charline Vaughan
 - Jackeline Fernandez



Today's Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **CCFA Policy - Key Points**
- **Review of Effective Policy Changes**
- **What's Next**
- **Q & A**

Purpose

- Provide an overview of **where we are today** in the CCFA policy change process.
- Review policy changes that are in effect now
- Acknowledge outstanding questions that were asked in previous trainings, providing answers or updates
- Share update on where we are headed and when those changes can be expected.

EEC CCFA Reform Timeline

Here is where we are in the Child Care Financial Assistance reform process:

1


**New CCFA Regulations
Take Effect**

606 CMR 10.00 Effective
Date: 10/1/2023

2

Initial Trainings Held

Principles of Engagement,
Family Journey and Provider
Experience Trainings held:
October – December 2023

3

**Policy Advisories
Released & Refreshers
Held**

April/May 2024



4

**Final CCFA Policy
Trainings
Kinderwait & CCFA
Trainings**

Coming Next: Summer 2024



5

**Final Policies &
Procedures Released**

Fall 2024



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

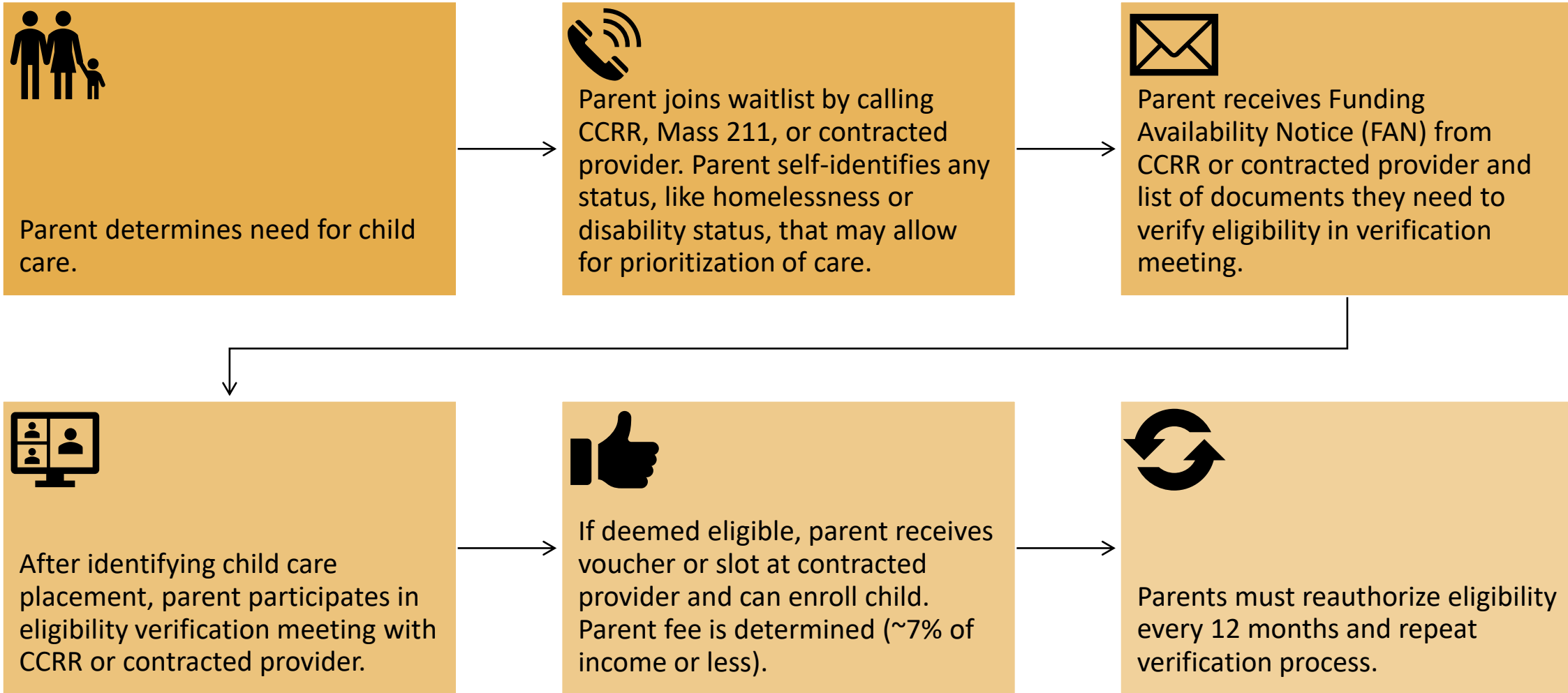
Virtual Office Hours

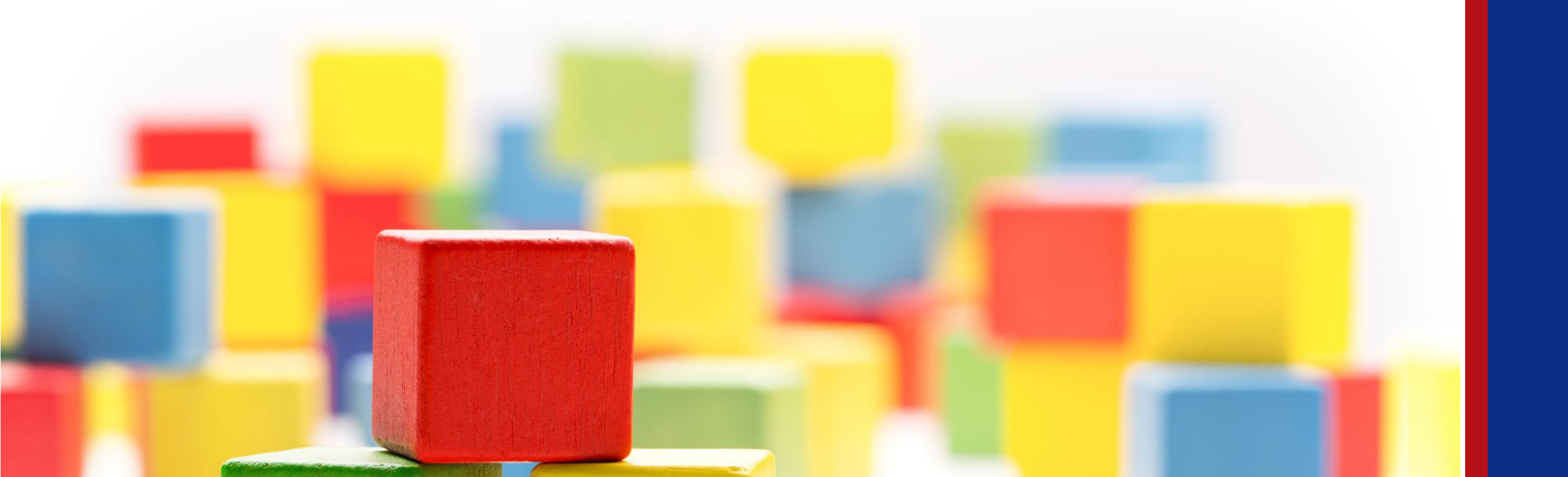
Recorded Trainings to
reference on your own



CHILD CARE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - OVERVIEW

Parent Journey Map: Income Eligible Program

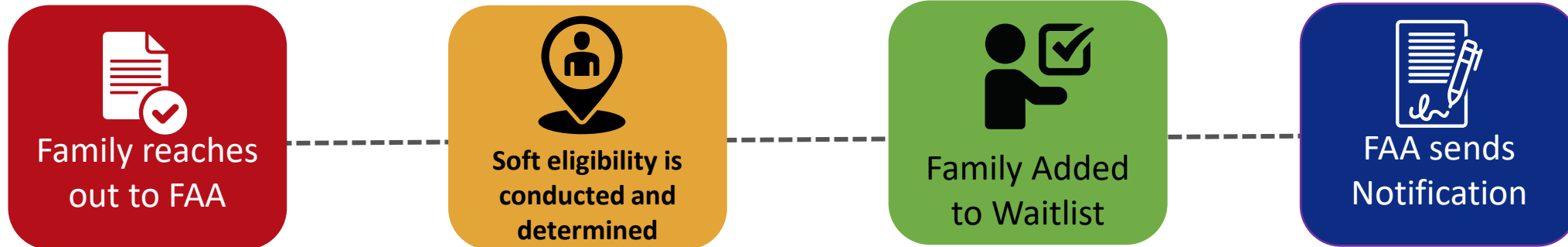




WAITLIST

Waitlist Policy Overview & Refreshers

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).



Waitlist Communications

Family Access Administrators must:

- Update Kinderwait with notes anytime a family reaches out to a Family Access Administrator.
- Funding Availability Notices must be sent to families via email and/or mail as the **first mode of communication**.
- Family Access Administrators must email and mail notices to confirm a family's status on the waitlist (i.e., confirmation and removal).

(NEW) Priority Codes:

- Waitlist priority codes have been updated in KinderWait to include “Experiencing or have experienced Domestic Violence and “Substance Abuse Rehabilitation.”

Soft Eligibility:

- A soft eligibility screening must be completed for **all** families added to the waitlist. Families should be screened for any priority statuses and given the ability to self-identify.
- The priority status must be marked off in KinderWait.

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 next slide*
 - 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

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?

Priority Status:

- Waitlist priority statuses have been broken down by 3 priority statuses:
 - **Immediate(homeless, DV, ECE staff, Parent under 24, Sibling)**
 - **Priority (All other priority statuses)**
 - **General**

Note: Families with DCF and DTA referrals are not required to be placed on the waitlist and receive immediate access

Offering Funding from Waitlist

- According to the community's needs the Family Access Administrators will ensure equity when offering funding to families by looking at:
 - Priority Status
 - Date family was added to the waitlist.
 - Date family requires care.
 - Family's program preference.
- **Funding Availability Offers that are refused are redefined.**

Please note: The Income Eligible Child Care Financial Assistance is based on funding availability.



ELIGIBILITY

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

- **(NEW)** Once a family is determined eligible for child care financial assistance and is issued a 12-month authorization, the family may access care anytime during that 12-month period.
 - A child care placement is not required at the time of the authorization
 - A family can reauthorize even if there is not a current placement, as long as the family is within the time frame to reauthorize.
 - This allows for more flexibility around parent choice and continuity of care for families who transition in and out child care based on their needs.



Eligibility - Income

Earned Income

- Families may submit proof of income received within the last 26 weeks.
- Pay stubs submitted do not have to be consecutive.
- Self-employed families only need to report one month of income.
 - *Proof of receipts and expenses are no longer required.*

Non-countable income:

- Veteran's Disability benefits (NEW)
- Social Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)
- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) benefits
- Child Support

Eligibility - Documentation

- Expired IDs are acceptable forms of verification.
- The Third-Party Verification form (2nd parent not in home) is now obsolete and must no longer be used
- Proof of address is now only required at initial authorization unless a family has a change in address.

A child shall not be denied child care financial assistance based only on an applicant's failure to demonstrate citizenship or immigration status of the child seeking care without final review by EEC.

Eligibility - 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



Part Time Service Need

An average of 20-24 hours per week.

Travel Time

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

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.

Eligibility - Service Need

Education

- 10 college credits are considered full time (10 credits x 2.5 hours = 25 hours)
- Graduate school is a service need **ONLY** at **reauthorization** AND if previous service need was **education**.

Employment

- Families with new employment at the time of authorization can use an employment letter or employment verification form (EVF).
 - Families that provide an employment letter or EVF must be issued a 12-month authorization and will be entered into CCFA as “employment” and not “new employment”.
 - **(NEW)** The parent must provide paystubs at reauthorization.

Disability of Parent can be combined with another service need. **Current form and a letter should be used.**

Eligibility - Service Need

Families Experiencing Homelessness: families experiencing homelessness are now eligible for priority access from the waitlist.

- Eligibility can be verified through a homeless referral from EOHLC, shelter letter, or other documentation as defined by EEC.
- Families will be eligible for full-time care
- No income verification is required or entered in CCFA
- Families will not be assessed a parent fee.
- Families are allowed up to 6 months to submit immunization and physical paperwork requirements.
- A family experiencing homelessness no longer has a two-year limit.

Eligibility - Service Need

Early Education and Care staff is now formalized as a priority status from the waitlist for vouchers only. This is no longer a pilot.

- A family with a parent who is currently working at a licensed or funded early education and care program will be eligible for immediate access to child care based on funding availability.
- Family Child Care providers and assistants are now eligible to care for their own children if meeting certain conditions.
 - Requests for Family Child Care providers to care for their own children must be sent to the EEC Subsidy Mailbox (EECSubsidyManagement@mass.gov) to determine eligibility at this time.



PARENT FEES

Parent Fee Scale

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 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
- Families experiencing homelessness

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

- Providers will no longer collect an initial deposit from families.
 - This replaces the policy that families were charged an initial weekly deposit for their first week (charged 2 weeks in total to start) to cover their last week of care.
- EEC will continue to pay the daily reimbursement rate minus any parent fees, up to 2 weeks or until the child's last day of care, whichever is sooner.
- Family Access Administrators must institute their own policies on the collection of parent fees.

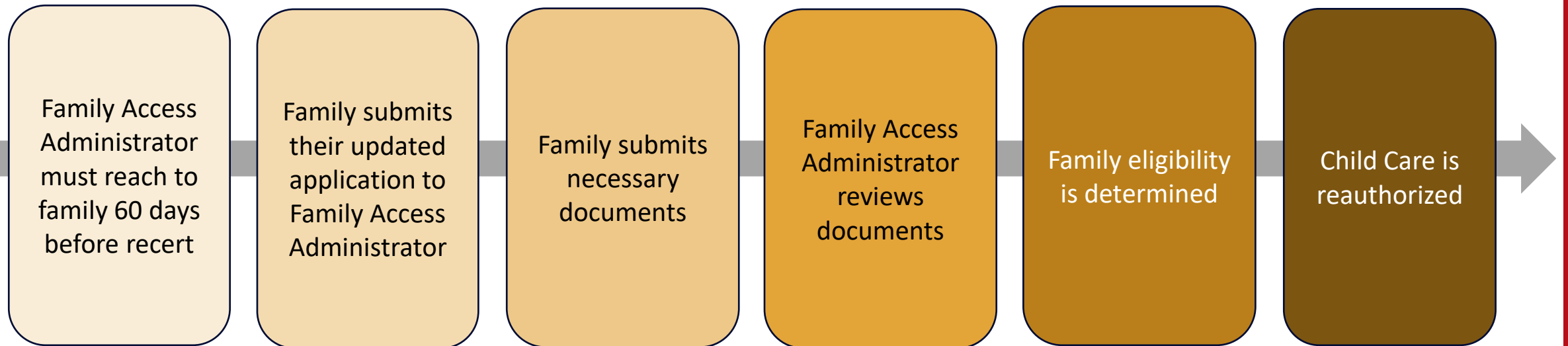
Families with outstanding parent fee balances must not be denied access to the waitlist and child care financial assistance



REAUTHORIZATION

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



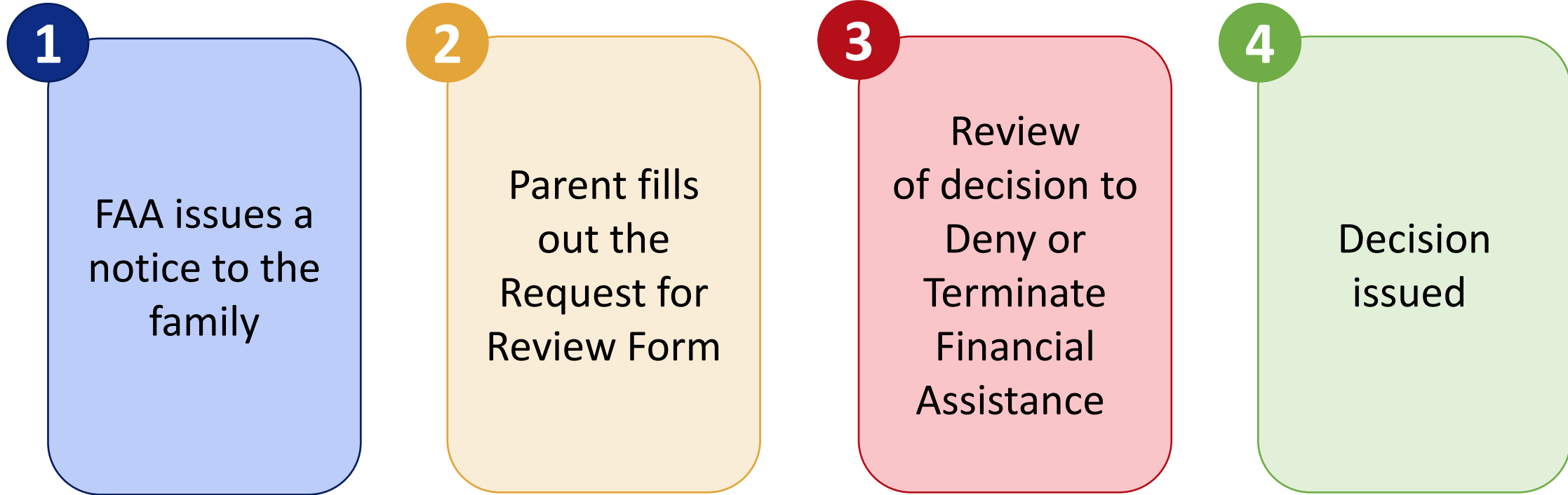
Reauthorization

- Families must be sent a reauthorization notice at least 60 days prior to the end of their authorization period. This time period was previously 45 days.
- 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) to notify the family care needs to be renewed.
- A Notice of Denial should be issued 2 weeks prior to the end of the authorization period.



DENIALS & TERMINATIONS

Request for Review Process



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.

Denials and Termination Notices

- “Abandonment of subsidy” has been eliminated as a reason for denial.
- Before a family’s child care financial assistance placement can be terminated, the Family Access Administrator must make two separate attempts using different modes of communication to reach the family
- Terminations of a child’s placement can be issued in the following circumstances:
 - 30 consecutive unexplained absences
 - 45 non-attended days including unexplained absences
 - Termination ONLY applies to the child’s current placement



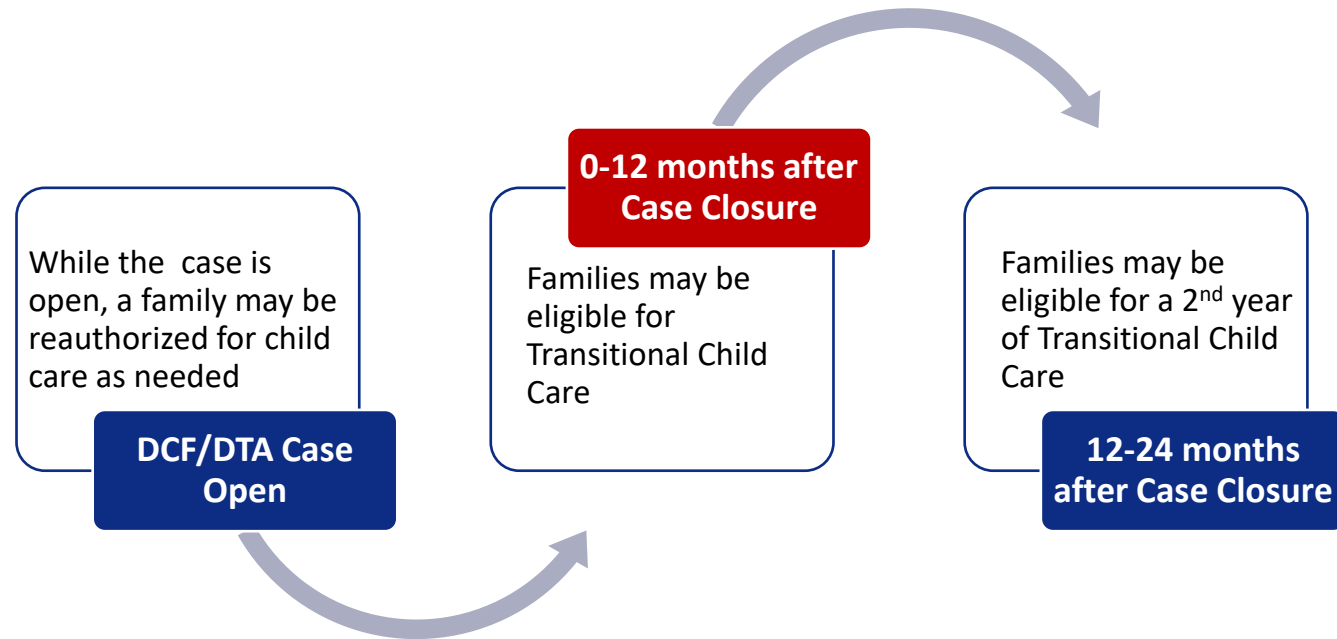
DTA & DCF

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)

DTA and DCF Transitional Child Care

- Families seeking child care within 24 months of their DTA-TAFDC or DCF case closure may be eligible for immediate access to child care.
- If the family is in the middle of a DCF or DTA Related Child Care authorization, the authorization shall not be shortened; the case closure date entered will be the last day of the current DCF or DTA Related Child Care authorization.
- The Transitional authorization will always be a full 12-months unless a new referral is received.
- Parent fees will not be assessed during the first 12 months of transitional child care.

What's Next

:

Final CCFA Policy Trainings

Coming Next: Summer 2024



System Training & Support

Fall 2024



Final Policies & Procedures Released

Fall 2024



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

Virtual Office Hours

Recorded Trainings to reference on your own

THANK YOU

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