



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Board of Early Education & Care – June Meeting

June 13, 2023

Agenda

Routine Business

- Approval of Minutes from May 9, 2023 Meeting – VOTE
- Approval of Board Meeting Dates for FY24 - VOTE

Items for Discussion and Action

- Promoting High Quality Early Education and Care – Theory of Action
- Child Care Financial Assistance Parent Fee Scale – Overview and VOTE
- Updating Board By-Laws – Overview and VOTE
 - Nomination and Election of Vice-Chairperson – VOTE

FY24 Meeting Schedule

For state Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24), the Board proposes the following meeting schedule. Please note that meetings will move to **Wednesday**.

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 (1:00-4:00pm)	Wednesday, February 14, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)
Wednesday, October 11, 2023 (1:00-4:00pm)	Wednesday, March 13, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)
Wednesday, November 8, 2023 (1:00-4:00pm)	Wednesday, April 10, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)
Wednesday, December 13, 2023 (1:00-4:00pm)	Wednesday, May 8, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)	Wednesday, June 12, 2024 (1:00-4:00pm)

MOVED: That the Board of Early Education and Care, in accordance with G.L. c. 15D, § 3(b), shall meet in accordance with the schedule set forth above, and that all meetings will begin at 1:00 p.m. and will be held at 50 Milk Street, Boston MA, unless otherwise announced and duly posted.

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1

Promoting High Quality Early Education and Care

Strategic Pillars

Children, Youth & Families



Children are on track for success in school and to reach their full potential. Their families are empowered to work, build their skills, and attain economic mobility while supporting their children's education and development.

Educators



The early childhood and out-of-school time workforce is professionally prepared, well supported, adequately compensated, and culturally and linguistically representative of the population it serves.

Providers



Programs will increase their sustainability, engage in continuous quality improvement, and promote high-quality education and healthy development among children and youth.

State System



To efficiently and effectively steward public investments in early education and care with utmost integrity, transparency and accountability to the people of Massachusetts.



FY23 Accomplishments and Priority Initiatives

The Board, and the agency, have made significant progress over the past year across each strategic pillar, stabilizing the early education and care field and positioning the agency and the field for further transformation.

This year has focused on:

Reforming Child Care Financial Assistance

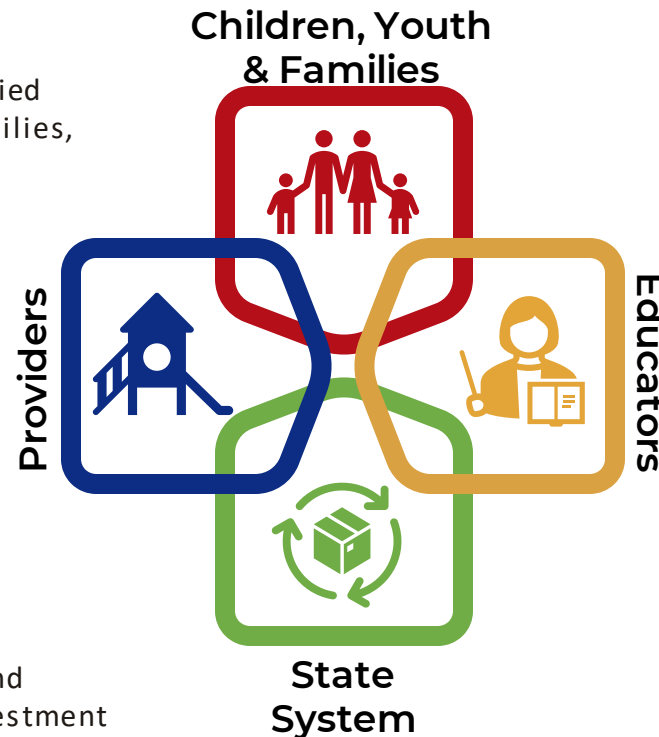
Improve access, create a more family-centered, dignified experience and reduce administrative burdens for families, providers, and EEC

Rate Increases and Cost-Informed Rate Reforms

Historic increase to child care financial assistance payment rate and expand on the Market Rate Study by looking at the cost of care to better inform the agency around the cost drivers and where we can better support programs across the Commonwealth

Stabilizing and Supporting Program Operations (C3)

Maintain capacity, support increased compensation and benefits, mitigate tuition/fee increases and direct investment into programs serving low-income families



Building Career Pathways & New Pipelines

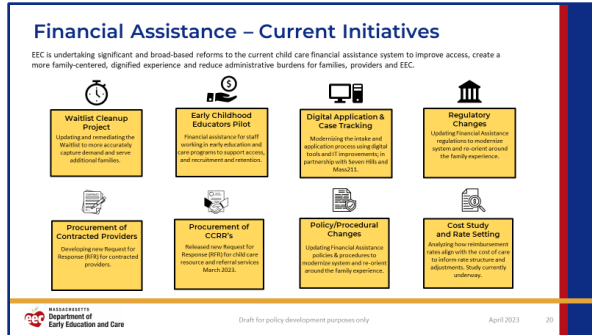
Robust professional opportunities and career pathways to help professionalize the field while developing immediate strategies to increase recruitment and retention of skilled educators

Updating and Modernizing Agency Operations

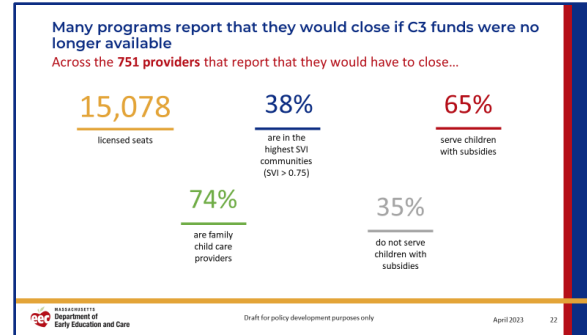
Create a human/user-centered agency and business processes to modernize and improve the staff and user experience

FY23 Accomplishments and Priority Initiatives

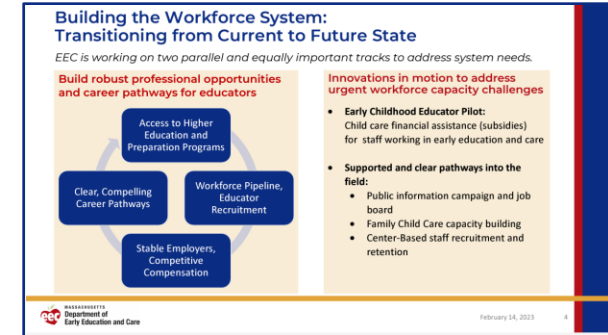
Reforming Child Care Financial Assistance ([link](#))



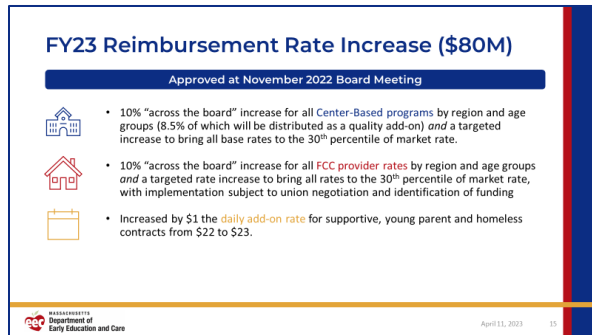
Stabilizing and Supporting Program Operations (C3) ([link](#))



Building Career Pathways & New Pipelines ([link](#))



\$80 Million Child Care Financial Assistance Rate Increase ([link](#))



Understanding the True Cost of Care ([link](#))



Updating and Modernizing Agency Operations ([link](#))



While maintaining momentum and progress in each of these areas, the agency is also developing a program quality theory of action to focus on what's happening in the classroom.

Access to High Quality Care Supports Positive Outcomes

Decades of research support investments in high quality early education & care

- High quality learning and care environments show relationships with improved child outcomes
- Impact evaluations have demonstrated school readiness and life success outcomes resulting from high quality early education for 3- and 4-year-olds



Defining high quality learning and care environments



Characterized by frequent warm, supportive and stimulating interactions



Children have opportunities to play and explore in a safe and engaging environment



Planful curriculum shapes opportunities to learn through active experiences in ways that are responsive to individual needs



Families are empowered to engage in collaborative partnerships and programs are inclusive and supportive to the diversity of families and children they serve

Program Quality Theory of Action



HIGH QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE IS AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN MASSACHUSETTS

- Families will have the resources to thrive socially and economically
- Children will be well prepared for school success and life-long learning

Success can be measured by



Observation Tools

High quality learning environments in early education and care programs (using standardized observation tools)



Screening in Early Education

Robust developmental and early literacy screening identifies extent of need for additional supports



Third Grade MCAS

Strong third grade MCAS outcomes across racial, linguistic and other family characteristics



School Completion

High levels of high school completion and college attendance

Theory of Action - Interconnected Efforts

Continuous Quality Improvement System for Programs



Robust professional opportunities and career pathways for educators



Theory of Action - Domains of Quality



Adult/Child Interactions



Curriculum and Assessment



Physical Environment



Family Engagement



Leadership and Professional Learning



Business Practices



Adult/Child Interactions

- Adults and children engage in warm, supportive and cognitively engaging interactions with each other
- Conversations are frequent and characterized by open-ended questions and extended turn taking – adults listen with interest to children
- Adults provide a safe base for younger children and support older children in learning new things
- Adults create an environment of respect and value for linguistic and cultural differences

Educators

- Ensure frequent opportunities for interactions with all children
- Tailor interactions to needs and preferences of individual children
- Recognize and respond to linguistic and cultural differences

Program Leaders

- Support educators deepening their skill in interactions
- Provide observation and feedback
- Ensure consistent staffing
- Model positive interactions

Here is what this looks like: <https://youtu.be/a9m5trmh1Lw>



Curriculum and Assessment

- Day is organized around playful, developmentally appropriate activities, grounded in play
- Curriculum includes activities designed to support learning goals grounded in standards
- Books, writing and other literacy activities are common
- Educators attend to children's learning, document growth and adapt activities to meet individual needs
- Curriculum is reflective of children's experiences, culture and language
- Educators have regular opportunities to plan and reflect

Here is what this looks like (infants): <https://youtu.be/K7Ku6EcCQGU>

Here is what this looks like (older kids): <https://youtu.be/jqeByELyyx8>

Educators

- Set goals for children
- Plan activities adapted for children's needs
- Implement effectively and adjust as needed

Program Leaders

- Protect time for curriculum planning
- Ensure books and materials are available
- Select appropriate curricula and materials



Physical Environment

- The environment is safe for children to explore freely
- Materials are thoughtfully selected, support curriculum and accessible to all children
- Books and writing materials are readily available
- Classroom arrangement supports a variety of interactions and different groupings
- Materials reflect the diversity of children, culturally, linguistically, etc.

Educators

- Organize classroom environment
- Structure predictable routines
- Select and arrange materials

Program Leaders

- Ensure purchase of high quality furniture and materials
- Support educators in understanding and reflecting on environment

Here is what this looks like: <https://youtu.be/9dOxyomUSW8>



Family Engagement

- Families and educators collaborate to create consistent and supportive contexts across home and school
 - Regular conversations
 - Soliciting feedback and information from families
- Developmental screening is used to support communication with families and provide early identification of opportunities to improve support
- Connections among families creates a sense of community that is supportive to a child's well being
- Educators respect and are responsive to families' diverse needs and preferences

Educators

- Talk regularly with families
- Share practices and ask about home activities
- Respect and respond to families' individuality

Program Leaders

- Ask families for feedback
- Build opportunities for families to connect
- Support developmental screening and referrals, when appropriate
- Support educators in understanding needs of families

Here is what this looks like: https://youtu.be/_TVFWVqPrfY



Leadership and Professional Learning

Educational leader creates a sustained focus on effective educator practices supporting play and learning

- Adult-child interactions
- Curriculum and assessment
- Physical environment
- Working with families as partners





Business Practices

Leadership supports strong program operations

- Educational leadership to support continued professional growth of educators
- Effective business and administrative practices ensure programs stability and investment in quality, including educator compensation



Responsive to and Inclusive of Different Program Types



FAMILY CHILD CARE

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FCC educators take on the role of education and program leader.

- Need focused and integrated supports
- Often work in isolation
- Deeply committed and responsive to family needs



CENTER BASED EARLY CHILHOOD

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Center-based programs vary widely from very small to multisite systems.

- Widely varied staffing capacity
- Range of fiscal resiliency



OUT OF SCHOOL TIME

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Afterschool and Out-of-School time programs work with children and families in unique ways.

- Focus on positive youth development
- Workforce includes adolescents

Strong and accessible licensing standards, along with technical assistance in continuous quality improvement scaffolds programs of all types to move from licensing compliance to increasing quality.

Strong Supports for Programs & Educators



EEC Staff Support

Licensors and quality team provide direct touch points to programs.



Strong Start Learning Management System

Access to asynchronous and facilitated foundational courses in multiple languages.



Professional Learning

Free and low-cost professional learning opportunities provided statewide.



Comprehensive Supports to Programs

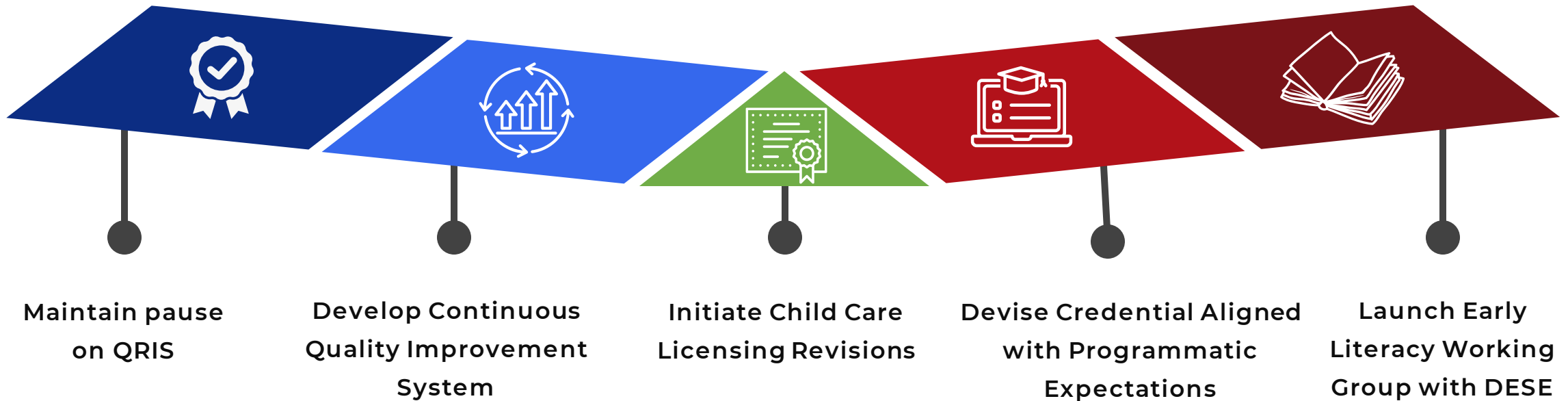
Comprehensive supports including early childhood mental health consultation, continuous quality improvement and integration of high-quality practices.

- **Revised licensing standards that focus on health, safety, and quality and are accessible to each program type**
- **System-wide supports for ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement reflection and planning**
 - Accessible and responsive to all program types
 - Coordination across system components
- **System supports ongoing professional learning for all educators**

Discussion & Next Steps

Continue data-informed system development through:

- Ongoing data integration between EEC and DESE
- Expansion of developmental and early literacy screening
- Broaden the use of standardized quality/practice observations



Use funding from the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to accelerate this work.

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Child Care Financial Assistance – Parent Fee



Parent Fee - Overview



Depending on their size and income, a family that receives child care financial assistance may also need to pay an associated fee to cover the balance of their tuition.

CONTEXT

- The federal government, through the Child Care Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG), requires that families contribute to the cost of child care on a sliding fee scale basis

CURRENT STATE

- EEC's current parent fee scale was revised and approved by the Board of Early Education and Care on June 8, 2021

Parent Fee Scale – Key Points

Structure of the Parent Fee Scale



Based only on a family's income that is above the federal poverty threshold for their household size.

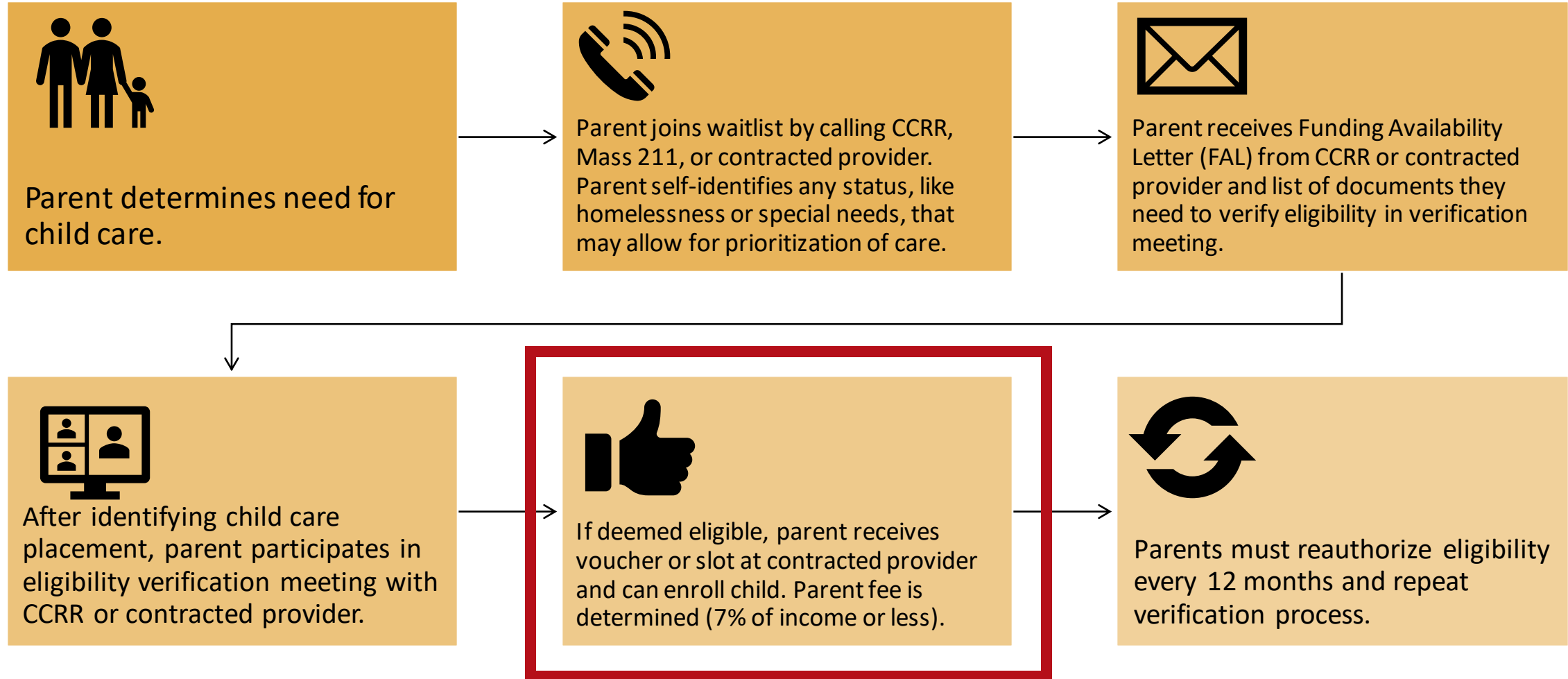


Most families pay a fee that is 7% of all income or less, ranges from 0 to ~12% of income.



Must be reviewed by Board every 3 years, following approval of Market Rate Survey.

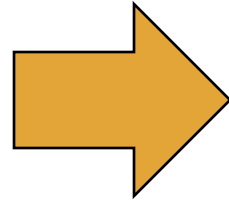
Reminder: Parent Journey Map (Income Eligible)



Parent Fee – Example Family Experience



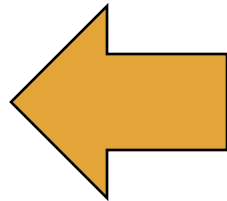
A two-person family has a gross monthly income of **\$1,700** and needs child care. They want to estimate what they should expect to spend on care each month.



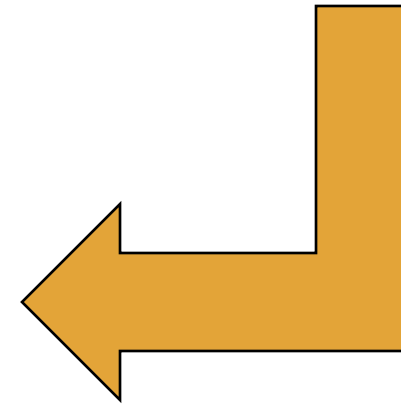
The federal poverty guideline for a family of 2 is **\$1,526** monthly so this family's parent fee would only look at the **\$174** that they make each month over the poverty guideline.

\$6.96

Estimated monthly parent fee for this family



The current parent fee scale would have this family pay only **4%** of that amount over the federal poverty guideline.



See [parent fee table](#)

Ratification and Approval of Parent Fee Scale

Pursuant to G.L. c. 15D, § 2, Section 73 of Chapter 227 of the Acts of 2020 (“Section 73”), and G.L. c. 30A, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is responsible for establishing and implementing a schedule for revising a rate structure for voucher and contracted payments to providers of subsidized early education and care programs and services on behalf of low-income and other at-risk children and a sliding fee scale for participants in those programs. Parents receiving child care financial assistance may be required to contribute to the cost of the child care services they receive, in accordance with a sliding fee scale established by the EEC. The sliding fee scale, known as the Parent Fee Scale, was most recently updated in June of 2021.

In addition, 606 Code Mass. Regs. 10.03(2)(a) (2) requires that EEC establish a schedule for revising its Parent Fee Scale and requires that such revision “[w]ithin six months of completion of each triannual Market Rate Survey, as required for the EEC’s administration of the CCDF Plan pursuant to 45 CFR 98.45(c).”

In November of 2022, the Board approved the most recent Market Rate Survey and Preliminary Cost Analysis. Accordingly, to meet its statutory and regulatory obligations, the Board is again required to approve a sliding fee scale. EEC recommends maintaining the fee scale that was approved in June of 2021 and asks the Board to ratify it.

MOVED: That the Board of Early Education and Care, in accordance with G.L. c. 15D, § 2 and 606 CMR 10.03(2)(a)(2), hereby reaffirms the Parent Fee Scale that was approved in June 2021, and authorizes its continued use.

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3

Updating Board By-Laws

EEC Board By-Laws

The by-laws are the rules established by the Board of Early Education and Care that govern the Board's organization, operations, and internal management. In 2005, the Board approved its first set of by-laws which have not been updated since.





Why Now?

- The operation of public bodies has changed over the past 18 years
- Potential for remote participation is a new factor that wasn't possible in 2005
- This update reflects the current Board's method for operations to ensure meaningful participation by all

Basis for Revisions

- Contemplate the current state of Board operations
- Incorporate relevant material from Boards of Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education
- Clarify statutory expectations of Board Members

Key Updates

-  Incorporate statutory attendance requirement – Board members may not miss more than 4 meetings in a calendar year before their seat must be declared vacant.
-  Clarifies meeting scheduling including directive for Board to set a meeting schedule at the end of each fiscal year
-  Creates new structure for remote participation including permissible reasons to participate remotely
-  Codifies requirement that Board meetings shall be made available to the public via online livestream

Adoption of Board By-Laws

In 2005, the Board of Early Education and Care adopted a series of by-laws to govern its organization and functional operation, as well as standards for conducting Board meetings and Board rules and regulations. Since that time, there have been significant changes in how Board meetings are conducted including, for example, the opportunity for remote participation. The Board determines that it is necessary to reexamine and revise these by-laws in the interest of facilitating its work on matters of early education and care and in furtherance of administrative efficiency.

MOVED: That the Board of Early Education and Care hereby approves the attached as their permanent by-laws, effective June 13, 2023, and until such time as they are revoked, rescinded, or amended by the Board.

Nomination and Election of a Vice-Chairperson

The Board of Early Education and Care (“Board”) is permitted to appoint a Vice-Chairperson of the Board. The Vice-Chairperson is responsible for performing the duties of the Chairperson at the Chairperson’s request or in case of their absence. The Vice-Chairperson is elected by the Board from persons nominated by the Board at one of its regular meetings. The Vice-Chairperson position has been vacant since December 23, 2022.

MOVED: That the Board of Early Education and Care hereby elects the nominated individual as determined at the June 13, 2023 meeting as Vice-Chairperson of the Board.