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PARENT HANDBOOK

WorkForce Solutions Child Care Services (CCS) assist parents who are working, participating in a job training program, or enrolled in a school to obtain affordable child care. CCS offers child care assistance throughout the 12-county Deep East Texas service area; including Angelina, Houston, Jasper, Nacogdoches, Newton, Polk, Sabine, San Augustine, San Jacinto, Shelby, Trinity, and Tyler counties.

Finding the right place for your child while you work or go to school is an important decision. When it comes to finding childcare, there are a number of options from which to choose. The choice is yours.

WorkForce Solutions Deep East Texas has developed this handbook to inform you about the CCS program and explain your rights and responsibilities. Please read this handbook carefully. Keep it handy as a reference for questions you may have later about your child care assistance. Feel free to contact us at the phone number and email address listed above if you have any questions.

A Proud Partner of the  AmericanJobCenter[®] Network

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For hearing impaired 1-800-735-2988 English (voice) / 1-800-662-4954 Spanish (voice) 1-800-735-2989 or 711 (TDD)

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

To be eligible for child care assistance:

1. You must live in the 12-county Deep East Texas Board area.
2. The household income must be below the 85% State Minimum Income guidelines for your household size.
3. You must be working, in school, or in training for an average of 25 hours per week. If you are married, or living with your child's other parent, you must each work or be in school or training for an average of 25 hours per week, for a total average of 50 hours per week. If you (or your spouse) are unable to meet the work/school requirements due to a verified medical reason, you must inform CCS about the need to work fewer hours and submit medical documentation from an appropriate medical professional. The same applies if you must work fewer hours to care for a disabled family member.

When you apply for child care assistance:

1. CCS staff determines eligibility for child care services by verifying your income and/or attendance in a school/training program. All income received in the household will be considered when determining eligibility. This includes income from bonuses, overtime, commissions, etc. If you are not sure what is considered income, contact us with your questions.
2. CCS staff provides information regarding program requirements and you will sign paperwork acknowledging you understand all your responsibilities.
3. It is your responsibility to choose a child care provider that meets your needs. CCS staff will provide information on choosing a child care provider. You can also visit: www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/
4. You will be required to pay a portion of your child care, with few exceptions. See "parent fees" on the next page for more information.
5. You must agree to report all changes that affect your eligibility for child care within 14 days of the change, submit required documents timely, meet the requirements of the Parent Eligibility Reporting and Attendance Requirements, pay your parent fee on time to the provider, and use the CCAA swipe card to report your child's attendance and absences.

Failure to report all income and family circumstances may result in you receiving child care that you are not eligible to receive. This is considered stealing and you may be prosecuted for fraud. Please be advised that all information you provide to determine your eligibility is subject to validation through cross-checks against state and federal databases. You may be asked to participate in face-to-face interviews and provide original documents to verify identity and eligibility for child care services.

If you are eligible for child care assistance, you will be placed on the Interest List (unless we are actively enrolling). Additional verification may be required depending on the waiting time as information must be current at enrollment. If you are added to the Interest List, it is generally NOT possible to tell how long you will have to wait for enrollment and it is very important that you keep CCS informed of any changes to your contact information. You must submit required documentation to CCS every 90 days to maintain your place on the Interest List or your name will be removed and you will have to reapply.

Eligibility for child care assistance will be certified for a period of at least one year. You may continue to be eligible for child care services if funds are available and you continue to meet the eligibility requirements. About 30 days before the end of your eligibility period you will be asked to complete the redetermination paperwork and submit all verification documents.

You should be aware that you may be prosecuted for obtaining or attempting to obtain, by fraudulent means, services to which you are not entitled.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

When CCS staff determines your eligibility they will deduct any out-of-pocket medical and related expenses pertaining to your child's disability from your gross income. You will be asked to supply supporting documentation of these expenses. It is your responsibility to bring this to your caseworker's attention. CCS may also be able to pay the child care provider an additional rate to help care for your disabled child. Be sure to discuss this with your caseworker if applicable.

PARENT FEES

Most parents must pay part of the cost for childcare. Fees are based on your family's gross monthly income and the number of children in care. This fee is assessed for all children who receive services and will not exceed the cost of child care. This fee is a monthly fee, and it is due in full - in advance - on the first day of each month. The fee is not reduced when children are absent. It must be paid whether they attend or not. Failure to pay this fee as required, can result in termination of your child care services. You will not be allowed to reenroll in child care services until these fees are paid in full. Additionally, if your fees are not current you will not be allowed to transfer your children until the fee is paid in full.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Each child in the family is allowed 40 absences per year. If you need an exception to this policy because your child has a documented chronic/disability, you may discuss that PRIOR to the 40th absence day and a waiver will be considered. Failure to use your CCAA swipe card to record attendance will be counted as an absence even if your child is present.

CCS staff will send you a letter when your child has missed 15 days, 30 days and after the 40th day. When your child exceeds 40 absences child care assistance will end for that child. You will not be eligible to receive child care assistance again for 60 days. If there is an interest list, we will not be able to add your name to the list for 60 days.

REPORT ATTENDANCE WITH THE CHILD CARE ATTENDANCE AUTOMATION SYSTEM

You will receive a CCAA swipe card in the mail. You must activate the card as instructed and use it to report your child's attendance using the swipe machine at the provider center. If you lose your card, it is YOUR responsibility to report the loss to CCS immediately so a new card can be issued. If you do not receive your card, you must call CCS by the fifth day so it can be determined why you haven't received your card. This applies to the initial card and any subsequent cards you may need.

It is YOUR responsibility to swipe the card to report your child as either present or absent each day they are scheduled for daycare. If you forget or are unable to swipe the correct attendance information for any day(s), you must use the swipe card as soon as possible, but no later than six (6) days after the day missed, to record the correct attendance (called a "backswipe".) The six days includes weekends and holidays. Note: When your child is absent, you may report the absence by calling the number on the back of the swipe card. This includes absences for vacations and court order visits as well.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Following is a list of your Parental Rights in the Child Care Services Program. You have the right to:

1. Have someone represent you when applying for CCS.
2. Be notified of eligibility to receive assistance within 20 days from the day CCS receives all necessary documentation required to determine your eligibility for services.

3. Choose the type of child care provider that best suits your needs. You will select the child care arrangement you desire from a licensed child care center, licensed child care home, or registered child care home. You are encouraged to visit child care providers before making your choice.
4. Receive assistance in choosing initial or additional child care referrals including information about CCS policies regarding transferring children from one provider to another.
5. Be informed that some providers charge the difference between what CCS pays for child care services and their published rates. If you choose one of those providers, you are responsible for paying the difference to the provider. Note: This additional charge only applies if you have been assessed a parent fee.
6. Have information used to determine eligibility for assistance treated as confidential by CCS.
7. Receive services without regard to race, gender, color, national origin, age, political beliefs, religion, or disability.
8. Reject an offer of assistance or voluntarily withdraw your child from CCS. This does not apply to families who have children from Child Protective Services.
9. Be informed by CCS of the possible consequences of rejecting or ending assistance that is offered.
10. Be notified in writing by CCS at least 15 calendar days before the denial, delay, reduction, or termination of services; except in cases where the Choices or CPS caseworker has authorized child care to end immediately.
11. Appeal the denial, reduction, or termination of services. This does not apply to parents who have children from CPS and did not request child care. The procedure for requesting fair hearings will be provided by CCS.
12. Receive 30-day written notification from CCS if your child care is to be terminated in order to make room for a priority group. Should that happen, you will be given written notification of the denial, delay, reduction, or termination and the notification will include information about other child care options for which you may be eligible. In emergency situations you will be given notice at the earliest possible date that your child care will be terminated.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Make sure you meet the work, school, or training requirements at enrollment and redetermination. If you stop participating in your chosen activity, you must notify CCS within 14 calendar days to request an activity search.
2. You must report the following changes that affect your eligibility within 14 calendar days:
 - a. Permanent loss of job, training, or education
 - b. Change in family size
 - c. Change of address, email, or phone number
 - d. Permanent income increase over 85% of the State Median Income amount for your household size.
3. Make sure you submit all required documents to CCS in the required timeframe. Failure to comply will result in the termination of your child care assistance.
4. A Change Request or Mid-Month Transfer Request form must be submitted 5 days prior to requesting a change.
5. Comply with all WorkForce Solutions and Child Care provider policies & requirements.

CHOOSING A CHILDCARE PROVIDER

CCS will give you information that will help you choose a childcare provider that meet your needs and the needs of your children. State and federal policies require that you be allowed to choose the childcare provider who will provide care for your children.

You are encouraged to check online at: www.dfps.state.tx.us for information on choosing a childcare provider for your children. You may also call the Texas information and referral network at 211 for additional information. Your

children will spend many hours a day at the center of your choice, so you need to choose carefully. There are several child care options available:

- a. Licensed Childcare Center - A childcare facility which provides care for 13 or more children under the age of 14 that has been licensed to operate by the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (TDFPS). A licensed facility must comply with the minimum standards and guidelines required by TDFPS and is subject to regular monitoring.
- b. Licensed Childcare Home - A childcare facility which provides care for no more than 12 children under the age of 14 authorize to operate by TDFPS. A licensed childcare home must comply with the minimum standards and guidelines required by TDFPS and is subject to regular monitoring.
- c. Registered Family Home - A home in which the caregiver lives and takes care of no more than 6 children under the age of 14, plus no more than 6 additional school-age children. The total number of children - counting the caregiver's own children - may not be more than 12 at any time. It is authorized to operate by TDFPS and must comply with minimum standards & guidelines required by TDFPS and is subject to regular monitoring.

Note: The website at www.dfps.state.tx.us also shows "Listed" Childcare Providers. CCS is not able to work with these providers.

A childcare provider may be a TEXAS RISING STAR (TRS) PROVIDER – which means that the provider exceeds minimum state licensing standards. Parents are encouraged to ask a provider if they are a TRS provider or if they have received other certifications.

A childcare provider may also be designated as a TEXAS SCHOOL READY! (TSR) facility. A center with this designation is meeting additional requirements developed by the State Center for Early Childhood Development that focus on helping children become ready to start school. Go to www.detwork-childcare.com for a listing of the TRS and TSR centers available to you.

APPEALS

When a written determination has been sent to you that your child care services will be terminated, you have the right to appeal that decision. Should you choose to do so you must:

- a. Send a written request for a review of the decision no later than the 14th calendar day after the mailing date of the determination sent by CCS.
- b. Send the written or faxed request to:

DEBORAH HOMMAN
WorkForce Solutions Deep East Texas
415 South 1st St., Suite 110 B; Lufkin, Texas 75901
FAX: (936) 633-7491

- c. Under certain circumstances your childcare may continue during the appeal process if you request it. However, you will be required to repay the cost of childcare during the appeal if you lose. You will not be eligible to reenroll in childcare until that cost has been paid in full.

OBJECTIONS

CCS staff cannot change the program requirements, but they can work with you if you have a problem with your case. Should you have an objection to the service provided by CCS, discuss it first with your caseworker. If you are still unhappy, ask to speak to the Director of Client Services. If the director is unable to resolve your problem, you may ask to speak to the Senior Director of CCS.