

July 2010

REVISED RULES FOR CHILD CARE SUBSIDY ELIGIBILITY CHANGES FAST FACTS FOR FAMILIES AND EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS

Q: Why did the Department of Early Learning (DEL) change these rules? A new state law allows some families in the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program 12 months of eligibility before the family needs to reapply for child care subsidies. WCCC is a program that helps families with low incomes pay for child care. DEL revised these rules to put the new law (House Bill 3141) into effect.

Q: Which families might qualify for this 12-month “extended eligibility”? Families qualify for this 12-month *extended eligibility* if:

- Their child is enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), **AND**
- The family is eligible for WCCC.

Q: How many months of WCCC does a family get if they don’t have a child in Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP? Families who do not have a child in Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP may receive six months of WCCC eligibility before they must reapply. The family’s eligibility period may be less than six months if:

- The family asks for WCCC assistance for less than six months, or
- For a family receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, their *individual responsibility plan* says that child care is needed for less than six months.

Q. When will families be able to access the 12-month *extended eligibility* period? The revised rules take effect August 15, 2010. For a family that qualifies, the 12-month eligibility starts when:

- The family first applies and is approved for WCCC, and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) verifies that the family has a child enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP, or
- For a family already in WCCC, the next time they re-apply for WCCC, and DSHS verifies that they have a child enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP.

Q: How will DSHS verify that the family has a child in one of these preschool programs? All Head Start, Early Head Start and ECEAP programs will use the same enrollment verification form. The family then gives the form to DSHS.

Q: If a family has one child who qualifies for *extended eligibility*, would other children in the family qualify? The rules would allow **all children** in a family who qualify for WCCC to get *extended eligibility*, so long as **at least one child** is enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, or ECEAP.

Q: When might *extended eligibility* end earlier than 12 months? *Extended eligibility* would end earlier than 12 months:

- When a family tells DSHS they no longer need WCCC; or
- If the family no longer meets the WCCC eligibility requirements.

Q: What would happen to *extended eligibility* if a child left Head Start, Early Head Start, or ECEAP before the 12 months is over—but the family still qualifies for WCCC? If the child leaves the preschool program before the 12-month eligibility period ends, but the family still needs WCCC, the family's *extended eligibility* continues to the end of the 12-month period. After that, if the family is still eligible for WCCC, they would receive subsidies for six months before having to reapply.

Q: If a parent lost his/her job, would he/she lose *extended eligibility*? Not necessarily. A parent who loses his or her job may still get WCCC for 28 days while the parent looks for work (this is called a "gap period"). The parent could also get a second 28 days while they continue looking for work.

Q: Could families with *extended eligibility* use WCCC to pay for child care while the parent takes a parent education class? Parents who receive 12 months of eligibility can get WCCC-paid child care while they attend a parent education or family development class, if the class is offered by their child's Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP program. Depending on available funds, DEL may later allow other types of parent education as "approved activities" for WCCC subsidies.

Q: Did DEL change whether a family has to report changes to DSHS? DEL plans to revise other WCCC rules on the types of family changes in circumstances that must be reported to help make the rules simpler for parents to follow. This may include rules on reporting changes in the family's income. We will announce proposed rules, public hearing dates and the deadline for sending written input later.

Q: Where can I find more information about WCCC? DEL has a section on our website about getting help paying for child care and preschool. Visit www.del.wa.gov/care/help/ to learn more.