

CCDBG Implementation in California: Guiding Vision and Principles

Child care is the keystone of an equitable educational system, a productive workforce, and a fit society. Early experiences affect a child's brain development, providing the foundation for all future learning. Quality child care helps children develop a sense of security, knowledge and skills that are essential for their success.

Over the past seventy years, the availability of child care has become a pillar of gender equity by enabling women to participate in the workforce. Child care has also become a critical support for low-income families working to achieve economic stability. However, California's child care infrastructure faces significant challenges. Legislative changes and financial investment are needed to ensure a strong child care system that will return dividends to us in years to come.

New rules contained in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014, which reauthorized the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), and the planning process it requires, present a unique opportunity for state agencies and the Legislature to be bold and visionary in strengthening the State's child care system.

We envision a robust and comprehensive child care system in California that serves a large and diverse population of approximately 6.5 million young children age twelve and under, their families, and the nearly 174,000 providers who are the backbone of the system. Such a system would:

- Provide access to all children who are eligible for child care, including the 230,000 children who are currently financially eligible but are not able to receive services – many of whom live in poverty and are Dual English Learners.
- Focus on children's well-being by providing continuity of care and minimizing the required burdens on parents to obtain and maintain child care services.
- Partner with parents to offer consumer information that is relevant, timely, and accessible to all Californian parents so that they can make choices that best suit their families' needs.
- Be inclusive of all parents to benefit from and contribute to creating a strong and supportive child care system focused on children and family development.
- Support providers by offering living wages for their work and enabling them to focus on quality improvements.
- Appreciate the multitudes of ways in which providers deliver quality care and education and support for families.
- Develop a linked network of support for ongoing quality improvement and professional development that is progressive, coordinated, incentive-based, easily comprehensible, and accessible for the diverse provider workforce.
- Support agencies and non-profits in the efficient and effective delivery of child care services and ensures that health and safety standards and other regulations are enforced in a positive and constructive manner.

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In the spirit of working together to create a stronger state child care system, advocates offer the following principles to guide policy development and decision-making for implementation of new CCDBG provisions:

PROCESS

- Develop a long-term road map for strategic, multi-year implementation to absorb the changes and costs over time.
- Draw on the wisdom of children, families, providers, and other stakeholders to proactively move forward in setting policy goals that can be supported via legislative, administrative, regulatory and budgetary actions over a multi-year period.
- Reasonably interpret available federal guidelines in a light that is focused on the well-being of children and parents.
- Rely on transparent information, such as cost implications of the new requirements and solutions under current consideration by CDE and other agencies, to guide a robust dialogue and innovative approaches to CCDBG implementation.

SCOPE

- Implement changes across the entire child care and development systems, not just for those providers/programs funded through CCDF to minimize further bifurcation of our child care system, which would present a great disservice to the most vulnerable children and families.
- Embrace meeting the full intent of the law, including providing parents with critical information about their child care options, reducing burdensome reporting requirements and increasing stability of care for children, ensuring access to quality child care that promotes child development by strengthening health and safety standards, and supporting the child care workforce and ongoing program improvement.

IMPACT

- Ensure that existing services to children and families are not cut; retain the long-term goal of serving all income-eligible children. These proposals hold to “do no harm” criteria so that financially struggling families and child care providers do not bear the costs of implementation.
- Deepen the State’s simultaneous commitment to two-generation solutions by helping low-income parents to work or pursue education while promoting their children’s healthy development and early learning.
- Build upon our existing mixed-delivery supply of family child care homes, child care centers, state preschool and license-exempt care, and continue to provide families access to a variety of child care settings.