

2 Child and Family Eligibility and Enrollment and Continuity of Care

Stable and reliable child care arrangements facilitate job stability for parents and healthy development of children. CCDF eligibility and enrollment policies can contribute to these goals. Policies and procedures that create barriers to families accessing CCDF, like inaccessible subsidy applications and onerous reporting requirements, interrupt a parent's ability to work and may deter eligible families from participating in CCDF.

To address these concerns, Lead Agencies must provide children with a minimum of 12 months between eligibility determinations, limit reporting requirements during the 12-month period, and ensure eligibility determination and redetermination processes do not interrupt a parent's work or school.

In this section, Lead Agencies will identify how they define eligible children and families and how the Lead Agency's eligibility and enrollment policies support access for eligible children and families.

2.1 Reducing Barriers to Family Enrollment and Redetermination

Lead Agency enrollment and redetermination policies may not unduly disrupt parents' employment, education, or job training activities to comply with the Lead Agency's or designated local entity's requirements. Lead Agencies have broad flexibility to design and implement the eligibility practices that reduce barriers to enrollment and redetermination.

Examples include developing strategies to inform families and their providers of an upcoming redetermination and the information that will be required of the family, pre-populating subsidy renewal forms, having parents confirm that the information is accurate, and/or asking only for the information necessary to make an eligibility redetermination. In addition, Lead Agencies can offer a variety of family-friendly methods for submitting documentation for eligibility redetermination that considers the range of needs for families in accessing support (e.g., use of languages other than English, access to transportation, accommodation of parents working non-traditional hours).

2.1.1 Eligibility practices to reduce barriers to enrollment

- a. Does the Lead Agency implement any of the following eligibility practices to reduce barriers at the time of initial eligibility determination? Check all that apply and describe those elements checked.
 - i. Establishing presumptive eligibility while eligibility is being determined. Describe the policy, including the populations benefiting from the policy, and identify how long the period of presumptive eligibility is: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- ii. Leveraging eligibility from other public assistance programs. Describe: *The Lead Agency uses an integrated eligibility system (SPACES) to administer the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Information from LIHEAP, SNAP, TANF and Health Care programs are shared with CCAP. In addition, the Lead Agency uses Basic Eligibility Alignment to determine eligibility for CCAP. When a household has been approved for Crossroads, LIHEAP, SNAP, or TANF, they can be eligible for CCAP without having to provide any additional income information when applying for CCAP.*
 - iii. Coordinating determinations for children in the same household (while still ensuring each child receives 12 months of eligibility). Describe: *If a new child is added to an ongoing CCAP case after the household has been determined eligible, a new 18-month eligibility period will begin for the entire household beginning the month the new child was added.*
 - iv. Self-assessment screening tools for families. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
 - v. Extended office hours (evenings and/or weekends).
 - vi. Consultation available via phone.
 - vii. Other. Describe the Lead Agency policies to process applications efficiently and make timely eligibility determinations: *The Lead Agency has implemented policies to ensure efficient processing of CCAP applications through an integrated eligibility system. This system, which also handles Medicaid, LIHEAP, TANF, and SNAP applications, tracks progress from submission to eligibility determination. Applications are assigned to eligibility workers based on timeliness priorities, with work items weighted and queued accordingly. The system's design allows the Lead Agency to monitor the entire application flow, tracking which workers handle specific cases to assess timeliness and pinpoint areas for improvement. This structured approach facilitates timely eligibility determinations and continual service enhancement.*
 - viii. None.
- b. Does the Lead Agency use an online subsidy application?
- Yes.
 - No. If no, describe why an online application is impracticable. *Click or tap here to enter text.*
- c. Does the Lead Agency use different policies for families receiving TANF assistance?
- Yes. If yes, describe the policies: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
 - No.

2.1.2 Preventing disruption of eligibility activities

- a. Identify, where applicable, the Lead Agency's procedures and policies to ensure that parents do not have their employment, education, or job training unduly disrupted to comply with the State's/Territory's or designated local entity's requirements for the redetermination of eligibility. Check all that apply.
- i. Advance notice to parents of pending redetermination.
 - ii. Advance notice to providers of pending redetermination.
 - iii. Pre-populated subsidy renewal form.
 - iv. Online documentation submission.
 - v. Cross-program redeterminations.
 - vi. Extended office hours (evenings and/or weekends).
 - vii. Consultation available via phone.
 - viii. Leveraging eligibility from other public assistance programs.
 - ix. Other. Describe: *The Lead Agency offers multiple ways for a household to complete a review in addition to online document submission, including an option for in-person drop-off of documents and an email option to our customer support center.*
- b. Does the Lead Agency use different policies for families receiving TANF assistance?
- Yes. If yes, describe the policies: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
 - No.

2.2 Eligible Children and Families

At eligibility determination or redetermination, children must (1) be younger than age 13; (2) reside with a family whose income does not exceed 85 percent of the State's median income (SMI) for a family of the same size and whose family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000; and (3)(a) reside with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program (which can include job search) or (b) receive, or need to receive, protective services as defined by the Lead Agency.

2.2.1 Eligibility criteria: age of children served

Lead Agencies may provide child care assistance for children less than 13 years of age, including continuing to provide assistance to children if they turn 13 during the eligibility period. In addition, Lead Agencies can choose to serve children up to age 19 if those children are unable to care for themselves.

- a. Does your Lead Agency serve the full federally allowable age range of children through age 12?
- Yes.
 - No. If no, describe the age range of children served and the reason why you made that decision to serve less than the full range of allowable children. *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Note: Do not include children incapable of self-care or under court supervision, who are reported below in 2.2.1b and 2.2.1c.

- b. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility for CCDF-funded child care to children ages 13 and older but below age 19 who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care?

No.

Yes.

i. If yes, the upper age is (may not equal or exceed age 19): *18*

ii. If yes, provide the Lead Agency definition of physical and/or mental incapacity: *The Lead Agency allows care for children ages 13 through 18 when the child is physically or mentally incapable of caring for themselves as verified in writing by a physician or a licensed or certified psychologist.*

- c. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility for CCDF-funded child care to children ages 13 and older but below age 19 who are under court supervision?

No.

Yes. If yes, and the upper age is (may not equal or exceed age 19): *18*

- d. How does the Lead Agency define the following eligibility terms?

i. “residing with”: *A child or children who are physically present in the home of a parent, legal guardian or an individual who is considered loco parentis while receiving child care services.*

ii. “in loco parentis”: *An individual (relative or non-relative) who is not the natural, adoptive or stepparent of the child but who assumes parental responsibilities and is physically caring for the child in their home on a 24-hour-a-day basis when the natural, adoptive or stepparent is not caring for the child or residing in the home and when the duration is expected to last over 30 uninterrupted days.*

2.2.2 Eligibility criteria: reason for care

Lead Agencies have broad flexibility on the work, training, and educational activities required to qualify for child care assistance. Lead Agencies do not have to set a minimum number of hours for families to qualify for work, training, or educational activities, and there is no requirement to limit authorized child care services strictly based on the work, training, or educational schedule/hours of the parent(s). For example, the Lead Agency can include travel or study time in calculating the amount of needed services.

How does the Lead Agency define the following terms for the purposes of determining CCDF eligibility?

- a. Identify which of the following activities are included in your definition of “working” by checking the boxes below:

i. An activity for which a wage or salary is paid.

ii. Being self-employed.

iii. During a time of emergency or disaster, partnering in essential services.

- iv. Participating in unpaid activities like student teaching, internships, or practicums.
- v. Time for meals or breaks.
- vi. Time for travel.
- vii. Seeking employment or job search.
- viii. Other. Describe: *Paid work studies, internships, or assistantships.*

b. Identify which of the following activities are included in your definition of “attending job training” by checking the boxes below:

- i. Vocational/technical job skills training.
- ii. Apprenticeship or internship program or other on-the-job training.
- iii. English as a Second Language training.
- iv. Adult Basic Education preparation.
- v. Participation in employment service activities.
- vi. Time for meals and breaks.
- vii. Time for travel.
- viii. Hours required for associated activities such as study groups, lab experiences.
- ix. Time for outside class study or completion of homework.
- x. Other. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

c. Identify which of the following diplomas, certificates, degrees, or activities are included in your definition of “attending an educational program” by checking the boxes below:

- i. Adult High School Diploma or GED.
- ii. Certificate programs (12-18 credit hours).
- iii. One-year diploma (36 credit hours).
- iv. Two-year degree.
- v. Four-year degree.
- vi. Travel to and from classrooms, labs, or study groups.
- vii. Study time.
- viii. Hours required for associated activities such as study groups, lab experiences.
- ix. Time for outside class study or completion of homework.
- x. Applicable meal and break times.
- xi. Other. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

d. Does the Lead Agency impose a Lead Agency-defined minimum number of hours of activity for eligibility?

No.

Yes.

If yes, describe any Lead Agency-imposed minimum requirement for the following:

Work. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Job training. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Education. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Combination of allowable activities. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Other. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

e. Does the Lead Agency allow parents to qualify for CCDF assistance based on education and training without additional work requirements?

Yes.

No. If no, describe the additional work requirements: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

f. Does the Lead Agency extend eligibility to specific populations of children otherwise not eligible by including them in its definition of “children who receive or need to receive protective services?”

Note: A Lead Agency may elect to provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care when foster care parents are *not* working or are *not* in education/training activities, but this provision should be included in the Lead Agency’s protective services definition.

No. If no, skip to question 2.2.3.

Yes. If yes, answer the questions below:

Provide the Lead Agency’s definition of “protective services” by checking below the sub-populations of children that are included:

Children in foster care.

Children in kinship care.

Children who are in families under court supervision.

Children who are in families receiving supports or otherwise engaged with a child welfare agency.

Children participating in a Lead Agency’s Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships program.

Children whose family members are deemed essential workers under a governor-declared state of emergency.

Children experiencing homelessness.

Children whose family has been affected by a natural disaster.

Other. Describe: *The Lead Agency through the ND Child Care Initiative has implemented the Child Care Workforce Benefit Pilot which guarantees eligibility for employees working at least 25 hours in a ND licensed child care program through CCAP with a waived co-payment, regardless of income.*

g. Does the Lead Agency waive the income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services on a case-by-case basis?

No.

Yes.

h. Does the Lead Agency waive the eligible activity (e.g., work, job training, education, etc.) requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services on a case-by-case basis?

No.

Yes.

i. Does the Lead Agency use CCDF funds to provide respite care to custodial parents of children in protective services?

No.

Yes.

2.2.3 Eligibility criteria: deciding entity on family income limits

How are income eligibility limits established?

There is a statewide limit with no local variation.

There is a statewide limit with local variation. Provide the number of income eligibility tables and describe who sets the limits: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Eligibility limits are established locally only. Provide the number of income eligibility tables and describe who sets the limits: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Other. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

2.2.4 Initial eligibility: income limits

a. Complete the appropriate table to describe family income limits.

i. Complete the table below to provide the statewide maximum income eligibility percent and dollar limit or threshold:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1	\$4,962	\$3,722	75%
2	\$6,489	\$4,867	75%
3	\$8,015	\$6,011	75%

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
4	\$9,542	\$7,157	75%
5	\$11,069	\$8,302	75%

ii. Does the Lead Agency certify that they use other funds if the income eligibility limit percent exceeds 85% SMI?

Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not allow income eligibility limits above 85% SMI.

Yes, the Lead Agency certifies that they use other funds (non-CCDF funds) for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI.

No. The Lead Agency establishes income eligibility limits above SMI and includes CCDF funds to pay for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI. If checked, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

b. Complete the table below if the Lead Agency has local variation in the maximum income eligibility limit. Complete the table for the region/locality with the highest eligibility limit, region/locality with the lowest eligibility limit, and the region/locality that is most populous:

i. Region/locality with the highest eligibility limit:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
2	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
3	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
4	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
5	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

ii. Region/locality with the lowest eligibility limit:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
2	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
3	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
4	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
5	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

iii. Region/locality that is most populous:

Family Size	100% of SMI (\$/Month)	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) %	Maximum Initial Eligibility Limit (or Threshold) \$
1	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
2	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
3	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
4	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
5	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>	<i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

iv. Does the Lead Agency certify that they use other funds if the income eligibility limit percent exceeds 85% SMI?

Not applicable. The Lead Agency does not allow income eligibility limits above 85% SMI.

Yes, the Lead Agency certifies that they use other funds (not CCDF funds) for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI.

No. The Lead Agency establishes income eligibility limits above 85% SMI and includes CCDF funds to pay for families with income that exceeds 85% SMI. If checked, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

c. How does the Lead Agency define "income" for the purposes of eligibility at the point of initial determination? Check all that apply:

i. Gross wages or salary.

ii. Disability or unemployment compensation.

iii. Workers' compensation.

- iv. Spousal support, child support.
 - v. Survivor and retirement benefits.
 - vi. Rent for room within the family's residence.
 - vii. Pensions or annuities.
 - viii. Inheritance.
 - ix. Public assistance.
 - x. Other. Describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- d. What is the effective date for these income eligibility limits? *July 1, 2024*
- e. Income limits must be established and reported in terms of current SMI based on the most recent data published by the Bureau of the Census, even if the federal poverty level is used in implementing the program.
- What federal data does the Lead Agency use when reporting the income eligibility limits?
- LIHEAP. *If checked, provide the publication year of the LIHEAP guideline estimates used by the Lead Agency: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)*
 - Other. Describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- f. Provide the direct URL/website link, if available, for the income eligibility limits.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/policy-guidance/liheap-im-2020-02-state-median-income-estimates-optional-use-fy-2020-and?utm_medium=rss

2.2.5 Income eligibility: irregular fluctuations in earnings

Lead Agencies must take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings in initial eligibility determination and redetermination processes. The Lead Agency must ensure that temporary increases in income, including temporary increases that can result in a monthly income exceeding 85 percent of SMI from seasonal employment or other temporary work schedules, do not affect eligibility or family co-payments.

Check the processes that the Lead Agency uses to take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

- i. Average the family's earnings over a period of time (e.g., 12 months).
Identify the period of time: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- ii. Request earning statements that are most representative of the family's monthly income.
- iii. Deduct temporary or irregular increases in wages from the family's standard income level.
- iv. Other. Describe the other ways the Lead Agency takes into account irregular fluctuations in earnings: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2.2.6 Family asset limit

- a. When calculating income eligibility, does the Lead Agency ensure each eligible family does not have assets that exceed \$1,000,000?
- Yes.
- No. If no, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
- b. Does the Lead Agency waive the asset limit on a case-by-case basis for families defined as receiving, or in need of, protective services?
- No.
- Yes. If yes, describe the policy or procedure: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

2.2.7 Additional eligibility criteria

Aside from the eligibility conditions or rules which have been described in 2.2.1 – 2.2.6, is any additional eligibility criteria applied during:

- a. Eligibility determination? If checked, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
- b. Eligibility redetermination? If checked, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

2.2.8 Documentation of eligibility determination

Lead Agencies must document and verify that children receiving CCDF funds meet eligibility criteria at the time of eligibility determination and redetermination.

Check the information that the Lead Agency documents and verifies at initial determination and redetermination and describe what information is required and how often.

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicant identity. Describe how you verify: <i>The identity of any caretaker must be verified at initial application. Once identity verification is received and retained in the casefile, it does not need to be supplied for future eligibility determinations. Identity verification includes, but is not limited to: driver's license, picture ID, school, work, hospital or health care identification, pay stubs, bank records, utility records, mortgage/rent receipt or agreements, birth certificates.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicant's relationship to the child. Describe how you verify: <i>The relationship of the applicant must be verified at initial application. Once relationship verification is received and retained in the casefile, it does not need to be supplied for future eligibility determinations. Relationship verification includes, but is not limited to: birth certificates, vital statistics, adoption papers, baptismal records, marriage</i>

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
		<i>certificates, court records, contact with school system, Head Start records, day care provider records, hospital and clinic records community organizations, social service agencies.</i>
☒	☐	Child's information for determining eligibility (e.g., identity, age, citizen/immigration status). Describe how you verify: <i>The age and citizenship of any child for which assistance is requested must be verified. Once age and citizenship verifications are received and retained in the case file, it does not need to be supplied for future eligibility determinations. Age and citizenship verification includes, but is not limited to: children's birth certificates, vital statistics, adoption papers, baptismal records, passport, picture ID, hospital and clinic records, school records, Immigration or Naturalization records, Alien Registration card.</i>
☒	☒	Work. Describe how you verify: <i>All employment activities of any identified caretaker must be verified. Employment verifications are required at application and review. Households must also supply employment verification during the eligibility period when there is a total loss of all activities and the household has been granted a minimum three month period of continued assistance. Verification of the new activity must be supplied for assistance to continue beyond the three months. Acceptable employment verification includes, but is not limited to: pay stubs, employer statement, work schedules, client statement if other verification sources are not available.</i>
☒	☒	Job training or educational program. Describe how you verify: <i>All job training or educational activities of any identified caretaker must be verified. Job training and educational activity verifications are required at application and review if applicable. Households must also supply training or education verifications during the eligibility period when there is a total loss of all activities and the household has been granted a minimum three month period of continued assistance. Verification of the new activity must be supplied for assistance to continue beyond the three months. Acceptable job training and education verification includes but is not limited to: class schedules, training schedules, statements from school administrators,</i>

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
		<i>employer statement, Crossroads Program approval letter, client statement if other verification sources are not available.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Family income. Describe how you verify: <i>All income, earned and unearned, of any identified caretaker must be verified at the time of application and review. Households who report a change in income during the eligibility only need to verify income if the income change results in a decreased copayment. Eligibility will continue if no verification is received. Increases in income do not need to be verified as it is not a mandatory reportable change, unless the income is expected to remain over 85% SMI. Acceptable income verification includes, but is not limited to: pay stubs, employer records, employer statement, court order, child and spousal support agreements, self-employment records, tax documents, benefit letters from pensions and various government benefit programs, bank statements, client statements if other verification sources are not available.</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Household composition. Describe how you verify: <i>Household composition must be verified at initial application. Once household composition verification is received and retained in the casefile, it does not need to be supplied for future eligibility determinations if the household composition does not change. Verification of household composition is typically verified through receiving verification for other mandatory items such as relationship and income. However, in the event the household composition is questionable, additional verification may be requested. Acceptable household composition verification includes, but is not limited to: birth certificates, hospital and clinic records, school records, court records, utility records, mortgage and lease records, client statement if other verification sources are not available</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicant residence. Describe how you verify: <i>The household's residency must be verified at initial application. Once residency verification is received and retained in the casefile, it does not need to be submitted for future eligibility determinations. Identity verification includes, but is not limited to: driver's license, picture ID, school records, work records,</i>

Required at Initial Determination	Required at Redetermination	Description
		<i>hospital or health care records, pay stubs, bank records, utility records, mortgage/rent receipt or agreements, birth certificates.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other. Describe how you verify: <i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

2.2.9 Exception to TANF work requirements

Lead Agencies must ensure that families with young children participating in TANF will be informed of their right not to be sanctioned under the TANF work requirement if the custodial parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain child care for a child under age six, in accordance with Section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act.

- a. Identify the TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions: *North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Economic Assistance Policy Section.*
- b. Provide the following definitions established by the TANF agency:
 - i. “Appropriate child care”: *Appropriate child care which includes licensed center-based providers, licensed family home child care providers, self-declared home child care providers under North Dakota Century Code 50-11.1.*
 - ii. “Reasonable distance”: *Child care is unobtainable at a location such that the usual commuting time from the parent’s home to the location at which child care is provided, and on to the parent’s worksite, is one hour or less*
 - iii. “Unsuitability of informal child care”: *Suitable child care is unobtainable for a relative, from an approved child care provided licensed or registered under North Dakota Century Code chapter 50-11.1, or from a child care provider not required to be licensed to registered under North Dakota Century Code chapter 50-11.1.*
 - iv. “Affordable child care arrangements”: *Child care is unobtainable, from a child care provider licensed or registered under North Dakota Century Code chapter 50-11.1, at a rate equal to or less than two times the maximum allowable amount as determined by the child care assistance program.*
- c. How are parents who receive TANF benefits informed about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the TANF work requirements?
 - i. In writing
 - ii. Verbally
 - iii. Other. Describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

2.3 Prioritizing Services for Vulnerable Children and Families

Lead Agencies must give priority for child care assistance to children with special needs, families with very low incomes (considering family size), and children experiencing homelessness. A Lead Agency has the flexibility to prioritize other populations of children.

Note: Statute defines children with disabilities, and CCDF rule gives flexibility to Lead Agencies to include vulnerable populations in their definition of children with special needs.

CCDF defines “child experiencing homelessness” as a child who is homeless, as defined in Section 725 of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a).

2.3.1 Lead Agency definition of priority groups

Describe how the Lead Agency defines:

- a. *“Children with special needs.” The Lead Agency defines a child with special needs as a child who is physically or mentally incapable of caring for himself or herself as verified by a qualified health professional, a physician, physician's assistant, advanced registered nurse practitioner, qualified mental health professional. Services are prioritized by providing services to a child between the ages of 13 to 19 when that child is identified as having special needs. A special needs child is a child who has multiple and/or severe functional needs that requires ongoing specialized care. Written verification is required and should state the nature of the special needs and if for a child age thirteen (13) under age nineteen (19) state that the child is unable to care for themselves.*
- b. *“Families with very low incomes.” The Lead Agency defines families with very low incomes as families who are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).*

2.3.2 Prioritization of child care services

Identify how the Lead Agency will prioritize child care services for the following children and families.

- a. Complete the table below to indicate how the identified populations are prioritized.

Population Prioritized	Prioritize for enrollment in child care services	Serve without placing on waiting list	Waive co-payments as described in 3.3.1	Pay higher rate for access to higher quality care	Use grants or contracts to reserve spots	Other
Children with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe: <i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
Families with very low incomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe: <i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>
Children experiencing homelessness, as defined by CCDF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe: <i>Click or tap here to enter text.</i>

Population Prioritized	Prioritize for enrollment in child care services	Serve without placing on waiting list	Waive co-payments as described in 3.3.1	Pay higher rate for access to higher quality care	Use grants or contracts to reserve spots	Other
(Optional) Families receiving TANF, those attempting to transition off TANF, and those at risk of becoming dependent on TANF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Describe: Click or tap here to enter text.

b. Does the Lead Agency define any other priority groups?

No.

Yes. If yes, identify the populations prioritized and describe how the Lead Agency prioritizes services: *Services are prioritized for parents participating in the Alternative Response for Newborns (ARSEN) program. ARSEN is a child protection response involving substance exposed newborns which is designed to provide referral services to and monitor support services for a person responsible for the child's welfare. CCAP will pay child care while the parent works with ARSEN program and waive the co-payments for these families. Services are also prioritized for parents participating in the Crossroads program. The Crossroads Program is designed to assist teen parents under the age of 21 continue their education.*

2.3.3 Enrollment and grace period for children experiencing homelessness

Lead Agencies must allow (after an initial eligibility determination) children experiencing homelessness to receive CCDF services while required eligibility documentation is obtained.

Lead Agencies must establish a grace period that allows children experiencing homelessness and children in foster care to receive CCDF assistance while providing their families with a reasonable time to take any necessary actions to comply with State, Territory, or local immunization and other health and safety requirements. The length of such a grace period must be established in consultation with the State, Territorial, or Tribal public health agency.

Note: Any payment for such a child during the grace period may not be considered an error or improper payment.

a. Describe the strategies to allow CCDF enrollment of children experiencing homelessness while required eligibility documentation is obtained: *Households who indicate on an application or review that they are experiencing homelessness must be approved for services for the month of application before supplying all necessary verifications. Households are provided a 90-day grace period from the date of application to supply all necessary verifications to continue assistance.*

- b. Describe the grace period for each population below and how it allows them to receive CCDF assistance while providing their families with a reasonable time to take any necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements.
- i. Provide the policy for a grace period for:
- Children experiencing homelessness: *Any child admitted to an early childhood facility and not adhering to the recommended schedule shall provide proof of immunization or a certificate of immunization within thirty calendar days of enrollment or be excluded from the early childhood facility.*
- Children who are in foster care: *Any child admitted to an early childhood facility and not adhering to the recommended schedule shall provide proof of immunization or a certificate of immunization within thirty calendar days of enrollment or be excluded from the early childhood facility.*
- ii. Does the Lead Agency certify that the length of the grace period was established in consultation with the State, Territorial, or Tribal public health agency?
- Yes.
- No. If no, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

- c. Describe how the Lead Agency coordinates with licensing agencies and other relevant State, Territorial, Tribal, and local agencies to provide referrals and support to help families with children receiving services during a grace period comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements: *The Early Childhood section, Economic Assistance section, and Public Health Division, all housed within the Lead Agency, coordinate efforts to provide referrals and support to help families with children receiving services to comply with immunizations and other health and safety requirements. The Lead Agency's website has information about children's health including special health services, newborn screening, oral health program, immunization program and child passenger safety, as well as the children's health insurance program. The immunization program includes immunization requirements, certificate of immunization and/or exemption, and an infectious disease exclusion guide.*

2.4 Lead Agency Outreach to Families Experiencing Homelessness, Families with Limited English Proficiency, and Persons with Disabilities

The Lead Agency must conduct outreach and provide services to families with limited English proficiency, families experiencing homelessness, and persons with disabilities.

- 2.4.1 Families with limited English proficiency and persons with disabilities: outreach and services
- a. Check the strategies the Lead Agency or partners utilize to conduct outreach and provide services to eligible families with limited English proficiency. Check all that apply.

- i. Application in languages other than English (application and related documents, brochures, provider notices).
 - ii. Informational materials in languages other than English.
 - iii. Website in languages other than English.
 - iv. Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations.
 - v. Bilingual caseworkers or translators available.
 - vi. Bilingual outreach workers.
 - vii. Partnerships with community-based organizations.
 - viii. Collaboration with Head Start, Early Head Start, or Migrant and Seasonal Head Start.
 - ix. Home visiting programs.
 - x. Other. Describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- b. Check the strategies the Lead Agency or partners utilize to conduct outreach and provide services to eligible families with a person(s) with a disability. Check all that apply.
- i. Applications and public informational materials available in braille and other communication formats for access by individuals with disabilities.
 - ii. Websites that are accessible (e.g., Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act).
 - iii. Caseworkers with specialized training/experience in working with individuals with disabilities.
 - iv. Ensuring accessibility of environments and activities for all children.
 - v. Partnerships with State and local programs and associations focused on disability-related topics and issues.
 - vi. Partnerships with parent associations, support groups, and parent-to-parent support groups, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers.
 - vii. Partnerships with State and local IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C providers and agencies.
 - viii. Availability and/or access to specialized services (e.g., mental health, behavioral specialists, therapists) to address the needs of all children.
 - ix. Other. Describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2.4.2 Families experiencing homelessness: Outreach and technical assistance efforts

- a. Check, where applicable, the procedures used to conduct outreach for children experiencing homelessness and their families.
 - i. Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations.

- ii. Partnerships with community-based organizations.
 - iii. Partnering with homeless service providers, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and others who work with families experiencing homelessness to provide referrals to child care.
 - iv. Other. Describe: *Outreach is conducted for CCAP eligible families at each local county level by conducting referrals to programs and services in the area that assist homeless families and families with low incomes. Families who are TANF eligible work with JOBS program contractors who provide outreach TANF families by connecting them with services. McKinney-Vento liaisons provide outreach and referrals to homeless families.*
- b. The Lead Agency must provide training and technical assistance (TA) to providers and appropriate Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff on identifying and serving children and families experiencing homelessness.
- i. Describe the Lead Agency's training and TA efforts for providers in identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness. *The Lead Agency's contracted child care resource and referral vendor offers an online, self-paced course to help providers learn about reasons behind homelessness, how being homeless affects children's development and what they can do to support children experiencing homelessness.*
 - ii. Describe the Lead Agency's training and TA efforts for Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff in identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness. *The Lead Agency is currently exploring training and technical assistance opportunities.*

2.5 Promoting Continuity of Care

Lead Agencies must consider children's development and promote continuity of care when authorizing child care services and must establish a minimum 12-month period for each child, both at the initial eligibility determination and redetermination.

2.5.1 Children's development

Describe how the Lead Agency's eligibility, enrollment, reporting, and redetermination policies promote continuity of care in order to support children's development. *The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is housed under the Lead Agency's Economic Assistance Policy Section. The policy section also contains LIHEAP, SNAP and TANF, and works closely with the Medical Services section which contains the Health Care Coverage programs. The Lead Agency provides a combined program application that contains all these programs, in addition to a combined review form that contains all open programs that are due for review. Additionally, verification and information provided for one program is used to determine eligibility for other programs. This allows clients a combined option to access multiple programs and promotes the continuity of care by making various types of assistance as accessible as possible to these populations. Applicants who apply for CCAP and Health Care Coverage are reviewed for Health Tracks, a free preventative health-screening service office to children ages 0-21 whose families*

do not have a copay. These screenings include dental, hearing, vision, developmental and other types of screenings.

2.5.2 Minimum 12-month eligibility

Lead Agencies must establish a minimum 12-month eligibility period for each child, both at the initial eligibility determination and at redetermination to support continuity in child care assistance and reduce barriers to families retaining eligibility. This requirement is:

- Regardless of changes in income, Lead Agencies may not terminate CCDF assistance during the minimum 12-month period if a family has an increase in income that exceeds the Lead Agency's income eligibility threshold but not the federal threshold of 85 percent of SMI; and
- Regardless of temporary changes in participation in work, training, or educational activities.

a. Does the Lead Agency certify that their policies or procedures provide a minimum 12-month eligibility period for each child at initial eligibility determination?

Yes.

No. If no, describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

b. Does the Lead Agency certify that its definition of "temporary change" includes each of the minimum required elements?

1. Any time-limited absence from work for an employed parent due to such reasons as the need to care for a family member or an illness.
2. Any interruption in work for a seasonal worker who is not working between regular industry work seasons.
3. Any student holiday or break for a parent participating in a training or educational program.
4. Any reduction in work, training, or education hours, as long as the parent is still working or attending a training or educational program.
5. Any cessation of work or attendance at a training or educational program not listed above. In these cases only, Lead Agencies may establish a period of 3 months or longer.
6. Any change in age, including a child turning 13 years old during the minimum 12-month eligibility period.
7. Any changes in residency within the State or Territory.

Yes.

No. If no, describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

c. Are the policies different for redetermination?

No.

Yes. If yes, provide the additional/varying policies for redetermination: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2.5.3 Job search and continued assistance

- a. Does the Lead Agency consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination and/or at the minimum 12-month eligibility redetermination? (Note: If yes, Lead Agencies must provide a minimum of 3 months of job search.) Check all that apply:
- i. Yes. The Lead Agency does consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination. If yes, describe: *Activity search is an allowable activity at application. Child care for activity search must be allowed for three full consecutive months within an eligibility period.*
 - ii. Yes. The Lead Agency does consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at redetermination. If yes, describe: *Activity search is an allowable activity at review. Child care for activity search must be allowed for three full consecutive months within an eligibility period.*
 - iii. No. The Lead Agency does not consider seeking employment (engaging in a job search) as an eligible activity at initial eligibility determination or redetermination.
- b. Does the Lead Agency continue assistance during the minimum 12-month eligibility period when a parent has a non-temporary loss or cessation of eligible activity?
- Yes. The Lead Agency continues assistance.
- No, the Lead Agency discontinues assistance.
- i. If no, describe the Lead Agency's policies for discontinuing assistance due to a parent's non-temporary change: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
 - ii. If no, describe what specific actions/changes trigger the job-search period after each such loss or cessation: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
 - iii. If no, how long is the job-search period where a family can continue assistance (must be at least 3 months)? [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- c. The Lead Agency may discontinue assistance prior to the next minimum 12-month redetermination in the limited circumstances listed below. Check and provide the policy for all circumstances in which the Lead Agency chooses to discontinue assistance prior to the next minimum 12-month redetermination:
- i. Not applicable.
 - ii. Excessive unexplained absences despite multiple attempts by the Lead Agency or designated entity to contact the family and provider, including the prior notification of a possible discontinuation of assistance.

Provide the Lead Agency's policy defining the number of unexplained absences identified as excessive: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- iii. A change in residency outside of the State or Territory.
Provide the Lead Agency's policy for a change in residency outside the State or Territory: *If the caretaker moves out of state, the case will close.*
- iv. Substantiated fraud or intentional program violations that invalidate prior determinations of eligibility.
Provide the Lead Agency's definition of fraud/intentional program violations that lead to discontinued assistance: *Clients that have committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) will be disqualified from receiving benefits. An IPV is defined as having made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect to the Child Care Assistance Program.*

2.5.4 Reporting changes during the minimum 12-month eligibility period

Lead Agencies may only require families to report changes that impact a family's eligibility, including only if the family's income exceeds 85 percent of the SMI, taking into account irregular fluctuations in income, or there is a non-temporary change in the parent's work, training, or education status, during the 12-month eligibility period. Lead Agencies may also require families to report that enable the lead agency to contact the family or pay providers, such as a new telephone number or address.

Note: The response below should exclude reporting requirements for a graduated phase-out, which are described in question 2.5.5.

Does the Lead Agency limit what families must report during the 12-month eligibility period to the changes described above?

Yes.

No. If no, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

2.5.5 Policies and procedures for graduated phase-out of assistance at redetermination

Lead Agencies that establish initial family income eligibility below 85 percent of SMI must provide a graduated phase-out of assistance for families whose income has increased above the Lead Agency's initial income threshold at the time of redetermination but remains below the federal threshold of 85 percent of SMI.

Lead Agencies that provide a graduated phase-out must implement a two-tiered eligibility threshold, with the second tier of eligibility (used at the time of eligibility redetermination) to be set at:

- (i) 85 percent of SMI for a family of the same size; or,
- (ii) An amount lower than 85 percent of SMI for a family of the same size but above the Lead Agency's initial eligibility threshold that:
 - (A) Takes into account the typical household budget of a family with a low income
 - (B) Provides justification that the second eligibility threshold is:
 - (1) Sufficient to accommodate increases in family income over time that are typical for workers with low incomes and that promote and support family economic stability
 - (2) Reasonably allows a family to continue accessing child care services

without unnecessary disruption

At redetermination, a child must be considered eligible if their parents are participating in an eligible activity even if their income exceeds the Lead Agency's initial eligibility income limit as long as their income does not exceed the second tier of eligibility. Note that once determined eligible, the child must be considered eligible for a full minimum 12-month eligibility period, even if the parents' income exceeds the second tier of eligibility during the eligibility period, as long as it does not exceed 85 percent of SMI.

A child eligible for services via the graduated phase-out of assistance is considered eligible under the same conditions as other eligible children with the exception of the co-payment restrictions, which do not apply to a graduated phase-out. To help families transition from child care assistance, Lead Agencies may gradually adjust co-payment amounts in proportion to a family's income growth for families whose children are determined eligible under a graduated phase-out. Lead Agencies may require additional reporting on changes in family income but must still ensure that any additional reporting requirements do not constitute an undue burden on families.

Check and describe the option that best identifies the Lead Agency's policies and procedures regarding the graduated phase-out of assistance.

- a. Not applicable. The Lead Agency sets its initial eligibility threshold at 85 percent of SMI and therefore is not required to provide a graduated phase-out period. (If checked, skip to question 3.1.1.)
- b. The Lead Agency sets the second tier of eligibility at 85 percent of SMI. If checked, describe the policies and procedures: *At the time of review, households will continue to be eligible for another 18-month period if the household's income is over the initial application income limit of 75% SMI but is under 85% SMI.*
 - i. Lead Agency adjusts the family's co-pay during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe how the Lead Agency gradually adjusts co-payment for families under a graduated phase-out period in proportion to a family's income growth. Include information on the percentage or amount of change made in the co-payment during graduated phase-out: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
 - ii. Lead Agency requires additional reporting requirements during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
- c. The Lead Agency sets the second tier of eligibility at an amount lower than 85 percent of SMI for a family of the same size but above the Lead Agency's initial eligibility threshold. If checked, provide the following information:
 - i. Provide the income level (\$/month) and the percent of SMI for the second tier of eligibility for a family of three: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
 - ii. Describe how the second eligibility threshold takes into account the typical household budget of a low-income family: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

- iii. Describe how the second eligibility threshold is sufficient to accommodate increases in family income over time that are typical for low-income workers and that promote and support family economic stability: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- iv. Describe how the second eligibility threshold reasonably allows a family to continue accessing child care services without unnecessary disruption: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- v. Lead Agency adjusts the family's co-pay during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe how the Lead Agency gradually adjusts co-payment for families under a graduated phase-out period in proportion to a family's income growth. Include information on the percentage or amount of change made in the co-payment during graduated phase-out: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)
- vi. Lead Agency requires additional reporting requirements during the graduated phase-out period. If checked, describe: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)