



CHILDCARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

PARENT AND PROVIDER GUIDE

**Ramsey County
Community Human Services
and
Think Small**

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Customer Service Standards

Ramsey County and Think Small are dedicated to providing you with exceptional customer service.

Serving parents

The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) exists to support safe and quality child care for low-income families who are working or seeking/participating in employment and training.

Parents can expect the following from us:

- You will be treated with respect.
- You will receive timely and clear information from us about this program.
- Your call will be returned within one (1) working day.
- You will receive a written authorization if you are found eligible for the child care assistance program. That authorization will name the children whose child care can be paid for, how much child care will be paid, and when that assistance will start.

Serving child care providers

Child care providers are important partners in serving our community. The service you provide is critical to our children.

Child care providers can expect the following from us

- You will be treated with respect.
- Your call will be returned within one (1) working day.
- You will receive a written authorization when a family becomes eligible for the Child Care Assistance Programs.
- Your payment will be issued within ten (10) working days after we receive your accurately completed billing form.
- You will be sent a 15-day notice when a family is no longer eligible for care.

If you have problems or we aren't living up to these expectations, we want to hear about it. You can let us know by contacting:

The Child Care Payment Service Line 651-266-3899

**Manager of Ramsey County Child Care Assistance Programs
651-266-4604 (MFIP and Transition Year)**

**Manager at Think Small BSF Child Care Assistance Program
651-641-3541**

What child care programs are available?

MFIP Child Care Assistance

The MFIP Child Care Assistance Program is available to families receiving MFIP financial assistance for the parents and their children. To be eligible, adult family members need to be participating in work activities, be seeking employment, pursuing education or be involved in pre-employment social service activities that are part of an approved employment plan.

Transition Year Child Care Program (TY)

The Transition Year Program is available for parents whose MFIP case is closed. To be eligible for the TY Child Care Assistance Program, a family must have received MFIP for at least three of the last six months. If a parent is eligible for the TY program, they may receive child care assistance for 12 months following their MFIP closing. There is no waiting list for the TY program.

Basic Sliding Fee Program (BSF)

The Basic Sliding Fee Program is available for working parents who are residents of Ramsey County and are within the income guidelines. Authorized activities include employment, job search, or pursuing education and training with an approved educational plan. Often there is a waiting list for this program. Families will have an initial screening to determine eligibility for the waiting list. When a family reaches the top of the waiting list, Think Small will send a Child Care Assistance application to the family. The family must complete and return the application with verifications to Think Small to determine eligibility.

Who should you contact for child care assistance in Ramsey County?

If you feel you are eligible for MFIP or TY Child Care Assistance, you can call 651-266-4019 or ask your MFIP Case Worker about child care assistance.

If you would like to be screened for eligibility for the Basic Sliding Fee Assistance Program call 651-641-6665 and an Intake Screening will be done.

Who should parents call if they need help finding child care?

If parents need help locating child care or would like more information regarding available care and the types of providers in their area, they should call their local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

The Resource and Referral Staff at Think Small will be happy to help you find, assess and choose child care for your child. Think Small's goal is to help you find the best child care providers and program for your child's might needs.

If you live in Ramsey County and would like help locating child care, call 651-641-0332 to speak with a Parent Education and Referral Specialist.

Who is eligible for these programs?

To be eligible for the child care assistance programs, parents must be:

- A Ramsey County resident.
- Within the income guidelines.
- Involved in an eligible activity (working, job searching or in an approved educational program.)
- If employed, earning at least applicable minimum wage and working twenty hours a week.
- If employed and a full-time student, working at least 10 hours per week and earning applicable minimum wage.

How do parents apply for child care assistance?

When parents apply for child care assistance they will need to do the following:

- Meet the program eligibility requirements.
- Fill out and return a completed application.
- Provide all required documentation.
- Cooperate with child support on all children in the household who are under 18 years old and have a parent that does not live in the home.
- Use legal child care.

What happens after a parent applies?

After the application is received, the child care assistance program has up to thirty (30) days to process your application and determine if you currently qualify for assistance.

We need to verify a number of things, including employment hours and income, in order to process your application. We will notify parents in a timely manner, if we need additional paperwork or documents. If your application is incomplete or missing required documentation, you may not receive child care assistance.

Who can parents choose to be their child care provider?

Parents select the child care provider of their choice.

The types of providers that can be used are:

- Child care centers
- Licensed family homes
- Extended day programs
- Nursery schools
- Preschools
- Legal nonlicensed providers

In what situations can someone take care of children and not have a license?

- That person takes care of children to whom he or she is related; and/or
- That person takes care of children from only one family not related to her or him.

*You can contact your worker for definition of relative.

How does a Nonlicensed Provider get registered for the Child Care Assistance program?

- To get the registration process started, the parent should request a Legal Nonlicensed Provider Registration Application.
- The child care provider should fill out and return the application along with the signed release of information form(s) so that criminal and child protection background checks can be done.
- Both the parent and provider must sign the application.
- If parents choose a nonlicensed provider, the provider and all persons in the household need to be included in the application. Before the application can be approved, all of the household members age 13 or older will need to pass the background check, which will look for criminal and child protection concerns.
- If we find a criminal history or a negative child protection history, the application may be denied. The parent and provider will be informed if the application is being denied.
- The county won't pay for care before background checks are complete and approved. The registration process can take 6 to 8 weeks.
- Care provided during the registration process can be paid **only if** registration is approved. ***If the provider is not approved, payment will not be made.***

What training is required?

- New Nonlicensed providers must complete and submit verification of CPR & First Aid Training with the registration paperwork. Providers already registered and approved prior to 1/1/12 are required to complete and submit verification of CPR and First Aid Training at the two year renewal period.
- Think Small offers CPR & First Aid Training at a reduced rate for Nonlicensed providers who care for children on Child Care Assistance. Contact Think Small Professional Development Department (651) 641-3549. Identify yourself as a Nonlicensed provider caring for children on CCAP to receive a reduced fee & training schedule information.
- All providers must complete registration process every 2 years. At 2 year renewal, Nonlicensed providers must have completed 8 hours of additional training in topics listed by the MN Center for Professional Development Registry.

Can child care be done in your home?

In most cases, Legal Nonlicensed Providers must provide care in their homes. Being approved to do care in the child's home can only be approved due to one of the following situations:

- The parents' activity is during times when out-of-home care is not available.
- The family lives in an area where out-of-home care is not available.
- A child has a verified illness or disability that would place the child at risk or create hardship for the child and family to take the child out of the home to the provider's home.

If one of these situations apply and care is being done in the child's home, contact your worker to start the request of In-Home Child Care Process. The Dept of Human Services reviews and either approves or denies the request.

If caring in the child's home is approved, be aware of the following legal requirements:

MN State Statute defines any child care provider caring for a child in the home of the child as an employee of the parent.

Therefore, the parent is responsible to:

- **Pay federal unemployment taxes**
- **Withhold Social Security**
- **Provide state workers compensation insurance**
- **Withhold federal and state income tax.**

How do the parent and provider find out if the family will get child care assistance?

After the provider is chosen and approved the Case Worker will issue an "authorization." An authorization is the official notice that announces that the county will pay up to a specific amount of the child care costs. The authorization will also inform the parent and provider about the family's co-pay amount. A copy of the authorization is mailed to both the parent and provide. There are maximum rates that the County can pay. Maximum rates for care and family co-payment amounts are set by the State Department of Human Services.

How long do families continue to receive child care assistance

We continue to review families' situations to make sure they continue to be eligible for child care assistance. Eligibility reviews are done at least once every six months.

PLEASE NOTE: The Data Practice Regulations prohibit release of information in a parent's file without the parent's written permission. We will not discuss a parent's status on the program with anyone other than the Ramsey County Human Services, Child Support and Collections, the County Attorney's Offices and the Child Care Assistance Programs of Ramsey County.

How does the child care get paid?

After an authorization is done, the child care provider will receive billing forms every two weeks. Each billing form covers a two-week service period. The provider should submit the billing form after the end of the service period. Payment will be made on correctly completed billing forms within ten working days of receipt at either Ramsey County or Think Small.

All billing forms require the signatures of both the provider and parent before they can be paid.

The provider must submit bills for payment within 60 days after the claim form is received or payment will be denied. Providers with good cause for submitting late claims can appeal denial of payment to the CCAP manager.

All income received from providing child care is taxable by the State and Federal government. Except for providers doing care in the child's home, all providers are considered to be self-employed independent business owners. Minnesota Department of Human Services will issue an IRS 1099 at the end of the calendar year to assist you in filing your income taxes. For more information regarding family child care business practices and self-employment taxes, contact Think Small at 651-641-0305. Think Small has a number of publications, forms and tools available to help. For more information on taxes and self-employment, contact the IRS and the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

NOTE: Providers doing care for a child, in the child's home should see the "Parent Responsibility" section of this guide for important employment status and tax information.

Does the parent have to pay for some of the child care?

Yes, parents are expected to pay a share of their child care costs on a biweekly basis. This payment is made directly to their provider and is called a co-payment. The biweekly co-payment is calculated per family, not per child.

Co-payments are based on the parent's gross income, minus allowable deductions. The State of Minnesota sets the rates for co-payments based on income and household size. This standard is called the Sliding Fee Scale. The Sliding Fee Scale is used to determine co-payments for MFIP, TY and BSF Child Care Assistance Programs.

The co-payment appears on the authorization form sent to both the provider and parent. It also appears on billing forms when it will be deducted from the provider's payment.

The parent pays the provider the co-payment biweekly. The provider should set up a payment plan with the parents to ensure timely payment. The provider needs to notify the Child Care Worker if a parent fails to make co-payments.

Parents risk losing child care assistance if they do not pay co-payments.

Parents should request and receive a receipt from their provider for all co-payments paid.

NOTE: Child care providers can not charge parents who receive CCAP more than they charge their private-pay clients.

In what situations will a family no longer receive child care assistance?

Reasons for denial or termination

- The parent does not provide required information or documentation.
- The parent does not report changes in marital status, household members, address, employment, provider or income. Changes must be reported within ten (10) calendar days after they occur. In cases of an income change, the date of a pay rate change begins on the day that the parent receives payment at the new pay rate.
- The parent does not pay the required co-payment to the provider.
- The parent, the child care provider or both misrepresent facts or do not share relevant facts with us. In cases where fraud is suspected, cases are referred to the Ramsey County Attorney's Office for investigation.
- The parent is no longer eligible because his or her income is too high, she or he is no longer in an eligible activity, the membership of the family's household changes or the family no longer resides in Ramsey County.

What should parents do if they think they lost their child care assistance unjustly?

If parents feel they have unjustly lost their child care assistance, they have a right to appeal that decision. However, disputed decisions can often be settled without an appeal by an informal conference. If you would like an informal conference, contact your Child Care Worker or your worker's supervisor.

If you are unable to settle the dispute through the informal process, you may request a formal appeal. To obtain a formal appeal hearing, parents must file an Appeal to State Agency form with the Department of Human Services. Parents can obtain this form by calling the Child Care Assistance Program Supervisor and requesting it.

NOTE: All appeals must be filed with the State of Minnesota within thirty days of your child care assistance termination date.

What happens if a child misses days at child care?

- The Child Care Assistance Program may pay for absent days if the provider has a written policy requiring payment. An absent day is defined as a child missing the entire period of time they were to be in care on a particular day. If a child attends for any part of a scheduled day of care the day is not counted as an absent day.
- Payment for absent days is limited to 25 days per child in a calendar year or 10 consecutive absent days per child.
- Providers may not charge the Child Care Assistance Program for a child's absent days if they do not charge families who are not on child care assistance for absent days.
- The provider's services must be available unless it's a holiday.
- Providers must record the number of absent days on all billing forms. The County will notify the provider at the time of the initial authorization how many absent days a child has used in that calendar year. Remittance advices identify the number of absent days a child has used.
- If the provider is reporting more than six absent days the provider must call the child care worker.
- If a child is absent more than ten days in a row, the Child Care Assistance Program will review the case to determine if payment can continue.
- Payment for additional absent days may be authorized if a child has a chronic health condition that causes the absenteeism. Contact your childcare worker for information on how to request authorization for additional absent days.

Can providers bill for their vacation and sick time?

- No, providers may not bill for time when they are unavailable to do care (unless it's a holiday). This includes vacation and sick days of the provider.
- Parents may have to pay the provider for the provider's vacation and sick days if the parent has a contract with the provider that requires payment.

Can providers bill for holidays?

- **Yes**, a provider can charge for up to ten (10) federal or state holidays per year.
- The provider must charge all families for these days.
- The holiday must fall on a day the child is scheduled to be in attendance.

Does the Child Care Assistance program pay for child care registration fees?

- **Yes**, the program will cover registration fees for a child two times in a 12 month period. Registration fees are paid only to Licensed Providers and Center.

What happens if the child care provider charges more than the Child Care Assistance program pays?

- The parent is responsible to pay all child care costs that exceed the authorization and any additional charges above the base rate of the provider. (NOTE: This includes late fees, activity fees, diaper fees, etc.)

What are parent's responsibilities?

Parents are responsible for the following:

- Payment of their biweekly co-payment to their provider.
- Notifying the Child Care Assistance Program within ten (10) days of any changes in address, household size, income, work hours, days or employer, school activity and child care provider.
- Returning eligibility review and other required information to the Child Care Assistance Workers within stated timelines.

NOTE: *If a parent fails to pay co-payments, give notification of changes or return required information, they may be terminated from child care assistance. Any payments that have been made to the provider under the above circumstances may be considered an overpayment. The parent will be responsible to repay the County.*

What are providers' responsibilities?

Providers are responsible for the following:

- Notifying the Case Manager within ten (10) days when a parent stops using their child care services.
- Submit correctly completed, signed billing forms.
- Submit claims only after the service period has ended.
- Treat parents on the subsidy program with equality and respect. The same policies should be applied to all children and parents the provider services.
- Notify the Child Care Assistance Program promptly if your residence changes so that payments can continue to reach you in a timely manner. All child care assistance payments are marked "Do Not Forward" and therefore will be returned to the county by the postal service. Unreported changes in the provider's address will cause significant delays in payment.
- Notify Child Protection of any suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. (NOTE: All child care providers are considered Mandated Reporters by State law. Child Protection can be reached at 651-266-4500.)

