

State of Illinois

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor



Department of Human Services

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Welcome to the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

a parent's guide

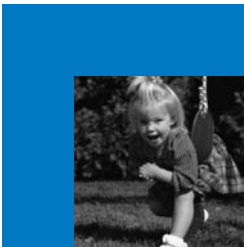


Welcome!

As a parent, providing your child with the long-lasting benefits of quality child care is one of the most important things you can do for his or her future. The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency are working together to help families get the information and resources they need to access the best child care for their child.

We understand that the procedures and paperwork can be confusing. We want to make things as easy as possible. The information in this guide is provided to help you navigate, and make the most of the services available to you. If you have more questions, or need clarification, please call your local CCR&R.

We're here for you!



Getting started

Eligibility

Parents of limited income that work or attend school or vocational training may be eligible for help with the cost of child care. You will need to work closely with your Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency to help supply all of the information that is needed to decide if you qualify for the program. The CCR&R will either “approve” or “deny” your application based on the information you give them. Information is verified using various state databases. If conflicting information is found, or there is information missing, the CCR&R will send you a Request for Additional Information. You must submit the needed information within 10 days of the request or your application will be denied.

Choosing a child care provider

Not all child care providers are the same. What’s right for you and your child may not be the same as what works for friends or family members. Your provider:

- Can be licensed or license-exempt (not legally required to be licensed);
- Can be a child care center or a home;
- Can be a relative, friend or neighbor;
- Must be at least 18 years old;
- May not be the parent or step parent of the children;
- May not be on the same TANF cash assistance grant as you and your children if you are receiving these benefits.

Please remember—whether a provider is licensed or license-exempt, it is the quality of care that counts!

Changing your child care provider

If, for any reason, you need to find a new child care provider, we can help. We can give you a list of child care providers in your area, plus tips for evaluating your options, which range from center care to home care. Call the phone number on the back of this guide for more information.

It is important that you notify us as soon as you know that you are changing providers. Without advance notice, we cannot guarantee your new provider will get paid for the time that he or she cared for your child(ren).

Provider background check

Illinois law states that all providers paid by the state who are not licensed must agree to a Child Abuse and Neglect background check every two years. This background check will match your provider's name and other pertinent information—as well as that of anyone age 13 or older in his or her household (if that is where care is provided)—against the Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) maintained by the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Your approval letter

Once you have been approved for child care assistance, both you and your provider will receive an approval letter. This letter contains important information including:

- The length of time you are eligible for the program;
- The amount of your monthly co-payment (your share of the cost of child care);
- The children who are eligible for the program;
- The number of days per week that IDHS will pay for child care;
- The daily rate at which your provider will be paid.

Each time you receive an approval letter, you should read it carefully because your monthly co-payment amount is listed along with the beginning and ending dates of your eligibility period.

The approval period

It is important that you submit your child care application as soon as possible. Your application can be backdated a maximum of seven days from the date it is received at the Child Care Resource and Referral agency.

As the parent or guardian, you are responsible for paying for any child care provided before the start date listed on your approval letter. Your approval letter will list the first and last date that you are eligible for assistance. Usually, you will be approved for 3 or 6 months at a time.

Before your approval period ends, you will have to renew your child care case in order to continue receiving assistance. You will do this by filling out a “Redetermination” form. This form will be automatically mailed to you in the month before your approval period ends. For example, if you are approved through April, you should receive your Redetermination form in March. If you do not return your Redetermination form and all required documents -OR- if you no longer meet the eligibility guidelines of the program, your case will be canceled.

Unless you are otherwise notified, your provider’s final payment will be for the last month of the approval period. If you are in your last month of approval and have not, received your Redetermination form, please contact us at the number listed on the back of this guide to prevent your case from being canceled.

If you have more than one child in care

The state will pay your provider for the care of all children listed on your approval letter. If a child is not listed on your approval letter, they have not been approved for care. If you think a mistake has been made, call us at the number found on the back of this guide.

Once a child turns 13, he or she is no longer eligible for the program. The state will pay through the last day of the month of his or her 13th birthday. However, if your child is 13 or older and has a mental or physical condition that requires child care or if your child is under court supervision they may be eligible for continued services. Please contact the CCR&R if this situation applies to you.

Monthly co-payments

What is a monthly co-payment?

Your monthly “co-payment” is the portion of your child care costs you must pay your provider each month. Make sure that you read each approval letter carefully—the co-payment amount can change. By paying a monthly co-payment, you are contributing toward your child’s quality child care.

How are co-payment amounts determined?

The amount of your monthly co-payment is determined by IDHS and may vary from parent to parent. Monthly co-payments are based on income, family size, the number of children in child care, and the schedule of your children in care.

How do I know what my co-payment amount is?

Your monthly co-payment amount will be listed on your approval letter. Carefully read each approval letter that you receive, because your monthly co-payment can change. Monthly co-payment changes can occur each time your case is renewed (“redetermined”) or if there is a change in your income, family size, the number of children in care, or in the schedule of your children’s care. You will receive a new approval letter each time your monthly co-payment changes so you know how much to pay.

Neither you, nor the provider, should adjust the monthly co-payment. If you think that an adjustment is necessary, you or the provider should contact your CCR&R for help with the next steps.

How do I pay my co-payment?

Pay your monthly co-payment amount directly to your provider. The monthly co-payment amount is deducted from your provider's payment from IDHS. If you do not pay your monthly co-payment, your provider will not receive his or her full payment.

Each provider may have a different policy for collecting monthly co-payments. You and your provider should agree on how, and when, you will pay your monthly co-payment so there are no misunderstandings later. If you have more than one child care provider, you will only need to pay a monthly co-payment to one provider. Your approval letter will tell you which provider should receive your co-payment. If you are asked to pay a monthly co-payment to more than one provider, please contact your CCR&R.

Remember:

It is very important that you notify the CCR&R immediately if your income, family size, child care schedule, or number of children in care changes. These changes may affect the amount of your monthly co-payment.

Can my provider charge me more than my co-payment amount?

Yes. If your provider charges private paying parents a higher rate than the IDHS program pays, your provider can ask you to pay the difference by requiring a fee in addition to your co-payment. Be sure that you and your provider discuss what you are expected to pay before care for your child starts.

If your provider's costs are too high for you, your CCR&R may be able to help you find a child care provider who is more affordable. Call them for help with finding a new child care provider.

How your child care provider gets paid

The IDHS Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) makes it possible for your child to enjoy the benefits of quality child care. Your provider works hard to provide that care, and we want to make sure that he or she is paid in a fair and timely manner. Please take a moment to read the following questions and answers so that you understand the payment process and your part in it.

How much will my provider be paid?

Payments or “rates” are determined by IDHS based on the type of care provided (child care center, licensed home provider or license-exempt provider) and the age of your child. The rate is also based on the number of hours your child is in care:

- Full-day rate: child is in care 5-12 hours per day.
- Part-day rate: child is in care under 5 hours per day.
- School-age rate: school-aged child in care under 5 hours per day while school is in session.

Make sure you and your provider discuss these rates and that you have a good understanding of how much your provider is going to charge you before you place your child in care. If you have any questions about the number of days your child is eligible for care, or how much your provider will be paid, please contact your CCR&R.

How many days a week will my provider be paid?

Your approval letter will list the maximum number of days per week your provider can be paid for child care. Your provider may bill the state ONLY for child care provided while you are at work; in an approved school or training program; and traveling to and from child care to work or school. The number of approved days is based on the work or school schedule and check stubs that you submit with your child care program application.

When will my provider receive the first payment?

It can take 4 to 8 weeks for your provider to receive the first payment. After your provider receives the first payment, regular payments will arrive on a monthly basis. The reason the first payment takes longer is your provider's name and social security number must be recorded with the Illinois Office of the Comptroller before any payments can be made. To do this, our office will mail your provider a W9 tax form. The sooner he or she completes and returns the W9 form, the sooner he or she can get paid.

Your provider will also need to send the CCR&R a copy of their Social Security Card and photo ID before they are approved.

After the Illinois Office of the Comptroller has your provider's information on file, we can send him or her the first "Child Care Certificate." This is the billing form that you and your provider complete each month to tell IDHS how much to pay your provider.

What do I need to do?

During the last week of every month, your provider will receive a monthly billing certificate in the mail. You and your provider must complete the certificate.

On the certificate, your provider will write in the number of days during that month that he or she cared for your child. There will be a space for both you and the provider to sign. Before you sign, make sure the correct numbers of days are listed for your child(ren). If your child attends a child care center, you will not have to sign this form.

After the last day of the month, your provider may choose to mail the Child Care Certificate to the local CCR&R office or your provider may choose to enter the payment by phone by using the IDHS Child Care Telephone Billing System. For more information about the IDHS Child Care Telephone Billing System contact your local CCR&R agency. Three weeks after the certificate has been entered the Illinois Office of the Comptroller will mail a check directly to your provider. Please note that neither the CCR&R nor IDHS issues the check.

What if my provider doesn't receive the monthly certificate?

Certificates are mailed from Springfield and can take 5-7 days to arrive. If your provider does not receive a billing certificate, one reason may be that your eligibility period has ended. When you receive an approval letter, please take note of the start and end dates. You should receive a cancellation notice before your eligibility will end.

If your provider does not receive a billing certificate by the last day of the month, he or she can call the Child Care Resource and Referral agency.

What could delay my provider's payments?

Although we do our best to make sure that providers are paid in a timely manner, payments can be delayed if your provider:

- Does not complete the W9 tax form as soon as possible;
- Does not send a copy of SSN card and photo ID;
- Does not notify us of a change in address;
- Mails a billing certificate that is not complete or is not signed in ink;
- Asks to be paid for more days than you are eligible;
- Does not have his or her name on the mailbox;
- Has not provided an apartment number.



Your rights and responsibilities

As a participant in the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, you have specific rights and responsibilities. It is important that you read and understand your rights and responsibilities, as any misunderstanding could affect your child's care. If you have any questions, please call your local CCR&R.

Your rights:

- To be notified by mail if your case is approved, renewed, canceled or denied, or if we need additional information in order to start or continue your child care assistance.
- To be notified by mail of any changes in your co-payment or in the number of days for which you are eligible.
- To receive friendly and professional customer service.
- To appeal decisions regarding your case.

Your responsibilities:

- To pay your child care provider the monthly co-payment amount that you have been assigned.
- To make sure that all paperwork you mail or bring in to your CCR&R is complete and accurate, includes all necessary documentation, and is signed in ink.
- To notify us as soon as you have made a decision to change providers
- To notify us within 5 business days if:
 - You move.
 - You stop or start working.
 - You stop or start attending school or a training program.
 - You change your job or your school/training program.
 - You change work or school hours.
 - There is a change in your family size.
 - There is a change in your income.
 - You get married or divorced.
 - You start or stop receiving TANF, child support, SSI, SSA and other cash benefits.

For more information:

Call or visit your Illinois Department of Human Services' Family Community Resource Center (FCRC).

If you have questions about any Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) program, call or visit your FCRC. We will answer your questions. If you do not know where your FCRC is or if you are unable to go there, you may call the automated helpline 24 hours a day at:

1-800-843-6154

1-800-447-6404 (TTY)

You may speak to a representative between:

8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Monday - Friday (except state holidays)

For answers to your questions,
you may also write:

Illinois Department of Human Services
Bureau of Customer and Provider Assistance
425 South 4th Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701

Visit our web site at:

www.dhs.state.il.us

For more information on finding quality child care and getting financial assistance, call the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) at:

877-20-CHILD

[877-202-4453] (Voice)

800-649-1884 (TTY)

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