

## The Child Care Development Fund and Children Experiencing Homelessness

### Background

In 2014, Congress reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) for the first time in 18 years, making significant changes to the federal [Child Care Development Fund](#) (CCDF) program, which helps economically disadvantaged families obtain child care. Among the many changes to the program were new provisions designed to specifically remove barriers to child care for children and families experiencing homelessness. States, territories, and tribes are required to:

- Use the definition of homelessness from the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act
- Establish a grace period that allows children experiencing homelessness to receive child care while their families take action to comply with immunization and health/safety requirements
- Provide support to families in obtaining immunizations, etc.
- Use funds for activities that improve access to child care services
- Establish procedures to permit enrollment of children experiencing homelessness while required documentation is obtained
- Provide training and technical assistance on identifying and serving children and their families experiencing homelessness
- Conduct specific outreach to families experiencing homelessness
- Coordinate with early childhood programs serving children experiencing homelessness, State Coordinators for Homeless Education, and, as practicable, local liaisons and CoCs
- Collect and submit data on children experiencing homelessness receiving child care assistance
- Prioritize families experiencing homelessness for services

### Setting CCDF Policies and Procedures

Every three years, states, territories, and tribes (grantees) are required to submit a [CCDF Program Plan](#) to the Office of Child Care. The CCDF Plan serves as an application for CCDBG funds and provides a description of how grantees will meet the requirements set forth in CCDBG. Because of the way the CCDF Plan is structured, approved plans provide an excellent overview of how grantees are implementing the requirements pertaining to homelessness under CCDBG. Specifically, section 3.2 of the FY2019-2021 CCDF Plan, under which grantees must explain how they will increase access to CCDF for vulnerable children and families, contains the bulk of the policies and procedures pertaining to families experiencing homelessness. The Office of Child Care posts [links to approved CCDF Plans](#) that the public can view.

As the FY2019-2021 CCDF Plan cycle comes to a close, grantees are now preparing their new CCDF Plans for FY2022-2024. The new CCDF Plans will look slightly different than those in the previous cycle, as the Office of Child Care updates the Plan Preprint with each cycle. The CCDF Plan Preprint for FY2022-2024 is not yet finalized, but will likely look very similar to the [current draft](#). As with previous cycles, grantees are required to address how they will coordinate with partners to expand accessibility and continuity of care, including a description of their coordination goals, processes, and results, with state coordinators for homeless education and other relevant entities. The process of writing the CCDF Plan provides an important opportunity for state coordinators of homeless education (state coordinators) to engage with their CCDF administrator and develop a working relationship, if none already exists, and to elevate the

barriers to child care for children and families experiencing homelessness and identify policy solutions that can be advanced through the CCDF Plan.

### **Advancing child care policies that benefit families experiencing homelessness**

Now is the time for state coordinators to reach out to their [CCDF administrators](#) to discuss how the state, territory, or tribe can best serve children and families experiencing homelessness in child care. State coordinators may wish to educate themselves about the CCDF program ahead of engaging with the CCDF administrator, and be prepared to offer ideas for partnership and how they can support development of the CCDF Plan. Some ideas include:

- Organizing a listening session for the CCDF administrator to hear from families experiencing homelessness, local McKinney-Vento liaisons, and homeless service providers about their challenges, needs, and ideas related to child care accessibility and quality
- Share existing McKinney-Vento training resources and written policies and procedures that could be adapted for the CCDF program
- Developing a formalized referral process between local McKinney-Vento liaisons and local child care resource and referral agencies.

Some resources to learn more about CCDF and homelessness include:

- [\*Strategies for Expanding Access to Child Care Subsidy for Children Experiencing Homelessness\*](#)
- [\*Final Child Care and Development Fund Regulations Published: Summary of Regulations Specific to Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness\*](#)

Individual consultation and support is available through NAEHCY's Early Childhood Committee by emailing [earlychildhood@naehcy.org](mailto:earlychildhood@naehcy.org). Committee members stand ready to assist state coordinators in understanding CCDF, making connections to CCDF administrators and identifying tangible opportunities to improve access to child care specific to each state or community context.