

Care 4 Kids Program

Policy Transmittal

Transmittal Number: C4K-POL-23-01

Transmittal Date: November 1, 2023 (Revised 7/15/24)



Connecticut Office
of Early Childhood

To: Sherri Sutera, Program Director
Care 4 Kids Program

From: Julie Giaccone, CCDF Administrator
Office of Early Childhood

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Giaccone".

CC: Distribution List

Subject: Institution of Protective Services

Background: 45 CFR 98.20(a)(3)(ii) provides that, “To be eligible for services under §98.50, a child shall, at the time of eligibility determination or redetermination: ... Receive, or need to receive, protective services, which may include specific populations of vulnerable children as identified by the Lead Agency, and reside with a parent or parents other than the parent(s) described in paragraph (a)(3)(i) of this section. (A) At grantee option, the requirements in paragraph (a)(2) of this section may be waived for families eligible for child care pursuant to this paragraph, if determined to be necessary *on a case-by-case basis*.” (emphasis added).

45 CFR 98.45(k)(4) provides, “Lead Agencies shall establish, and periodically revise, by rule, a sliding fee scale(s) for families that receive CCDF child care services that: ... At Lead Agency discretion, allows for co-payments to be waived for families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size, *that have children who receive or need to receive protective services*, or that meet other criteria established by the Lead Agency”. (emphasis added.)

Up until July 1, 2023, Connecticut did not have the legal authority to institute protective services in accordance with the above-referenced rule.

Effective July 1, 2023, Section 347 of House Bill No. 6941 repeals and amends subsection (a) of 17b-749 of the General Statutes and provides that, “ ... The Commissioner of Early Childhood may institute a protective service class in which the commissioner may waive eligibility requirements for at-risk populations that meet the guidelines prescribed by the commissioner, and subject to review by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management. Such at-risk populations are children placed in a foster home by the Department of Children and Families and for whom the parent or legal guardian receives foster care payments, adopted children for one year from the date of adoption and homeless children and youths, as defined in 42 USC 11434a, as amended from time to time”.



Effective July 1, 2024, Section 8 of House Bill No. 5002 (Public Act No. 24-91) expanded the protective services class to also include children who are, “under the care of a caregiver who is a recipient of subsidies under the subsidized guardianship program pursuant to section 17a-126”.

42 USC § 11434a(2) defines “The term ‘homeless children and youths’ — (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 11302(a)(1) of this title); and (B) includes— (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 11302(a)(2)(C) of this title); (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 6399 of title 20) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii)”.

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies governing the Child Care Assistance Program do not outline requirements or guidelines for the implementation of protective services. This policy transmittal shall outline such requirements and guideline for the implementation of H.B No.6941.

For purposes of the Care 4 Kids program, “Protective Services” means “an at-risk population of children as defined by Connecticut General Statutes § 17b-749, for which eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis. Effective July 1, 2023, such at-risk populations include (1) children placed in a foster home by the Department of Children and Families and for whom the parent or legal guardian receives foster care payments, (2) children who are adopted through the Department of Children and Families for one year from the date of adoption and (3) homeless children and youths, as defined in 42 USC 11434a, as amended from time to time.”

Policy Directives: Care 4 Kids shall determine eligibility for the protected classes as outlined below. Children and families eligible for protective services shall be given highest priority and should not be placed on a waitlist.

1. Children placed in a foster home by the Department of Children and Families (Effective December 1, 2023)



- a. A separate family unit shall be established for children placed in a foster home by the Department of Children and Families. These children will be considered a family unit of one for purposes of income eligibility. For purposes of authorizing the hours of care only, Care 4 Kids shall use the child's foster parent(s) self-declared activity schedule. The child's foster parent(s) shall not be considered part of the family unit for income purposes.
 - b. The income for the child's family unit shall be waived on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. If the child's foster parent(s) are employed, or participating in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized based on the self-declared schedule on the Parent Provider Agreement Form (PPA).
 - d. If the child's foster parent(s) **are not** in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized for a **maximum** of half-time care, based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - e. The family fee and asset limit shall be waived regardless of the foster parent(s) participation in an approved activity.
 - f. Required documentation for eligibility determination:
 - i. Completed Care 4 Kids application; and
 - ii. Completed PPA.
- 1.1. When a child(ren) is remanded to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and placed in a foster home, the Commissioner of DCF is the legal guardian of such child(ren). The Department of Children and Families shall be responsible for submitting all documentation on behalf of the foster parent/placement resource regarding C4K program eligibility. The Department of Children and Families shall work with the foster parent/placement resource to ensure that all information is submitted timely and accurately. The foster parent/placement resource has a right to request a change to the care schedule and/or provider at any time; however, the foster parent/placement resource shall obtain DCF authorization prior to altering any care arraignment, including but not limited to the care schedule or care provider.
2. Children who are adopted from the Department of Children and Families for one year from the date of adoption (Effective December 1, 2023)
 - a. A separate family unit shall be established for children adopted through the Department of Children and Families. These children will be considered a family unit of one for purposes of income eligibility for one year from the date of adoption. For purposes of authorizing the hours of care only, Care 4 Kids shall use the adopted child's parent(s) self-declared activity schedule. The adopted



- child's parent(s) shall not be considered part of the family unit for income eligibility.
- b. The income for the child's family unit shall be waived on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. If the adopted child's parent(s) are employed, or participating in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - d. If the adopted child's parent(s) **are not** in an approved activity child care shall be authorized for a **maximum** of half-time care, based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - e. The family fee and asset limit shall be waived regardless of the parent(s) participation in an approved activity.
 - f. Required documentation for eligibility determination:
 - i. Completed Care 4 Kids application; and
 - ii. Completed PPA.
3. Homeless children and youths, as defined in 42 USC § 11434a (Effective December 1, 2023)
- a. A separate family unit shall be established for homeless children and youths. These children will be considered a family unit of one for purposes of income eligibility. For purposes of authorizing the hours of care only, Care 4 Kids shall use the child's parent(s) self-declared activity schedule. The child's parent(s) shall not be considered part of the family unit for income eligibility.
 - b. The income for the child's family unit shall be waived on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. If the child's parent(s) are employed, or participating in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - d. If the child's parent(s) **are not** in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized for a **maximum** of half-time care, based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - e. The family fee and asset limit shall be waived regardless of the parent(s) participation in an approved activity.
 - f. Required documentation for eligibility determination:
 - i. Completed Care 4 Kids application;
 - ii. Completed Parent Provider Agreement Form (PPA); and
 - iii. Completed McKinney-Vento Self-Attestation Form.
 - g. If, within the 12-month eligibility period, an active Care 4 Kids family reports a retroactive change in living circumstances that make them eligible under a protective services class, Care 4 Kids shall approve eligibility back to the date the change occurred as reported on the McKinney-Vento Self-Attestation Form.



4. Children under the care of a caregiver who is a recipient of subsidies under the subsidy guardianship program pursuant to section 17a-126 for one year from the date that such child is approved for a subsidy. (Effective July 1, 2024)
 - a. A separate family unit shall be established for children under the care of a caregiver who is a recipient of subsidies under the subsidy guardianship program pursuant to section 17a-126. These children will be considered a family unit of one for purposes of income eligibility for one year from the date that such child is approved for the subsidy. For purposes of authorizing the hours of care only, Care 4 Kids shall use the child's caregiver(s) self-declared activity schedule. The child's caregivers(s) shall not be considered part of the family unit for income eligibility.
 - b. The income for the child's family unit shall be waived on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. If the child's caregiver(s) are employed, or participating in an approved activity, child care shall be authorized based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - d. If the child's caregivers(s) **are not** in an approved activity child care shall be authorized for a **maximum** of half-time care, based on the self-declared schedule on the PPA.
 - e. The family fee and asset limit shall be waived regardless of the caregiver(s) participation in an approved activity.
 - f. Required documentation for eligibility determination:
 - i. Completed Care 4 Kids application; and
 - ii. Completed PPA.

In accordance with C4K-POL-23-02, children eligible for protective services shall receive a 90-day grace period to take any necessary action to comply with immunizations and other health and safety requirements and to obtain required Care 4 Kids documents necessary for program eligibility. The 90-day grace period will begin the date the application is processed by Care 4 Kids and is not a rolling deadline. At the end of the 90-day grace period all documents must be received by Care 4 Kids to continue program eligibility.

Transition Plan for Children in DCF Custody:

Phase 1: Beginning **December 1, 2023**, all children in custody of DCF that are enrolling in child care for the first time will follow this new process. DCF staff will complete the C4K application with the foster parent and the foster parent will work with their chosen, licensed child care provider to obtain a completed PPA. DCF staff will review the C4K application, approve funding levels on the PPA and upload both to the C4K website or fax to C4K. All subsequent invoices will be submitted by the child care provider through the C4K provider portal for the full monthly

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amount of child care costs delineated in the PPA and paid in full by C4K. DCF will not make direct payments to child care providers for December 2023 or ongoing child care costs. All child care costs beginning and including December 1, 2023 will be paid by C4K. C4K will pay child care costs on behalf of DCF up to 15 days prior to the application received date, but not prior to 12/1/23.

Phase 2: Beginning **January 1, 2024**, all existing foster children and adopted children enrolled in child care with an active C4K certificate (those for whom DCF and C4K currently split fund the cost of child care services) will transition to the new process delineated above. C4K will begin working throughout December and January to generate new C4K certificates for these children using the current PPA that is on file. All invoices for services beginning and including January 1, 2024 will be submitted by the child care provider to C4K through the provider portal for the full monthly amount of child care costs delineated on the PPA and paid in full by C4K. DCF will pay for services rendered through December 31, 2023 under current DCF financial agreements (hereinafter referred to as "WAFs"). Beginning January 1, 2024, no new WAFs will be issued for foster and adopted children with a currently active C4K certificate and DCF will not make direct payments to child care providers for January 2024 or ongoing child care costs. All child care costs beginning and including January 1, 2024 on will be paid by C4K.

Phase 3: Beginning **February 1, 2024**, all existing foster and adopted children enrolled in child care with no current C4K certificate (those for whom DCF currently funds the entire cost of child care services) will transition to the new process. DCF will begin working throughout January to complete a C4K application with the foster parent who will also work to obtain a new PPA with the licensed child care provider. DCF staff will review the C4K application, approve funding levels on the PPA and upload both to the C4K website or fax to C4K. Beginning April 1, 2024, all invoices will be submitted by the child care provider to C4K through the provider portal for the full monthly amount of child care costs delineated on the PPA and paid in full by C4K. WAFs will be issued by DCF for the months of January, February and March, and invoices for services in January, February and March should still be submitted to DCF for payment. Beginning April 1, 2024, no new WAFs will be issued for foster children and DCF will not make direct payments to child care providers for April or ongoing child care costs. All child care costs beginning and including April 1, 2024 on will be paid by C4K.

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