

RCW 43.216.136 Working connections child care program—

Eligibility. (Effective until October 1, 2023.) (1) The department shall establish and implement policies in the working connections child care program to promote stability and quality of care for children from low-income households. These policies shall focus on supporting school readiness for young learners. Policies for the expenditure of funds constituting the working connections child care program must be consistent with the outcome measures established by the department and the standards established in this section intended to promote stability, quality, and continuity of early care and education programming.

(2) As recommended by P.L. 113-186, authorizations for the working connections child care subsidy are effective for twelve months beginning July 1, 2016.

(a) A household's 12-month authorization begins on the date that child care is expected to begin.

(b) If a newly eligible household does not begin care within 12 months of being determined eligible by the department, the household must reapply in order to qualify for subsidy.

(3) (a) The department shall establish and implement policies in the working connections child care program to allow eligibility for families with children who:

(i) In the last six months have:

(A) Received child protective services as defined and used by chapters 26.44 and 74.13 RCW;

(B) Received child welfare services as defined and used by chapter 74.13 RCW; or

(C) Received services through a family assessment response as defined and used by chapter 26.44 RCW;

(ii) Have been referred for child care as part of the family's case management as defined by RCW 74.13.020; and

(iii) Are residing with a biological parent or guardian.

(b) Families who are eligible for working connections child care pursuant to this subsection do not have to keep receiving services identified in this subsection to maintain twelve-month authorization.

(4) (a) Beginning July 1, 2021, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department may not require an applicant or consumer to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving working connections child care benefits when the applicant or consumer is in a state registered apprenticeship program or is a full-time student of a community, technical, or tribal college and is enrolled in:

(i) A vocational education program that leads to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation; or

(ii) An associate degree program.

(b) An applicant or consumer is a full-time student for the purposes of this subsection if the applicant or consumer meets the college's definition of a full-time student.

(c) Nothing in this subsection is intended to change how applicants or consumers are prioritized when applicants or consumers are placed on a waitlist for working connections child care benefits.

(d) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department may extend the provisions of this subsection (4) to full-time students who are enrolled in a bachelor's degree program or applied baccalaureate degree program.

(5) (a) An applicant or consumer is eligible to receive working connections child care benefits for the care of one or more eligible children for the first 12 months of the applicant's or consumer's enrollment in a state registered apprenticeship program under chapter 49.04 RCW when:

(i) The applicant or consumer's household annual income adjusted for family size does not exceed 75 percent of the state median income at the time of application, or, beginning July 1, 2027, does not exceed 85 percent of the state median income if funds are appropriated for the purpose of RCW 43.216.1368(4);

(ii) The child receiving care is: (A) Less than 13 years of age; or (B) less than 19 years of age and either has a verified special need according to department rule or is under court supervision; and

(iii) The household meets all other program eligibility requirements.

(b) The department must adopt a copayment model for benefits granted under this subsection, which must align with any copayment identified or adopted for households with the same income level under RCW 43.216.1368.

(6) (a) The department must extend the homeless grace period, as adopted in department rule as of January 1, 2020, from a four-month grace period to a twelve-month grace period.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "homeless" means being without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as described in the federal McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a) as it existed on January 1, 2020.

(7) For purposes of this section, "authorization" means a transaction created by the department that allows a child care provider to claim payment for care. The department may adjust an authorization based on a household's eligibility status. [2023 c 294 § 1; 2021 c 199 § 202; 2020 c 279 § 2.]

Effective date—2021 c 199 §§ 201, 202, 301, 309, and 504: See note following RCW 43.216.1368.

Short title—Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2021 c 199: See notes following RCW 43.216.770.

Effective date—2020 c 279: "This act takes effect July 1, 2020." [2020 c 279 § 4.]

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(C) Received services through a family assessment response as defined and used by chapter 26.44 RCW; or

(D) A parent or guardian participating in a specialty court or therapeutic court or who is a listed victim in a case in a specialty court or therapeutic court;

(ii) Have been referred for child care as part of the family's case management as defined by RCW 74.13.020 or as part of the specialty court or therapeutic court's proceedings; and

(iii) Are residing with a biological parent or guardian.

(b) Families who are eligible for working connections child care pursuant to this subsection do not have to keep receiving services or keep participating in a specialty court or therapeutic court identified in this subsection to maintain 12-month authorization.

(4)(a) Beginning July 1, 2021, and subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department may not require an applicant or consumer to meet work requirements as a condition of receiving working connections child care benefits when the applicant or consumer is in a state registered apprenticeship program or is a full-time student of a community, technical, or tribal college and is enrolled in:

(i) A vocational education program that leads to a degree or certificate in a specific occupation; or

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(d) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department may extend the provisions of this subsection (4) to full-time students who are enrolled in a bachelor's degree program or applied baccalaureate degree program.

(5) The department may not consider the immigration status of an applicant or consumer's child when determining eligibility for working connections child care benefits.

(6)(a) An applicant or consumer is eligible to receive working connections child care benefits for the care of one or more eligible children for the first 12 months of the applicant's or consumer's enrollment in a state registered apprenticeship program under chapter 49.04 RCW when:

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exceed 85 percent of the state median income if funds are appropriated for the purpose of RCW 43.216.1368(4);

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(8) For purposes of this section, "authorization" means a transaction created by the department that allows a child care provider to claim payment for care. The department may adjust an authorization based on a household's eligibility status. [2023 c 294 § 1; 2023 c 222 § 3; 2021 c 199 § 202; 2020 c 279 § 2.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2023 c 222 § 3 and by 2023 c 294 § 1, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Effective date—2023 c 222 § 3: "Section 3 of this act takes effect October 1, 2023." [2023 c 222 § 6.]

Findings—Intent—2023 c 222: See note following RCW 43.216.1364.

Effective date—2021 c 199 §§ 201, 202, 301, 309, and 504: See note following RCW 43.216.1368.

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