

ST. LOUIS COUNTY
CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM POLICY MANUAL
FOR
PARENTS

PHHS # 33699
Revised 5/31/18
Updated 8/23/19

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Program Definitions

The Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) helps families pay for child care in order to work, look for work, or attend school. The CCAP program is available in all Minnesota counties and families may apply at county human service offices. The CCAP program includes these three subprograms:

- **MFIP Child Care:** for families who receive assistance through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or the Diversionary Work Program (DWP).
- **Transition Year Child Care:** is available to families for a full year after their MFIP case closes. If there is a waiting list for the Basic Sliding Fee Child Care Program, you may get help from this program for more than a year.
- **Basic Sliding Fee Child Care:** for other families with low incomes who meet the program requirements.

B. How to Apply: Applications may be submitted in person, by mail, via Fax or online. In St. Louis County, applications are taken for the Child Care Assistance program at these county offices:

Government Services Center- Central Client Area, 1st Floor
ATTN: CCAP
320 West 2nd Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Northland Office Building – 2nd floor
ATTN: CCAP
307 South 1st Street
Virginia, MN 55792

St. Louis County Public Health & Human Service Dept.
Hibbing Courthouse Annex - ATTN: CCAP
1814 East 14th Ave
Hibbing, MN 55746

Ely Government Services Center
ATTN: CCAP
118 S 4th Ave
Ely MN 55731

Office hours are 8 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

To apply by mail: Call 218-726-2400 or 1-800-450-9777 ext. 2400 and request an application.

To apply with a fillable PDF: Go to <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/> and search for form 3550. You will need to print the form and mail or deliver it to one of the addresses listed above, or fax it to one of the fax numbers on the last page of this manual.

ApplyMN: ApplyMN is Minnesota's online system you can use to apply for cash assistance, SNAP (food support), emergency help, **and child care assistance.** **To apply through ApplyMN, go to: applymn.dhs.mn.gov.** You will need to create a user ID when applying through ApplyMN.

C. Communication Process

This section provides a guide for contacting agency staff, and information regarding what parents and providers can expect from staff in terms of communication and time frames.

Customer Service Principles: The agency customer service policy states: “as a client and customer, you can expect to receive professional services and clear information respectfully, courteously and in a timely manner.” Staff in the child care unit will observe these principles, and will also expect professional courtesy and mutual respect in interactions with parents, providers and staff of other agencies. If individuals feel that these policies are not being followed, the agency has a Customer/Client complaint procedure which gives two options. The first choice is to talk to the supervisor of the employee who is working with you. The supervisor will work with you to resolve the complaint. The second choice is to speak with a Senior Manager from the service area from which you are receiving services.

Phone calls: The child care unit will return all phone calls within 2 business days. The large majority of calls are returned either the same day or the next day. Occasionally, when call volume is high, or when staff are attending required meetings or training, the call response time is delayed. Staff will receive calls regarding eligibility issues only from parents or their legally authorized representatives. The child care unit also has staff who specialize in provider registration and provider support. These workers will respond to calls from providers concerning the provider’s information on the MEC2 payment system, and general questions concerning billing forms and payment policies. Calls regarding the timing of payments (such as “has the State issued my check?”) will be returned in the order received. The majority of payments are issued by the State within two weeks of when the billing form was received. However, State and County policy allows 21 days to make a payment from the time a complete and accurate billing form was received.

Application Processing: Applications are usually processed within two weeks of when they are received by the child care unit if all verifications and supporting documents have been submitted. State law allows 30 days for processing applications, after a complete application has been received at the agency.

AGENCY CONTACT PHONE NUMBERS:

Child Care Workers: Alphabetical split, see last page of this manual.

Child Care Worker of the Day: 218-726-2400

Legal Non-Licensed registrations: Peter M, 218-726-2064

Public Health and Human Services Department Administration: 218-726-2096

St. Louis County Toll free: 1-800-450-9777 to reach any of the above staff.

Duluth Area Child Care Assistance Supervisor: Amanda Yates

Range Area Child Care Assistance Supervisor: Maria Lopez

II. PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

A. Types of Child Care:

Legal Non-licensed (LNL) Child Care Providers are registered with the County. A friend, neighbor, or a relative who is 18 years of age or older can be registered. These providers do not have to be licensed if: a) they only provide care for relatives and/or they provide care to a single unrelated family, or b) they provide care for less than 31 days total for multiple unrelated families in any 12 month period. LNL providers are required to complete trainings and a background check.

Licensed Family Child Care Providers are self-employed and licensed by the State. Because they are licensed, they can care for more families that are not related to them. This child care is done in the provider's home. Licensed providers are required to follow State rules for family child care homes.

Child Care Centers have teachers and assistants and have to meet State rules for their programs. They can care for as many children as their State license allows. Preschools and nursery schools are also in this category.

License Exempt Centers are programs like a child care center but they are not required to have a child care license. These include extended day school age childcare programs, extended kindergarten programs that offer more hours than half day free public kindergarten, camps licensed by the State Health Department, school age centers operated by public schools, and some other after school programs.

B. Provider Background Checks

Licensed providers have background studies completed as part of the licensing process, and legal non-licensed providers have these background studies as part of the CCAP registration process. Also, the State checks the backgrounds for licensed child care center staff.

Background studies include checks of the county Social Services records, history of child maltreatment, and criminal history checks. If the background check information includes certain crimes, child maltreatment history, and/or recent chemical dependency issues, a provider may be disqualified from providing care to families on Child Care Assistance.

State law prohibits the county from authorizing persons who have felony convictions for various crimes. Information on which crimes apply to this law is available for persons interested in providing child care. Background applicant studies are required for everyone age 13 and older in the household. If care is in the parent's home, only the provider needs a background applicant study. Fees are \$25 per person, up to a maximum of \$100.

The purpose of background studies is to assist in keeping children safe in child care. However, parents have the primary responsibility to choose a provider who has the ability to provide safe care and surroundings. Parents have the right and responsibility to choose a provider who they trust and who meets the county's requirements for registration or licensing.

C. Additional Requirements for LNL providers

All LNL family child care providers are required to complete First Aid and CPR training, plus state required trainings prior to authorization for CCAP payments.

Additionally, upon subsequent renewal of a provider's registration, LNL family child care providers are required to provide verification of at least 8 hours of additional training listed in the Minnesota Center for Professional Development Registry.

D. Choosing a Provider

Parents have the right to:

- Choose any of the mentioned types of providers who are participating in CCAP.
- Change child care providers as needed, with 15 day advance notice.
- Use more than one provider. CCAP payments may be limited to a secondary provider.

For more information about licensed child care providers, call Parent Aware of Minnesota at 1-888-291-9811, or search online at www.parentaware.org/search.

III. HOW THE CCAP PROGRAM WORKS – ELIGIBILITY

A. Family Copayments

Many families receiving CCAP are required to pay part of the costs of their child care. The amount of this co-payment depends on income and family size. The co-payment is subtracted from the payment to the provider, and parents pay this amount directly to their provider. If the co-payment is not paid, the State requires that child care assistance or CCAP be closed until the bill is paid, or until a payment agreement is worked out between the parent and the provider. Copayment fees are determined by the State.

B. Exceptions to Collection of Copayments

If a provider chooses not to collect the copayment, the provider must keep a record concerning the date of service for which they did not collect the copayment.

Also, CCAP allows someone other than the parent to pay the copayment. In these cases, the provider must keep a record of the name of the person or organization who made the payment, and the dates of service.

C. Authorized Activities

CCAP allows child care to be authorized only for approved activities, such as job search, work or school, and may include reasonable amount of travel time. Other uses may result in overpayments or a referral for fraud investigation. Parents need to call their child care worker:

- **before using more hours** than currently authorized, or
- when the school or work schedule changes, or
- when a job ends, or
- when they start or stop looking for work (job search).

Child care assistance can be authorized for care provided in the child's home under special situations, if the child's parents have authorized activities outside of the home and if one or more of the following circumstances are met:

- The parents' qualifying activity occurs during times when out-of-home care is not available. If child care is needed during any period when out-of-home care is not available, in-home care can be approved for the entire time care is needed;
- The family lives in an area where out-of-home care is not available; or
- A child has a verified illness or disability that would place the child or other children in an out-of-home facility at risk or creates a hardship for the child and the family to take the child out of the home to a child care home or center.

DHS-6475 'Parent Request for In-Home Child Care' must be completed for the state to determine whether the special situation meets eligibility.

There are limits to time that an adult family member who is not in an authorized activity can be considered temporarily absent. A temporarily absent adult family member who is participating in an authorized activity may continue to be counted as part of the CCAP family for an unlimited time period as long as the family indicates that the family member plans to return, but other absent adult family members will be removed from the CCAP family after 60 days. Adverse action notices will be sent to affected families and child care providers.

D. Reporting Requirements

Parents must report the following changes for each family member to their Child Care Assistance worker **within ten (10) calendar days**.

Failure to report these changes within ten (10) calendar days may result in an overpayment, termination, or closing of your Child Care Assistance, a fraud investigation and/or possible criminal charges.

- A change in family income that puts the family over the maximum amount allowed for their family size (85% SMI).
- A permanent end to a parent's authorized activity.
- A change in address or residence.
- Child school schedule
- A change in family status or household composition

- A change in citizenship or immigration status for any child receiving child care assistance.
- A change in a parentally responsible individual's (PRI's) visitation schedule or custody arrangement for any child receiving child care assistance.

Additionally, scheduled reporters need to report all changes in their authorized activities. If you are not sure of your reporting type, call your child care worker.

Provider changes must be reported fifteen (15) days in advance

E. Medical Leave

CCAP has policies allowing for coverage during medical events. If you need more information regarding medical leave, please contact your child care worker.

F. Children with Special Needs –Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

The State has a policy about requirements for child care providers under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Providers are required to make “reasonable accommodations” for children with disabilities. If you have questions about compliance with the ADA, call the Dept. of Justice ADA information Line: 1-800-514-0301 (voice) or 1-800-514-0383 (TDD). You can also access their web site at www.ada.gov.

The Child Care Assistance program has a process for approving special needs rates. Special needs rates must be services beyond those required to comply with the ADA. These rates are not for recovering the cost of measures required by the ADA. Please refer to the rate section of this manual for further information regarding requesting special needs rates.

G. Overpayments

When parents or providers are overpaid, the CCAP program will recover the overpayment as required by State policy. For overpayments to parents, this usually is done by increasing the co-payment until the amount is recovered. If the family is no longer using child care, St. Louis County sends a bill to the parent. This is true even when the overpayment is due to agency error. Families will be given an opportunity to make satisfactory re-payment arrangements with St. Louis County before the CCAP program ends the authorization or denies eligibility. However, if satisfactory re-payment is not being made, the State policies will not allow child care to be authorized. Parents and providers have appeal rights if they are found to have an overpayment.

IV. HOW THE CCAP PROGRAM WORKS – AUTHORIZATIONS AND PAYMENT

A. Payment Process

The parent or provider can mail or drop off the billing form for payment. Both the parent and their provider are responsible for the days and hours claimed on the billing form.

Only the CCAP parent or an authorized representative and the child care provider can sign billing forms that are sent in for payment. Do not sign blank billing forms. Do not sign “for” someone else. If the County finds information on a billing form is false, the County may follow through with legal action. Payments may be delayed if more hours are billed than authorized without prior approval or if billing forms are not filled out correctly.

Billing forms are entered on the MEC2 system by the St. Louis County Accounting Department. The State system then issues payments either by check or by electronic deposit. Once a billing form is processed, payments are generated nightly by the state payment system in St. Paul. Usually payment is made within two weeks of when the county receives an accurate and complete billing form. However, at times payments are delayed and the State allows 21 days for processing payments after a complete and accurate billing form is received by the county.

B. Provider Billing Practices

Providers establish their own policies for billing and payment. It is very important for parents and providers to discuss these policies ahead of time. Providers are required to give parents a written copy of their policies when they begin care and anytime a policy is updated or changed.

CCAP can pay only up to State determined Child Care Maximum Rates. If the provider charges more than the maximum rate as stated in their provider policy, the parent would be responsible for the difference.

C. Authorization and Payment

CCAP will pay:

- for the authorized hours of child care;
- up to the DHS maximum rates;
- minus the family's co-pay amount.

CCAP will not pay:

- more than the provider bills;
- for more care than the authorized hours;
- for more than the CCAP maximum rates;
- for provider vacation days, provider sick days, or any other days that child care is not available, other than for holidays;
- for nonstandard hour differential payments and payments for activity fees;
- for care that is provided for a child by a child care provider who resides in the same household or occupies the same residence as the child.

CCAP payments will be limited at licensed or license-exempt child care centers to 25 children cared for by the provider who are children of the provider's employees or reside with center employees.

The amount paid is based on:

- the county where care is provided
- the age of child
- the type of provider
- applicable maximum rate
- provider's charge
- number of child care hours authorized
- hours the child is scheduled to be in care

The billing system will determine payment according to the number of hours billed per day and per week.

D. Provider Rates

The State has set maximum child care rates for each County. Providers can charge less than these rates but cannot charge more for Child Care Assistance clients than they charge for private pay clients. See Addendum A for Rate Information.

E. State Absent Day Policy

Billing for absent days

Providers may bill CCAP for absent days if:

- The care was authorized by CCAP and scheduled by the parent, but the child was absent
AND
- It is the provider's policy to bill all of their families for absent days
AND
- The scheduled hours are identified in the provider's attendance records as an absent day
AND
- The care is available.

CCAP will not pay for more than ten consecutive absent days of scheduled care and no more than a total of 25 in a calendar year. If a child is absent for part of a day, the payment for that day will be for the amount of care that is scheduled and will not count toward the 25 absent day limit.

Families and providers will be told the number of absent days used by each child on the *Service Authorization*. Additionally, the provider will be told the number of absent days used on the *Remittance Advice*. **However, this information is only as current as the last bill submitted by the provider.** If a child has more than one provider, or if *Billing Forms* are not submitted timely, it is possible that the number of absent days that have been used will be different than the information provided.

If a provider is aware that a child has stopped attending or has been absent for 7 consecutive days, they are to notify the family's CCAP worker immediately.

F. Billing for holidays

CCAP will pay a provider's charge for up to 10 federal or state holidays per year if:

- The provider is closed and not providing care.

AND

- The provider charges all families for these days.

AND

- The holiday falls on a day when the child is authorized and scheduled to be in attendance.

If care is available on the holiday, but the child is absent, count the day as an absent day.

The 10 recognized state and federal holidays are:

- New Year's Day (January 1)
- Martin Luther King's Birthday (3rd Monday in January)
- Washington and Lincoln's Birthdays (3rd Monday in February)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (1st Monday in September)
- Christopher Columbus Day (2nd Monday in October)
- Veterans Day (November 11)
- Thanksgiving (4th Thursday in November)
- Christmas Day (December 25)

If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding day shall be a holiday. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the following day shall be a holiday.

Participants or providers may switch other cultural or religious holidays for the 10 recognized state and federal holidays if they let St. Louis County CCAP know before or within 10 days after the substitution.

****If the provider has their daycare policy on file with St. Louis County CCAP, and this policy lists the holidays for which the daycare provider will be billing, *even if the holidays differ from the above listed recognized holidays*, the county can authorize payment for the provider's listed holidays without any other notification of substitutions. Again, CCAP can only pay up to a maximum of 10 holidays per year. Make sure your provider has submitted their daycare's policy to the county.**

If the provider's service is not available on the holiday the provider bills for but the family needs care from another provider on that day, only one provider may be paid.

CCAP cannot pay for provider vacation days, provider sick days, or any other days that child care is not available, other than for holidays.

G. Special Needs Child Care Rates

The Child Care Assistance program policy for Special Need Rates requires the Parent and Provider request a Special Needs rate and the rate must be approved by DHS. A Special Needs Rate Variance form (DHS-4194) is completed by both parent and provider. Documentation of the child's special needs is included with the request, and then is submitted to the CCAP county worker.

The County will complete the County Recommendation form and submit all forms to DHS. If approved, DHS will determine the rate, based on a process used by DHS. The County will receive notification of the decision and rate.

The County will notify both the parent and provider. If denied, the parent will be notified of the right to appeal.

State Law has established:

- **The Child Care Assistance Program cannot make child care payments to someone who lives in the same home as the child.**
- **Payments cannot be made for child care in the child's home unless approved by the Child Care Assistance Program.**

Payments for child care in the child's home can **only** be made if:

- The child's parents work or go to school out of the home,
and
- Child care out of the home is not available;
or
- A child being cared for has an illness or disability that would make it hard for the family to take the child to a child care home or center.

If you are a family getting child care assistance and your child care is in your home, you must change your child care. If you think you meet the conditions to have child care in your home, call your worker.

- **Child care payments for one day cannot be more than the daily rate. Child care payments for one week cannot be more than the weekly rate.**
- **Payments for activity fees are no longer allowed.**
- **The Child Care Assistance Program will not make absent day payments to legal non-licensed (LNL) family child care providers. The Child Care Assistance Program will pay for 25 absent days a year per child at a licensed provider or a license exempt center.**
- **The Child Care Assistance Program will not make payments to a child care center for more than 25 children at the center who are children of the center's workers or live with center workers.**

If you are a family with a child in care and you work for the child care center your child attends you may need to choose a different child care center.

Effective November 01, 2014:

St. Louis County will refuse to issue an authorization, revoke an existing authorization, stop payment issued, or refuse to pay a bill submitted by a licensed or legal non-licensed provider if:

1. The provider admits to intentionally giving the county materially false information on the provider's billing forms;
2. The county finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the provider intentionally gave the county materially false information on the provider's billing forms;
3. The provider is operating after receipt of an order of suspension or an order of revocation of the provider's license;
4. The provider submits false attendance reports or refuses to provide documentation of the child's attendance upon request; or
5. The provider gives false child care price information.

If fraud is established, disqualification periods in CCAP Policy Manual Chapter 14.12.6 will also apply.

In addition, if a provider is deemed unsafe, operating illegally and/or does not meet the Child Care Assistance Program requirements, as outlined in Chapter 2 and 11 of the CCAP Policy Manual, under current policy, the county must deny or revoke a provider's authorization.

Child Care Centers

(Effective February 03, 2014)

	<u>Hourly Rate</u>	<u>Full Day Rate</u>	<u>Weekly Rate</u>
Infant	\$3.23	\$34.00	\$157.00
Toddler	\$3.07	\$32.00	\$147.27
Preschool	\$3.00	\$29.66	\$142.11
School Age	\$3.00	\$29.97	\$149.86

Age Categories – Center

Infant	6 weeks to 16 months*
Toddler	17 months to 33 months*
Preschool	34 months to age 5*
School Age	Ages 5 to 13

Licensed Family Child Care Providers

(Effective February 03, 2014)

	<u>Hourly Rate</u>	<u>Full Day Rate</u>	<u>Weekly Rate</u>
Infant	\$3.00	\$28.00	\$131.45
Toddler	\$3.00	\$25.00	\$125.00
Preschool	\$2.85	\$25.00	\$120.00
School Age	\$2.80	\$23.65	\$118.31

Age Categories – Licensed Family Child Care Provider

Infant	6 weeks to first birthday (12 months)
Toddler	From 12 months to 24 months
Preschool	24 months to age 5
School Age	Ages 5 to 13**

Legal Non-Licensed Providers

(Effective February 03, 2014)

	<u>Hourly Rate</u>
Infant	\$1.79
Toddler	\$1.70
Preschool	\$1.63
School Age	\$1.61

Age Categories – Legal Non-Licensed Provider

Infant	Birth to first birthday (12 months)
Toddler	From 12 months through 24 months
Preschool	24 months to 4 months before Kindergarten
School Age	Ages 5 to 13

Registration Fee - Centers and Family Child Care Maximum fee: \$25.84

***NOTE: Registration fees may be paid up to two (2) times in 12 months per child.**

**** CCAP's definition of child** (Minnesota Statutes 119B.11 Subdivision 4) allows CCAP participation and payment for children through age 12, or age 14 if there are special needs. The parent must document the condition related to the special need.

Note: These definitions are found in Minnesota Statutes 245A.02, Subd. 16 and 19 and are enforced by Minnesota Department of Human Services – Division of Licensing.

245A.02 Subd.19-

Family Day Care and Group Family Daycare child age classification:

Newborn:	A child between birth and six weeks old
Infant:	A child who is at least 6 weeks old but less than 12 months old
Toddler:	A child who is at least 12 months but less than 24 months old
Preschooler:	A child who is at least 24 months old, up to school age
School ager:	A child who is at least 5 years of age, but is younger than 11 years of age

245A.02 Subd. 16-

Child Care Centers age classification:

School ager:

A child of at least of sufficient age to have attended the first day of kindergarten or is eligible to enter kindergarten within the next 4 months but is younger than 13 years of age.

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE WORKERS**

218-726-2400 or 1-800-450-9777 ext 2400

Fax: 218-733-2992

Amanda Yates, Duluth Area Child Care Assistance Supervisor

South St. Louis County cases:

Jonathan M	726-2170	Cases <u>A – E</u>, <u>Mj – O</u>
Dean K	726-2145	Cases <u>F – Mi</u>
Tonia V	726-2031	Cases <u>P – Z</u>
Briana L	726-2064	Provider general information and provider registrations

Maria Lopez, Range area Child Care Assistance Supervisor

North St. Louis County cases:

AnnMarie H	471-7327	Cases <u>A – L</u>
Jill M	471-7544	Cases <u>M – Z</u>

Virginia:	General Information Number	471-7137	Local fax	218-471-7123
Hibbing:	General Information Number	262-6000	Local fax	218-262-6049
Ely:	General Information Number	365-8220	Local fax	218-365-8217

**St. Louis County Toll Free - 1-800-450-9777 plus Name or Extension Number
Child Care Assistance ‘Worker of the Day’ extension - 2400**

Parent Aware MN

District Office: 1-888-291-9811 <http://parentaware.org/search>