Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council

May 18, 2016

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Louisiana Believes

Serving Children with Special Needs Through Child Care Assistance

Bulletin 139 *(Louisiana Child Care and Development Fund Programs)*

Background
Challenge & Approach

CHALLENGE

Current policy does not support building providers' capacity to improve access.

- Louisiana has policy that provides higher child care assistance (CCAP) payments for children with special needs; however,
- Providers have to prove they charge families of children with special needs more than they charge other families.

Therefore, ***Louisiana's child care assistance program (CCAP) does not support adequate access for children with special needs.***

Differences in **program requirements** and **funding** to provide special education services and opportunities:

	Public Schools	Early/Head Start	Early Steps	Child Care
Requirement to Serve or enroll	Must provide services to children 3 and older with IEPs	10% of their enrollment must have identified needs	Must provide services to children up to 3 with IFSPs	No requirement to serve or enroll
Funding Available	MFP, IDEA Part B	Head Start Allocation	IDEA Part C	Minimally enhanced CCAP rate

Approach, Goal, and Objectives

APPROACH

To improve access and supports for children with special needs in child care settings, the Department established an informal workgroup to recommend improvements to CCAP.

- In August 2015, the Early Childhood Advisory Council recommended having a workgroup propose recommendations in spring 2016 for serving children with special needs.
- The workgroup consisted of:
  - *Department Early Childhood and Special Education staff*
  - *Department of Health and Hospitals Early Steps Manager (ex officio Advisory Council member)*
  - *Disabilities Advocates*
  - *Child Care and Early Head Start provider*
  - *Inclusion Workgroup representatives (from the original BrightStart workgroups)*

GOAL

The goal of the workgroup's recommendations is to increase the capacity of child care providers to offer high-quality child care for children with special needs.

OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the ***definition*** of a child with special needs;
2. Determine how CCAP can ***support access*** to child care for children with special needs; and
3. Determine the ***criteria*** and ***process*** for providing specialized resources to providers and communities.

Objectives and Recommendations

Objective 1: Definition

Any improvements to child care assistance first requires clarity on which children may be classified as having special needs.

RECOMMENDATION

Definition: For purposes of CCAP, a child with special needs is any child with an IFSP or IEP and qualifies for CCAP.

- *IFSPs (Individualized Family Services Plan) determine the services and supports provided to children birth to three-years-old*
- *IEPs (Individual Education Plans) determine the services and supports provided to children with disabilities ages three through twenty-one-years-old*

- The proposed definition aligns with the existing system for serving children with special needs and removes any confusion over which children may qualify for any enhanced child care assistance services.
  - *No longer sets an expectation that a physician justify the special need(s) beyond what is in the IFSP or IEP (e.g., will no longer accept documentation from SSI, physician evaluations, etc. for eligibility for the CCAP rate)*
  - *Clarifies that children of all ages with an IFSP or IEP, who meet CCAP eligibility requirements, are included for CCAP purposes.*

Objective 2: Supporting Access through CCAP

Enhancing providers' capacity and ensuring access to child care for children with special needs requires CCAP to provide additional support for providers

RECOMMENDATION

Criteria: Child care providers serving CCAP-eligible children with special needs should receive an increased CCAP rate which is more than the base rate for that age child.

- Families of children with special needs must still qualify for CCAP based on traditional eligibility criteria – income and work/education requirements

- Using a nominal increased CCAP rate for children with special needs provides basic capacity-building for child care providers to serve this population
  - *Increased financial support is intended to cover basic cost increases for enrolling that child*

- Children who qualify for the CCAP rate for children with special needs will qualify for the maximum state rate (no state-required co-pay)

Objective 2: Supporting Access through CCAP

Proposed Increased Rates

Providing an increased rate for every child with special needs can help ensure child care providers are supported to provide high-quality services.

RECOMMENDATION

Increase the maximum full-time CCAP rate up to 26% for all children with special needs.

Provider Type	Current Infant Toddler Max	Current Infant Toddler Special Needs Rate	Proposed Infant/Toddler Special Needs Rate*	Current 3 & Older Max	Current 3 & Older Special Needs Rate	Proposed 3 & Older Special Needs Rate*
Type III	$22.50	$26.65	**$28.25**	$21.50	$25.65	**$27.00**
Military Center	$22.50	$26.65	**$28.25**	$21.50	$25.65	**$27.00**
Family Child Care	$16.00	$19.50	**$20.00**	$15.00	$18.50	**$18.75**
In-Home Child Care	$15.50	$18.90	**$19.50**	$14.50	$17.90	**$18.25**
School Child Care	$16.00	$19.50	**$20.00**	$15.00	$18.50	**$18.75**

*rounded up to nearest quarter dollar.

Notes

- Providers would receive the special needs rate for children with special needs, regardless of what the family would typically qualify for based on income.
- Families would still be responsible for any provider charges above what CCAP pays for.

Objective 3: Specialized Resources
Special Services Capacity Fund

Some providers may require additional financial support beyond what is provided by the CCAP special needs rate or other programs to increase their ability to meet the needs of an individual child.

RECOMMENDATION

The workgroup will explore establishing a Special Services Capacity Fund Pilot that enhances child care providers' ability to serve children with special needs.

Pilot would generally support long-term capacity building:

- **Training**: for the teacher(s) or leader, as needed
- **Coaching**: for the teacher(s) or leader, as needed
- **Additional Staff Support**: e.g., an additional assistant support staff who can support multiple children and classrooms

The state is working toward releasing the Special Services Capacity Fund Pilot for the 2016-2017 school year. Community Networks, via their Lead Agency, can opt to apply to this pilot funding opportunity for "special services team" coordination function for their community.

Timeline

- **April:** Prepare policy revisions to Bulletin 139
- **May:** Advisory Council reviews recommendations and revisions to Bulletin 139
- **June:** BESE considers Bulletin 139 changes
  BESE authorizes Lead Agencies
- **Summer:** Determine potential funding for capacity fund pilot in 2016-17
- **Fall:** Launch application for Lead Agencies for pilot capacity fund
  November: Bulletin 139 changes in effect *(definition and increased rates)*
- **Winter:** Pilot Lead Agencies submit plan and process for special services team

Proposed Revisions to Bulletin 140 *(Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network)*

Early Childhood Care and Education Network in 2016-2017

This section outlines proposed changes in policy (Bulletin 140) and practice based on 2015-2016 Learning Year.

- ***Vision for Unifying Early Childhood in Louisiana***

- ***Proposed Shifts in Policy***
  - Quality Rating and Improvement System
  - Coordinated Enrollment

- ***Proposed Shifts in Practice***
  - Supporting Improvement
  - Other Key Operational Shifts Based on Feedback

Vision:

Unifying Early Childhood In Louisiana

Act 3 (2012) Vision

Act 3 seeks to unify early childhood so all children enter kindergarten ready.

Shared high standards for what children should learn and what excellent teaching looks like

Teachers are excellent at interacting with children and guiding learning

Expectations for health, safety and learning are consistent with adequate funding levels for programs that serve children well

Families can easily apply and choose the best option for their children

Act 3 Implementation Timeline

Local communities continue to lead the way in implementation.

2012
BESE approves multi-year plan for implementation

2013
13 Early Childhood Community Network Pilots launch

2014
16 more Community Network Pilots launch
Additional legislation is passed to unify licensing, enrollment, and funding

2015 – 2016
All communities have Community Network in place
Statewide implementation and engagement through a Learning Year

2016 – 2017
Continue progress in fully implementing rating and improvement system and coordinated enrollment

Proposed Shifts in Policy:
Quality Rating and Improvement System

Overview of Unified Rating and Improvement System

Act 3 requires the state to evaluate publicly-funded early childhood programs to help families choose the best option for their children.

In 2015-2016, Louisiana launched a unified rating and improvement system with practice performance profiles to:

- *Define and measure core elements needed for positive child outcomes;*
- *Provide simple, clear information about what's happening in classrooms;*
- *Clearly articulate a path to improvement; and*
- *Give families an easy way to compare choices in their community.*

Louisiana's unified rating and improvement system in 2016-2017 will maintain the two core components:

1. Rating that relates to positive child outcomes

- *Adult-child interactions and instruction, as measured by CLASS; and*
- *Access for at-risk children (Community Networks only).*

2. Information on classroom best practices

- *E.g., using curriculum, maintaining low ratios, assessing children for learning*

Summary of Louisiana Results

Louisiana has insight into every classroom thanks to local efforts.

Communities completed a very high number of *CLASS* observations:

✓ 98% of toddler and pre-K classrooms were observed in the fall

✓ Widespread support statewide, across programs and regions

Initial results highlight strengths and areas for improvement:

- Classrooms scored well on climate and organization
  - *Classrooms are generally positive environments where children are encouraged and supported.*
  - *Classrooms mostly run smoothly with consistent routines and clear behavioral expectations.*
- Classrooms scored low on instructional quality
  - *Learning activities are rote (e.g., naming a letter, color or shape) or nonexistent (e.g., lack of adult facilitation during toddler play) and rarely encourage analysis and reasoning.*
  - *Young children receive few, if any, opportunities to learn through back-and-forth dialogue and are not supported to connect concepts and ideas (e.g., reading a book at children rather than engaging them throughout story).*

Adjusting Policy Based on Learning Year

Policy shifts should help encourage instructional improvement in 2016-2017.

1. Communicate Differences in Quality:

- *How do we improve ratings in order to better communicate the differences in what children are experiencing?*

2. Honor Quality and Improvement:

- *How do we reward programs with excellent interactions and instruction? And programs that are improving children's experiences?*

3. Address Issues of Poor Quality:

- *What is the minimum quality experience we want for all children?*

4. Increase Accuracy and Credibility:

- *How do we ensure observations are accurate, even with stakes attached?*

5. Ensure consistent implementation and full participation

- *How do we ensure continuity and build on progress of Learning Year?*

Preliminary Results – March 2016

Current system does not help parents understand what's happening in classrooms.

Preliminary Results – March 2016

Higher scores in climate and organization contrast with lower instruction scores.

This graph shows how many PreK sites scored in each range.

Preliminary Results – March 2016

Difference between interaction and instruction quality is also significant in Toddler classrooms.

This graph shows how many Toddler sites scored in each range.

Performance by Program Type – March 2016

Though 95% of sites were proficient, children are experiencing very different levels of care and instruction.

Third Party Replacements by Program Type

Of thousands of observations, two thirds of all domain scores were reliable. There were no significant differences in accuracy across program types.

1. Differentiate Quality

Adopting recommendations from the makers of the tool will better communicate the quality of experiences for children.

Challenge: Rating system must show the differences in quality in programs to inform families and encourage improvement, in a clear and simple way like the star-rating system did.

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

- Use a four-level scale based in research to differentiate the "Proficient" group.
- Weight domains more equally by using negative climate as separate indicator.

Learning Year	
Range	Rating
6.00-7.00	Excellent
3.00-5.99	Proficient
1.00-2.99	Needs Improvement

Proposed Changes	
Range	Rating
6.00-7.00	Excellent
4.51 -5.99	Proficient
3.00 -4.50	Approaching Proficient
1.00-2.99	Unsatisfactory

2. Honor Excellence and Improvement

2016-2017 Profiles will honor excellence and encourage improvement.

Challenge: Performance Profiles should honor networks and sites that:

- Provide excellent interactions and instruction; and
- Have improved the quality of children's experiences.

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

1. Keep the high bar for Excellence for sites and networks.
2. Release an annual public Honor Roll to recognize sites that are rated "Excellent."
3. Recognize sites and networks that improve their scores or ratings as "Top Gains" on their Performance Profiles.
4. Transition Quality Start in 2017 to continue to reward excellence and foster improvement.

3. Maintain Minimum Standard and Add Future Consequences

System should offer support to struggling sites but also include future consequences if sites consistently fail to meet minimum expectations.

Challenge: Rating and Improvement System must address very low quality sites that use public funds to serve children.

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

- Continue to consider overall score of below 3 on *CLASS* as very low quality.
- Prioritize sites with unsatisfactory ratings for support.
- Sites that consistently fail to reach minimum expectations will lose approval or funding:
  - *All classrooms will receive Third Party Observations to ensure accuracy*
  - *Sites will have two years to improve their Unsatisfactory rating*
  - *Sites that earn an Unsatisfactory rating for two years in any three year period will lose academic approval or public funding*
  - *Two year timeline starts in Fall 2016, with loss of funding taking full effect no earlier than July 1, 2019. Programs and sites will have the opportunity to appeal*
  - *The LDE will conduct a needs analysis in areas where funding may be at risk*

4. Increase Accuracy and Credibility

Louisiana will strengthen oversight, reporting and auditing.

Challenge: Rating system depends on accuracy of *CLASS* observations that are:

- Provided twice a year for every classroom by local valid and reliable *CLASS* observers; and
- Validated by an independent third party that observes 70% of classrooms, providing more consistent measurement statewide and addressing potential bias.

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

1. Third party scores replace local scores for domains different by more than 1 point when observations occur within same semester (Fall or Spring).
2. If there are accuracy concerns at the domain or site level, third party scores will be used at that site (e.g., third party scores would be used if a local observer gives all 7s at a site even if third party did not observe all classrooms at that site).
3. High scores, low scores and concerning patterns trigger more third party observations.
4. Local observers whose scores differ by more than 1 point with comparable observations will be subject to graduated set of interventions:
   - *For less than 80% accuracy, observers and Lead Agencies will receive a warning notice in writing*
   - *For 67% accuracy or less, shadow scored by another local observer*
   - *For less than 50% accuracy observers will not be allowed to observe in the next period*
5. Lead Agencies and local observers can request a departmental review.

5. Ensure consistent implementation and full participation

Based on feedback from the field, a few other small shifts are needed to provide continuity and reduce burdens on providers.

Challenge: Full participation is needed for 2016-2017 while minimizing burden and complexity.

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

1. Maintain Academic Approval process through which programs agree in writing to participate in the quality rating and improvement system and coordinated enrollment.
2. Maintain consequences to ensure all classrooms are observed but allow for flexibility so programs are not unduly penalized.
3. Maintain Community Network-level profiles but provide information on quality and access as separate indicators.
4. Maintain informational metrics including curriculum, ratios, teacher preparation, and teacher certification but allow for flexibility on how informational metrics are reported and what other metrics may be added.

Proposed Shifts in Policy:
Coordinated Enrollment

Adjusting Policy Based on Learning Year: Enrollment

Policy shifts should help local communities make progress in 2016-2017.

Families need an easier process and providers would benefit from coordinated planning and resources. Law requires communities to coordinate enrollment so:

- *Families know of all available seats,*
- *Families have an easy way to know what they are eligible for and apply, and*
- *Families do not occupy more than one seat, ensuring maximum use of slots.*

1. **Increase Transparency**
   - *How do we ensure that parent choices are honored and increase trust?*
2. **Ensure Fair Processes**
   - *How do we ensure there are clear and fair criteria and processes in place as it relates to funding?*
3. **Improve Implementation**
   - *How do we support local communities to make progress even though there may be operational challenges along the way?*

Coordinated Enrollment and Funding – High Level Findings

More time is needed to fully coordinate enrollment and funding.

- **Initial results of Learning Year:**
  - The Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Report showed that nearly 90% of communities made improvement on working together on enrollment since last year
  - 100% of Community Networks submitted Coordinated Enrollment Plans that detailed a description of the steps that will be taken to improve enrollment in 2016-2017
  - 100% of Communities submitted one unified request for PreK funding but child care funding is still disconnected from process
  - Most communities are conducting information campaigns and coordinating applications but need more time for coordinating eligibility and matching
- **Snapshot of how communities are currently implementing coordinated enrollment:**

Coordinated Information Campaign	Coordinated Eligibility Determination	Coordinated Application	Matching Based on Preferences
Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Mostly Implemented	Needs More Time

Coordinated Enrollment in 2016-2017
Continuing to Improve Experience for Families

Louisiana will keep the Coordinated Enrollment expectations in Bulletin 140 consistent, and support communities to continue to improve local systems.

Challenge: Local communities are best prepared to design and implement local systems but there have been challenges (e.g. trust issues, implementing new procedures or technology, etc.) .

Revise Bulletin 140 to:

1. Increase transparency of parent choice within the enrollment process.
2. Community networks must establish clear, transparent and fair criteria and process for making determinations related to coordinated funding.
3. Community networks should provide training, as needed, to providers and others on the eligibility criteria for different programs, as well as the matching process for the network.

Proposed Shifts in Practice

Supporting Improvement and Other Key Shifts

Support Improvement for All Programs

Programs need ratings to understand where to improve and practical resources and tools to make improvement.

Supports aligned to **CLASS Observations** available for every classroom

Curriculum

- Curriculum reviews
- Curriculum Funding Initiative for Child Care
- Teacher Leader Summit
- Online Instructional Toolbox

Assessment

- *GOLD* available to all classrooms
- Online training on *GOLD*
- Choice for sites to use another assessment

Professional Development

- Prof. Development Guide
- Teacher Leader Sessions
- R&Rs (Foundational Training and Coaching)
- Mental Health Consultation
- Inclusion Pilot (Classrooms w/children w/special needs)
- Believe & Prepare: EC (Ancillary Certificate)

Provide Intensive Support for Sites with Lower Scores

Sites with overall average score of Unsatisfactory and Approaching Proficient will be prioritized for additional support from highly-regarded program at Tulane.

Early Learning Centers that have overall average score below 4.5 for 2015-2016 will be prioritized for the following services in 2016-2017:

- Coaching for directors and teachers, including job-embedded technical assistance, based on *CLASS* results
- Customized training based on site-level needs such as:
  - *Creating supportive environments*
  - *Managing young children's behaviors*
  - *Understanding what children can (and cannot) do at each age and how to support their learning and development*
  - *Improving the warmth and supportiveness of teacher-child interactions*
- Assistance in creating and implementing learning and development plans for children

Intensive supports are available for up to six months with extensions if needed and can also be accessed by higher performing sites.

Other Key Operational Shifts for 2016-2017

Feedback from the field calls for several key operational shifts too.

What we heard	What the LDE will do
Teachers need third party results in a timely fashion with enough detail to understand results	Work with Picard to establish a standard form to provide observations information to teachers
3rd Party observation experiences were at times inconsistent	Work with Picard to establish tighter protocols for observers that will be shared with the field in advance
Lead Agencies need to be able to track observer reliability on ongoing basis	Create reports in the *CLASS* System that will support better understanding of observer reliability
3rd Party observations began too early in the Learning Year	Work with Picard to ensure observations for programs operating on a school year begin mid-September
Communities need practical supports and technical assistance on coordinated enrollment	Produce guidance for communities, codify and share best practices and provide technical assistance through collaboratives
Lead Agencies encountered multiple obstacles	Increase per-classroom funding for Lead Agencies, reduce administrative burden and focus on observations and enrollment (not training)

Early Childhood Advisory Council Quarterly Report– Q1 2016

Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council

Expectation for Quarterly Reports

From Bylaws:

"The ECCE Advisory Council will receive quarterly reports from the LDE on the implementation and progress, activities, and status of the Early Childhood Care and Education Network, including the creation and implementation of an accountability system for early care and education programs and the transition of the Child Care and Development Block Grant and licensure to the Department of Education."

Early Childhood Community Networks
Key Activities in Quarter 1

The Department and Community Networks have continued to implement the early childhood accountability system and support coordinated enrollment.

- **Preparing for Performance Profiles in the Learning Year**
  - Teachers finalized their second *GOLD* by Teaching Strategies® checkpoint
  - Lead Agencies began spring *CLASS* observations, provided teachers feedback, and entered scores into the *CLASS* online system
  - The Department established a public-private partnership with the United Way of Southeast Louisiana to produce the Early Childhood Family Survey
  - The Department submitted a mid-year Learning Year Report to the House and Senate Committees on Education

- **Coordinating Enrollment and Funding**
  - Lead Agencies completed the February 1 Child Count
  - Cohort 3 completed Coordinated Enrollment Plans that detailed a description of the steps that will be taken to improve enrollment in 2016-17
  - Lead Agencies and Community Networks submitted a unified Coordinated Funding Request, requesting seats for LA 4, NSECD, and Pre-K Expansion Seats
  - New PreK Expansion Grant seats were allocated at March BESE
  - Lead Agencies attended Supervisor Collaborative sessions in January and March

Supporting Teachers to be Successful
Key Activities in Quarter 1

The Department supported professional training and teacher preparation opportunities.

- **Participating in Teacher Leader Collaboratives**
  - Two teachers from every Community Network were invited to attend the statewide Teacher Leader collaboratives in January
  - Teachers from every type of program learned practical strategies for improving classroom interactions
- **Instructional Materials Reviews- Infant/Toddler and Pre-K Curriculum**
  - The Department launched a review of instructional materials for programs that service children ages birth to five
  - The reviews determined the degree of alignment with the Louisiana Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards
  - Five curriculum reviews have been posted, with more being added over the spring
- **Believe and Prepare: Early Childhood**
  - The Department selected five programs to collaboratively develop the first ever Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate Programs
  - Emerging programs proposals are expected to be reviewed by BESE in June, with preparation programs launching as early as fall 2016

Child Care and Development Block Grant and Licensure

Key Activities in Quarter 1

The Department implemented a series of revisions to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Benefits, making quality child care more affordable.

1. **Extended Eligibility Period for Families**
   - Families remain eligible for at least one year regardless of life changes

2. **Revised Subsidy Rates , Sliding Scale, Part-time, and Absence Days**
   - Infant/toddler max rate increases from $18.50 per day to $22.50 (Type III Centers and Military Centers only)
   - PreK max rate increases from $17.50 to $21.50 (Type III & Military)
   - Change Sliding Scale to 0%, 135%, and 165% of Federal Poverty Level
   - Part-time rates paid per hour rather than 6 minute increments
   - Absent days paid change from 2 days to 5 days per month

3. **Simplified Co-Pay's for Providers and Families**
   - Co-pays change from the 40%, 60%, 80% structure to minimal flat amount per day ($3, $2, or $0) based on household income

Child Care and Development Block Grant and Licensure
Key Activities in Quarter 1

The Department has continued the transition of the Child Care Development Block Grant and the implementation of the new licensing regulations.

- **Successful Launch of the CAFÉ Web Portal for Families and Providers**
  - Families can now submit application and verification documents through the CAFÉ web portal
  - The LDE prepared to launch the CAFÉ Provider Portal, which allows center directors to manage licensing and provider certification tasks online

- **Submitted the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan**
  - The CCDF State Plan was drafted and reviewed by ECCE Advisory Council and public
  - The Department revised the plan based on feedback and submitted the plan to be reviewed by the federal government

- **Improving Child Care Assistance Program Responsiveness:**
  - Launched overtime initiative to process over 14,070 applications in from January-March, with over 2,500 overtime hours worked
  - Began daily tracking of phone calls and emails, ensuring emails were responded to within three business days and driving down answer time
  - Intensive hiring for scanning, processing, quality control and customer services

Quality Start Participation
Monitoring Change Over Time

There has been little change in Quality Start enrollment for Quarter 1.

Publicly-Funded Licensed Early Learning Centers
Monitoring Change Over Time

There has been little change in the number of Type III Centers.

	Type I	Type II	Type III
January 2016	315	143	1088
February 2016	314	144	1079
March 2016	318	148	1072

Update on CCAP Eligibility Rejection Rates

	Did not provide verification	Over Income	Did not meet work/school requirement	Did not complete required materials	Other
January 2016	42%	6%	37%	6%	9%
February 2016	44%	6%	38%	6%	6%
March 2016	53%	5%	31%	5%	6%