



February 16, 2017



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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues,

Today, the Department announced changes to the eligibility requirements for the [Child Care Assistance Program \(CCAP\)](#) to enable more working families in Louisiana to access child care assistance. These changes come in response to the feedback we have received since CCAP transitioned to the Department on July 1, 2015.

The new eligibility requirements, which are effective immediately, state:

- Families who work at least 20 hours a week are now eligible;
- Students enrolled in school or job training full-time, regardless of total hours in class, are eligible; and
- Families of children with special needs who work 15 hours a week, and note they often face challenges in sustaining hours due to the needs of their children are eligible.

Prior to this change, Louisiana's requirements were among the strictest in the nation. Families that were not guaranteed work for 30 hours a week could not access child care assistance.

Moreover, the CCAP stipend for most Louisiana families averaged only 28 percent of the amount provided for other pre-K programs. These low payments caused a financial burden for child care centers, and payments were immediately stopped when a parent lost their job.

As a result, there was a 60 percent decrease—from 25,000 children to 11,000 children—in the number of families receiving child care subsidy over a five-year period. Yet current numbers for this year indicate that the trend is reversing thanks in large part to our efforts to:

- Increase eligibility;
- Increase rates for providers;
- Reduce expensive co-pays for working families; and
- Allow families to remain eligible for CCAP for at least one year, regardless of changes in work or school status.

Ultimately, it is expected that more Louisiana children can benefit from quality care through the child care assistance program at any given time.

Thanks for your support and patience as we have helped improve the child care assistance program for Louisiana families and children.

And as always, thank you for all you do for our children.

John

John White
Louisiana Department of Education
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

FEBRUARY GOLD[®] CHECKPOINT

By the end of February, teachers should finalize the developmental levels for the second checkpoint for all publicly-funded children in birth through pre-K classrooms. Teaching Strategies [®] offers an array of [resources](#) on this process including *Quick Start Guides* for Teachers and Administrators. These [resources](#) are available to anyone with a Teach Strategies GOLD[®] account through the "Help?" feature. Additionally, users have access to a web page devoted to the checkpoint process that includes "User Guides and FAQs", "Webinar Support", "How to Videos", and "Support from the Teaching Strategies [®] Blog".

Administrators can review the status of finalized checkpoint completion for their classes in order to determine support needed by their teachers by accessing the *Assessment Status Report* (located under the "Checkpoint" tab of Teaching Strategies GOLD[®] account).

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact [Ivy Starns](#).

LOUISIANA'S GOLD[®] TECHNICAL SUPPORT LINE

The staff at Teaching Strategies has provided Louisiana with its own state-specific Technical Support phone line. This service will allow tracking of issues with the GOLD[®] assessment system in order to provide timely, efficient support and resolutions. To report difficulties in adding/saving informational metric information (teacher certification, ratios, and curriculum) as well as other technology issues related to the GOLD[®] app, finding missing documentation, etc., call the Louisiana Technical Support Hot Line at **1-866-248-2575** .

FUNDING AND ENROLLMENT

FEBRUARY 1 CHILD COUNT DUE FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Bulletin 140 requires all communities to count all publicly-funded children being served on February 1, 2017, who have not yet entered kindergarten. To complete this count, Lead Agencies will be requesting counts of publicly-funded children by funding source from all publicly-funded sites. Please work with your Lead Agencies to provide this information in a timely manner. The February 1 Child Count must be completed by **February 28**.

SCHOOL READINESS TAX CREDITS- PROPOSED REVISIONS

This week, the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council endorsed proposed revisions to the School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC) and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) bonus payments structure. The proposed revisions will be reviewed by BESE on March 7 and 8. Please note that there will *not* be any changes to tax credits or bonus payments in 2017. If approved, the revisions will not go into effect until 2018.

The Department has posted a series of resources to help understand the proposed revisions:

- [Presentation slides](#) that describe the proposed revisions
- [Recorded webinar](#) describing the proposed revisions
- [SRTC Calculator](#) to help centers estimate how their tax credits and bonus payments may be impacted

The proposed revisions to tax credits support alignment with the recently unified system for early childhood, as well as with the new expectations for child care teachers. Any questions related to the proposed revisions for the SRTC can be sent to earlychildhood@la.gov.

QUALITY START REMINDER - SCHOOL READINESS TAX CREDITS

If you are a Quality Rated center, you may qualify for School Readiness Tax Credits. School Readiness Tax Credits may be available for qualifying teachers, directors, centers, and parents. Important information and dates concerning these tax credits can be found [here](#).

For questions, please contact [Mary Jo Smith](#) .

CHILD SAFETY AND WELFARE

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS RELATED TO YOUR CENTER

The Licensing field specialists are in the early learning centers completing inspections daily and will answer any questions regarding your inspection while on site.

If you have additional questions or questions related to BESE [Bulletin 137](#) (*Louisiana Early Learning Center Licensing Regulations*), please contact your licensing consultant at 225-342-9905  or email [LDE Licensing](#).

TEMPORARY CLOSURE NOTIFICATION

A center must notify the Department's Licensing Division in writing of any type of temporary closure within one day of the closure (BESE [Bulletin 137](#) ; §907. *Notification of Temporary or Permanent Closure*).

For questions, please contact your licensing consultant at 225-342-9905  or email [LDE Licensing](#) .

LEAD AGENCY SUPPORT

WEEKLY EARLY CHILDHOOD LEAD AGENCY OFFICE HOURS

The Early Childhood team is conducting weekly office hours for lead agencies. These calls are an opportunity for lead agency representatives to call in with any questions about current work and to hear updates from the Early Childhood Team. These sessions are typically held every **Tuesday from 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Use this information to connect:

1-855-240-2575  and

PIN: 81774907.

Future Office Hours will be held on the following Tuesdays:

- February 21

Office Hours will **not** be held on February 28 due to the Mardi Gras holiday.

OTHER

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL - MARCH 22

The next Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council meeting will take place on

Wednesday, March 22 at 1 p.m. The meeting will be held in the **Claiborne Building, 1201 N. 3rd Street, Baton Rouge, LA.**

This meeting is open to the public and can be live streamed. Please click [here](#) for directions on accessing live streamed meetings.

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