



Arkansas House Newsletter

July 19, 2024

Improving Access to Childcare



Early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong learning. Improving access to high-quality childcare programs helps to provide structured environments where children can explore, play, and interact, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and cooperation.

This week, we would like to share a recent announcement regarding increased access to affordable childcare. The Arkansas Department of Education announced important changes to the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy program under the LEARNS Act.

The Child Care Assistance is a program available for low-income families. This program provides financial assistance for quality childcare and is made possible by the CCDF.

The changes below, which became effective on July 1, are the result of efforts by the State Board of Education Committee on Early Learning and local early childhood lead organizations and their continued engagement with stakeholders.

- Required work hours: Families must now show they completed 20 hours of work each week, a reduction from 30 hours. This change expands access to high-quality early childhood opportunities, making it easier for working families to balance work and home life.
- Household income determination: Instead of updating the eligibility-based state median income every two years, ADE will update this criteria every year. This ensures eligibility determinations are more accurate.
- Family Co-Payment: Arkansas now waives family co-payments for families at or below 75 percent of the state's median income. This is a change from 40 percent, so more families can afford high-quality early childhood opportunities for their children.
- Removal of lifetime limit: The previous 60-month limit to receive benefits has been removed, allowing eligible families to now qualify indefinitely.
- Unified application: Families can now use one application for both Arkansas Better Chance and CCDF programs.

ADE serves approximately 16,000 Arkansas families annually through CCDF. There is no deadline for families to apply. As long as funding is available, the department will process eligible applications.

To learn more, visit <https://dese.link/childcareassistance>.