

Update on Proposal to Centralize Eligibility Determination for the DCF CC Financial Assistance Program, January 2011

As part of Challenges for Change legislation passed in 2010 the Child Development Division (CDD) of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) planned to centralize responsibility for eligibility determination for the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CC FAP) on February 1, 2010.

CDD developed a transition plan that created a bridge between the current externally contracted process and a long range goal of integrating CC eligibility determination into DCF's modernized benefits process. It was agreed that integration into the modernized benefits process would not occur until that process was working smoothly for other programs. In the transition plan, a specialized unit of Benefit Eligibility Specialists is created and supervised jointly by the CDD and by the Economic Services Division (ESD) to process CC FAP applications and work with families and CC providers around CC assistance. The transition plan prioritizes maintaining timely determinations and high quality customer services for families, and effective day-to-day communication and accurate and timely payments for CC providers while improving the flow of information among DCF benefit programs and services. Part of the transition plan included funding transition services and support for families in navigating access to CC benefits through the 12 Community Child Care Support Agencies who currently determine eligibility. Eligibility determination for Specialized CC Services, which includes Family Support CC, Protective Services CC, and CC for Children with a Special Health Need, will continue to be administered locally as a responsibility of regional Children's Integrated Services (CIS) teams.

With the formation of a new administration, both AHS Secretary Racine and DCF Commissioner Yacovone decided to delay centralization and take time for a thorough re-examination and analysis of the proposed change. Community Child Care Support Agencies were given an opportunity to either continue to determine eligibility for CC FAP through June 2011 or work with CDD on piloting the centralization transition plan during that same period. Eligibility determination in the St. Johnsbury region was centralized in November 2010. Eligibility determination for the Lamoille region will be centralized on February 1, 2011. All other regions will retain eligibility determination in Community CC Support Agencies. CDD is communicating with families and child care providers in those regions about the change. The Secretary and Commissioner plan to make an informed decision about CC FAP eligibility determination by May 1, 2011 and the model they propose will be implemented in July of 2011.

In order to spearhead the analysis process, a Steering Committee has been formed. The charge for the Steering Committee is:

To identify the potential service delivery models for child care financial assistance eligibility determination and to analyze each model in the following areas:

- Equity and access
- Financial considerations
- Effectiveness of service delivery
 - For families
 - For providers
- Outcomes
 - For families
 - For providers

Although not a decision making body, the Steering Committee is charged with creating an objective analysis of each potential model for determining child care financial eligibility and for presenting that information to Secretary Racine and Commissioner Yacovone for a final decision. Their target date for the final decision is May 1, 2011.

The Steering Committee is small in order to ensure that we can act as a working group but our intent is to communicate regularly with our stakeholders and to reach out for expertise and information as often as necessary. Please feel free to contact any member of the Steering Committee with thoughts or questions.

Members of the Committee

Linda Dean-Farrar, Sunrise Family Resource Center	ldeanfarrar.sunrise@comcast.net
Scott Johnson, Lamoille Family Center	sjohnson@lamoillefamilycenter.org
Lee Lauber, Family Center of Washington County	leel@fcwcvt.org
Elizabeth Meyer, Child Care Resource	emeyer@childcareresource.org
Reeva Murphy, Child Development Division, DCF	reeva.murphy@ahs.state.vt.us
Kathleen Paterson, Child Development Division, DCF	kathleen.paterson@ahs.state.vt.us
Monica Caserta Hutt, Commissioner's Office, DCF (Facilitator)	monica.hutt@ahs.state.vt.us