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EXPANDING ACCESS TO CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE:
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT FUND ON IMPROVING INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY AND OUTREACH

Rachel Wilensky, Alyssa Fortner, and Shira Small | October 2024

*This fact sheet is part of a series developed from an in-depth report to help state child care agencies and advocates assess existing policies and identify opportunities to increase access to child care. For additional information and policy considerations, please reference the **full report**: "Expanding Access to Child Care Assistance: Opportunities in the Child Care and Development Fund."*

IMPROVING INFORMATION ACCESS AND OUTREACH

Many families, especially those with low incomes, families of color, and immigrant families, encounter significant barriers when trying to access information about child care services and assistance. These challenges include limited access to transportation, unreliable internet connectivity, and inconsistent work hours. Information from agencies may not be shared in multiple languages or in ways that are accessible to people with limited literacy. Further, there may not be staff who live in the same communities as the families they are trying to reach, or there could be limited staff capacity to conduct outreach and build trust in these communities. However, states have the opportunity within federal regulations to design equitable, inclusive, and accessible outreach policies that can help bridge the information gap.

UPDATES FROM THE MARCH 2024 FINAL RULE

*The **final rule** includes updated requirements and encouragements for states to make information more accessible to families. For more information, please see CLASP's **"The Child Care and Development Fund 2024 Rule: Detailed Summary and State Examples."***

- **Posting sliding fee scales:** The final rule requires Lead Agencies to post information about their sliding fee scales for parent co-payments, including policies related to waiving co-payments and estimated co-payment amounts for families on their consumer education websites. Tribal Lead Agencies are exempt from this requirement.
- **Online applications:** The final rule requires that Lead Agencies offer an online subsidy application for families or that they demonstrate why the implementation of an online subsidy application is impracticable in their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan.
- **Eligibility verification through other programs:** The final rule offers Lead Agencies the option to use documents from other benefit programs to verify CCDF eligibility or use enrollment in these programs to satisfy CCDF eligibility without additional documentation, so long as these programs' eligibility aligns with CCDF.

CURRENT BARRIERS INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- Lack of internet access to receive, review, and share information.
- Shortage of multilingual agency staff and lack of information and services available in languages other than English.
- Mistrust in government services or agencies.
- Decentralized information across different social services agencies.
- Agency staff who do not live in the same communities as the families they are trying to reach.
- Limited agency staff capacity to conduct outreach and build trust in communities of color.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider what information about child care assistance availability and eligibility is shared and how **websites** can be user-friendly and easily accessible for all.
- Ensure all information is available in the languages of potential applicants.
- Examine how **parents are treated**. Listen to their experiences engaging with the subsidy agency to understand the impact of biases on child care access.
- Consider **working with other state agencies** that administer social services (such as early intervention programs; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) to offer eligible families automatic referrals to multiple programs.
- Use trusted community partners, leaders, or organizations who speak the languages of the community to share and provide information to potentially eligible families.

PROMISING STRATEGIES

- **Georgia** features information on the state's child care website that facilitates parents' ability to **search for child care providers**, information regarding their Quality Rating and Improvement System, and options on financial assistance. The website also has information on the state's pre-K programs, meal programs, IDEA programs, and services, including a searchable feature for inclusion specialists along with child care information. Georgia's website is comprehensive, linking all the necessary information **in one place**.
- **Massachusetts** partners with community-based organizations as part of its consumer education efforts. Their state plan includes a **partnership with the state Office of Refugees and Immigrants** to identify the most commonly spoken languages of families who receive child care assistance, and supports translating information into these languages. In addition, Massachusetts works to employ bilingual staff in the primary language of their clients to provide services in the families' native language and offer access to telephonic translation services.
- **Oregon** families can **submit child care subsidy applications** in person; online; or via fax, mail, or email. The state also offers the application in various languages, including Braille.

Note: The barriers and considerations outlined above are not comprehensive. For a more detailed list, please visit the full report.

For questions or additional information, please contact Rachel Wilensky at rwilensky@clasp.org.