### GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Child and Family Services Agency



Administrative Issuance: CFSA-14-4

TO: All Staff

FROM: Leslie Gross

Director, Office of Well Being

DATE: June 23, 2014

RE: Early Education and Child Care

The Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA or the Agency) recognizes that early childhood is a time of great developmental growth and resiliency. For a child involved in the child welfare system, many of whom have experienced trauma, quality child care can greatly support a child's developmental growth, as well as provide an emotionally-supportive environment for children to prepare for educational success. In addition, accessibility of quality child care has been cited as having a positive impact on permanency and reunification. To ensure a high level of customer service, CFSA makes concerted efforts to keep children in foster care enrolled in their current child care setting, if appropriate.

For resource parents, quality child care can be a crucial service that reinforces an individual resource parent's efforts to provide nurturing support for the child's healthy development. It should be noted that lack of child care has been cited by staff and resource families as a major barrier to placing children in resource homes that would otherwise be the best match for a child.

CFSA is dedicated to ensuring high quality child care, including before- and after-school care, as part of a larger effort to support educational development for every child involved with CFSA. The Agency has therefore centralized and streamlined its child care process to assist the following individuals to identify and access quality child care alongside early education options that can help prepare children for successful educational outcomes:

- 1. CFSA and private agency resource parents (including kinship families)
- 2. Birth parents with children in protective supervision
- 3. Teen parents who are in foster care

This administrative issuance provides guidance to CFSA and private agency social workers and staff members who are responsible for the management of child care services provided to the above-cited groups of parents (hereinafter collectively referred to as "parents"). If you have questions regarding this issuance, please contact the early education specialist in the Office of Well Being (OWB).

### **Eligibility**

Parents are eligible for the following services:

1. Child care for children ages 0-5 before- and after-care for children who are attending school (ages 3 and older).

#### **Early Education and Child Care**

- 1. Early education and child care services are coordinated through OWB.
- All child care placement options are thoroughly considered. Preference is given to <u>Head Start</u> as well as
  pre-kindergarten programs provided by District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), followed by
  consideration of quality child care programs. To facilitate access to such programs, parents can apply for
  vouchers in addition to subsidies provided by CFSA.
- 3. Parents (as defined in this issuance) are automatically eligible for child care vouchers that are distributed through the DC Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE).
  - a. OSSE has given CFSA authority to manage the child care voucher program for children in the above categories.
  - b. CFSA may also provide subsidies to <u>licensed</u> child care providers who do not accept OSSE vouchers. These subsidies are administered through OWB and tracked in FACES.NET.
- 4. Child care requests are authorized by OWB staff members who also facilitate child care placement decisions.
  - Child care placements are based on the quality of the child care setting, the educational needs of the child, and the best interests of the child as determined by a child's team.

#### **Early Education and Child Care Options**

- 1. Early Head Start
  - a. This program is available for children ages 0-3 who reside in the District of Columbia (DC) and Maryland (MD).
  - b. CFSA follows DCPS, OSSE, and MD guidelines regarding eligibility and any cost for Early Head Start.

#### 2. Head Start

- a. This program is available for children ages 3-5 who reside in DC and MD.
- b. CFSA follows DCPS, OSSE, and MD guidelines regarding eligibility and any cost for Head Start.
- 3. DC or MD Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)
  - a. Pre-K program are available for children ages 3-5 (based on age, birth date, and any other requirements of the school district).
  - b. There is no cost for any DC or MD-eligible resident (based on their respective residency).
- 4. Child Care from DC-based Providers who accept OSSE Child Care Vouchers
  - a. Child care is available for children ages 0-5 (based on the child care center's age requirements for infants) and also for ages 3-12 (pre-K through age 12) for families who reside in DC. See Attachment A: Process for Securing OSSE Vouchers.
  - b. Child care vouchers may also be used for before- and after-care services.
  - c. These vouchers cover the entire cost of child care from the provider.

- 5. Child Care from Providers who do not accept OSSE Vouchers (in DC or Other Jurisdictions)
  - a. Child care is available for children ages 0-5 (based on the child care center's age requirements for infants) and also for ages 3 and older (pre-K through last year of school attendance). See Attachment B: Process for Securing CFSA Child Care Subsidy.
  - b. Child care subsidies may also be used for before- and after-care services.
  - c. If OWB approves the request to enroll a child in a child care center that does not accept the OSSE voucher, a CFSA daily rate subsidy is available to parents.
    - CFSA pays a subsidy that may cover the entire cost of child care or a percentage of the child care rate with the remainder covered by the parent.

#### **Enrollment Process**

The following steps describe the consultation process between OWB and parents for making decisions about early education experiences:

- 1. OWB provides guidance to parents regarding identification of child care options in the following situations:
  - a. Removal of a child and placement into a foster home
  - b. Change in foster care placement
  - c. Status change to protective supervision with birth parents
- 2. Parents should submit to OWB (via telephone or email) their preferences for Early Head Start (ages 0-3), Head Start (ages 3-5), Pre-K programs (ages 3-5), and other early education programs near home or work.

Reminder: children in foster care are categorically eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start, regardless of parent income.

- 3. OWB staff reviews the parent's requested preferences.
- 4. OWB gives preference to Head Start or Pre-K programs first, followed by child care programs.
- 5. OWB shares options with parents, ranking them in order of preference.
  - Parents may request a justification to the preferential order via telephone or email to OWB.
- 6. OWB reviews and approves child care request.
- 7. OWB assists with enrollment into the approved program, or completion of a voucher or subsidy application (as applicable).
- 8. Social workers are responsible for ensuring that parents receive confirmation of enrollment, voucher, or subsidy.

Note: Payment is provided through the subsidy process outlined in this document. Demand payments do not serve as a standard method of payment for child care providers.

- 9. Social workers enter the enrollment information into the FACES.NET education screen.
- 10. CFSA's Accounts Payable department distributes blank subsidy invoices to providers who do not accept vouchers so that payment can be issued by CFSA.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- Early Education Specialist
  - a. CFSA's early education specialist is the central point of contact for all parents in need of child care for their children, including children placed outside of the DC or MD area.
  - b. The early education specialist provides recommendations for education and child care placement options.
  - c. The early education specialist also oversees the administration of child care vouchers, CFSA child care subsidies, and the tracking and monitoring of these services.
  - d. OWB staff members support the early education specialist by performing administrative tasks to document eligibility and submitting paperwork as needed to secure child care for children involved with CFSA.

#### 2. Social Worker

- a. The social worker facilitates communication between the parent and the OWB early education specialist.
- b. Social workers inform parents of the process for securing early education and child care services.
- c. Social workers should refer to the procedures outlined in this document when accessing early education and child care.
- 3. Child Information System (FACES.NET)
  - All child care subsidy payments are processed in FACES.NET.
- 4. DC Office of the Chief Financial Officer
  - a. The DC Office of the Chief Financial Officer receives requests for child care subsidy payments from FACES.NET and provides payments to the child care providers.
  - b. Procedures are in place to ensure customer satisfaction and timely payment processes.

#### **Quality Assurance**

- 1. Quality assurance processes such as periodic client satisfaction surveys and questionnaires are conducted for parents, child care providers, and staff (CFSA and private agency).
- 2. Other quality assurance processes will include a review of the levels of quality child care (in keeping with DC standards) as well as an evaluation of all facets of the program.
- 3. The information collected from the quality assurance processes are used to inform the way that child care is administered by CFSA.
  - Improvements will be made to the system based on the above quality assurance findings.

# Attachment A: Process for Securing OSSE Vouchers

- 1. OSSE issues vouchers to DC child care providers who accept them. The vouchers cover the entire cost of child care for those who meet the requirements.
- 2. An OSSE voucher can only be issued if the following conditions are met:
  - a. The child care provider is located in the District of Columbia and accepts vouchers.
  - The child is 12 years old or younger (unless the child has special needs, then the age of eligibility extends to age 19).
  - c. At least one of the following family circumstances exists:
    - i. The child is in the care of resource parents.
    - ii. A teen parent is in the care of CFSA.
    - iii. The child is living at home with his or her biological parent under protective supervision.
- 3. Applying for a voucher is completed in two easy steps:
  - a. With assistance from OWB, the parent locates a child care provider by contacting DC Child Care Connections via phone at 202-862-1111 or accessing their website at <a href="https://www.learndc.org">https://www.learndc.org</a>.
  - b. With assistance from OWB, the parent completes the required documents for the child care voucher outlined in the table below. These documents can be accessed via CFSA's website at <a href="www.cfsa.dc.gov">www.cfsa.dc.gov</a> under Partners, then Social Workers, then Social Worker Support Forms, and finally Child Care Referral Packet.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	Protective Supervision	Foster/Kinship Care	Teen Wards
Child Care Referral Form	✓	✓	✓
OSSE Health Certificate Form	✓	✓	✓

- 4. Please note that the OSSE Health Certificate Form is a two-page document. All children over 1 year old must have a yearly physical exam, tuberculosis test results, lead test results, and chicken pox vaccination.
- 5. The social worker and supervisor must sign and date the bottom part of the referral form.
- 6. Sometimes child care is needed to support a family when the parent is employed and works nights, weekends, or some other time of the day or week during which child care is not typically provided or available but is needed. To complete the referral for nontraditional child care, the referral <u>must include a</u> <u>letter from the parent's employer</u>, which includes verification of employment and tour of duty <u>in addition to the documents listed above</u>.
- 7. The parent or social worker must submit all referrals with the required documentation to OWB via e-mail at cfsa.wellbeing@dc.gov.

# Attachment B: Process for Securing CFSA Child Care Subsidy

- 1. Social workers can request a subsidy for child care outside of the District of Columbia or from a District provider who does not accept vouchers by using the CFSA child care provider subsidy.
- 2. A parent may select any <u>licensed</u> child care center regardless of the city or state within which it is located.
- 3. Social workers must submit the following two required documents to <a href="mailto:cfsa.wellbeing@dc.gov">cfsa.wellbeing@dc.gov</a>:
  - a. Current copy of the selected child care provider's license
  - b. W-9 form
- 4. Upon review of the referral documents, OWB staff will provide social workers with a FACES.NET Provider ID number for the child care provider.
- 5. The social worker must link the client to the child care provider in FACES.NET by going into "Service Log" and following the steps below:
  - a. On the *Service* tab, enter the appropriate Child Care Service, Status, Frequency, Estimated Begin Date, Estimated End Date, and Actual Begin Date. The appropriate Status for a service that has begun and is still ongoing is "Service Initiated/In Progress."
  - b. On the Provider tab, click Find and find the Provider.
  - c. Click "Save".
  - d. Request "Approval".
  - e. Note that payments will not be scheduled unless the Actual Begin Date has been entered and the service is approved both by the supervisor and by the program manager. As well, the child's Date of Birth must be recorded on the Client General Information screen so that the correct rate can be calculated.

# Attachment C: CFSA Child Care Subsidy Rates

The following CFSA Child Care Subsidy rates are effective as of April 1, 2014. Resource parents are required to pay any difference between the CFSA rate and the daily child care center rate. For example, if the daily rate is \$80.00 for an infant and CFSA pays \$54.41 through a subsidy, then the resource parent pays \$25.59.

	Center		Home	
	Center	Out of	Home	Out of
	DC	State	DC	State
Infant <sup>1</sup> (Full)	\$54.41	\$39.00	\$35.00	\$30.58
Infant (Part)	\$32.65	\$19.50	\$21.00	\$15.29
Pre-School <sup>2</sup> (Full)	\$42.00	\$24.59	\$28.00	\$22.63
Pre-School (Part)	\$25.20	\$14.29	\$16.80	\$11.31
School Age <sup>3</sup> (Full)	\$32.00	\$17.56	\$25.80	\$16.16
School Age (Before)	\$14.40	\$10.54	\$11.61	\$9.70
School Age (After)	\$14.40	\$10.54	\$11.61	\$9.70
School Age (Before & After)	\$19.20	\$14.05	\$15.48	\$14.05

Questions about child care subsidy payments can be directed to the Accounts Payable contacts below.

First letter of the first name of the home-	Point of Contact
based provider or first letter of the business	
name	
C, E, K, O, Q, R	Sherita Hawthorne, 202-671-4415
B, D, J, T, X, V, Y	Vicki King, 202-671-4478
H, L, N, M, U, Z, G	Toyin Sobowale, 202-671-4373
A, F, I, P, W, X	Brenda Young, 202-671-4362

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Infant rate applies to children ages 0-2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Pre-school rate applies to children ages 3-4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> School age rate applies to children ages 5 and older