

Child Care Assistance Frequently Asked Questions

PLEASE KEEP THIS SECTION FOR YOUR RECORDS!

Who is eligible for child care assistance?

You may be eligible for child care assistance if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You are working at least 80 hours per month and are within the established income guidelines.
- You receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and are in an approved work activity.
- You are a vocational/technical student in a program running two years or less and your school and work equal 80 hours per month.
- You are a college student who attends school a minimum of 80 hours per month or a combination of both work and school for a minimum of 80 hours per month.
- You are attending a college, university or technical institute a minimum of 12 semester credit hours.
- You are a high school or GED student.

For two-parent households, both parents must meet work or work/school requirements. In addition, you must have at least a 30-day need for child care. CCS will NOT pay for child care for anyone pursuing education beyond a bachelor's degree.

Who can apply for child care assistance?

A child's parent, guardian or a person who is exercising parental control of the child can apply for assistance. If the application is submitted by a person exercising parental control, they must submit a signed statement from the child's parent or guardian giving them authority to exercise parental control of the child.

How do you determine the amount of assistance I will receive?

Assistance levels are determined using a formula based on family size, gross income (before taxes), and the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Depending on your family income, you may be responsible for a co-payment. This co-payment will remain the same no matter how many children you have in care, the number of hours they are in care, or what your provider charges per hour.

How many hours may my child spend in child care each month?

210 hours per month is the maximum allowed per child by CCS. However, monthly hours are calculated individually for each family, based on work and school schedules and the need for child care. A certificate will be issued for the number of hours per month that you are eligible for. You are 100% responsible for any child care costs after you reach the maximum number of hours on your certificate.

When will my assistance start?

Caseworkers have up to 10 working days to process your application. If your application is received between the 1st and the 15th of the month, your eligibility for assistance will begin on the 1st. If your application is received between the 16th and the end of the month, your eligibility will begin on the 16th. Do not apply for assistance more than one month before your child care need begins.

How often do I need to reapply?

You will need to check the expiration date of your certificate when you receive it. You may reapply 30 days prior to the expiration date of your current certificate. However, if you have a change in circumstances (permanent change in employment or school status, address change, a change in child care arrangements or if your income exceeds the dollar amount listed on the back of your approval certificate) you will need to notify your caseworker, in writing, within ten (10) days of the change.

How does CCS pay my child care bill?

Payments are made directly to the child care provider. Providers bill our office, using forms provided, either once or twice a month. Payments are NEVER made directly to parents.

How is my response to the voter registration question used by CCS?

If you answer yes, or the question is left blank, you will be sent a voter registration form and postage paid return envelope so that you can register.

Registration or refusing to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance or services that you may receive from the Department of Social Services. If you register to vote, the information regarding the office to which the voter registration form was submitted will remain confidential and be used for voter registration purposes. If you would like help filling out the voter registration form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the voter registration form in private. If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the: South Dakota Secretary of State, 500 E Capitol, Pierre SD 57501, (605) 773-3537.

What child care providers can I use?

It can be difficult to find an appropriate child care provider for your children. Therefore, several different types of provider types are allowed under CCS program guidelines. They include:

- Regulated – providers who are registered or licensed by CCS. These can include family day cares, group family day cares, and day care centers.
- In-Process – providers who are in the process of becoming registered or licensed and who have submitted a signed application to the CCS licensing worker.
- Relatives – an uncle, aunt, grandparent, great grandparent, or non-resident sibling to the child who is at least 18 years of age. Verification of the relationship between provider and the child(ren) in care is required.
- In-Home – a provider who comes into your home and provides care to only your children and who is at least 18 years of age.
- Informal Care – a provider who cares for only your children and who is at least 18 years of age.

In-home and Informal providers must meet various requirements in order for payment to begin. This includes completion of the provider forms, CPR certification including hands on testing, and CCS must have received the results of the background screenings. **Care done prior to the date these requirements are met cannot be reimbursed by CCA.** Providers will also be required to complete orientation training and a home inspection within designated timeframes in order to remain eligible for payment to continue. If you choose a relative, in-home, or informal care provider, he/she will receive a packet with complete instructions. Your provider will need to fill out and return the required forms before your application can be processed.

May I use more than one provider?

Yes. But every provider must meet the requirements of CCS as outlined above. It is important that your CCS caseworker knows how many hours your child will spend with each provider each month, in order for your assistance to be figured correctly. Please make sure to attach a sheet to your application, stating which children are at which provider and the days and hours they are there.

Why does CCS require cooperation with the Division of Child Support Enforcement for all children in the household?

Many children face poverty when adequate child support is not available. Therefore, you are required to enroll and cooperate with Child Support Enforcement in order to be considered eligible for child care assistance. This helps to ensure that all resources available to the family are fully utilized. For situations when cooperating with the Division of Child Support Enforcement is not in the best interest of the child or family, an exception can be made with appropriate documentation. You may contact CCS at 1-800-227-3020 for more information.

What if I have a child with special needs?

CCS does offer a higher reimbursement rate to child care providers who care for children with documented special needs up to age 19. The higher rate must be authorized by your CCS caseworker. Written documentation from a professional such as a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, psychologist, psychiatric social worker, special educator, physical therapist or occupational therapist is required to attest to the child's requirement for special accommodations. Your child care provider will be required to submit information as to the type of special accommodations he/she must make to provide care for your child.

A child who is under court supervision can also be considered "special needs". A copy of a court order requiring child care must be supplied to CCS.

How does the McKinney-Vento Act define homeless?

The term homeless means an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and includes individuals who:

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care placement;
- Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- Live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Are migratory and live in any of the circumstances as described above.