

# Ten Things Every Provider Should Know About the New **CCDBG** Law

by Rachel Demma

Did you know that the reimbursements for child care subsidy you may receive as a provider in your state are funded through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)? The CCDBG is the primary federal funding source passed down to states to subsidize child care for low-income working families with children from birth up to age 13. This funding stream also supports state investments in quality improvement for all child care programs by supporting systemic initiatives like Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), training, and profes-

sional development for the child care workforce.

In November 2014, CCDBG was reauthorized for the first time in 18 years. Changes in the law represent an exciting opportunity for state policymakers to strengthen the health, safety, and quality of child care for all children and families, while continuing to expand access to high-quality care for those who qualify for the subsidy support.

The 'new and improved' CCDBG also promises opportunities for providers to enhance and strengthen early care and

learning experiences for children across the full range of care settings. Although CCDBG is designed to help families access child care when their income levels do not exceed 85% of a state's median income, there are several new provisions that may impact all licensed providers — including those serving only tuition-paying families. The following ten CCDBG changes may affect broader state child care funding and policies, as well as specific statewide licensure and regulatory processes. For more information on how each of these requirements will affect providers in your specific state, contact your resource and referral or state licensing agency.



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Photographs by Bonnie Neugebauer

# 1.

## Expanded Annual Health and Safety Inspections

For the first time in the history of CCDBG, the law now includes *inspection requirements that pertain to all licensed providers in each state, not only those that serve children who receive child care subsidy*. In fact, since federal law does not prohibit license-exempt providers from receiving CCDBG funds, these providers will also be subject to specific inspection requirements.

Beginning in 2016, *if you are a licensed provider, you will receive one pre-licensure inspection and at least one annual, unannounced inspection to determine if you are in compliance with state health, safety, and fire standards*. The degree to which currently licensed providers will feel the impact of the new inspection protocol will vary across states depending on current licensure and inspection policies. Another change, taking place in 2017, will require non-relative, license-exempt providers who receive CCDBG funds to undergo an annual inspection to ensure compliance with state health, safety, and fire standards.

# 2.

## More Comprehensive Criminal Background Checks

While criminal background check procedures have historically been included in CCDBG, the 2014 law significantly strengthens these requirements as an additional precautionary safety measure for both providers and children in their care. Beginning in 2016, all non-relative providers — including all child care program staff members who don't directly care for children, but have unsupervised access to children, including janitors, food service workers, and administrative staff — must undergo a comprehensive criminal background check. As part of the background check

process, states will now cross-check various state and federal databases, including criminal and sex offender records and require Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint checks for all providers.

# 3.

## Additional Health and Safety Training

Providers receiving CCDBG funds will now participate in pre-service and ongoing training and professional development in specified areas, including the prevention and control of infectious diseases, safe sleep practices, prevention of shaken baby syndrome and head trauma, prevention of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), first aid, and CPR. *These new training requirements apply only to those providers receiving CCDBG funds; however all providers may be able to take advantage of these training opportunities, particularly if these resources are offered through web-based platforms.*

# 4.

## Statewide Disaster Plans

States will be newly required to develop a comprehensive disaster plan that covers procedures relating to evacuation, relocation, and lock-down procedures, among other activities. Check with your state child care licensing agency to see if you can benefit from these protocols that will help to ensure the safety of the children in your care and to reassure their families that you are prepared to respond to emergency situations.

# 5.

## Strengthening the Continuity of Care

Research shows us that the consistency of high-quality care over time, often referred to as the *continuity of care*, is a

strong contributor to school readiness outcomes, particularly for low-income children. The new CCDBG law considerably strengthens your capacity to provide continuity of care for children and families by requiring states to:

Maintain a child's eligibility for child care subsidy for a minimum of 12 months before redetermination is conducted. This eligibility applies as long as the child's family income remains within the required federal threshold, and despite any temporary changes in parent work or education status.

Allow families a graduated phase-out period of assistance following redetermination due to an increase in family income that still remains below the required federal subsidy threshold.

Continue subsidy assistance for at least three months to allow for job search if termination based on employment loss occurs.

# 6.

## Focusing on Targeted Services to Infants and Toddlers

The new law reserves a portion of federal funds for states to pay for initiatives that increase the supply and quality of infant and toddler care. This may include programs that focus on serving this population or supplementing programs with services that support families with children below age four, such as an evidence-based home visiting program.

# 7.

## Increasing State Investments in Quality Improvements

Over time, the new CCDBG law gradually increases the amount of federal funds that states can spend on initiatives

that improve the quality of child care. The legislative language identifies ten allowable state-level quality improvement strategies, including developing and expanding tiered-reimbursement linked to a QRIS and supporting resource and referral services. States must implement research-based, developmentally appropriate Early Learning and Development Guidelines, and educate all providers on policies relating to expulsions and behavioral interventions, as well as the availability and use of developmental screenings for children at risk of cognitive or developmental delays.

## 8.

### Meeting Family Care Needs

States must design and fund care options for CCDBG families with unique needs, which may include nontraditional hours such as weekend or overnight care, or for families in rural areas with limited care options.

## 9.

### Supporting Provider Business Practices

If you are serving children who receive a CCDBG subsidy, the new law means you will have access to training resources

that will strengthen your business practices. For example, learning how to establish your provider payment practices to improve the consistency and timeliness of reimbursements should have a positive impact on your bottom line. Again, even if you are not a 'subsidy provider,' training opportunities that are web-based will allow all providers within a state to benefit from this technical assistance.

## 10.

### Engaging Parents and Increasing Their Access to Information

For the first time, CCDBG dollars will fund a national website that links users to a zip code-based searchable database of child care providers, as well as a national hotline for reporting child care instances of abuse and neglect. In addition, states will now post online provider-specific results of monitoring and inspection reports that include the number of deaths, serious injuries, and instances of substantiated child abuse that have occurred in a provider setting each year.

*Exchange* magazine is partnering with the Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) on an exciting project that will examine how the new CCDBG law's implementation is affecting all types of providers, including family child care homes, multi-site tax paying and non-profit centers, as well as Head Start, faith-based, and school programs. Stay tuned for our next article in the November/December issue that will highlight findings from conversations with staff across the field. The lessons learned will help all early care and education stakeholders — from policy makers to practitioners to parents — understand how CCDBG can be used to most effectively support today's working families and their young children who will become the workforce of the future.

