

Child Care and Development Block Grant Implementation Project

by Rachel Demma and Meghann Hickey



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This year, the Early Care and Education Consortium (ECEC) (www.ececonsortium.org) and *Exchange* are partnering to examine the implementation and early impacts of the recently reauthorized 2014 Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) law. The ECEC-

“I think probably one of the greatest outcomes for all of us could be that programs that are actually able to implement these changes need to be celebrated in a really public way.”

Kathy Villano, School-Based Pre-K
 Arlington Heights, Illinois



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Meghann Hickey is currently the Policy Associate at the Early Care and Education Consortium. She graduated from the University of New Hampshire in December 2014, where she earned a B.A. in Human Development and Family

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Exchange CCDBG Implementation Project is designed to gather feedback directly from Provider voices on initial impact and lessons learned, and to inform the CCDBG implementation process moving forward.

As a national trade association and advocacy nonprofit, ECEC advocates for policies and investment strategies to bring early care and learning quality to scale. ECEC is made up of high-quality community early care and learning Providers, as well as a range of organizations that support the field through related programs and services. Overall, ECEC's members directly serve over 1 million children and their working families in over 9,100 socially, culturally,

and economically diverse programs in all 50 states. For over five years, ECEC has worked with *Exchange* as a strategic partner to support continuous quality improvement across the field of early care and education.

CCDBG is the primary federal funding source passed down to states to subsidize child care for low-income working families with children ages birth to 13. In November 2014, President Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law, reauthorizing the child care program for the first time since 1996. Several key provisions within the new law are designed to improve the health, safety, continuity, and quality of care

families are able to access. The new law also addresses payment practices that are family friendly and fair to Providers. Timeframes for implementation of the law span a two-year timeframe, beginning in 2015.

ECEC and *Exchange* kicked off their CCDBG Implementation Project in the May/June edition of *Exchange* with the publication of “Ten Things Every Provider Should Know About the New CCDBG Law.” Approximately 20 Providers representing tax-paying and non-profit community child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start programs, faith-based programs, and school-based prekindergarten programs participated in the initial pilot phase of the project. Participants received a copy of the Administration for Children and Families CCDBG Plain Language Summary (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdbg-of-2014-plain-language-summary-of-statutory-changes) as background, and then took part in a 30-minute in-depth telephone survey to discuss provisions expected to have the greatest impact on their programs, operating challenges to implementation, and projected outcomes for the future. The survey included the number of children each Provider served, the number of children supported by child care subsidy, and program collaborations, including Head Start.

Overall, participants in the initial phase of the ECEC-Exchange CCDBG Implementation Project conveyed a positive outlook about CCDBG’s reauthorization. Providers indicated that they are looking forward to improving program operations to better meet the needs of the families and children they serve, particularly by implementing the new 12-month uninterrupted eligibility required by the CCDBG 2014 law. Providers also anticipate greater technical assistance and training opportunities to come with the new law’s implementation.

Providers commented on challenges to state-level capacity to implement the new law effectively, including:

- ensuring action and accountability.
- enhancing communication loops.
- preventing trade-offs between investments in access versus quality.
- meeting increased costs and staffing needs, particularly around new inspection and criminal background provisions.
- sustaining overall funding for quality improvements.
- integrating these changes with existing system levers, including

QRIS and parent engagement initiatives.

Providers also discussed operational concerns that affect them directly, including:

- ensuring all eligible Providers can benefit from new resources and strengthened provisions.
- keeping communication lines open to inform state planning and policy implementation.
- educating parents about the value and impact of high-quality early care and education.
- continuing to function within fiscal constraints.

Finally, this initial phase captured the Provider voice regarding recommendations for supporting successful implementation moving forward, including:

- frequent and regular implementation status check-ins between the state and programs.
- improving families’ access to technology.
- simplifying processes such as fingerprinting and background checks.
- respecting feedback provided by actual field Providers who are implementing the changes called for by the new CCDG law.

The Project’s next phase is to expand the Provider participant pool to capture a larger cross-section of Provider voices on the impacts and challenges of CCDBG implementation.

To participate in the ECEC-Exchange CCDBG Implementation Project, go to www.ChildCareExchange.com/ccdbg

“The other challenge is convincing the state to bring the early childhood experts to the table for their experience and knowledge.”

Isabel Barcia, Head Start Program
Immokalee, Florida