



Chapter 4: Families Experiencing Homelessness

Using Grants and Contracts to Build the Supply of Infant and Toddler Care for Families Experiencing Homelessness

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule provide incentive and opportunity to expand high-quality child care options for infants and toddlers from families experiencing homelessness. The CCDBG Act and the CCDF Final Rule require States and Territories to do the following regarding services for children of families experiencing homelessness:

- ◆ Coordinate the provision of child care with other early care and education programs;
- ◆ Give priority for services to children experiencing homelessness, as defined by McKinney-Vento Act (Pub. L. 100-77, July 22, 1987, 101 Stat. 482, 42 U.S.C. § 11301 *et seq.*)
- ◆ Establish a grace period for homeless families to provide documentation, such as proof of immunizations (45 C.F.R. 98.41 (a)(1)(i)(C));
- ◆ Address new reporting requirements (45 C.F.R. 98.70(a)(16));
- ◆ Establish procedures for enrollment pending completion of required documentation;
- ◆ Provide training and technical assistance to child care providers on identifying and serving children and families experiencing homelessness; and
- ◆ Conduct outreach that is specific to families experiencing homeless (45 C.F.R. § 98.51(a)(b)(c), 2016).

Additionally, the CCDF Final Rule sets forth key changes for improving infant and toddler child care services, including an increased 3 percent of quality set-aside funds (45 C.F.R. § 98.50(b)(2), 2016), and priority placed on improving quality and increasing supply (45 C.F.R. § 98.53(a)(4), 2016).

Why Are Grants and Contracts a Supportive Mechanism?

The preamble to the 2016 CCDF Final Rule strongly encourages, but does not require, States and Territories to use grants and contracts as a strategy for increasing the supply and quality of infant and toddler child care (81 FR 67520). As stated in the preamble, “grants or contracts can play a role in building the supply and availability of child care, particularly high-quality care, in underserved areas and for special populations in order to expand parental choice” (81 FR 67521). This mechanism is particularly helpful for increasing the accessibility of child care to families experiencing homelessness. The following is from the Administration for Children and Families (2001a, p. 4):

Grants and contracts can play an important role in increasing the capacity and provide greater financial stability for providers working with underserved populations. Currently, 21 states use grants or contracts to provide direct child care services. Some already use this strategy to work directly with organizations that serve homeless families and other vulnerable populations to ensure the supply and availability of child care services for the neediest children and families.

The additional funding provided through grants and contracts help child care programs meet central elements of high-quality infant and toddler care. For instance, by offering equitable and stable reimbursements and requiring child care programs and providers to meet higher standards, grants and contracts support continuity of care—the



practice of an infant and toddler caregiver remaining with the same small group of infants and toddlers until they turn 36 months of age (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d.; Sosinsky et al., 2016).

How Might Contracts and Grants Be Used to Build Supply for Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness?

Grants and contracts can be used to do the following:

- ◆ Create or stabilize this specialized type of care in specific geographic areas (Matthews, Schulman, Vogtman, Johnson-Staub, & Blank, 2015).
- ◆ Purchase spaces in high-quality child care settings for infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness in order to increase access and maintain enrollment (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d., p.1). These slots should meet quality standards specific to infants and toddlers and pay higher subsidy rates for the care (e.g., higher requirements for teachers' education and professional development and lower teacher-child ratios). States and Territories can require providers to exceed the minimum standards outlined by licensing and meet the State's/Territory's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) standards or other designated quality rating standards (Matthews, Schulman, Vogtman, Johnson-Staub, & Blank, 2015). States and Territories can also consider designating competencies within their QRIS "that indicate that programs are structured and staff are trained to serve children experiencing homelessness and their families" (Bires, Garcia, & Zhu, 2015, p. 22).
- ◆ Increase the quality of infant and toddler child care for this special population over a prolonged period. Using grants and contracts can help "Providers become stable businesses by providing consistent enrollment and funding levels over prolonged periods. They allow Lead Agencies to establish higher quality and performance standards for contracted facilities and make lasting investments to improve provider services and practices" (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d., p.1).
- ◆ Widen comprehensive services to include families experiencing homelessness. "Lead Agencies can use contracts to provide additional support services, including family support, developmental screening and assessment, parent engagement and education, and health and mental health screening and referral" (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d., p.1).
- ◆ Decrease administrative burden and incentivize providers to serve families experiencing homelessness. "Grants and contracts can reduce administrative workload. Lead Agencies generally purchase blocks of spaces and establish reasonable standards for maintaining minimum enrollment levels. Programs receive contract payments at scheduled intervals, instead of individual payments for each child in care" (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d., p.1).

Central Policies and Practices to Consider

While developing and implementing grants and contracts that provide direct services to infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness, consider the following policies and practices.

- ◆ Assess the supply of high-quality care for this targeted population in order to understand geographic and program capacity. In order to accomplish this, invite and involve those who are already designated and charged with these supply assessments, including the McKinney-Vento state coordinators, Head Start State Collaboration Directors, Child Care resource and Referral agencies, and school district liaisons (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d.).
- ◆ Coordinate ongoing quality improvement efforts with direct service contracts in order to use funds efficiently and generate the best outcomes for infant and toddler child care programs. Lead Agencies can work toward securing sufficient long-term funding by exploring the possibility of layering CCDF subsidies with federal and state funding streams (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d.).



- ◆ Use the State or Territory’s procurement process to select providers to receive grants or contracts. In developing a procurement process, it is important for Lead Agencies to create a comprehensive breadth of required services and performance standards. Additionally, “important program decisions include whether to delegate family outreach and eligibility determination to the contractor, how to establish rates and provider payments provisions, and how long to make the term of the contract” (National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability, n.d., p. 2).
- ◆ Pursue relationships with organizations that are most likely to be interested in connecting infants and toddlers and their families experiencing homelessness to appropriate child care resources. The following is a non-exhaustive list of possible partnerships:
 - Local community-parent resource centers;
 - Local educational agencies/school districts/local homeless liaisons;
 - Head Start and Early Head Start programs;
 - Local child care providers;
 - Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care programs;
 - Domestic violence shelters;
 - Homeless coalitions; and
 - Child care resource and referral agencies.



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