



State Strategies for Leveraging Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships to Build High-Quality Infant and Toddler Care

Background

The Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership Grant, funded by the Office of Head Start within the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, helps grantee agencies deliver high-quality comprehensive services to infants and toddlers that meet the requirements established by the Head Start Act (Office of Head Start, 2014).

A primary purpose of the grant, is to encourage partnerships between Early Head Start and child care programs. In most cases the agency receiving the Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) funding agrees to partner with FCC providers and/or local child care centers, called partner programs, to deliver high-quality comprehensive services. In a small number of cases, existing Early Head Start grantees have used these funds to expand their existing programs. In addition, the grantee agency agrees to ensure that a percentage of the children served in these partner programs are eligible for and receive funding from the state’s child care subsidy program funded by CCDF. Each grantee agency must ensure that at least 25 percent of the infants and toddlers enrolled in the Early Head Start partnerships will be dually eligible for and funded with child care subsidies, including CCDF subsidies (Office of Head Start, 2014).

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 and the Final Rule offer States the opportunity to develop and revise subsidy policies to better align with EHS-CCP (Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, 2014; Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule, 2016). The alignment allows States to leverage EHS-CCP funding to build the quality and expand the capacity of early childhood education programs serving low-income families with infants and toddlers. It also helps enhance children’s well-being and their school readiness outcomes.

- ◆ Early education program capacity is increased because the EHS-CCP grantee agency funds and supports comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and their families by partnering with existing child care programs (Office of Head Start, 2014).
- ◆ Because the EHS-CCP grantee must ensure that a percentage of the children enrolled also receive CCDF subsidies, grantees recruit and serve families with low incomes, who are eligible for or receive CCDF subsidies (Office of Head Start, 2014).
- ◆ Families enrolled in EHS-CCP benefit from full-day, full-year comprehensive services, including low ratios and small class sizes, credentialed teachers, relationship-based learning environments that nurture children’s growth and development, and accessibility to educational, health, nutrition, family support, and social services (Office of Head Start, 2014).

Goals of EHS-CCP for States Building High-Quality Infant and Toddler Care

Traditionally, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are local agencies delivering services within their communities. However, Alabama, California, Delaware, Georgia, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and the



Territory of the Northern Mariana Islands received state-level funding to provide EHS-CCP services (Office of Early Childhood Development, 2016). These stakeholders recognized that the EHS-CCP grant would improve integration and alignment among components of their early education systems and maximize resources to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and their families (BUILD Initiative, 2016).

- ◆ The Alabama Department of Human Resources applied to ensure that the State receives the full amount of EHS-CCP allocated to the State to leverage current and new state resources that enhance services at the local level and increase alignment between local and state early learning systems (BUILD Initiative, 2016).
- ◆ The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning partnered with local-level grantees and applied. The State wishes to enhance quality and accessibility of high-quality Early Head Start programs by partnering with family child care homes and child care learning centers, developing a centralized system and infrastructures to support the provision of comprehensive services to families, and leveraging CCDF to create unified and integrated systems of service delivery (BUILD Initiative, 2016).
- ◆ In the District of Columbia, the prekindergarten program applied to implement a quality improvement network system of supports aligned to Early Head Start standards and leverage all available local and federal funding to ensure high-quality learning opportunities are accessible to children with high needs (BUILD Initiative, 2016).

Reauthorization of CCDF Supports EHS-CCPs

The reauthorization of CCDF provides both the opportunity and the flexibility to support EHS-CCP grantees and their partners. In turn, EHS-CCP is structured to meet the needs of low-income, working families who are served by CCDF by offering seamless and comprehensive full-day, full-year early education and family support services that promote family self-sufficiency (Administration for Children and Families, 2015, 2016).

When layering CCDF and EHS-CCP funding, it is important to recognize that infants, toddlers, and their families receive a wider array of services than are typically funded by CCDF alone. For children enrolled in EHS-CCP, they and their parents benefit from the full array of comprehensive services offered through EHS. In addition children within the classroom, but not enrolled in EHS-CCP also benefit from program level enhancements (lower staff to child ratios, smaller group sizes, increased classroom materials, etc.) as a result of these partnerships. EHS-CCP grant funds can be used to cover the full cost of providing program level enhancements that are being used to support an enrolled EHS-CCP child. CCDF traditionally funds certificates or vouchers for eligible families to receive child care; it does not include the full array of services offered in Early Head Start and Head Start settings. Layering both funding streams enables families eligible for CCDF subsidies to access and receive full-day/year Early Head Start services. It also allows grantees to stretch EHS-CCP funding to serve more families in Early Head Start. Families eligible for both funding streams may continue to receive Early Head Start services if their circumstances change and they are no longer eligible for CCDF subsidies for their children. EHS-CCP provides continuity of care until the children age out of Early Head Start. It is a win-win for CCDF Administrators, EHS-CCP grantees, the early education partners, and families (Administration for Children and Families, 2016).

CCDF Lead Agencies are using the flexibility afforded through the reauthorization of CCDF to better align subsidy policies with Head Start/Early Head Start. Subsidy program requirements, such as family income thresholds, eligibility periods, copayments, work and education participation, and citizenship can be modified so that the children can benefit from Early Head Start (45 C.F.R., 2016). Some examples of these EHS-CCP friendly policies include the following:

- ◆ Establish a new exit income limit that allows families receiving subsidies to benefit from modest increases in wages without losing subsidy eligibility, which promotes continuity of care.
 - The CCDBG Act of 2014 and the Final Rule support continuity of care by establishing a minimum period of 12 months for Lead Agencies to redetermine eligibility for families receiving CCDF subsidies. As stated in the CCDF Final Rule:



The child shall be considered eligible and will receive services at least at the same level, regardless of: (i) A change in family income, if that family income does not exceed 85 percent of [state median income] SMI for a family of the same size; or (ii) A temporary change in the ongoing status of the child's parent as working or attending a job training or educational program. (45 C.F.R. § 98.21(a)(1), 2016)

- Since eligibility for CCDF subsidies is redetermined a minimum of once a year, States can choose longer eligibility periods. For example, children in Connecticut who are enrolled in EHS-CCP programs are eligible for CCDF subsidies for the length of time that they are enrolled in the program (Office of Early Childhood Development, 2016).
- Families who are determined ineligible for subsidies after the period ends would continue to receive Early Head Start services, funded 100 percent by EHS-CCP as long as the child remains age eligible for Early Head Start (Administration for Children and Families, 2015).
- ◆ Lead Agencies have been able to waive co-payments for families at or below the poverty level. However, the new regulations also allow lead agencies to waive co-payments for families who fit other criteria they establish (45 C.F.R. § 98.45(k)(4), 2016). Some states have decided to waive co-payments for families enrolled in EHS-CCP regardless of the families' incomes. CCDF supports families who are participating in work, job training, or education. States have the flexibility to determine the number of hours that families must participate in order to be eligible for subsidies. Early Head Start family services staff work directly with families to assess strengths and needs, set goals, develop family services plans, provide resources, and coordinate services, including services to promote financial stability (Administration for Children and Families, 2016).
- ◆ Layer CCDF through contracts with EHS-CCP grantees and their partners. Contracts provide consistent and predictable subsidy funding that, when added to the EHS funding, helps the partners budget and provide the required comprehensive services, offer lower ratios and group sizes, provide qualified teachers, and offer broad-scale family engagement activities (Administration for Children and Families, 2016). The EHS-CCP grantee retains overall responsibility for the federal grant and all of the services delivered, including services delivered by the partners. The EHS-CCP grantee can support families to receive and retain their subsidies.

Suggested additional resources:

Making Connections: The Partnership Newsletter
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Layering Services and Funds: A Cost Estimation Tool

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehs-ccp/docs/news-2016-is02-layering-services.pdf>

The Cost Estimation Tool for EHS-CCPs:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehs-ccp/cost-estimation-tool>

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