



Helping Families Obtain Child Care Subsidies: Lessons from One Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grantee

The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships

In March 2015, the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded 275 Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnership and EHS expansion grants. In the years since 2015, Congress has approved additional funding which has resulted in additional partnerships and expansion grants. As of December 2017, the EHS-CC Partnership and Expansion Grants had preliminarily reported partnerships with 1,600+ child care centers and 1,070+ family child care homes. In 2018, Congress approved additional funding (\$115 million) for new partnership and expansion grants.

The EHS-CC Partnership grants support partnerships between EHS programs and local child care centers and family child care providers serving infants and toddlers from families with low incomes. The partnerships support working families by providing expanded access to full-day, full-year child care and comprehensive services to children and families.

A key goal of the Early Head Start-Child Care (EHS-CC) Partnerships is to increase the supply of high-quality early learning environments for infants and toddlers. EHS-CC Partnership grantees leverage multiple funding sources to maximize resources and provide quality child care opportunities for children from families with low income. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is one of the funding sources for EHS-CC Partnerships and provides subsidies for eligible families. CCDF subsidies are available for eligible children ages birth through age 12. These subsidies are designed to help parents obtain child care so they can work or attend education or training programs. Layering CCDF subsidies with EHS funds is essential for EHS-CC Partnership programs to improve the quality of care children receive.

In this implementation story, staff from one grantee, The Lourie Center for Children's Social & Emotional Wellness in Rockville, Maryland, share four lessons they learned about encouraging families to apply for CCDF subsidies.

1. Communicate the long-term benefits of applying for the child care subsidy

Staff at The Lourie Center shared that some EHS-CC Partnership program families might need support to fully understand how child care subsidy works and its long-term benefits. Informing families that the child care subsidy could be available until a child turns 13 years old might help families understand the value of applying for the child care subsidy now. According to The Lourie Center's EHS director, the message staff try to send to families is to think about the family's long-term child care needs. For instance, families might still need after-school care when their child is in kindergarten or elementary school. The center director encourages families to apply for child care subsidy early, and offers support from the Lourie Center's staff to coach them through the process. As she noted, "They'll be able to then do it on their own when that time comes."





2. Ensure grantee staff, like family support workers, are knowledgeable about the child care subsidy program

Family support workers at The Lourie Center take the lead in encouraging families to apply for CCDF subsidies, so, as the director noted, it is important that the family support workers have deep knowledge of the child care subsidy program so they can facilitate the application process and help answer questions once families receive the child care subsidy. As The Lourie Center’s EHS director said, “The best approach is [to] get your family service workers trained and make sure that they are knowledgeable about how to navigate the system.”

“My family support worker walked me through the whole process.... She would sit on the phone with me on a three-way call. The best part is that the family support worker sat with me and if I needed her to hold my hand, she would hold my hand. If I needed her to stand behind me, she would stand behind me.”

Parent whose child is enrolled at The Lourie Center Early Head Start

3. Encourage family support workers to be liaisons between the families and the child care subsidy agency

Multiple federal funding streams and their associated programs can be complex and time consuming to navigate, especially for families with hectic schedules. Family support workers with The Lourie Center have worked in collaboration with the child care subsidy agency on behalf of the families and have worked alongside families to help them with the application

and approval process. The family service worker reflected, “There’s a lot of times and a lot of instances we actually call the child care subsidy program with the families so that they can speak to them themselves, and ask all the questions they have.”

“Calling an agency like a child care subsidy agency, that definitely helps the family; it empowers them to ask questions and advocate for themselves.”

Family support worker at The Lourie Center Early Head Start

4. Facilitate families’ enrollment in the child care subsidy program by including the application materials in the EHS-CC Partnership program enrollment packet

Making the subsidy application part of an enrollment packet and helping families fill it out when they enroll in the partnership program is another way to increase subsidy enrollment. When a new family is in the process of joining The Lourie Center, family support workers will compile a new enrollment packet, which includes the child care subsidy application, for the families. The family support workers work with families ahead of time and schedule a time to discuss the information in the packet. Once the application is complete, the family support workers will email the application to the child care subsidy program on behalf of the family.

Implementation Stories. This brief is one in a series that highlights the ways in which specific grantees implement EHS-CC Partnerships. By highlighting the work of partnership programs through the voices of grantees, child care partners, T/TA staff, and families, the briefs aim to share stories of implementation with others in the field.

For more information, please contact: The Lourie Center for Children’s Social & Emotional Wellness at (301) 891-1900 or <https://www.adventisthealthcare.com/LC/programs/early-head-start>.

Photos courtesy of the Partnership Center.



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships