

State Child Care Assistance Policies: Colorado

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2011, counties in Colorado could set the income limit for a family of three to qualify for child care assistance between \$23,803 per year (128 percent of poverty, 35 percent of state median income) and \$54,108 per year (292 percent of poverty, 80 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Colorado had 5,205 children on county waiting lists for child care assistance as of February 2011, and expected the waiting lists to increase.²
- **Parent copayments:** In 2011, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$18,530 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$155 per month, or 10 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$27,795 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$259 per month, or 11 percent of its income, in copayments.
- **Reimbursement rates:** In 2011, Colorado's reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance were below the federally recommended level—the 75th percentile of current market rates, which is the level designed to give families access to 75 percent of the providers in their community.³
 - Colorado's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver was \$578,⁴ which was \$375 (39 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - Colorado's monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Denver was \$721,⁵ which was \$376 (34 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered reimbursement rates:** In 2011, some counties in Colorado, including Denver, paid higher reimbursement rates for higher-quality care.⁶
 - The reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver at the highest quality tier was 34 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
 - The reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** As of February 2011, Colorado allowed parents to qualify for or continue receiving child care assistance for up to 180 days while searching for a job.⁷

Source: Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, State Child Care Assistance Policies 2011: Reduced Support for Families in Challenging Times (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2011). These data reflect policies as of February 2011, unless otherwise indicated.

1 Counties set their income limits within state guidelines. Also note that counties may allow families already receiving assistance to continue doing so after their income exceeds the county's initial income limit for up to six months, if their income remains below \$54,108.

2 Waiting lists are kept at the county level, rather than at the state level. This waiting list total is the total of reported county waiting lists.

3 Each Colorado county determines its own reimbursement rates. Some counties have reduced their rates since February 2011.

4 Denver has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.

5 This is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.

6 Each county determines whether to offer higher rates for higher-quality care.

7 The amount of time parents could receive child care assistance while searching for a job was expanded from 30 days to 180 days (in a 12-month period) as of April 2009 using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. The state reverted to the previous policy (30 days) as of July 2011.