

CHILD CARE

Building Pathways, Creating Roadblocks: State Child Care Assistance Policies for Parents in School

May 2015

Education and training opportunities help parents trying to gain more stable employment with better pay and benefits. Studies have demonstrated that higher education levels are associated with an increased likelihood of employment; higher earnings; receiving health care, retirement, and other benefits through one's job; and better health¹—all of which have a positive impact on both parents and children. In addition, individuals with higher education levels are more likely to have stable work schedules,² which can make it easier for parents to manage their job and family responsibilities.³

Given these potential two-generation benefits of advanced education, it is important that states design their child care assistance policies to allow low-income parents to receive assistance to attend school. With assistance, parents are able to afford reliable child care so they can attend classes, focus on their coursework, and have time to study. By making it possible for parents to receive additional education, child care assistance improves parents' future prospects of getting and keeping a good-paying job that will enable them to support their families and have more resources to foster their children's healthy growth and development.

All states allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend education and training, but most put some restrictions on this assistance—such as requirements to work for a certain number of hours while also attending school, limits on the length of time parents can receive assistance to attend school, limits on the level of degree they can earn while receiving assistance, or other criteria.⁴ Parents may find it difficult to comply with such requirements while struggling to balance competing demands of family, school, and—in some cases—work. If too restrictive, such limitations on child care assistance can prevent parents from accessing the child care they need to take advantage of educational opportunities—thereby impeding their future earning potential and their children's chances for success in school and in life.

KEY FACTS

Child care assistance helps parents access the additional education they need to get better, more stable jobs. But most states put restrictions on this assistance, making it more difficult for parents to gain the education and training they need to get ahead. For example:

- **Three states only allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school in limited circumstances.**
- **Two states allow localities to decide whether to provide child care assistance to parents to attend school.**
- **Nineteen states require parents to participate in school and/or work-related activities for a minimum number of hours to be eligible for child care assistance.**
- **Eleven states require at least some parents in school to also work for a minimum number of hours to be eligible for child care assistance.**
- **Seventeen states limit the amount of time parents can receive child care assistance to attend school.**
- **Thirty-five states limit the degree or educational level for parents receiving child care assistance to attend school.**
- **Fourteen states require parents in school to make satisfactory progress to continue receiving child care assistance.**

General Restrictions on Child Care Assistance to Attend School

While all states allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school in at least some cases, five states allow it only on a very limited basis or allow localities to determine whether to permit it (see Table 1).

- Three states do not allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school except in limited circumstances:
 - In Nevada, parents can only receive child care assistance to attend school if they are under age 19 and attending high school, or if they are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and have school as their countable activity in their Personal Responsibility Plan.
 - In Oregon, parents can only receive child care assistance to attend school if they are required to take continuing education as part of their job or to keep their job; if they are receiving TANF, are attending high school or a GED program, and have school as their countable activity in their Personal Responsibility Plan; or if they are teen parents, are attending high school or a GED program, and are attending a school-based program that includes early childhood development and education.
 - In Rhode Island, parents can only receive child care assistance to attend school for vocational training, and only for up to six months; the state does not allow parents to receive child care assistance for post-secondary education.
- Two states allow localities to decide whether to provide child care assistance to parents to attend school:
 - In Colorado, counties determine whether parents can receive child care assistance to attend school; 53 of the state's 64 counties accept education as an eligible activity.
 - In New York, local social services districts determine whether parents can receive child care assistance to attend school.

Activity Participation Requirements

Nineteen states reported that they require (or allow localities to require) parents who receive child care assistance to attend school to participate in activities—school or work-related activities or a combination—for a minimum number of clock hours or credit hours per week (see Table 2).⁵

- Alabama and South Carolina require parents to participate in activities for at least 15 hours per week.
- Florida, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island require parents to participate in activities for at least 20 hours per week.⁶
- Georgia requires parents to participate in activities for at least 24 hours per week.⁷
- Texas requires parents to participate in activities for at least 25 hours per week for a single-parent family or 50 hours per week for a two-parent family, or a higher number of hours per week as established by the local workforce development board.
- Iowa requires parents to participate in activities for at least 28 hours per week, or to attend school full time, as defined by the school.⁸
- Arkansas, Connecticut, Louisiana, and Tennessee require parents to participate in activities for at least 30 hours per week.⁹
- South Dakota requires parents to participate in activities for at least 80 hours per month.¹⁰

- Maine requires parents in school to take at least six credit hours, or 12 credit hours if online.
- Massachusetts requires parents to attend school full time if in high school and to take at least 12 credit hours if in college.
- New Jersey requires parents in school to take at least 12 credit hours per term or, if in job training, at least 20 classroom hours per week.
- Mississippi requires parents in school to attend full time, as defined by the school.
- New York allows local social services districts to require parents in school to take a minimum number of class hours or credits.

Work Participation Requirements

Eleven states reported that they require parents attending school (or certain groups of parents attending school) to also work for a minimum number of hours per week to be eligible for child care assistance (see Table 2). Unlike the above activity participation requirements, which can be met through a combination of education, work, and/or work-related activities, these requirements can only be met by working the specified amount of time, in addition to the parent's educational activities.

- Wisconsin requires parents to work at least five hours per week or 20 hours per month, unless they are in high school.
- Pennsylvania requires parents to work at least 10 hours per week (out of the 20 hours per week total that they must participate in activities).¹¹
- Kansas and Utah require parents to work at least 15 hours per week.¹²
- Arizona, Kentucky, and Washington require parents to work at least 20 hours per week.¹³
- New York requires parents to work at least 17.5 hours per week if they are attending an education program leading to an associate degree (other than one with a specific vocational objective) or bachelor's degree and are permitted to receive child care assistance by the local social services district.
- Illinois requires parents to work at least 20 hours per week after the first 24 months of vocational education or education below the post-secondary level and after the first 48 months of post-secondary education.¹⁴
- Georgia requires parents to work at least 24 hours per week after their first year of vocational or technical training or if they are attending post-secondary education.¹⁵
- Montana requires parents to work at least 40 hours per month if attending school full time (as defined by the school) and at least 60 hours per month if attending school part time (as defined by the school), unless the parent is a teenager enrolled in high school or pursuing a GED.

Time Limits on Education

Seventeen states reported that they limit (or allow localities to limit) the amount of time parents can receive child care assistance while in school (see Table 3). The limits ranged from six months to six years (or eight years if also working).

- Rhode Island allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend vocational training for a maximum of six months (and, as noted above, does not allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend post-secondary school).

- North Carolina allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend post-secondary school for a maximum of 20 months.
- Alabama, Iowa, Kansas, Utah, and Wisconsin allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of 24 months.¹⁶
- New Hampshire allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of two years.¹⁷
- Washington allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of 36 consecutive months.
- Idaho allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of 40 months.
- Missouri allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of four years.
- California allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of six years or 24 semester units.
- Wyoming allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of six years (or eight years if they are also working at least 30 hours per week) if they are in a bachelor's degree program, and a maximum of three years (or five years if they are also working at least 30 hours per week) if they are in an associate degree program.
- Indiana allows parents to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of 16 semesters.
- Colorado permits counties to allow parents to receive child care assistance for a maximum of 12 months for a high school degree, a GED, or basic skills education, and for a maximum of 48 months for post-secondary education.
- New York's local social services districts, if they allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school, determine any time limits on such assistance.
- Texas's local workforce development boards determine time limits on child care assistance for parents to attend school.

Limits on Educational Degree

Thirty-five states reported that they restrict (or allow localities to restrict) the degree parents can pursue while receiving child care assistance (see Table 3). In those states that set a restriction on the degree, parents are most commonly limited to a bachelor's degree.

- Twenty-eight states—Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming—allow parents to receive child care assistance while earning up to a bachelor's degree.¹⁸
- California allows parents to receive child care assistance for up to 24 semester units of education beyond a bachelor's degree.
- New Hampshire allows parents to receive child care assistance while earning up to an associate degree.¹⁹
- Washington allows parents to receive child care assistance while in school only for vocational or technical education that leads to a certificate for a specific vocation.
- Rhode Island allows parents to receive child care assistance for training or education only if it is short-term vocational training, on-the-job training, an apprenticeship, an internship, work experience, work immersion, or a job readiness or job attachment program.

- Nevada and Oregon allow parents to receive child care assistance while earning up to a high school degree.²⁰
- Texas allows local workforce development boards to determine what, if any, limits to set on the degree parents can attain while receiving child care assistance.

Educational Progress Requirements

Fourteen states reported that they require parents in school to maintain “satisfactory progress” or a specific grade point average to continue receiving child care assistance (see Table 3).

- Arkansas requires parents in school to maintain an average grade of C or 2.0 or better.
- California requires parents in school to maintain an average grade of 2.0 or better.²¹
- Illinois requires parents enrolled in vocational training programs or education programs below the post-secondary level to maintain an average grade of C or better and requires parents enrolled in post-secondary education to maintain an average grade of 2.5 or better if they are not working or 2.0 or better if they are working 20 hours or more per week in paid employment.²²
- Kansas requires parents in school to maintain an average grade 2.0 or better, or its equivalent in another grading system.²³
- Vermont requires parents in school to maintain an average grade of 2.0 or better within a graded system or a passing grade in a pass/fail system.
- West Virginia requires parents in post-secondary school to maintain an average grade of 2.0 or better.
- Wyoming requires parents in school to maintain an average grade of 2.0 or better.
- Seven other states—Alabama, Arizona, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Virginia—require parents in school to make “satisfactory progress,” but do not specify a particular grade point average they must maintain.

Conclusion

Reliable child care can enable parents to pursue the educational credentials they need to gain secure employment and earn sufficient income to support their families. Most states recognize that helping parents advance their education also helps increase their chances of attaining self-sufficiency, and therefore provide child care assistance while parents attend school. However, the majority of states also place some constraints on this assistance, which can create obstacles for parents trying to participate in an education program or complete a degree. States should ensure their policies do not deter parents from attending school, but instead support parents’ efforts to improve their employment prospects, achieve financial security for their families, and ensure their children’s well-being.

- 1 See, for example, Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York, NY: The College Board, 2013), available at <https://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-full-report.pdf>; Sandy Baum, Charles Kurose, and Jennifer Ma, *How College Shapes Lives: Understanding the Issues* (New York, NY: College Board, 2013), available at <http://trends.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/education-pays-2013-how-college-shapes-lives-report.pdf>; David Card, "Estimating the Return to Schooling: Progress on Some Persistent Econometric Problems," *Econometrica*, 2001, 69 (5): 1127–60, available at <http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/return-to-schooling.pdf>.
- 2 Maria E. Enchautegui, *Nonstandard Work Schedules and the Well-Being of Low-Income Families*, Paper 26 (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2013), available at <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412877-Nonstandard-Work-Schedules-and-the-Well-being-of-Low-Income-Families.PDF>.
- 3 Liz Watson, Lauren Frohlich, and Elizabeth Johnston, *Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Wage Jobs and Their Consequences* (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2014), available at http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/collateral_damage_scheduling_fact_sheet.pdf.
- 4 Data on state policies reported in this issue brief were collected through a survey sent by the National Women's Law Center to state child care administrators in February 2014. State administrators were given the opportunity to verify and update the data in April 2015. This issue brief reflects data from all 50 states; data on the District of Columbia's policies were not available. For data on other key state child care assistance policies collected through the Center's February 2014 survey of state administrators, see Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, *Turning The Corner: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2014* (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2014), available at http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/nwlc_2014statechildcareassistancereport-final.pdf.
- 5 In addition to these 19 states, Delaware requires parents attending post-secondary education to also participate in a Department of Social Services Food Benefit/Employment and Training Program. This requirement does not apply to parents attending high school or completing a GED program.
- 6 Florida allows parents to meet this requirement by attending school full time, as defined by the school. Pennsylvania exempts parents from this requirement if they are under 18 years old, do not have a high school diploma or a GED, and are enrolled in and attending an education program full time (as defined by the school), or if they are between 18 and 22 years old and are attending high school.
- 7 Georgia allows parents 20 years old and under who attend middle or high school to meet this requirement by attending school full time, as defined by the school. Parents can also meet the participation requirement for up to one year by attending a certificate-based vocational or technical training program that leads to employment. Parents attending education or training beyond their first year of a vocational or technical program or attending post-secondary education must also work an average of at least 24 hours per week.
- 8 As of July 1, 2014, Iowa allows parents to meet the activity participation requirement with a combination of school and work, rather than with only school or only work alone.
- 9 Connecticut allows parents to meet this requirement by attending school for at least 15 credit hours.
- 10 South Dakota exempts parents from this requirement if they are attending an education program that leads to a GED or high school degree. In addition, as of June 30, 2014, the state allows parents attending a college, university, or technical institute to meet the requirement by attending at least 15 semester credit hours.
- 11 Pennsylvania exempts parents from this requirement if they are under 18 years old, do not have a high school diploma or a GED, and are enrolled and attending an education program full time (as defined by the school), or if they are between 18 and 22 years old and are attending high school.
- 12 For Kansas, this information reflects a policy change effective August 1, 2014; previously, parents were required to work at least 20 hours per week.
- 13 Washington allows parents to meet this requirement with 16 hours of work study.
- 14 Illinois does not require parents to work during the first 24 months of vocational education or education below the post-secondary level or during the first 48 months of post-secondary education.
- 15 Georgia does not require parents to work if they are 20 years old and under and are attending middle or high school full time (as defined by the school or program), or if they are attending their first year of a certificate-based vocational or technical training program that leads to employment.
- 16 Iowa, Kansas, and Wisconsin do not apply the 24-month time limit to parents in high school. For Kansas, this limit reflects a policy change effective August 1, 2014; previously, parents could only receive child care assistance to attend post-secondary school if the degree would be completed within six months. Also note that for Iowa, the time limit is 24 fiscal months; two semesters that are scheduled from August 26 through December 20 and from January 13 through May 9 would count as eight fiscal months.
- 17 New Hampshire does not place a time limit on child care assistance for parents in basic education (such as GED, high school, or English as a Second Language classes).
- 18 Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and North Dakota specified that they do not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree. Indiana does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond one bachelor's degree or two associate degrees. Oklahoma generally does not provide child care assistance to attend school for a second bachelor's degree, but does allow it in certain circumstances, such as when a parent is no longer able to find employment in his/her area with his/her current degree. Minnesota allows parents to receive child care assistance for education beyond a bachelor's degree for continuing education units or certification or coursework necessary to update credentials to obtain or retain employment; the state also may approve a parent receiving TANF to pursue education beyond a bachelor's degree, under a policy change effective July 2014. Kansas requires parents receiving child care assistance to attend post-secondary school to complete their degree or certificate program within 24 months. Utah provides child care assistance for a parent to earn a bachelor's degree only during the last 24 months of the degree program.
- 19 New Hampshire allows parents to receive child care assistance while earning up to a bachelor's degree if they are receiving TANF.
- 20 Oregon allows parents to receive child care assistance to complete their high school degree or GED if they are receiving TANF or if they are teen parents and attending a school-based program that includes early childhood development and education. Parents may also receive child care assistance to attend school if they are required to take continuing education as part of their job or to keep their job.
- 21 When a vocational or education program does not use grades, California requires parents to pass the program's requirements in at least 50 percent of the classes or meet the institution's standard for making adequate progress. The state allows parents one additional quarter, semester, or training period, as applicable, to improve their grades or progress if they fail to meet these requirements.
- 22 Illinois allows parents one semester to improve their grades if the grades fall below the required level for the parent's vocational or education program. When a vocational or education program does not use grades, satisfactory progress is determined by the written policy of the institution.
- 23 This requirement reflects a change in Kansas's policy effective August 1, 2014; previously, the state required parents to maintain a passing grade or adequate progress, as defined by the school.

Table 1: Child Care Assistance for Parents to Attend School

State	Does the state allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school?
Alabama	Yes
Alaska	Yes
Arizona	Yes
Arkansas	Yes
California	Yes
Colorado*	Locally determined
Connecticut	Yes
Delaware	Yes
Florida	Yes
Georgia	Yes
Hawaii	Yes
Idaho	Yes
Illinois	Yes
Indiana	Yes
Iowa	Yes
Kansas*	Yes
Kentucky	Yes
Louisiana	Yes
Maine	Yes
Maryland	Yes
Massachusetts	Yes
Michigan	Yes
Minnesota*	Yes
Mississippi	Yes
Missouri	Yes
Montana	Yes
Nebraska	Yes
Nevada*	Yes
New Hampshire	Yes
New Jersey	Yes
New Mexico	Yes
New York*	Locally determined
North Carolina	Yes
North Dakota	Yes
Ohio	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes
Oregon*	Yes
Pennsylvania	Yes
Rhode Island*	Yes
South Carolina	Yes
South Dakota	Yes
Tennessee	Yes
Texas	Yes
Utah	Yes
Vermont	Yes
Virginia	Yes
Washington	Yes
West Virginia	Yes
Wisconsin	Yes
Wyoming	Yes

***Notes for Table 1**

Colorado: Counties determine whether parents can receive child care assistance to attend school; 53 of the state's 64 counties accept education as an eligible activity.

Kansas: The information on the state's policies in this issue brief reflects changes effective August 1, 2014. Previously, parents could only receive child care assistance to attend education or training if it was short term, skill specific, and/or created greater earning potential for the parent; parents could not receive assistance for the completion of a bachelor's or higher degree unless it would be completed within six months.

Minnesota: Some parents transitioning off Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are not permitted to receive child care assistance to attend school.

Nevada: Parents can only receive child care assistance to attend school if they under age 19 and attending high school or if they are receiving TANF and have school as their countable activity in their Personal Responsibility Plan.

New York: Local social services districts determine whether parents can receive child care assistance to attend school.

Oregon: Parents can only receive child care assistance to attend school if they are required to take continuing education as part of their job or to keep their job; if they are receiving TANF, are attending high school or a GED program, and have school as their countable activity in their Personal Responsibility Plan; or if they are teen parents, are attending high school or a GED program, and are attending a school-based program that includes early childhood development and education.

Rhode Island: Under a pilot program begun in October 2013 and lasting until June 2015, parents can receive child care assistance to participate in vocational training for a limited time (six months or less). This short-term training can include an apprenticeship, an internship, on-the-job training, work experience, work immersion, or other job readiness/job attachment programs; it cannot include post-secondary education.

Table 2: School, Work, and Activity Requirements for Parents Receiving Child Care Assistance to Attend School

State	Minimum school, work, and/or total activity participation hours for parents receiving child care assistance to attend school?
Alabama	Activity participation: 15 hours/week
Alaska	No requirement
Arizona	Work participation: 20 hours/week
Arkansas	Activity participation: 30 hours/week
California	No requirement
Colorado	No requirement
Connecticut*	Activity participation: 30 hours/week
Delaware*	See notes
Florida*	Activity participation: 20 hours/week
Georgia*	Activity participation: 24 hours/week
Hawaii	No requirement
Idaho	No requirement
Illinois*	See notes
Indiana	No requirement
Iowa*	Activity participation: 28 hours/week
Kansas*	Work participation: 15 hours/week
Kentucky	Work participation: 20 hours/week
Louisiana	Activity participation: 30 hours/week
Maine*	School participation: 6 credit hours
Maryland	No requirement
Massachusetts*	School participation: 12 credit hours
Michigan	No requirement
Minnesota	Activity participation: 20 hours/week
Mississippi*	School participation: Full-time attendance
Missouri	No requirement
Montana*	Work participation: 40 hours/month
Nebraska	No requirement
Nevada	No requirement
New Hampshire	No requirement
New Jersey*	School participation: 12 credit hours/term or 20 classroom hours/week
New Mexico	No requirement
New York*	Work participation: 17.5 hours/week
North Carolina	No requirement
North Dakota	No requirement
Ohio	No requirement
Oklahoma	No requirement
Oregon	No requirement
Pennsylvania*	Activity participation: 20 hours/week, including 10 hours/week of work
Rhode Island	Activity participation: 20 hours/week
South Carolina	Activity participation: 15 hours/week
South Dakota*	Activity participation: 80 hours/month
Tennessee	Activity participation: 30 hours/week
Texas*	Activity participation: 25 hours/week
Utah	Work participation: 15 hours/week
Vermont	No requirement
Virginia	No requirement
Washington*	Work participation: 20 hours/week
West Virginia	No requirement
Wisconsin*	Work participation: 5 hours/week
Wyoming	No requirement

***Notes for Table 2**

Connecticut: Parents can meet the activity participation requirement by attending school for at least 15 credit hours.

Delaware: Parents attending post-secondary school must participate in a Department of Social Services Food Benefit/Employment and Training Program.

Florida: Parents can meet the activity participation requirement by attending school full time, as defined by the school.

Georgia: Parents must participate in state-approved activities for at least 24 hours per week. Parents 20 years old and under who attend middle or high school can meet the activity participation requirement if they are enrolled full time, as defined by the school. Parents can also meet the participation requirement with education alone for up to one year of certificate-based vocational or technical education that leads to employment; after one year of vocational or technical education as their exclusive activity, parents must work at least an average of 24 hours per week. Parents attending post-secondary education must also work at least 24 hours per week.

Illinois: Parents must work at least 20 hours per week after the first 24 months of below post-secondary or vocational education or after the first 48 months of post-secondary education. There is no work requirement for parents during the first 24 months of attending below post-secondary or vocational education or the first 48 months of attending post-secondary education.

Iowa: Parents can meet the activity participation requirement by attending school full time, as defined by the school. As of July 1, 2014, parents can also meet this requirement through a combination of work and school hours; previously, parents could only meet the requirement with either school alone or work alone.

Kansas: The information reported in this table reflects a policy change effective August 1, 2014. Previously, the state required parents to work at least 20 hours per week.

Maine: Parents taking classes online must take at least 12 credit hours to meet the activity participation requirement.

Massachusetts: Parents in high school must attend school full time and parents in college must take at least 12 credit hours.

Mississippi: Parents in school must attend full time, as defined by the school.

Montana: Parents must work at least 40 hours per month if attending school full time (as defined by the school) and at least 60 hours per month if attending school part time (as defined by the school), unless the parent is a teenager enrolled in high school or pursuing a GED.

New Jersey: Parents can meet the activity participation requirement by taking at least 12 credit hours per term or by participating in at least 20 classroom hours of job training per week.

New York: Parents must work at least 17.5 hours per week if they are attending an education program leading to an associate degree (other than one with a specific vocational objective) or a bachelor's degree and are permitted to receive child care assistance by the local social services district. Also note that local social services districts can require parents in school to take a minimum number of class hours or credits.

Pennsylvania: Parents must work at least 10 hours per week, and must participate in activities for a total of at least 20 hours per week. Parents are exempt from this requirement if they are under 18 years old, do not have a high school diploma or a GED, and are enrolled in and attending an education program full time (as defined by the school), or if they are between 18 and 22 years old and are attending high school.

South Dakota: Parents attending an education program that leads to a GED or high school degree are exempt from this requirement. In addition, as of June 30, 2014, parents attending a college, university, or technical institute can meet the requirement by attending at least 15 semester credit hours.

Texas: Parents must participate in activities for at least 25 hours per week for a single-parent family or 50 hours per week for a two-parent family, or a higher number of hours per week as established by the local workforce development board.

Washington: Parents can meet the work participation requirement with 16 hours of work study.

Wisconsin: Parents must work at least five hours per week or 20 hours per month, unless they are in high school.

Table 3: Time and Degree Limits for Parents Receiving Child Care Assistance to Attend School

State	Time limit for school	Highest degree allowed	Other requirements/limits for parents receiving child care assistance to attend school
Alabama*	24 months	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Alaska	No limit	No limit	
Arizona	No limit	No limit	Must make satisfactory progress
Arkansas	No limit	No limit	Average grade of C or 2.0 or better
California*	6 years	Bachelor's + 24 semester units	Average grade of 2.0 or better
Colorado*	See notes	Bachelor's	
Connecticut	No limit	Bachelor's	
Delaware*	No limit	Bachelor's	
Florida	No limit	No limit	
Georgia	No limit	No limit	
Hawaii	No limit	No limit	
Idaho	40 months	Bachelor's	Online classes cannot be counted
Illinois*	No limit	Bachelor's	Average grade of C or 2.5 or better (2.0 or better if working)
Indiana*	16 semesters	Bachelor's	School must be certified or accredited
Iowa*	24 months	Bachelor's	
Kansas*	24 months	Bachelor's	Average grade of 2.0 or better (or equivalent)
Kentucky	No limit	No limit	
Louisiana	No limit	No limit	
Maine	No limit	No limit	
Maryland	No limit	Bachelor's	Teen parents must be in school
Massachusetts*	No limit	Bachelor's	School must be accredited & education must lead to degree
Michigan*	No limit	Bachelor's	Online classes must meet certain criteria
Minnesota*	No limit	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Mississippi	No limit	No limit	
Missouri*	4 years	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Montana*	No limit	Bachelor's	
Nebraska*	No limit	Bachelor's	Must provide class schedule
Nevada*	No limit	High school	See notes
New Hampshire*	2 years	Associate	See notes
New Jersey	No limit	No limit	
New Mexico*	No limit	Bachelor's	
New York*	Locally determined	Bachelor's	Locally determined
North Carolina*	20 months	Bachelor's	Documentation of class schedule & grades
North Dakota*	No limit	Bachelor's	
Ohio	No limit	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Oklahoma*	No limit	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Oregon*	No limit	High school	
Pennsylvania*	No limit	Bachelor's	Online classes only allowed in limited circumstances
Rhode Island*	6 months	Vocational training	
South Carolina	No limit	No limit	
South Dakota	No limit	Bachelor's	
Tennessee	No limit	No limit	
Texas*	Locally determined	Locally determined	Locally determined
Utah*	24 months	Bachelor's	Education must provide marketable skills
Vermont*	No limit	Bachelor's	Average grade of 2.0 or better (passing grade if pass/fail)
Virginia*	No limit	Bachelor's	Must make satisfactory progress
Washington*	36 months	Vocational/technical (2-year)	Education must lead to certificate for specific vocation
West Virginia*	No limit	No limit	Average grade of 2.0 or better
Wisconsin*	24 months	No limit	Education must provide skill facilitating employment
Wyoming*	6 or 8 years	Bachelor's	Average grade of 2.0 or better

***Notes for Table 3**

Alabama: Parents must make satisfactory progress, as defined by the school.

California: Parents may receive child care assistance for up to 24 semester units, or its equivalent, of education beyond a bachelor's degree or up to six years for a vocational or education program, whichever expires first. These limitations do not apply to parents who, as of June 27, 2008, were receiving services for vocational training and who have attained a bachelor's degree; parents attending vocational training who have been deemed eligible for rehabilitation services by the California Department of Rehabilitation; or parents attending retraining services available through the state's Employment Development Department or its contractors due to a business closure or mass layoff.

When a vocational or education program does not use grades, parents must pass the program's requirements in at least 50 percent of the classes or meet the institution's standard for making adequate progress. If parents do not meet the grade or progress requirements, they are allowed one additional quarter, semester, or training period, as applicable, to meet the requirements. Parents must provide documentation of their class schedule and progress.

Colorado: Counties can allow parents to receive child care assistance for up to 12 months for a high school degree, a GED, or basic skills education, and up to 48 months for post-secondary education. Also note that the state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Delaware: The state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Illinois: Parents enrolled in vocational training programs or below post-secondary education must maintain an average grade of C or better and parents enrolled in post-secondary education must maintain an average grade of 2.5 or better if they are not working or 2.0 or better if they are working 20 hours or more per week in paid employment. If parents' grades fall below the required level for their vocational or education program, they are allowed one semester to bring their grades up to the required average. When a vocational or education program does not use grades, satisfactory progress is determined by the written policy of the institution.

Indiana: Parents can receive child care assistance for up to 16 cumulative semesters/terms if their sole service need is education. Also note that the state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond one bachelor's degree or two associate degrees.

Iowa: Parents can receive child care assistance to attend school for up to 24 fiscal months; two semesters that are scheduled from August 26 through December 20 and from January 13 through May 9 would count as eight fiscal months. The 24-month time limit does not apply to parents in high school. Also note that the state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Kansas: The information shown in this table reflects policy changes effective August 1, 2014. Previously, parents could only receive child care assistance while earning up to a bachelor's or higher degree if it would be completed within six months; otherwise, the education or training had to be short term, be skill specific and/or create greater earning potential for the parents upon completion. Under current policy, parents can receive child care assistance while earning up to a bachelor's degree, but they must complete their degree or certificate program within 24 months and the state will not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree. The 24-month time limit does not apply to parents in high school. Also note that, previously, the state required parents to maintain a passing grade or adequate progress, as defined by the school, but did not specify a grade point average that they had to maintain.

Massachusetts: Parents must be participating in an accredited college or university and the education must lead to an associate or bachelor's degree.

Michigan: Online education programs can only be approved if attendance is mandatory, the number of required hours of online attendance time is verified, and attendance is required at specific, regularly scheduled times.

Minnesota: The state does not have a set time limit on child care assistance for parents to attend school, but does not authorize more than the time necessary for a part- or full-time student to complete the requirements the institution determines necessary for an associate or bachelor's degree. Parents cannot receive child care assistance for education beyond a bachelor's degree, except for continuing education units or certification or coursework necessary to update credentials to obtain or retain employment. In addition, a parent receiving TANF may be approved to pursue education beyond a bachelor's degree, under a policy change effective July 2014. Also note that parents must make satisfactory progress, as defined by the school.

Missouri: The state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Montana: Parents cannot receive child care assistance for training and education activities if they have earned a post-secondary education degree or training certificate within the last five years (unless they are in a continuous four-year program that issues a two-year certificate or degree at the midpoint of the student's intended educational goal).

Nebraska: The state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Nevada: Parents can receive child care assistance to attend school only up to age 19, unless they are receiving TANF and attending school is their approved activity.

New Hampshire: There is no time limit on child care assistance while parents are in basic education (such as GED, high school, or English as a Second Language classes). Parents can receive child care assistance while earning up to an associate degree, unless they are receiving TANF, in which case they can earn up to a bachelor's degree. Parents can only receive assistance to attend school if they are in a degree or certificate program in a specific field that prepares them for employment; the state will not provide child care assistance for parents to take single courses that are not part of such a program.

New Mexico: Parents preparing to obtain a GED can only receive child care assistance for education for up to one year.

New York: Local social services districts, if they allow parents to receive child care to attend school, determine any time limits on such assistance.

North Carolina: The state has a 20-month time limit on child care assistance for post-secondary education.

North Dakota: The state does not provide child care assistance to attend school beyond a parent's first bachelor's degree.

Oklahoma: The state generally does not provide child care assistance to attend school for a second bachelor's degree, but does allow it in certain circumstances, such as when a parent is no longer able to find employment in his/her area with his/her current degree.

Oregon: Parents can receive child care assistance to complete their high school degree or GED if they are receiving TANF or if they are teen parents and attending a school-based program that includes early childhood development and education. Parents may also receive child care assistance to attend school if they are required to take continuing education as part of their job or to keep their job.

Pennsylvania: The state will only provide child care assistance to a parent taking online courses if the education program requires the parent to attend the online class on a specific day and time or if it is a teen parent whose school district approves of the program and verifies that it meets the requirement for full-time high school education.

Rhode Island: Parents are only allowed to receive child care assistance to attend vocational training for a maximum of six months; the state does not allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend post-secondary school.

Texas: Local workforce development boards determine how long to allow parents to receive child care assistance to attend school and what, if any, limits to set on the degree a parent can attain while receiving child care assistance; there are no limits set at the state level. Local boards are required to provide child care assistance for up to four years to parents enrolled in an associate degree program that prepares them for a job in a high-growth, high-demand occupation as determined by the board.

Utah: The state provides child care assistance for a parent to earn a bachelor's degree only during the last 24 months of the degree program.

Vermont: Parents must complete a plan with the projected date of completion of their degree or training program; parents must receive approval for authorization of child care assistance beyond that date. Parents must provide documentation of their class schedule and completion of coursework.

Virginia: Parents must periodically (such as each term or quarter) show they are meeting a consistent standard of progress based on written policy developed by the educational institution or training agency. Verification of satisfactory progress could include a grade report, letter, or progress report from the education or training program.

Washington: Parents are allowed to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of 36 consecutive months. Parents must be receiving vocational or technical education that leads to a certificate for a specific vocation.

West Virginia: Parents must maintain satisfactory progress (as demonstrated by a 2.0 grade point average) and attendance to receive child care assistance to attend school. High school students are exempt from the satisfactory progress requirement.

Wisconsin: The 24-month time limit does not apply to parents in high school. Also note that parents must be in an education program that provides an employment skill that facilitates their efforts to maintain their current position or enhance employment in the same or another profession. Online courses that are self-paced do not qualify.

Wyoming: Parents are allowed to receive child care assistance to attend school for a maximum of six years (or eight years if they are also working at least 30 hours per week) if they are in a bachelor's degree program, and a maximum of three years (or five years if they are also working at least 30 hours per week) if they are in associate degree program.