

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: COLORADO

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2016, counties in Colorado could set the income limit for a family of three to qualify for child care assistance between \$33,149 per year (164 percent of poverty, 46 percent of state median income) and \$61,343 per year (304 percent of poverty, 85 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** Colorado had 24 children on county waiting lists for child care assistance as of February 2016.<sup>2</sup>
- **Parent copayments:** In 2016, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$20,160 a year) receiving child care assistance in Colorado paid \$34 per month, or 2 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,240 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$277 per month, or 11 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>3</sup>
- **Reimbursement rates:** In 2016, reimbursement rates in Colorado 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.<sup>4</sup>
  - The monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in El Paso was \$578,<sup>5</sup> which was \$457 (44 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
  - The monthly reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in El Paso was \$738,<sup>6</sup> which was \$430 (37 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered reimbursement rates:** In 2016, some counties in Colorado, including El Paso, paid higher reimbursement rates for higher-quality care.<sup>7</sup>
  - The reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in El Paso at the highest quality tier was 10 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
  - The reimbursement rate for center care for a four-year-old in El Paso at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In February 2016, Colorado required counties to allow parents to continue receiving child care assistance for up to 60 days while searching for a job, and counties could choose to allow parents to continue to receive child care assistance while searching for a job for a longer period of time. Counties could choose whether to allow parents to qualify for child care assistance while searching for a job; if counties chose to do so, they had to allow parents to receive child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 60 days, or for a longer period of time.<sup>8</sup>

Source: Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, Red Light Green Light: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2016 (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2016). These data reflect policies as of February 2016, unless otherwise indicated.



- 1 In Colorado, counties set their income limits within state guidelines. Also note that counties may allow families already receiving assistance to continue doing so up to an exit eligibility limit that is higher than the county's initial eligibility limit. As of October 2016, the maximum level at which counties are allowed to set their income limits was increased to \$62,781 (85 percent of state median income) to adjust for the updated state median income estimate.
- 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. Also note that counties determine whether to serve any groups of families without placing them on the waiting list.
- 3 Families receiving child welfare child care and families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and enrolled in activities other than paid employment are exempt from copayments. Teen parents may also have their copayment waived if it produces a hardship.
- 4 In Colorado, counties determine their own reimbursement rates.
- 5 El Paso has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
- 6 This is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
- 7 Prior to September 2016, each county in Colorado determined whether to offer higher rates for higher-quality care, and only some counties (including El Paso) had higher rates for higher-quality care in February 2016. The state required all counties to have such tiered rates by September 2016.
- 8 As of June 2016, counties must allow parents to continue or qualify to receive child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 13 weeks, or for a longer period of time.

