

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: CALIFORNIA

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in California could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$42,216 (207 percent of poverty, 62 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** In California, there were waiting lists for child care assistance at the local level as of February 2017.²
- **Parent copayments:** In 2017, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$20,420 a year) receiving child care assistance in California had no copayment. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,630 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$128 per month, or 5 percent of its income, in copayments.³
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, California's payment 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.⁴
 - California's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Los Angeles County was \$1,039, which was \$85 (8 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - California's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Los Angeles County was \$1,466, which was \$129 (8 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, California did not have higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, California allowed parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job, and allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it while searching for a job, for up to 60 days.⁵

Source: Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, *Persistent Gaps: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2017* (Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center, 2017). These data reflect policies as of February 2017, unless otherwise indicated.

- 1 Two pilot counties (San Mateo and San Francisco) allowed families already receiving assistance to continue to receive it up to an income of \$56,904 in 2017. As of July 2017, the statewide income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$52,076 (70 percent of the 2015 state median income), and the state began allowing families already receiving assistance to continue doing so until their income reached \$63,235 (85 percent of the 2015 state median income).
- 2 The state does not have a centralized waiting list, so a statewide total for the number of children on waiting lists is not available. Most local contractors and some counties maintain waiting lists.
- 3 These were the copayments in effect as of February 2017; the state reduced copayments for families as of July 2017. Also note that families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), families whose children are participating in the state-funded part-day prekindergarten program, and children with severe disabilities are exempt from copayments. In addition, families receiving child care assistance on the basis of a child being at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation may be exempt from copayments for up to three months and families receiving child care assistance on the basis of needing protective services may be exempt from copayments for up to 12 months.
- 4 The state planned to increase rates for licensed care to the 75th percentile of 2016 market rates (unless existing rates are higher, in which case they will not change) as of January 2018.
- 5 Parents could receive child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 60 consecutive working days per fiscal year, for no more than 5 days per week and less than 30 hours per week.

