

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: *DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA*

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in the District of Columbia could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$45,775 (224 percent of poverty, 55 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** The District of Columbia had no waiting list for child care assistance as of February 2017.
- **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 the District of Columbia paid \$53 per month, or 3 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,630 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$118 per month, or 5 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>2</sup>
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, the District of Columbia'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.<sup>3</sup>
  - The District of Columbia's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old was \$909,<sup>4</sup> which was \$500 (35 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
  - The District of Columbia's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old was \$1,355,<sup>5</sup> which was \$474 (26 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, the District of Columbia had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.<sup>6</sup>
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old at the highest quality tier was 44 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, the District of Columbia allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for up to 180 days while searching for a job.<sup>7</sup> However, the District of Columbia did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job unless it was a structured job search through an approved agency.

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 In February 2017, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$51,101. As of October 2017, the income limit to qualify for assistance was expected to be increased to \$51,050 (250 percent of poverty), and the exit eligibility limit was expected to be increased to \$57,176 (280 percent of poverty).
- 2 Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), foster children, and homeless children are exempt from copayments. In February 2017, families with incomes at or below 50 percent of the 2009 federal poverty level (\$9,155 a year for a family of three) were also exempt from copayments. As of October 2017, the state planned to exempt families with incomes up to 100 percent of the 2017 federal poverty level from copayments and to reduce copayments for other families.
- 3 This analysis is based on payment rates as of February 2017. The state increased rates for care for infants and toddlers by 4 percent for centers and 10 percent for family child care as of October 2017.
- 4 The District of Columbia has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the most common rate level (the level representing the greatest number of providers).
- 5 This is the most common rate level.
- 6 This analysis is based on payment rates as of February 2017. The state increased rates for care for infants and toddlers by 4 percent for centers and 10 percent for family child care as of October 2017.
- 7 Parents receiving child care assistance can continue to receive it while searching for a job for up to 180 days or until the end of their eligibility period, whichever comes first. (A termination letter is issued on 91st day that a parent is without a job, and then the parent may continue to receive child care assistance for up to an additional 90 days from the date the termination letter was issued, for a total of 180 days that parents can continue receiving assistance while searching for a job).

