

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: *FLORIDA*

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in Florida could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$30,240 (148 percent of poverty, 53 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** Florida had 28,835 children on a waiting list for child care assistance as of February 2017.<sup>2</sup>
- **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 Florida paid as much as \$129 per month, or 8 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 as much as \$195 per month, or 8 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>3</sup>
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, payment rates in Florida 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 payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Miami-Dade County was \$419,<sup>5</sup> which was \$144 (26 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.<sup>6</sup>
  - The monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Miami-Dade County was \$464, which was \$164 (26 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.<sup>7</sup>
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, Florida allowed local coalitions to have higher payment rates for higher-quality care.<sup>8</sup>
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Miami-Dade County at the highest quality tier was 20 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
  - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Miami-Dade County at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.<sup>9</sup>
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, Florida allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for up to 3 months while searching for a job.<sup>10</sup> However, the state did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job.<sup>11</sup>

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 \$46,955. As of July 2017, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$30,630 (150 percent of poverty) to adjust for the 2017 federal poverty level, and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$48,297 (85 percent of state median income) to adjust for the updated state median income estimate.
- 2 Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and subject to federal work requirements and children up to age nine receiving protective services, although not statutorily exempt from the waiting list, are prioritized for child care assistance.
- 3 Local early learning coalitions, which administer Florida's child care assistance program, set their copayments, subject to state approval; copayments shown here reflect the maximum copayment levels allowed under state policy and used by a local coalition. Also note that a coalition may, on a case-by-case basis, waive the copayment for an at-risk child or temporarily waive the copayment for a family whose income is at or below the federal poverty level and who experiences a natural disaster or an event that limits the parent's ability to pay, such as incarceration, placement in residential treatment, or becoming homeless, or an emergency situation, such as a household fire or burglary, or while the parent is participating in parenting classes.
- 4 Local coalitions set their own payment rates.
- 5 Miami-Dade County has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
- 6 The state's market rate survey differentiates between quality levels and the 75th percentile of market rates is obtained for providers at the base level and at the Gold Seal level. The base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level, is compared here to the 75th percentile for providers at that same quality level.
- 7 The base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level, is compared here to the 75th percentile for providers at that same quality level.
- 8 Local coalitions may pay rates that are up to 20 percent higher than the base rate for Gold Seal providers, a designation indicating higher-quality care and tied to accreditation.
- 9 The rate at the highest quality level (Gold Seal level) is compared here to the 75th percentile for providers at that same quality level.
- 10 Parents can continue receiving child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 3 months, even if they reach the end of their eligibility period for child care assistance before the end of that 3-month period.
- 11 Parents can only qualify for child care assistance while searching for a job if they are applying for or receiving TANF.

