



CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

## STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: MASSACHUSETTS

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in Massachusetts could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$45,771 (224 percent of poverty, 50 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** Massachusetts had 24,202 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 Massachusetts paid \$162 per month, or 10 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 \$325 per month, or 13 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>3</sup>
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, Massachusetts'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>4</sup>
  - Massachusetts's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Boston was \$869, which was \$430 (33 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care
  - Massachusetts's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston was \$1,292,<sup>5</sup> which was \$345 (21 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, Massachusetts had higher payment rates for higher-quality care for infants and toddlers.<sup>6</sup>
  - The reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston at the highest quality tier was 3 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
  - The reimbursement rate for center care for a one-year-old in Boston at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, Massachusetts 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 8 weeks.<sup>7</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 \$77,810. For special needs care, the income limit to qualify for assistance was \$77,810, and the exit eligibility limit was \$91,542 in February 2017. As of November 2017, the income limit to qualify for assistance was expected to be increased to \$46,280 (50 percent of state median income) for standard care and \$78,676 (85 percent of state median income) for special needs care, and the exit eligibility limit was expected to be increased to \$78,676 for standard care and \$92,560 (100 percent of state median income) for special needs care, to adjust for the updated state median income estimate.
- 2 The state does not determine families' eligibility for child care assistance at the time they are added to the waiting list. Also note that families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and participating in the employment services program, families referred by the child welfare agency based on open cases of abuse or neglect, siblings of children already in care, and children of actively deployed members of the military are served without being placed on the waiting list.
- 3 Families receiving or transitioning from TANF, foster parents, guardians, caretakers, and families receiving protective services are exempt from copayments. In addition, families at the lowest income levels (in 2017, \$14,160 a year for a family of three) are exempt from copayments.
- 4 This analysis reflects rates in effect as of February 2017. The state increased payment rates for center care and family child care for infants and toddlers to the 50th percentile of 2015 market rates in regions where rates were below that level as of April 2017. In addition, the state increased rates for all providers by 6 percent in August 2017 (retroactive to July 2017).
- 5 The state has higher rates for higher-quality care for infants and toddlers; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
- 6 The state pays higher rates for higher-quality center care and family child care for children up to 2.9 years old.
- 7 Parents receiving child care assistance may be allowed to continue to receive it while searching for a job for an additional 4 weeks (on top of the initial 8 weeks allowed within a 52-week period) if there are extraordinary circumstances.

