

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: WASHINGTON

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in Washington could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$40,320 (197 percent of poverty, 55 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Washington 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 Washington paid \$65 per month, or 4 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 \$186 per month, or 7 percent of its income, in copayments.²
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, Washington'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.³
 - Washington's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in King County was \$788,⁴ which was \$512 (39 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - Washington's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in King County was \$939,⁵ which was \$580 (38 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2017, Washington had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in King County at the highest quality tier was 15 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in King County at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, Washington allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it while searching for a job until the end of their 12-month eligibility period. However, the state did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job.⁶

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 whose income exceeded the initial eligibility limit to qualify for assistance could continue receiving assistance, for up to an additional three months after their recertification, if their income did not exceed \$44,352. As of April 2017, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$40,848 (200 percent of poverty), and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$44,928 (220 percent of poverty), to adjust for the 2017 federal poverty level.
- 2 Homeless families who cannot document participation in approved activities can have their copayment waived for four months.
- 3 This analysis reflects payment rates in effect as of February 2017. The state increased rates for licensed and license-exempt family child care providers as of July 2017, and increased rates for centers by 6 percent as of September 2017.
- 4 The state 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 Parents can only qualify for child care assistance while searching for a job if they are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and job search is an approved activity.

