

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

STATE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE POLICIES: *ARKANSAS*

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2017, a family of three in Arkansas could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$30,926 (151 percent of poverty, 61 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Arkansas had 1,870 children on a waiting list for child care assistance as of July 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 Arkansas had no copayment. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$30,630 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$31 per month, or 1 percent of its income, in copayments.³
- **Payment rates:** In 2017, Arkansas's payment rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance were at or above 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—for some types of care, but below the recommended level for other types of care.
 - Arkansas's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in urban areas was \$511,⁴ which was \$9 (2 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - Arkansas's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in urban areas was \$618,⁵ which was \$3 (1 percent) above the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered reimbursement rates:** In 2017, Arkansas had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in urban areas 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 urban areas at the highest quality tier was above the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2017, Arkansas allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for up to 90 days while searching for a job. However, the state did not allow parents to initially qualify for and begin receiving child care assistance while searching for a job.

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 2017, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$43,812 (85 percent of the 2015 state median income).
- 2 Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), families receiving Extended Support Services (which are available to certain families who lose eligibility for TANF due to earnings), foster families, and families receiving protective services are served without being placed on the waiting list.
- 3 The state determines copayments based on the cost of care; this copayment amount was calculated assuming that the family was purchasing care at the state's maximum base payment rate for center care for a four-year-old. In March 2014, the state began varying the copayment based on the quality level of the care a family was using, with a family paying 6 percent of the cost of care if using a provider with a one-star rating in the state's three-tier quality rating and improvement system, 4 percent if using a two-star provider, and 2 percent if using a three-star provider. The copayment amount shown here assumes the family is using a one-star provider, given that, as of January 2016, all providers serving families receiving child care assistance must be at the one-star level or higher. Also note that families receiving TANF, families in their first year of transitioning from TANF, foster children, children receiving protective services, homeless children, children with special needs, and teen parents are exempt from copayments. In addition, families with incomes below 40 percent of the 2015 state median income (\$20,618 a year for a family of three) were exempt from copayments in 2017.
- 4 The state has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
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