



**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER**

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FEBRUARY 2020 | FACT SHEET

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

State Child Care Assistance Policies: Alabama

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2019, a family of three in Alabama could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$27,012 (127 percent of poverty, 46 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Alabama had no waiting list for child care assistance as of February 2019.
- **Parent copayments:** In 2019, a family of three with an income at 100 percent of poverty (\$21,330 a year) receiving child care assistance in Alabama paid \$78 per month, or 4 percent of its income, in copayments. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$31,995 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$132 per month, or 5 percent of its income, in copayments.²
- **Payment rates:** In 2019, Alabama'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.
 - Alabama's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in the Birmingham region was \$580,³ which was \$165 (22 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - Alabama's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in the Birmingham region was \$615,⁴ which was \$221 (26 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2019, Alabama had higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in the Birmingham region at the highest quality tier was 10 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in the Birmingham region at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2019, Alabama allowed parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it for up to 90 days while searching for a job.⁵ 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, Early Progress: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2019 (Washington, DC: National Women’s Law Center, 2019). These data reflect policies as of February 2019, unless otherwise indicated.

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- 1** In February 2019, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$50,256. As of October 2019, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$27,732 (130 percent of poverty) to adjust for the 2019 federal poverty level, and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$52,416 (85 percent of state median income) to adjust for the updated state median income estimate.
 - 2** Children receiving protective services and foster children are exempt from copayments. In addition, families with incomes below 100 percent of the 2017 federal poverty level (\$20,420 a year for a family of three) were exempt from copayments in 2019.
 - 3** The state has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
 - 4** This is the base (lowest) rate, which is the most common rate level.
 - 5** Parents can continue receiving child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 90 days, even if they reach the end of their eligibility period for child care assistance before the end of that 90-day period.