



**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER**

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CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

State Child Care Assistance Policies: California

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2019, a family of three in California could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$54,027 (253 percent of poverty, 77 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** In California, there were waiting lists for child care assistance at the local level as of February 2019.²
- **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 California had no copayment. A family of three with an income at 150 percent of poverty (\$31,995 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$87 per month, or 3 percent of its income, in copayments.³
- **Payment rates:** In 2019, California'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.
 - California's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Los Angeles County was \$1,124, which was \$129 (10 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - California's monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Los Angeles County was \$1,594, which was \$94 (6 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2019, California did not have higher payment rates for higher-quality care.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2019, California 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. Parents could also initially qualify or recertify for child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 12 months.⁴

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.

- 1** In February 2019, families already receiving assistance could continue doing so until their income reached \$65,604. As of July 2019, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$69,626 (85 percent of state median income); the state no longer has a separate exit eligibility limit.
- 2** The state does not have a centralized waiting list, so a statewide total for the number of children on waiting lists is not available. Most local contractors and some counties maintain waiting lists.
- 3** Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and families whose children are participating in the state-funded part-day prekindergarten program are exempt from copayments. Families receiving protective services are exempt from copayments for up to 12 months. In addition, families with incomes up to 39 percent of the 2016 state median income (\$30,096 a year for a family of three) were exempt from copayments in 2019.
- 4** In February 2019, parents could initially qualify or recertify for child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 12 months, for no more than 5 days per week and less than 30 hours per week. The state planned to increase the limit on the number of hours of child care for which a parent could receive assistance while searching for a job to 32.5 hours as of October 2019.