



**NATIONAL
WOMEN'S
LAW CENTER**

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FEBRUARY 2020 | FACT SHEET

CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING

State Child Care Assistance Policies: Colorado

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2019, a family of three in Colorado could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$38,443 (180 percent of poverty, 50 percent of state median income).¹
- **Waiting list:** Colorado had 376 children on county waiting lists for child care assistance 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 Colorado paid \$36 per month, or 2 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 \$293 per month, or 11 percent of its income, in copayments.³
- **Payment rates:** In 2019, payment rates in Colorado 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.⁴
 - The monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver was \$990,⁵ which was \$180 (15 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
 - The monthly payment rate for center care for a one-year-old in Denver was \$1,407,⁶ which was \$291 (17 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2019, Colorado required counties to have higher payment rates for higher-quality care.⁷
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver at the highest quality tier was 47 percent higher than the rate at the lowest quality tier.
 - The payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in Denver at the highest quality tier was still below the 75th percentile of current market rates.
- **Eligibility for parents searching for a job:** In 2019, counties in Colorado had to allow parents already receiving child care assistance to continue receiving it while searching for a job for up to 13 weeks, or a longer period of time.⁸ Counties could choose whether to allow parents to 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 Colorado, counties set their income limits within state guidelines; the limit shown here is the minimum at which counties could set their income limit to qualify for child care assistance. Also note that in February 2019, all counties were required to allow families already receiving assistance to continue doing so until their income reached \$65,135. As of October 2019, the minimum level at which counties could set the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$39,461 (185 percent of poverty) to adjust for the 2019 federal poverty level, and the exit eligibility limit was increased to \$68,218 (85 percent of state median income) to adjust for the updated state median income estimate.
 - 2** Waiting lists are kept at the county level, rather than at the state level. This waiting list total is the total of reported county waiting lists. Also note that prior to July 2019, counties had the option to allow certain groups of families to be served without being placed on the waiting list; these groups included households with incomes at or below 130 percent of poverty, teen parents, children with additional care needs, homeless families, and other groups defined by the county based on local needs. As of July 2019, counties must serve households with incomes at or below 130 percent of poverty, children with additional care needs, and homeless families without placing them on waiting lists; counties may choose to allow other groups of families to be exempt from the waiting list.
 - 3** Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and with parents enrolled in activities other than paid employment, families receiving child welfare child care, and parents without income are exempt from copayments. Homeless families do not have copayments during a 60-day stabilization period. Teen parents may have their copayment waived if it produces a hardship. Counties also have the option to waive copayments for families with children dually enrolled in a Head Start or Early Head Start program.
 - 4** This analysis reflects payment rates as of February 2019. At that time, counties determined their own payment rates. As of July 2019, counties are required to set payment rates at the 10th percentile of market rates for providers that are at level one and two of the state’s quality rating and improvement system and that are caring for preschool- and school-age children, the 25th percentile for providers that are at levels one and two and that are caring for infants and toddlers, the 50th percentile for providers at level three, and the 75th percentile for providers at levels four and five; previously, the state recommended—but did not require—these payment rate levels.
 - 5** Denver has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the most common rate level (the level representing the greatest number of providers).
 - 6** This is the most common rate level.
 - 7** This analysis reflects payment rates as of February 2019. As of July 2019, counties are required to set payment rates at the 10th percentile of market rates for providers that are at levels one and two of the state’s quality rating and improvement system and that are caring for preschool- and school-age children, the 25th percentile for providers that are at levels one and two and that are caring for infants and toddlers, the 50th percentile for providers at level three, and the 75th percentile for providers at levels four and five; previously, the state recommended—but did not require—these payment rate levels.
 - 8** Counties are required to allow parents to continue receiving child care assistance for up to 13 weeks after each instance of the loss of a job or other activity. Parents can continue receiving child care assistance while searching for a job for up to 13 weeks even if they reach the end of their eligibility period for child care assistance before the end of that 13-week period, but they must provide the required verification at the end of their eligibility period for assistance to continue.