

**CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING**

## State Child Care Assistance Policies: Washington

- **Income eligibility limit:** In 2019, a family of three in Washington could qualify for child care assistance with an annual income up to \$41,568 (195 percent of poverty, 54 percent of state median income).<sup>1</sup>
- **Waiting list:** Washington 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 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 (\$31,995 a year) receiving child care assistance paid \$207 per month, or 8 percent of its income, in copayments.<sup>2</sup>
- **Payment rates:** In 2019, 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.
  - Washington's monthly payment rate for center care for a four-year-old in King County was \$1,251,<sup>3</sup> which was \$244 (16 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 \$1,342,<sup>4</sup> which was \$378 (22 percent) below the 75th percentile of current market rates for this type of care.
- **Tiered payment rates:** In 2019, 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 2019, 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.<sup>5</sup>

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 whose income exceeded the initial eligibility limit to qualify for assistance could continue receiving assistance, for up to an additional 12 months after their recertification, if their income did not exceed \$45,708. As of April 2019, the income limit to qualify for assistance was increased to \$42,672 (200 percent of poverty), and the exit eligibility limit for the graduated phase-out period was increased to \$46,932 (220 percent of poverty), to adjust for the 2019 federal poverty level.
- 2** Homeless families who cannot document participation in approved activities can have their copayment waived for four months. In addition, children who are receiving protective services, child welfare services, or family assessment response services and who have been referred for child care assistance as a part of their case management are exempt from copayments.
- 3** The state has higher rates for higher-quality care; this is the most common rate level (the level representing the greatest number of providers).
- 4** This is the most common rate level.
- 5** 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 or if they are experiencing homelessness.