

**I. CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

Waiting lists provide an equitable and efficient method of allocating services when Local Purchasing Agencies (LPA) are faced with limited resources. Waiting lists must be developed when child care funding is not available, child care providers are not available, or the LPA lacks sufficient staff to process all requests for child care services.

Waiting lists maintained by the LPA provide valuable information about child care needs. This information helps justify the need for additional child care funds; therefore, it is important that the list provide valid information regarding the number of *eligible children* who are waiting to receive services. Waiting lists must be maintained in an accurate and consistent manner. Waiting lists also give potential providers useful information when deciding where to locate and what ages of children to serve.

**II. REQUIREMENTS**

Each LPA must establish policies approved by its governing board for establishing and maintaining a waiting list. These policies must be made available by distribution to parents or by posting in the LPA. The Division of Child Development (DCD) monitors the LPA's waiting list policies for compliance with state policy. Waiting list policies must be submitted to the Subsidy Services Consultant of DCD on an annual basis and more frequently, if the policy has been amended. (See [Chapter 19: The Child Care Provider Agreement](#) and [Chapter 22: Local Policy Options](#) for information regarding local policies.)

**A. Conducting Informal Eligibility Screening**

Before adding a family to the waiting list, the LPA must conduct an informal eligibility screening by collecting the following information from the family:

1. Name;
2. Address;
3. Phone number;
4. Child's name and date of birth;
5. Date of inquiry;
6. Reason care is needed; and
7. Family size and amount of family income (if applicable).

The family must appear to be eligible based on the informal eligibility screening. It is not necessary for families to fill out the Application for Child Care Services ([DCD-0456](#)) in order to be put on the LPA's waiting list.

If a family is not eligible at the time of the informal eligibility screening, but can reasonably be expected to become eligible within 30 days, the LPA may place them on the waiting list the date of the request. For example, a parent has job offer and will begin work within 30 days.

### **B. Options for Establishing Waiting Lists**

The LPA has several options for establishing a waiting list. These options include, but are not limited to:

1. Establishing one single waiting list of eligible children maintained in chronological order by parent inquiry;
2. Establishing separate lists of eligible children waiting for child care services and a separate list for transportation services, both in chronological order by parent inquiry and within or across the different need criteria; or
3. Establishing a waiting list of eligible children based on **need** criteria. The LPA has the option to prioritize the order in which families needing child care will receive services. However, the LPA **cannot** prioritize according to income.

### **C. Separate Waiting Lists**

1. Special Needs

Counties must establish a separate waiting list for children with special needs. Payment for these services is made with the LPA required special needs set-aside. Refer to [Chapter 2: Funding for Subsidized Child Care Services](#) for additional information on these funds.

Once the minimum set-aside amount is encumbered, children with special needs who are currently being served should be served with funds in the LPA's regular subsidy allocation. LPAs may continue to serve new children with special needs who apply, as long as the LPA does not overspend their regular subsidy allocation. Refer to [Chapter 6: Serving Children with Special Needs](#), for additional information.

## 2. Expectant Mothers (Optional)

Sometimes expectant mothers may request child care for a time in the future. The LPA has an option to establish a separate waiting list.

**This list is not counted/reported in the Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement System.**

### III. PROCEDURES

#### A. Prioritizing Families

The LPA must establish waiting list policies for serving families. Care may be provided for different reasons and priorities established within the different need criteria.

The waiting list is a tool for providing services to the family as a unit. For example, a parent/responsible adult who is already receiving services and later comes back to apply for another child (including newborns, preschoolers or school-agers) is eligible to receive immediate services for that child if funding is available. LPA staff should determine if funding is available by reviewing monthly expenditures for the state fiscal year and a review of the budget. When a family is removed from the waiting list, all the children in that family needing care **should** be included.

The following are examples (not inclusive) of how different reasons care is needed may be prioritized:

1. Children who need child care to support protective services may be prioritized over families who need child care for other reason categories;
2. Families needing child care to support Work First employment or training may be given priority over other families needing child care to support employment or training;
3. Families with foster children in DSS custody who need child care to support employment may be given priority over other families needing child care to support employment;
4. Families who need child care to support full-time employment may be given priority over families who need child care to support part-time employment; or
5. Teen parents who need child care to remain in high school may be given priority over other families needing child care to support education.

Children who are in foster care or in the custody of the local department of social services are not a separate need criteria. Their need for child care services is based on the employment or educational needs of the foster parent or the developmental needs of the child.

### **B. Reporting Procedures**

Monthly data on the number of eligible children waiting for services statewide is collected in the automated SCC Reimbursement System. When the LPA begins a waiting list, the number of children waiting for services at the beginning of the month should be entered on the waiting list screen. When paying for a child from the waiting list, the child's payment must be coded with Client Status 0 (zero), **not Client Status 1 (one)** in order for the system to automatically remove the child from the waiting list. Also, LPAs should manually update the online waiting list when the LPA removes children whose parents are no longer interested in or no longer qualified for child care assistance. This system requires LPAs to enter the number of children on their waiting lists before closing out the reimbursement process for each service month. The **Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement Manual** provides additional information regarding adding and removing children from the waiting list in the automated Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement System.

### **C. Removing Families from the Waiting List**

LPAs need to establish a procedure for managing the waiting list.

Children are removed from waiting lists as funding or child care spaces become available. When reducing the waiting list, families must be removed in accordance with local policy. Refer to [Chapter 22: Local Policy Options](#) for information regarding local policies. LPA's have three (3) options for removing families from the waiting list:

1. Families may be served on a "first-come, first-served" basis according to their date of inquiry;
2. Families may be served in order of priority established by the LPA; or
3. If it appears that some families in the lowest priorities never receive services, the LPA may clear one area of priority one month and clear another priority the next time families are removed from the waiting list. In this manner, the LPA is prioritizing services to families but also attempting to serve each area of need.

**NOTE:** Children receiving time limited services supported by one-time, non-recurring funds who were on the waiting list must be retained on the waiting

list in the order they were placed. See [Chapter 4: Application, Eligibility Determination and Documentation](#) and [Chapter 9: Parental Choice and Voucher Procedures](#) for information on time limited services.

When a parent's name is reached on the waiting list, notify them in writing that they may come in to apply for services. Since families may have been waiting for several months to receive services, the LPA should allow a reasonable time for them to respond. For example, 14 calendar days may be needed for the parent to respond.

**Waiting lists must be reviewed and families on the waiting list must be contacted at least annually, but the LPA may choose to do this more often.**

#### **D. How Changes in Need for Child Care Affect Waiting Lists**

When a family's need for child care changes, it is not necessary to interrupt services if they are currently receiving child care. For example, a child receiving child care to support child protective services would not have to go on the waiting list when the CPS case closes and the parent needs child care to support employment (as long as the parent meets income eligibility requirements and the child care case is not terminated). However, if the reason care is needed does not fit the county's priorities for serving families, then services may be denied. The local waiting list policy should address this issue.

#### **E. Options When not Enough Providers are Available**

LPAs are encouraged to work with the local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R), Smart Start Partnership, and other community resources to develop child care services that meet the needs of the community. These agencies should have a clear understanding of the demographics of the community and the need for specific types of care, e.g., infant care, school-age care, and evening care.

When a child care program becomes unavailable to currently enrolled children, the LPA should respond quickly to try to assist with locating other available arrangements and/or referring to the local CCR&R so that there will be little disruption to the child or to the parent's employment, training, etc. The LPA may develop its own policy for establishing a waiting list when child care spaces are not available.

#### **F. Reduction of Services When Funding is not Available**

If child care funding is no longer available, the LPA may have to reduce services. The LPA may choose to use Smart Start or other funds to pay for

child care services to avoid termination of services.

Before reducing or terminating child care services due to lack of funds, the local purchasing agency must notify its Subsidy Services Consultant in the Division of Child Development.

Written procedures, which will assure equitable treatment of families, must be established before the LPA reduces child care services. These procedures will vary according to the nature and severity of the reduction of services and should be included as part of the local purchasing agency's waiting list policies. Refer to [Chapter 22: Local Policy Options](#) for information regarding local policies. The LPA must decide which procedures will be followed and in what order to address reduction of services. Families and providers affected by a reduction in services must be sent a Child Care Action Notice ([DCD-0450](#)) at least ten (10) work days in advance indicating the reason for service termination and the procedures for such termination.

Some of the options available to agencies when reducing services are:

1. Optional transportation services may be terminated;
2. Payment of registration fees may be terminated;
3. Payment of part-time child care services may be terminated;
4. Payment for child care to support *seeking employment* may be terminated; or
5. The last family receiving services may be the first family to have services terminated, based on prioritized need criteria.

When funds are limited, i.e., an LPA is overspending its allocation of child care funding and has been advised that additional funding is not available, the LPA should discontinue new placements for all but the most critical cases. Certain eligible children may receive child care services if the LPA has established a priority for children who need care for a particular reason. For example, a LPA may continue to place children in child care to support protective services while undergoing a reduction in services. Or, since a portion of a LPA's child care funds must be set aside for children with special needs, priority might be given to their families. LPA decisions, such as these, must be documented in local policy. (See [Chapter 19: The Child Care Provider Agreement, Attachment 1](#) and [Chapter 22: Local Policy Options](#) for information regarding local policies.)