

FAMILY F.A.Q.

Q. How do I get help paying for child care?

A. There are different types of financial assistance to help pay for child care in Massachusetts. For more information about financial assistance options or to get on the centralized waitlist, please dial 2-1-1 or [register online](#).

Q. What is the waitlist for child care financial assistance?

A. Please see the [parent information sheet](#) for more information.

Q. Am I eligible for financial assistance?

A. Families are eligible for subsidized child care if they meet EEC income eligibility requirements and have a reason for needing child care. This reason is called a service need. The service need is defined as the amount of time (during which subsidized child care is available) that neither parent is available to care for the child because they are:

- beginning or continuing paid employment; or
- seeking paid employment; or
- participating in education or training (not including graduate school); or
- are incapacitated

The chart shows current income eligibility by family size. These amounts are for gross income including all sources. Click [here](#) to see the complete EEC income eligibility table.

Families with a child or parent with a documented special need may have an income at or below 85% SMI at initial assessment and may remain eligible up to 100% SMI, provided they continue to have a documented special need.

Q. How long is the waitlist?

A. There are many factors that influence how long you are on the waitlist: funding availability, priority factors and preferred type of assistance. Funding Availability Letters are issued on a first come, first served basis according to waitlist application dates. Please understand that it is very difficult to determine when child care financial assistance may become available. Be advised that EEC only pays a portion of the daily child care cost and that you may be assigned a co-payment (parent fee) based on your total household income.

Q. How do I find a child care provider?

A. Mass 2-1-1 offers referrals to licensed child care centers, family child care providers, preschools, and out of school time programs.

Q. What should I look for in a child care provider?

A. Mass 211 Specialists provide referrals, not recommendations. We do not license, endorse or recommend any particular provider. Only you can determine the best quality setting for your child. Please contact and visit providers before making a final decision.

Q. How do I know if a program is licensed?

A. The current license for all these programs will be posted in a prominent location. EEC can tell you the licensing history of the program.

Q. What types of child care are available?

A. There are several types of child care available for you to choose from:

1. **Child Care Centers** serve children full or part-time in groups or classrooms of children. Children are usually grouped according to age.
2. **Family Child Care** is delivered in a provider's home. Children in a family child care home may range in age from infant through school age and programs may serve between a maximum of six or ten children (with an additional assistant).
3. **Out of School Time** is group child care for school-age children, which may be held at their school. They are generally open before and after school and during vacations. Some are privately licensed, while others are licensed by EEC.
4. **Family Child Care Systems** may provide additional supports to providers and families.

Q. What should I do if I have concerns about my child's program?

A. It is important to stay involved with your child's program. If you have questions or concerns about the care your child is receiving, you should first talk with your provider. If you feel that your issues or concerns have not been addressed appropriately, you may call EEC. Dial 211 or use our public database to find your community's licensing office to report a child care complaint. If you feel that your child may be at risk, call immediately. Every report is investigated and people who report their concerns can request to remain anonymous.

Q. How can I find out if the public school offers an early childhood program?

A. Call your local public school, or visit the Department of Education's [website](#).

Q. What Is Head Start / Early Head Start?

A. Free early childhood programs for pregnant women and for children from birth to age 5. These programs help children from low-income families get a healthy start and become ready for school. Head Start is a free pre-school program for 3-5 year-old children from low-income families. Head Start programs are free of charge and usually run 10-months a year for 4-6 hours a day. Early Head Start serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers. Families who are eligible for other subsidies may be able to use them to access full-day and year-round care through their [Head Start program](#).

Q. What are child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs)?

A. Are regional agencies that manage child care subsidies. They offer information on inclusive programming for children with special needs. CCR&Rs provide training, consultation and technical assistance to child care providers. They collect information about licensed child care providers and programs, provide referrals and counseling on how to identify and select quality child care.

Q. What are Coordinated Family & Community Engagement Programs (CFCE's)?

A. They are family resource/support centers which serve as an information hub for the community. They assist families from prenatal through age 8. They promote family education, engagement and literacy.

Q. What is Help Me Grow?

A. Is a developmental screening tool for Birth through 5-Ages and Stages questionnaire regarding child's milestones. HMG improves early detection of children at risk for developmental and behavioral problems. Contact your CFCE for more information.

Q. What is Early Intervention?

A. [Early Intervention \(EI\)](#) is a program to help infants and toddlers who are at risk of developmental delays. Early Intervention teams work with children and their families to determine what services are needed and the best way to provide those services. [Family TIES](#) of Massachusetts provides information and referral services, emotional support, and trainings to parents of children and youth with special needs. The Department of Public Health (DPH) regulates EI programs and handles funding.

Q. How do I apply for special education?

A. Contact the special education coordinator at your child's school to ask for an evaluation to find out if your child qualifies for special education services. There is no cost to you. The list of approved special education schools can be found [here](#).

If you do not find the information or service you need, please dial 2-1-1! Our services are free and confidential.