

Dear Interested Stakeholders,

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is pleased to inform you of multiple points of access that will open, or have been opened in the past month, to allow increased access to financial assistance for early education and care programming to targeted populations.

EEC currently funds early education and care opportunities for approximately 50,000 children, including 28,000 children participating in EEC's income eligible financial assistance program, but access to financial assistance for new income eligible families has been closed since November 2008, due in part to increased demand and declining state revenues.

This fiscal year EEC has been able to manage our budget and caseload in such a way that no child lost access to early education and care and we are now in a position to open access in a strategic fashion, in line with our existing priorities to ensure that valuable state funds are targeted at the families that need the most assistance. This is possible now due to past policy restrictions in addition to the increased monitoring of caseload data and attrition rates.

In summary, the following EEC financial assistance access points are currently open or will be open shortly:

- Continuity of Care for Families Through Increased Access for Siblings (enrolling February 1 – June 2010)
Increased access for financial assistance for continuity of care for approximately 1,000-1,500 siblings through EEC vouchers and contracted providers.
- Expansion of Contracts for Specialized Child Care Services for Homeless Children (enrolling February 1, 2010- life of contract)
Contracted providers are able to provide early education and care and related support services to additional homeless children through the tripling of Specialized Child Care Services for Homeless Children contracts to serve 170 new children bringing the total of children served to 255.
- Contract Placements Available to Income Eligible Working Families Due to an Increase in EEC Contracts by 5% (enrolling March 1, 2010 -life of contract)
Income eligible contracted slots have been increased to serve approximately 728 additional children statewide, resulting in an overall 5% increase, with all providers receiving at least one additional slot. Eligible families will be enrolled from the EEC centralized waitlist on a first come first serve basis, providing an opportunity for families in the general Income Eligible population to receive financial assistance.
- Vouchers Available to Income Eligible Working Families (enrolling March 1, 2010 - April 30, 2010)
Effective March 1, 2010 until April 30, 2010, approximately 2,400-3,000 children from income eligible working families will be enrolled from the EEC centralized waitlist on a first come first serve basis, providing an opportunity for families in the general Income Eligible population to receive financial assistance.

- Summer Only Vouchers (enrolling March 1, 2010 – June 30, 2010)

With the use of ARRA funds “summer only” financial assistance will be available to approximately 1,450 children from working families from approximately June 14, 2010 through September 2010. This is an extension of the same program that was implemented during the summer of 2009. This program will prioritize serving children attending the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Commissioner’s Districts; and children whose siblings are already enrolled/receiving child care financial assistance from EEC.

Please note, enrollment dates are estimated and may be extended or decreased based on levels of enrollment.

I looking forward to working with you over the coming months and as always appreciate your on-going commitment and support as EEC aims to provide the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers.

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