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COMMISSIONER

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Early Education and Care

EMB FY 2014-04

EEC Management Bulletin

- Subject:** Revisions to the Child Care Subsidy Waiting List Policies
- Date Issued:** May 9, 2014
- Effective Date:** Immediate
- For Use By:** All EEC Waitlist Agents: Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), Contracted Providers, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees, and Mass 2-1-1
- Synopsis:** Revises waitlist removal and reinstatement policies to improve data quality
- Supersedes:** Chapter 1 §§ 1.3(C)(1), 1.4(A) and 1.5 of the *EEC Financial Assistance Policy Guide* governing removal from the EEC Waiting List and reinstatement of Waiting List records.
- Further Info:** bulletinquestions@massmail.state.ma.us
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Introduction

In an effort to improve data quality, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) has been working with both internal and external stakeholders to review its policies governing Waiting List removal and reinstatement. Based on these efforts, EEC is revising its existing Waiting List policies set forth in Sections 1.3(C)(1), 1.4(A) and 1.5 of the Child Care Financial Assistance Policy Guide. The revised policies, which are described in greater detail below, are effective as of the date of this EEC Management Bulletin (EMB).

EEC will create an amendment log, which will be posted with the current EEC Financial Assistance Policy Guide on EEC's website and updated, as necessary, with the announcement of any future changes to EEC financial assistance policy. Until a new policy guide is finalized, please use this EMB and the amendment log, along with the existing Financial Assistance Policy Guide in conducting child care subsidy management decisions, including but not limited to, waiting list management.

Background

During the review of existing Waiting List policies, both internal and external stakeholders expressed grave concerns regarding the amount of time and effort it takes to identify eligible families from the Waiting List. In explaining this issue, stakeholders repeatedly stated that existing policies related to Waiting List management cause duplication of efforts and create unintended delays, preventing families from receiving timely funding opportunities. Stakeholders conveyed that the same families receive multiple funding availability letters while other families with an immediate need for child care financial assistance are not receiving any communication because: (1) families are not required to respond to available funding letters; and (2) non-compliant families are allowed to return to the "top of the list" provided that the family contacts EEC, or its designee, within 6 months of removal. Not only does this dilute the quality of Waiting List data, but it also raises concerns about the fairness of child care financial assistance policies applied in Massachusetts. To address these concerns, EEC is implementing the following changes:

- Families must respond to funding availability letters. Failure to respond will result in the removal from the EEC Waiting List; and
- EEC is reducing the time period for reinstating Waiting List records from six (6) months to thirty (30) days.

The following contains the actual text of each updated policy, as it will appear in the revised policy manual. These revised policies are effective immediately.

Section 1.3(C) Funding Availability Letters (FAL) {revised May 9, 2014}

1. Time is of the Essence. Families must contact the subsidy administrator that issued the FAL within 15 days of the date of the letter to schedule an appointment. Failure to respond in a timely manner will result in families' removals from the Waiting List.

Revised Policy: 1.4(A) Reasons for Removal from the Waiting List {revised May 9, 2014}

6. Failure to Respond to FAL. Families must contact the subsidy administrator that issued the FAL within 15 days of the date of the letter to schedule an appointment. Failure to respond in a timely manner will result in the families' removal from the Waiting List.

Revised Policy: 1.5 Reinstating Waiting List Records {revised May 9, 2014}

If a family that has been removed from the waiting list contacts an administrator within 30 days of their removal, the family may be placed back on the waiting list using their original placement date provided that information that the family provides demonstrates eligibility for child care financial assistance.