Date:  August 11, 2017  
To:  Child Care Assistance Program Administrative and Client Access Contacts  
From:  Minnesota Department of Human Services – Child Care Assistance Program  

RE: Early Learning Scholarships and the Child Care Assistance Program

This memo has information about Early Learning Scholarships and the Child Care Assistance Program.  

What are Early Learning Scholarships?

The Early Learning Scholarships increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs to improve school readiness for all young children. Children birth to two years old are eligible if they meet one or more of the following:

- Child of a teen parent
- Currently in foster care
- In need of child protective services
- Experienced homelessness in the last 24 months.

Priority for scholarships is given based on family income, child poverty, or one of the special populations above.  

Scholarship funding is limited. Some families may be placed on a waiting list for scholarships.  

There are two scholarship pathways:

- Pathway I Scholarships are awarded to families to use at the eligible program of their choice.
- Pathway II Scholarships are awarded to families by designated Four-Star Parent Aware Rated early childhood programs.

Who is income-eligible for Early Learning Scholarships?

Families receiving public assistance, including child care assistance, are income-eligible for scholarships:

- Families can use a Service Authorization or any recent paperwork showing eligibility for child care assistance as proof of income eligibility.
- Counties can share eligibility information with the scholarship administrator if a signed release is provided, or counties can send a copy of a current Service Authorization to an applicant, who can then send it to a scholarship administrator.

Families not receiving public assistance with income below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guideline are income-eligible for scholarships.
How do families apply for Early Learning scholarships?

Families should contact their area scholarship administrator to see if scholarships are available and to request an application. If the family is eligible, scholarship funds are paid directly to the program the family chooses.

What programs can accept Early Learning Scholarships?

To receive scholarships, programs must participate in the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System. Programs may include Head Start, school district pre-kindergarten and preschool programs, and child care programs. Area scholarship administrators can help families find eligible programs.

For more information about Parent Aware and to find participating programs, go to Parentaware.org

Does receiving a Scholarship impact Child Care Assistance Program eligibility?

No. Scholarships do not count as income and the amount of child care assistance is not reduced when a scholarship is received.

How can Scholarships help a family on Child Care Assistance?

Programs are encouraged to layer scholarships with other resources, including child care assistance. Programs are directed to bill child care assistance for their regular charges and to bill scholarships for charges not covered by child care assistance. Payments are not reduced due to scholarship receipt. If providers have questions on layering scholarships and child care assistance, refer them to Information for Child Care Providers: How Early Learning Scholarships Work with the Child Care Assistance Program” (DHS-7056)

Examples of scholarship uses for families receiving child care assistance:

- Copayments
- Activity fees
- Prices not covered by the maximum rates
- Breaks in authorization or additional hours of attendance not paid by child care assistance.

Should counties suggest that families apply for an Early Learning Scholarship?

Yes. Refer families to the area scholarship administrator.

Families that might benefit from scholarships are:

- Families on the Basic Sliding Fee waiting list
- Families that are not in an approved activity for child care assistance
- Families whose providers charge more than the maximum rates.

Where can I find more information about Early Learning Scholarships?

Contact the area scholarship administrator in your region or area.
Early Learning Scholarships Area Scholarship Administrators

Region 1 Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council: 1-800-543-7382

Region 2 Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen
Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.: 218-632-3600

Region 3 Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Saint Louis
Northland Foundation: 1-800-433-4045

Region 4 Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wilkin
Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership: 800-452-3646 or 218-512-1584

Region 5 Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, Wadena
Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Inc.: 218-632-3600

Region 6E Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Renville
Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc.: 1-800-292-5437

Region 6W Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine
Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc.: 1-800-292-5437

Region 7E Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Pine
Families First of Minnesota: 1-800-450-2773

Region 7W Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright
Milestones: 1-800-288-7549 or 320-251-5081

Region 8 Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc.: 1-800-658-2444

Region 9 Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, Watonwan
Families First Minnesota: 1-855-588-2056

Region 10 Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona
Families First Minnesota: 1-888-450-2773

Hennepin and Ramsey Counties
Think Small: 651-641-6604

East Metro – Anoka and Washington Counties
Anoka County Community Action Program: 763-783-4711

West Metro – Carver, Dakota, and Scott Counties
Families First of Minnesota: 1-888-450-2773

Tribal Administrators:
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwa - Child Care Services: 1-800-551-0969

White Earth Reservation - Child Care/Early Childhood Program: 1-800-433-4045