

Age Category Exceptions

9.24.6

Maximum rates that can be paid vary by age of the child and type of provider. The age category of a child receiving CCAP is typically determined by the standard age categories for children in family child care (includes licensed family and legal nonlicensed providers) and child care centers (includes licensed and certified license exempt centers). See Chapter 2 ([Glossary](#)) under infant, toddler, preschool and school age for definitions of each age category.

Center licensing provision for age flexibility

Age categories for licensed child care centers fall into the following categories:

- “Infant” is a child who is at least six weeks old but less than 16 months old.
- “Toddler” is a child who is at least 16 months old but less than 33 months old.
- “Preschooler” is a child who is at least 33 months old but has not yet attended the first day of kindergarten.
- “School-age” is a child who is at least old enough to attend their first day of kindergarten within the next four months but is less than age 12 (or age 14 if the child has a documented disability). A child is school age when they are currently authorized to receive CCAP and turn age 13, up until the family’s next redetermination. A child with a documented disability is school age when they are currently authorized to receive CCAP and turn age 15, up until the family’s next redetermination.

Licensing does allow for exceptions to these age categories. The licensing provision for age flexibility allows children attending licensed child care centers to receive care in a different age-category classroom for a short period of time without a licensing variance. A child may be in a different age-category classroom for the purposes of staff ratios, group size and programming when the decision is in the best interest of the child and with the agreement of parent, teacher and center director.

The following exemptions are allowed without a licensing variance:

- A child may be designated as an “infant” up to the age of 18 months.
- A child may be designated as a “toddler” up to the age of 35 months.
- A child may be designated as a “preschooler” at the age of 31 months.

When the county or tribe is notified by the parent or the provider that the child meets the age criteria to qualify for the licensing provision for age flexibility, payment should be made at the rate associated with the age-rate category of the classroom that the child attends.

When changing the age category in MEC², override the Service Authorization using the “Provision for Age Rate Flexibility” override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See [“Edit Service Authorization”](#) in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.

Age category flexibility related to kindergarten start dates

CCAP recommends that agencies consider a child to be preschool age for payment purposes until September 1st following the child’s 5th birthday. When September 1st falls in the middle of the week, the school-age category and rate change is effective the following Monday (see Chapter 9.24, [Provider Rates](#)).

CCAP allows for the following exceptions:

- **Child within four months of entering kindergarten**

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- In August of each year, MEC² will complete the annual school age change batch. This process changes the age category for children who have reached the appropriate age to start kindergarten in the fall and who have a kindergarten start date entered on the child's school window. Without a date entered in that field, the age change cannot occur and the child will remain in the preschool age category when they should be changed to school age.
- If the parent or provider requests that the child be moved to the school age category, the worker may change the age category. When changing the age category, override the Service Authorization using the "Provision for Age Rate Flexibility" override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See "[Edit Service Authorization](#)" in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.
- **Child starts kindergarten after 6th birthday**
 - CCAP recommends that agencies consider a child to be school age for payment purposes on September 1st following the child's 5th birthday unless the parent informs the agency that the child will not be starting school in September of that year. In this case, the child would not be school age until September 1st of the following year. MEC² will determine the child's age category based on information coded on the Member and School windows. Update the school window with the future kindergarten start date reported by the parent to continue paying the preschool rate.
- **Child starts kindergarten before 5th birthday**
 - If a child starts school before the child's 5th birthday, the child is considered school age on the day the child starts school. When the school start date falls in the middle of the week, the school-age category and rate change is effective the following Monday (see Chapter 9.24, [Provider Rates](#)). When changing the age category, override the Service Authorization using the "Provision for Age Rate Flexibility" override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See "[Edit Service Authorization](#)" in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.

Specialized infant and toddler family and group family child care providers

A child attending a specialized infant and toddler family and group family day care is considered a "toddler" if they are least 12 months old but less than 30 months old. If the child meets the age criteria and the provider is licensed as a specialized infant and toddler family and group family child care provider, payments should be made at the toddler age-rate category.

When changing the age category in MEC², override the Service Authorization using the "Provision for Age Rate Flexibility" override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See "[Edit Service Authorization](#)" in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.

Licensing variance

A licensing variance can be granted for children attending licensed child care. The variance allows a child to receive care in an age-based setting that does not correspond with the child's birthday for a specified period of time. Note that licensing variances are required when children receive care in different age-categories for longer periods of time and outside of the definitions listed above.

Licensed family child care

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Licensing may grant a variance to a licensed family child care provider allowing them to consider a child a different age-category. When documentation of the DHS licensing variance is provided, payment should be made at the age-rate category indicated on the licensing variance for the duration of the variance.

When changing the age category in MEC², override the Service Authorization using the “DHS Variance Granted” override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See [“Edit Service Authorization”](#) in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.

Licensed child care centers

Licensing may grant a variance to a licensed child care center allowing the center to care for a child within a different age-category classroom. When documentation of the DHS licensing variance is provided, payment should be made at the age-rate category of the classroom where care is provided for the duration of the variance.

When changing the age category in MEC², override the Service Authorization using the “DHS Variance Granted” override reason, select the appropriate Age Rate Category and enter a case note explaining why the override was done. See [“Edit Service Authorization”](#) in the MEC² User Manual. When the age category of the child is changed, review the Service Authorization to ensure the appropriate maximum rate is paid.

Legal authority

Minnesota Statutes 142B.01, subd. 13

Minnesota Statutes 142E.01

Minnesota Statutes 142E.10, subd.1(e)

Minnesota Rules 9503.0005