2025-26 Child Care Complex Needs Fund Summary

Fast Facts

- The 2025-26 CCCNF application opened on December 8, 2025, and closed January 20, 2026.
- DCYF's budget was $7.67 million.
- DCYF received 915 applications requesting more than $28 million in funding.
- DCYF scored eligible applications using the Child Care Complex Needs Fund scoring rubric.
- DCYF created a review panel of subject matter experts to prioritize finalist applications to make funding determinations.
- The final funding determinations prioritized:
    - Applications that had the highest total scores.
    - Applications that fulfilled the intent of the fund while producing the best impact for children with complex needs.
- 2025-26 CCCNF awards will fund 244 applications (137 child care centers, 97 licensed family homes, 5 Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers, and 5 tribal programs) for a total of $7.69 million*.

  * $22,669 from Fiscal Year 2027's CCCNF budget was used to fully fund awardees.

Background

The purpose of the Child Care Complex Needs Fund (CCCNF) is to promote inclusive and least-restrictive environments by supporting providers serving children with developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs, or other unique needs.

DCYF opened the Child Care Complex Needs Fund application on December 8, 2025. The application asked providers to explain any unique needs or behaviors of children in their care and describe their plan to support children with complex needs. Providers requested funding in the spend category that best suited their plan for children's needs.

Over the six-week application period, DCYF received an overwhelming response. Providers across the state submitted 915 applications requesting more than $28 million. The need for support for children with complex needs remains clear.

Processing Applications

DCYF used a multi-step process to review applications. First, applications were screened for eligibility and completeness. Next, eligible applications were either automatically prioritized and advanced as finalists or they went through a scoring process. The automatic prioritization and scoring process is described below and in the Scoring Rubric. After the initial screening and prioritization, a review panel made up of subject matter experts reviewed all finalist applications, both the automatically prioritized and the high-scoring applications, to make funding determinations.

Screening Applications

DCYF screened all submitted applications for eligibility and completeness. A contractor translated applications submitted in languages other than English.

Providers had to meet the following criteria to move to the next step:

- Have an open license or certification
- Currently serve children with behavioral needs, developmental delays, disabilities, or other unique needs.
- License-exempt Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) providers must have served at least one child on subsidy in four of the last six months or two of the last three months and claim for subsidy through the Social Service Payment System (SSPS) at time of application.

Reasons ineligible applications did not move forward included:

- Application was incomplete (missing information).
- Application total requested funding outside the minimum/maximum range by facility type.
    - Child care centers and licensed family homes could request between $5,000 and $50,000.
    - FFN providers could request between $100 and $2,000.
- FFN Application did not meet the subsidy requirement listed in the eligibility criteria.
- Application stated no children with complex needs currently enrolled.
- Application for a provider whose license was closed at the time of application review.
- Application included requests for items or services that are not allowed. To review the guidelines for the spend categories, please visit the Child Care Complex Needs Fund manual here.
- Application requested a funding amount that did not equal the itemized budget/spend plan.

Automatic Prioritization (Finalist Status)

Some applications automatically advanced to the final review stage without scoring. These included:

- Tribal Early Learning Programs
    - Licensed, certified, or certified for payment only programs with a tribal affiliation.
- Programs in Priority ZIP Codes
    - Providers located in ZIP codes identified as areas where Black, Indigenous, and Children of Color are disproportionately not ready for kindergarten.

The remaining eligible applications moved on to the next step of scoring.

Scoring Applications

A team of seven DCYF staff scored applications based solely on content and criteria in the scoring rubric. DCYF published the scoring rubric with the application so providers would know exactly how their application was going to be scored.

Applications had to receive **nine points or higher** to move on to the prioritization phase.

Prioritization

DCYF received over $28 million in funding requests. With $7.67 million available, DCYF prioritized eligible applications that received the highest total number of points. Additionally, DCYF ensured that the list of finalists included eligible applications from each provider type.

The total numbers of points was calculated by averaging the applicant's score for each spend category using the rubric criteria.

These finalists were presented to the review panel for funding determinations.

Panel Review

DCYF created a review panel of subject matter experts to evaluate the finalist applications in order to make funding decisions.

The panel included experts from the following:

- Child Care Licensing
- Tribal Early Learning
- Child Care Subsidy Program
- Language Access Specialists
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

The panel performed individual evaluations of each finalist application and prioritized applications to be awarded funding.

The panel reviewed and scored each finalist application based upon:

A) Does the application fulfill the intent of the Child Care Complex Needs Fund?
B) Out of these finalists, will this specific application produce the best impact for children with complex needs?

Applications that received the highest score from the panel's prioritization were granted an award.

Funding Decisions

DCYF was able to fund 244 applications! DCYF awarded $7,689,357* to 137 child care centers, 97 licensed family homes, 5 FFN, and 5 tribal programs.

This award resulted in $5.34 million for Adding Staff or Increasing Staff hours, $565,859 for Therapeutic Services, $437,740 for Facility Improvements to comply with ADA accessibility or Behavioral Needs and $1.35 million for Supportive and Adaptive Materials and Equipment.

*A total of $22,669 from the Fiscal Year 2027 CCCNF budget was used to fully fund awardees for the 2025-26 grant cycle.

Summary on Subsidy

Subsidy Status	Total Count	Total Amount
Subsidy Child Care Centers	126	$3,873,930
Subsidy Licensed Family Homes	88	$2,870,536
Subsidy FFN	5	$8,625
Total Subsidy	**219**	**$6,753,091**
Private Pay Child Care Centers	15	$548,562
Private Pay Licensed Family Homes	10	$387,704
Private Pay FFN	0	$0
Total Private Pay	**25**	**$936,266**

Staffing remains the most-requested funding category.

DCYF expects to open a new round of the Child Care Complex Needs Fund in late 2026.