

MILITARY CHILD CARE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD-PLUS EXPANSION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

About Child Care Fee Assistance:

What is Child Care Fee Assistance?

For more than a decade, military branches – Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force – have provided fee assistance to eligible military families to offset the cost of child care in community programs through Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood, or MCCYN, when on-installation child care is unavailable. MCCYN supports families in locations with extensive waiting lists as well as those that are geographically dispersed – to include reserve component families. MCCYN provides fee assistance to eligible military families using nationally accredited child care providers in the community. Child Care Aware® of America serves as the third party administrator for the MCCYN program.

What's new with the Child Care Fee Assistance program?

The Defense Department, or DOD, fee assistance program MCCYN has expanded to MCCYN-PLUS to include community child care programs that are rated by their state's quality improvement program. Licensed child care providers participating in their state's quality improvement program will be additional options for families.

What are the state-level quality improvement programs?

State-level quality improvement programs offer a systemic approach to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, state quality improvement programs award quality levels/tiers to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their state's quality improvement program, early care and education programs embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Even providers that have met the standards of the lowest quality levels/tiers have achieved a standard of quality that is beyond the minimum requirements to operate.

What is Child Care Aware®?

Child Care Aware® of America is a nonprofit organization that works directly with child care agencies and families. They are the third party administrator that assists the military branches to serve and support eligible military families through the Child Care Fee Assistance programs. They manage the administration of the MCCYN and MCCYN-PLUS programs. For more information, visit: <https://www.childcareaware.org/>.

Where is MCCYN-PLUS available?

MCCYN-PLUS is now available in several states. This effort continues to increase the number of eligible child care providers in areas with a high concentration of military families. Child care providers, which include both child care centers and family child care providers, without accreditation will be required to participate in and progress through their state's quality improvement program to become an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider.

New applicants requesting to participate in the fee assistance program will be required to enroll with a minimum quality level/tier of three in their state's quality improvement program to become an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider. Search for eligible providers by state through Child Care Aware® of America: <https://www.childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care/starting-child-care-search/>.

Why did the Defense Department expand MCCYN-PLUS to include quality rated child care?

The DOD is committed to supporting the health and well-being of all military children. Children play an important role in the strength and resilience of military families. When spouses are comfortable with their family's child care arrangements and children are happy and healthy, service members can focus on their missions. By including quality rated providers as child care options for MCCYN-PLUS, parents can be assured that their children will have safe, healthy and nurturing environments to thrive.

Will the MCCYN-PLUS program continue to expand to additional states?

Yes. With the initial success of the program, MCCYN-PLUS continues to grow and expand into additional states. The expansion will provide the opportunity for community child care providers that are participating in their state's quality improvement program to be eligible to become MCCYN-PLUS providers. This expansion will offer additional quality child care options in the community for both military and civilian families. You can learn more about state quality improvement programs at <https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/>.

For Service Providers:

What are the benefits to child care providers for participating in the MCCYN-PLUS program?

Community-based child care providers approved for the MCCYN-PLUS fee assistance benefit by expanding their child care businesses to a military family customer base and offer additional quality child care options. Our military families are getting younger. Of the 400,000 children of all active-duty service members age 5 and under, over half of those children are age 2 and under. This is an opportunity to increase their income and grow their businesses while serving our nation's military parents. In addition, by participating in their state's quality improvement program, providers can take advantage of incentives that may be available such as technical assistance, which provides customized support from subject matter experts, and/or financial incentives for professional development training, maintaining accreditation and background check processing.

What are the standards for becoming an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider?

Community child care providers must meet the following requirements to be eligible to receive DOD fee assistance:

- Provide evidence of enrollment in the state's quality improvement program within 12 months from the date the program is notified of the change in requirements.
- Provide evidence of the initial level/tier as awarded by the state's quality improvement program.
- Achieve a minimum level/tier of three as prescribed by the state's quality improvement program.
- Advance to the highest level/tier or until accreditation is achieved in accordance with state guidelines.

New applicants requesting to participate in the fee assistance program must meet the following requirements:

- Provide evidence of DOD-approved state or national accreditation, if applicable, *or*
- Provide evidence of participation in the state's quality improvement program with a level/tier of three or higher.
- Advance to the highest level/tier or until accreditation is achieved in accordance with state guidelines.

Community-based providers must continue to meet other MCCYN eligibility requirements for fee assistance as prescribed by the military branches policy.

What is the difference between an accredited provider and a provider enrolled in a state quality improvement program?

Accredited providers receive national or state recognition by an approved accrediting body that they are meeting a mark of excellence according to a set of quality standards. Providers participating in a state quality improvement program are recognized for their commitment to quality child care and early education by a state agency. Ratings are awarded to providers as they continue to improve quality based on a set of standards. These quality ratings are also available to both military and civilian families on each state's website to help them make an informed choice in the care and education of their children. For more information about state quality improvement programs or to explore approved child care facilities across the country, visit: <https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/>.

Is national accreditation still required for participation in the MCCYN-PLUS program?

It is the DOD's policy that community child care providers receiving fee assistance meet state licensing regulations and requirements, adhere to DOD-approved national or state early learning accreditation standards and be inspected by an outside agency once a year. Child Care Aware® will assist eligible families in locating accredited community child care providers as first choice. Child care providers with a quality level/tier of three or higher will be made available to eligible families as an alternative.

For Parents:

How do I find out if I am eligible for MCCYN-PLUS?

Child Care Aware® of America is the third party administrator that manages the administration of the ChildCare Fee Assistance program for the military branches. For more information about approved MCCYN-PLUS providers, visit:

<https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistancerespite/feeassistancerespiteproviders/qris-mccyn-plus/>.

Will the MCCYN-PLUS program affect the availability of child care?

Yes, the expansion of the MCCYN-PLUS program will increase the availability of child care. The program is expanding in communities with a high concentration of military families and locations with extensive waitlists for child care. MCCYN-PLUS supports military families by expanding the eligibility requirements to providers enrolled in their state's quality improvement program. Civilian families in these communities also benefit by having more quality child care options available to them.

Within the scope of the MCCYN-PLUS program, what are my options for child care in the community?

Military families in search of quality child care options will be assisted in locating accredited child care providers. In certain locations where accredited care is unavailable, community-based child care providers with a quality level/tier of three or higher will be made available to eligible families as an alternative.

I already have a provider. Can he or she participate?

If care for your child is provided by a child development center or family child care provider, the child care administrator can put you in touch with or contact Child Care Aware® of America for more details on enrollment and eligibility. If your child care provider is nationally or state accredited, is state licensed and meets the other eligibility requirements, they can participate. If the child care provider does not meet the eligibility requirements, Child Care Aware® of America can assist you in locating an eligible provider in your area.

What happens if my child care provider elects not to participate in their state's quality improvement program?

To ensure continuity of care, families of nonparticipating child care providers will be grandfathered into the fee assistance program until the youngest child (which includes new children of the enrolled family) ages out of the program or the family transfers to another provider/duty location. The child care provider is grandfathered into the program for the specific families only and is not automatically available for future families enrolling in the program once implementation begins.

Providers that refuse to participate in their state's quality improvement program after the family disenrolls will not be eligible to participate with the fee assistance program for other DOD families without enrolling in the process. The grandfather clause relates to families currently enrolled only. The provider must adhere to state quality improvement program requirements to allow new families to enroll and be subsidized in the program.