



Parent Handbook

1-888-469-5627

www.wrksolutions.com

Workforce Solutions is an Equal Opportunity program/employer. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Individuals who are hearing impaired may call Relay Texas at

1-800-735-2988 (Voice)

1-800-735-2989 (TDD)

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Information on Financial Aid for Child Care

Finding the right place and the right people to care for your child while you work or go to school is an important decision. When it comes to finding early education and child care, there are a number of options from which to choose. Care may be provided by a relative, by individual caregivers who are registered with the state licensing agency, or by licensed child care centers. The choice is yours.

Workforce Solutions offers a network of child care facilities throughout the 13-county Gulf Coast service area which are all licensed or registered by the State of Texas. The Gulf Coast area includes: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, and Wharton.

Workforce Solutions customers include parents who are currently working or enrolled in school or training. **Workforce Solutions** developed this Parent Handbook to inform you about our financial aid for child care, to explain your rights and responsibilities, and to help you obtain affordable quality child care.

Please read this handbook carefully. Keep it handy as a reference for questions you may have later about your child care financial aid.

Workforce Solutions can also help you find a job or a better job, and can provide financial aid and scholarships for education and career training to obtain these jobs. For more information on what job or educational services are available, and if you qualify for financial aid, please call us at 1-888-469-5627 (JOBS) if you have any questions or visit Workforce Solutions web site www.wrksolutions.com.

Authorized Child Care Providers

Workforce Solutions gives parents information to help them choose the type of provider that will meet their needs and the needs of their children. Parents have several alternatives when selecting a provider to care for their child, including regulated and listed relative care options.

Regulated Providers are licensed or registered with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). Licensed child care centers, licensed child care homes and registered child care homes are authorized to operate by the TDFPS. These operations must comply with the Minimum Standards and rules of TDFPS and are subject to monitoring by the TDFPS. Some regulated providers have also recognized as having achieved a Texas Rising Star certification.

Licensed Child Care Centers operate in a facility other than the permit holder's home. Licensed child care centers may care for seven or more children through 12 years of age.

Licensed Child Care Homes operate in the home of the caregiver. The caregiver may care for up to 12 children depending on the age of the children. Children's ages may vary and range from birth through 12 years old.

Registered Child Care Homes operate in the home of the caregiver. The caregiver may care for up to six children under the age of 6 and may care for up to six additional children after school. The total number of children, including the caregiver's own children, may not be more than 12 at any time.

Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certification Program

A Texas Rising Star certified provider exceeds minimum state licensing standards and has smaller group sizes, more qualified staff, and program components that address sound practices for the development of children. *Parents are encouraged to inquire whether a chosen provider is Texas Rising Star certified.*

Relative Providers are eligible relatives of the child. Eligible relatives include grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings of the child at least 18 years of age. Eligible relatives cannot reside in the same household as the family receiving assistance from Workforce Solutions. A relative provider must be listed with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and maintain the listing status.

Relative providers are not employees of Workforce Solutions but are independent vendors. Workforce Solutions will reimburse relative providers up to the maximum rate per day each day we have authorized care and the children receive care from the relative provider. Workforce Solutions will not reimburse relative providers for days the child is absent. Workforce Solutions will not withhold any taxes from the reimbursement child care providers receive. It is the provider's responsibility to report earnings in their annual tax return; and if the provider is receiving government assistance such as TANF, Food Stamps, or SSI the provider must report the earnings from child care to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

Parents requesting relative child care must provide the name and contact information of the relative to the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Call Center who will check with the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office to determine if the relative is an authorized relative care provider. If the relative is not an authorized relative care provider, the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office will contact the relative to acquire the necessary documents so the relative can become an authorized relative care provider.

Choosing a Child Care Facility - Check List

Choosing a provider to care for their child is one of the most important decisions for a parent. Before visiting a facility, it is helpful to identify the basic family needs that you look for in a child care program. These may be the location of the program, the hours of operation, transportation services, etc.

After selecting a child care program that meets the basic needs, parents are urged to visit to learn first-hand if it is right for the child and the family. There is no substitute for a “walk-through” visit. Take the time to talk to the caregiver and ask questions about the children’s activities. When choosing a child care arrangement and for monitoring a provider after enrollment, parents may want to use this checklist:

- Staff members are warm and friendly
- The children seem happy and relaxed
- My child felt comfortable during the visit
- The child care program accepts my child’s age group
- The hours of operation fit my schedule
- Transportation is available
- Nutritious meals and snacks are provided
- Activities are available for children of different age groups
- There are enough staff members to care for the children
- There are enough toys, books, paint, and games, and they are in good condition
- The classrooms are nicely arranged to allow for active and quiet play
- The staff is trained to care for children
- Staff members are respectful to children, coworkers, and parents
- Fee arrangements are clear and precise
- The facility is clean and safe
- The program’s mission is appropriately focused on children
- Parents are welcome and can visit without notice

Workforce Solutions also provides a searchable database of child care providers online at [Find a Child Care Provider](#).

Workforce Solutions Requirements for Financial Aid for Child Care

Customer Requirements

1. You must be actively working, in school, or training for a minimum of 25 hours per week for a single parent household or 50 hours per week for a two-parent household. Only Workforce Solutions can authorize a child care arrangement, including changes in child care provider.
2. You must meet Workforce Solutions income guidelines for the number of persons in your household.
3. In advance or within 14 calendar days after the change occurs, you must inform Workforce Solutions about changes including:
 - a. work (permanent interruption in employment)
 - b. school, training, or education status (permanent withdrawal from education/training program)
 - c. income, (increases that would raise the gross monthly family income above the allowable income level for the family size)
 - d. family (changes to family composition that would raise the gross monthly family income above the allowable income level for the family size)
4. You must inform Workforce Solutions and your child care provider within 14 days about changes in:
 - a. residence
 - b. telephone number, email address or other contact information
 - c. emergency contact information
5. You must comply with requirements from Workforce Solutions and the child care provider.
6. You must meet the enrollment requirements and all other policies specified by the child care facility in which your child is enrolled.
7. You will report to the TDFPS licensing office any complaints about a possible violation of licensing standards, which affects the care of children in the facility.

Transportation Requirements

If the childcare facility is providing transportation for your child:

1. Stay with your child or make sure someone else does until the bus arrives each morning.
2. Be at home or make sure someone else is at home when your child arrives home in the evening.
3. Call the child care facility any day your child will be absent. Call early to keep the bus from coming to your home to pick up your child.

Parent's Share of Costs and Fees

1. If applicable, parents must pay a share of cost for all days that children are scheduled to receive child care financial aid.
2. A parent agrees and understands that:
 - The parent must pay the fee in advance, before receiving the child care;
 - Any subsidy a parent receives from another agency for child care must also be paid to the facility the parent is using with Workforce Solutions financial aid;
 - The fee is based on a parent's household income and the number of children for whom that parent is receiving Workforce Solutions financial aid;
 - The parent must pay the fee even if his or her children are absent;
3. **Workforce Solutions financial aid does not include:** overtime charges incurred for late pick up, charges related to payments made by checks with insufficient funds supply fees, field trips, and late payment fees. Parents are responsible for these costs.

Attendance Requirements

1. A parent must use Workforce Solutions' Attendance Card to report her child's attendance.
2. A parent must notify the child care provider in advance for planned absences.
3. A child's attendance can be "reported" when a parent uses the attendance card to indicate that the child was present or absent. Parents using a home-based provider can "report" attendance by calling 1-866-960-6496.

Any attendance not reported by a parent swiping the attendance card or calling in the attendance within the required timeframe counts as an absence and counts against your child's limit of 65 days during the eligibility period.

4. A child may be absent for court-ordered visits with an absent parent. However, documentation of the court-order and notification to Workforce Solutions is required.
5. A child with chronic illnesses may exceed the maximum absences with approval from Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Call Center. Documentation from a physician may be required.
6. A suspension is a means of continuing your eligibility for financial aid for child care during temporary interruptions in care. A suspension does not require a provider to hold a place for a child unless the provider agrees to do so.

There are two reasons a parent may request a suspension. If a parent has a temporary interruption in work, education, or job training activities and is not working the minimum number of hours a week or attending school, child care may be suspended for up to 90 calendar days (12 weeks) from the documented effective date of the interruption of these activities. If a parent has a documented temporary medical incapacitation and is unable to meet work, education, or job training requirements child care may be suspended.

Please contact the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid call center at 713.334.5980 or 1.888.469.5627 if you have additional questions.

How to Report Attendance

1. Parents must use the attendance card to report the child's attendance.
2. If a child attends a licensed facility provider, the parent must use the Point of Service terminal to report attendance.
 - a. The parent must make sure that attendance for a child is approved for the day by checking the message on the swipe machine or receipt for approval.
 - b. If the machine response is 'Denied', the parent must inform the child care provider.
 - c. If the response is 'Store and Forward' (SAF), the parent must inform the child care provider and the parent must check at the next transaction to assure the previous swipe was successful.
3. If a child attends a home-based provider, the parent must call 1-866-960-6496 to report attendance.
 - a. The parent must listen to the IVR message after each recorded attendance to confirm that the attendance (i.e., presence or absence) for that day is approved.
 - b. If the IVR response is 'Denied', the parent must inform the child care provider.
4. The parent must inform Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Call Center at 1-888-600-5936 or 1-877-858-7644 when his/her attempt to record attendance is denied or rejected and cannot be corrected at the child care provider site.

Requirements for using attendance cards

1. Parents cannot let any other individual, child care provider or its owner, director, assistant director, or employees possess, accept, or use their cards, or the alternate cardholders' attendance cards or PINs.
2. Parents cannot let any other individual, child care provider or its owner, director, assistant director or employees perform the attendance/absence reporting function for parents.
3. Parents cannot designate the child care provider staff, owner, director, or assistant director as alternate cardholders.
4. Parents are responsible for informing alternate cardholders of these requirements. A parent is responsible if an alternate cardholder misuses the attendance card.
5. Parents must report any misuse of attendance cards and/or PINs to Workforce Solutions at 1-888-600-5936 or 1-877-858-7644.
6. **Workforce Solutions will take appropriate action against anyone who fails to abide by the above attendance card security requirements. We may stop financial aid for child care, move children to another vendor selected by the parent, and may file criminal charges if the parent has intentionally defrauded Workforce Solutions.**

Parents' Responsibilities

Each time Workforce Solutions determines you eligible for child care financial aid, you must sign a new Parent Agreement showing that you understand and agree to comply with all requirements and responsibilities of receiving this financial assistance.

- ✓ Workforce Solutions will not authorize your financial aid for child care if you have not returned a signed Parent Agreement each time by the deadline we specify.

Parents and caretakers should be aware that a person may be prosecuted for obtaining or attempting to obtain, by fraudulent means, services to which she is not entitled.

Workforce Solutions Responsibility

Workforce Solutions has a responsibility to our customers.

- ✓ **You have the right to expect good service from Workforce Solutions**
- ✓ We will notify you about eligibility for financial aid as soon as possible, generally within 20 calendar days from the date we have received all required application documents.
- ✓ You may receive child care financial aid regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, age, political beliefs, religion, or disability.
- ✓ Funding for financial aid for child care is dependent on federal and state funds. If Workforce Solutions determines there are insufficient funds to continue your financial aid for child care, we may have to end our assistance. In the unlikely event this occurs, we will provide you 15-day notice.

Appeals

Parents are eligible to appeal termination of child care financial aid if the request for the appeal is made within 15 days of notification of termination. Some parents are eligible to continue receiving child care during the appeal process. Workforce Solutions will mail a letter to notify parents that child care financial aid is being reduced or ended.

To request an appeal, a parent must complete The Child Care Financial Aid Appeals form and return it to Workforce Solutions by mail or in person within 15 days from the date shown on the letter sent by Workforce Solutions.

If a parent loses the appeal and has chosen to continue child care financial aid during the appeal process, then the parent is responsible for the total cost of the care (parent fee plus Workforce Solutions fee) provided during the appeal process.

Notification and appeal procedures for foster care families, CPS families, and families required to cooperate with Workforce Solutions to receive TANF and/or SNAP assistance differ from those above and are guided by the Health and Human Services Commission.

Phone Numbers and Resources

Financial Aid Call Center

1-888-600-5936 or 1-877- 858-7644

Website

www.wrksolutions.com

Resources Available to Parents

Collaborative For Children 832-600-1234
(For information on available child care and 1-888-833-6805
choosing quality child care)

Child Care Licensing 713-940-5200
(To locate a licensed child care provider, make a complaint or check licensing
status of child care providers)

Workforce Solutions general information 1-888-469-JOBS (5627)

Workforce Solutions Career Offices

Workforce Solutions provides excellent resources to help Gulf Coast residents get a job, keep a job, or get a better job. Each office provides information about open jobs, resources to help research careers and employers, and free computer, fax and telephone usage to customers. Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer program.

To locate the office nearest you, call 1-888-469-JOBS (5267), or visit the web site at www.wrksolutions.com.

Important Times to Remember

Please remember that, to continue receiving financial aid through Workforce Solutions, you must meet certain deadlines. Below are some dates that, if forgotten, can cause child care financial aid to be denied, reduced, terminated or delayed. To avoid such problems, remember:

- Your eligibility re-determination or recertification date
 - Date paperwork and other documentation must be returned to Workforce Solutions
 - Change of status must be reported to Workforce Solutions within 14 days of the change
 - Parent share of cost must be paid in advance to the child care provider.
- Appeals must be requested within 15 days of denial, reduction, or termination of child care financial aid as indicated on Workforce Solutions Appeal Form.

Workforce Solutions – Child Care Financial Aid Recertification
⊕ Time to Update My Paperwork

| Date I was told that my paperwork needs to be updated | **My deadline to complete Recertification (Update) | I was told by Phone, Letter, or In-person, etc. | I was notified by (name of staff person) |
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REMEMBER

All changes in status must be reported to Workforce Solutions within 14 days of the change.

Please use the RECERTIFICATION SCHEDULE above to keep up with the date(s) for re-assessing your eligibility to continue to receive financial aid.

**HELPFUL HINT: Each time you speak with a Workforce Solutions representative, check to be sure you have written down the correct recertification date.



GLOSSARY (common terms used throughout the handbook)

Caregiver - an individual who directly cares for children while they are in a child care facility.

Caretaker - an adult who performs all parental functions for a minor including the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and supervision. In this handbook the word “parent” is used to mean either a parent or a caretaker.

Child Care - a service provided for children during part of a 24-hour period, either in a licensed child care center, a regulated family day home, in the child’s own home or in the home of a relative caregiver. Services should include recreational and developmental activities and snacks/meals as appropriate.

Child Care Vendors or Providers - people or operations that provide child care; can be individuals caring for children in their own homes, in child care centers, or in group day homes.

Children’s Protective Services (CPS) - a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) that provides services to protect abused, neglected, or exploited children.

Children With Disabilities - children with functional needs requiring assistance to perform tasks that are within the typical chronological range of development, including but not limited to:

- ◆ movement of large and small muscles
- ◆ talking/communicating
- ◆ social/emotional
- ◆ hearing
- ◆ learning
- ◆ self-help
- ◆ seeing
- ◆ breathing

Confidentiality - refers to safeguarding any medical, counseling, educational, service, income and/or personal information about a child or family unless the parent gives written permission to release it.

Eligibility Determination - a process for deciding which families are eligible to receive financial aid.

Incapacitated Parent - a parent who cannot engage in work, education or training activities and who cannot care for a child because of a medically determined physical or mental impairment.

Income Eligible - persons who are eligible to receive financial aid based on family income.

Infant - a child aged from birth through 17 months.

Parent - the biological mother or father of a child; also used to include adoptive parents, legal guardians, and caretakers.

Parent Choice - by federal mandate, parental freedom of choice of where to place their children for child care financial aid.

Parent Share of Cost - the amount that a parent or caretaker pays as a share of the cost of child

care. Also referred to as co-pay.

Part-day Care - child care that lasts less than six hours in a 24-hour period.

Part-Week Care - child care for three days or less during a week.

Preschool - children age 36 months through the age at which a child begins full day kindergarten or first grade.

Protective Child Care - services provided by DFPS to prevent or remedy child abuse or neglect, by ensuring adequate care and supervision of children.

Relative Care - care that is provided by an eligible family member. The family member must also be listed with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Eligible relatives include grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, or a sibling at least 18 years of age and not residing in the same household.

Residing With – a child is considered to be residing with the parent when the child is living with and physically present with the parent during the time period for which child care financial aid is requested or received.

School-age - the age at which a child begins full day kindergarten or first grade through age 12, or older for a child who has a mental or physical disability.

School-Age Child Care - child care provided only before and after the usual school day for children ages 5 through 12 years, and for older children who have disabilities that necessitate child care. Full day child care may be provided for the same children on school holidays, teacher work or conference days, and during school breaks, including summer vacation.

Temporarily Incapacitated Parent - a parent with an incapacity that occurs after the parent is receiving financial aid for child care from Workforce Solutions, and an incapacity expected to last no longer than 8 weeks, based on a doctor's statement.

Texas Rising Star Certification Program (TRS) - - a child care provider who volunteers to meet a set of program standards that exceed the minimum standards set by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Child Care Licensing. The standards require smaller group sizes, more qualified staff, and program components that address sound practices for the development of children.

Toddler - a child aged from 18 through 35 months.

Waiting List - list of families waiting for financial aid.

School Readiness Certification System - The school readiness certification system is administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) under the Kindergarten Readiness System (KRS). It certifies the effectiveness of prekindergarten and child care programs in preparing children for kindergarten.