



Parent Handbook

1-888-469-JOBS (5627)

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Individuals who are hearing impaired, please call Relay Texas
1-800-735-2988 (Voice)
1-800-735-2989 (TDD)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Information on Child Care Financial Aid	2
Choosing a Child Care Arrangement	2
Choosing Child Care - A Facility Checklist	3
Workforce Solutions Child Care Financial Aid Requirements.....	4
Fees(Parent’s Share of Cost).....	5
Attendance Policy	6
Security Agreement Requirements for the Attendance Card/PIN	7
Parent’s Responsibility	7
Workforce Solutions Responsibility	8
Appeals	9
Phone Numbers and Resources.....	9
Important Times to Remember	9
Recertification Schedule	11
Glossary	12

Information on Child Care Financial Aid

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 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, participating in a job training program, or enrolled in school. **Workforce Solutions** has developed this Parent Handbook to inform you about its child care financial aid, 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

Choosing a Child Care Arrangement

Workforce Solutions gives parents information that will help them choose child care arrangements that meet their needs and the needs of their children. Parents have several child care alternatives, 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 13 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 13 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 TRS 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 TRS 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 and not residing in the same household. A relative vendor 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 vendors up to the maximum rate per day. 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 acquire a Self Arrange Child Care Package from Workforce Solutions and have the relative provider complete it. Along with these documents the provider must include a copy of their Listing Certificate, Social Security Card, a copy of their Texas Identification, such as a Driver's License or Identification Card, and a Certificate of Relationship Form signed by the parent. These documents must be mailed to Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office at P.O. Box 741361, Houston, Texas 77274-1361 for processing to be set up as a Workforce Solutions vendor.

Choosing a Child Care Facility Check List

Choosing child care 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 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 Child Care Financial Aid Requirements

Customer Requirements

1. You must be actively working, in school, or training for a minimum of 25 hours per week. Only Workforce Solutions can authorize a child care arrangement, including changes in child care provider.
2. You must meet Workforce Solutions income guidelines.
3. In advance or within 10 calendar days after the change occurs, you must inform Workforce Solutions and the child care provider about changes (either temporary or permanent) in:
 - ◆ Work (including income)
 - ◆ school
 - ◆ training
4. You must inform Workforce Solutions and provider as soon as possible about changes in:

- ◆ residence
- ◆ telephone number
- ◆ emergency contact information

5. You must comply with requirements from Workforce Solutions and the child care provider or have child care financial aid denied or terminated.
6. You are responsible for all child care payments made while you are ineligible if you do not notify Workforce Solutions that you no longer work or attend school or training.
7. You understand that funding for child care is limited and Workforce Solutions may terminate child care financial aid with a 15- day notice.
8. You must meet the enrollment requirements and all other policies specified by the child care facility in which your child is enrolled.
9. 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/ren.

Parent's Share of Cost -Fees

If applicable, parents must pay a share of cost for all days that children are scheduled to receive child care financial aid.

Parent's share of cost is assessed on the basis of the family income and the number of children in care.

Part-week/after school child care, and a family with more than six members, may affect the amount of the parent fee. Parent fees are not reduced when children are absent.

The parent's share of cost assessed by Workforce Solutions will not exceed the cost of the child care.

Parents agree and understand:

- ◆ you must pay the fee in advance, before receiving the child care
- ◆ any child care subsidy that you receive from another agency must also be paid to the child care facility where your child receives care
- ◆ the fee amount is based on your household income and the number of children they have enrolled in care
- ◆ the fee must be paid even when your child is absent
- ◆ if you do not pay the amount Workforce Solutions requires, **financial aid for child care will be terminated**

Note: Parents are required to pay over time charges incurred for late pick up and charges related to payments made by checks with insufficient funds. Some additional charges are not covered by Workforce Solutions, such as supply fees, field trips, and late payment fees.

Parents needing child care on any of the licensed child care provider's nine paid holidays are responsible for payment.

Attendance Policy

Parents must use the Child Care Automated Attendance (CCAA) system to report the child's attendance. Parents must notify the provider in advance if a child will be absent.

Workforce Solutions automatically stops paying for a child's care if one of the following occurs:

- ◆ Three days have passed since your child was authorized to start care. If your child was not in attendance and you did not contact the provider, your child care will be terminated on the third day.
- ◆ Your child has been absent for five consecutive days and you did not contact the provider or the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office at 1-888-469-5627 Option 2.
- ◆ Your child has been present for five consecutive days but you did not record your child's presence by using the CCAA system.
- ◆ Your child's absences plus "non reported" present days exceed 30 days in a year.

A child's attendance is "reported" when a parent uses the CCAA system to indicate that the child was present or absent.

A child's attendance is "not reported" when a parent did not use the CCAA swipe card and did not call the CCAA phone line within the required timeframes to report that the child was present or absent.

Attendance which is not reported through the CCAA system will count as an absence if the parent does not report the child's attendance through the CCAA within the required timeframe.

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.

Additionally, children with chronic illnesses may exceed the 30-day maximum with approval from Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office. Documentation from a physician may be required.

Reporting Attendance

The parent must use the Child Care Automated Attendance (CCAA) system to report the child's attendance. If a child attends a licensed facility provider, the Point of Service (POS) machine is used to report attendance. If a child attends a home-based provider, an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is used to report attendance.

The parent must make sure that attendance for child(ren) is approved for the day by checking the message on the POS machine or receipt after each swipe to see if it is approved.

- If the response is 'Denied', the parent must inform the child care provider
- If the response is 'Store and Forward' (SAF), the parent must inform the child care provider that the transaction was SAF and the parent will check at the next transaction that it was successful.

If using an Interactive Voice Response (IVR), the parent must listen to the IVR message after each recorded attendance to confirm that the attendance for that day is approved. Follow the same steps above if denied.

If the attendance is not approved through the Point of Service (POS) or the IVR, the parent may be responsible for payment of the child care services for that day.

Security Agreement Requirements for the Attendance Card / PIN

- The parent cannot let any other individual, vendor, or its employees possess, accept, or use their card, or the alternate cardholder's CCAA card or PIN, or have them perform the attendance/absence reporting function on parent's behalf.
- The parent cannot designate vendor staff to swipe their primary or the alternate cardholder's card to enroll or report attendance at the facility.
- The Parent must report any misuse of CCAA cards and/or PINs to Workforce Solutions.

Workforce Solutions will take appropriate action against anyone who fails to abide by the above security requirements for the CCAA system, including stopping care, moving children to another vendor selected by the parent, withholding vendor payments or reimbursement of costs incurred, termination of childcare services, recoupment of funds, and up to filing criminal charges with the appropriate authorities.

Parent's Responsibility

State and federal laws require that families receiving assistance abide by the Parent Responsibility Agreement.

Workforce Solutions expects each parent, or both parents of a household with two parents, receiving financial aid for child care to accept the following responsibilities

- ◆ establish paternity of the children if necessary;
- ◆ enforce child support and provide documentation showing the child support amount
- ◆ ensure that parents shall not use, sell, or possess marijuana or any other controlled substance;
- ◆ ensure that parents shall not abuse alcohol;
- ◆ ensure that each child in the family younger than 18 years of age attend school regularly, unless the child has a GED or is specifically exempt from school attendance by Education Code.
- ◆ provide Workforce Solutions with all information necessary to establish eligibility to receive child care financial aid. This information must be provided within 21 calendar days from the day Workforce Solutions initiates the request.
- ◆ report changes in income or size of family, loss of TANF cash assistance grant or Medicaid benefits, or any other change in circumstances which may affect eligibility. Changes must be reported to Workforce Solutions within 10 calendar days.
- ◆ understand that child care financial aid will be denied or terminated for failure to submit all information requested in items above.

Each time you are determined eligible you will be required to sign Workforce Solutions - Parent Agreement showing you agree to comply with responsibilities listed above. Your child care financial aid will be stopped if you do not return the agreement by the deadline.

Parents and caretakers should be aware that a person may be prosecuted for obtaining or attempting to obtain, by fraudulent means, services to which s/he 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 but always within 20 calendar days from the date all application documents are received by Workforce Solutions.
- ◆ You may receive child care financial aid regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, age, political beliefs, religion, or disability.

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.

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

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.

Phone Numbers and Resources

Telephone Numbers

Customer Services Assistance 1-888-469-JOBS (5627)

Relay Texas Information 1-800-735-2988

Website www.wrksolutions.com

Resources Available to Parents

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

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

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 10 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 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.



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)

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; eligibility may have been determined by an agency such as Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

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.

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.