

Child Care Parent Handbook



1-888-469-5627
www.wrksolutions.com


Workforce Solutions



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Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. (Please request reasonable accommodations a minimum of two business days in advance.) **Relay Texas** Numbers: 1.800.735.2989 (TDD) 1.800.735.2988 (voice) or 711

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 Health and Human Service (HHS) Child Care Regulation (CCR). Licensed child care centers, licensed child care homes, and registered child care homes are authorized to operate by the HHS CCR. These operations must comply with the Minimum Standards and rules of HHS CCR and are subject to monitoring by the HHS CCR. Some regulated providers are 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 twelve 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 six 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 twelve 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.*** Workforce Solutions will reduce the parent share of cost for **all** customers upon the parent's selection of and acceptance by a TRS-certified provider. All providers with child care services agreements must become 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 Health and Human Service (HHS) Child Care Regulation (CCR) 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, SNAP, 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 Support Center who will check with the Workforce Solutions 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 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. You have 14 days after your application has been approved to select a child care provider. If a provider is not selected, your eligibility will end, and you will need to reapply for services.

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 to a 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 end to participation in 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 take your child within 5 days of care being authorized.
7. You must meet the enrollment requirements and all other policies specified by the child care facility in which your child is enrolled.
8. You must ensure their children attend on a regular basis consistent with the child's authorization for enrollment.
9. If you need to transfer care to a different provider, there is a two-week waiting period.
10. You will report to the HHS CCR licensing office any complaints about a possible violation of licensing standards, which affects the care of children in the facility.

Transportation Requirements

If the child care 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 home or make sure someone else is 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 their children are absent.
3. Failure to pay the parent share of cost is a program violation. A program violation will lead to the parent's loss of eligibility for 60 days from the date Workforce Solutions withdraws authorization for child care. After the 60-day penalty period the parent may apply for Workforce Solutions financial aid for the child or children.
4. Workforce Solutions will provide a 30% discount for all customers upon the selection of and acceptance by a Texas Rising Star (TRS)-certified provider for any full month.
5. **Workforce Solutions financial aid does not include:** overtime charges incurred for late pick up, charges related to payments made by checks with insufficient funds, late payment fees, and optional activities such as field trips and optional classes. Parents are fully responsible for these costs.

Note: Supply fees and activity fees should be included in the calculated daily fee and activity fees. Include only the fees that all parents are required to pay and do not include fees for optional activities such as field trips or optional classes.

6. A parent can request a reduction of the Parent Share of Cost due to extenuating circumstances. Proof of the extenuating circumstance will be requested.

Attendance Requirements

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1. A child may not exceed 40 total unexplained absences during a 12-month eligibility period.
 2. Your provider must notify Workforce Solutions if your child is absent for five (5) consecutive days.
 3. If a child exceeds 40 total unexplained absences in the current eligibility period, then the child can be terminated from care for excessive unexplained absences.
 4. Failure to meet attendance standards is a program violation. A program violation will lead to the parent's loss of eligibility for that child for 60 days from the date Workforce Solutions withdraws authorization for child care. After the 60-day penalty period the parent may apply for Workforce Solutions financial aid for the child or children.
 5. A child may be absent due to a child's chronic illness, disability or to a court-ordered custody or visitation agreement. However, notification to Workforce Solutions and documentation from a physician or of the court-order agreement is required for the absences to be adjusted.
 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.
 7. A suspension can be requested if for any reason a parent does not need care for a period longer than one-week. A suspension must be requested at least one week in advance. Absences do not accumulate when care is suspended. When requesting a suspension, a parent must contact the Financial Aid Support Center and request the suspension at least one week prior to the start of the suspension and provide a start and end date and the reason for the suspension.
 8. A parent must notify the child care provider in advance for planned absences.
 9. A child care provider may end a child's enrollment with the provider if the child does not meet the provider's established attendance policy.
 10. Please contact the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Support Center at 1-888-469-5627, option 3, if you have additional questions.

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 one 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, 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.

Board Reviews

Workforce Solutions will notify parents when child care financial aid is being delayed, reduced, or terminated via email or mail 15 days before the action. Child care assistance for cases involving fraud and family income exceeding 85% SMI guidelines will end immediately. A parent may request a review of the decision to terminate financial aid within 14 days of the date on the letter. Some parents are eligible to continue receiving child care during the review process.

To request a review a parent must complete The Child care Financial Aid Request for Review form and return it to Workforce Solutions by mail, in person or email to supportcenter@wrksolutions.com within 14 days from the date shown on the letter sent by Workforce Solutions.

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

Notification and review procedures for the following customers differ from above:

- Foster care families and DFPS families are required to follow DFPS policy
- Families required to cooperate with Workforce Solutions to receive TANF and/or SNAP assistance are guided by the HHSC

Phone Numbers and Resources

Financial Aid Support Center

1-888-469-5627, option 3
supportcenter@wrksolutions.com

Website

www.wrksolutions.com

Resources Available to Parents

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| Workforce Solutions Early Education Service Provider (For information on available child care and choosing quality child care) | findchildcare@wrksolutions.com | 713-500-3725 |
| Health and Human Service Child Care Regulation (To locate a licensed child care provider, make a complaint or check licensing status) | https://hhs.texas.gov/doing-business-hhs/provider-portals/protective-services-providers/child-care-licensing | 713-287-3238 1-800-862-5252 |
| Workforce Solutions | www.wrksolutions.com | 1-888-469-JOBS (5627) |
| United Way | www.unitedway.org | 211 |

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 job openings, employment opportunities, and career opportunities, 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 Things to Remember

Please remember that, to continue receiving financial aid through Workforce Solutions, you must meet certain deadlines. Below are 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
- Board Reviews must be requested within 14 days of denial, reduction, or termination of child care financial aid as indicated on Workforce Solutions Request for Review form.

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 Health and Human Service Child Care Regulation. 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 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 meets a set of program standards that exceed the minimum standards set by Health and Human Service Child Care Regulation. 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.