

Child Care Scholarships Parent Handbook



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Information for Child Care



Information for Child Care

Choosing the right child care provider while parents work or pursue their education is a significant decision. There are various child care options available, including care provided by a relative, individual caregivers registered with the state licensing agency, or licensed child care centers.

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

Workforce Solutions provides financial aid for child care to support parents who are employed, enrolled in school, or looking for a job. This Parent Handbook has been created to help parents understand the financial aid process, their rights and responsibilities, and how to access high-quality, affordable child care.

We encourage parents to review this handbook carefully and keep it as a reference for any future questions regarding their child care financial aid.

In addition to child care assistance, Workforce Solutions can help individuals find employment or advance in their career by offering financial aid and scholarships for education and job training. To learn more about available services and determine eligibility for financial aid, please contact us at 1-888-469-5627 (JOBS) or visit our website at www.wrksolutions.com.

Authorized Child Care Providers



Authorized Child Care Providers

Workforce Solutions helps parents choose child care that meets their needs, offering both regulated and listed relative care options.

Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certification Program

TRS-certified providers exceed state licensing standards with smaller group sizes, qualified staff, and developmentally appropriate programs. Providers with child care service agreements must obtain TRS certification within two years.

Authorized Child Care Providers

Regulated Providers

Regulated providers include licensed child care centers, licensed child care homes, and registered child care homes. These vendors must be licensed or registered with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and the Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Care Regulation (CCR), meeting all state standards.

To be eligible for payment for childcare services, regulated vendors must:

- Be licensed or registered with DFPS.
- Provide a copy of their childcare license or permit, along with current published rates available to the public.
- Ensure the business owner does not have any outstanding over-payments owed to Workforce Solutions.

Types of regulated child care providers:

- **Licensed Child Care Centers:** Facilities caring for seven or more children up to age 12.
- **Licensed Child Care Homes:** Operated within a caregiver's home, serving up to 12 children.
- **Registered Child Care Homes:** Operated within a caregiver's home, caring for up to six children under six years old, plus an additional six school-age children, not exceeding a total of 12 children.

Authorized Child Care Providers

Listed (Relative) Providers

Listed (relative) providers include eligible relatives—grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, or siblings aged 18 or older—who provide childcare and have listed status with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Care Regulation (CCR).

To be eligible for payment for providing childcare, listed vendors must:

- Be a grandparent, great-grandparent, aunt, uncle, or sibling (aged 18+).
- Maintain a separate residence from the family receiving childcare financial aid.
- Provide a Certification of Relationship form signed by the parent.
- Be listed with DFPS and maintain listing status.
- Pass background checks conducted by HHS CCR.
- Operate independently, not as Workforce Solutions employees.
- Report earnings for tax purposes and notify the Texas Health and Human Services Commission if they receive government assistance.

Parents must submit the relative's contact information to the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Support Center. If the relative has not yet been authorized, the Financial Aid Payment Office will assist them in the authorization process.

Selecting a Child Care Provider



Selecting a Child Care Provider

Selecting a child care provider is one of the most important decisions a parent can make. Before visiting a facility, it is helpful to identify the key factors that align with your family's needs. These may include location, hours of operation, transportation services, and other essential considerations. Once an application has been approved, parents have 14 days to select a child care provider.

After narrowing down potential child care programs, parents are encouraged to visit in person to assess whether the environment is the right fit for their child and family. There is no substitute for an on-site visit. Take the time to observe the facility, speak with caregivers, and ask questions about daily activities.

Selecting a Child Care Provider - Checklist

When evaluating a child care provider or monitoring the selection after enrollment, parents are to consider the following checklist:

Staff and Environment

- ☒ Staff members are warm, friendly, and respectful to children, coworkers, and parents.
- ☒ Children appear happy, relaxed, and engaged.
- ☒ Children felt comfortable during the visit.
- ☒ The child care program accepts the child's age group.

Operations and Services

- ☒ The facility's hours of operation align with the parent's schedule.
- ☒ Transportation services are available, if needed.
- ☒ Nutritious meals and snacks are provided.
- ☒ A variety of age-appropriate activities are offered.

Safety and Resources

- ☒ There are enough staff members to provide adequate care.
- ☒ Toys, books, art supplies, and games are in good condition.
- ☒ Classrooms are well-organized, allowing for both active and quiet play.
- ☒ The facility is clean, safe, and well-maintained.
- ☒ Staff members have appropriate training in child care and development.

Selecting a Child Care Provider - Checklist

continued

Policies and Parental Involvement

- ☒ Fee arrangements are clear and transparent.
- ☒ The program's mission and philosophy are child-focused.
- ☒ Parents are welcome to visit at any time without prior notice.

For additional assistance, Workforce Solutions offers a searchable online database to help families find child care providers that meet their specific needs. Visit [Find a Child Care Provider](#) for more information.

Parent Requirements



Parent Requirements

1. A parent must be actively **seeking employment, working, or enrolled in school for a minimum of 25 hours per week** in a single-parent household or 50 hours per week in a two-parent household. Only Workforce Solutions can authorize a child care arrangement, including any changes to a child care provider.
2. When first determining or reviewing eligibility, a parent can request a lower the required hours for work, education, or job training if a parent has a documented medical disability or needs to care for a physically or mentally disabled family member—making it difficult for them to meet the usual weekly activity requirements.
3. A parent must meet Workforce Solutions' income guidelines based on household size.
4. A parent must inform Workforce Solutions within 14 calendar days of any changes, including:
 - **Employment** – Permanent loss of a job
 - **School, training, or education status** – Permanent withdrawal from an education or training program
 - **Income** – Increases that raise the gross monthly family income above the allowable level for the household size
 - **Family composition** – Changes that affect household income and eligibility

Parent Requirements

continued

5. A parent must notify Workforce Solutions and the child care provider within 14 days of changes in:
 - Residence
 - Telephone number, email, or other contact details
 - Emergency contact information
6. A parent must comply with all requirements set by Workforce Solutions and the selected child care provider.
7. A parent must ensure the child attends child care within **one week of authorization**. Failure to do so may result in the provider withdrawing the child from the program.
8. A parent must meet all enrollment requirements and follow the policies established by the child care provider.
9. A parent must ensure that the child attends regularly, consistent with the authorized enrollment schedule.
10. If transferring to a different provider, a **two-week waiting period** applies.
11. A parent must report any concerns regarding violations of licensing standards to the HHS Child Care Regulation (CCR) licensing office. Complaints regarding a Texas child care provider can be submitted for suspected child abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
 - Texas Abuse Hotline:
 - Phone: 1-800-252-5400
 - Online: <https://www.txabusehotline.org/>.

Transportation Requirements

If a child care provider is responsible for transporting a child, the following guidelines must be observed:

1. A parent or designated guardian must remain with the child until the bus arrives each morning.
2. A parent or designated guardian must be present at home when the child returns in the evening.
3. If the child will be absent, the parent must notify the child care provider as early as possible to prevent unnecessary transportation arrangements.

These requirements help ensure the safety and efficiency of transportation services for all children.

Parent Share of Costs and Fees

1. A parent must pay a share of the cost based on their children's scheduled child care under financial aid.
2. A parent agrees and acknowledge that:
 - Fees must be paid in advance, prior to receiving child care services.
 - Fees are determined based on household income and the number of children receiving financial aid.
 - Fees must be paid even if a child is absent.
3. Failure to pay the required share of cost constitutes a program violation. This will result in a loss of eligibility for 60 days from the date Workforce Solutions withdraws child care authorization. After the penalty period, the parent may reapply for financial aid.
4. **Workforce Solutions financial aid does not cover:**
 - Overtime charges for late pick-ups
 - Fees for checks returned due to insufficient funds
 - Late payment fees
 - Costs for optional activities, such as field trips or elective classes

Note: Supply and mandatory activity fees should be included in the calculated daily fee. Fees for optional activities should not be included.

5. A parent may request a reduction in their share of cost due to extenuating circumstances. Documentation supporting the request will be required.

Attendance Requirements

1. A parent must ensure their child attends child care regularly and must use KinderSmart, KinderSign, or a TWC-approved system to report attendance and absences. A child may not exceed 40 unexplained absences during a 12-month eligibility period.
2. The selected child care provider must notify Workforce Solutions if a child is absent for five (5) consecutive days.
3. If a child exceeds 40 unexplained absences within the current eligibility period, the child may be terminated from care due to excessive absences.
4. Failure to meet attendance standards constitutes a program violation. This will result in the parent losing eligibility for child care financial aid for that child for 60 days from the date Workforce Solutions withdraws authorization. After the penalty period, the parent may reapply for financial aid.
5. A child's absences may be adjusted if due to chronic illness, disability, or a court-ordered custody or visitation agreement. Parents must notify Workforce Solutions and provide documentation from a physician or a court order for these absences to be considered.

Attendance Requirements

continued

6. A suspension allows a parent to temporarily pause child care financial aid during temporary interruptions in care. Child care providers are not required to hold a child's spot during suspension unless they agree to do so.
7. Requesting Suspension
 - Parents can request a suspension if child care is not needed for more than one week.
 - The request must be submitted at least one week in advance.
 - Absences do not accumulate during a suspension.
 - To request a suspension, parents must contact the Financial Aid Support Center at least one week before the start date and provide the reason, as well as the start and end dates.
8. Parents must notify the child care provider in advance of any planned absences.
9. A child care provider may terminate a child's enrollment if the child does not meet the provider's attendance policy.
10. Please contact the Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Support Center at 713-334-5980 or text at 346-249-7700, Monday through Friday from 7AM-7PM if you have additional questions.

Financial Aid for Child Care: Responsibility



Parent Responsibility

By beginning child care, a parent acknowledges their rights and responsibilities, confirming the understanding and commitment to comply with all requirements and responsibilities associated with this assistance.

Parents and caretakers should be aware that attempting to obtain services fraudulently may result in legal prosecution.

Workforce Solutions Responsibility

Workforce Solutions is committed to providing quality service to its customers.

- ✓ **A parent has the right to expect efficient and professional service from Workforce Solutions.**
- ✓ A parent will be notified of their eligibility for financial aid as soon as possible, within 20 calendar days from the date we receive all required application documents.
- ✓ Child care financial aid is provided without discrimination based on race, sex, color, national origin, age, political beliefs, religion, or disability.

Board Reviews



Board Reviews

Workforce Solutions will notify parents at least 15 days in advance if child care financial aid is delayed, reduced, or terminated. Child care assistance will end immediately in cases involving fraud or when a family's income exceeds 85% of the SMI guidelines.

Parents have the right to request a review of a financial aid termination decision within 14 days of the date on the notification letter. Some parents may continue receiving child care assistance during the review process, except in cases of excessive absences or unpaid fees.

To request a review, parents must complete the Request for Review form and submit it to Workforce Solutions via email at appeals@wrksolutions.com within 14 days of the date indicated on the letter.

If a parent loses the review and has chosen to continue receiving child care financial aid during the process, they will be responsible for the full cost of care (including both the parent fee and the Workforce Solutions fee) incurred during the review period.

The notification and review procedures for the following groups differ from the above:

- Foster care families and DFPS families must follow DFPS policies.
- Families required to cooperate with Workforce Solutions to receive TANF and/or SNAP assistance must follow HHSC guidelines.

Resources for Parents



Important Reminders

To ensure continued financial aid through Workforce Solutions, please adhere to the following deadlines:

- Note your eligibility redetermination or recertification date.
- Submit required paperwork and documentation to Workforce Solutions by specified dates.
- Report any changes in your status within 14 days.
- Pay your share of child care costs in advance to the provider.
- Request Board Reviews within 14 days following any denial, reduction, or termination of child care financial assistance.

Workforce Solutions Career Offices

Workforce Solutions offers resources designed to assist Gulf Coast residents in obtaining, maintaining, or advancing in employment. Each office provides information on current job openings, employment and career opportunities, resources for career and employer research, and complimentary access to computers, fax machines, and telephones. Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer program.

To find your nearest office, call 1-888-469-JOBS (5267) or visit www.wrksolutions.com.

Phone Numbers and Resources

Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Support Center <i>Assistance for all child care scholarship related questions.</i>	https://www.wrksolutions.com/for-individuals/financial-aid/financial-assistance-for-child-care/parent-and-child-care-scholarships	713-334-5980 (Phone) 346-249-7700 (Text)
Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C) <i>Learn how to use the TX3C system, including KinderConnect, TX3C Parent Portal, and register for attendance.</i>	https://tx3c.info/	1-888-265-6461 supportTX@kindersystems.com
KinderConnect <i>Parents receiving child care scholarships must be registered to receive alerts and notification regarding their account.</i>	https://childcare.twc.texas.gov/KinderConnect/NonActivityPages/Login.aspx?wsid=0	1-888-265-6461 supportTX@kindersystems.com
Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office <i>For information on becoming a child care vendor.</i>	https://wrksolutions.com/about-us/business-opportunities/become-a-vendor	713-975-7409 (option 5) wfvendor@wrksolutions.com
Workforce Solutions	https://www.wrksolutions.com/	1-888-469-JOBS (5627)

Phone Numbers and Resources *continued*

Health and Human Service Child Care Regulation <i>For information on Child Care Regulation, make a complaint or check licensing status.</i>	https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/child-care-regulation	713-287-3238 1-800-862-5252
United Way	www.unitedway.org	211
Texas Department of Family Protective Services	https://www.dfps.texas.gov/default.asp	1-800-252-5400

Glossary



Glossary

Caregiver: An individual who directly cares for children while they are in a child care provider.

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, learning, talking or communicating, self-help, social/emotional, seeing, hearing, and 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.

Glossary *continued*

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 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.

Glossary *continued*

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: A 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.