


EARLY LEARNING PROVIDER HANDBOOK

CHILDCAREGROUP

APRIL 2025

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE 1

CHAPTER 2: CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ENROLLING IN THE CCA PROGRAM..... 3

CHAPTER 3: HOW PARENTS QUALIFY & RECEIVE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE..... 5

CHAPTER 4: FAMILY ENROLMENT PROCESS 7

CHAPTER 5: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES 9

CHAPTER 6: DETERMINING PAYMENT RATES 12

CHAPTER 7: REPORTING CHILD CARE ATTENDANCE 15

CHAPTER 8: PARENT FEES: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES 18

CHAPTER 9: PAYMENT SCHEDULE GUIDELINES..... 20

CHAPTER 10: COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY..... 22

CHAPTER 11: SUPPORT AND MONITORING..... 25

CHAPTER 12: QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICIES 26

CHAPTER 13: IMPROVING QUALITY OF CARE: TEXAS RISING STAR (TRS) CERTIFICATION 28

RESOURCE GUIDE 30

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM 31

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

Welcome to the Child Care Assistance (CCA) Program

The Child Care Services (CCS) program, managed by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is designed to support families in becoming self-sufficient by providing financial scholarships for child care. These scholarships enable parents to work, attend training programs, or pursue educational opportunities while ensuring their children have access to quality early learning environments. By bridging the gap between need and opportunity, the program helps families transition from depending on financial assistance to a stable, independent future where when parents thrive, communities succeed.

How Does the CCS System Work?

The CCS program operates through a collaborative system that ensures efficient service delivery:

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):

- Oversees the CCS program at the state level.
- Develops policies and allocates funding for child care services.

Local Workforce Development Boards:

- Manage child care services in designated regions across Texas (28 regions in total).
- Customize services to meet local needs and priorities.
- Example: Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas manages services for Dallas County.

Child Care Contractors:

- Contracted with local boards to implement the program.
- Example: ChildCareGroup serves as the contractor in Dallas County, determining eligibility, connecting families with Early Learning Programs (ELPs), managing payments, providing mentoring for the Texas Rising Star program, and managing quality initiatives to support ELPs.
ChildCareGroup refers to the program for Dallas County as Child Care Assistance (CCA).

Key CCA Staff and Their Roles

The CCA program involves several specialized roles, each essential to ensuring smooth operations and high-quality services:

Role	Responsibilities
Provider Services Representatives	Handle Provider Agreement paperwork, maintain accurate records, provide resources, and ensure compliance with program standards.
Inclusion Support Specialists	Assist early learning programs in supporting children with disabilities, including guidance on accessing Inclusion Assistance Rates.

Role	Responsibilities
Texas Rising Star Mentors	Work with early learning programs to improve quality and achieve Texas Rising Star certification.
Eligibility Staff	Help families determine eligibility, provide information on quality child care options, and handle enrollment processes.
Financial Management Staff	Manage payments, address reimbursement inquiries, and ensure financial accountability.

Rules and Regulations

The CCA program operates within a framework of federal and state regulations, which are implemented and adapted locally to meet community needs. ELPs and families can access detailed guidelines and updates through the following resources:

- [TWC Child Care Services Guide](#)
- [TWC Child Care Services Rules](#)

CHAPTER 2: CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ENROLLING IN THE CCA PROGRAM

Eligibility for Early Learning Programs (ELPs)

To participate in the CCA program, early learning programs (ELPs) must meet the following requirements:

1. **Licensing and Registration:**

- Programs must be licensed or registered with Child Care Regulation (CCR).

2. **Compliance with Standards:**

- Programs must not be under corrective or adverse action from CCR.
- Programs must not exceed the 40 point threshold for CCR deficiencies incurred within the most recent 6 months. This will be reviewed in April and October each year. Additional information on the deficiencies and points threshold can be found in Chapter 13

3. **Commitment to Quality:**

- ELPs must agree to work toward achieving Texas Rising Star certification within the required timeline of 24 months.

Steps to Enroll

1. **Complete Texas Rising Star Interest form:**

- ELPs must complete an interest form to initiate the process to become a Provider with Child Care Assistance. The form is linked to the ChildCareGroup website “Apply to Become a Provider”

2. **Attend Early Learning Program Onboarding:**

- After an ELP completes the interest form, they will receive a call to be scheduled for the next available onboarding meeting. Onboardings are held once a week.

3. **Provide enrollment documents:**

- ELPs must complete the provider information, documentation of fees and weekly rates, W-9, and direct deposit forms. They must also provide documentation to verify the W-9 information and a voided check.

4. **Sign a Provider Agreement:**

- This legal document outlines the responsibilities of the ELP and the CCA program. It includes payment terms, compliance expectations, and operational guidelines.

5. **Review the CCA Handbook:**

- ELPs must familiarize themselves with the handbook, which serves as a comprehensive guide to program policies and procedures.

6. Sign Mentoring Agreement:

- This legal document outlines the responsibilities of the ELP and the Texas Rising Star Mentor.

Important Notes

- **Parent Choice Matters:**

- Enrollment in the CCA program does not guarantee child placements. Parents select the early learning program that best meets their needs.

- **Impact of Changes:**

- Major changes, such as relocation or ownership transfer, require a new Provider Agreement to ensure continuity of service. ELPs must report to Provider Services when changes occur.

The Provider must inform the Contractor in advance of the following changes within five (5) business days:

- Change in contact information
- New/change in financial information affecting payments
- Facility name change
- Change in ownership
- Change in location
- Change in Child Care Regulation (CCR) facility/permit type
- CCR revocation of permit to operate
- Employer Identification Number (EIN) change
- Ages of children served
- Published rates or any other required fees

CHAPTER 3: HOW PARENTS QUALIFY & RECEIVE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

How Parents Qualify for Scholarships

Parents seeking child care assistance through the CCA program must meet specific eligibility criteria, including:

Work or Training Hours:

- Parents must be employed, looking for employment, in training, or enrolled in an educational program.
- 25 hours per week for a single parent household; 50 hours combined for a 2 parent household.

Income and Family Size:

- Eligibility is determined based on family income and size of the household.

Referrals:

- In some cases, families are referred to CCA by agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Workforce Solutions employment services, or Child Protective Services (CPS).

Parents' Role in Choosing Child Care

The CCA program empowers parents to make informed decisions about their child's care. Families are encouraged to:

- Explore multiple early learning programs in their area.
- Consider factors such as location, hours, curriculum, and staff qualifications.
- Choose a program that aligns with their family's needs and values.
- Use the Texas Child Care Availability portal to search for child care. This site allows ELPs to update information on their program as well as post current vacancies by age group to help parents find a program that meets their needs.

Special Cases: Parents Employed at the ELP

Licensed Centers:

- Parents cannot serve as directors, assistant directors, or owners of the program where their child is enrolled.

Licensed or Registered Homes:

- Parents cannot work in the child care home during the hours their child is in care.

Termination of Enrollment

Child Care Assistance may end before the eligibility review date for the following reasons:

1. **Permanent Loss of Work or Training:**

- If the parent does not resume work or training within three months.

2. **Income Exceeds Limits:**

- Families whose income surpasses eligibility thresholds will no longer qualify for assistance.

3. **Failure to Meet Program Requirements:**

- Examples include non-payment of fees or excessive absences (more than 40 in a 12-month period).

Waiting Lists

When funding is limited, eligible families will be placed on a waiting list. To remain active on the list, parents must:

- Respond promptly to communications sent via the automated system or from CCA staff.
- Keep contact information (email, phone, address) updated.

Placements from the Waiting List

Families are added to the waiting list based on priority categories and in the order that they submit applications. When funding is available, families are sent an email with a link to the full application, and based on priority.

Families are outreached from the waiting list in the following order:

1. Children of a qualified Veteran
2. Children of foster youth
3. Children experiencing homelessness
4. Children of parents on military deployment who are unable to enroll in military-funded child care assistance programs
5. Children of teen parents
6. Children with disabilities
7. Children with a sibling already receiving child care assistance
8. Children whose parent/parents meet the income threshold for their family size

CHAPTER 4: FAMILY ENROLMENT PROCESS

The Enrollment Process

When parents are determined to be eligible for financial scholarships, the enrollment process involves multiple steps to ensure a smooth transition into care:

1. Eligibility Review:

- CCA Eligibility Staff assess the parent's need for care and provide a clear explanation of their rights and responsibilities.
- Information is shared about the types of child care available and how to identify quality programs.
- Parents are encouraged to visit several early learning programs (ELPs) before making a decision.

2. Selection of Early Learning Program:

- Once a parent identifies a preferred ELP, CCA staff verify that a Provider Agreement is in place for the required age group and type of care.
- Care is verbally authorized, and a Notice of Communication is sent to the program via the web portal.

What is the Notice of Communication?

The Notice of Communication provides critical information for both parents and ELPs, including:

- The start date of child care services.
- The end date of eligibility or scheduled review.
- The weekly parent fee amount.
- Days of care authorized and type of care (e.g., part-day or full-day).

Important Notes for ELPs

- **Authorization Required:** ELPs must not accept a child without a verbal authorization from CCA. Programs without prior approval may not be reimbursed for care provided.
- **Accuracy of Information:** Programs should verify all details in Notice of communication within five days of receipt. Any discrepancies must be reported to CCA immediately.
- **Non-Attendance:** If an authorized child does not begin care, ELPs must notify CCA by the fifth day of absence.

Inclusivity Under ADA

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), all individuals, regardless of disabilities, must have access to child care facilities. ELPs are required to provide reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities. Refer to Chapter 5 for detailed guidance.

ELP Enrollment Policies

While ELPs can limit the number of CCA-referred children based on their business practices, they must not discriminate against referrals based on:

- Parent income status or inability to pay a copay.
- Receipt of public assistance.
- Child's status with Child Protective Services (CPS).

Written Policies for Parents

ELPs must provide parents with a copy of their written policies, ensuring clarity on expectations and rules. Policies should align with CCA, TWC, and other state or federal regulations.

ELPs **cannot require** CCA parents to:

- Pay the difference between CCA reimbursement rates and private pay rates.
- Abide by stricter late pick-up or payment policies than those applied to private

CHAPTER 5: SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Equal Access for Families

Parents with children with disabilities have the same right to choose child care as other families. They can select care based on location or convenience, even if the chosen early learning program (ELP) has limited experience with disabilities. In such cases, **Inclusion Specialists** are available to provide training and resources to support the program in meeting the child's needs. Parents must initiate communication with Inclusion specialists to receive assistance. ELPs may consult with an Inclusion Specialist for assistance for all children but must receive parent permission for resources relating to a specific child.

The ADA and Early Learning Programs

Under the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**, public accommodations such as licensed child care centers and registered homes are required to:

- Accept children with disabilities.
- Ensure parents with disabilities can access child care facilities.

Care for children with disabilities can only be declined if it would:

1. Fundamentally alter the facility's programming, or
2. Present an undue burden to the program.

If care must be refused or discontinued:

- Contact CCA before making the decision.
 - Provide written documentation detailing attempts to accommodate the child, required adjustments, and reasons they were not feasible.
-

Promoting Inclusive Child Care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services emphasizes that inclusion means providing children with disabilities opportunities to learn alongside peers without disabilities. Inclusive care includes:

- **High Expectations:** Encouraging participation in all learning and social activities.
 - **Accommodations:** Using evidence-based supports tailored to individual needs.
 - **Development Goals:** Fostering cognitive, social-emotional, and physical growth, along with friendships and a sense of belonging.
-

Inclusion Support Program

The **ChildCareGroup Inclusion Support Program** enhances access and removes participation barriers for children with disabilities.

Support services include:

- Training and technical assistance from an Inclusion Specialist.
- Access to an **Inclusion Assistance Rate** for adaptive equipment, staff training, or one-on-one support.
- Referrals to additional resources.

Programs serving CCA-referred children with disabilities may collaborate on an **Inclusion Plan** to address the child's specific needs.

Confidentiality Standards

Protecting privacy is essential when working with children with disabilities. Information should only be shared with:

- Staff directly working with the child.
- Supervisors overseeing the child's care.

Do not share information with other staff, parents, visitors, or unrelated programs without written parental consent.

Caring for Children with Disabilities

Early learning programs can access resources and guidance on:

- Engaging parents effectively.
 - Implementing individualized inclusion plans.
 - Obtaining adaptive equipment.
 - Addressing concerns if caregivers feel unequipped to meet a child's needs.
-

Inclusion Assistance Rates

To support inclusive practices, CCA offers **enhanced reimbursement rates** (up to 190% of standard rates) when additional support is necessary. This funding can be used for:

- Hiring extra staff.
- Purchasing specialized equipment.

Exclusions: Funds cannot be used for therapy, counseling, or medical services.

For assistance, programs can contact the Inclusion Support Team at inclusionassistance@ccgroup.org.

CHAPTER 6: DETERMINING PAYMENT RATES

Maximum Reimbursement Rates

Maximum payment rates for services provided to referred children are determined based on:

- **Federal and state laws and regulations**
- **Market rate surveys**
- **TWC Performance measures**
- **Parent share of cost factors**

Reimbursement rates are established according to:

- **Facility type** (licensed center, home, etc.)
- **Type of care** (full day, part day, or blended)
- **Age category** (infant, toddler, preschool, school age)
- **Quality rating** (e.g., Texas Rising Star certification, Texas School Ready!)

Note: Programs certified under Texas Rising Star (2-star, 3-star, or 4-star levels) or are participating in Texas School Ready! are eligible for higher reimbursement rates.

Payment Rates

Payment rates are finalized when a **Provider Agreement** is signed. These rates are:

- Based on the program's published rates for public clients.
- Prorated to a daily rate using a standard formula.
- Inclusive of all required fees (e.g., registration, uniforms, activities). **Additional mandatory fees CANNOT be charged to parents.** See below for example of fees that cannot be charged to the parent.

Optional Fees

Fees for optional activities **are not** included in the daily rate or reimbursed by CCA. **Examples include:**

- Some field trips or activities
- Special classes by outside vendors (e.g., karate, dance, computer)
- Class pictures

Parents have the choice to have their child participate. When opting in for these activities, parents are responsible for the additional costs, and programs must collect these fees directly. If they choose not to participate, there are other planned activities with staffing available.

Group Activities: Costs for activities planned for the entire group without alternatives must be included in the program's standard published rates.

Age Categories for Reimbursement:

- Infant 1: 0–11 months
 - Infant-2: 12–17 months
 - Toddler-1: 18–23 months
 - Toddler-2: 2 years
 - Preschool-3: 3 years
 - Preschool-4: 4 years
 - Preschool-5: 5 years
 - School Age: 6–13 years
-

Calculating Daily Rates

Daily rates are determined as follows:

Program Rate Type	Calculation Formula
Monthly Rate	Divide by 4.33, then by 5
Biweekly Rate	Divide by 2.165, then by 5
Weekly Rate	Divide by 5
Hourly Rate	Multiply by 12 for full day or by 6 for part day

When multiple rates exist within an age category, they are averaged before applying the formula.

Important: Programs will not be reimbursed beyond the maximum rate set by CCA and cannot charge parents to make up the difference.

Updating Rates

If a program changes its published rates, they should:

1. Notify **Provider Services** at least two weeks before the change.
 2. Submit updated rate information. Provider Services can send a form to complete to assist in documenting the rates.
 3. A new **Rate Addendum** will be prepared.
-

Reimbursement for Transportation

If an ELP charges a separate fee for transportation, that rate will be added into the daily reimbursement rate. The rate for care + transportation cannot exceed the maximum rate for the child's age and type of care.

School-Age Care and Blended Rates

Children attending school, Early Head Start, Head Start, or public PreK may require:

- **Part day care on school days.**
- **Full day care during school holidays.**

For such cases, a **blended rate** applies:

- **$(\text{Part time rate} \times 175\text{days}) + (\text{full time rate} \times 30\text{ days}) \div 205\text{ total days} = \text{Blended daily rate.}$**

Summer Months: Full-day rates apply if full-day care is needed.

Programs offering year-round care must reserve space for children needing full-day care during school holidays, except when the program itself is closed.

CHAPTER 7: REPORTING CHILD CARE ATTENDANCE

Attendance Standards

The Texas Workforce Commission has a centralized, state-wide system for managing the child care program, called Texas Child Care Connection, or TX3C. Within TX3C is an attendance system that must be used for all children. Parents will record attendance using one of the following:

1. **KinderSign** – a tablet application used to record attendance. A tablet will be sent to the ELP if needed, and the ELP must have a stable internet connection.
2. **KinderSmart** – a smartphone app that allows parents to check in their children. The parent must be at the ELP location in order to record days present. Absences can be recorded from any location.
3. **API Connection** – if the ELP uses a childcare management software (CMS), a connection can be established that will allow parents to record attendance using the ELPs program then import attendance information into the state-wide system.

KinderConnect, another component of TX3C, is a web application used by parents, ELPs, and CCA staff.

- ELPs can view enrollment information for families, review attendance recording, view payment information, and send messages.
- Parents can view basic case information, report changes, make requests, message their Eligibility Specialist, and upload documents.

Requirements for ELPs:

- Must ensure that parents have access to record attendance daily.
- ELP staff cannot have access to a parent's login for the attendance system.
- Cannot perform the attendance or absence reporting function
 - In instances where there is not a parent/guardian performing the drop off or pick up of the child (such as when the provider is transporting the child to or from school) the ELP may record the appropriate check-in/check-out.
 - If the ELP records a check-in/check-out, the parent **must** still record at least one daily check-in or check-out for the child.
- If the ELP is using a CMS that does not allow parents to report back-dated attendance, the ELP may correct back-dated attendance if children were present.
- Report discrepancies between a child's authorization for care and the attendance system within 5 days of authorization

- **Report if a newly authorized child does not attend the ELP within 5 days of their start date.**

Parents must ensure their child regularly attends child care, with no more than **40 total absences** allowed during the 12-month eligibility period. They must record attendance for each day their child is enrolled in the Early Learning Program. Failure to record attendance will count as absences. Certain absences, such as those due to chronic illness, disability, or court-ordered custody/visitation, may be excluded from this count with documentation provided by the parent.

Absence Reporting

ELPs play a vital role in monitoring and reporting attendance.

1. Cumulative Absences:

- If a child accumulates more than **40 absences** during the eligibility period CCA will begin the process to terminate child care services.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to provide documentation if absences were due to:
 - Chronic illness
 - Disability
 - Court-ordered custody or visitation agreements
 - Other extenuating circumstances

2. Courtesy Notifications:

- Parents will receive alerts when their child accumulates **15 absences** and again at **30 absences**.

3. Children Authorized But Do Not Start Care:

- ELPs must report to CCA if a newly authorized child does not attend the first 5 days of care.
- CCA staff will follow up with the parent to determine if care is still needed.
- ELP will be paid for the first 5 days of care if enrollment is terminated.

Consequences for Non-Compliance

It is mandatory to provide Parents with an accessible way to record attendance as well as report within 10 days if a child stops attending. Failure to do so could result in:

- Issuance of a **Service Improvement Agreement**.
- **Termination of referrals** to the program.
- **Recoupment of funds** for unreported absences.

If a parent informs an ELP that their child will not return, the program must report this to CCA for follow-up.

Suspension of Enrollment

In some cases, a child may need to temporarily suspend attendance without accruing absences. Common reasons include:

- **Court-ordered visitation** or custody agreements.
- **Employment breaks**, such as school district employees during summer vacation.
- **School breaks** for parents who are students.
- **Medical leave**, preventing the parent from transporting the child to care.

Process for Suspension:

- Parents can request a suspension, during which Eligibility Staff will:
 1. **Terminate the child's enrollment** at the ELP.
 2. Place the child on **suspended enrollment** status.

Important Notes:

- Programs are not paid for the suspension period and may enroll another child in the vacant spot.
- After the suspension, the child may return to the original ELP if space is available or enroll with another program with availability.
- ELPs are not required to hold a spot for suspended children

CHAPTER 8: PARENT FEES: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Federal law requires many parents receiving financial assistance to contribute to the cost of their child care. The **parent fee** is calculated based on the family's **gross monthly income**. CCA Eligibility staff will inform early learning programs (ELPs) of the required fee amount for each family.

Collecting Parent Fees

Key Requirements for ELPs:

- Parent fees must be **collected in advance** of providing services.
- A clear **written policy** must outline payment deadlines, consequences for non-payment, and termination procedures. This policy should be shared with parents during enrollment.
- ELPs keep all parent fees collected, which are deducted from the CCA payment.
- Programs should provide regular **receipts or statements** to parents detailing payments received.

Payment Guidelines:

- **Weekly Payments:** Parents should pay for the upcoming week by Friday or Monday.
- **Bi-weekly Payments:** Payments should be made in alignment with the CCA Payment Schedule and be paid for the upcoming 2 week period.

Parent Fees Must Be Paid Even If:

- The child is absent but scheduled to attend.
 - The parents take vacation days.
-

Reduction of Parent Fees

Parents experiencing unusual circumstances may request a temporary reduction of their fees. The Process is as follows:

- Only CCA Eligibility staff can approve fee reductions.
- ELPs should encourage parents to contact CCA to initiate the process.
- Requests can be submitted via the parent's KinderConnect account or message center in KinderSign or KinderSmart. Parents will be asked to provide supporting documentation to show the need.

Once approved, Eligibility staff will notify the ELP via phone and update the **Notice of Communication Form**.

When Parents Do Not Pay Their Fees

Responsibilities of ELPs:

- Collection of parent fees is the sole responsibility of the ELP. CCA will not reimburse uncollected fees.
- Follow the program's written policy, which may include:
 - Charging a **late fee**.
 - **Suspending care**.
 - **Terminating care** at the facility.

Reporting Late Payments:

- If a parent fails to pay their weekly fee assigned by CCA, the ELP must report the late payment to CCA within **10 business days** of payment due date.
- CCA will contact the parent to assess whether a fee reduction is warranted.
- If no reduction is approved and the fee remains unpaid, CCA will begin the process to terminate child care services.
- ELP's do not need to report non-payment of other fees to CCA.

CHAPTER 9: PAYMENT SCHEDULE GUIDELINES

Payment Processing

- Payments are processed **biweekly** and released no later than the first Wednesday of the 2-week period being paid.
 - ELPs can access the payment schedule on the **CCA web portal** at cca.childcaregroup.org.
-

Payment for Child Care Services

- ELPs are reimbursed for all days a child is enrolled, **regardless of attendance**.
 - Assigned Parent fees are **deducted from CCA Payment** (total number of days x daily rate, minus assigned parent fee).
-

Holidays

CCA reimburses up to **12 holidays or planned closure days** per calendar year (January–December).

Requirements for Payment:

1. Submit a **written list of closure dates** for the following year by **December 1**.
2. Notify CCA at least **5 business days in advance** of any additional closures.

Holidays Are Not Paid if:

- A child's enrollment ends before the holiday.
 - A child's enrollment begins after the holiday.
 - The holiday falls on a day the child is not scheduled to attend.
 - The program has already been reimbursed for 12 holidays.
 - The closure is not reported to CCA in advance.
-

Electronic Payments

- Payments are made via **direct deposit** to a business account.
 - Paper checks are not issued.
 - The CCA web portal provides the payment processing schedule.
-

Payment Summaries

- Payment summaries are **under the ELPs account in KinderConnect**.
- Detailed payment statements will be sent to each ELP via the CCA web portal until they are added to KinderConnect functionality.
- Review payment statements promptly; report any errors to the **Financial Management unit** within **30 days**.

Refunds Required for:

- Overpayments.
- Duplicate payments.
- Payments made in error.

Note: Accepting payment for services not provided or failing to report when a child stops attending may constitute fraud. Instances of suspected fraud will be reported to the **Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)**.

Record Keeping Requirements

ELPs must maintain records for **3 years and 90 days** after a CCA-referred child leaves the program. Required documents include:

- Financial and supporting records, such as **attendance records** and **receipts for parent fees**.
 - Other documents related to financial claims.
-

Access to Records

ELPs must provide reasonable access to records during regular business hours to authorized personnel, including:

- **CCA staff** or contracted monitoring entities.
- **Local Board staff** (Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas) or contracted monitors.
- **TWC staff**.
- Representatives from the **State Attorney General's office**.
- **Federal auditors** overseeing child care programs

CHAPTER 10: COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Complying with the Provider Agreement

Early learning programs (ELPs) must adhere to the terms outlined in their **Provider Agreement** and the **CCA Handbook**. A signed agreement is provided to all programs once necessary documentation is received and finalized.

Service Improvement Agreements (SIA)

A **Service Improvement Agreement (SIA)** is initiated when an ELP:

- Fails to meet the terms of the Provider Agreement.
- Does not follow the procedures outlined in the CCA Handbook.
- Does not use the attendance system or make it available to parents.

Contents of a SIA:

- A statement of the problem.
- Required improvements.
- Any necessary training requirements.
- Steps for achieving compliance.
- Support provided by CCA staff, including technical assistance.
- Timeframes for implementing changes.
- Potential consequences of not making improvements.

Important Notes:

- SIAs must be signed by both the ELP's authorized representative and CCA Provider Services staff.
- **Texas Rising Star (TRS)** programs will lose TRS certification if placed on an SIA for CCA program violations.
- CCA reserves the right to bypass a SIA and take immediate action for serious issues.

Attendance System

- ELPs that are not using the attendance system will be placed on a Service Improvement Agreement (SIA) notifying them that they have one month to use the system.
- The SIA will also notify ELPs that if they are not using the attendance system within one month of the execution of the SIA, CCA payments will be withheld until they come into compliance.

Adverse Actions

For serious noncompliance or unresolved issues after a SIA, CCA may take **adverse actions**, including:

- **Temporary or permanent payment withholding.**
- **Halting referrals of children.**
- **Recouping funds.**

Provider Agreement Termination

An agreement will be terminated if:

- Ownership or location of the program changes.
- TRS certification is not achieved within the required timeframe, and no waiver is applicable.
- License or registration is revoked or suspended by Child Care Regulation.
- The program is disqualified from the **Child and Adult Care Food Program**.

Additional Training

ELPs must complete orientation on CCA procedures before enrolling in the program. Refresher training may be required to address deficiencies and ensure compliance.

Actions for Child Care Regulation Issues

When Child Care Regulation places a program on probation or adverse action, CCA will notify the ELP and parents as follows:

Status	ELP Notified	Parents Notified	New Enrollments Stopped	Currently Enrolled Children Removed	Eligible for TRS/TSR Rates
Probation Status	Within 2 business days	Within 5 business days	Yes	No	No
Adverse Action	Within 1 business day	Within 2 business days	Yes	Yes – within 5 business days	No

For Probation Status:

- Parents are notified and given the option to remain in care or transfer.
- No new enrollments through CCA are allowed.
- TRS/TSR are no longer eligible for the higher, enhanced rates.

For Adverse Action:

- Parents are notified and required to transfer their child to another program within **5 days**.
 - All children must be transferred.
-

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

All individuals in Texas are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

If abuse/neglect occurs in a child care setting:

- Notify **DFPS, Child Care Regulation**, or law enforcement.
- CCA staff will report complaints received about a program.

If abuse/neglect occurs outside the facility:

- The individual who suspects abuse must report it to DFPS immediately.

DFPS Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

Reasons for Prosecution

ELPs may face prosecution for:

- False claims for payment.
- False statements.
- False documentation.

Reminder: Carefully review all signed documents, including the Provider Agreement, Rate Addendum, and SIA.

Fraud Reporting

- Report suspected abuse by parents or programs to **TWC's Fraud and Program Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-252-3642.
- CCA investigates all fraud allegations and reports findings to **Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas**.

Unannounced Visits: CCA, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas or their contracted monitoring entity, and Texas Workforce Commission staff may conduct site visits to verify attendance and investigate documentation.

CHAPTER 11: SUPPORT AND MONITORING

How CCA Staff Support Programs

The **CCA Contractor** acts as a resource for early learning programs (ELPs), providing tailored assistance to:

- Ensure compliance with the **Provider Agreement** and **CCA Handbook**.
 - Support programs working toward or maintaining **Texas Rising Star (TRS)** certification through guidance and ongoing mentorship.
-

Visits to Early Learning Programs

TRS Certification and Monitoring:

- **TRS Mentors** conduct onsite and virtual visits to help programs meet higher standards and provide guidance during certification and renewal.
- **TRS Assessors from the state centralized assessment entity** visit programs for initial certification, annual monitoring, and renewal evaluations.

Programs Serving Children with Disabilities:

- **Inclusion Specialists** visit:
 - Every **six months** to monitor the implementation of an Inclusion Plan.
 - Quarterly for programs receiving the inclusion assistance rate.

Program and Fiscal Audits:

- Programs must allow access to authorized personnel from **Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas, TWC**, or other state/federal authorities for audits during business hours.

Compliance Monitoring:

- The **Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation Division** oversees licensing and registration standards.
- Noncompliance observed by CCA, Workforce Solutions, or TWC staff must be reported to Child Care Regulation.

CHAPTER 12: QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICIES

For clarification on the Provider Agreement or CCA Handbook policies, ELPs should contact **CCA Provider Services staff**, who may escalate inquiries to the **Local Board/Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas** if necessary.

Parents

Encouraging Communication:

Parents are encouraged to address concerns directly with ELP staff first. If further assistance is needed, CCA staff can provide support.

Filing Complaints:

- Complaints regarding noncompliance with Child Care Regulation standards must be reported by CCA staff to the appropriate authorities. Parents are also provided with the information to file a report.
- For service termination, parents can submit an informal appeal in writing with supporting documentation. If denied, directions for filing a formal appeal will be provided.

Contacting CCA Staff:

- Parents with concerns about CCA staff can call **214-630-5949** to request a supervisor or submit a request via **their KinderConnect account**.
 - If unresolved, they may escalate their concerns to the department manager or director.
-

Early Learning Programs

Resolving Concerns with CCA Staff:

- ELPs can address complaints by calling **214-630-5949** or submitting a request via the **CCA web portal**.
- If issues remain unresolved, they may escalate to the department manager or director.

Appealing Adverse Actions:

- Appeals should be submitted in writing via the **CCA web portal**, mail, or fax (**214-688-4436**) and addressed to the department manager responsible for the action.

Contacts for Appeal and Assistance:

- **General CCA Issues:**
 - Provider Services Supervisor
ChildCareGroup – CCA
3000 Pegasus Park Dr suite 800, Dallas, TX 75247

- **Texas Rising Star Issues:**

- Texas Rising Star Program Manager
ChildCareGroup – CCA
3000 Pegasus Park Dr suite 800, Dallas, TX 75247

Follow-Up Process:

The manager will review the appeal and respond via phone and in writing. If the ELP is dissatisfied with the outcome, further appeal options will be provided.

CHAPTER 13: IMPROVING QUALITY OF CARE: TEXAS RISING STAR (TRS) CERTIFICATION

Overview of TRS Certification

The **Texas Rising Star (TRS)** certification program, managed by the Texas Workforce Commission, is a quality rating and improvement system for ELPs. Certification is available to:

- **Licensed Centers**
- **Licensed Homes**
- **Registered Homes**

TRS offers **three levels of certification**—**2-star**, **3-star**, and **4-star**—to motivate providers to achieve progressively higher standards.

Initial Requirement:

Programs must first obtain **Entry Level Designation** before enrolling in the CCA program.

Entry Level Designation

To qualify for Entry Level Designation, a program must:

1. Be **licensed or registered** by Child Care Regulation (including initial permits) or regulated by the U.S. Military.
2. Not be on **Corrective or Adverse Action** with Child Care Regulation.
3. Meet the **40-point threshold** for compliance history within the last 6 months.

Points System for Compliance History:

The points threshold is calculated by assigning the following points to high- and medium-high weighted CCR deficiencies received within the most recent six months of CCR licensing history:

- **High-risk deficiencies** = 5 points each.
- **Medium-high risk deficiencies** = 3 points each.
- Total points from high- and medium-high deficiencies must not exceed 40.

CCA will review compliance history each April 1 and October 1 for all programs at the Entry Level Designated status. If a program exceeds the 40-point threshold when reviewed, their agreement will be terminated within 30 days. The ELP will not be able to return to CCA until they meet the points threshold requirement.

Timeline for Certification

- Programs must achieve TRS certification (2-star, 3-star, or 4-star) within **24 months** of joining the CCA program.
 - To initiate certification, programs must complete an interest form on the **Texas Rising Star website**: www.texasrisingstar.org.
-

TRS Certification Categories

The TRS program evaluates programs in four categories:

1. **Director and Staff Qualifications, Orientation, and Training**
2. **Teacher-Child Interactions**
 - Group size and staff-to-child ratios.
 - Interactions supporting child development and social-emotional learning.
3. **Program Administration**
 - Family education and involvement.
 - Program management.
4. **Indoor and Outdoor Environments**

Scoring System:

- **4-Star Certification:** 80% or more points across all categories.
- **3-Star Certification:** 60–79% of points.
- **2-Star Certification:** 0–59% of points.
- Structural “met” or “not met” measures are required to be met for certification at any level.

For details on certification guidelines, self-assessment tools, and the application process, visit www.texasrisingstar.org.

Benefits of TRS Certification

- **Possibility of Higher Reimbursement Rates:** Programs may receive increased child care payments.
- **Professional Development:** Access to training opportunities.
- **Mentorship:** One-on-one guidance from TRS Mentors.
- **Additional Benefits:** Eligibility for grants, stipends, materials, and equipment.
- **Community Visibility:** Free advertisement to parents and the local community.

RESOURCE GUIDE

CCA Web Portal

- <https://cca.childcaregroup.org>

Texas Child Care Connection (Tx3c) Information Website:

- <https://tx3c.info/>

KinderSystems contact information:

- Phone: 1-888-265-6461. Support staff are available Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM – 9:00 PM Central Time.
- Email: supportTX@kindersystems.com

Texas Child Care Availability Portal/Texas Child Care Connection:

- Searching for child care: <https://childcare.twc.texas.gov/find/welcome>
- Parent application for child care scholarships: <https://childcare.twc.texas.gov/find/register?mode=signup>
- ELP profile updates: <https://childcare.twc.texas.gov/provider/welcome>

CCA Handbook Acknowledgement

I have received the CCA Handbook. My signature below acknowledges receipt and recognition of rules and guidelines. I accept responsibility for orienting any staff at my child care facility with the information in this handbook, and for contacting CCA for any questions I might have about the contents now and in the future.

I understand that this handbook may be amended during the year without notice. This handbook is the latest version and is applicable to my early learning program upon the implementation of any change. CCA staff will notify all programs in writing of any changes to the handbook.

Early Learning Program Name (as printed on permit):	License/Permit Number:
Authorized Representative:	Title:
Signature:	Date: