



ChildCareGroup
Child Care Assistance

Regulated Child Care Handbook

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Chapter 1

Overview of CCA

The Texas Workforce Commission

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the state agency that provides financial scholarships and support services to families working to become and remain self-sufficient by moving them from the welfare system into the workforce.

The Child Care System

Most TWC services that help eligible families with child care and reimburse early learning programs (ELPs) are combined into one system called the Child Care Services or Child Care Assistance program.

- Local workforce development boards across the state of Texas are designated to administer child care and other workforce support funds. Each local board serves a county or a group of counties, and there are 28 local boards established in Texas. Dallas County is one service delivery area, and Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas is the local workforce development board.
- Each local board contracts with independent organizations to manage the delivery of child care services in their area. These organizations are referred to as the “contractor” or “CCA contractor”. ChildCareGroup is the child care contractor for Dallas County.
- Each CCA contractor is responsible to the local board for the operation of the child care system in their area, and the local board is in turn responsible to TWC for administration of funds and the child care system.

Child Care Assistance Staff

CCA staff that ELPs will see or talk to most often are:

- Provider Services Representatives, who:
 - Visit the programs,
 - Maintain and update ELP records,
 - Offer program support, training, technical assistance and resources, and
 - Help early learning programs comply with CCA requirements
- Inclusion Support Specialists, who:
 - Visit the early learning programs
 - Offer program support, training, technical assistance, and resources, and
 - Process requests for Inclusion Assistance Rate in cases where additional adult assistance or specialized equipment is needed
- Texas Rising Star Mentors, who:
 - Assist early learning programs with the Texas Rising Star program
 - Provide mentoring to site directors and early learning program teachers
 - Assist early learning programs with accessing funding for quality improvement

- Eligibility Staff, who:
Help parents determine if they are eligible for services,
Educate parents on choosing child care that meets their needs,
Enroll children into child care programs, and
Give early learning programs updated information on family eligibility and fees
- Financial Management Staff, who:
Process payments for early learning programs, and
Answer payment questions

Laws, Regulations and Rules Governing the CCA System

Most rules, policies, and procedures in this CCA Handbook are based on federal or state laws and regulations. TWC develops rules, policies, and procedures to implement the federal and state laws and regulations. Each local workforce development board then develops policies based on these laws and regulations to meet the needs in the community that they serve. The CCA contractor, in turn, will develop its own operating procedures to carry out all rules, policies, and procedures developed by TWC and the local board.

The TWC Child Care Services Guide can be found at:

<https://www.twc.texas.gov/partners/workforce-program-guides#childCare>

TWC Child Care Services Rules can be found at:

<https://www.twc.state.tx.us/files/twc/rules-chapter-809-child-care-services-twc.pdf>

Chapter 2

Enrolling in the CCA Program

An early learning program (ELP) is eligible to participate in the CCA program if:

- The program is licensed or registered by Child Care Regulation (CCR);
- Is not on corrective or adverse action with CCR;
- Does not exceed the 75 point threshold for CCR deficiencies incurred within the most recent 12 months; and
- Agrees to work with a mentor towards Texas Rising Star certification.

An early learning program must:

- Sign a Provider Agreement;
- Agree to abide by the terms of the Agreement; and
- Agree to read and follow procedures outlined in this CCA Handbook.

The Provider Agreement is a legal document that

- Has information needed by the CCA Contractor;
- Explains to early learning programs what they must do;
- Is signed before CCA can pay for child care services to CCA-referred children;
- Is the basis of payment to early learning programs for child care services provided to CCA-referred children; and
- Includes this CCA Handbook as part of the agreement.

All regulated programs must care for CCA-funded children in a location other than the eligible child's own residence.

Having a Provider Agreement in place does not guarantee that a program will have children referred by CCA. All referrals made by the CCA Contractor are based on parent choice.

Note: A Board shall not reimburse early learning programs that are debarred from other state or federal programs unless and until the debarment is removed. Early learning programs terminated or disqualified from the Child and Adult Care Food Program are not eligible to participate in the CCA program or be paid for care.

Changes Effecting the Provider Agreement

As ELPs have changes occur, they will need to report those to CCA. CCA staff will determine if a new provider agreement is needed and follow up with the program. The ELP must notify CCA in advance of the following changes, within five business days:

- Facility Name
- Ownership status
- Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- Contact Person
- Address/location
- Conditions on license/permit
- Hours of operation
- Ages of children served
- Published rates or any required fees

Note: All changes should be reported via the CCA web portal. Failure to report changes may/will affect payment for services provided and may cause CCA children to be moved to another early learning program.

Changes that cause termination of the Provider Agreement are changes in:

- location
- ownership
- facility type or permit number

The Provider Agreement, referrals of children, and payment do not transfer to another location or owner. Updated paperwork must be completed and a new agreement signed. Texas Rising Star certification status will be evaluated once the new permit is in place.

Attendance and payment for care may continue under the existing permit number and Provider Agreement until:

- A permit to operate has been issued by Child Care Regulation for the new location or owner,
- The owner or responsible party completes required CCA paperwork,
- A new Provider Agreement is signed, and
- The new permit information is verified by CCA staff.

All paperwork should be gathered, and a new Provider Agreement signed in advance if possible, to help create a smooth transition.

Chapter 3 Getting Child Care

Parents get scholarships for child care services by contacting CCA to determine if they are eligible. Eligibility is based on work and/or training hours, income, and family size. Some parents are referred to CCA by the local workforce development board or TWC employment contractor “Choices staff”, or by DFPS Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers. These employment staff or caseworkers determine the parent’s eligibility and authorize CCA to provide the child care services.

Parent Choice of Early Learning Program

CCA is a parent’s choice program and having a Provider Agreement in place does not guarantee that children will be referred to a specific early learning program (ELP). Federal and State law requires that parents choose where they want their children to go for care.

Children receiving child care services through Child Protective Services have different requirements for choosing child care. These parents work with their DFPS caseworker to choose the program that best meets their needs.

Parents Employed by the Early Learning Program

If a parent is employed by the ELP, the following applies:

- Licensed Child Care Centers – the parent cannot be the director, assistant director, or have any ownership interest in the facility and use that child care facility for care of their own children.
- Licensed or Registered Child Care Homes – the parent cannot be employed and working at the home during the hours their child is in care.

Termination of Enrollment

The Child Care Contractor may terminate child care services before the family’s eligibility end date due to:

- Permanent loss of work or training and the parent has not resumed activity after 3 months,
- Family income too high,
- Determination of fraud,
- Failure to pay parent share of cost (copay), or
- Accumulating too many absences.

ELPs will receive paperwork for each family that lists a beginning date and/or an end date, which allows the program to track when care may end or should be updated. When care will be terminating before the scheduled end date CCA will send the parent and program a notice 15 days in advance.

Placements and Waiting List

At times children who are eligible for services must be placed on a waiting list for funding. Once children are placed on the waiting list, the parent will be sent a letter notifying them of their status and the requirements to keep their information current while waiting for funding.

Once a family is placed on the waiting list, they must contact CCA every 60 days to remain on the list. Failure to contact CCA by the due date will result in them being removed from the list. Parents should use the CCA web portal to update their information.

As funds become available, families are pulled from the wait list according to State and Local Board mandated priority groups and in the order in which they applied. Once pulled from the waiting list the parent will receive an application packet in the mail and will have a deadline to complete all information and return paperwork to CCA.

Chapter 4 Enrolling Children

The Enrollment Process

When a parent is determined to be eligible for financial scholarship CCA Eligibility Staff:

- Reviews the needs are for care,
- Reviews the parent's rights and responsibilities,
- Gives the parent information on types of child care available as well as how to choose quality child care, and
- Encourages the parent to visit several early learning programs (ELP).

When the parent has identified an early learning program the staff:

- Verifies there is a provider agreement in place for the age and type of care needed,
- Verbally authorizes care to start with the program, and
- Sends the program Form 2450, Authorization for Child Care Enrollment via the web portal message center.

Form 2450 tells the program:

- The date child care is to begin,
- When the parent's eligibility will end or is due for review,
- The amount of the monthly parent fee,
- The days that the parent is able to use care,
- If care is authorized for part day (up to 6 hours) or full day (6-12 hours), and
- Whether transportation is authorized.

The ELP must not accept a child unless CCA has called the program to authorize enrollment. If the child is referred by a CPS or TWC caseworker, the program must have CCA authorization before accepting the child into care. **Without authorization by CCA, the program will not be paid for care provided.**

The program should verify that a child's personal and referral information matches the authorization given for days of the week and part/full day upon receipt of the 2450. If information does not match, the program must contact CCA within 5 days.

If a child is authorized to start but does not begin care, the early learning program must report to CCA on the 5th day if the child has not begun care.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, requires that all individuals, regardless of their disabilities, be allowed access to child care facilities, including registered family homes. See Chapter 5 for additional information on working with children with disabilities.

ELPs may limit the number of children enrolled through the CCA program in their facility and are not required to take referrals that do not align with business practices applied to the general public (example: part week or part day enrollment).

ELPs may not deny a child care referral based on:

- The parent's income status or lack of parent copay;
- Receipt of other public assistance;
- The child's Department of Family and Protective Services Child Protective Services (CPS) status.

Early Learning Program Policies

Early learning programs must give parents a copy of their written policies and answer questions that they may have. Parents are required to comply with all policies unless the policy conflicts with CCA, TWC, or other state or federal policies.

ELPs cannot require CCA parents to:

- Pay the difference between CCA reimbursement rates and private pay rates,
- Pay a higher late fee than private pay parents,
- Abide by a different late pick-up policy than private pay parents,
- Pay any mandatory fees charged to private pay parents (example: registration, supply, activity, transportation), and
- Pay a penalty if CCA ends care without notice.

Units of Child Care Service

CCA purchases child care based upon the "units" of service delivered:

- A unit of service may be a full day or a part day.
- A **full day** unit of service is **6 to 12 hours** of care within a 24-hour period.
- A **part day** unit of service is **less than 6 hours** of care within a 24-hour period.

Children may not be enrolled for more than 1 ½ units of care per day (24-hour period).

Part-Time Care

CCA arranges care based on the time needed to support parents' employment or training. In some instances, **part-time** care, or **less than 5 days** per week may be needed. The child will be enrolled for the type of unit of care needed based on the parent's needs (example: 3 full day units, 4 part day units).

The ELP should not accept a part-day referral if that care is not listed on their provider agreement. If they wish to add it, the program must contact Provider Services staff and have it added to their agreement before the referral can be made and the care can be paid for.

Programs must allow a child referred as part-day to attend up to the full six hours, and allow a child referred as full-day to attend up to the full twelve hours, during the child care program's operating hours.

ELPs must not use the parent’s work or training hours to determine how long the child may remain at the facility without being charged a late fee. Care is authorized as either full day or part day based on the parent’s needs. Programs may charge parents a late fee if care is provided beyond the number of hours authorized for full (12 hours) or part day (up to 6 hours) during their operating hours.

Early learning programs that offer extended hour or 24-hour care may request a schedule of need for the week from the parent so that they can plan for staffing. This should be part of their written policies and given to parents.

School-Age and PreK Care and Wrap Around Services

ELPs who offer full-year care for school-age children will need to reserve space for children whose parents need to have them attend for full day care during school holidays unless they are also closed those days. Programs who have a preK partnership with a school district should also plan for children who are dually enrolled with the ISD and CCA to attend full day during school holidays.

Children who attend a full day public or charter school, Early Head Start, Head Start, or public PreK program and need child care part day on school days and full day on school holidays will have a single referral for the school year and be paid a blended rate for each day of care. The blended rate combines the full day rate with the part day rate as follows:

- Part day rate for 175 days + full day rate for 30 days
- Divided by total number of days during the school session (205)

During the summer months care will be paid at the full day rate if full day care is needed by the family.

Chapter 5

Enrolling Children with Disabilities

Parents of children with disabilities have the same right to parent choice as other parents. Parents may choose to place their children in child care according to location or convenience, even if the early learning programs (ELP) who are chosen do not have experience caring for children with disabilities. In these cases, our Inclusion staff can provide support for ELPs who care for children with disabilities.

The ADA and CCA Early Learning Programs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, requires public accommodations, including licensed child care centers licensed homes, and registered child care homes to ensure access for all individuals regardless of disabilities. All ELPs must comply with this law by accepting children with disabilities into their facility, and by making it possible for parents with disabilities to access child care facilities.

Care for children with disabilities cannot be discontinued or refused, unless the care would fundamentally alter the child care facility's programming or presents an undue burden to the program. Programs who wish to discontinue or refuse care for a child with a disability should:

- Contact CCA before refusing or discontinuing care, and
- Document in writing any inability to provide adequately for a child's needs or safety, which may include accommodations that have been tried, accommodations that are considered necessary, and reasons the necessary accommodations were unsuccessful or not readily achievable.

Inclusive Child Care

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines inclusion in early childhood programs as including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.

Inclusion Support

ChildCareGroup's Inclusion Support Program seeks to improve access, eliminate participation barriers, and promote quality inclusive practices. This three-tier approach immerses children with additional needs into an inclusive learning environment. It also provides two-way learning opportunities between themselves and their typically developing peers. The Inclusion Support Program aims to improve delivery of early learning programs for children with disabilities.

Inclusion support may include:

- Technical assistance and training from an Inclusion Specialist
- Inclusion Assistance rate that can be used to adaptive equipment, one-to-one support, trainings, etc.
- Referrals and resources

A CCA referred child with a disability may have an Inclusion Plan developed by the Inclusion Specialist if the parent elects to participate in the program. Inclusion Plans are reviewed with the parents, the ELP, staff, and any professionals that care for the child. The Inclusion Plan is written to assist programs and their staff with including the child in the care setting with typically developing peers.

Confidentiality

All information ELPs and their staff have about children with disabilities is confidential. Information about children with disabilities cannot be given to anyone who does not directly work with the child or supervise someone who does, either in writing or verbally, without permission from the parent. Staff working directly with children with disabilities must learn all they can about the children, however caregivers must not share confidential information with:

- Caregiver staff who do not work with the children with disabilities,
- Other early learning programs,
- Other parents, or
- Visitors.

Inclusion staff cannot observe a specific child without written permission from the parent to observe and share information with the early learning program.

Caring for Children with Disabilities

Information on caring for children with disabilities is available to help programs who have children with disabilities enrolled. Information and assistance are available on:

- Working with parents of children with disabilities,
- Getting a child settled into the facility,
- How CCA will help,
- How to help develop and follow individualized inclusion plans,
- Getting adaptive equipment,
- Determining if more help is needed,
- Finding community resources,
- What to do if a parent has a disability, and
- What to do if caregivers don't think they can meet the child's needs.

Inclusion Assistance Rates

CCA recognizes that caring for a child with a disability can create challenges in a child care setting. To assist programs in maintaining an inclusive child care setting, CCA can support the program in finding additional training for staff or other resources to help better meet a child's needs. Enhanced reimbursement rates may be available when extra

adult assistance is needed for the child and an approved professional recommends additional adult assistance. The Inclusion Specialist will assist the program in the process. The additional reimbursement rate is set at up to 190% of the program's reimbursement rate, based on the type and amount of additional care that may be necessary according to an approved professional.

The inclusion assistance rate may be used:

- To help pay for extra staff or
- To help pay for additional equipment needed to assist in the care of a child

Inclusion assistance may not be used to pay for counseling, therapy, or medical services.

Early learning programs can contact our inclusion staff at inclusionassistance@ccgroup.org

Chapter 6

Determining Payment Rates

Maximum Reimbursement Rates

Maximum reimbursement rates for services to CCA-referred children are based on:

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

Maximum rates are established for each facility type, type of care (full/part day, blended), age of child (infant, toddler, preschool, school age), and quality rating (Texas Rising Star, Texas School Ready!). Texas Rising Star certified programs have higher maximum rates based on their certification level (2, 3, and 4 star). See chapter 13 for more information on Texas Rising Star certification. Texas School Ready!™ programs are eligible to be reimbursed at a higher rate for infant, toddler, and preschool age children.

Payment Rates

Actual payment rates are set when the provider agreement is signed and are based upon the documentation of rates given to CCA by the early learning program (ELP). Rates for full day and part day care are established for each age category that applies to the facility.

Reimbursement rates are based on the ELP's published rates, or what is charged to the public, and prorated to a daily rate. The program will submit their rates for care as well as any other fees required for a child to participate in their program (registration, uniforms, activities, etc.). These additional fees must be included in the CCA rates and cannot be charged to the parent by the program.

Daily rates are calculated for full day and part day for each of the age categories listed below:

- Infants (0-17 months)
- Toddlers (18-35 months)
- Preschool (3-5 years)
- School Age (6-12 years)

Calculating Daily Rates

If early learning program rates are:	To obtain daily rate:
Monthly	Divide the rate by 4.33, then divide the result by 5
Biweekly	Divide the rate by 2.165, then divide the results by 5
Weekly	Divide the weekly amount by 5
Hourly	Multiply the hourly rate by 12 to calculate the full day rate and by 6 to calculate the part day rate

If there are multiple rates within an age category all applicable rates will be averaged to obtain the published rate for the age category, then the daily rate will be determined using the appropriate method above.

The calculated daily fee amount is the total of reported fees prorated by the number of days in the program year.

Early learning programs will not be paid more than the CCA maximum reimbursement rate for child care. Programs cannot require CCA-referred parents to make up the difference between the program's published rates and the CCA maximum rates. The program may not charge CCA a higher rate than what the public is charged.

Optional Fees

Fees that are optional are not included in the daily rate calculation or reimbursement. These would include some field trips, class pictures, classes provided by an outside vendor (karate, dance, computer, etc.) or other fees not required for a child to participate in a program. If parents choose to have their children participate in these activities, they will be responsible for paying the costs, which are in addition to their Parent Share. ELPs are responsible for collecting these fees.

Activities that are planned for the entire group with no alternate plans are not considered optional and these costs must be included along with the program's published rates.

When Early Learning Programs Change Their Rates

If early learning programs change their published rates, they should contact Provider Services to update their information. A new provider agreement will be prepared that shows the new rates. The new rates will be effective the first of the month *after* the agreement and rate addendum have been signed. Programs should send new rate information to Provider Services via fax or by uploading on the CCA web portal at least two weeks prior to the change to ensure that updates are made and the agreement is completed and signed as needed.

Reimbursement for Transportation

When programs transport children, CCA will reimburse as follows:

- If programs charge a separate transportation fee, CCA will pay the transportation fee for CCA-referred children who have been authorized for transportation up to the maximum rate for the age of child and type of care.
- **The combined total for child care plus transportation cannot be more than the CCA maximum reimbursement rates**

School-Age Care Wrap Around Services and Blended Rates

Children who attend a public or charter school, Early Head Start, Head Start, or public PreK program and need child care part day on school days and full day on school holidays will be paid for under the blended rate for each day of care during the school year. CCA will set the start and end dates for the school year in the database to accommodate the majority of school districts in Dallas County. The blended rate combines the full day rate with the part day rate as follows:

- Part day rate for 175 days + full day rate for 30 days
- Divided by total number of days during the school session (205)

During the summer months care will be paid at the full day rate if full day care is needed by the family.

Early learning programs who offer full-year care will need to reserve space for children referred as blended whose parents need to have them attend for full day care during school holidays unless the program is also closed those days.

Chapter 7

Child Care Attendance

Parents must ensure that their child attends child care on a regular basis. Meeting attendance standards for CCA consists of no more than 40 total absences in their 12-month eligibility period. Absences due to chronic illness, disability, or court-ordered custody or visitation agreements can be removed from the absence count.

Absences

Early learning programs (ELPs) are required to notify CCA if a child has **5 consecutive days** of absence. If 40 absences (8 reports of 5 consecutive absences) are accumulated during a child's 12-month eligibility period, CCA will start the process to terminate child care services. The parent will have opportunity to provide documentation for review if the absences were due to a chronic illness, disability, court-ordered custody or visitation agreement, or other extenuating circumstance. As a courtesy, parents are advised when their children accumulate 15 absences and again at 30. Some cases may not be terminated based on eligibility.

ELPs must report *all* instances of 5 consecutive days of absence on the CCA web portal. The 5 days may be during the same week (Monday – Friday) or across multiple weeks (Wed, Thurs, Fri, Mon, Tues). The information should be reported on the 5th day of absence.

If a program fails to report instances of 5 consecutive days of absence, corrective action may be taken by CCA. This may include issuing a Service Improvement Agreement as well as ending the referral, limiting further placements of children, and recouping funds paid to the early learning program.

If a parent reports to their early learning program that they will not be returning, the program must report the information to CCA for follow up either on the CCA web portal or by calling.

Suspension of Enrollment

Sometimes a child must be absent from care for an extended period. This can happen when:

- The child must spend time with a parent on a court-ordered visit or as part of a custody agreement
- A parent has a break in employment (example: parent works for a school district and is off for the summer)
- A parent has a break in school and is not working during the break (examples: teen parents, parents enrolled in college)
- A parent is on medical leave and is unable to get the child to the ELP

A parent can request a suspension so that absences will not accumulate. The Eligibility Staff will:

- Terminate the child's enrollment with the ELP, and
- Place the child on suspended enrollment.

The program is not paid for the period the child is on suspended enrollment and may enroll another child in that space. When the suspension period is over, the child will be re-enrolled into the CCA program and may be placed with the original ELP if space is available, or with another program that has availability. Early learning programs are not required to hold spaces for children that are on a suspension.

Chapter 8 Parent Fees

Who Pays Parent Fees

Federal law states that many parents must pay part of the cost of their child care, even when they are getting financial assistance. Parent fees are calculated according to the family's monthly income before taxes. Eligibility staff will let early learning programs (ELPs) know if parents must pay fees and how much the fees are.

Collecting Parent Fees

ELPs **must** collect the assessed parent fee *in advance* of providing services. Each program should have a clear written policy that explains when payment is due and consequences for non-payment, including fees charged and practice for termination from the ELP. The policy should be given to parents at the time of enrollment. ELPs keep the fees they collect, and the amount of the assessed parent fee is deducted from the CCA reimbursement to the program. Early learning programs should provide each parent a receipt or statement showing amounts collected on a regular basis.

Early Learning programs must collect parent fees and document all payments received. Parents must pay *before* services are provided.

Examples:

- If weekly payments are required by the ELP, parents should pay for the upcoming week either the Friday before, or on Monday
- If monthly payments are required, parents should pay on the first of the month for that month.

Parents must pay their parent fees even when:

- Children are scheduled to attend but do not attend, and
- The parent takes vacation days.

Reduction of Parent Fees

Parent fees may be lowered temporarily when parents have unusual circumstances. Only the CCA Eligibility staff can lower parent fees. Early learning programs may **not** lower fees, but they can recommend that a parent contact CCA and ask for a fee reduction. Requests for fee reductions can be entered on the CCA web portal, and the parent will be required to provide documentation to support the request.

Eligibility staff will notify ELPs by phone when parent fees have been reduced and send an updated 2450 Authorization Form through the CCA web portal message center.

When Parents Do Not Pay Their Fees

Collection of the parent fees is the responsibility of the ELP, and CCA will not reimburse the program for any uncollected fees. The program should follow their written policy which can include assessing a late fee, suspending care, and ending care with the facility.

When signing the Provider Agreement, the ELP agrees to collect any assessed parent fees in advance of providing services and report any non-payments to CCA within five business days of the due date. **If a parent does not pay their fee according to the early learning program's written policy, the program must report the late fee within 5 business days** on the CCA web portal. CCA will contact the parent to inform them of the reported late copy and review their financial situation to see if a fee reduction is appropriate. If there is no fee reduction staff will contact the ELP regarding the status of payment. If the parent still has not paid the fee balance CCA will start the termination process and send a notice to end child care to the parent and ELP.

If the ELP works out a payment arrangement with the parent to get them caught up on the outstanding fee, the ELP does not need to report the late copay for that month. If the next month begins and the parent does not pay timely, the program should report the late fee and not continue to offer a payment plan for a second month.

CCA is only able to follow up on late parent fees that are reported timely. Staff are unable to follow up on outstanding balances from previous time periods that were not reported timely.

Examples for payments and late fee reporting:

- Weekly fee payment is required by the ELP. The program can divide the parent's monthly fee amount into weekly payments. Four payments are recommended to keep it simple, but not required. If payment is due each Monday, the program would report at the end of the day on Friday if the parent does not make their payment.
- Fee payment is required twice monthly by the ELP. The early learning program would collect $\frac{1}{2}$ the fee on the first of the month and the other half on the 15th of the month. If the parent does not pay on the first of the month the program would report no later than the end of the day on the 5th. If the parent does not pay on the 15th, the program would report no later than the end of the day on the 20th. If the 5th or 20th falls on a weekend, the program would report on Friday or Monday.
- Monthly fee payment is required by the ELP. If the parent does not pay on the first of the month the program would report no later than the end of the day on the 5th. If the 5th falls on a weekend, the program will report on Friday or Monday.

Chapter 9 Reimbursement for Services

Payments are processed (payment calculated, and statement prepared) every 2 weeks, and are released within 5 business days of processing. A schedule for payment processing and payment release dates can be found on the provider page of the CCA web portal – cca.childcaregroup.org.

Payment for Child Care Services

Early learning program(ELPs) are paid for all days the child is enrolled, whether present or absent. All assigned parent fees that the program should collect are deducted from the CCA reimbursement payment.

Holidays

CCA will pay up to 12 holidays/planned closure days each calendar year (January – December) beginning in 2023. **All ELPs must provide CCA a written list of the specific closure dates for the next year by December 1 of each year.** It is important to check which holidays may fall on the weekend for the upcoming year (New Year’s Day, Christmas, July 4th) and determine if the program will be closed the Friday before, Monday after, or not at all. Staff professional development days can be counted in the 12 days. All planned closures, including those beyond the 12 reimbursed dates must be reported at least 5 business days in advance either annually when requested or on the CCA web portal.

Holidays are not paid if:

- A child’s care ends before the holiday
- A child’s care begins the day after the holiday
- The holiday falls on a day the child is not authorized to be in care
- The early learning program has already been paid for 12 holiday days in the calendar year
- CCA is not notified in advance of the holiday.

CCA must be notified of any changes in scheduled holidays a minimum of 5 business days in advance.

Electronic Payments

All payments are made by direct deposit to a checking account in the business name, or to a debit card issued to the program. No paper checks are issued. CCA publishes a yearly schedule for payment processing and estimated payment release dates on the provider page of the CCA web portal.

Payment Summaries

Payment summaries are sent to each ELP via the CCA web portal message center. Programs should be sure to review the payment summary for each period as soon as possible after receiving it. If an error is found, contact the Financial Management unit within 30 days of receiving the payment summary.

Early learning programs will be required to refund any payments that they are not entitled to, including:

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

Accepting payment for services not actually provided may be considered fraud if consecutive absences are not reported as required. ELPs must report *all* instances of a child being absent for 5 consecutive days. Programs and parents will be referred to the Texas Workforce Commission in cases where it is suspected that a fraudulent claim has been made.

Record Keeping Requirements

ELPs must keep records while a CCA-referred child is in their care. After a CCA-referred child is no longer coming to the facility, it is recommended to keep the following documents for 3 years and 90 days:

- Financial documents and supporting documents such as attendance records and receipts for parent fees, and
- Any other records having to do with financial claims.

Access to Records

ELPs must allow reasonable access to their records and must provide copies on request to people who are authorized to see records and documents. The access only has to be during regular business hours. People authorized to see records are:

- CCA Staff or any entity contracted by CCA to conduct on site monitoring,
- Local Board (Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas) staff or any entity contracted to conduct monitoring,
- TWC staff,
- Representatives of the State Attorney General's office, and
- Representatives of Federal government offices with responsibility for managing and auditing federal and state child care programs.

Chapter 10

Corrective or Adverse Actions

Complying with the Provider Agreement

Early learning programs (ELPs) must comply with all the terms of the agreement and follow procedures in this CCA Handbook. A copy of the agreement is given to all programs once all required paperwork is received, and the agreement is signed and in effect.

Service Improvement Agreements

CCA Provider Services staff will negotiate Service Improvement Agreements (SIA) for programs if they:

- Do not meet the terms of the provider agreement.
- Do not follow the procedures in this CCA Handbook.

Service Improvement Agreements will:

- State the problem,
- Explain what improvements must be made,
- List any training requirements,
- List ways to make improvements,
- Tell what CCA staff will do to help make the improvements, including any technical assistance to be provided by CCA,
- Set time limits for making improvements, and
- List the results of not making the improvements.

Provider Services staff will review SIAs with ELPs and will offer help to correct the problems or make the improvements. SIAs must be signed by the ELP's authorized representative and Provider Services staff. If a serious problem happens with a program, CCA can take immediate action instead of implementing a Service Improvement Agreement.

Note: Texas Rising Star programs will lose TRS certification if placed on a Service Improvement Agreement for CCA program requirements.

Adverse Action by CCA

Consequences for serious problems (in which immediate action may be taken by CCA), noncompliance with policy, or failure to make needed improvements as defined by a Service Improvement Agreement may include the following:

- Temporarily withholding payment,
- Permanently withholding payment,
- Discontinuing referrals of children, and
- Recouping funds.

A Provider Agreement will be terminated in the following instances:

- Change of ownership
- Change of location
- ELP does not achieve TRS certification within the required timeframe and a waiver is not applicable
- Revocation or suspension of a license or registration by Child Care Regulation
- Program is terminated and/or disqualified from participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Additional Training

ELPs must participate in orientation provided by CCA on the procedures that are in this Handbook prior to enrolling in CCA. Existing programs may be required to participate in a refresher on the CCA program to help them make corrections and meet requirements.

Corrective and Adverse Action by Child Care Regulation

Child Care Regulation will notify TWC when a facility is placed on probationary status or adverse action. In all cases CCA staff will contact both the ELP and parents of children enrolled through CCA after receiving notice of the action from the Texas Workforce Commission. The following table summarizes the actions to be taken by CCA when a program has been placed on corrective or adverse action by Child Care Regulation. More detailed information follows.

Status	Early Learning Program Notified	Parents Notified in Writing	New Enrollments are Stopped?	Currently Enrolled Children are Removed?	Program is Eligible to Receive TRS/TSR Rates?
Corrective Action/ 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 programs placed on Probation Status:

- CCA will send letters to all parents of CCA enrolled children notifying them of the status and giving them the option to remain in care or transfer
- No new children may be enrolled through CCA
- If the program is receiving a higher reimbursement rate due to Texas Rising Star certification or Texas School Ready participation, the rates will be lowered and the standard maximum rates will be applied

For programs under Adverse Action:

- CCA will contact all parents of CCA enrolled children notifying them of the status and requiring them to transfer to another early learning program within 5 days
- All children are required to transfer
- No new children may be enrolled through CCA

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Everyone in Texas is required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If the suspected abuse or neglect happens while the child is in care with an early learning program DFPS, Child Care Regulation, or a local or state law enforcement agency must be notified. CCA staff will make a report if they receive a complaint against a program.

If an early learning program suspects abuse or neglect of a child is happening away from the facility, the individual who suspects the abuse or neglect must immediately report the suspicion to DFPS as well.

The DFPS toll-free hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

Reasons Early Learning Programs Could Be Prosecuted

Programs may be prosecuted under applicable federal or state laws for:

- False claims for payment,
- False statements, or
- False documents.

Program representatives should carefully review all documents that they sign and note that their signature is confirmation of the information included on the document. This includes information contained on the Provider Agreement, Rate Addendum, Service Improvement Agreement, and any paperwork submitted.

Anyone suspecting program abuse by either a parent or early learning program should contact TWC's Fraud and Program Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-3642.

CCA is required to investigate all allegations of fraud and report the findings to Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas. CCA staff may make unannounced visits to early learning program facilities to investigate allegations, review documentation, and verify attendance of CCA-referred children.

Chapter 11 Assisting and Monitoring

How CCA Staff Assist Programs

The CCA Contractor serves as a resource for early learning programs and will provide help that fits the situation and needs. CCA staff will help programs understand and comply with requirements of the Provider Agreement and this CCA Handbook. Programs working on becoming certified as Texas Rising Star will receive assistance in that process, as well as ongoing support to maintain certification.

Visits to Early Learning Programs

Programs who are working on becoming Texas Rising Star (TRS) certified or who are already certified receive onsite and virtual visits from a TRS Mentor to provide support and guidance on meeting the higher standards. TRS Assessors conduct site visits to complete initial certification, renew certification, and complete annual monitoring.

If a program has a child with disabilities enrolled, an Inclusion Specialist will visit:

- Every six months to monitor implementation of the child's Inclusion Plan, and
- Quarterly if the program receives the inclusion assistance rate.

Early learning programs must allow Local Board, Texas Workforce Commission, or other state or federal authorities to conduct program and fiscal audits as requested. This will be done during regular business hours.

The Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation division monitors compliance with licensing or registration standards. **CCA staff, Board staff, or TWC staff who observe noncompliance with minimum standards are required to report the noncompliance to Child Care Regulation.**

Chapter 12

Asking Questions and Solving Problems

Questions about policies

When early learning programs (ELPs) have questions about the Provider Agreement or about any of the policies outlined in this CCA Handbook, they should contact CCA Provider Services staff. CCA staff will contact the Local Board/Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas for additional information when necessary.

Parents

Parents are encouraged to communicate with the early learning program staff on a regular basis so that when concerns arise they are comfortable in addressing them. CCA staff can assist when needed, however, direct communication between the parent and program is always encouraged first.

Parents sometimes report complaints to CCA staff regarding services provided by the program. If the complaint involves a possible noncompliance to Child Care Regulation minimum standards, then CCA staff are required to report the complaint to Child Care Regulation staff for follow up. The parent is given the information to report the complaint as well.

In cases where a family's services are terminated, parents are given written directions for filing an informal appeal. The parent should put their request/grievance in writing, explain reasons they feel the action is being taken in error, and submit it along with any additional documentation. A supervisor will review the appeal request and contact the parent as well as provide written information on the outcome of the appeal request. If the appeal is not granted, directions to file a formal appeal will also be given.

If parents have concerns or complaints regarding the CCA staff, they should call CCA at 214-630-5949 and request that a supervisor contact them. CCA staff will route the request to the appropriate supervisor. They can also put a request in on the CCA web portal and it will be routed to the appropriate supervisor.

If concerns or complaints are not resolved with the supervisor, the parent may request to speak with the department manager, then director.

Early Learning Programs

If early learning programs have concerns or complaints regarding the CCA staff, they may contact CCA at 214-630-5949 and request that a supervisor contact them. They can also put a request in on the CCA web portal and it will be routed to the appropriate supervisor.

If concerns or complaints are not resolved with the supervisor, the ELP may request to speak with the department manager, then director.

If an ELP wishes to appeal an adverse action taken against them by CCA, they should put their request in writing along with reasons they feel the action is being taken in error. Requests can be submitted via the CCA web portal, mailed, or faxed (214-688-4436) and should be addressed to the manager for the department taking the action.

For general CCA issues:

Provider Services Manager
ChildCareGroup – CCA
1420 W. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 300
Dallas, TX 75247

For Texas Rising Star issues:

Texas Rising Star Program Manager
ChildCareGroup – CCA
1420 W. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 300
Dallas, TX 75247

The manager will complete a review of the information and actions taken, then follow up with the early learning program via phone and in writing once a decision is made. The ELP will be given additional options if they wish to further appeal once a decision has been made and they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Chapter 13

Improving Quality of Care

Early learning programs (ELPs) that provide child care services are required to participate in the Texas Workforce Commission Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification program. The TRS program is the quality rating and improvement system for Texas and certification is available to Licensed Centers, Licensed Homes, and Registered Homes. The TRS program offers three levels of quality certification (2-star, 3-star, and 4-star) to encourage early learning programs to attain progressively higher certification requirements. Programs begin by achieving Entry Level Designation prior to enrolling in the CCA program, then move into the certification process.

Entry Level Designation

To qualify for entry level designation, an early learning program must meet the minimum quality standards outlined below and will receive technical assistance and support under the TRS program:

- Licensed or registered with Child Care Regulation (may have an initial permit) or regulated by the United States Military;
- Not on Corrective or Adverse Action with Child Care Regulation; and
- Meets the points threshold of 75 for high- and medium-high weighted Child Care Regulation deficiencies based on a review of licensing history withing the most recent 12 months.
 - In determining the points assigned to the most recent 12 months of compliance history, each cited deficiency that is high risk is assigned 5 points, and each cited deficiency that is medium-high risk is assigned 3 points. The total of high and medium-high risk deficiencies cannot exceed 75 for the program to meet entry level designation.

Once joining the CCA program, an early learning program must become Texas Rising Star certified at the 2-, 3-, or 4-star level within 24 months. The program can initiate the certification process by completing the interest form on the Texas Rising Star website: www.texasrisingstar.org. Texas Rising Star staff will then contact the program to begin the certification process. Those not submitting the interest form within the first 12 months in the program will be screened for TRS eligibility by the Texas Rising Star staff and contacted if eligible.

Texas Rising Star Certification

The Texas Rising Star program recognizes high-quality child care that exceeds the state's minimum child care licensing standards in the following categories:

- Category 1: Director and Staff Qualifications, Orientation, and Training
- Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions
 - Group size and staff-to-child ratios

- Teacher interactions that support child development and social-emotional learning.
- Category 3: Program Administration
 - Family education and involvement
 - Program management
- Category 4: Indoor and Outdoor Environments

Within each category the program is scored on foundational quality standards, and additional points can be earned on other standards to increase the star level rating.

- Four Star programs earn 80% or more of points across all four categories
- Three Star programs earn 60-79% of points across all four categories
- Two Star programs earn 0-59% of points across all four categories

For more information on the TRS program, the certification guidelines, self-assessment tools, and the application process please visit the Texas Rising Star website at: www.texasrisingstar.org.

Every parent in the CCA program or on the waiting list will receive a Consumer Guide, which gives information about the Texas Rising Star program as well as national accreditation.

Benefits of Texas Rising Star Certification

- Higher child care reimbursement rates
- Professional development opportunities
- One-on-one mentoring
- Eligibility for other benefits such as grants, stipends, materials and equipment
- Free advertisement to parents and the community

Important Contact Information

Child Care Assistance:

Phone: 214.630.5949

Web portal: cca.childcaregroup.org

Main Fax: 214.688.4436

Early Learning Program Fax: 214.905.2471

Address:

1420 W. Mockingbird Lane, Suite 300
Dallas, TX 75247

CCA Web Portal Information

Early learning programs can use the portal for:

- Reporting absences of 5 days in a row
- Reporting or updating holiday and other closure information
- Payment questions, errors
- Payment schedule
- Reporting any other issues related to a specific family
- Requesting copies of forms
- Sending CCA a general question
- Getting updates and other information from CCA (message center)

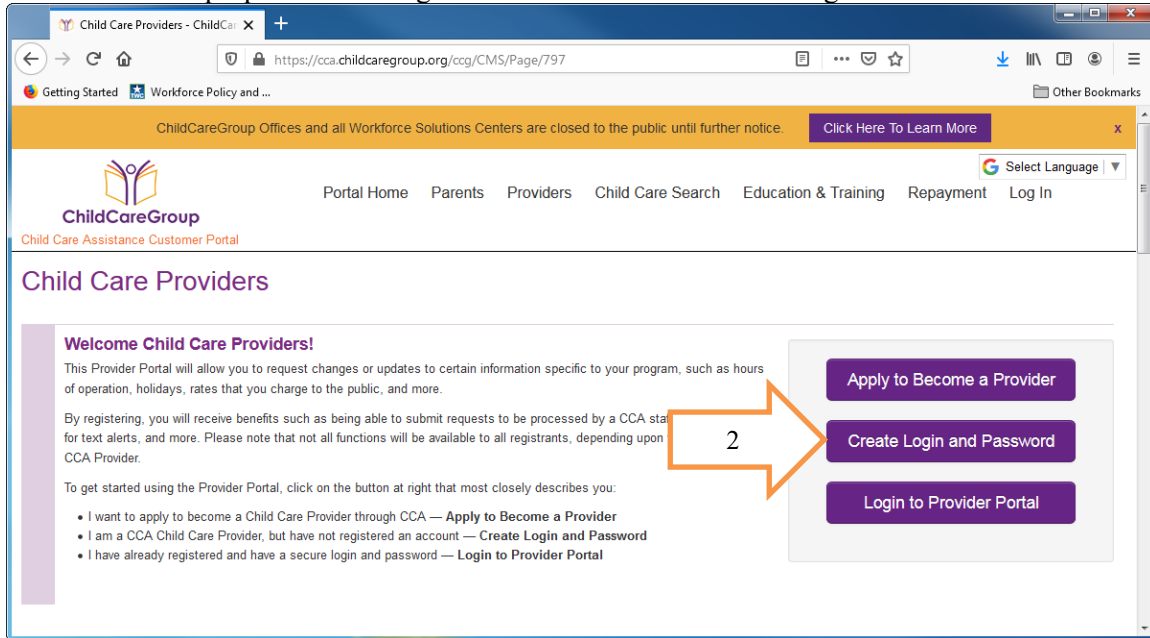
Parents can use the web portal for:

- Reporting changes in income, work/school status, family size, phone number, address, or any other info related to their case
- Information on choosing child care
- Requesting a transfer to another early learning program
- Sending CCA a general question
- Getting updates and other information from CCA (message center)

Creating an Account on the CCA Web Portal

Website: cca.childcaregroup.org

1. From the main page, click on the purple “Learn More” button under Child Care Providers
2. Click on the purple “Create Login and Password” button on the right side of the screen



3. Complete all information in the boxes down the Left side of the screen (picture of the screen is below)
 - a) First and Last Name of the person registering
 - b) Email – can be a different email address than the one CCA has on file
 - c) Password – person registering will create a password for the account
4. Complete all information down the boxes on the Right side of the screen.
 - a) Address is the address of the early learning program
 - b) Last 4 of SSN or Last 4 of EIN –
 - i. Relative care providers will enter the last 4 numbers of their Social Security Number in the SSN box.
 - ii. All regulated programs (licensed centers & homes, registered homes) will enter the last 4 numbers of the SSN or EIN on file with CCA in the EIN box (even if the number used is SSN)
5. Click on the purple “Submit” button at the bottom

You should get a message that says your registration was completed successfully.

Provider Account Registration

Help with SSN or EIN: Regulated providers use the last four digits of either the EIN or SSN associated with your child care license. Relative providers use the last four digits of your SSN.

Your Information

(Required fields are in bold)

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Confirm Email Address

Password

Confirm password

Facility Information

License Number

Street 1

Street 2

City

State

Zip Code

Regulated Providers' Last 4 of EIN or SSN (Licensed centers, licensed homes or registered homes)

OR

Relative Providers' Last 4 of SSN

3. Name of person registering

4a. Address of child care facility or home

4b. Relatives use SSN, all others enter # in EIN box

5

Once this is done you are able to log into the website any time using the email address and password you entered in the registration screen.

All early learning programs must check the web portal message center at least weekly to ensure they are receiving information and paperwork for the CCA program.

Submitting 5 Consecutive Absences via the CCA Web Portal

Early learning programs are paid for all days a child is enrolled/authorized to attend by CCA. Programs must report all absences of 5 days in a row regardless of reason or knowledge of the reason for absence. The 5 absences may be all in one week (Monday – Friday) or carry over from one week to the next (Thursday, Friday, Monday-Wednesday).

Directions:

1. Early learning program staff logs into portal with the email address & password they have set up.
2. Select Case Inquiry/Reporting, then Report Absences – 5 consecutive from the drop down menu
3. Use the drop-down menu to
 - Select the parent/TWIST ID OR Enter the TWIST ID manually (last option)
Note: You may manually enter 000000 for the TWIST ID# if you do not have one, then manually enter the child's name.
 - Select the child OR Enter client name manually (last option)
4. To enter the dates of absences, click in the dates box and a calendar will appear. Click on the date of the first absence and 5th day of absence. The date range will then be displayed in the box. Click on the blue “close” button to close the calendar.
5. If the reason for absence is known, enter that information in the next box.
6. Select the purple “Submit” button
7. From there the program can sign out of the portal or go to other areas.

Web Portal Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What if I don't have a computer?

A: You can access this site from any computer, tablet, or phone with internet access. The site will adapt to the device you are using and still display all information.

Q: What if I don't have an email account?

A: You can set up an email account for free. There are many options such as google, Hotmail, and yahoo. Child Care Regulation requires an email address, so each program should have one in place.

Q: Can more than one person from my child care facility have an account, or do we have to share the login and password?

A: Multiple people from the same facility can set up their own login and password.

Q: How will I know you got the information I submitted?

A: A confirmation will show after submitting a request or report. Keep that information.

Q: Are parents required to use this site?

A: Parents are not required to use this site, but we do strongly encourage them to use it. Our goal is to make it easy and convenient for all customers to request and get information. Please let parents know this site is there for them as well.

Q: Are early learning programs required to use this site?

A: Yes. Programs are required to check the web portal message center at least weekly. All payment statements, 2450 authorization forms, policy changes, grant information, and most other important announcements are sent through the message center. Communication about the Texas Rising Star certification process is sent via email.

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 on 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 in the latest version 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: