

## Questions and Answers

### OFA Possibilities for Coordination Between TANF, Child Care, and Workforce Development Webinar

July 26, 2017

**QUESTION:** Does this information apply to tribal TANF programs? Maybe some of the presenters on the call want to address that?

**ANSWER ~ Kathy Bell:** Hi, this is Kathy from Oklahoma. I know that with Child Care and Tribal TANF in Oklahoma, we have to – I'm sorry, I've chimed in and now I'm going to stammer. We have to be in contact with the tribal TANF worker to ensure what they're participating in. And then, yes, in Oklahoma they are eligible for that \$0 family share copayment. And then really the burden falls on our Adult and Family Services worker to stay in contact with the tribal TANF worker to make sure that the client is still participating. But, as long as they're receiving tribal TANF, they are eligible for the \$0 family share copayment in Oklahoma.

**ANSWER ~ Heather Hahn:** This is Heather. I would just add broadly that a tribal TANF generally has more flexibility than, say, TANF programs do. But, in the area of child care, even state programs have quite a bit of flexibility. I think that the issues that we've raised today about the availability of care, the various hours, and for infants and toddlers would apply, or *could* apply, depending on the specific situation. You might add to that the issue of finding culturally appropriate care.

**QUESTION:** Dr. Hahn, can you speak a little bit about the benefits of child care on workforce development?

**ANSWER ~ Heather Hahn:** Yeah, I think that's something that...today we are more emphasizing that in some cases the benefits for the children because that has been what has been neglected. I think it seems like it's taken for granted that you need to have child care to be able to participate in training or in work. So in some cases, it's like the new focus is, "oh, and we need to make sure that the children are not just watched but that we pay attention to their child development needs."

But I think generally, just having a child in a high-quality setting just helps the parents not worry about their child's safety while they're at work. So they can focus on their work, can be more productive at work, and be a better employee. Also, the high-quality care tends to be more stable and reliable. If you're relying on your neighbor, your neighbor at the last minute might say, "Oh, I can't watch your kid today." Whereas, that's not going to happen so much with a center or a licensed child care home. So, when you have that stable, reliable care, that helps the parents go to class, go their training, go to work, and be a stable, reliable worker or student, which is definitely going to help them in the long run.

**QUESTION:** How have you successfully worked with child care facilities to accommodate the shifting schedules of vulnerable populations?

**ANSWER ~ Kathy Bell:** Hi, this is Kathy from Oklahoma again. Honestly, it continues to be a struggle in Oklahoma. We do recruitment. We're always trying to find more providers, especially in our rural areas. But the recruitment is primarily done by our Oklahoma Child Care Services, which is licensing. So I'll be honest, I don't know all the steps that they take, but I know that they're constantly trying to recruit more providers. We try to pay providers a livable wage for the care that they give.

But, most of the providers in Oklahoma are from 6 o'clock in the morning until 6:00 p.m. in the evening. So for those TANF clients that have gone to work or are trying to go to school in the evenings, it is a struggle because there are not as many – especially if you're not in a metro area – providers available for you that provide evening and weekend care.

**ANSWER ~ Erin Oalican:** This is Erin from Vermont. I'm not sure how much work the Child Development Division has been able to do in this area, because I think the primary challenge in Vermont is just child care in general – having enough child care. The extended hours is just not something that we can get to realistically at this point.

But, I will say that interestingly, there was a child care facility that was opened a few years ago that had overnight hours. It had to close because there weren't enough people who took advantage of it. So I do think there's also a hesitancy – which is understandable – for people to want to leave their children in child care all night long or into the late hours at night. So that's another aspect of it that is not fully understood.

**ANSWER ~ Shannon Christian:** Shannon Christian from the Child Care Office. One thing I wanted to mention is just because something *is* a center or a family child care home, but mostly a center, you can't necessarily assume that it's going to be high-quality care. You have to look at each setting on its own merits, and hopefully there's a QRIS or some rating system in your state to help you.

One of the things we've been talking about with the family child care providers is the importance of helping the numbers of people in that field grow because those are often the ones that are available for the less traditional hours. Also, the CCDF money can be used to pay relatives or people who might come to your home or stay overnight. It's less important to have a developmental program at night if the child is asleep than during the day. So, you also have to think about what kind of child care do you want, depending on is it Saturday or is it midnight, and not be too sweepingly general in your statements, because it might be fine to be in a developmental Head Start program for four hours of the day and then have somebody stay over during the night if the parent has got a nighttime work shift schedule.

I think one of the things we're really trying to do...that and those partnership grants that are trying to extend the day for Early Head Start to combine Early Head Start with Child Care money and provide a longer day for working families. That helps, that's more traditional hours, but at least it's a full workday, not a part day. So, I think you can also look around for programs that are a mix of developmentally high-quality child care and then something that might be a little bit less stringent, though still safe, if it's nighttime.

**QUESTION:** Have you seen significant increases in caregivers getting jobs, training, or education with your focus on TANF and Child Care, and how you've measured improved child care, and has that resulted in better TANF program results?

**ANSWER ~ Erin Oalican:** This is Erin from Vermont. I'm not sure that we could attribute confidently our increases in folks going to work with child care. We've had our partnership with CDD in place for quite some time, so it isn't like that aspect – and also with parent/child centers and with Head Start. So it isn't like that aspect has changed, although we are seeing a lot more people go to work. I don't think we can necessarily connect the two.

But, I thought Heather made a really salient point, that we know that if children are cared for – the parents need the children to be cared for in order for them to work. That's just a given. But I think it's *really* important that we're focusing on how are those kids doing in child care and are they in those good quality places where the parents can relax and they know that they're safe and they know that they're getting the best that they can during the day.

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French:** No, I believe they answered it about the same that we would. We don't have a measure in place, but we do know that with the consistency of the licensed child care and that low family share copay, that does give them the ability to go to work and know that their child is safe and gives them a chance to get reestablished and get back on their feet.

**QUESTION:** What about when a family becomes sanctioned? How does this affect the child care?

**ANSWER ~ Erin Oalican:** Vermont keeps the authorization open for a full year, regardless of sanction. This is to ensure consistency for the child and family.

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French/Kathy Bell:** When the TANF is sanctioned, child care is extended for 90 days from the date the TANF recipient dropped out of their TANF activity.

**QUESTION:** Are there opportunities in areas with limited child care options to grow a child care workforce through partnerships, and what are the pros and challenges?

**ANSWER ~ Erin Oalican:** We have talked about this, but this has not gotten very far due to a variety of reasons. We do provide minimal support to TANF participants who are interested in opening their own child care business. Through support services, we may pay for some start-up supplies, and a case manager may help a participant with the planning process and refer to a local community action micro-business program. The challenges to starting child care business include the low pay for workers and the many regulations that need to be followed. The regulations contribute to a very good quality child care system, but they may inhibit the start-up of new child care facilities.

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French/Kathy Bell:** Recruiting of child care providers is handled from Child Care Services. All professional development initiatives are handled by Child Care Services and their contractors. Also, our support of the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships has increased care options in rural parts of the state.

**QUESTION:** Do you utilize license exempt care (friend, family and neighbor care)? Have you seen a decrease in providers as a result of the training and monitoring requirements under CCDBG reauthorization?

**ANSWER ~ Erin Oalican:** Vermont does use exempt care, but only family members may be exempt providers. This is a change with the reauthorization; previously anyone could be an LECC provider. We hear anecdotally that this has affected some TANF participants, but do not have the data to confirm. We also hear anecdotally that some home and licensed providers have chosen to close due to the new regulations.

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French/Kathy Bell:** TANF clients may not choose a license exempt provider. DHS does not contract with license-exempt family, friend, and neighbor care, other than through in-home providers (care provided in the child's home). And starting 10/1/17, these will be restricted to relative caregivers. However, TANF participants cannot choose an in-home provider due to policy restrictions. In regards to the second question, we have not seen a decrease in providers due to new CCDBG requirements. We were already meeting most of these health and safety requirements prior to the CCDBG reauthorization. Oklahoma has had and continues to have one of the top licensing programs in the nation. However, there has been a gradual decrease in providers for the last 10 years, which we cannot attribute to a specific reason. This is a trend nationally as well.

**QUESTION:** Does Oklahoma need separate applications for TANF, SNAP, Child Care?

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French/Kathy Bell:** Oklahoma uses one comprehensive application for all programs.

**QUESTION:** Is CCDF also administered through the OK DHS?

**ANSWER ~ Lisa French/Kathy Bell:** Yes, CCDF is the main funding source for the subsidy program.