

July 3, 2008

Dear Abbott Child Care Center Director:

The Division of Family Development (DFD) recently announced a change in the income eligibility criteria for 3 and 4 year olds to be eligible for free wraparound child care services as of September 2008. During the month of May 2008, DFD held four regional meetings to discuss the changes with Abbott District Early Childhood Supervisors, Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Directors and Center Directors, and their staff. I am writing to ensure that everyone understands the new guidelines.

The change involves lowering the income eligibility criteria from 300% to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for families of children seeking enrollment effective September 1, 2008. Commonly referred to as Abbott Wraparound Services, these services are defined as:

- Four hours of part-time care before and/or after the six-hour program of preschool instruction for ten months (i.e., 180 days) that, at a minimum, meet (DFD) child care center licensing requirements; and
- Up to ten hours of program operation to enable children to receive full-time child care for six or more hours for two months (i.e., when schools are closed during the summer months).

Children that are currently enrolled and receiving a voucher for child care that will remain in the child care program for another year, will be able to continue to receive free child care and will not need to reapply for the program. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agency will issue a new agreement for the parent and your representative to sign.

New families seeking to enroll early and begin utilizing the full-day program during July and August 2008, can be served as long as their family income does not exceed 300% of the current FPL, but they must meet the 250% threshold to be determined eligible for Abbott Wraparound to continue past September 1, 2008.

New families seeking to enroll their child(ren) for the part-time program beginning September 1, 2008, must meet the lowered threshold of 250% of the FPL to receive free wraparound child care. If the families' income is over the 250% FPL on September 1, 2008, they will have to pay the full cost of the Abbott wraparound services directly to you.

New families must contact the local CCR&R to have their income verified by submitting proof of income and an application. Call 1-800-332-9227 to find out the location of the CCR&R in your county.

I have attached family size and income eligibility information to assist you in assisting families with determining if their family is eligible for free wraparound child care.

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Fortunately, there is no conclusive evidence that suggests that our transition from contracts to vouchers and the addition of income eligibility requirements has effectively reduced utilization of Abbott Preschool or Wraparound Child Care. In fact, DFD is currently subsidizing more children via vouchers than we ever served through contracts.

The Division remains committed to ensuring that low income families that need child care in order to obtain employment or remain employed have access to services as opposed to those who use it simply because it is available at no cost. The recently enacted Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) requires us to ensure that resources are made available to support expanded child care services in communities with higher populations of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). A large percentage of these families happen to reside in communities that have been designated as Abbott Districts. However, our responsibilities go far beyond those for preschool children and require us to ensure access for infants, toddlers and school aged children as well. We are also concerned about the low-income working families that reside outside of Abbott District communities that do not have access to high quality preschool services or subsidized child care of any sort. Our waiting list is currently at more than 3,000 children and it is growing every month. The Division will continue to examine methods to reduce the waiting list for child care and provide support for low income working families.

We will also continue to look at more cost effective ways to administer subsidy payments. Many other states have moved toward utilization of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards as well as online attendance reporting and we hope to learn a few valuable lessons from their experiences.

I wish you continued success in serving New Jersey's children and families. If you have any additional questions concerning voucher payments for Abbott Child Care Wraparound Services, please contact Beverly Wellons, Assistant Director for Child Care Operations, at (609) 588-2163

Sincerely,



Jeanette Page-Hawkins
Director

JPH:BDG:BW/hs

bc: Jennifer Velez
James Smith, Jr.
Barbara DeGraaf
Beverly Wellons
CCO Staff
CCR&R Directors