

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SUBVENTION POLICY

(ECDSP)

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Policy Statement

The Early Childhood Development Subvention Policy (ECDSP) refers to the Governments' commitment to the provision of a weekly/monthly subvention for young children from low-income families/households for child care and preschool education services.

This policy applies to every child in the birth to 5 age cohort from low-income families enrolled in public and private early childhood centres **that are registered with the Early Childhood Development Unit/Ministry of Education.**

Definition of terms

Centre refers to a preschool, Day Care Centre, Nursery including Home-based settings that provides early childhood education and child care services for children of preschool age and under for a fee that is determined by the centre authorities or government in the case of public centres.

Subvention means that the government will subsidize day care/preschool fees by \$25.00 weekly which will be paid to both public and private early childhood centres for each child from low income families with the parent paying the remainder

Low income family means that the family weekly income does not exceed \$1000.00 or the monthly income does not exceed \$4000.00. Parents whose income exceeds \$4000.00 will continue to pay school fee.

The Goal: is to enable greater access to quality childcare and preschool services at a reduced cost to parents.

Rationale

Research shows that children from low-income households benefit most from access to quality early education and childcare.

The Ministry of Education recognizes that participation of children from low-income families in Early Childhood Development services may be compromised due to financial constraints in the family.

The Ministry of Education is committed to providing support to the parents on the premise that the subvention increases the opportunity for equitable access to quality early childhood development and education services for children from low-income families.

This support is one of the strategic activities used in achieving one of the Early Childhood Policy (2010) strategic action: 'to increase access to quality early childhood services with special emphasis on the poor and vulnerable children'

Strategies, Procedures and Practices

From February 2015, government will give our centres \$25.00 weekly or \$100.00 monthly for each child attending the centre. Parents whose income is under \$4000.00 are exempted from the payment of fees. Parents whose income exceeds \$4000.00 will begin to pay the new fee of \$25.00 from September 2015.

Private centres will also receive a monthly subvention equivalent to \$25.00 weekly for every child from low-income family households with the parent paying the remainder

The maximum number of children supported by subvention at any day-care centre will not exceed the number to be accommodated at the centre based upon standard space per child requirements. This means if more children are enrolled in the centre than it should accommodate the government will not pay the subvention for the additional children.

Procedures

Applicant/parents

Each parent must fully complete an application form and provide other information stipulated on the form, if they wish to be considered for the subvention. Additional information includes:

- ✓ Information of both parents if married or in a common law relationship
- ✓ Evidence of salary/wage
- ✓ Proof of financial needs for persons whose monthly income exceeds \$4000.00, desiring the subvention

Application forms will be at each centre and will be made available to parents after the selection of the new children for September of each year.

Completed forms must be returned to the preschool/centre two weeks after receipt of the form from the centre.

Parents will receive written information of their acceptance for the subvention from the Early Childhood Development Unit or from the centre on behalf of the Early Childhood Development Unit.

A parent who wishes to withdraw their child from a centre should give one month notice in writing to the centre. In the case of a transfer from one government centre to another, the parent should request the transfer in advance and the supervisor facilitates the transfer if it is for valid reasons and will inform the Early Childhood Unit in writing including date of transfer. The subvention will be made to the new centre after receipt of notification.

The Ministry of Education/Early Childhood Development Unit reserves the right to withdraw a child from the service/subvention if the financial status of the parents has changed.

Parental Involvement

It is the policy of the Early Childhood Development Unit and the Ministry of Education to promote the active participation of parents in the development of centres.

Parents are therefore expected to:

- Attend Parent Teachers Association meetings
- Participate in centre activities
- Make voluntary/requested contributions to the centre to further improve the quality of the care and education it offers. (money, in-kind)

Centres

Centres must be registered with the Early Childhood Development Unit to qualify for the subvention.

Centres will distribute application forms to parents and check application forms submitted by parents to ensure they are fully and accurately completed.

Centre will submit completed application forms to the Early Childhood Development Unit within the stipulated timeframe.

Centres will inform parents of their eligibility for the support and the reduced amount they are required to pay upon receipt of proof of eligibility from the Early Childhood Development Unit.

Early Childhood Development Unit/Ministry of Education

All application forms will be reviewed by a committee at the Early Childhood Unit for the selection of those children who qualify for the subvention.

The Unit will inform the centres and the centre on behalf of the Unit, will notify the parents of the children who will receive the subvention

The subvention to centres will be reviewed twice per year based on enrolment detected at time of review.

Policy Reviews

The Early Childhood Development Unit and the Ministry of Education will review the Early Childhood Development Subvention Policy and procedures every 2 years.

Parents, families and staff are critical to the review process and are encouraged to collaborate with the Ministry of Education in the review of the policy and procedures.

Finally, the policy will be implemented or be put in place from February 2015. Therefore as of February 2015 parents in government centres only, will not have to pay school fees and will not be required to complete an application form at this time.

However, parents in private centres will have to fill out an application form at this time.

All including new parents will have to fill out the form for September 2015. The records need to show who is getting the support.