

MILITARY CHILD CARE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD-PLUS PILOT

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

About Child Care Fee Assistance:

What is Child Care Fee Assistance?

For more than a decade, the Military Departments – Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Army – have provided fee assistance to eligible military families to offset the cost of child care in community programs through Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood, or MCCYN, when on-installation child care is unavailable. MCCYN supports families in locations with extensive waiting lists as well as those that are geographically dispersed – to include Reserve component families. MCCYN provides fee assistance to eligible military families using nationally accredited child care providers in the community. Child Care Aware of America serves as the third party administrator for the MCCYN program.

What's new with the Child Care Fee Assistance program?

The Department of Defense, or DoD, fee assistance program MCCYN will expand to MCCYN-PLUS as a pilot. The MCCYN-PLUS pilot will expand to include community child care centers that are quality rated by a state Quality Rating and Improvement System. In locations where national accredited care is unavailable, child care centers with a QRIS level of three or higher will be made available to families. Eligible military families will continue to utilize Child Care Aware of America as their link to approved fee assistance child care facilities under the MCCYN-PLUS pilot.

What is the Quality Rating and Improvement System, or QRIS?

A QRIS is a systemic approach to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS awards quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their state's QRIS, early and school-age care providers embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Even providers that have met the standards of the lowest QRIS levels have achieved a level of quality that is beyond the minimum requirements to operate.

What is Child Care Aware?

Child Care Aware® of America is a nonprofit organization that works directly with child care agencies and families. They are the third party administrator that assists the military departments to serve and support eligible military families through the Child Care Fee Assistance programs. They manage the administration of the MCCYN and MCCYN-PLUS program. For more information, visit:

<http://usa.childcareaware.org>

Where is MCCYN-PLUS available?

Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood-PLUS will pilot state-wide in Maryland and in five regions – Central, Eastern, North Central, Northern, and Peninsula – of Virginia through their Quality Rating and Improvement System, or QRIS, know as Maryland EXCELS or VA Quality. This effort will be to increase the number of eligible child care providers in areas with a high concentration of military families. Child care centers without national accreditation that are currently receiving fee assistance will be required to enroll, and progress, in the state's QRIS system to become an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider. New child care programs will be required to enroll with a minimum quality level of three in the state's QRIS system to become an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider.

Why did the Department of Defense expand MCCYN-PLUS to include quality rated child care?

The Department of Defense is committed to supporting the health and well-being of all military children. Children play an important role in the strength and resilience of military families. When spouses are comfortable with their family's child care arrangements and children are happy and healthy, service members can focus on their missions. By including quality rated providers as child care options for MCCYN-PLUS, parents can be assured that their children will have safe, healthy, and nurturing environments to thrive.

How long is the MCCYN-PLUS pilot?

The two year pilot from 2019 to 2021 will be coordinated by the military departments and the Office of Secretary of Defense, or OSD, in conjunction with Child Care Aware of America, and the State QRIS representatives from Maryland EXCELS and VA Quality.

Will MCCYN-PLUS Fee Assistance program be expanded to additional states?

The results of the pilot will be evaluated and considered for expansion to additional states.

For Service Providers:**What are the benefits to child care providers for participating in the MCCYN-PLUS Fee Assistance program?**

Programs approved for the MCCYN-PLUS fee assistance program benefit by expanding their child care business to a military family customer base and offer more available options for quality child care. In addition, by participating in their state's QRIS program, providers can take advantage of incentives that may be available such as technical assistance, which provides customized support from subject matter experts, and/or financial incentives for professional development training, maintaining accreditation, and background check processing.

What are the standards for becoming an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider in Maryland and Virginia?

Community child care providers in Maryland and Virginia currently receiving DoD fee assistance must meet the following requirements:

- Enroll in their state's QRIS program.
- Provide evidence of an initial quality level within twelve months from the date the provider is notified of the change in requirements.
- Achieve a quality level three within two years following the initial awarded quality level.
- Advance to a quality level four within two years following the awarded quality level three.
- Advance to the next highest quality level or accreditation within two years.

New provider applicants requesting to participate in the fee assistance program must meet the following requirements:

- Complete an application and provide evidence of enrollment in their state's QRIS with a minimum state quality level of three.
- Advance to the next highest quality level or accreditation within two years.

What is the difference between an accredited provider and a provider enrolled in the QRIS program?

Accredited providers receive national recognition by an approved accrediting body that they are meeting a mark of excellence according to a set of quality standards. Providers participating in a QRIS program are recognized for their commitment to quality child care and early education by a state agency. Ratings are awarded to providers as they continue to improve quality based on a set of

standards. These quality ratings are also available to families on each state's website to help them make an informed choice in the care and education of their children.

Is national accreditation still required for participation in the MCCYN-PLUS pilot?

It is DoD's policy that community child care programs receiving fee assistance must be accredited by an approved DoD accrediting body. Child Care Aware will link families to national accredited child care programs as a first choice. In locations where national accredited child care programs are unavailable, child care centers with a QRIS level of three or higher will be made available to families.

For Parents:

How do I find out if I am eligible for MCCYN-PLUS?

Child Care Aware® of America is the third party administrator that manages the administration of the child care fee assistance program, including paying child care providers on behalf of the military services. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit: <http://usa.childcareaware.org>

Will the MCCYN-PLUS pilot affect the availability of child care?

Yes, the pilot is intended to increase the availability of child care. The pilot program supports military families in locations with extensive wait lists by expanding the eligibility requirements to providers enrolled in their state's quality assurance program.

As part of the MCCYN-PLUS pilot, what are my options for child care in the community?

Military families in search of quality child care options in Maryland and Virginia will need to select a provider that is nationally accredited. However, in certain locations, when accredited care is unavailable, community child care centers with a QRIS level of three or higher will be listed as options.

I already have a provider. Can he or she participate?

If care for your child is provided at a child care center in the state of Maryland or Virginia, the center administrator can contact Child Care Aware of America for more details on enrollment and eligibility. If your child care center is nationally accredited, state licensed, and meets the other eligibility requirements, they can participate. If the child care center is not nationally accredited, you would need to select a new child care center that meets the requirement, Child Care Aware of America can assist you. If there are no nationally accredited child care centers available, the child care center may be eligible if it has a quality level of three or higher.

What happens if my child care provider elects to not participate in their state's QRIS program for Maryland and Virginia?

Eligible military families with children enrolled in community child care centers, who elect not to participate in their state's QRIS program, will be grandfathered until the family's youngest child ages out of the program, the family dis-enrolls or the provider becomes ineligible due to non-compliance with state licensing or program policies.