

## MILITARY CHILD CARE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD-PLUS EXPANSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### About Child Care Fee Assistance:

#### What is Child Care Fee Assistance?

For more than a decade, military branches – Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Space Force – 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 active-duty military members and active Guard and reserve members in locations with extensive waitlists or when families do not live close to a military installation. MCCYN provides fee assistance to eligible military families using nationally accredited child care providers in the community.

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

The Defense Department, or DOD, fee assistance program MCCYN has expanded to MCCYN-PLUS to include community child care programs that are rated by their state's quality improvement program. Community child care providers participating in their state's quality improvement program will be additional options for families.

#### What are the state-level quality improvement programs?

State-level quality improvement programs offer a systemic approach to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, state quality improvement programs award quality ratings, levels or tiers to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their state's quality improvement program, early care and education programs embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Parents can expect that providers are working toward quality standards that are higher than minimum licensing requirements.

#### 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 serves and supports eligible military families through the Child Care Fee Assistance programs. They manage the administration of the MCCYN-PLUS program. For more information, visit: <https://www.childcareaware.org/>.

Navy families only: The Navy MCCYN Child Care Fee Assistance Program administers the MCCYN program for Navy families. Navy families can visit the following website for additional information: <https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mcc-central/mcchome/mccyn>.

#### Where is MCCYN-PLUS available?

MCCYN-PLUS is now available in several states. This effort continues to increase the number of eligible child care providers in areas with a high concentration of military families. Child care providers, which include both child care centers and family child care providers, without

accreditation will be required to participate in and progress through their state's quality improvement program to become an approved MCCYN-PLUS provider.

New applicants requesting to participate in the fee assistance program will be required to enroll with an awarded DOD-approved state quality rating, level or tier to become a participating MCCYN-PLUS provider. If you would like assistance finding an eligible provider, contact: <https://www.childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care/starting-child-care-search/>.

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

The DOD 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 expect that providers are working toward quality standards that are higher than minimum licensing requirements.

### **Will the MCCYN-PLUS program continue to expand to additional states?**

Yes. With the initial success of the program, MCCYN-PLUS continues to grow and expand into additional states. The expansion will provide the opportunity for community child care providers that are participating in their state's quality improvement program to be eligible to become MCCYN-PLUS providers. This expansion will offer additional quality child care options in the community for both military and civilian families. You can learn more about state quality improvement programs at <https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/>.

### **For Community Child Care Providers:**

#### **What are the benefits to child care providers for participating in the MCCYN-PLUS program?**

Community child care providers approved for the MCCYN-PLUS fee assistance benefit by expanding their child care businesses to a military family customer base and offer additional quality child care options. Our military families are getting younger. Of the more than 950,000 children of all active-duty service members, 41% are age 5 and under. This is an opportunity to grow their businesses while serving our nation's military parents. In addition, by participating in their state's quality improvement 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?**

Community child care providers must meet the following requirements to be eligible to receive DOD fee assistance:

- Provide evidence of enrollment in the state's quality improvement program within 18 months from the date the program is notified of the change in requirements.

- Provide evidence of a DOD-approved state quality rating, level or tier as awarded by the quality improvement program.
- Advance to the next highest quality rating, level or tier or until accreditation is achieved in accordance with state guidelines.

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

- Provide evidence of DOD-approved accreditation, if applicable, or
- Provide evidence of a DOD-approved state quality rating, level or tier as awarded by the quality improvement program.
- Advance to the next highest quality rating, level or tier or until accreditation is achieved in accordance with state guidelines.

Community providers must continue to meet other MCCYN eligibility requirements for fee assistance as prescribed by the military branches policy.

### **What is the difference between an accredited provider and a provider enrolled in a state quality improvement program?**

Accredited providers receive national or state 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 state quality improvement 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 both military and civilian families on each state's website to help them make an informed choice in the care and education of their children. For more information about state quality improvement programs or to explore approved child care facilities across the country, visit: <https://ecquality.acf.hhs.gov/>.

### **Is national accreditation still required for participation in the MCCYN-PLUS program?**

It is the DOD's policy that community child care providers receiving fee assistance meet state licensing regulations and requirements, adhere to DOD-approved national or state early learning accreditation standards and be inspected by an outside agency once a year. Through the fee assistance program, eligible families will receive support from Child Care Aware® of America in locating community child care providers who are accredited or who have achieved a DOD-approved state quality rating, level or tier as awarded by their state's quality improvement program.

### **For Parents:**

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

Families must apply for fee assistance and qualify by meeting specific requirements for eligibility. For more information about approved MCCYN-PLUS providers, visit:

<https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mcc-central/mcchome/mccyn>.

**Will the MCCYN-PLUS program impact the demand for quality child care options?**

Yes, the expansion of the MCCYN-PLUS program will increase access to quality child care providers in the local community. The program is expanding in communities with a high concentration of military families and locations with extensive waitlists for child care. MCCYN-PLUS supports military families by expanding the eligibility requirements to providers enrolled in their state's quality improvement program. Civilian families in these communities also benefit by having more quality child care options available to them.

Within the scope of the MCCYN-PLUS program, what are my options for child care in the community? Military families in search of quality child care options will be assisted in locating community child care centers or home-based programs that are accredited or have achieved a DOD-approved state quality rating, level or tier as awarded by their state's quality improvement program.

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

If your child care provider is nationally or state accredited, is state licensed and meets the other eligibility requirements, they can participate. For more information about approved MCCYN-PLUS providers, visit: <https://public.militarychildcare.csd.disa.mil/mcc-central/mcchome/mccyn>.

**What happens if my child care provider elects not to participate in their state's quality improvement program?**

If a child care provider serving a military family under MCCYN does not enroll in the state quality improvement program, the current grandfathering policy will apply. For these providers, enrolled families may continue to receive fee assistance if the provider remains state licensed and inspected annually. The child care provider will be grandfathered to participate in MCCYN for the specific family until the youngest child ages out of the program. The provider may be referred to new families if there are no other options for accredited or quality rated child care.