

	<p>Tennessee Department of Children's Services</p> <p>Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families</p> <p>Supplemental to DCS Policy: 31.17 Childcare Assistance Program</p>
---	--

DCS Childcare Assistance Program

The Department of Children's Services (DCS) partners with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to offer childcare assistance to families who adopt special needs children from DCS foster care. Qualifying families must meet the eligibility criteria, and the childcare provider must participate in the DHS Childcare Certificate program.

Eligibility Criteria and Requirements for Childcare Assistance

To qualify for childcare assistance, the criteria below must be met:

1. The child must be adopted from TN DCS foster care in his/her most recent adoption.
2. The child has a valid deferred or active adoption assistance agreement in effect.
3. The child is between ages 0 -12 years old.
4. Adoptive parents must apply for childcare assistance, utilizing DCS form [CS-4231, Application, Referral and Authorization for Adoption Childcare Assistance](#)
5. DCS form [CS-4231, Application, Referral and Authorization for Adoption Childcare Assistance](#) must be accompanied by supporting documentation to validate the reason for the request.
6. The applicant must be a party to the deferred or active adoption assistance agreement.

Verification for Childcare Assistance

Requests for childcare assistance must be validated by supporting documentation. Acceptable forms of verification are outlined below:

- ☐ Eligible children must have a deferred or active subsidy record in TFACTS. A copy of the adoption assistance agreement must be uploaded to his/her subsidy record.

Effective Date: 4/23
Supersedes: 11/22
Supplemental to:
RDA SW22
CS-0001

Subject: Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families

- A copy of each CHILD'S BIRTH CERTIFICATE and SOCIAL SECURITY CARD in the adoptive name is REQUIRED unless the adoption has been finalized for less than nine (9) months. Exceptions to this requirement may be considered in extenuating circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

DCS 31.17, 11/16/22

Applying for Childcare Assistance

1. When applying for Childcare Assistance, adoptive families must complete and submit the childcare assistance referral along with the required verification and send it to DCS Childcare Assistance via:
 - Email: EI-DCS.AdoptionChildcare@tn.gov
 - Regular mail: DCS, Adoption Childcare Assistance, 315 Deaderick Street, 9th Floor, UBS Tower, Nashville, TN 37243
 - Fax: 615-532-5723 Attn: Adoption Childcare Assistance
2. Email is the preferred method of submission. Using email will allow requests to be processed faster.

Processing Referrals for Childcare Assistance Prior to Adoption Finalization (Pre-Finalization)

1. Initial applications submitted pre-finalization for new applicants (foster/adoptive families who are NOT currently participating or been approved for childcare assistance through DCS) will be processed within thirty (30) days from the date the referral is submitted to Central Office Childcare Assistance.
2. The DCS Permanency Specialist and/or Contract Provider representative will assist the family with gathering information and applying for the program.
3. Applications and supporting documentation should be submitted to the EIDCS.AdoptionChildcare@tn.gov inbox.
4. Pre-finalization approval will be granted if the following is true:
 - a) The childcare provider is a participant in the DHS Childcare Certificate program.
 - b) The child has an approved deferred or active subsidy record in TFACTS.

Subject: Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families

- c) A completed DCS form [CS-4231, Application, Referral and Authorization for Adoption Childcare Assistance](#) and the applicable supporting verification are uploaded in the child's approved TFACTS subsidy record to include a signed adoption assistance agreement.
5. Once the adoption is finalized, the adoptive parent is responsible for notifying the DCS Childcare Assistance Specialists, and the referral will receive final approval and be sent to DHS for processing.
6. DHS notifies the DCS Childcare Assistance program if additional information is needed but will otherwise process the Childcare Assistance referral to certify the family for Childcare Assistance.
7. DHS sends the certificate to the Childcare provider and the DCS Childcare Assistance Specialist once the adoptive family has been certified for childcare assistance.
8. The DCS Childcare Assistance Specialist notifies the adoptive family of approval.
9. The certification is valid for twenty-four (24) months from the date of approval.
10. If the adoption has not occurred within ninety (90) days from the pre-finalization approval, the application will be denied, and a new application to include supporting documentation will be required.

Processing Referrals for Childcare Assistance Post Adoption Finalization

1. Initial applications submitted post-finalization will be reviewed and processed as they are received.
2. The Childcare Assistance Specialist/Approver reviews each referral to ensure it is completed accurately and sends it to DHS for processing.
3. DHS notifies the DCS Childcare Assistance program if additional information is needed but will otherwise process the Childcare Authorization to certify the family for the Childcare Certificate program.
4. DHS sends the certificate to the Childcare provider and the DCS Childcare Assistance Specialist.
5. The DCS Childcare Assistance Specialist notifies the adoptive family of approval.
6. The certification is valid for twenty-four (24) months from the date of approval.
7. If a completed application has not been received within ninety (90) days from submission, the application will be denied, and a new application to include supporting documentation will be required.

Effective Date: 4/23 Supersedes:
11/22

Supplemental to: 31.17, 11/16/22
RDA SW22
CS-0001

Subject: Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families

Recertification for Childcare Assistance for Adoptive Families

1. Adoptive parents must reapply and be determined eligible for continued services through a recertification process to qualify for assistance beyond the certification period.
2. Recertification for childcare assistance is necessary in the following circumstances:
 - ☐ To qualify for assistance beyond the expiration date or prior approved authorizations; or
 - ☐ To change the childcare provider; or
 - ☐ To change the childcare service type.
3. The recertification cycle varies based on the type of Childcare Assistance used to determine the child eligible for the program.
 - ☐ Custodial Childcare Assistance is certified for a 12-month approval period.
 - ☐ Adoption Childcare Assistance is certified for a 24-month approval period.
4. Children transitioning from Custodial Childcare Assistance to Adoption Childcare Assistance will continue to remain eligible for a 12-month approval period.
5. Once the 12-month approval period expires through custodial childcare and the adoption is finalized, the adoptive family is responsible to recertify for assistance upon notification that their prior approval is ending.
6. If the child is redetermined eligible for the program through Adoption childcare assistance, the family will be certified for the 24-month approval period.
7. The Childcare Assistance Specialists will send recertification notices in advance of the expiration date for previously approved childcare authorizations.
8. Families who do not respond to the recertification notice will be sent a notice of termination to the address on file with DCS.
9. The same process utilized for the initial application and approval process is applied when determining eligibility for recertification.
10. Adoptive parents are responsible for any childcare expenses incurred beyond the approval period if a subsequent approval is not granted.

Effective Date: 4/23 Supersedes:
11/22

Supplemental to: 31.17, 11/16/22
RDA SW22
CS-0001

Subject: Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families

Denying the Request for Childcare Assistance

The request for childcare assistance will be denied if any of the following circumstances exist:

1. The application is incomplete.
2. The eligibility criteria are not met.
3. The childcare provider does not participate in the DHS Certificate Program.

Terminating Childcare Assistance

Childcare assistance is subject to termination when one of the following termination reasons occurs:

1. The child turns age thirteen (13). In this circumstance, the childcare assistance shall be terminated on the 1st day of the month following the child's birthday.
2. The need for childcare assistance no longer exists. In this circumstance, the childcare assistance shall be terminated on the 1st day of the month following the month in which the Department is notified or determined the need for assistance no longer exists.
3. The child's adoption assistance agreement is terminated. In this circumstance, the child shall continue to remain eligible for the childcare assistance program for the duration of the approval period unless the child turns age thirteen (13), or the need for childcare assistance no longer exists during the approval period.
4. The child is no longer attending the childcare program approved under the DHS Childcare Certificate program.

Assisting Adoptive Families with locating childcare providers accepting DHS Vouchers DHS maintains resources on their webpage to help customers locate childcare. Some of these tools will search for any childcare in the area families choose. They need to ensure that they filter for providers that accept childcare assistance. These resources can be found here:

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/resources-forparents.html>.

Childcare Cost and the DHS Voucher

In many cases, the voucher does not cover the entire cost of childcare. The payment of any cost beyond the voucher amount is the responsibility of the parent. The easiest way to find out the amount covered by the voucher is to ask the childcare provider. Childcare providers who participate in the Childcare Assistance Program are aware of the amount they receive from the voucher. The voucher amount is determined by several variables including location,

Effective Date: 4/23 Supersedes:
11/22

Supplemental to: 31.17, 11/16/22
RDA SW22
CS-0001

Subject: Protocol for Childcare Assistance Referral and Authorization for Adoptive Families

saturation of childcare providers in the area, population of the area, the star rating of the childcare, hours of operation, the age of the child, and if the provider is willing to accept children with disabilities. DHS has a matrix on their webpage that outlines the voucher amount information, which can be found here:

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/humanservices/documents/Reimbursement%20Rate%20Chart%207.1.22.pdf>.

The Department of Human Services can only assist with childcare assistance for providers who participate in the Childcare Certificate Program through DHS.

TCA 36-1-205

Whoever knowingly obtains, or attempts to obtain, or aids, or abets any person to obtain, by means of willfully false statement or representation or by impersonation, or other fraudulent device, any assistance on behalf of a child or other persons pursuant to the Interstate Compact on Adoption and Medical Assistance to which such child or other person is not entitled or assistance greater than such child or other person is entitled, commits a Class E felony. *(This means that making any statement that is not true OR failing to inform the Agency of any later change that might affect the adopted child's eligibility for the current assistance may result in criminal charges.)*