

Subsidized Child Care Assistance Program Policy Manual

Chapter 10. Waiting List Policies

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I. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Waiting lists provide an equitable and efficient method of allocating services when the local Department of Social Services (DSS) or Local Purchasing Agencies (LPA) are faced with limited resources. Waiting lists must be developed when child care funding is not available, child care providers are not available, or the DSS/LPA lacks sufficient staff to process all requests for child care services.

Waiting lists maintained by the DSS/LPA provide valuable information about child care needs. This information helps justify the need for additional child care funds; therefore, it is important that the list provides valid information regarding the number of *eligible children* who are waiting to receive services. Waiting lists are in NC FAST. Waiting lists also give potential providers useful information when deciding where to locate and what ages of children to serve.

II. REQUIREMENTS

Each DSS/LPA must establish policies approved by its governing board for establishing and maintaining a waiting list. These policies must be made available by distribution to parents or by posting in the DSS/LPA. The Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) monitors the DSS/LPA's waiting list policies for compliance with state policy. Waiting list policies must be submitted to the DCDEE Subsidy Services Policy Consultant if the policy has been amended. See Chapter 18: Local Policy Options for information regarding local policies.

A. Conducting Informal Eligibility Screening

Before adding a family to the waiting list in NC FAST, the DSS/LPA must conduct an informal eligibility screening by collecting the following information from the recipient:

1. Name.
2. Address.
3. Phone number.
4. Child's name and date of birth.
5. Date of inquiry.
6. Reason care is needed; and
7. Family size and amount of family income (if applicable).

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The recipient must appear to be eligible based on the informal eligibility screening. It is not necessary for recipients to complete an Application for Child Care Assistance in order to be put on the DSS/LPA's waiting list.

If a recipient is not eligible at the time of the informal eligibility screening but can reasonably be expected to become eligible within 30 days, the DSS/LPA may place them on the waiting list the date of the request. For example, a parent has job offer and will begin work within 30 days.

B. Establishing Waiting List

The DSS/LPA must configure their county waiting List before adding children. Waiting list configuration involves selecting the start date and the reason for putting the county in waiting list mode. The waiting list configuration also includes entering changes in the reason for the waiting list or entering an end date for the county waiting list. Refer to the NC FAST SCCA Job Aid: Waiting List Configuration for step-by-step instructions.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Prioritizing Families

DSS/LPA staff should determine if funding is available by reviewing monthly expenditures for the state fiscal year and reviewing the budget. The DSS/LPA will determine policies for prioritizing the placement of children in care when there are insufficient funds to serve all eligible families. Examples of populations that the DSS/LPA may prioritize include but are not limited to: child care to support protective services, Work First families, children in DSS custody, child care to support child welfare services or teenage parents needing care to support high school education.

The DSS/LPA may also prioritize families who are already receiving services and later need care for another child, such as a newborn. The waiting list is a tool for providing assistance to the family as a

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unit. When a family is removed from the waiting list, all the children in that family needing care should be included.

1. Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable populations include children identified as having special needs and children and families experiencing homelessness or those who are in a temporary living situation. Payment for these services is made with the vulnerable population set-aside.

Prioritization of this population is required. Refer to Chapter 2: Funding for Subsidized Child Care Services and Chapter 18: Local Policy Options for additional information on these funds.

Once the minimum set-aside amount is encumbered, children that are identified as one of these vulnerable populations who are currently being served should be served with funds in the DSS/LPA's regular subsidy allocation. DSS/LPA's may continue to serve new children who apply and are in one of these vulnerable populations, as long as the DSS/LPA does not overspend their regular subsidy allocation. If necessary, children in one of these vulnerable populations must be placed on a separate waiting list. Refer to Chapter 6: Serving Children with Special Needs for additional information.

B. Conducting Wait List Survey

The DSS/LPA is responsible for creating the waiting list survey and shall determine how often the waiting lists are reviewed and updated through NC FAST. DCDEE may periodically conduct a waiting list survey. DSS/LPA's have the option to conduct additional surveys as the DSS/LPA deems appropriate.

Once the survey is returned to the DSS/LPA, the child care worker must review the information and update NC FAST.

If the applicant fails to respond and return the waiting list survey, the applicant shall be removed from the waiting list.

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C. Adding Families to the Waitlist

There are three ways child care workers can add a child to the waiting list:

1. By screening a potentially eligible child when the waiting list criteria prevents application,
 - i. Complete steps 1-12 of the SCCA – Application to Case Job Aid

NOTE: When a county is in waiting list mode, NC FAST automatically adds children who do not meet screening criteria to the waiting list during the application screening process.

2. On the Manage Waiting List page, or
3. The parent / responsible adult's person page.

NOTE: Methods 2 and 3 above require that the child's residential address be in the waiting list county.

Child care workers must search for each household member and register each, when necessary, before adding a child to the waiting list. Searching the waiting list allows the child care workers to locate the recipient who should receive a notice on behalf of a child. Workers send the Serving from the Waiting List notice to the recipient.

D. Removing Families from the Waiting List

DSS/LPAs need to establish a procedure for managing the waiting list. Children are removed from waiting lists as funding or child care spaces become available. When reducing the waiting list, families must be removed in accordance with federal, state, and local policy. The DSS/LPA must notify waitlist applicants in writing informing them that they may come in to apply for services. Applicants shall have thirty (30) calendar days to submit an application to the DSS/LPA. If the parent/RA does not apply by that deadline, the child care worker must manually remove the child from the waiting list. Refer to SCCA – Managing the Waiting List Job Aid for further instructions.

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DSS/LPA's have two (2) opportunities for removing families from the waiting list:

1. Families must be served in order according to the local policy. The DSS/LPA must include the federal prioritizations in their local policies which includes children with special needs and families experiencing homelessness.
2. If it appears that some families in the lowest priorities never receive services, the DSS/LPA may clear one area of priority one month and clear another priority the next time families are removed from the waiting list. In this manner, the DSS/LPA is prioritizing services to families but also attempting to serve each area of need.

NOTE: DSS/LPAs are required to prioritize vulnerable populations however, the DSS/LPA's have the option to order the required prioritizations based on their county's need.

E. How Changes in Need for Child Care Affect Waiting Lists

When a family's need for child care changes, it is not necessary to interrupt services if they are currently receiving child care. For example, a child receiving child care to support a general prioritized need would not have to go on the waiting list when changing to another non-prioritized need.

F. Options When Not Enough Providers are Available

DSS/LPAs are encouraged to work with the local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R), Smart Start Partnership, and other community resources to develop child care services that meet the needs of the community. These agencies should have a clear understanding of the demographics of the community and the need for specific types of care, e.g., infant care, school-age care, and evening care.

When a child care program becomes unavailable to currently enrolled children, the DSS/LPA should respond quickly to try to assist with locating other available arrangements and/or referring to the local CCR&R so that there will be little disruption to the child or to the

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parent's employment, training, etc. The DSS/LPA may develop its own policy for establishing a waiting list when child care spaces are not available.

For additional information on policy described in this chapter please refer to:

SCCA Manual:

Chapter 2: Funding for Subsidized Child Care Services

Chapter 6: Serving Children with Special Needs

Chapter 18: Local Policy Options

NC FAST Job Aids:

SCCA - Waiting List Configuration

SCCA - Waitlist Management

SCCA - Application to Case