

Information on Changes to Maine's Child Care System

For Early Childhood Providers, Families,
and Other Stakeholders

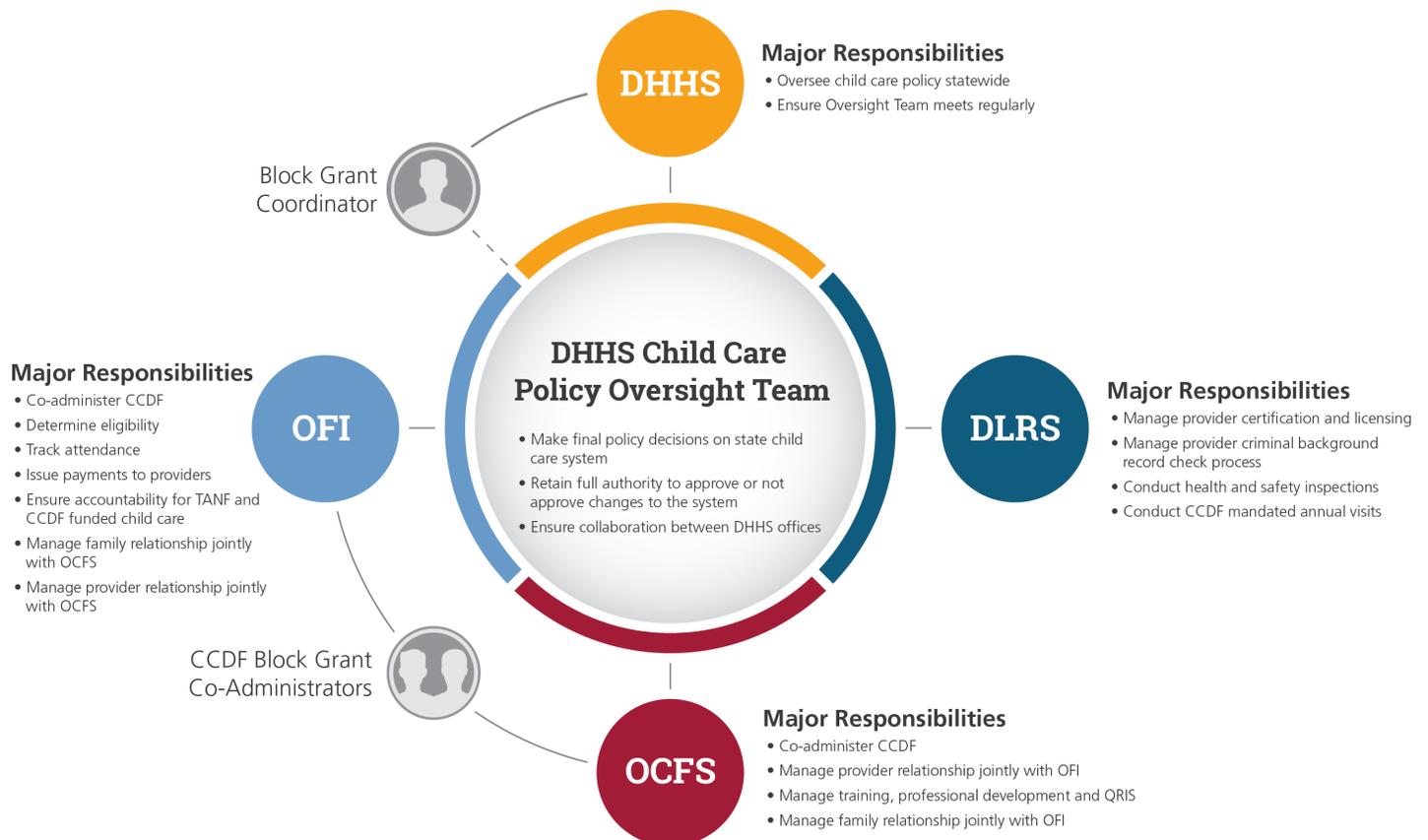


Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is excited to announce upcoming changes in the state child care system. In the new child care system, all DHHS offices will work closely to align policies and procedures for child care services provided to different populations across the state.

A new oversight body, DHHS Child Care Policy Oversight Team, will be established with representation from all DHHS offices involved in the new child care system. This group will be responsible for policy and fiscal decisions and facilitating collaboration between all DHHS offices for the new child care system.

The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and Office for Family Independence (OFI) will work together to administer child care services for all families, with the following breakdown of responsibilities:

- OFI will determine eligibility, track attendance, issue payments to providers, and ensure program accountability for all child care programs, including CCDF and TANF funded services.
- OCFS will manage child care provider training, professional development, and quality.
- OFI and OCFS will jointly manage the family consumer relationship.
- The Division of Licensing and Regulatory Services (DLRS) will continue to manage the child care provider certification and licensing, including background record checks and health and safety inspections.



Q&A about Maine's New Child Care System

Q: What are the major changes?

A: The most significant changes planned for the new child care system as of now are:

- The establishment of and oversight by the new DHHS Child Care Policy Oversight Team, which will be ultimately responsible for making all policy and fiscal decisions for the child care system and ensuring meaningful collaboration between DHHS offices.
- OFI and OCFS will jointly manage the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) funded Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), with OFI taking the lead in eligibility, attendance, payments, and program integrity.
- Policies related to the CCSP and TANF funded child care (for ASPIRE and Transitional Child Care) will be updated to be more aligned and to provide a more unified child care program.

Q: Why is Maine making these changes?

A: To develop a unified child care system that is easy and efficient for families, providers, and DHHS staff. The new child care system and its changes are centered on timeliness, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and access. One goal of the redesign is to bring the publicly funded child care programs more into line with the private child care market.

Q: When will these changes occur?

A: DHHS plans to move toward implementation of the new child care system beginning in the fall of 2016. Full implementation could take up to 18 months, or longer. The timeline is dependent on numerous factors, including state rules changes, systems upgrades, and the design of business process to move the CCSP eligibility and payment operations from OCFS to OFI.

Q: How will these changes be implemented?

A: DHHS is planning for a phased implementation of the new child care system, so that each change can be thoroughly planned for before being put into action. Before any changes are instituted, DHHS will ensure appropriate staffing levels, training and technology resources, policies and procedures, and lines of communication are in place to facilitate a smooth and seamless transition. DHHS will also keep staff, providers, and other stakeholders well-informed throughout implementation and as the timeline is finalized.

Q: How will these changes affect families and children in Maine?

A: By unifying and streamlining the state's child care system, Maine hopes to increase access to child care services for families and children. The changes will be based on their capacity to remove barriers, increase availability, and enhance timeliness and efficiency of child care services.

Q: How will these changes affect child care providers in Maine?

A: A key goal of these changes is for the new child care system to be more friendly, fair, and consistent for providers. Maine aims for the state's child care services to reflect private market policies and practices to the extent possible.

Q: How will payments for child care services be made?

A: All providers will be paid directly for child care services by the Office for Family Independence. This includes CCDF and TANF funded services. As part of the new child care system implementation process, DHHS will conduct a thorough analysis of the rate structure to assess ways to make payments and rates more closely aligned with private market child care.

Q: Will rates change?

A: Decisions on changing the rate structures and/or amounts have not yet been made. As part of the implementation planning, DHHS will conduct a thorough analysis of the rate structure to assess the feasibility of changing rates for all providers, but intends for rates in the new child care system to reflect the private market of child care services to the extent possible. The goal is to align the rates paid for care provided for all families, regardless of funding source.

Q: Will provider licensing or certification requirements change?

A: Licensing and certification requirements in the new child care system will ensure a baseline of health and safety for all providers across the state and promote high quality early childhood services. DHHS will offer support and training resources for providers and educators to accompany any and all future changes.