



Child Care Assistance

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Fast facts

- ▲ In 2006, more than 8,100 families used Child Care Assistance or the Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) child care assistance.
- ▲ More than half – 64 percent – of families using Child Care Assistance in 2006 used a child care center; 31 percent used an informal provider such as a friend or family member; and 5 percent used a licensed family child care.
- ▲ Hennepin usually has a waiting list for BSF child assistance. As of December 2006, there were no families on the waiting list. The longer the wait, the more BSF waiting list families turn to MFIP – historically an average of 33 families go onto MFIP each month while they wait for BSF.
- ▲ Less than 5 percent of the program costs go to program administration. A portion of the program's work is contracted with Jewish Family and Children Services.

What is Child Care Assistance?

Low-income families may receive assistance with child care costs if they meet requirements. Hennepin has child care assistance for families enrolled in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) as well as Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) child care for families with low-to-moderate incomes. BSF relies on a combination of federal, state and county dollars, and families are required to contribute to child care costs.

The programs are managed by Hennepin County's Child Care Assistance unit, which is a part of the Human Services and Public Health Department.

How many are helped and at what cost?

In 2006, more than 4,400 families receiving Child Care Assistance were enrolled in MFIP, and an average of 3,700 used BSF.

In 2006, Hennepin County spent approximately \$56 million in direct payment to child care providers. It is estimated that \$62 million will be spent in 2007.

Who uses it?

A typical family using this service is a single mother with two children. The number of families seeking child care assistance has grown, in part, due to welfare reform, which mandates that families enrolled in MFIP need to be working, seeking work or gaining an education for employment.

As of January 2007, parents whose children are using Child Care Assistance:

- 72 percent are working.
- 12 percent are seeking work.
- 16 percent are gaining an education so they can work.

Is child care free to low-income families?

No. Parents are required to pay a portion of their child care costs. Based on several factors, including number of children, wages and unearned income such as child support, the county expects families to pay a fee to their child care provider at the beginning of each month.

For example, a family of three (parent and two children) earning less than \$12,068 a year will pay \$5 a month for child care. A family of three earning annually \$39,421 to \$40,224 (eligibility limit) will pay \$603 a month for child care assistance.

How prevalent is child care fraud?

If Hennepin becomes aware of questionable public assistance program eligibility results on a child care case, the family is referred to the Fraud Prevention Investigation unit. Less than 1 percent of all Child Care Assistance families are referred for investigation, and about half of these cases are referred to the fraud unit for further action.