

Across the country, access to affordable childcare is a significant challenge. Similar to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a federal block grant supports Mississippi’s childcare subsidy system, which provides childcare vouchers to parents in need of affordable childcare. The program is called the Child Care Payment Program (CCPP). CCPP works to offset childcare costs by utilizing a sliding-scale fee and is available for eligible families with children birth to age 12.



THE BASICS

Affordable and reliable childcare is consistently cited by families as their biggest barrier to being able to work or pursue their goals. CCPP block grants have been chronically underfunded, and states are given significant discretion as to how they are utilized; this means rules and procedures vary from state to state. Although other childcare options are available, they are often inaccessible to low-income mothers for a variety of reasons. Private childcare facilities are often expensive and have limited spots or waitlists. Programs meant to provide accessible childcare also run into similar issues of limited availability.

THE ISSUES

In Mississippi, “only about 31% of our state’s eligible children are served” by the CCPP, leaving many parents without accessible childcare.¹ Furthermore, CCPP works in tandem with TANF but can be affected by TANF amounts. Parents may also have to navigate work requirements or be enrolled in school, which—again—may be difficult to do if they do not have reliable childcare.

This “catch-22” is a consistent barrier for residents attempting to find stable employment or pursue their educations. Further, the utilization of CCPP can sometimes make parents ineligible for TANF and put them through a difficult reapplication process.

Reimagining What’s Possible

Up until May 2023, single parents who applied for CCPP were required to initiate legal action for child support against an absent parent in order to be eligible for the program. Fortunately, this requirement has been removed. While there have been some changes to CCPP, we continue to believe there is more work to be done to make the program accessible, such as removing additional work requirements and limiting TANF disqualification. Continued conversations with parents and childcare providers are essential to improve CCPP and create people-centered approaches that improve policy outcomes and overall quality of life for families.

Tiyonda’s Story

Tiyonda was only able to work very limited hours because of a lack of affordable, reliable childcare. She was only making about \$400 a month for herself and her two children. Through the Magnolia Mother’s Trust (STO’s guaranteed income program), Tiyonda was able to afford childcare. This allowed her to start working full-time and pulling in a larger paycheck. She was able to start paying all her bills on time, keep gas in her car to get to and from work, and ensure there was always food in the fridge.

For more information about Springboard to Opportunities’ policy agenda, please visit springboardto.org/policy-priorities

¹ Burnett, C. Here’s What Mississippi’s Women and Children Need. But Will We Meet Their Need?. Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative. <https://www.mschildcare.org/heres-what-mississippi-women-and-children-need-but-will-we-meet-their-needs/>