The Child Care Assistance Program and fraud: Questions and answers for child care centers

What is the Child Care Assistance Program?
The Child Care Assistance Program, sometimes called CCAP, helps parents with low incomes pay for child care while they work, go to school, or look for a job, and helps make sure children are well cared for and prepared to enter school ready to learn.

What are the Child Care Assistance Program laws?
Child care providers and families who use child care assistance must follow the program’s laws. Failure to follow the law could result in serious consequences. Some of these laws are listed below. You can find more of the program’s laws in the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Child Care Provider Guide (DHS-5260). If you have questions about these laws, contact the local agency where you are registered to receive child care assistance.

Billing
Providers can only bill for days and times when children are authorized for child care assistance. It is against the law to bill the Child Care Assistance Program for days when a child DOES NOT attend, unless you bill those days as absent days or holidays.

For more information, see Minnesota Statutes, section 119B.13, subdivision 7 and Minnesota Rules, part 3400.0110, subpart 9.

Absent days
The Child Care Assistance Program will pay for up to 25 total absent days per calendar year (not to exceed 10 days in a row).

Centers can only bill the program for absent days if:
- The child was absent AND
- Your policy is to bill ALL families for absent days AND
- The scheduled hours are marked on your attendance records as an absent day AND
- Your center is open and care is available.

If a child is absent for part of a day, the payment for that day will be for the amount of care that is scheduled for that day, and the day will not count toward the 25 absent day limit.

After a child uses all of his/her absent days for the year,
- The family can continue getting child care assistance
- The program will pay for days when a child attends child care
- The program will not pay for any days when a child does not go to child care at all
- The family is responsible to pay for any absent days that child care assistance does not pay.

Holidays
The Child Care Assistance Program will pay for up to 10 holidays per year if:
- You are closed and not providing care AND
- You charge all families for these days AND
- The holiday falls on a day when the child is authorized and scheduled to be in attendance.

If you are open on the holiday and the child is scheduled to be in care but is absent, you must bill the day as an absent day.

Other cultural or religious holidays may be substituted for 10 recognized state and federal holidays if the parent or provider notifies the local agency of the substitution prior to, or within, 10 days after the holiday.
Attendance records
You must keep daily attendance records for six years at the place where care is provided.
These attendance records MUST:
- Be immediately available upon request of the county, tribe or the Department of Human Services (DHS) even if the owner, director, or controlling individual is not at the center.
- Be a true record of the days and times each child arrives at and leaves your center. Records must include the date of service, each child’s first and last name, and sign in and out times. Each day a child attends, the person picking up or dropping off the child should be the one to sign the child in and out.
For centers that transport children to and from child care, the parent or guardian is still required to sign the children in and out at the time the bus picks up and drops off the children at their home.

Reporting child absences
You are required to report the following attendance information:
- When a child has been absent for more than seven days in a row
- When a child attends less than half of their authorized hours or days for a four-week period
- When you believe that child care will be ending
- When child care has ended.
When a child’s attendance drops to less than half of their authorized hours or days for a four-week period, you must report this in the Comments section of the Billing Form.

Employing parents who receive child care assistance
The Child Care Assistance Program cannot pay for more than 25 employees’ children to attend a child care center where their parents work. For more information about this law, see the Child Care Assistance Program Payments for Children of Center Employees - Questions and Answers for Providers form (DHS-6960A).

What if I don’t follow the law?
Failure to follow child care assistance laws could result in serious consequences, such as:
- Being disqualified from serving as a provider for all programs administered by the Department of Human Services.
- Having to pay back money that child care assistance paid, and/or
- Receiving a fraud determination (see below for more information).

What is fraud?
Fraud means that you knowingly gave the government false information to get public assistance for yourself or someone else. Public assistance includes programs like child care assistance, cash assistance, SNAP and Medical Assistance.
It’s very important that you provide true, complete and current information to the local agency and the Department of Human Services.

Know what you are signing
When you sign a form as a provider, either a paper or an electronic form, you are stating to the government that all of the information you provided is true and accurate. You agree that any misrepresentations or failure to provide accurate information can result in possible administrative, civil and criminal sanctions against you, as well as the owners, license holders, controlling individuals and/or the provider/entity.

Fraud penalties
If you commit fraud, you may lose your right to be a provider for any Department of Human Services program. You may also have to:
- Pay back the money or public assistance benefits that you wrongfully received
- Pay additional fines to the court
- Go to jail or prison.

Who can I call to report fraud?
People who are dishonest about information related to public assistance benefits cause serious trouble for themselves and others. If you think someone is cheating or breaking the law, please help by reporting it. To report suspected fraud, contact the Department of Human Services Fraud Hotline:
- 800-627-9977 toll-free outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area
- 651-431-3968 in the Twin Cities metropolitan area
- Online at: https://fraudhotline.dhs.mn.gov/
You do not have to give your name when you report fraud.
Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to DHS.CCAP@state.mn.us, call 651-431-3809, or use your preferred relay service.