

New York State News

New York State Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget: Division of Child Care Services



On January 16, 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul released the [FY2025 New York Executive Budget](#). Within the executive budget, there are

various items that pertain to the Division of Child Care Services.

- **Child Care Assistance:** Provides approximately \$1.8 billion in the upcoming fiscal year for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).
- **After-School Programming:** Combines the Advantage and Empire After School programs into one single program and increases after-school programming amounts to a total of \$100.8 million.
- **Infant/Toddler Mental Health Consultation Expansion:** Expands the capacity of the infant/

toddler mental health consultants at the seven regional infant/toddler resource centers across the state.

- **Staffed Family Child Care Networks:** Supports and grows the capacity of family and group family child care providers by expanding business and operational support.
- **Expansion of the Workforce Retention Grant Program:** Continues the Workforce Retention Grant Program by providing one more payment to providers statewide that can be used for staff recruitment, strategies, sign-on bonuses for new employees and other expenses related to hiring.
- **Differential Payment for High-Quality Providers:** Increases payment rates for providers to incentivize quality improvements, including being accredited by a nationally recognized child care organization, participating in QUALITYstarsNY, or having completed training and actively participating in the OCFS Non-Patient Epinephrine Auto-Injector Initiative.

New York State to Experience a Total Solar Eclipse

A total solar eclipse will occur on April 8, 2024, passing over Mexico, the United States and Canada. A total solar eclipse is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and occurs in the same place once every 400 years, with the next one not occurring anywhere until August 12, 2026! This occurs when Earth, the moon and the sun line up as the moon passes between the sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the sun. The sky will become dark, as it would at dawn or dusk. Weather

permitting, those along the path of totality will see the sun's corona, or outer atmosphere, which is usually obscured by the bright sun.

Expect it to get very dark in mid-afternoon in a large portion of upstate New York. Some areas that will be most affected and have the best view of the eclipse are Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse. The eclipse will begin a little after 2 p.m. in western New York and will move through the state to Plattsburgh at approximately 3:25 p.m.

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Safety is extremely important when viewing an eclipse, which includes not looking directly at the sun without specialized solar viewing glasses (not sunglasses!), also known as eclipse glasses. The sun must **not** be viewed by any other means, such as through a camera lens, binoculars or a telescope without a special purpose solar filter over the optics, as doing so will cause severe eye injury. Further information about safe viewing can be found on the [American Astronomical Society website](#).

Be aware that the event will overlap with the end of the school day and workday and could cause serious traffic delays and overload communications systems. Tourist areas, such as Niagara Falls, could see a surge in business as visitors travel to experience the eclipse. If you must drive during the eclipse, be prepared for heavy traffic, keep emergency supplies such as water and medication in your vehicle, and be sure to have plenty of gas in your car.



Providers are encouraged to talk to children and give them the opportunity to learn about eclipses. **Children must always be supervised when using solar viewing glasses.** You should still wear protective clothing and use sunscreen during an eclipse to prevent sun damage. Visit the [NASA website](#) and the [ILoveNY website](#) for more information on safety practices during the eclipse.

Grants & Financial Assistance News

The Child Care Capital Program (CCCP)



The Child Care Capital Program (CCCP) will award grants ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million to eligible child care providers to expand existing child care centers or build new ones.

The program will be administered by the [New York State Office of Children and Family Services](#) (OCFS) and the [Dormitory Authority of the State of New York](#) (DASNY). Funding will be split 60% for the downstate region (which includes New York City; Long Island; and Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester counties) and 40% for the rest of the state.

The CCCP will provide reimbursement grants for the design, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, equipment and other capital assets for existing or proposed state-licensed, not-for-profit or for-profit child day care centers and registered school-age child care programs. The facility must be intended to be used as a child care program for at least eight years. Projects must be shovel-ready, demonstrate the ability to be licensed and fully operational within six months of completing construction, and worth at least \$500,000.

Applicants must prequalify through [New York State Grants Gateway](#). Final applications will be accepted through May 22, 2024. Awards will be announced on or after July 15, 2024.

Supporting Children and Families

The Importance of Oral Health

February was National Children's Dental Health Month. Children should be encouraged to take care of their teeth beginning at an early age, even before all of their teeth have grown in. Oral health is an important part of a child's overall health and well-being. Children with good oral health tend to eat, sleep and develop well, and it also makes a big difference in their ability to learn.

What is oral health literacy? Oral health literacy is a person's ability to understand and use oral health information and available services to make good decisions for their oral health.

Early childhood programs that focus on health literacy can improve the well-being of children and families. Providers can help parents understand and know how to respond to the many factors that affect overall health, including their child's oral health. A parent might not understand the importance of oral health because the information they received and the practices they grew up with are no longer correct.

A simple step to begin a lifelong journey of oral health is to have a child visit a dentist by the age of one. Children should have a bedtime routine so

that they know to brush their teeth with a fluoride toothpaste at the end of the day. Young children may not have the skills to brush their teeth properly and parents might have to help. [Sesame Street's: Healthy Teeth Habits! Learn How to Brush Your Teeth and More](#), along with additional content on their [website](#) can assist providers and parents in developing their teeth-brushing routines.

Water and milk are the best drinks for children and sugary drinks should be avoided. Injuries to primary and permanent teeth can affect a child's speech, nutrition, self-confidence and overall health. Parents and providers should try to prevent oral injuries by making the child's surroundings safe. Use of age-appropriate equipment, safety gates and uncluttered play areas are all important for the oral health of children.

Parents and providers are encouraged to ask questions and discuss concerns with their dental care provider to learn more about oral health. Child care providers can share handouts with families to promote a healthy start for young children. More information can be found at: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/series/healthy-habits-happy-smiles>.

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs



The U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) recently released a [joint policy statement](#) on the inclusion of children

with disabilities in early childhood programs. This policy statement builds upon the earlier 2015 policy statement with renewed commitment and urgency as children with disabilities continue to face significant barriers accessing and participating in inclusive early childhood programs. All young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive, high-quality early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support

so they can fully participate alongside their peers with varying abilities.

Highlights of the joint policy statement include:

- An expanded definition of inclusion in early childhood programs.
- Increased focus on children's full and effective participation in a program's learning activities and experiences.
- Strategies to address racial and economic disparities in access to inclusive settings.
- Alignment of state and local recommendations and exemplars with national [Indicators of High-Quality Inclusion](#).
- Updated resources and [state and local exemplars](#) of inclusion.

Pack 'n Plays for Family-Based Providers at No Cost

The Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is pleased to continue to support safe sleep in family child care programs by offering Pack 'n Plays to family-based child care providers at no cost!

All licensed/registered family and group family day care programs as well as home-based legally exempt programs are eligible to request a Pack 'n Play crib and one fitted sheet at no cost. Group family day care programs are eligible to receive two Pack 'n Play cribs.

To request a Pack 'n Play for your program, please complete the form found here: [Pack and Play Request \(office.com\)](#) / [Solicitud de Pack 'n Play \(office.com\)](#). Once approved, your Pack 'n Play will be shipped directly to your program within two to three weeks.

Thank you for your help in ensuring that all children enrolled in your program sleep safely: alone, and on their back, in a safety-approved crib with a fitted sheet. For more information, visit: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/info-for-providers.php#graco>.

For additional information and resources on safe sleep, please visit the New York State Department of Health website found here: [Safe Sleep For Baby \(ny.gov\)](#).



Early Childhood Provider Corner – FYI and Reminders from OCFS **Recruitment Tool Kit for Child Care Providers**

To help address the critical shortage of child care workers, the OCFS Division of Child Care Services (DCCS) has created a tool kit to help child care providers find the ideal staff for their program.



The tool kit is a comprehensive guide to assist child care providers in each step of the recruiting, hiring and onboarding process. The tool kit can be found on the [Child Care Workforce Development page](#) of the OCFS website.

“A well-trained, dedicated workforce is the backbone of every child care facility,” said Nora Yates, OCFS deputy commissioner for DCCS. “Finding and hiring staff can be a difficult and time-consuming process for both new and experienced child care providers. The tool kit offers strategies

and templates that can be customized by child care programs to meet their unique needs and goals.”

The tool kit includes marketing guidance and flyers for recruiting new staff, sample job descriptions, sample interview questions and interview rating scales, and a sample job offer letter. It also includes information on welcoming and onboarding new hires, including the comprehensive background check process and employee training records.

Anyone seeking a child care job is also encouraged to check out the [Child Care Workforce Development page](#) for helpful information including links to New York State Department of Labor (DOL) Career Centers and early childhood education job boards. The [DOL Child Care Job Bank](#) is available to help those seeking jobs as well as child care providers who want to post job vacancies.

New York State Impact Project on Quality Child Care

To improve child care program quality statewide, the OCFS Division of Child Care Services recently launched a long-term research project to develop a standardized definition of what constitutes quality child care. This research project is expected to take at least two to three years to ensure that this definition is created with purpose and thought.

“OCFS promotes quality child care through regulations, policy and [QUALITYstarsNY](#); however, currently there is no statewide definition of quality child care,” said Nora Yates, OCFS deputy commissioner for the Division of Child Care Services. “This project will create and uphold a standardized definition of quality that can be used by all OCFS-funded programs and services.”

Parents, child care providers and the general public are being encouraged to respond to a survey about their experiences with child care, the factors that influence their choice of child care providers, and what constitutes a quality child care program. The survey will be open from March through May.

“Once the survey is closed, OCFS will review all feedback and explore new ways to define quality as it relates to early childhood and school-aged children in all settings,” Yates said.



OCFS is receiving assistance for this research from an early childhood systems consultant as part of a [Child Care State Capacity Building Center \(SCBC\)](#) Impact Project. SCBC works with government leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families, especially programs implemented under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) aimed at meeting the needs of low-income working parents.

The survey will be available through the [Child Care page](#) on the OCFS website.

Join Us for Upcoming Public Hearings on the OCFS Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) 2025-2027 Plan!

Have your voice heard and contribute to shaping the future of child care and early childhood programs in our community. The hearings will take place May 8-10, so mark your calendars and be part of the conversation. Your input is invaluable in creating a plan that meets the needs of families and providers alike. Look for more information on the OCFS website coming soon!

Training Updates

The Facility and Application Management System (FAMS) and Comprehensive Background Checks (CBC) Training Sessions

Did you know that there are live, interactive [FAMS CBC technical assistance sessions](#) being held? Join OCFS to learn more and get all of your questions answered about automated CBCs. Also, check out the [website](#) for various other [resources](#) such as webinars and recordings, instructional user guides, video tutorials and even a FAMS CBC Process Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).



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