



Early Learning and Child Care

Child Care Subsidy Program

Terms and Conditions

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Background

The priorities for the Government of Nova Scotia include the following key priorities:

- Health Promotion and Protection;
- Youth, Families and Communities;
- Community Safety;
- Economic Development and Infrastructure; and
- Environment.

These initiatives are focused on strengthening the social service system, enabling the government to improve outcomes for Nova Scotia's youth, families, and communities.

One of the priorities of the Department of Community Services Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) program is to strengthen the child care sector by providing services and funds to "*ensure that all Nova Scotia children enjoy a good start in life and are nurtured and supported by caring families and communities*". This is compatible with the Department's goal of "*self reliant people, strong families and inclusive communities*". The Department has embarked upon a multi-year plan to revamp the child care sector in Nova Scotia.

This document describes the Department of Community Services Terms and Conditions for the Child Care Subsidy Program (the Subsidy Program).

Terms and Conditions Overview

The Subsidy Program has been in place in the Province of Nova Scotia since the early 1970's. Its initial and ongoing goal has been to assist low income families with their child care expenses to enable them to work, pursue employment, attend school, cope with family crisis, or provide for their children who have special developmental needs. The Subsidy Program enables eligible parents and guardians to enroll their children in licensed full day child care programs by providing subsidy to the child care facility on their behalf. Acceptance in the Subsidy Program is established by means of an application process which evaluates four primary areas of eligibility: social need, financial assets, family income and residency status. An applicant family must establish eligibility in all four areas to qualify for receipt of subsidy.

The Subsidy Program serves and supports a broad range of eligible families including: families involved with Employment Support and Income Assistance, employed parents, parents attending school, families who are receiving child protection and prevention services, families in crisis, and families whose children have unique developmental needs. The Subsidy Program aids families in meeting the child care needs of their children up to and including twelve years of age.

There a number of steps involved in the subsidy process:

- Application process - The applicant can access child care subsidy by completing and sending the application via mail or by an interview with a Child Care Subsidy Caseworker (the Caseworker).
- Determination of eligibility - The Caseworker will determine eligibility for subsidy based on financial and needs tested criteria.
- Wait list management - If a subsidy is not available or if a space does not exist at the child care centre, the applicant will be registered on a waiting list. The waiting list is organized with consideration given to the circumstances and the needs of the child and family.
- Eligibility Review - The outcome and decision regarding the family's determination of eligibility can be reviewed. This is usually conducted by the Caseworker Supervisor.
- Annual review - There is also a yearly review to determine continued eligibility for subsidy.
- Claims process - Once a subsidy is approved, the centre is paid the subsidy on behalf of the client. The centre submits a monthly claim request based on the attendance of the child at the centre.
- Transfers - Children can be transferred to another centre depending on the needs of the family and child and the availability of spaces and subsidies.
- Payment process - Payments are made to the centres based on the subsidy claims.

Note: Please refer to "Appendix A – Definitions" for definitions of the terms used throughout this Terms and Conditions document.

Program Description

The Subsidy Program is an income tested program designed to assist Nova Scotia families with the cost of child care services at full day licensed child care centers and family home day care homes.

General Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy Program, the applicant must:

- (a) Meet social needs eligibility requirements and;
- (b) Meet financial needs requirements and;
- (c) Provide and complete all required documentation to substantiate need and;
- (d) Be a permanent resident of Canada or have applied for permanent resident or refugee status or a temporary resident who has been in Canada for at least 18 months consecutively. As well, the applicant must live in Nova Scotia and intend to place their child in a Nova Scotia child care centre.

Application Process

Contact Information

Centres requiring additional information about the *Subsidy Program* are requested to contact their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.

Determination of Eligibility and Fees

The primary role of the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker is to evaluate the initial and ongoing eligibility for those families applying for, or who are currently in receipt of, child care subsidy funding.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker assesses the eligibility prior to a child being admitted to a child care centre. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will assess the family's social need, liquid assets, financial eligibility and residency status. If all **four points of eligibility** are met, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will then determine the Assessed Daily Parent Fee and the Daily Government Subsidy Rate and advise the parent/applicant and the child care centre of these amounts.

When assessing an applicant for the Subsidy Program, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker should review *Type of Care needs* with the applicant and determine if these needs will be appropriately met by the parent-chosen child care facility.

This may be applicable in cases where the applicant may only want part-week or part-day service where the facility of choice only offers full week or full day service. Parental needs may be better served via another child care facility.

Social Need

Social need for Child Care Subsidy can be established by any one or a combination of the following:

- i) To maintain or seek full time employment. If the applicant is seeking employment, child care subsidy is usually granted for no more than six (6) months unless there is a recommendation from a supporting agency, e.g. Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), Services Canada, etc.
- ii) To maintain or seek part-time employment. If the applicant is seeking employment, child care subsidy is usually granted for no more than six (6) months unless there is a recommendation from a supporting agency, e.g. Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA), Services Canada, etc.
- iii) To attend school or job training activities.
- iv) To support agency involvements with families where a child care placement is recommended as a support and benefit to the family unit, e.g. by Child Welfare, Mental Health Services, etc.
- (v) To provide support to families in times of short or long term illness or crisis, e.g. medical, mental health, abusive home environment, death.
- (vi) To meet the developmental needs of children whose emotional, cognitive, social or physical development is delayed or at risk for delay. If, in the judgment of the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker, subsidized child care is needed to alleviate the effects of poverty and/or parental limitations, this judgment and determination is acceptable as a reason to approve the applicant for initial or ongoing subsidized child care. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker may wish to consult with the Director of the child care centre for their insight on the need for continued child care. These indicators should be documented on the application as well as the caseworker notes.
- (vii) To support an applicant/parent who is in receipt of Employment Insurance (EI) benefits e.g. maternity, sick, and regular.

Financial Assessment

If a family is found eligible on the basis of social need, an income test consisting of a review of liquid assets and financial eligibility is completed by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker to determine the amount of subsidy for which the applicant/parent may be eligible. For families in receipt of ESIA, an income test is not required to determine financial eligibility. In these situations it is important for the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker to clearly advise the applicant of potential changes which could impact their subsidy eligibility.

Residency Status

- In order to be eligible for child care subsidy the family will have to meet the residency requirements for the program. The applicant must:
 - Be a permanent resident of Canada, or
 - Have applied for permanent resident, or
 - Have refugee status, or
 - A temporary resident who has been in Canada for at least 18 months consecutively without being absent from the country for more than a one month period, and
 - Live in Nova Scotia and intend to place their child in a Nova Scotia child care center.

Determination of the Assessed Daily Parent Fee (ADPF) and Subsidy Rate

Once the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker has determined the applicable monthly income, the amount is compared to the *Daily Parent Fees* schedule to determine the parental contribution.

A family eligible for subsidy is required to pay a portion of the approved subsidy Government Per Diem. This portion is known as the Assessed Daily Parent Fee which the applicant/parent pays directly to the child care centre. The Daily Government Subsidy Rate is the balance which is paid by the Department to the child care centre on behalf of the parent/applicant via the Child Care Subsidy Claims process. These fees are established by Government and vary according to the types of care provided to the child, as described in the definitions section of Appendix A.

The Department revised the per diems effective November 1, 2004. A per diem was established for each age group. The four age groups as defined in the Day Care Act and Regulations and the approved maximum per diems are as follows:

Age Group	Ages	Per Diem
Infants	0 - 18 months	\$22.00
Toddlers	19 - 36 months	\$20.00
Preschool*	37 - 60 months	\$19.00

School Age	61 - 144 months	\$17.70
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* Children who are between the ages of 56 – 59 months and who are attending school will be considered school age.

As a child changes age groups, the approved Government Per Diem will be reflective of the new age group per diems. The child care centre will be advised by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of the change in the approved Government Per Diem and applicable Daily Government Subsidy Rate approximately two months prior to the change, to allow the child care centre adequate time to adjust their parent billing.

Notification of Eligibility

Once a family has been approved for subsidy, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker shall complete an ECDS *Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* and provide a copy to both the applicant/parent and the child care centre. It shall include the following information for each child:

- Name and birth date of the child.
- Name of the child care centre.
- Approved Government Per Diem.
- Daily Government Subsidy Rate.
- Assessed Daily Parent Fee.
- Type of Care and approved number of days per week.
- Subsidy Effective Date.

The *Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* emphasizes to parents the importance of their responsibility to report any changes in their circumstances to their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker to ensure they continue to qualify for subsidy.

Effective Dates

The subsidy effective date shown on the *ECDS Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* is the date on which the child is eligible for subsidy and is usually the first date of attendance. Where a child care centre decides to admit a child prior to the approval date, the Department of Community Services will make no commitment to provide subsidy on behalf of the family. Consequently, parents will be responsible for the full fee should they fail to qualify for subsidy. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker should be aware that child care centres need to fill their available spaces as quickly as possible.

Rates must always be effective the first of the month except in the case of new applications, re-applications, transfers, or adding a sibling/child. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker cannot enter any new subsidy or a change to an existing subsidy any further back than the **first day of the month prior to the current month**.

Eligibility Review Process

In cases where an applicant/parent believes their circumstances have been inaccurately assessed, the parent/applicant may request to have their application for subsidy reviewed. The applicant/parent must submit a written request to the Casework Supervisor within 30 days of receiving the *ECDS Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* or *Child Care Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice* from the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker. The request should identify specific areas where the applicant/parent believes they have been inaccurately assessed. The Casework Supervisor will review the request and the applicant/parent's case file based on the ECDS Subsidy Program Procedures and respond to the applicant/parent in writing within 15 working days.

Should an applicant decide to continue their placement at the child care centre, the Department makes no commitment to pay subsidy until the review has been completed. If the application was inaccurately assessed, the Department may pay retroactively no more than the first day of the month two (2) months prior to the current month.

Subsidy Review Process

Subsidy Review Requirements

Eligibility for child care subsidy will be re-evaluated at a minimum of every 12 months or as designated by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.

If the applicant/parent has not provided all required documentation within three months of their review date, their child care subsidy may be discontinued. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will advise the applicant/parent and the child care centre of any decision leading to the discontinuation of child care subsidy by means of the *Child Care Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice*.

Provision of child care subsidy continues until the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker takes action to discontinue the subsidy.

Suspension of Subsidy

In situations where, in the opinion of the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker, the applicant/parent has misrepresented their eligibility for child care subsidy, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker may suspend subsidy until the matter can be reviewed and/or resolved. The applicant/parent and the child care centre should be advised of the suspension as soon as possible. The applicant/parent must also be notified of their right to have the matter reviewed by the Casework Supervisor.

Child Welfare Involvement

Children in receipt of Child Welfare services may be eligible for child care subsidy. Individual family circumstances may impact the manner in which services are accessed. Child care centres are encouraged to communicate their centre's policies and procedures to Child Welfare Caseworkers. Child care centres need to be aware that all information released to centre staff must be treated in a highly confidential manner.

The billing arrangements for the child's subsidy are dependent on the child's care status as follows:

Children in Permanent Care and Custody

Children in Permanent Care and Custody are the responsibility of the Child Welfare Agency/District Office. The Approved Government Per Diem and centre parent fee are charged to the appropriate Child Welfare Agency/District Office. Therefore, these children are not included on the ECDS Monthly Child Care Claim.

Children Taken into Care (Temporary Status)

These situations may often be complex. The Child Welfare Caseworker will communicate any change in care status to both the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker and the child care centre as appropriate.

If the child remains in the home of the parent, the applicant/parent shall be assessed for subsidy in accordance with the usual child care subsidy criteria, either prior to or after the child is taken into care. The Centre includes the child on the *Monthly Child Care Claim*. The Assessed Daily Parent Fee may be charged to the applicant/parent or the Child Welfare Agency/Office.

If the child is placed in foster care, Child Welfare shall assume all costs for child care. The Centre bills the Agency/District Office for the Daily Government Subsidy Rate and any additional centre fees.

Children in Temporary Care

Children in temporary care may or may not live in foster care. The care status is often time specific. The applicant/parent is assessed for subsidy based on usual child care subsidy criteria. The Centre includes the child on the Monthly Child Care Claim. The Assessed Daily Parent Fee may be charged to the applicant/parent or the Child Welfare Agency/Office.

Children in Subsidized Adoption Placements

Children in subsidized adoption placements are in the process of adoption. The applicant/parent is assessed for subsidy based on usual child care subsidy criteria. The Centre includes the child on the Monthly Child Care Claim. The Assessed Daily Parent Fee is charged to the applicant/parent.

Waiting Lists Process

Child care centres allocated child care subsidies prior to 2000 maintain centre-based waiting lists using criteria developed by the child care centre's Board of Directors and/or Admissions Committee. Many child care centres have established mandates to service a specific population, e.g. students. When a subsidy becomes available, if the parent has not yet applied for subsidy, the child care centre Director or designate will advise the parent of the application procedures. These centres may facilitate the process by scheduling appointments and providing applicant families with the required documents in advance of their assessment.

Waiting lists for subsidies are maintained and prioritized by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker. Clients who have similar social needs are allocated subsidy on a first come, first serve basis.

Claims Process

Changes in Circumstances and Fee Changes

The *Application for Child Care Subsidy* and the *Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* state that applicant/parents are required to notify the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of any change in their social or financial circumstances within seven (7) days of the occurrence of said change. Failure to notify the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of these changes may result in cancellation of the subsidy and recovery of any overpayment.

When a change in circumstances results in a change to the parent fee and the Daily Government Subsidy Rate, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker shall advise the parent and the child care centre of the rate change and effective date. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will use the *Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice* to inform the client and the centre of the changes. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will also place a copy of the notice in the file.

Changes causing the parent fee to increase are made effective the first of the month following the change. Delays in an applicant advising of a change in income may result in an overpayment.

Fee changes resulting from a reduction of the parent fee are to be changed effective the first of the month the change occurred. In cases where the applicant failed to notify the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of the changes in the prescribed manner (7 days), the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker may only go back one month to change the parent fee.

Temporary Changes in Type of Care

The *Type of Care* approved by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker may, on occasion, temporarily change. These instances often occur during holiday times, (Christmas, March Break, summer) but can also occur because of storm days, in-service days, and school unavailability. In these instances, the Accounting Clerk will have the ability to override the approved *Type of Care* to allow the claim for full day instead of part day or after school care. Should the *Type of Care* change on a permanent basis the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker must make the appropriate adjustments to the case.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will make necessary changes to the number of days of attendance per week.

Overpayments and Underpayments

Overpayments in the Subsidy Program occur when the payment to the centre exceeds the Daily Government Subsidy Rate assessed for the family. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will determine the amount of the overpayment and work with the applicant/parent to develop an appropriate repayment schedule.

Underpayments occur when the payment to the centre is less than the Daily Government Subsidy Rate assessed for the family. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will determine the amount of the underpayment and advise the child care centre and applicant/parent. The child care centre will be responsible for including the appropriate amount(s) on the *Monthly Child Care Claim*, and ensuring that the parent is credited for this amount. Please refer to the section entitled Subsidy Payment Process for detailed instructions on completion of the claim.

Attendance

For the purpose of claiming subsidy, attendance days must be recorded by the child care centre using the following categories: Present, Sick, Absent, Holidays, Vacation and Other. Centres must bill parents for the same days that are billed to the Department.

Present Days

Children are recorded as present per *Type of Care* (Full Day, Part Day or After School) for all days in which they are physically in attendance at the child care centre. Present days cannot exceed the number of working days per month.

Sick Days

While group care offers children many opportunities for socialization, it may also provide more exposure to sickness which results in absences from the child care facility. Many child care centres have strict policies with respect to sickness and may require medical documentation for re-admission after a child has been sick. These policies are often outlined for the parent in the centre parent manual. Parents should read these documents carefully to ensure that they fully understand their meaning and scope. It is the responsibility of the child care facility to ensure the parent has received a copy of the centre policy manual and has had an opportunity for a full review and discussion of its content.

The Subsidy Program will continue to pay the Daily Government Subsidy Rate on behalf of a child who is absent from a centre for reason of sickness for a period of up to five (5) days per service period. The Department of Community Services may approve payment for sickness in excess of five days per month based on the parents' communication of specific circumstances to their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker. A doctor's certificate may be required. Child care centre directors should verify the additional sick leave approval by contacting the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker's decision for additional sick leave should not be interpreted as the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker giving authority for re-admission to the centre. It should be clearly explained to the parent that although the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker has the authority to allow absences beyond the standard five (5) sick days per month, they are not advising the parent regarding the medical care of their child.

Absent Days

Every child who is in receipt of subsidy is permitted to be absent (for reasons other than sickness) from the child care centre, without documentation, for up to three (3) days of care per service period.

Holidays

Subsidy funding is provided for the following approved holidays:

- New Year's Day;
- Good Friday;
- Easter Monday;
- Victoria Day;

- Canada Day;
- Civic Holiday;
- Labour Day;
- Thanksgiving Day;
- Remembrance Day;
- Christmas Eve (After 1pm);
- Christmas Day;
- Boxing Day.

Some communities recognize a specific holiday instead of the Civic Holiday. Child care centres must contact the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker to advise him/her of the appropriate date(s) of holidays, in order that the child care centre may receive payment for these date(s). The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will advise the Accounting Department of the approved holidays.

When a child is scheduled to start in a child care centre on a day listed as an approved holiday, the Subsidy Program will pay the Daily Government Subsidy Rate for that day provided that the parent is also charged for the day.

Vacation Days

Subsidy funding provides payment for fifteen (15) days of vacation each fiscal year (April 1 - March 31). Vacation for the first year is calculated at 1.25 days per month from enrolment month to end of the fiscal year. Other terms regarding vacation include:

- Vacation can be taken prior to accumulating;
- Vacation cannot be carried over from one year to the next;
- Vacation cannot be borrowed from a future year;
- Vacation can be combined with other approved absences;
- There shall be no reduction of vacation entitlement as the result of centre summer closures, and;
- There shall be no reduction of vacation entitlement based on part day or after school
Types of Care

An additional five (5) days vacation may be granted in situations where legal documentation is provided that supports joint or shared custody and/or court ordered access. It is the client's responsibility to provide the appropriate documentation to the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker thirty (30) days prior to the requested vacation days.

Other Days

Other Days refers to attendance which does not fall into the previous categories. They may include parental sickness, storm days, floods, and unexpected centre closures for reasons of health and safety. The Department may provide approval for other days as circumstances dictate. The child care centre must contact their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker for approval of any other days.

Centres Closed for the summer

Applicant/parents returning following summer closure do not require a new application or re-application. These families should be advised that they continue to be obligated to advise the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of changes in their circumstances. Annual Review dates remain the same.

Withdrawals

The Withdrawal Date is the last day of attendance for the child in the child care centre. When a child has withdrawn or the applicant/parent is requesting a transfer, the family must advise the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.

The child care centre will not be paid for subsidy after the child has withdrawn, e.g. for unused vacation, absent or sick days.

All child care centres receiving subsidy on behalf of families are required to report any withdrawals on their claim form. The Accounting Clerk will advise the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of reported withdrawals. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker or designate will follow up and ensure the appropriate data entry changes are made to the System. This has a twofold impact, to ensure System integrity and to ensure efficient access for families on the waiting list.

Transfer Process

Transfers - General

Transfers occur when a child in receipt of subsidy relocates from one centre to another.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker should be aware that most child care centres require a time specific notice of withdrawal (usually two weeks) and many centres will honour their colleagues'

notice period before allowing a child to be transferred to their centre. As well, many centres will not accept an applicant/parent who has left an outstanding debt at another centre.

Centres may ask a potential parent to sign a release which allows the centre to check with previous placements. Some centres will allow the parent to make arrangements to pay the debt over time. However, their placement is often conditional upon the parent paying the debt. As a result, an applicant/parent's subsidy may be conditional upon a centre offering them a space. Any arrangements regarding outstanding debts to another child care centre are purely a business arrangement between the applicant/parent and the child care centre. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker's role in this instance is informational.

Transfers of Subsidy

Subsidy is by definition attached to the child and may relocate with the child as needed. The primary stipulation is that the centre to which they wish to transfer is eligible to receive subsidy. A subsidy may be transferred to any licensed full day child care centre in the province that has signed the *Child Care Subsidy Funding Agreement*.

When a transfer occurs, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker shall advise the parent and the child care centre by means of the *Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice* and a phone call, if possible. The *Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice* will also serve to advise the incoming child care centre of available vacation entitlements.

When an applicant/parent has a subsidy and transfers to another centre in another community, he/she must contact the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker responsible for the centre to which the child is transferring. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will review the information on the ECDS Information System and proceed with the necessary data entry and forms, if appropriate. Once completed, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker shall advise the parent and the child care centre of the Assessed Daily Parent Fee, Approved Government Subsidy Rate and the effective date.

Subsidy Payment Process

Child Care Subsidy Payments

Child care centres complete monthly child care claims summarizing the children's attendance and submit them to the Department of Community Services for payment. The Department verifies the monthly child care claims and provides payments to centres.

Completion of Monthly Child Care Claim (the Monthly Claim)

Each month the Department of Community Services sends a system generated *Monthly Child Care Claim* to each child care centre listing children in attendance that are approved for Child Care Subsidy funding. The *Monthly Child Care Claim* lists all children approved for subsidy at the centre, the child's client identification number, and approved rates of subsidy funding for each child. Columns are provided for the Centre to record the children's days of attendance by Type of Care, the total claimed amount for each child, and any child withdrawals, where applicable.

Recording Attendance

The Department of Community Services requires all licensed child care centres to maintain daily records of attendance for all children. Details of time of arrival and time of departure must be recorded each day. Attendance records must be recorded in pen and maintained for seven years after the child leaves the centre. The Director or designate must transfer the attendance information for subsidized children to the monthly claim which are submitted to the Department of Community Services.

The Attendance portion of the claim is divided into three sections for each Type of Care: Full day child care, part day child care, and after school child care which are defined in Appendix A. Each child is approved for one or more Types of Care by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker. The approval is communicated to the centre by means of the *Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice* or the *Subsidy Change in Assessment Notice*.

The Type of Care claimed should, in most cases, be the same as that approved for the child. In some circumstances however, attendance may be recorded and claimed as another Type of Care. For example, a child approved for after school care may have attended the Centre for full days during March Break, and the Centre would claim those five days in the Full Days section of the claim.

Within each Type of Care section of the monthly claim, the child's attendance must be recorded in the following categories: Present, Sick, Absent, Statutory Holiday, Vacation, and/or Other. The choice of category is dependent on the attendance information included in the centre's daily attendance records and the maximum days of attendance allowed per Department of Community Services. The following table summarizes the attendance categories described in detail in the section in the Claims Process entitled Attendance.

Present Days	Cannot exceed the number of working days per service period.
Sick Days	Maximum of 5 days per service period or as specifically approved by the Caseworker.

Absent	Maximum of 3 days per service period.
Statutory Holiday	Number of statutory holidays per service period as approved by the Department of Community Services.
Vacation	Cannot exceed the annual number of vacation days approved for the child by the Caseworker.
Other	Number of days specifically approved by the Department of Community Services.
Total Days of Attendance	Cannot exceed the number of working days per service period or the total number of days approved for the child.

Calculating the Total Claimed Amount per Child

The Centre calculates the Total Claimed amount for each child as follows:

- For each Type of Care, multiply the Total Days of Care by the applicable Daily Government Subsidy Rate; and
- Add the resulting amounts for each Type of Care.

Children not listed on the System Generated Claim

There may be occasions when children eligible for child care subsidy are not listed on the system-generated *Monthly Child Care Claim* sent to the child care centre. This may occur when the child was approved for payment after the *Monthly Child Care Claim* was printed. When this occurs, the Child Care Centre should add the child’s information on one of the blank lines at the bottom of the *Monthly Child Care Claim*. The required information includes the Client ID Number (if available), Child Name, Service Period, Funding Type, Attendance Information and the Total Claimed amount.

If the child has not yet been approved for Child Care Subsidy when the *Monthly Child Care Claim* is processed, the child care centre will not receive payment and will be advised to resubmit the claim for the child.

Claiming for Children for Retroactive Service Periods

There may be occasions when it is necessary for a child care centre to submit attendance for a subsidized child for a previous service period (e.g. a child not listed on the previous claim, additional sick days which were previously not paid or an underpayment).

The Child Care Centre will add the child's information on one of the blank lines at the bottom of the claim. The required information includes the Client ID Number, Child Name, Service Period, Funding Type, Attendance Information, Daily Government Subsidy Rate and the Total Claimed amount.

In the case of an underpayment, the child care centre would record the child's information, as above. However, the Daily Government Subsidy Rate would reflect the difference between the amount that should have been paid to the child care centre and the amount that was actually paid.

Recording Withdrawals

Child care centres are required to record the withdrawal date of any child listed on the monthly claim. The Accounting Clerk forwards the withdrawal information to the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker for follow-up and appropriate action. Child care centres are not eligible to receive subsidy or supported child care after a child has withdrawn (e.g. for unused vacation, absent or sick days).

The *Monthly Child Care Claim* for the following month will usually continue to include the child's name even though s/he is no longer attending the centre. The Centre must not claim the child on the following month's claim. Following the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker's action, the child's name will no longer appear on the *Monthly Child Care Claim*.

Submission of Monthly Child Care Claim

Monthly claims must be completed and submitted to the Department of Community Services on a monthly basis. The claim must be completed and submitted after the end of the claim period. Attendance information is not known until the last day of the claim period.

All *Monthly Child Care Claims* must include the date prepared and the printed name and signature of the child care centre Director. Faxes or photocopies will not be accepted for payment.

The completed *Monthly Child Care Claim* should be forwarded to the following address for processing and payment:

Accounting Clerk
Finance and Administration
NS Department of Community Services
PO Box 696
Halifax, NS B3J 2T7

Verification and Payment of Child Care Claim

The Accounting Clerk responsible for Subsidy Payment receives *Monthly Child Care Claims* in the mail each day. Claims are processed on the basis of order received.

As the Accounting Clerk is entering attendance information, s/he may enter explanatory payment notes. For instance, the Accounting Clerk will add a note if the child's vacation days as submitted on the claim have exceeded the approved number. These notes will display on the *Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation* report as described below.

When the Accounting Clerk processes the centre's monthly claim, the Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation report for that service period and the Monthly Child Care Claim for the next service period are generated and mailed to the child care centre.

Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation Report

The *Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation* provides summary and detailed information on the processed *Monthly Child Care Claim*. There are three main sections of the *Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation*: verified claim information, notes and claim summary.

The first section provides detailed information regarding the verified claim. The attendance information as entered and verified by the Accounting Clerk, the Daily Government Subsidy Rates and the Total Paid amount for each of the children's claim lines are provided.

The second section includes all explanatory payment notes as entered by the Accounting Clerk during the claim verification process. These notes provide information when the submitted claim does not agree with the amounts verified and processed.

The third section includes:

- **Summary of Claim Paid:**
The Summary of Claim Paid box summarizes the Verified Claim Total by subsidy and service period. The summary also shows the amount of the advance and/or adjustments deducted from the Verified Claim Total and the amount of the Claim Payment.
- **Summary of Adjustments:**
The Summary of Adjustments box includes information relating to the Overpayment Adjustment.

Monthly Child Care Claim

The *Monthly Child Care Claim* is the system generated report that will be used by the child care centre for submitting attendance for the following month.

Cheques for Claim Payments are mailed directly by the Nova Scotia Department of Finance to child care centres.

Monthly Advances

Eligibility for Advances

In order to receive an advance a child care centre must submit a written request (email or letter) to the Director of Early Childhood Development Services in the Department of Community Services. Advances will commence within two months after the request has been approved by the Director.

All child care centres (commercial and not-for-profit), will be eligible to receive child care centres advances if they either have a minimum of 5 FTE (full time equivalent) subsidies or the subsidy comprises at least 25% of the total centre enrollment. Centres that drop below the minimum 5 FTE's or 25% of total centre enrollment consistently for a three month period will lose their eligibility for subsidy claim advances. Advances will be eliminated for summer closures and reduced for sharp drops in enrollments.

The monthly advance is provided for the next claim period (e.g. January payment for the February claim period). The Monthly Advance is deducted from the Verified Claim Total for the applicable service period.

Calculation of Advance

The advances will be calculated based on enrollment in the subsidy program at the beginning of the month. Advances will be calculated as approximately 80% of the expected subsidy claim for the upcoming month.

The advance amount will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure continuing effectiveness. The amount can be reviewed more frequently if an overpayment occurs or if there are significant enrollment changes.

Late Claims

Child Care Centres are required to ensure that claims have been received by the claim deadline (the 15th of the following month) in order to receive the advance for the next month. Exceptions can be adjudicated by the Director, Early Childhood Development Services.

Overpayments to Child Care Centres

Child care centres can incur an overpayment if the Monthly Advance exceeds the Verified Claim Total for the claim period. When this occurs, the Department usually recovers the overpayment from the next Monthly Advance. The Overpayment Adjustment is deducted from the Verified Claim Total as reflected on the *Monthly Child Care Claim Payment Confirmation* report.

Appendix A - Definitions

For purposes of these Terms and Conditions the following definitions apply:

“Accounting Clerk” refers to the Department of Community Services Accounting and Control staff member responsible for processing monthly claims submitted by child care centres.

“Age Group” refers to the group in which a child belongs for purposes of the Subsidy Program as determined by the child’s birth date and definitions under the Day Care Act and Regulations. This includes: Infant, Toddler, Preschool and School Age.

“Applicant” refers to a person who applies for Child Care Subsidy.

“Application” refers to an application for Child Care Subsidy.

“Approved Education Program” refers to a high school, adult day school, University, upgrading or literacy program or technical or professional training

“Approved Government Per Diem” refers to the total daily amount approved for Subsidized Child Care. The current approved maximum government per diems are as follows:

	INFANT	TODDLER	PRESCHOOLER	SCHOOL AGE
FULL DAY	\$22.00	\$20.00	\$19.00	\$17.70
PART DAY	\$14.67	\$13.33	\$12.67	\$11.80
AFTER SCHOOL	N/A	N/A	\$6.33	\$5.90

“Assessed Daily Parent Fee” refers to the parental contribution as assessed by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker upon completion of the Application for Child Care Subsidy. The current minimum Assessed Daily Parent Fee per family is \$1.00.

“Case ID” refers to a unique six digit number generated by the System to identify a specific family grouping. A Case ID is assigned to each new application.

“Casework Supervisor” refers to a person employed by the Department of Community Services who is responsible for overseeing the work and decisions of a Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.

“Caseworker” refers to the Department of Community Services, Child Care Subsidy Caseworker who is responsible for assessment and completion of Applications for Child Care Subsidy and all other related duties associated with the Child Care Subsidy Program in his/her Region and/or District of the Department of Community Services.

- “Child Welfare”** refers to Child Protection Services that are delivered by Department of Community Services District Offices and Children’s Aid Societies in accordance with the Children and Family Services Act.
- “Claim Period”** refers to the primary service period included on the Monthly Child Care Claim.
- “Daily Government Subsidy Rate”** refers to the amount of subsidy the government will pay daily on behalf of eligible families for each subsidized child. It is calculated as the difference between the Approved Government Per Diem and the Assessed Daily Parent Fee for each subsidized child.
- “Department”** refers to the Department of Community Services.
- “Director”** refers to the Director of Director of Early Childhood Development Services of the Department of Community Services.
- “Early Childhood Development Officer (ECDO)”** refers to regional staff of the Department of Community Services responsible for licensing child care centres and providing supported child care consultation.
- “ECDS”** refers to the Early Childhood Development Services section of the Family and Community Supports Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.
- “Early Childhood Development & Community Outreach Specialist (ECD Specialist)”** refers to regional staff of the Department of Community Services responsible for policy development, coordinating regional service delivery and liaising between head office and the regions.
- “ESIA”** refers to the Employment Support and Income Assistance program delivered by the Department of Community Services. This program provides people in financial need with assistance with basic needs such as food, rent, utilities like heat and electricity, and clothing.
- “Employed Full-time”** refers to paid employment for 30 hours or more per week.
- “Employed Part-time”** refers to paid employment for less than 30 hours per week.
- “Family Home Day Care Agency”** refers to an agency regulated by the Department of Community Services to coordinate child care in approved caregiver homes. Family Home caregivers are supervised and supported by the Family Home Day Care Agency.
- “Fiscal Year”** refers to the provincial government business year which runs for the twelve months from April 1st of any given year until March 31st of the following year.

“**Full Day Child Care**” refers to:

- Continuous care for the morning and afternoon programs combined with the provision of a noon meal; or
- Before school care combined with a noon meal and after school care for school-age children.

“**Full Time Equivalency (FTE)**” means full time equivalent. It is a means of measuring utilization and represents the number of children at a centre. A full-day child would be 1 FTE where as a part-day child would be a percentage of 1 FTE. Centres will be required to calculate part-day children into FTE’s during the application process. Please refer to the Child Care Operating Grant application for examples.

For example, assume a centre has 3 full-day children enrolled; Child A, Child B and Child C. Child A attends daily, 5 days a week; Child B attends 2 days a week; Child C attends three days a week. The centre would have 2 FTE’s out of their licensed capacity.

“**Gross Monthly Income**” refers to monies received from employment and/or other sources prior to any allowable deductions.

“**Guardian**” refers to the legal guardian of the child or children.

“**Infant**” refers to a child who is 17 months of age or younger.

“**Liquid Assets**” refers to assets that are easily converted to cash such as, but not limited to, cash on hand, bank accounts, stocks, bonds or other securities, monetary lottery winnings, monetary inheritances;

“**Minister**” refers to the Minister of Community Services.

“**Monthly Child Care Claim**” refers to the form used by a child care centre to invoice the Department of Community Services for children who are enrolled in the centre and eligible for subsidy.

“**Net Monthly Income**” refers to gross monthly income less allowable deductions.

“**New Application**” refers to an application for Child Care Subsidy that will be entered in the ECDS Information System for the first time. A new application includes:

- A family that has not previously received funding via the Subsidy Program;
- A family whose individual members have previously received funding via the Child Care Subsidy Program with a different family head;
- A family grouping who has not received funding via the Subsidy Program for over three years.

“Operator”	refers to the individual, partnership, group, or Board of Directors in whose name a license to operate a child care facility under the Day Care Act and Regulations has been issued.
“Overpayment”	can refer to families or to child care centres. For families, overpayment means any monies paid to families that were paid that ought not to have been paid; for centres, an overpayment may be monies paid to centres which exceeded their entitlement.
“Parents”	refers to parents and/or guardians.
“Part Day Child Care”	refers to one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care for the complete morning program combined with a noon meal; or• The noon meal combined with care for the complete afternoon program; or• Before school care and after school care, before school and lunch; or• Lunch and after school.
“Preschooler”	refers to a child who is between the age of 36 months and the age of 59 months inclusive that is not attending school.
“Post-secondary education program”	for the purposes of the Subsidy Program, refers to any program designated for student loan purposes;
“Re-application”	refers to an existing Subsidy Case ID which is re-activated when a specific family grouping who has received funding via the subsidy program within the last three years reapplies for the service. Except in relation to centres who close for the summer, a Re-application form must be completed when a family has been absent from the Subsidy Program for a period of six weeks or more. Caseworkers should note previous involvement by referencing the previous Subsidy Case ID.
“Regulated Child Care”	refers to any organization which has received a license from DCS to operate a child care centre or Family Home in the Province.
“School Age”	refers to a child between the ages of 60 months and the age of 155 months inclusive or between the ages of 56 months and 59 months and is attending school.
“Service Period”	refers to the calendar month for which subsidy is paid.
“Special Developmental Needs”	refers to a child’s developmental disability, delay, health disorder, or behavioral concern that may significantly impact his/her ability to fully participate in a centre’s daily program.

“Spouse”	refers to a husband or a wife of an applicant or recipient, a common-law partner or a same-sex partner with who an applicant is in a marriage-like relationship that is not a legal marriage.
“Subsidized Child”	refers to a child aged 3 months up to and including age 12 who is approved for subsidy and enrolled in a regulated child care facility or an approved caregiver home. Except in the case of a transfer or re-application, a subsidized child may be subsidized in only one child care centre per service period.
“Subsidized Child Care”	refers to the Early Child Development Services program which provides government subsidy to full day licensed child care facilities on behalf of eligible families.
“Subsidy Program”	refers to the Early Child Development Services Child Care Subsidy Program.
“Surcharge”	refers to a child care centre fee charged in addition to the Approved Government Per Diem. The surcharge is billed to the applicant/parent.
“System”	refers to the Early Child Development Services Information System.
“System Administrator”	refers to the individual responsible for establishing user access and maintaining the control tables in the ECDS Information System.
“Toddler”	refers to a child who is between the age of 18 months and the age of 35 months inclusive.
“Type of Care”	refers to the portion of day approved for subsidy, i.e. Full Day, Part Day, or After School.
“Withdrawal Date”	refers to the last day a child was eligible to receive subsidy at a specific centre.
“Working Days”	refers to week days (Monday to Friday).

Appendix B - Roles and Responsibilities

Caseworker Role and Responsibilities

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker plays a significant role in assisting families with the application and eligibility process. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker interprets policy and must clearly communicate these policies to families and child care centres in a timely manner.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker communicates with child care centres, regarding specific clients and general policies and procedures regarding the Subsidy Program.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker should periodically review the *Monthly Child Care Claim* of centres in their caseload to ensure that attendance is being recorded accurately and in compliance with DCS procedures.

Optimum Utilization of Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker is responsible to ensure that all subsidies, for which they are responsible, are optimally utilized. This serves to assist both the families waiting to receive subsidy as well as the child care community who have available spaces. Clear communication with the child care centre community, efficient time management, and effective caseload management skills will facilitate this process.

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker should review the Caseworker Caseload Report and the Child Care Centre Subsidy Information Reports on a regular basis to maximize utilization of subsidies.

Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse and Neglect

The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker must immediately report any concerns with respect to child abuse and neglect to the appropriate child welfare office/agency. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker must document the incident and the action taken. The documentation must include:

- the date and location of the incident
- a summary of the incident
- the date the child welfare agency/office was contacted
- the name of the child welfare staff person to whom the incident was reported
- any other pertinent information and the direction given by Child Welfare

Applicant/Parent Responsibility for Child Care Subsidy

It is the applicant/parent's responsibility to make an application to the Subsidy Program. The applicant may apply for subsidy at any time. However, before being awarded a subsidy the applicant/parent must first ensure that there is an available space eligible for subsidy at a facility approved to receive child care subsidy funding. It is the applicant's responsibility to supply the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker with all the necessary documentation to accurately assess their eligibility for child care subsidy. Applicants must also advise the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of any changes in their social or financial circumstances within seven (7) days of the occurrence. Failure to notify the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker of these changes may result in cancellation of the subsidy, recovery of any overpayment as determined by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker, and/or prosecution by the Department of Community Services.

Applicants should have contact with the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker prior to placing their child in a child care centre. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will review the application and documentation to determine the family's eligibility for child care subsidy. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will communicate the decision to the parent and the applicable child care facility by providing the completed ECDS Child Care Subsidy Decision Notice. This document will serve to advise the applicant/parent and centre of the approval or denial of subsidy. If the application is approved, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will provide the details of the funding. If the application is denied, the reason for denial will be provided to the applicant only.

Should the applicant/parent wish to enroll the child in the selected child care centre prior to child care subsidy eligibility being granted or determined, the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker must ensure that this is a decision between the applicant/parent and the child care centre and that the Department of Community Services makes no commitment to payment until the application has been completed in its entirety, including the receipt of all documentation for both the applicant/parent and spouse/partner. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker may assist by providing a preliminary indication of eligibility, but again this should not be interpreted by the parent or the child care centre as a commitment to subsidy being approved. The parent/applicant has thirty (30) business days from the date of application or meeting with the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker in which to provide all necessary documentation. Should the documentation not be provided within this time period the application is considered void. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker will advise the child care centre of application status to ensure that the centre may offer the space to another prospective applicant/parent. The Child Care Subsidy Caseworker would proceed to the next appropriate applicant/parent on the waiting list.

Child Care Centre Responsibility

The Child Care Centre Director should familiarize herself/himself with procedural information regarding the Subsidy Program. The Director should establish clear lines of communication with the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker assigned to their child care centre. Such communication would include any questions regarding the Subsidy Program with respect to subsidy, waiting lists, applications, surcharges and claims. Effective communication will assist in avoiding delays in the processing of subsidy applications and claims.

A significant responsibility of the child care centre as it relates to the Subsidy Programs relates to the accurate and timely completion and submission of the Monthly Child Care Claim. Further information and direction with respect to the claiming process is included in a following section.

Child Care Centre Fees

All centres involved in the Subsidy Program must charge, at a minimum, the Approved Government Per Diem for each Type of Care. A child care centre must charge both subsidized and non-subsidized families equal fees for equal service. The daily fee for services charged by a child care centre may result in subsidized families being charged an additional daily fee over and above the Daily Government Subsidy Rate. The child care centre bills the applicant/parent for any fees above the government subsidy rate as determined by the Child Care Subsidy Caseworker. It is the responsibility of the child care centre to advise parents of fees and any changes made to them.

Child Care Centre fees are established by the Owner/Operators/Boards of Directors and are subject to change. A child care centre must establish billing policies that are applied in a fair, consistent and uniform manner, including payment for:

- present days
- sick days
- absent days
- holidays
- vacation days
- other days

Registration and administration fees and deposits are the responsibility of the parent(s) and are not covered by the Subsidy Program.

The following table is useful for calculating the total daily fee to be charged to applicant/parents, which includes the centre surcharge and the Assessed Daily Parent Fee:

Child Care Subsidy Program

**Terms and Conditions
Appendix B**

Daily Fee charged to the family	(minus) -	Daily Government Subsidy Rate	(Equals) =	Amount charged to applicant/parent (includes the Assessed Daily Parent Fee):
\$26.00	-	\$17.00	=	\$9.00

Example based on:

Infant age range (Per Diem = \$22.00)

Assessed Daily Parent Fee: \$5.00

Daily Government Subsidy Rate: \$17.00 (\$22.00 Approved Government per Diem - \$5.00

Assessed Daily Parent Fee)

The basic formula for the calculation of the daily government subsidy rates is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 \text{Approved Government Per} & & - & & \text{Assessed Daily} & & = & & \text{Daily} \\
 \text{Diem} & & \text{(minus)} & & \text{Parent Fee} & & \text{(equals)} & & \text{Government} \\
 \text{per Type of Care} & & & & & & & & \text{Subsidy Rate}
 \end{array}$$
