



COLORADO
Department of Early Childhood

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The State of Colorado Department of Early Childhood and the Board of County Commissioners or other elected governing body of _____ County, Colorado.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made on this 1st day of January 2023 between the State of Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and the Board of the County Commissioners or other elected governing body of _____ County (the “County”).

CDEC is the sole state agency with the responsibility to administer or supervise the administration of the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program as outlined in CRS §§ 26.5-1-106 and CRS §§ 26.5-4-104.

The Colorado General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 97-120 in response to the passage of the federal “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996” thereby adopting the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (“Child Care Program”); referred to as the “Program” for the purposes of this MOU.

CRS §§ 26.5-4-115 requires CDEC, and each County, either acting singly or as a group of Counties, to enter into an annual performance contract that includes but is not limited to, requirements and provisions that address each party’s duties and responsibilities to work in a collaborative manner to administer, financially support, and implement the Child Care Assistance Program using fair and objective criteria.

CDEC and the County understand and agree that the services and assistance outlined in this MOU are subject to available appropriations by the General Assembly, and the County. Neither party will be obligated to provide services or assistance if adequate appropriations have not been made.

The following terms are agreed to by CDEC and the County:

1. MOU MEETS PERFORMANCE CONTRACT REQUIREMENT

The parties agree that the provisions of this MOU constitute compliance with CRS §§ 26.5-4-115.

2. TERM

The term of this MOU will be from January 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025. This MOU shall be reaffirmed annually through an amendment that shall be signed by all applicable parties.

3. REQUIRED DUTIES OF THE COUNTY

- a. The County will administer and implement the Child Care Assistance Program using fair and objective criteria, and in compliance with Federal law, State Statute, and applicable program regulations in 9 CCR 2503-8, 8 CCR 1403-1, 9 CCR 2501-1, and 11 CCR 2508-1.

- b. The County will not restrict eligibility or the provisions of services, nor will it impose penalties that are inconsistent with State Statute or Federal law and applicable program regulations, including the process and penalties outlined in 9 CCR 2503-8, and 8 CCR 1403-1.
- c. The County will maintain sufficient records and will permit CDEC or its duly designated agents and/or representatives of the federal government, to inspect the records and make such records available to CDEC as specified in CRS §§ 6-17-100 and CRS §§ 26.5-4-118. The County must also continue to report to CDEC in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), title 45 of the Public Welfare Code, parts 98 AND 99, and State regulations, to include 9 CCR 2503-8, 8 CCR 1403-1 8 CCR 1403-1, 9 CCR 2501-1, and 11 CCR 2508-1, or any other applicable regulation promulgated by CDEC and must report to CDEC in the future, as required by law. In addition, counties or county departments that are covered entities, or contracting parties to a Business Associate Agreement, pursuant to the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), must comply with HIPAA, as required by law.
- d. As specified by Program regulations and State statutes, counties shall have flexibility in determining the approaches needed to achieve federal and state requirements and to utilize allowable local level policies to manage their budget within their CCCAP Allocation. The County agrees to provide CDEC with its adopted policies and any updated written information when, or if, changes to these policies are made in the Program. The County agrees to provide the information and policies as outlined in 8 CCR 1403-1 to CDEC prior to adopting the aforementioned policies and to update their Child Care Program County Plan when changes impact the administration of the Program.
- e. In addition to what is required by statute or rule, the parties agree that information and policies provided by the County to CDEC, as described in paragraph (d) herein, are for informational purposes and are provided to assist CDEC in meeting its responsibilities, with respect to the Child Care Program. Nothing in this MOU gives CDEC the authority to require any county policies beyond what is required by statute, Program regulations, or the Child Care Program County Plan. The County acknowledges that CDEC has the right to review, comment upon, approve, or request reasonable additional information or clarification of any County policies or records. Such requests will be made in writing and directed to the County Department of Human/Social Services Director.
- f. The County will utilize the technical assistance, training, and reporting or tracking resources offered by CDEC in order to administer the Program and will meet performance measures of timeliness and accuracy.
- g. The County will meet timely processing requirements as outlined in 8 CCR 1403-1. Timeliness requirements are measured from the date the county receives an application or re-determination.
- h. The County will meet established accuracy requirements that ensure compliance with Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), title 45 of the Public Welfare Code, part 98, subpart K - Error Reporting and the Federal Child Care Improper Payment Data Collection Instructions (DCI).

The parties acknowledge that the performance measures of timeliness and accuracy are, as of the signing of this MOU, the only mandated performance goals. The County's agreement to meet the performance measures is relevant to CDEC's anticipation that CDEC will, in turn, be able to meet the performance measures required by Federal guidelines.

4. DUTIES OF CDEC

- a. In consultation with the Counties, CDEC will oversee the implementation of the Child Care Program, statewide, and will develop standardized forms that streamline the application process, the delivery of services, and the tracking of participants.
- b. CDEC will monitor the County's provision of child care services and, if necessary, perform the duties outlined in CRS §§ 26.5 Article 4, Part 1.
- c. CDEC exercises oversight of and responsibility for the development, implementation, maintenance, and enhancement of the State Child Care Automated Tracking System (CHATS) and its application relative to the Child Care Program. Because the State Child Care Automated Tracking System is a system that utilizes decision tables run by a rules engine for determining eligibility and amount of benefits to the extent allowed by law, the County will not be penalized or required to follow a remediation plan due to service disruptions or for erroneous decisions made by the State Child Care Automated Tracking System. Without limitation, this applies to erroneous eligibility decisions, erroneous determination of the amount of benefits, erroneous decisions resulting in overpayments and subsequent recoveries, and erroneous decisions resulting in underpayments and subsequent supplemental payments of claims.
- d. CDEC will not penalize counties for not meeting the required eligibility performance measures when it is due to a system service disruption that impacts a county's ability to meet timeliness and accuracy rates.

CDEC acknowledges that liability to third parties resulting from erroneous, inaccurate, or inadequate State Child Care Automated Tracking System notices to Child Care Program households, is properly the State's liability. CDEC will not take recovery action against the County for any claim, including a legal claim, that is defined in this paragraph c as a State Child Care Automated Tracking System caused error. This provision does not apply to any errors, claims, or issues caused by the County's inaccurate data entry in the system, the County's failure to follow clear, reasonable, and lawful instruction, or failure to follow applicable program regulations in 9 CCR 2503-8, 8 CCR 1403-1, 9 CCR 2503-8 or any other applicable regulation promulgated by CDEC. This provision does apply to the State Child Care Automated Tracking System training and data entry rules and/or any rules that are part of the State Child Care Automated Tracking System rule engine.

- e. CDEC will consider county recommendations and feedback provided to the Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) and/or RAC County Subcommittee related to proposed policies or proposed rule changes that may impact performance measures and help meet federal guidelines.
- f. CDEC will formally communicate in writing the established Performance Measures by outlining the requirements for timeliness and accuracy via a Program memo.
- g. CDEC will use valid data from the State Child Care Automated Tracking System and other sources, as necessary, to accurately calculate the County's performance measures. Prior to submitting its calculation to the federal government, CDEC will provide the County with the individual data variables and supporting information used in the calculations, so that the County may review the data to ensure the accuracy, validity, and proper calculation of the accuracy rates.
- h. CDEC will provide counties with reports that summarize the results of the Quality Assurance

reviews on a monthly basis

- i. CDEC will develop and provide ongoing technical assistance, training, and reporting for tracking resources to help the County administer the program and to meet performance measures. A CDEC technical issue that cannot be resolved within 48 hours will be factored into a County's timeliness rate as a mitigating factor during the time that the issue is unresolved.
- j. CDEC will develop and provide online, on-demand, or one on one training for Program staff.
- k. CDEC will provide reports on County performance monthly.
- l. The amount identified for a county's level of spending, as required by section 26.5-4-110(6) C.R.S., shall be identified annually in the Allocation Agency Letter.
- m. CDEC will ensure that requests for CHATS Pilot/LMS or CHATS access for County CCCAP staff are processed within two (2) business days of the request.
- n. CDEC will ensure, via agreement with LCO's, that Counties are only responsible for CCCAP timeliness once the application is received by the county.

5. JOINT CDEC AND COUNTY DUTIES

- a. CDEC and Counties will work together in partnership to communicate performance expectations and results to jointly achieve federally required performance outcome measures related to timeliness and accuracy as described in Section 3.
- b. As needed, the State and Counties will convene meetings, workshops, focus groups, or other forums to share information, best process, or targeted strategies to achieve the spirit and intent of this MOU document and related federal and state performance requirements.
- c. The State and the Counties will work together to ensure that the information entered and reported in the State Child Care Automated Tracking System and the Colorado Benefits Management System (for the purposes of data matching and Colorado Works Child Care cases) are as accurate as possible. The State shall work to address any system issues in a timely manner, and Counties will enter accurate client and provider information in the applicable state systems.

6. REMEDIATION PLANS

- a. The County, in consultation with CDEC, may develop a remediation plan if, during the term of this MOU, the County engages in any of the following actions:
 - i. Spending federal or state Child Care Program funds in a manner disallowed by Federal or State law, which could include receipts or recoveries that are not reported;
 - ii. Failing to meet the established performance measures;
 - iii. Restricting eligibility or the provision of services, or imposing penalties in a manner inconsistent with a federally compliant state law and state plan, and applicable program

regulation;

- iv. Failing to meet timely processing requirements or Child Care Program federal improper payment error rate guidelines, in accordance with the federal fiscal year and as described in section 3.

7. PENALTIES

- a. According to CRS §§ 26.5-4-115, a county or group of counties may be penalized for not meeting any obligation under this performance contract and may include a reduction in a future county block grant allocation.
- b. Subject to the limitations set forth herein, if CDEC is subject to a federal penalty, and the County's remediation plan was insufficient, CDEC may impose penalties on the County pursuant to this MOU only if during the term of this MOU, the County engages in any of the following actions:
 - i. Spending federal or state Child Care Program funds in a manner disallowed by Federal or State law, which could include receipts or recoveries that are not reported;
 - ii. Failing to meet the negotiated performance measures;
 - iii. Restricting eligibility or the provision of services, or imposing penalties in a manner inconsistent with a federally compliant state law and state plan, and applicable program regulation.
 - iv. Failing to meet timely processing and accuracy requirements as described in section 3.
- c. A penalty will not be imposed on the County for failing to adhere to a state regulation that conflicts with federal law.
- d. The county will not be penalized or required to follow a remediation plan if:
 - i. The County can demonstrate by a preponderance of evidence that CDEC provided inaccurate guidance, training, or data with regards to performance under this MOU; and,
 - ii. That the County's reliance on this information is the proximate cause for the imposed penalties. If the County can only demonstrate that it is the proximate cause for part of the penalty, the County will not be liable for that portion of the penalty.
 - iii. The CDEC fails to provide monthly timeliness reports to the County

8. PROCEDURES FOR IMPOSING A REMEDIATION PLAN OR PENALTIES

- a. The process for a penalty or remediation plan against the County or group of Counties by CDEC will be as follows:
 - i. CDEC will provide the County with written notice of the County's failure to meet any performance measure outlined in this MOU. This notification will include all associated documentation that supports CDEC's determination of the performance failure. Upon receiving such notice, the County has sixty (60) days to contest, explain, offer evidence of mitigating factors, and/or submit a remediation plan to correct the alleged

performance problem.

- ii. If the County's remediation plan does not rectify the performance problem, CDEC may determine the appropriate level of penalty. CDEC shall take into consideration as a mitigating factor any alleged violation of a state regulation, if that regulation exceeds or conflicts with the requirements of the federal law. CDEC will provide the County one hundred eighty (180) days written notice of the proposed penalty before imposing any penalty. This notification will include the rationale of imposing the penalty, as well as all associated documentation, a calculation of the proposed penalty, and an indication of what constitutes a remedy or correction that will allow the County to avert the penalty, if any remedy or correction is possible. Upon receiving such notice, the County has ninety (90) days to contest, explain or offer evidence of mitigating factors, before CDEC imposes the penalty.
 - iii. If a penalty is imposed by the Federal Government as a result of a county's actions, CDEC will impose a penalty against that county proportionate to the county's responsibility which cannot be greater than that imposed by the Federal Government. If CDEC has incurred a penalty due to the failure of more than one County to meet its obligations under the terms of this MOU, the County will only be penalized for its share of the penalty.
- b. CDEC will provide the County with all documents received from the federal government related to any proposed or imposed federal penalty within twenty (20) days of receipt, together with all CDEC documents related to the actions giving rise to that federal penalty, or that related to the penalty process or how the County's share of the penalty was determined. If CDEC fails to provide the required documentation within the twenty (20) days, CDEC may not hold the County liable for that penalty.

9. CIRCUMSTANCES FOR CDEC ASSUMING ADMINISTRATION

- a. As outlined in CRS §§ 26.5-4-115 (2), if the County continues to knowingly or consistently fail to meet its obligation specified in this MOU, CDEC, at its sole discretion, may assume the County's administration and implementation of the Child Care Program.

In that event, CDEC will provide the County with ninety (90) days of written notice before assuming these duties. Upon receipt of such notice, the County shall have the opportunity to contest, explain, offer evidence of mitigating factors, or correct the failure before CDEC assumes the duties.

- b. If the County continues to consistently fail to meet its obligation specified in this MOU, the County at its sole discretion may ask CDEC to assume the County's administration and implementation of the Child Care Program.
- c. If CDEC assumes the County's administration and implementation of the Child Care Program, it may retain the unused portion of the allocation that was provided to the County, as part of the County's block grant for its administration and implementation of the Program, in accordance with the formulas described in CRS §§ 26.5-4-110. CDEC will, in consultation and in conjunction with the County, develop or modify automated systems to meet the reporting requirements of CRS §§ 26.5-4-114.
- d. CDEC has no authority to require counties to pay MOE (Maintenance of Effort) for any program other than CCCAP.

10. DISCRETIONARY MATTERS

The parties agree that all portions of Part 1 of Article 4 of Title 26.5 that grant discretion to CDEC or the County regarding the administration of the Child Care Program in the County, will not be affected by the execution of this MOU except as explicitly stated herein.

11. SEVERABILITY

To the extent that this MOU is executed, and the performance of the obligations of the parties may be accomplished within the intent of the MOU, the terms of the MOU are severable. Thus, should any term or provision herein be declared invalid or become inoperative for any reason, such invalidity or failure shall not affect the validity of any other term or provision herein. The waiver of any break of term, herein shall not be construed as a waiver of any other term, or of the same term upon subsequent breach.

12. INTEGRATION OF UNDERSTANDING

This MOU is intended as the complete integration of the understanding between the parties concerning the matters negotiated between them and incorporated in this MOU. No prior or contemporaneous addition, deletion, or other amendments hereto shall have any force or effect whatsoever, unless embodied in writing. No subsequent notation, renewal, addition, deletion, or other amendments hereto shall have any force or effect unless embodied in a written amendment executed by the parties.

The parties recognize the nature of the relationship between the County and State. This relationship is governed more broadly by pertinent provisions of the Colorado Constitution and of State Statutes, the State Plan, and Program regulations. The parties further recognize that this MOU is not intended to supersede or change the relationship between the County and the State as established by any legal authority.

13. NO THIRD-PARTY BENEFICIARY

This MOU is binding on CDEC, and the County or group of Counties, as well as their respective successors and assigns. It is agreed that the enforcement of the terms and conditions of the MOU are reserved for CDEC and the County or group of Counties to the extent permitted by law. Nothing contained in this MOU allows a claim or right of action by a third party. Any third-party receiving services or benefits under the provisions of this MOU is deemed an incidental beneficiary.

14. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

According to CRS §§ 26.5-4-115, if a disagreement concerning this performance contract arises between the County or group of Counties and the CDEC, either party may request resolution of the disagreement through an independent dispute resolution process that is agreed upon by the parties. If necessary to assure services are available within the County or group of counties, the Department may enter into a temporary agreement with the County or group of Counties or with another public or private agent until the disagreement is resolved.

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR,
STATE OF COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Executive Director or Designee

COUNTY OF _____ COLORADO,
by and through the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chairman

ATTEST:

County Clerk to the Board

Date: _____