



DCF SUPPORTIVE CHILD CARE VOUCHERS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is a Child Care Resource and Referral agency?

The Department of Early Education and Care works with seven Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies statewide. The CCR&R is an agency that keeps information on all licensed and licensed-exempt programs including child care centers, family child care providers, preschools, and out-of-school time programs. CCR&Rs can help families search for child care tailored to their specific need and provide consultation on how to look for quality child care. Additional data such as age-specific vacancies, statewide and local child care waitlists, special services, financial assistance options e.g. vouchers and parenting information is also available.

2. What are the differences between a Supportive Child Care voucher and slot?

A Supportive Child Care Voucher is an EEC subsidy in the form of a voucher that DCF authorizes and can be used at any child care provider that accepts vouchers. Transportation may be added to a voucher when it is needed; however, the other services provided with DCF's Supportive Child Care slots are not. This also means that the child care provider accepting the voucher is not aware of the child's DCF involvement unless the caregiver has disclosed it to them. ***The DCF Supportive Child Care Authorization form is not passed on to the provider by the CCR&R.***

A Supportive Child Care Slot is an EEC subsidy in the form of a contracted slot. Only certain providers hold Supportive Child Care contracts with EEC for the provision of such slots. These programs are contracted to provide additional services to DCF children such as case management, transitional planning, transportation when needed, etc. These programs also have ongoing communication with the DCF Area Office's Child Care Coordinator and Social Workers regarding the children in these slots. ***An Area Office's slots should be used before contacting Central Office for a voucher.***

3. What makes a family eligible for a voucher?

Eligibility for Supportive Child Care, including these vouchers, is based on a child having an "open, active" DCF case. This includes foster care placements. The Area Director or their designee will prioritize who the staff may authorize for a voucher based on their clinical decision as well as the resources available through Supportive Child Care program. The child is eligible for this voucher as long as the case is open.

4. Can an Area Office request a voucher for a caregiver that resides in another DCF catchment area?

Yes, unlike Supportive Child Care slots the Child Care Coordinator seeking a voucher will be able to contact the CCR&R directly if there is a need outside of their catchment area. ***However, a Supportive Child Care slot should be pursued through the local Area Office where the child resides before requesting a voucher through Central Office.***

5. How long does the voucher process take after approval?

The voucher processing time varies depending on when DCF sends the referral to the CCR&R, when the caregiver is reached by the CCR&R, when the caregiver secures a provider and when the caregiver comes in to meet with the CCR&R for the voucher to be issued. Best practice is for the DCF Social Worker to discuss the process with the caregiver prior to the CCR&R contacting the caregiver. DCF and the CCR&R should communicate whenever there are challenges in reaching a caregiver. DCF Supportive Child Care Authorization Forms are valid for 45 days from the date when CCR&R receives it.



DCF VOUCHER APPROVAL NOTIFICATION TO CCR&R

6. What does DCF need to send to the CCR&R?

Upon the approval of the Early Childhood Program Coordinator at Central Office, the Child Care Coordinator will email to an updated and completed DCF Supportive Child Care Authorization Forms to the appropriate CCR&R copying the DCF Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Social Worker and Supervisor.

Please note: A DCF Supportive Child Care Authorization Form must be sent to the CCR&R to enable them contact the caregiver. Incomplete forms will be sent back to DCF; please be sure to fill in all sections.

7. Can transportation be included in the voucher?

Transportation can be indicated in the voucher authorization when needed. However, this limits caregivers to providers who provide transportation. If after a specific site is identified and transportation is no longer needed, the authorization can be changed. DCF determines if the child needs transportation; the CCR&R does not need to do this evaluation.

8. What happens if a caregiver wants to use a voucher with a Supportive Child Care provider?

If a DCF child is referred to a CCR&R for a voucher, and the caregiver chooses to use that voucher at a provider that has an open Supportive Child Care contracted slot, the child will only go into the contracted slot at DCF's discretion. If the DCF Social Worker would like the child to go into a slot instead, he/she should notify the DCF Child Care Coordinator who will let the CCR&R know that a voucher is no longer needed. ***Please see #2 above for the description of the services provided through a Supportive Child Care slot.***

CCR&R FOLLOW-UP WITH CAREGIVER

9. What happens next?

- The CCR&R will contact the caregiver by mail or by telephone when they receive the DCF referral using the contact information on the referral. The caregiver may also contact the CCR&R.
- During this conversation, the CCR&R will ask the caregiver whether they have identified a program. If not, they will provide the caregiver with an individualized consultation to determine the providers that meet their specific needs (location, hours, program type, etc.) and accept EEC vouchers. *MASS 211(dial 211) can also do the child care search if it is more convenient for the caregiver.*
- The CCR&R will send the caregiver "referrals" i.e. the results of the child care search, via mail or email. They may also provide some tips on choosing on how to choose a child care program.
- The caregiver must now contact the programs on the list to determine where they would like to enroll their child and whether the program has space. It is best for caregivers to visit the programs if possible. The caregiver should also let the provider know they have been awarded voucher.
- When the caregiver selects a program that can enroll their child, they will need to complete enrollment paperwork with the program. Part of this step will include the

program completing an EEC Provider Confirmation form which will need to be sent the CCR&R to secure the voucher.

- The caregiver then schedules a meeting with the CCR&R to sign the voucher. The caregiver will need to bring in a current photo ID and sign forms (voucher; application and fee agreement; attendance agreement). ***Until this part is completed the voucher is not active.***
- Once the voucher is signed, the CCR&R will send a copy of the signed voucher to the DCF Child Care Coordinator and Social Worker, indicating the start date and the program that the caregiver has chosen.

10. What happens if the caregiver does not find a program from the referrals?

The caregiver should contact the CCR&R as soon as possible and ask for another search using different criteria.

DCF AND CCR&R ONGOING COMMUNICATION

11. What happens for the 6 month reauthorization and 1 year exception?

The DCF Social Worker or Child Care Coordinator will follow the same process that they do for Supportive slots. All authorizations should be sent, via email, to the CCR&Rs, including the necessary information for each authorization. A new caregiver signature is not needed by the CCR&R.

12. What happens if there needs to be a change in the program during the authorization period?

The DCF Social Worker should let the Child Care Coordinator know when there needs to be a change in programs so that the CCR&R can be informed. The vouchers are program-specific and need to reflect the new program. If the caregiver has not identified a new program, the CCR&R can assist in a new search.

13. What happens if the caregiver changes during the authorization period?

The DCF Social Worker should let the Child Care Coordinator know when there has been a change in caregiver so that the CCR&R can be informed. Depending on the town where the child resides, the voucher may need to be transferred to another CCR&R. The new caregiver will also need to meet with the CCR&R to update the paperwork. When a voucher changes (most of often related to custody issues), the CCR&R will exercise some discretion in the length of time allowed for the new caregiver to sign forms at the CCRR office. On occasion, EEC will allow a faxed signature.

PREPARING FOR CASE CLOSURE

14. What should a DCF Social Worker do before case closure?

In order to ensure a smooth transition, the DCF Social Worker should discuss child care needs with the caregiver prior to case closure. It is important to find out whether the caregiver is still in need of child care after case closure. If so, the caregiver will need to contact the CCR&R to see if they are eligible for other EEC subsidies. ***Please note: This may take some time so having the conversation early is important.***

15. What happens after case closure or after Transitional Child Care ends?

To continue a voucher the CCR&R will need to determine whether the family qualifies for financial assistance under EEC regulations. This process included a review of the family's household income and service need.



16. What should a DCF Social Worker do at case closure?

The DCF Social Worker should communicate case closure to the Child Care Coordinator, indicating the plans for child care. Through these vouchers, DCF children are eligible for up to 6 months of Transitional Child Care.

When the DCF case closes and DCF is NOT authorizing Transitional Child Care: A 2 week notice should be sent out by the DCF Child Care Coordinator to the CCR&R via email, copying the Social Worker.

When the DCF case closes and DCF is authorizing Transitional Child Care: After the case has closed, the DCF Child Care Coordinator should send the CCR&R an email copying the Social Worker indicating the case closure date and the Transitional Child Care start and end date.