



# News Release

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NOVEMBER 9, 2017  
PRESS RELEASE

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## Office of Early Childhood Announces Care 4 Kids Program Will Reopen to Provide Crucial Child Care Subsidies to Thousands of Families

NEW HAVEN – The Care 4 Kids program, a cornerstone of Connecticut’s early care and education system, will reopen enrollment in the coming weeks. New funding included in the recently approved state budget will allow the Office of Early Childhood to reopen the child care subsidy program to some of the 5,769 families on the waiting list for the program. Program administrators mailed applications to the first 1,600 families today as a first step.

The Care 4 Kids program closure more than a year ago was the result of federal regulatory changes that increased program costs without providing additional funding, leading to a budget shortfall. The closure left thousands of families without high-quality care and threatened child care providers across the state who could no longer fill their classrooms. Thanks to the efforts of Connecticut advocates and policymakers, many children and families will regain access to this critical program.

The Care 4 Kids child care subsidy plays a key role in providing quality child care to low-income working families in Connecticut, enrolling an average of about 21,000 children per month in 2016. Connecticut has a high need for affordable child-care, especially for the sixteen percent of children under age five in our state whose families live below the poverty line. Care 4 Kids helps children and families access early care and education programs, which are among the most effective programs for improving the lifelong outcomes for children. Child care programs allow parents to go to work to support their families. Children who have attended high-quality early care and education tend to grow up healthier, do better in school, and earn higher incomes as adults. These improved outcomes have a direct positive impact on the economy in the form of increased wages and productivity, and lower spending on social services.

Securing additional funding for Care 4 Kids for the next two years was part of a bipartisan effort to ensure that children and families remain a priority for state government, building a strong foundation for families and for future economic growth. This funding, however, represents a partial first step. The additional funds cover only a small portion of the existing shortfall. Care 4 Kids will serve more children, but it won’t be able to return to last year’s levels, meaning that not every eligible family will receive the subsidies they need. It is expected that the program will continue to operate with a waiting list. Unfortunately, children’s development cannot wait, and neither do employers who need their employees to come in to work.

“The reopening of the Care 4 Kids program, even if partial, is good news for children, families and business across Connecticut,” says Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children. “By providing child care subsidies that open the doors to high-quality early care, we not only help parents work and enable young children to thrive but we also lay the foundation for later school success and college and career readiness. Bipartisan support for the program, even in these challenging budget times, sends a strong signal that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are willing to work to create opportunity and advance inclusive economic growth. We look forward to exploring new ways this coming legislative session to further expand the program to ensure that all children in Connecticut have a meaningful chance to reach their full potential.”

*About Connecticut Voices for Children: Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. In furtherance of its mission, Connecticut Voices for Children produces high-quality research and analysis, promotes citizen education, advocates for policy change at the state and local level, and works to develop the next generation of leaders.*