

GUIDANCE

Examples in this guidance The examples used in this guidance are illustrative only. They are not intended to prescribe approaches or limit Lead Agency flexibility.

Completing the Plan when other entities are involved Section 658D(b)(1)(A) of the Act requires the Lead Agency to “administer, directly, or through other governmental or non-governmental agencies” the funds received. The regulations at 45 CFR 98.11 provide that, in addition to retaining “overall responsibility” for the administration of the program, the Lead Agency must also (among other things):

- Promulgate all rules and regulations governing the overall administration of the CCDF program;
- Ensure compliance with the approved Plan and all Federal requirements;
- Oversee the expenditure of funds by subgrantees and contractors;
- Ensure that any State, local or non-governmental agencies through which the State administers the program – including agencies and contractors that determine individual eligibility – operate according to the rules established for the CCDF.

Some States permit other non-CCDF administrative entities, for example, county governments or multi-area entities, to set additional eligibility criteria, establish sliding fee scales, or select the quality activities to be undertaken, within broad parameters established by the Lead Agency. Section 1.5 of the Plan asks the Lead Agency how the Lead Agency maintains overall control when other non-CCDF administrative entities are involved.

Two sections in the Plan (section 3.3.3 on eligibility criteria and section 3.5.2 on sliding fee scales) specifically ask about the application of policy across the entire State. It is in these two areas that local variations most often exist. However, there may be other areas where local variations exist, but are not specifically addressed by the section. Where local variations exist, the Lead Agency should so indicate. The following sections may require Lead Agencies to note the existence of local variations:

- 3.4 - Priorities for Children
- 3.5.3 - Fee waiver policy
- 3.6 – Certificate Payment System
- Part 4 – Processes with Parents
- Part 5 – Quality Activities/Services

The notation need not specify the details of each local variation unless the

Lead Agency chooses to provide such detail. For example, in response to section 3.4, the Lead Agency could list the State-level priorities, but note that local counties have the flexibility to change the order of the priorities. It would not be necessary to list the priorities in each county. An acceptable response would be: “*Counties must submit their priorities to the State Lead Agency office for approval.*” Responses merely indicating that counties set their own priorities may not be acceptable unless it is made clear that the Lead Agency maintains its required “overall responsibility.”

Amendment Log An approved plan needs to be amended whenever a substantial change is made to the program. The amendment is to be submitted within 60 days of the effective date of the change. An amendment will be approved within 90 days from the date the amendment is received. (An extension of the time period may be made by a written agreement.) (98.18(b))

1.1 and 1.2 **Lead Agency Information:** Identify the Lead Agency and Lead Agency’s Chief Executive Officer as designated by the State Chief Executive Officer. ACF will send grant awards, grant adjustments, plan approvals and disallowance notifications to the address shown here.

State Child Care (CCDF) Contact Information: Identify the contact with day-to-day responsibilities and knowledge of the operations of the State’s CCDF-funded child care program. Typically, the Lead Agency information will identify a State cabinet-level incumbent, while the State Child Care (CCDF) Contact information will identify the State child care program administrator.

Responses to questions 1.1 and 1.2 serve as the Lead Agency's official and formal notification to ACF of any changes in the administration and location of the Lead Agency and contact for the State child care (CCDF) program.

1.3 and 1.4 The purpose of questions 1.3 and 1.4 is to provide the public with an indication of the amount of funds available for child care and related activities. The amounts provided in response to these questions are informational only and will not be subject to compliance actions, nor will ACF distribute funds based on these estimates. Estimates are for the one-year period 10/1/03--9/30/04 even though the Plan covers a two-year period. Quarterly requests for funds and information on the actual use of funds must be provided to ACF on other designated financial management forms (e.g., ACF-696) and reports.

1.3 and 1.4
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For purposes of this question, the Federal CCDF amount is the total of the Discretionary, Mandatory, and Matching Funds of the CCDF. On separate lines, Lead Agencies indicate the funds expected to be transferred from the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program and the anticipated Direct Federal TANF spending on child care (if known).

Lines are also provided for the estimate of State (i.e., non-Federal) funds available to meet the maintenance of effort (MOE) requirement and share of the Matching Fund of the CCDF. States have the option to include other State-only funds that exceed the amounts required to meet the MOE and Match provisions, if they choose.

Territories may indicate "Not Applicable" ("NA") in the State amount line or indicate any Territory-only funds used for the CCDF.

In question 1.4, estimate the amount and percentage of the total CCDF grant that will be used to administer all services and activities under CCDF. Show only the amount of Federal funds and required State CCDF expenditures, i.e., do not include the cost of administering other State programs. The Lead Agency is reminded that not more than five percent of the total CCDF (which includes the State's share of the Matching fund) may be used for administration. The regulations at 45 CFR 98.52 discuss what constitutes an administrative cost.

1.5

Examples of how the Lead Agency can demonstrate that it maintains overall control when services and activities are provided through other agencies include:

- A discussion of how frequently and in what manner the Lead Agency monitors the other agencies;
- Whether other agencies must certify that Lead Agency guidelines are followed;
- The benchmarks, performance indicators, or standards that are applied to the other agency;
- When administration has devolved to localities, whether those localities/agencies must submit plans to the Lead Agency or otherwise seek Lead Agency approval;
- A discussion of the contract/grant process, including an indication of how often a contract/grant is opened to new competition;
- Requirements specified in interagency agreements, memoranda of understanding, state statute, etc.

1.6

This question addresses only the child care services that are provided under §98.50, i.e., those services for which individual eligibility must be determined. When local offices of the Lead Agency perform the task, the appropriate answer is “Yes.” If other entities such as contracted child care providers perform any of the functions listed, the answer should be “No.”

If the Lead Agency answers “No” to any of the four questions, please identify the entity that performs the task. When more than one entity performs the same task, indicate all entities. For example, when a child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R) provides payments in one part of the State and the TANF agency performs this function in another part of the State, identify both.

It is only necessary to identify the highest level of the other entity involved.

For example, if the Lead Agency has an interagency agreement with county TANF agencies to determine eligibility, but the county TANF agencies have the authority to further contract those services through a competitive bid process, it is only necessary to indicate “County TANF agencies.” It would be helpful if the Lead Agency would explain that further contracting may occur in an example such as this one.

To facilitate comparisons across States, Lead Agencies are encouraged to indicate the type of entity performing the task by using one of the following identifiers:

- The State/County TANF agency;
- A non-TANF State/County agency. (Examples: State Employment Services; food stamp agency);
- A non-governmental community or faith-based organization. (Examples: United Way; Council of Churches);
- Child Care Resource & Referral Service;
- School/school district;
- Child care provider;
- Other – if the entity does not fall into one of the above types, please describe.

1.8

The regulations provide for the designation of only one entity in the State to receive donated funds, and only donations received by that agency may be counted for match purposes. The Lead Agency may designate itself as that entity.

1.9 The regulations at §98.53(h)(3) stipulate that a State may use public pre-K funds for up to 20 percent of its MOE funds and other public pre-K funds for up to 20 percent of its matching funds. However, the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative will allow a State to use pre-K funds for up to 30 percent of its CCDF match (this provision is subject to amendment of the CCDF regulations).

Examples of how the Lead Agency can coordinate its pre-K and child care services to expand the availability of child care include:

- The distribution of pre-K funding in the State takes into account the local availability of child care;
- School-based transportation is made available to child care programs;
- Child care programs and schools collaborate to make better use of school facilities, especially in the summer or when schools are not used.

2.1 The statute and the regulations stipulate that, in developing its Plan, the Lead Agency shall:

- Consult with appropriate representatives of local government (658D(b)(2); §98.12(b); 98.14(b))
- Coordinate the provision of services with other Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood development programs, including such programs for the benefit of Indian children. (§98.12(c); 98.14(a)(1))
- Coordinate with the State/Tribal agency responsible for: Public Health; Employment Services; Public Education; TANF.

Note: 17 States have no Federally recognized Tribes within their boundaries. These are: AR, DE, DC, GA, IL, IN, KY, MD, MO, NH, NJ, OH, PA, TN, VT, VA, WV.

2.2 Lead Agencies are reminded that at least one hearing must be held to allow the public the opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under the Plan. At least 20 days of statewide public notice must be provided in advance of the hearing. The hearing shall be held before the Plan is submitted to ACF but no earlier than nine months before the effective date of the Plan, i.e., no earlier than January 1, 2003. The content of the proposed Plan shall be made available to the public in advance of the hearing.

2.3 This section requests that the Lead Agency describes activities, including planned activities, to encourage public-private partnerships in meeting child care needs. Activities might include initiatives focused on public awareness, business involvement, professional development, quality improvement, resource and referral services, literacy initiatives, inclusion of children with disabilities, health initiatives, facility start-up and enhancement, and so on.

Consistent with §98.14(a)(2) of the regulations, Lead Agencies are required to discuss the results or expected results of these activities.

3.1.1 This question addresses contracts or grants to child care programs or providers for the direct purchase of a specified number of slots. Do not check “Yes” if every provider is simply required to sign a “contract” in order to be paid through your certificate program.

3.1.2 In this section, the Lead Agency should describe how it limits in-home care, for instance, by specifying the minimum number of children who must be served, requiring parents to pay the difference between the State's rate maximum and the minimum wage, requiring caregiver background checks, or mandating training.

3.1.3 The Lead Agency is not required to offer services statewide nor must the same services be offered statewide. If all services are not offered statewide, however, indicate the services that are not available and identify the area where the services are not offered.

3.2 The regulations provide that the local market survey must have been conducted “no earlier than two years prior to the effective date of the currently approved Plan.” Plans will not be approved unless a local market survey has been completed within the allowable time period (10/1/01 – 9/30/03). Lead Agencies are required to indicate the month and year when their local market rate survey was completed as well as a copy of the survey instrument and survey results. ACF does not expect that raw data will be submitted with the plan, but rather an analysis or summary of the results. Most States will have produced such a report that describes the survey process and its findings.

In addition, a copy of the payment rates for all categories of care including in-home providers should be attached. The Lead Agency should indicate the percentile of the local market rate at which the rates are set: e.g., the 75th

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percentile, 70th percentile, etc., and whether the rates vary by area of the State.

If the Lead Agency provides tiered reimbursements, a copy of those payment rates should be included as well. Tiered reimbursements include higher payments for providers who demonstrate that they provide better quality child care and payment rates that vary for children with disabilities and other special needs, non-standard-hour and other specialized types of care.

The explanation of how rates ensure equal access should include a description of how the rates correspond to market charges as evidenced by the survey. For example, the explanation might include: *“Rates for center-based and regulated family child care are set at the 75th percentile of market charges as demonstrated by our local market survey. Rates for unregulated providers are set at 50 percent of family child care home rates as a sufficient number of unregulated providers could not be identified and surveyed. Additionally, unregulated providers are not currently required to undertake the same high level of ongoing training as are the regulated providers. Rates for unregulated providers were set at a lower amount in the past and we experienced no reluctance to provide care at that rate.”*

Where the Lead Agency’s payment rates do not show the same categories of care described in the parental choice requirement at §98.30(e)(1) (i.e., centers, group homes, family, and in-home care), include a definition of the categories that the lead Agency uses. For example, if the Lead Agency’s rates include only centers, family homes, and in-home care: *“Centers are facilities caring for groups of children in a non-residential setting. A family child care home is a licensed provider in a private residence caring for up to 12 unrelated children depending on the ages of the children and availability of an assistant. An in-home provider cares for the children of only one family in that family’s home. The State does not distinguish between group and family child care homes, therefore rates for only three categories are shown.”*

Lead Agencies are reminded that §98.30(e)(1) stipulates that under each of the categories of care, care by a sectarian provider may not be limited or excluded. In addition, we note that timeliness of payments and rules governing child absences that reflect usual and customary market practice can also affect access.

3.3

Typically when children reach age 13, they are no longer eligible for CCDF funded child care. However, a Lead Agency has the option to provide child care to children age 13 or over if they are physically or mentally incapable of self-care, or under court supervision. When such children reach age 19, they

cease to be eligible for CCDF child care.

3.3.1 Eligibility for CCDF services is limited to families with income at or below 85 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) for a family of the same size. Whether or not the Lead Agency offers services to families with income up to 85 percent of SMI, this upper eligibility level must be recorded in column (a).

Column (b) is completed only if the Lead Agency uses an income level lower than 85 percent of SMI to limit eligibility. The percent of the SMI that an income level represents when below 85 percent of the SMI must be noted.

When there are multiple geographic areas with differing eligibility levels, a L.A. can satisfy the requirement of this section by providing a table that shows the areas and applicable maximum eligibility limits. If, for administrative purposes, a Lead Agency uses the Federal poverty level rather than the SMI to determine eligibility, ACF needs to know the corresponding SMI in order to ensure compliance with CCDF rules.

Note that the Lead Agency is now required to indicate the year of the SMI on which it bases its eligibility level.

Neither the statute nor the regulations specify a source or basis for State Median Income (SMI), and the Lead Agency has flexibility in determining its SMI. Lead Agencies are, however, encouraged to use the most recent fiscal year information provided by the Bureau of Census in completing column (a). The Bureau of the Census publishes estimates of SMI on its web site at: www.census.gov/hhes/income/4person.html. SMI estimates for FY 2004 (starting October 1, 2003) are also expected to be published in the Federal Register in March 2003 for use in the LIHEAP program. When published, the estimates will be available at: www.access.gpo.gov.

3.3.2 CCDF regulations provide that Lead Agencies are to include in their Plans any additional eligibility criteria, priority rules and definitions that have been established. This section requires that Lead Agencies describe and/or attach information about how income is defined for CCDF eligibility purposes.

3.3.3 If there are different/multiple income levels (e.g., 3.3.1 column “b”) in use in the State, explain the variations here and include a copy of the income levels as an attachment. For example, a Lead Agency may have entrance and exit eligibility thresholds that differ, allow local counties to set eligibility levels, or have eligibility that differs for families that include a child with special needs.

3.3.4	Waiving fees for children receiving (or in need of) protective services may only be done on a case-by-case basis. There is no provision for automatically waiving fees in every protective service case.
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3.3.5 and 3.3.6	The upper age limit may not be age 19 or over (e.g., not "19 years, 1 month"; or "up to age 20").
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3.3.8	The Lead Agency is reminded that respite care is allowable only for brief, occasional periods in excess of the normal "less than 24 hour period."
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3.4.1	<p>The Lead Agency <u>must</u> give priority for child care services to children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With special needs (as defined in Appendix 2); ▪ In families with very low incomes (as defined in Appendix 2). <p>However, the statute and the regulations do not prescribe how to "give priority." Therefore, while the list of priorities for services must include special needs and very low-income children, they need not appear first on the list. For example, priority can be achieved by setting aside specific funds or slots for special needs or very low income children. "Special needs" in this context may be broadly defined. It is not limited to children with physical or mental disabilities.</p>
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3.4.3	<p>Many States are unable to serve all families that are technically eligible for child care assistance under CCDF given the policy choices States have made in terms of eligibility limits, priorities, parent co-payments and provider reimbursement rates. The Plan asks the Lead Agency how it addresses this situation. E.g.: <i>Does the State maintain a waiting list and if so, for what populations? Is the waiting list maintained Statewide or at some other level? Are certain categories of waiting list families given priority for services? Does the State reexamine its policies about eligibility/co-payments/payment rates and make adjustments so that more families can be served?</i></p>
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3.5.1 and 3.5.2	The attachment must include an explanation -- for example, an excerpt from an eligibility worker's manual -- of how the sliding fee scale works; whether, e.g., it varies by number of children in care or the cost of care.
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3.5.3	The 2003 HHS Poverty Guideline is \$15,260 for a family of three. For other
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3.5.3 (continued) family sizes apply \$3,140 per person, except in Alaska and Hawaii. For Alaska, the 2003 HHS Poverty Guideline for a family of three is \$19,070 (apply \$3,930 per person for other family sizes). For Hawaii, the 2003 HHS Poverty Guideline for a family of three is \$17,550 (apply \$3,610 per person for other family sizes). The HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2003 were published on February 7, 2003. (68 FR 6456) They are available on the Federal Register Web site at: www.access.gpo.gov.

The Lead Agency is not required to use the HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2003, but must indicate the poverty level it is using if it elects to waive the required fee.

3.5.4 Allowing providers to charge parent fees in addition to those included under the sliding fee scale may have serious implications for access and affordability of child care by low-income families. Lead Agencies are asked whether they prohibit providers from charging families fees in addition to the co-payment described in 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.

3.5.5 The preamble to the regulations suggests that co-payments that are no more than 10 percent of family income would be "affordable." It should be noted, however, that the regulations do not establish this or any other standard or criteria that co-payments must meet. The suggested percentage may be too high for some very low-income families and not high enough to prevent "cliffs" for families nearing their State's eligibility limit. The explanation, at a minimum, should indicate the percent of its income that a typical family would use to meet its co-payment. Lead Agencies are reminded that co-pays may not vary based on a family's eligibility status or circumstances.

3.6.1 The Lead Agency is encouraged to provide a copy of the certificate in addition to its description.

3.6.3 The explanation should include an estimate of the mix of §98.50 services available through certificates versus grants/contracts. This may be expressed in terms of dollars, number of slots, or percentages of services.

4.1 A description of the eligibility process for families should be provided. The description should include any variations in the eligibility process based on eligibility category as well as information about how parents who receive TANF benefits are informed about the exception to individual penalties as described in 4.4.

The description should also address the length of the CCDF eligibility determination period including any extension to the eligibility period in support of collaborative arrangements between child care and Head Start or pre-K programs. (See ACYF-PIQ-CC-99-02, February 8, 1999.) For example: *“Generally, eligibility is redetermined every six months via a mailed certification. Where the child is receiving child care service in a collaborative arrangement with another program, the CCDF eligibility period will be the same as the eligibility period or service delivery criteria of the collaborative program. For Head Start/child care collaborative programs, the CCDF eligibility period is two years; for pre-K programs, the CCDF eligibility period coincides with the school year (e.g., nine months).”*

The Lead Agency can forestall audit questions by documenting in its Plan CCDF eligibility periods when different eligibility determination periods apply depending on the nature of the services provided.

Several child care studies indicate that barriers to initial and continuing eligibility for child care subsidies can deter low-income families from receiving subsidies and result in discontinuity of care for children. Some States have instituted on-line eligibility determination, extended the hours eligibility offices are open, and increased eligibility periods to minimize barriers to subsidy receipt.

4.2 The Lead Agency itself need not maintain the records of substantiated parent complaints. That function may be undertaken by another State agency. Regardless of who maintains the records, the Lead Agency must provide the required detailed description about how the information is made available to the public on request. The description should include the contact for obtaining information about parental complaints.

4.3 Examples of procedures include: 1) *“All provider contracts include a certification that the provider affords unlimited parental access, and all providers must sign a contract in order to be paid.”* 2) *“This is a requirement of the State licensing and registration process.”* 3) *“The Lead Agency sends periodic reminders to all providers about this policy.”*

4.4 The regulations do not establish any criteria or standard against which the requested TANF definitions are to be judged. This information is requested as a means of providing information to the public. ACF recognizes that the TANF definitions are not the responsibility of the CCDF Lead Agency. Therefore, the question also asks that the TANF agency be identified.

Attaching a copy of the applicable TANF Plan pages is sufficient. However, merely referring to a State TANF document (e.g., “as described in the TANF Plan submitted to ACF”) would not fulfill the public information purpose of this question.

5.1.1 **Quality Earmarks and Set-Aside.** Since Congress has earmarked funds for specific quality and access activities, the Plan requests separate descriptions of Lead Agency activities and services to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers, as well as its resource and referral services and school-age activities. (See ACYF-IM-CC-99-01, January 22, 1999.)

In identifying the entity performing a specific task, Lead Agencies are encouraged to use one of the indicators listed in the Guidance for section 1.6 (above).

5.1.2 Estimate the amount and percentage of the total CCDF that will be used for activities and services to improve the quality and availability of child care, provide comprehensive consumer education, and/or increase parental choice. Show only the amount of the Federal funds – including earmarked amounts -- and required State matching expenditures (i.e., do not include the cost of services and activities paid for with State MOE funds). The Lead Agency is reminded that no less than four percent of the total CCDF (which includes the State's share of the Matching fund and earmarked funds) must be used for quality activities. (While the earmarked funds are included in calculating the "not less than four percent expenditure requirement," they do not count toward meeting the four percent expenditure requirement.)

5.1.3 - 5.1.5 The list provided reflects options many Lead Agencies have selected in the past. It is not intended to be inclusive, nor is it intended to exclude other services or activities that meet the intent of the Act. The Lead Agency may include other services or activities not on the list by indicating "Yes" in the last selection. All activities and services marked “Yes” must be described in 5.1.4.

In identifying the entity performing a specific task, Lead Agencies are

5.1.3 - 5.1.5 encouraged to use one of the indicators listed in the guidance for section 1.6
(continued) (above).

5.2 As part of the President's *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative and consistent with the intent of Congress as expressed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Pub. L 107-110), the Administration has proposed a stronger Federal-State partnership in the delivery of quality early childhood services. Statutorily, this initiative is supported by sections 658D(b)(1)(D), 658E(c)(3)(B), and 658G of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 1990, as amended. These sections require States to coordinate the provision of child care services with other Federal, State and local child care and early childhood development programs and to use a portion of the funding they receive to improve the quality of child care services.

ACF's authority rests on the agency's inherent and legal right to information about how funds are being spent. Further, section 658G requires States to expend at least 4 percent of their funding for certain activities, including quality improvement activities, and the voluntary guidelines are an appropriate quality improvement activity. The regulations at 45 CFR 98.16(r) provide that a State plan "shall contain...(r) Such other information as specified by the Secretary." These provisions provide the basis for requesting information from the States.

The coordination provisions of section 658D(B)(1)(D) can be read in conjunction with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (PL 107-110)--in particular the "Reading First" program found at 20 SC 6301(11) of the NCLB Act, the "Early Reading First" program found at 20 USC 6371, et seq., the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Programs found at 20 USC 6381, et seq., and the Ready-to-Learn Television provisions. Given the provisions of No Child Left Behind and the quality and coordination requirements of CCDF, it will be to a State's benefit to work in a coordinated way to develop voluntary guidelines for early learning that align with the State's standards for K-12.

Section 5.2 asks a Lead Agency to describe the progress of its State in developing: 1) voluntary State guidelines on literacy, language, pre-reading, and numeracy for children ages 3 to 5 that are in alignment with State K-12 standards; 2) a plan for the professional development and training of child care teachers, providers and administrators to enable them to support the school readiness of young children; and 3) a plan for coordination across early childhood programs and funding streams. The intent of this section is to determine what States are doing to further the early learning and school

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readiness of young children. In this context, "What States are doing" is broadly construed to include relevant activities being carried out with leadership from the CCDF Lead Agency as well as other entities within the State. For instance, the development of guidelines may be under the auspices of the State Education agency. In this example, the CCDF Lead Agency would describe those efforts, including the Lead Agency's involvement to ensure that the guidelines are appropriate to children served in a variety of child care settings. ACF strongly encourages States to take steps toward guideline development and plans for professional development and coordination. While ACF would find it surprising, given the requirements of "No Child Left Behind," we do not envision adverse consequences during this plan cycle if a State indicates that it has no plans to develop guidelines, has not taken steps to implement *Good Start, Grow Smart*, or is unable to meet the outcomes it expected to achieve.

If a Lead agency has addressed its plans for professional development and/or program coordination under sections 5.1.3 and/or 5.1.4, it can reference those sections in sections 5.2.2 and/or 5.2.3.

For purposes of Good Start, Grow Smart and Section 5.2 of the preprint, the following definitions apply:

- **Benchmarks or indicators:** examples of behaviors that indicate progress toward, or attainment of, knowledge and competencies in a particular knowledge domain; for example, ability to follow simple directions is an indicator of the child's progress towards achieving competence in the listening/receptive area of the language domain.
- **Early learning guidelines:** research-based, measurable expectations about what children should know (understand) and do (competencies and skills) in different domains of learning. While these guidelines may be voluntary in their implementation, they should be relevant without regard to child care setting or whether or not a child has spent his or her preschool years in the care of a parent. Early learning guidelines differ from instructional guidelines, i.e., guidelines that identify the processes or practices that support development of knowledge, competencies and skills in children.
- **Guiding principles:** broad statements of the goals that provide a framework for the development, implementation, and assessment of early learning guidelines at the State level. The guiding principles underlying the development of early learning guidelines may include statements such as: "The need to improve outcomes for young children and their families and to assure that every child enters school with the skills and competencies necessary to succeed."

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- Knowledge domain: a set of elements that defines the content of a particular knowledge area. For example, in early childhood, the language domain includes spoken/expressive language and listening/receptive language; the literacy domain includes phonological awareness, book knowledge, print awareness, early writing and alphabet knowledge. Other knowledge domains include: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, science, mathematics, creative arts, and approaches to learning.
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5.2.1

Guidelines for Early Learning

Current Status. States are at various stages in developing early learning guidelines, and this has important implications for the work they will do in connection with *Good Start, Grow Smart*. This section provides an opportunity for a Lead Agency to describe the progress of its State toward developing early learning guidelines from preliminary planning to full development and implementation.

Process. For States that are just beginning to develop guidelines, the process of planning for and developing guidelines may include (but not be limited to): determining the expertise and resources that are available; identifying and recruiting stakeholders, including parents; building collaboration; and developing guiding principles and the framework for the guidelines.

Some States may have guidelines that were developed for pre-kindergarten programs without the involvement of the child care community. If these guidelines are research-based, and consistent with the definition of early learning guidelines described above, the Lead Agency may indicate that they will work with their State Education Agency to develop a plan for engaging the child care community in the review, dissemination, and implementation of the guidelines.

Guidelines for early learning should align with guidelines/standards for children in kindergarten through later grades. To this end, a number of States have assessed the types of knowledge, competencies, and skills that children are expected to develop once they enter school and have designed broad guidelines covering the desirable and general competencies and skills needed to support effective learning upon entering school.

Note: If other departments in State government have not yet designated the entity/person that will be involved in developing guidelines, a Lead Agency can indicate in the plan that it will take steps to work with the entity/person when designated.

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Domains. Early learning guidelines reflect expectations for children’s development of knowledge, skills and competencies in various domains, such as language, cognition, early literacy, numeracy (math), and social and emotional competence. These competencies differ for children of different ages, e.g., infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The *Good Start, Grow Smart* presidential initiative addresses knowledge and competencies for children ages three to five years, in the domains of early language, literacy, pre-reading, and numeracy. However, many States and communities have developed, or are in the process of developing, early learning guidelines that address other domains of learning, as well as children younger than three.

Implementation. In order for guidelines to be implemented across diverse early care and education settings, information about the purpose, benefits, and appropriate implementation of the guidelines needs to be disseminated among all early childhood stakeholder groups. In some instances, dissemination and implementation has been facilitated by piloting the guidelines in selected groups of settings and providing training on best practices to mentors, technical assistance specialists and parents. In addition, some States and communities tie implementation of early learning guidelines to systems of licensing and certification; require implementation in targeted settings in exchange for public funding; or support implementation through different types of incentives.

Assessment. The principal goal of *Good Start, Grow Smart* is to support research-based early childhood education strategies that will result in young children having the knowledge, competencies, skills, and dispositions they need to progress and succeed in school. In developing the component parts of *Good Start, Grow Start*, States are encouraged to actively consider what types of research and evaluation may be helpful in demonstrating the effects associated with development and implementation of early learning guidelines, provider training and education, and increased coordination among early childhood programs. In addition, some States and communities are implementing diagnostic assessments designed to screen children for risk factors and classroom-based instructional assessments designed to inform teaching and services throughout the school-year.

5.2.2

State Plans for Professional Development

Early learning guidelines that offer a clear and specific vision for what young children should know and be able to do when they enter school provide States with a solid basis for their professional development plans. A professional development plan should address the competencies providers in different child care settings need to ensure that young children acquire the knowledge,

5.2.2
(continued)

skills and abilities suggested by the State’s early learning guidelines. This, in turn, guides the implementation of specific provider education and training strategies and provides the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies in achieving desired outcomes.

Plans. Research emphasizes the need for a systematic approach to professional development that addresses the individual needs of learners. In this section, professional development is defined as systems of training and instruction developed for the purpose of improving the preparation and ongoing development of child care providers. States are encouraged to develop systems of professional development that are: comprehensive and aligned with other efforts to support early learning in children; built on a clearly articulated philosophical framework and core body of knowledge; tied in content and approach to the needs of the population served; oriented to providing a continuum of training opportunities, including a variety of formats and service delivery models (such as coaching and mentoring); and linked to a system of licensing, credentials, and/or certification.

Incentives. Examples of incentives that might encourage providers to participate in training and/or education are: tiered reimbursement; training scholarships; providing supplies and/or equipment; and credits for continuing education.

Outcomes. Systematic professional development plans often include a comprehensive evaluation approach designed to assess the system as well as individual participants. Consideration should be given to assessment plans that take into account the past experiences, strengths, knowledge and needs of participants; acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity; and assist participants in advancing to higher levels of professional development.

5.2.3

State Plan for Program Coordination

The *Good Start, Grow Smart* initiative requires each State to coordinate at least four early childhood programs and/or funding streams. Examples of programs that might operate in coordination are: CCDF, Head Start, TANF, Pre-K, public school programs and early intervention services.

Program coordination involves concerted action between two or more separate programs with a similar goal or purpose. In the case of coordination between early childhood programs, the goal is the well-being and development of very young children and concomitant benefits to their families. This common goal provides the motivation for separate programs to operate in a way that best serves children and families, and promotes

5.2.3
(continued)

continuity across education and care settings. But coordination also benefits the State in conserving scarce resources and facilitating smoother program operation.

Coordination can take place at many levels, though coordination of resources is perhaps the most crucial for program budgets. More and more States coordinate training, for example, so that instead of individual program training sessions or conferences, staff across programs can receive training together. This not only conserves resources, but also provides a common base of knowledge and understanding across programs.

Information sharing can facilitate more effective delivery of services. Some States have a system of "one-stop shopping" whereby the application processes for various programs are brought together at one location. This provides a great convenience for working parents and facilitates easier communication between program staff and offices.

A number of States have established interagency councils or work groups that provide a forum for coordination among multiple agencies and programs and for designing strategies for improving the quality, availability, and affordability of child care.

6.1

NOTE: Part 6 is completed by the 50 States and the District of Columbia only. Territories complete Part 7.

Section 658E(c)(2)(E) of the CCDBG Act requires the Lead Agency to provide "a detailed description" of its licensing requirements. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRCHSCC) provides a comprehensive, current, on-line listing of the licensing and regulatory requirements for child care in the 50 States and the District of Columbia. The listing, which is maintained by the University of Colorado Health Sciences

Center School of Nursing, is readily available to the public on the World Wide Web at: <http://nrc.uchsc.edu> .

ACF accepts the NRCHSCC compilation as fulfilling the statutory requirement. Nevertheless, the Lead Agency should verify that the NRCHSCC listing accurately reflects the State requirements. If the NRCHSCC listing is inaccurate, contact them at 800.598.5437 or e-mail: Natl.child.res.ctr.@UCHSC.edu

The first question in each section of Part 6 (6.1.1, 6.2.1, 6.3.1 and 6.4.1) is

6.1
(continued) designed to show if all care in the stated category is licensed. As indicated, if all care is licensed, the Lead Agency answers “Yes” to the first question, responds to the second question related to changes in licensing requirements, and skips the third question. If any care in the stated category is not licensed, the Lead Agency must complete the health and safety requirements that apply only to that unlicensed care (6.1.3, 6.2.3, 6.3.3, and/or 6.4.3).

Example: All center-based care in the State is licensed except that provided in school-based programs. The Lead Agency checks "NO" in the response to 6.1.1 and describes in 6.1.3 the health and safety requirements that apply to school-based centers.

Legal care that is not licensed by the State is not included in the NRCHSCC listing and must be described in the appropriate section of Part 6.

Example: A caregiver caring for fewer than three unrelated children is registered by the Lead Agency, but is not licensed. Because such caregivers are not licensed they are not included in the State NRCHSCC listing. The health and safety requirements for these providers must be described.

6.5 The Lead Agency has the option to exempt from its health and safety requirements only those relatives specifically mentioned in the Act; it is not required to exempt them. The Lead Agency should indicate its policy regarding relative providers. If relative providers are subject to different requirements than licensed providers, the requirements that apply to relatives must be described.

6.6 Under the statute and regulations that govern CCDF, each Lead Agency is required to certify the procedures that are in effect to ensure that providers serving children whose care is subsidized through CCDF comply with applicable health and safety standards.

Lead Agencies are to indicate whether or not they conduct routine unannounced visits on child care providers, perform background checks on providers (or their family members), and/or require that providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care. In addition, Lead Agencies are asked to describe other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are enforced. This might include information about the percent of providers inspected annually, the number of inspections conducted annually, the length of time between inspections, etc.

For purposes of this section, “routine” unannounced visits are those that are

6.6 (continued)	conducted as a matter of policy, not for purposes of licensing or formal complaint investigation. “Serious injuries” are defined as injuries to a child in care that require medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.
Part 7	Only Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa complete Part 7.
7.1 - 7.4	Because the Territories are not included in the NRCHSCC compilation, the health and safety requirements must be described for all four categories of care. The health and safety requirements for all care, whether licensed, regulated, or otherwise legal, that is paid for with CCDF funds must be described.
7.5	The Lead Agency has the option to exempt from its health and safety requirements only those relatives specifically mentioned in the Act; it is not required to exempt them. The Lead Agency should indicate its policy regarding relative providers. If relative providers are subject to different requirements than licensed providers, the requirements that apply to relatives must be described.
7.6	Under the statute and regulations that govern CCDF, each Lead Agency is required to certify the procedures that are in effect to ensure that providers serving children whose care is subsidized through CCDF comply with applicable health and safety standards.
	Lead Agencies are to indicate whether or not they conduct routine unannounced visits, perform background checks on providers (or their family members), and/or require that providers report serious injuries that occur while a child is in care. In addition, Lead Agencies are asked to describe other methods used to ensure that health and safety requirements are enforced. This might include information about the percent of providers inspected annually, the number of inspections conducted annually, the length of time between inspections, etc.
	For purposes of this section, “routine” unannounced inspections are those that are conducted as a matter of policy, not for purposes of licensing or complaint investigation. “Serious injuries” are defined as injuries to a child in care that require medical treatment by a doctor, nurse, dentist, or other medical professional.

Appendix 1 – Program Assurances and Certifications	Note that the Plan does not include the additional certifications listed at 45 CFR 98.13(b)(2)-(6), i.e., lobbying, drug-free workplace, debarment, nondiscrimination and smoking prohibitions. These certifications were obtained in the 1997 Plan and need not be collected again. Even if the Lead Agency has changed, these certifications apply to the successor agency.
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“in loco parentis”	Those who may serve “in the parent’s place” for purposes of the CCDF must be identified. For example: “ <i>any blood relative with custody (whether or not court-ordered) or any person with court-ordered custody.</i> ” A definition such as “a person acting in the parent’s place” is not adequate.
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“Protective Services”	<p>A Lead Agency that chooses to provide respite care to children in protective services (as indicated in questions 3.3.7 and 3.3.8) must explain the circumstances under which respite care is offered. As explained in the preamble at 63 FR 39949, respite care can only be used in cases where a child receives or needs to receive protective services.</p> <p>Because the use of respite child care may differ from how it is used/defined for other purposes (such as child welfare), the definition should address who makes the determination that a child “needs to receive” protective services.</p>
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“Special Needs”	The Lead Agency should distinguish between “special needs” for purposes of payment rates (i.e., children with disabilities), if applicable, and “special needs” for purposes of prioritizing services.
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“Very low income”	As indicated in section 3.3.1, the Act governing the CCDF requires States to give priority to families with “very low income.” While there may not be a practical need to make such a distinction, for example, because the Lead Agency is able to serve all families below 85 percent of the SMI, a definition of “very low income” is required.
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