

Dear Governor:

Strong families are essential to the well-being of children and the strength of our nation. Now more than ever, American families should have access to affordable child care options that serve their needs and preferences, as these decisions can shape some of the most personal decisions families make, including if and when to grow their families.

Federal child care policy should therefore begin with a simple principle: parents should be the primary decision-maker of the care that works best for their family and children. That means respecting the role of states in tailoring programs to local needs, rather than imposing one-size-fits all federal mandates that raise costs, limit supply, and crowd out providers. It also means expanding access and supporting a full array of child care arrangements, including informal arrangements, such as care provided by a parent, grandparent, other relative, or trusted in-home caregiver. Policy should respect those preferences and expand options, not narrow them.

In celebration of Mother's Day, President Donald J. Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance announced a child care reform package that will expand access to federal child care programs for families while empowering parents who rely on such programs with greater choice in the care that fits their needs.

To that end, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is issuing two companion guidance documents.

First, the enclosed CCDF Dear Colleague letter clarifies an important point under existing CCDF flexibilities: faith-based child care providers, along with family, friend, and neighbor child care can participate on equal terms with other providers eligible to administer federal child care subsidies.

Second, the enclosed TANF Information Memorandum (IM) encourages states to make fuller use of their authority to transfer TANF funds to CCDF and clarifies that states may support needy two-parent families with children, including families with a working spouse and a spouse caring for a child at-home. The IM also explains states retain substantial discretion to define who is needy for TANF purposes and to set benefit levels, including differentially higher benefit levels for married families.

Today, ACF also published two rules in the Federal Register. The first, *Restoring Flexibility in the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)*, formalizes the recession of Biden-era policies that limited parental choice and increased the risk of waste, fraud and abuse in federally-funded state child care. The second, *Restoring Flexibility to Support Head Start Program Access*, removes the burdensome personnel mandates that would have significantly reduced access. Both rulemaking actions cut red tape that raised provider costs, shrunk the child care workforce, and limited the number of children served. The Trump Administration supports policies that

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strengthen family formation and stability, increase affordability and access of child care, and promote real parental choice – not those that push families toward a single, government-favored model of child care. This reform package builds on past actions and towards other planned policies that will collectively make child care more affordable and within reach for families.

This Mother's Day, we especially recognize the dignity and value of the work performed every day by mothers, as well as by all parents and relatives who devote themselves to caring for children in the home. That work is real work. And it deserves the highest respect from policymakers.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families. We urge you to review the enclosed CCDF Dear Colleague letter and TANF Information Memorandum and to use every available CCDF and TANF flexibility to expand child care access, support married two-parent families, and respect parents' child care choices, especially families who choose to have a parent remain at home with young children.

Sincerely,



Alex J. Adams
Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families

CC: State human services director, CCDF director, TANF director