

Child Care Services

Kawerak Child Care Services (CCS) supports families by making high-quality child care accessible and affordable in our region. To support this vision, Kawerak Child Care Services:

- Supports children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.
- Enables family members to work, study, and engage in subsistence activities.
- Cultivates qualified, experienced, well-supported child care providers.
- Incorporates local culture and language into child care services.
- Supports safe, healthy homes, and facilities.
- Makes child care accessible through financial support.

Based on the FY 2016 CCDF funding, Kawerak is considered a medium allocation Tribal consortium.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PERIOD

Public Hearing Process – On February 3, 2023, Kawerak's Outreach Department posted information about the CCDF Public Hearing scheduled for February 24, 2023 using various outlets including Facebook, website, flyers and the local newspaper. A copy of the CCDF Plan was posted on Kawerak's website and available upon request through email or sent via mail. In addition, notice was sent to all child care partners including Nome Public Schools, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome Preschool Association, Nome Eskimo Community, all Tribal Coordinators, Tribal Family Coordinators, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Employment Education Support Services staff. The notice provided information for those community members to attend in person, telephonically or through Zoom to provide comments.

Feedback from the public hearing will be taken into consideration when presented to the Kawerak Board of Director to ensure the alignment and coordination of high-quality child care services benefitting the maximum number of eligible children and families.

DEFINITION OF INDIAN CHILD AND SERVICE AREA

Kawerak's definition of an Indian Child: American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) who is a child under the age of 13 (or under the age of 19 if a documented physical or mental disability is verified) who is a tribally enrolled member (verified by tribal enrollment or Certificate of Indian Blood) or a descendent of a tribal member in the process of being enrolled into a federally recognized tribe. Kawerak provides services in the Bering Strait region communities which include Brevig Mission, Diomede, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, Stebbins, St. Michael, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, and White Mountain, and to federally recognized tribes of Council, King Island, and Solomon who reside in Nome and Mary's Igloo who reside in Teller.

Kawerak, Inc. has received authorization from each member Tribe of the consortium authorizing Kawerak to receive CCDF funds on its behalf for the duration of the Plan period.

COORDINATION OF SERVICES

Kawerak CCS coordinates services with a variety of stakeholders and partners. CCS collaborates and works directly with the Kawerak Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership Program (HS/EHS/CCP) and two school districts in the region, Nome Public Schools and Bering Strait School District. Kawerak's EHS/CCP offers 40 slots for children ages birth to three who are eligible to receive CCDF. Kawerak provides CCDF assistance to qualified families who need full day wrap around child care services in Nome after the Head Start day. Kawerak works with both school districts to coordinate resources and initiate referrals for students with special needs or who may benefit from supplemental services. Continuity of care is ensured when transitioning children from one CCS program to another and when transitioning from the tribally operated center into the public-school system.

Access to child care is a significant barrier to employment in the region. The Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership programs partner with the local Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) to enable High School students to enroll in a Child Development Associates (CDA) credential program and conduct observations in the early childhood classrooms while attending high school. Dual-credit Early Childhood Education (ECE) courses guide high school students toward their CDA in grades 11 & 12. Work-based Learning programming is offered to qualified students in this pathway. Students participate in the Work Study at Kawerak Head Start programs, assisting with lesson planning, preparing activities and assisting as needed. Beginning CDA efforts in high school will engage students with practical work experience with PreK students, and contributes to fulfilling the requirement of logging CDA hours work with young children.

CCS is working collaboratively with Kawerak's HS/EHS/CCP and the Employment and Training Department on a new workforce initiative called Teachers in Training. This program provides opportunities for early childhood education and on the job training experience leading to careers as teachers in early childhood education and as child care providers.

Partnerships and collaborations are encouraged with public and private organizations in our region. The State of Alaska Child Care Resource & Referral agency, Thread, provides additional training and technical assistance upon request in the region. All HS/EHS/CC staff and licensed providers are encouraged to enroll in the Thread System for Early Education Development (SEED) Registry for early childhood professionals in Alaska. The University of Alaska Fairbanks, Northwest Campus and NACTEC provide ongoing professional development training opportunities for early care and education staff including training hours for the CDA credential and associate and bachelor degrees.

CCS has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Norton Sound Health Corporation in place to share child health records to ensure enrolled children are up to date on well child checks, physicals and the State's immunization schedule. With parent consent, CCS also provides referrals to social service agencies and other behavioral health programs to connect children and families to additional support. Kawerak also works with the state early intervention program to provide support for children, ages birth to three, who have developmental delays. CCS staff

attend annual training provided by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to provide healthy meal service for children in care.

Early childhood staff work with Kawerak's Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) program operated by the Children and Family Services Department to help foster care families with subsidy to offset the cost of child care for eligible children. CCS also partners with the local State Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) office to connect families who receive TANF benefits to quality child care options.

ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE FOR LOW-INCOME CHILDREN

Kawerak enables eligible families to choose from a variety of child care options. CCS options include State Licensed Center Based Care, including a tribally operated center, Group Home Care, Family Home Care, Tribally Approved Relative Care, and Tribally Approved (license exempt) Care.

CCS uses the following definitions of child care options:

Center Based and Group Home Care - Care provided by State Licensed Providers who are licensed by the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office. Center Based Care may be provided for 13 or more children. Group Home Care may be provided for 12 or less children.

Family Home Child Care - One or more individuals caring for children in a private residence that is licensed by the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office. Care may be provided to no more than eight (8) children under the age of 13.

Tribally Approved Care (license exempt) - An individual who provides care in their home or in the child(ren)'s own home. License exempt Tribally Approved Providers may care for no more than a total of four (4) children under the age of 13, excluding the provider's own children.

Tribally Approved Relative Care - A relative who provides care in their home or in the child(ren)'s own home. Tribally Approved Relative Providers may care for no more than a total of four (4) children under the age of 13, excluding the provider's own children. Tribally Approved Relative Provider definition - CCS defines Tribally Approved Relative Providers as those providers caring for only children who are related to them. Relative Providers include individuals who are 18 years of age or older and related to an eligible child by marriage, blood relationship or court decree. Relative providers include: Grandparents/Great Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, First Cousins or Siblings.

CCS operates the following Tribal CCDF Center:

Uiviilat Play & Learn Center (UPLC)
606 E. I Street
Nome, Alaska 99762

part-time and full-time care, ages three (3)
to six (6) years of age

UPLC Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership
606 E. I Street
Nome, Alaska 99762

full-time care, ages six (6) weeks to three (3)
years of age

Primary providers and secondary providers may be approved by Kawerak Child Care Services. Providers serving as a secondary provider may be State licensed, Tribally Approved Provider (license exempt), or a Tribally Approved Relative Provider. Secondary providers may provide child care services for an eligible family when their primary provider is closed. The secondary provider may provide up to five (5) days of child care services per month if their primary provider is unavailable. Secondary providers are paid on a daily rate in part-day or full-day increments.

STANDARDS ON CHILD STAFF RATIO AND GROUP SIZES FOR PROVIDERS:

Kawerak Child Care Services follows child: staff ratios and group size according to the State of Alaska Licensing Requirements and/or Head Start Program Performance Standards for licensed programs. Kawerak Child Care Services follows Tribal Standards for Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) and Tribally Approved Relative Providers.

State Licensed Center Based Care- children birth to five (5) years:

0 months through 18 months	5:1	maximum group size 10:2
19 months to 36 months	6:1	maximum group size 12:2
3-4 years old	10:1	maximum group size 20:2

State Licensed Tribally Operated Child Care Center Based Care- follows Head Start Program Performance Standards for Infants and Toddlers and Preschool:

0 months to 36 months	4:1	maximum group size 8:2
3-6 years old	10:1	maximum group size 20:2

State Licensed Group Home Child Care- children birth up to age 13:

0 months up to age 13	12:2	maximum group size 12:2, including Caregiver's children up to age 13
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State Licensed Family Child Care- children birth up to age 13:

0 months up to age 13	8:1	maximum group size 8:1, including Caregiver's children up to age 13
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Tribally Approved Provider (license exempt) and Tribally Approved Relative Provider Care-care follows Tribal Standards for children birth up to age 13:

0 months to age 13	4:1	maximum group size 4:1 not including Caregiver's own children up to age 13
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All Tribally Approved Providers must be 18 years of age or older. State Licensed Providers will follow the State Licensing qualifications for providers.

COMPREHENSIVE BACKGROUND CHECKS:

State Licensed Provider Background Checks - CCS follows the State Criminal Background Check requirements for all State Licensed Providers of Center-Based, Group Home and Family Home child care services which include:

- a. State of Alaska Child Abuse Registry
- b. State of Alaska Criminal Background Check, including fingerprinting
- c. FBI Criminal Background Check, including fingerprinting.
- d. State of Alaska State Sex Offender Registry In-state and Out of State Check

Tribally Approved Provider (license exempt) Background Check requirements include:

- a. State of Alaska Child Abuse Registry
- b. State of Alaska State Sex Offender Registry
- c. State of Alaska Court View Registry checks for all members of the household 18 years of age and older unless residing in the child(ren)'s home
- d. If the provider lived out of State during the past 5 years, a name-based criminal history, sex offender, and child abuse and neglect check will be required from the state(s) they resided in.

Tribally Approved Relative Provider Background Check requirements include:

- a. State of Alaska State Sex Offender Registry
- b. State of Alaska Court View Registry checks for all members of the household 18 years of age and older unless residing in the child(ren)'s home

PROVIDER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

State Licensed Provider Pre-service and Orientation - CCS follows the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing regulations regarding orientation and pre-service training requirements for Licensed Center-Based, Group Home and Family Home Child Care Providers. The State requires six (6) to 24 hours of mandatory training within the first 90 days.

State Licensed Provider Annual Training – CCS follows the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing regulations regarding annual training for providers which includes 24 hours of training relevant to child care and early childhood development of which at least one hour which must be focused on health and safety training topics identified by the state.

Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) will complete an orientation within 90 days of hire which includes a minimum of 6 hours of training on Kawerak's Tribal Health and Safety Standards and program policies and procedures. This training may be delivered in person, on-line or through the distribution of training materials.

Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) Annual Training will include a minimum of 6 hours of training on Kawerak's Tribal Health and Safety Standards, child development topics and other areas of interest. This training may be delivered in person, on-line or through the distribution of training materials.

Tribally Approved Relative Providers will complete an orientation within 90 days of hire which includes a minimum of 3 hours of training. Orientation training includes topics such as provider expectations, health and safety best practices, quality improvement, and child development appropriate to the provider setting. This training may be delivered in person, on-line or through the distribution of training materials.

Tribally Approved Relative Providers Annual Training – In the second year and each year thereafter, CCS will provide six (6) hours of annual training for Tribally Approved Relative Providers. Annual training will include training on topics relevant to health and safety best practices, child care and early childhood development. This training may be delivered in person, on-line or through the distribution of training materials.

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS AND MONITORING AND INSPECTIONS:

All Licensed Child Care Providers will follow the State of Alaska Health and Safety Standards. Kawerak has Tribal Health and Safety Standards for (license exempt) Tribally Approved Providers. Tribally Approved Relative Providers will be exempt from all Health and Safety Standards.

The following 11 Health and Safety Standards are required for State Licensed Child Care programs. Kawerak Tribal Health and Safety Standards will also follow the standards listed below for (license exempt) Tribally Approved Providers, except where noted. The exemptions for Tribally Approved Providers will not compromise the health and safety of children in care.

- a. **Prevention and Control of Infectious Disease:** For providers the standard is defined as prevention and control of infectious diseases. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Immunizations 2. Hand Hygiene 3. Cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting 4. Policy for inclusion/exclusion of children and staff due to communicable diseases and outbreak control 5. Prevention of exposure to blood or bodily fluid.
 - i. Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) are exempt from the standard on immunizations.
- b. **Prevention of Sudden Infant Death and the use of safe sleep practices:** For providers, the standard is defined as the prevention of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and use of safe sleeping practices. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Safe sleep environment and equipment 2. Safe sleep practices 3. Supervision 4. SIDS Risk reduction.
- c. **Administration of Medication, consistent with standards for parental control:** For providers the standard is defined as the administration of medication consistent with standards for parental consent. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Procedure for permission of administration of medication to include prescription and non-prescription medication 2. Storage of

medication 3. Administration of medication 4. Documentation of administration of medication 5. Safe return or disposal of unused medication.

- d. **Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions:** The standard is defined as the prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Identifying between food allergy and food sensitivity 2. Plan of care for children with food allergies to include minimization of exposure, feeding plans, and dietary modification 3. Response to allergic reaction due to food 4. Emergency Intervention 5. Documentation of allergic reaction occurrences
- e. **Safety of building and physical premises:** The standard is defined as building and physical premises safety, including identification of protection from hazards that can cause bodily harm such as electrical hazards, bodies of water and vehicular traffic. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water and vehicular traffic 2. Active supervision 3. Safe indoor and outdoor environments 4. Safety of equipment, materials and furnishing.
- f. **Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, abusive head trauma and child maltreatment:** The standard is defined as the prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma, and child maltreatment. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Infant and toddler appropriate developmental practices, to include how to cope with a crying/fussy infant 2. Knowledge of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma prevention and identification 3. Recognition of signs of abusive head trauma 4. Behavior guidance policies at the provider level that address appropriate discipline to prevent child maltreatment.
- g. **Emergency Preparedness and Response Planning resulting from a natural disaster or human caused event:** The standard is defined as emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event. Within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C 5195a(a)(1) that shall include procedures of evacuations, relocations, shelter-in-place and lock down, staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions). The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Written plan and training for managing urgent medical care, threatening incidents, shelter in place, lock down and natural disasters 2. Evacuation and emergency drills, to include policy and documentations 3. First Aid, food and water supplies 4. Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP).
 - i. Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) are exempt from the standard on written plan for handling urgent medical care and threatening incidents, shelter-in-place and lock down.

- ii. Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) are exempt from the standard on Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP).

- h. **Handling and storage of hazardous materials:** For providers the standard is defined as handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio contaminants. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Use and safe storage of hazardous materials and 2. Universal precautions, to include prevention and exposure of blood and bodily fluids.

- i. **Precautions for transporting children:**
Kawerak Child Care Services does not take responsibility or liability for the transporting of children while in care.

- j. **Pediatric First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation certification (CPR):** For providers the standard is defined as valid current Pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections. 1. Pediatric First Aid and CPR certification.
 - i. Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) are exempt from the certification requirement but must complete training in Pediatric First Aid and CPR.

- k. **Recognition and reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect:** For all providers the standard is defined as recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect, as required by section 106(b)(2)(B)(i) of the Child Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i); trained in compliance with Alaska's child abuse reporting laws under AS 47.17 or other child abuse reporting procedures and laws in the service area. The following minimum standards are checked during on-site monitoring and inspections: 1. Recognition of signs of child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment 2. Importance of reporting 3. Mandated reporting

MONITORING AND INSPECTIONS:

State Licensed Provider Monitoring - CCS follows the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office (CCPO) monitoring and inspection requirements for all licensed providers. State Licensing Specialists currently conduct pre-licensure and bi-annual licensing inspections (one announced and one unannounced) for all licensed providers to ensure compliance with state child care licensing regulations. CCS will receive a copy of all state licensing inspections reports and any follow up corrective actions plans for any State Licensed Child Care centers, Group Home and Family Child Care homes. This will include ensuring the licensed provider has a valid Child Care license and CCS receives a copy for our files. CCS staff will check the CCPO Licensing website to stay up to date on any postings or complaints regarding a licensed provider.

Tribally Approved Provider (license exempt) monitoring will occur annually. Staff conducting the annual announced site visit will utilize a Tribal Health and Safety inspection checklist to identify areas for improvement or correction. Recommendations for corrective action must be completed within a specified timeframe. Documentation will be kept on any corrective action measures implemented. Education, information, and/or supplies may be used to assist providers

in meeting the Tribal Health and Safety Standards. Staff may conduct an unannounced site visit as needed, or as requested by the parent guardian or community member to ensure the health and safety of children in care. Recurring failure or unwillingness to meet the Tribal Health and Safety Standards may result in a temporary or permanent discontinuation of services. All records will be kept in the provider's file and made available to the child's parent upon request or as determined by CCS staff.

Tribally Approved Relative Provider site visits will occur a minimum of once every two years. Staff conducting the annual announced site visit will utilize a Health and Safety inspection checklist to identify areas for improvement or correction. Recommendations for improvement must be completed within a specified timeframe. Documentation will be kept on any recommended measures implemented. Education, information, and/or supplies may be used to assist providers in meeting the health and safety guidelines. Staff may conduct an unannounced site visit as needed, or as requested by the parent, guardian or community member to ensure the health and safety of children in care. All records will be kept in the provider's file and made available to the child's parent upon request or as determined by CCS staff.

CCS will utilize trained child care or child development staff from Kawerak's CCS or Early Childhood Programs to conduct site visits/inspections. Each staff member will be assigned no more than 40 providers. Staff conducting site visits/inspections will have knowledge of child development and age appropriate healthy and safe environments for various child care settings. CCS will ensure staff conducting site visits/inspections are trained on Health and Safety Standards and/or Tribally approved minimum Health and Safety Guidelines and familiar with Caring For Our Children Basics.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

Kawerak Child Care Services will follow the tribe's disaster or state of emergency policies. CCS Emergency Child Care Plan addresses the needs of children before, during, and after a state of emergency or major disaster.

CCS developed the child care disaster plan in conjunction with stakeholders such as Kawerak's Executive Leadership, the Board of Directors, HS/EHS/CCP, and other partners including City of Nome, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Nome Public Schools and Bering Strait School District.

Kawerak's tribally operated center, UPLC, has adopted a disaster and emergency preparedness and response plan that meets the requirement of Alaska State Child Care Licensing. UPLC has a continuity of care service plan to respond to unexpected events that may disrupt services. CCS staff work in connection with the State Child Care Program Office regarding any instructions or guidance for licensed providers during a state of emergency or public health event. Licensed family child care providers have emergency preparedness plans as part of State licensing requirements.

CCS may adopt temporary operating standards during a public disaster or state of emergency. Co-payments may be waived for displaced families impacted by federal or state declared

emergency to ensure equal access. CCS will have the flexibility to continue providing child care services despite disruptions to families and providers including extended hours of care. Kawerak is guided by the Kawerak Safety Policy, the Return to Work Protocols, and a Data Management Plan with a backup system in the Cloud.

CCS staff will maintain communication with parents, Tribally Approved Providers and Tribally Approved Relative Providers during a public disaster or state of emergency. This will include information regarding the parent’s needs, provider’s ability to continue care, identifying other temporary emergency care, maintaining child care subsidies, and developing plans for post disaster recovery.

CCS stores all necessary program information on services, policies, forms, and provider, parent, and child files on the Kawerak server that is backed up each night and in the Cloud, accounting software and database. Stored information is accessible to CCS staff to operate and continue seamless services in the event of an emergency and public disaster. Kawerak is developing further procedures to maintain continuity of services during an emergency or public disaster.

SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The current 2016 CCDF funding levels designate Kawerak as a “Medium” size CCDF grantee. To meet the new CCDF Final Rule, Kawerak is committed to implementing the quality set aside levels, including those related to Infant/Toddler care. Kawerak will spend no less than 12% annually in fiscal years 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027 and 2028 to improve access, affordability and quality of child care services. This includes increasing parental knowledge and choice regarding child care options and educating parents and staff about the key indicators of high-quality services. Kawerak’s overall plan for improving quality during this Plan cycle will focus on three goals, but not limited to, Professional Development, Healthy and Safe Environments and High-Quality Care and Interactions.

Kawerak may also offer incentives for improving the quality of child care services through increased provider education and/or increased financial compensation for increased competencies.

<u>Quality Measures</u>	<u>FFY 2024-2028</u>
Quality Set-aside	9%
Infant & Toddler	3%
Total Quality	12%

Kawerak’s quality efforts may include the following:

- a. Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce such as attending pre-service and in-service training opportunities, paying for Child Development Associates Credentials, First Aid & Pediatric CPR or early childhood college courses.
- b. Offer trainings to support infant and toddler mental health on topics such as Attachment, Bonding, and Temperaments training.

- c. Developing, implementing, enhancing, or participating in a quality improvement system for childcare providers and services, such as participating in Alaska's Learn and Grow or attending classes offered by Thread.
- d. Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers through holding informational events and presentations. Provide resources from organizations such as Zero to Three to enhance high quality infant and toddler care.
- e. Supporting compliance with State or tribal requirements for licensing, inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety through providing quality grants for obtaining necessary health and safety equipment, needed repairs, upgrading outdoor play space or attending trainings.
- f. Provide opportunities for stabilization and child care capacity grants to eligible providers to stabilize child care services and expand capacity for new providers.
- g. Supporting the development or adoption of high-quality tribal program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development by offering early education and developmental materials and toys aimed at age appropriate development.
- h. Incorporate tribal language into child care settings, modify curricula to reflect tribal culture and offer culturally based training opportunities for parents and providers through newsletters, storytelling, elder participation and the purchase of age-appropriate indigenous books and traditional materials for activities.
- i. Support culturally based summer camps and/or afterschool programs.
- j. Provide specialized health and safety equipment, such as PPE, thermometers, handwashing and sanitizing supplies.
- k. Provide a cost of care stipend to offset cost of providing care in the provider's home.
- l. Provide a higher payment rate for children with a documented disability for family child care.
- m. The use of quality dollars may be used to provide immediate assistance to providers affected by a disaster or state of emergency for facilities and/or child care providers to improve the quality of care, specifically in areas where existing child care facilities are not able to operate or have been determined unsafe.

The Child Care Leadership Team plans for opportunities to offer training to the various providers. Some of the topics of interest to staff are working with children with special needs, individualization, Health & Safety Standards and practices, working with children on behavioral issues, and cultural and language immersion. CCS collects feedback from various providers to improve services. All of UPLC's providers are enrolled in the Alaska System for Early Education Development (SEED). UPLC has a coach mentor to provide support to direct providers. The Child Care Director will provide support to CCS Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) and Tribally Approved Relative Providers. CCS maintains a resource library for distributing provider resources.

STANDARD OR CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY (CE) DETERMINATION

Kawerak will use CE for one part of its service area, but not another. CE will be used in the communities in the Bering Strait region, which are located outside of the Nome service area. The

Alaska State Median Income (SMI) thresholds will be used to determine eligibility for the Nome service area.

The following communities will be granted categorical eligibility CE: Brevig Mission, Diomedea, Elim, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Shishmaref, Stebbins, St. Michael, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, and White Mountain. CCS will consider any American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) child in these communities up to age 13 (or under the age of 19 if a documented physical or mental disability is verified) eligible to receive CCDF services, regardless of family income. Services are prioritized for those with the highest need and tribal children enrolled into one of the 20 tribes in Kawerak’s consortium.

These communities have a Tribal Median Income that falls below 85% of the State Median income (SMI) based on data from the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates found at the U. S. Department of Commerce, Economics, and Statistical Administration, US Census Bureau at <https://www.census.gov/tribal/?st=02&aianihh=06370>. The monthly Tribal Median income (TMI) for the Bering Strait Alaska Native Regional Corporation for a family of four is \$5,967 (annually \$71,607). The monthly Alaska State Median Income at 85% for a family of four is \$7,777 (annually \$93,334). Data documenting SMI is based on the FY 2023 Alaska State Median income (SMI) for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The FY2023 Alaska SMI chart can be found online at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/policy-guidance/liheap-im-2022-03-federal-poverty-guidelines-optional-use-ffy-2022-and>

Kawerak will use the Tribal Median Income Schedule to determine co-payments for communities outside of the Nome Service Area in the Bering Strait region. Co-payments are set at reasonable family contribution rates. Co-payments may be waived for families receiving protective services.

Kawerak Grantee Alaska State Median Income (SMI) Matrix
vs Tribal Median Income Matrix (TMI)
Effective January 1, 2024

Family Size	(a) 100% of SMI - monthly	(b) 85% of SMI Monthly	(c) 100% of TMI Monthly
1	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	\$6,222	\$5,288	\$4,058
3	\$7,686	\$6,533	\$5,012
4	\$9,150	\$7,777	\$5,967
5	\$10,614	\$9,021	\$6,922
6	\$12,079	\$10,267	\$7,877
7	\$12,352	\$10,500	\$8,056
8	\$12,628	\$10,733	\$8,235
9	\$12,902	\$10,966	\$8,414
10	\$13,177	\$11,200	\$8,593
11	\$13,451	\$11,433	\$8,772
12	\$13,762	\$11,667	\$8,951
13	\$14,000	\$11,900	\$9,130
14	\$14,275	\$12,133	\$9,309

Kawerak will use the FY 2023 Alaska SMI as the Grantee Median Income for the Nome service area. Co-payments are set at reasonable family contribution rates. Co-payments may be waived for CCDF eligible families enrolled in the Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership program or the wrap around Head Start program referred to as Uiviilat Play & Learn Center (UPLC). Co-payments may also be waived for families receiving protective services. Families in the Nome service area may continue to receive assistance until their income reaches an amount up to 85% of the current FY 2023 Alaska State Median Income.

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Kawerak Child Care Services are available to eligible families who are working, engaged in subsistence activities, attending a job-training program, attending educational programs, or a combination of these activities. To be eligible, child(ren) must be under the age of 13 (or 19 with a documented disability), a Tribal member, reside in the service area and be living with or in a family household with a parent or legal guardian or other individual standing “in loco parentis.” Eligible parents may be exempt from Kawerak’s residency requirement with verification of employment or training if they are moving into the service area.

Income, for the purposes of eligibility, is defined as income of the parent and spouse, if married, or the significant other when living in the same household with common children. Children are considered common if the significant other is the biological father or mother.

Families may be eligible if they are engaged in an activity for a wage or salary, in a business with the intention of making a profit, or in subsistence activities for a minimum of 20 hours per week. Subsistence activities include, but not limited to, harvesting, gathering, procurement of fish and wildlife will be considered the same as working for wages.

Countable income from household parents/guardians aged eighteen (18) and over (or under eighteen (18) and emancipated) shall be considered in determining income related eligibility. Only income currently available on a regular basis shall be considered. Unpredictable income of indeterminate amounts will not be considered in the family contribution income, such as insurance settlements or income tax refunds. Countable income is any monetary payment received by the household on a regular basis. This includes earned income such as: gross wages, salaries and tips, stipends (VISTA, Delta Service Corps, AmeriCorps, OJT, etc.), commissions and regular cash bonuses, armed forces pay, self-employment income, piece rate wages, and contractual income. All families applying for Kawerak Child Care Assistance must certify that family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000 (one million) dollars. Each adult family member must certify this on the appropriate application document. All families receiving Kawerak child care services may receive a \$3,500.00 monthly income deduction to offset the high cost of living (i.e., rent, utilities, fuel, food, transportation, etc.) in the region.

Income is used to determine eligibility and co-payment in the Nome service area for child care services. Income is used to determine co-payments in the Bering Strait region outside the Nome service area. Co-payment is determined on a per family basis.

Parents attending a job training or educational program must attend a minimum of 20 hours per week or six (6) units per semester or two (2) - three (3) unit courses. Job training and educational programs shall be determined based on the program up to 50 hours per week, includes lunch, study time, and two (2) hours of travel time round trip per day. Parents must be in attendance as such to successfully complete the training and obtain a skill to enter the workplace, certificate, or degree.

Families may be eligible if they are temporarily relocating outside the service area or the Bering Strait region to attend a full-time college, vocational training, or job training program. Other educational programs may be considered, but not limited to, basic skills, GED preparation, high school completion or college courses leading to certificates as well as training at an accredited post-secondary school or program. For families to receive CCS services when temporarily relocating within Alaska, care is allowed when using a Stated Licensed or Tribally Approved Relative Provider.

Kawerak will provide child care services to eligible children receiving protective services. Protective services for the purposes of eligibility are:

- Children placed in foster care
- Children who are experiencing homelessness
- Children of parents attending inpatient drug or alcohol rehabilitation programs
- Children placed in kinship care
- Children of teenage parents
- Children with a disability whose family may or may not be working
- Children in a crisis situation related to domestic violence

Foster parents and households caring for a child in protective services may be exempt from income requirements. Families may also receive respite care under protective services. Respite care may be a State Licensed, Tribally Approved Provider (license exempt), or Tribally Approved Relative Provider. CCS allows for respite care only for brief occasional periods not to exceed 40 hours per month.

Families and the general public are informed of child care options and the availability of child care assistance through Kawerak's website, social media, newsletters, advertisements, tribal offices, and community outreach events. Information is also available through child care providers, child care resource and referral agencies and through our HS/EHS/CC Partnership program. Families may apply for services in-person, phone, fax, mail, at the child care provider's site and electronically via email or online application. When a fully completed and signed application for Child Care Services is received, CCS follows the procedures as stated in Kawerak Child Care Policies and Procedures Manual.

Eligible families are certified to receive 12 months of child care services and will be required to recertify at the end of the 12-month period. Parents who elect to report a change in job status during the 12-month period may reapply to redetermine whether their co-payment amount may decrease. Parents who report a loss of job will be eligible to apply for Job Search Activities. Child care assistance may be approved for job search activities with a minimum of 5 completed

applications per month for a total of 90 days. An extension of Job Search Activities may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Priority determinations for child care services will be given to children receiving protective services and other vulnerable children and families who are experiencing:

- A physical or mental disability
- Homelessness
- Teen parenting
- Child welfare placement
- Kinship Care
- Incarceration
- Drug or alcohol treatment program
- Or other at-risk circumstances determined on a case-by-case basis.

A grace period of 90 days will be giving to a family applying for child care to turn in all their documentation if the family is experiencing homelessness or for children in child welfare. Children with a physical or mental disability (as documented by a physician or medical professional licensed by the State of Alaska) or a parent with a documented disability who is experiencing challenges caring for an age eligible tribally enrolled child who could benefit from quality child care may be considered for priority assistance.

A child experiencing homelessness is defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, or nighttime residence.” Kawerak Child Care Services is committed to improving access to services, prioritizing services, conducting outreach activities and establishing grace periods for children experiencing homelessness to gather their documentation.

Families are notified in person or by phone within ten days of receipt of a completed application whether they are approved for child care services. This verbal notification is followed up by written correspondence to the family.

Kawerak participates in the State of Alaska Child Care Market Rate Survey. Due to the limited number of licensed child care providers participating in the Market Rate Survey, the Market Rates for Nome and the Bering Strait region do not reflect the true cost of care. CCS also obtains child care rates from other comparable organizations across the state. 100% of the licensed providers accept the payment rate to ensure equal access to comparable child care services. Kawerak reviews our Child Care rates annually to determine the cost of care.

CCS has implemented the ability to pay State Licensed Providers subsidies based on enrollment for regular full-time or part-time care. CCS pays full-time and part-time daily rates to Tribally Approved Providers (license exempt) and Tribally Approved Relative Providers based on attendance.

CCS aims to provide stability and timeliness of provider payments to encourage more child care providers to participate in offering licensed and tribally approved child care services.

- a. The provider must be State licensed or Tribally Approved, meet eligibility criteria and sign the provider agreement form.
- b. Provider must invoice CCS and provide monthly timesheets and attendance records.
- c. Kawerak pays State Licensed Providers on a monthly basis. Providers must bill Kawerak by the 15th of the following month. Once we receive an invoice, payment will be processed within ten (10) business days.
- d. Kawerak pays all Tribally Approved Providers on a bi-weekly or monthly basis following the 15th or 31st of each month.
- e. Tribally Approved Providers must bill Kawerak no later than 2 weeks following the 15th or 31st of each month. Once we receive an invoice, payment will be processed within a period of ten (10) business days.
- f. Kawerak tracks and monitors payments through reconciliation of bi-weekly or monthly payments and accounts in arrears.
- g. CCS defines full day enrollment by a State Licensed Provider for payment as more than five (5) hours of care per day and part day enrollment as less than five (5) hours per day.
- h. CCS defines full month enrollment by a State Licensed Provider for payment as six (6) or more days in a month and five (5) or fewer days as part month enrollment. A child(ren) must attend a minimum of one (1) day per month to be considered for part month enrollment.
- i. CCS defines full day care by all Tribally Approved Providers for payment as five (5) or more hours of care per day and part day care as less than five (5) hours per day.
- j. Kawerak notifies any provider when there is a change in family eligibility that may impact payments.
- k. CCS will inform providers of the procedures for resolution of billing and payment errors which may be a result of overpayment/underpayment, inadvertent, and/or intentional errors.
- l. A provider may request an internal review upon receiving a denial of payment or where adverse action has taken place. The provider may appeal any decision and request to have further internal review.
- m. Occasional absences do not affect State Licensed Provider payment rates based on enrollment for regular full-time or part-time care. Chronic and excessive absences will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- n. In the case of a change in payment rate, CCS will issue a new Authorization from the effective date of change in rate through the remainder of the current Authorization period.

PROMOTE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH OUTREACH AND CONSUMER EDUCATION

Parents and other community members will be informed of the various child care options through the distribution of consumer education information. This consumer education information will include how to apply for child care assistance, types of child care, how to choose quality care, child development and developmental screening, understanding quality ratings, other supports for children with special needs and resource links for other supportive family services. The consumer education information will also include provider specific monitoring and inspection reports.

CCS offers consumer education information through community outreach and events, workshops, social media and the Kawerak website. Parents or interested parties may contact Kawerak CCS directly for information. Head Start/Early Head Start/Child Care Partnership will also provide information on child care options and referrals for parents.

Kawerak's Child Care Consumer Statement is aimed at supporting parents in their role as consumers. The information provided is to help parents make informed decisions about child care services and to promote partnerships between providers and parents. Parent and family involvement are highly encouraged in reaching the full potential of a child's development while being cared for in out of home child care settings. The Child Care Consumer Statement informs the public about increased access, high quality, and affordable child care. CCS staff and providers are also provided a copy of the Consumer Statement during employee or provider orientation.

CCS collaborates with Thread, the Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Network and Best Beginnings to obtain and share information or resources that may assist families needing child care. We partner with the National Indian Child Care Association (NICCA) to obtain and provide information that may assist families needing child care. CCS also makes available the link to the Alaska Early Learning Guides and accompanying resource activity books to any interested parents/guardians and providers.

PROVIDER LEVEL MONITORING AND INSPECTION REPORTS

CCS will refer parents to the Alaska Child Care Program Office website to review any State inspection reports for licensed programs. CCS staff will conduct a semi-annual review of the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office website for licensed program inspection reports and substantiated complaints. CCS will maintain record of substantiated complaints regarding licensed care. Complaints against State Licensed Providers are forwarded to the State of Alaska. CCS will provide assistance to parents/guardians or other individuals in forwarding their complaint, if requested. CCS will share information regarding substantiated complaints with interested parents. CCS will review the outcome of any substantiated complaint as decided by the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office to determine whether the provider is eligible to continue as a CCS provider.

CCS maintains a formal process for receiving, investigating and making a determination regarding complaints involving Tribally Approved Providers. The Child Care Director will investigate all complaints and notify the parent/guardian of the determination. Any substantiated complaint and follow up action will be shared with the Vice President of Education, Employment and Supportive Services. A written letter of determination will be issued to the parent/guardian and provider. The parent or provider may appeal the determination to the Vice President of Education, Employment and Supportive Services for further review.

CCS will share information regarding substantiated complaints with interested parents. All notes including documentation related to the complaint and subsequent determination, if applicable, will be kept in the provider's file.

All providers must report incidents of serious injuries or death to CCS within 24 hours. CCS will conduct an annual review of aggregate reports of serious injuries and deaths that have occurred. CCS will review substantiated reports of child abuse.

PROGRAM INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CCS has policies and procedures in place to monitor program services that ensure compliance with regulations and provides oversight in the expenditure of CCDF funds. This includes identifying and recovering improper payments and implementing strategies to prevent fraud. CCS maintains internal controls such as training staff on the Office of Child Care Rules and Regulations, CCS Policies and Procedures, conducts regular supervised meetings, conducts review on enrollment documents, billing records and a review of provider records. CCS will conduct monthly reconciliation reviews with accounting staff.

CCS has procedures to investigate and collect improper payment resulting from error or fraud such as recovery through repayment plan, reduced payment in subsequent months, and referring to other tribal, state and federal agencies. CCS policy includes working with Human Resources to determine any personnel action for CCS employees for intentional fraud.

CCS will conduct monthly child care leadership team meetings to pursue ongoing continuous quality improvement.