

**Transcript of
The Afterschool Investments Project
State Child Care Subsidy Administration
Policies for School-Age Care
Audio Conference
January 31, 2008**

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Speakers

Dr. Nichole H. Stewart - Senior Program Associate, The Finance Project/Afterschool Investments Project

Moniquin Huggins - Acting Associate Director, Child Care Bureau

Jeanetta Green - Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy, Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources

Tamara Hall - Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services, Georgia's Department of Human Services

Janet McKeon - Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance at the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Rod Southwick - Research Director for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

Presentation

Operator

Greetings, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Afterschool Investments Project State Child Care Subsidy Administration Policies for School-Age Care audio conference. A brief question and answer session will follow the formal presentation. As a reminder, this conference is being recorded. It is now my pleasure to introduce your host, Dr. Nichole Stewart, Senior Program Associate, The Finance Project. Thank you Dr. Stewart, you may begin.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Welcome and thank you for joining us for today's audio conference. My name is Nichole Stewart, from the Afterschool Investments Project, and I will be moderating the call today. We are excited to be joined by speakers from three states, Tamara Hall from Georgia, Jeanetta Green from Alabama, and Rod Southwick and Janet McKeon from Massachusetts. Each of our guests will share their state's experiences in developing innovative strategies for facilitating the transition between part-time care during the school year and full-time care during school breaks. If you have not yet done so, I encourage you to view our project website, where you can find our



speakers' bios and presentation materials. You can find the link to our website in the invitation to this audio conference.

First, we will begin with a welcome and introduction from Moniquin Huggins, Acting Associate Director of the US Child Care Bureau.

Moniquin Huggins – US Child Care Bureau – Acting Associate Director

Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of the Child Care Bureau, I would like to welcome you to the audio conference call this afternoon. Participants on the call today include state child care administrators, state staff who work on school-age child care programs and Administration for Children and Families Regional Office Child Care Management and Staff. The Afterschool Investments Project has organized and is facilitating today's call as part of the Child Care Bureau's technical assistance network. The project is designed to help state child care officials and their partners address the unique needs of school-age children and programs. Over the last five years, the project has developed a variety of written materials, created state profiles, and provided state-specific TA in response to requests. Recently the project completed a new publication on State Child Care Subsidy Administration Policies for School-Age Care, which is the topic of today's call.

The nature of school-age care creates a number of unique challenges for subsidy administrators. On today's call, we will hear about how a number of states have addressed these issues. I would like to thank the presenters from Alabama, Georgia and Massachusetts for agreeing to share their experiences with us, and now I will turn the call back over to Nichole Stewart.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Thanks Moniquin. Many of you know that the Child Care and Development Fund is the largest single source of federal funding for afterschool programs and it is an important avenue through which low-income families can access care for school-age children. With funding from this program, states administer subsidies to families with children under the age of 13 that are in need of child care services. Administering subsidies for school-age care, however, can be particularly challenging. Because of the ages of the children being served, school-age care varies in a number of ways from care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

First, child-to-staff ratios tend to be higher for school-age care. Also because school-age care tends to be part-time and less intensive, the price of care is often lower than for infant, toddler, and preschool care. School-age children also tend to alternate between part-time care during the school year and full-time care that may be needed during holidays, teacher workdays, and summer breaks. These child care patterns can create a number of challenges for state child care administrators, care providers, and families.

For families, the transition between full-time and part-time care may require the re-certification of care arrangements to maintain subsidy eligibility, the selection of a new or secondary care provider, or the potential loss of a child care subsidy. Some school-age children need paid care during the school year, but make other non-paid arrangements during the summer months or vice versa, again putting families at risk of forfeiting their child care subsidy, which they may need when they return to paid care.

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Providers, on the other hand, have to account for fluctuations in attendance, and therefore income, during school breaks and summer months. Providers must also manage potentially frequent logistical adjustments, like rate changes, when administering subsidies for school-age children.

Subsidy administrators subsequently can be challenged to implement child care systems that address the needs of both providers and families with school-age children. States must track and manage the various changes in subsidy rates and types of care for school-age children throughout the year, including both the regular school year and any relevant school breaks. Fortunately, states have significant flexibility in developing their individual child care programs, and in light of the challenges that come with providing school-age care, many states have developed innovative strategies to better meet the needs of administrators, child care providers, and families.

You all know that, as a rule, states establish subsidy rates using their Market Rate Surveys, which they conduct about every two years, or more frequently, to examine how their rates compare with current market condition. Research indicates that most states address school-age care in their surveys and, subsequently, in the establishment of their subsidy rates. A study by Bobbie Weber and associates also found that 60% of states make a distinction between school year and summer pricing in their surveys as well.

A number of states also facilitate the administration of school-age care by differentiating between full-time and part-time care when establishing their subsidy rates. As I mentioned earlier, school-age children primarily need part-time care during the school year, but also may need full-time care at various times throughout the year during holidays and school breaks. By offering both full-time and part-time rate states help to ensure that families are allotted subsidies that reflect any fluctuations in the services they receive. According to the Child care Bureau's 2006-2007 Report of State and Territory Plans, nearly two-thirds of states and territories offer separate subsidy rates for full-time and part-time care.

The parameters of what is considered "part-time care" varies by state, sometimes defined by hours and service provided to a child each day and in other cases part-time care is measured on a weekly basis. Alabama, for example, provides part-time rates for care needed for less than 25 hours per week, while Texas pays part-time subsidies for less than six hours of care per day.

A few other states, like Kansas and Michigan, have bypassed the need for full- and part-time rates altogether by choosing to implement hourly rates. Hourly rates alleviate the need to make special provisions for rate transitions for school-age children, but some states do indicate that hourly pricing can provide less stability in subsidy payment schedules for both administrators and providers.

In addition to subsidy rates, some states also account for school-age care by making adjustments to family copayments. While the majority of states reason that because the co-payments are based on family's income and size no adjustment is necessary, a few states, including Alabama, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin to name

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a few, make allowances for the reduced cost of care for school-age children when establishing family copayment. We will hear more about some of these state copayment policies later on in the audio conference.

While the adjustment of subsidy rates and co-payments are the most common approaches to accounting for school-age care, several states have developed additional strategies. A number of these efforts are primarily aimed at increasing communication between all parties or providing families with flexible options for care throughout the school year.

Quite a few states have implemented initiatives that increase communication between administrators, providers and families by efficiently managing and organizing information. Some examples of these strategies include utilization of contracts awarded to out-of-school time providers to serve a certain number of eligible children for a specified time period. This can provide a stable, predictable source of income for providers, which can translate into more stability for families and children and help to ensure that access to care is not disrupted. This strategy is utilized in Hawaii, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Vermont.

Additional strategies include Comprehensive Child Care Certificate System, utilized by Georgia and Vermont; Child Care Management Systems, implemented in Alabama; and Targeted Communication, used by both Massachusetts and Washington State. We will hear more about these last three efforts during our speaker's presentations in a moment.

In addition to these strategies for increasing communication through the management, organization of information, other states have focused on providing flexible child care options for eligible families. This increased flexibility enables families to select the providers that best suit their needs, and gives providers the opportunity to plan accordingly for any adjustments in care throughout the year.

Some of these strategies include school bank hours, an initiative developed in Wisconsin that provides each school-age child with 300 hours per year banked for care during teacher workdays, holidays, and other school closings.

Flexible authorization, utilized in Minnesota and Louisiana, foregoes the need for any additional authorization when care changes from part-time to full-time, as long as the care the child receives remains within pre-arranged parameters of parental need. Also, Pennsylvania has established a flexible authorization system that allows families receiving subsidies to suspend care and subsidy receipt for up to 90 days during the summer, if needed, and still have a subsidy slot reserved during the school year for part-time care.

Our last example is the use of back-up providers, a strategy implemented in Iowa and Nevada, where families can specify back-up providers in their subsidy application process for full-time child care during school breaks and holidays.

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These are just a few brief examples of some innovative state strategies for easing the transition between full-time and part-time care for school-age children. You can learn more about these strategies in the forthcoming brief – *State Child Care Subsidy Administration Policies for School-Age Care*, which will soon be available both online and in hard copy form from the Afterschool Investments Project.

I would now like to introduce our first speaker, Jeanetta Green, the Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy in the Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources. Jeanetta's office is responsible for the administration of the Child Care Subsidy Program in Alabama. Jeanetta will speak today about Alabama's effort to develop a child care information system to ease the transition between full-time and part-time care for school-age children. Jeanetta...

Jeanetta Green – The Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources – Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy

Thank you Nichole. In Alabama school-age child care is pretty prevailing is one of the most chosen transform to child care in Alabama where a number of our children actually, most of our children served school-age children. Our Subsidy Program in Alabama is state administered, eligibility determination are made through contracts with public and private non-profit organizations who we refer to as child care management agencies. In Alabama, we serve approximately 32,000 children, and of those 32,000 children 41% of are school-age children. We found that our school-age families prefer all types of provider settings. We have children in licensed setting, in faith-based centers, who are not required to be licensed in Alabama, public school and community-based extended-day programs, and family and group daycare homes and also they choose related care. But we found that more often families are choosing licensed private child care centers for their school-age child care needs.

The next category that our parents choose is the faith-based centers and then after that the next category that families choose more often for school-age children is the public school centers or community-based centers. Having a 41% ratio of children who are school-aged is challenging for eligibility workers and those who are managing the child care subsidy program in that that quite a few children have frequent schedule changes and flexible schedules for those school-agers and because school-agers are the largest population of children we serve we needed our system to help us and manage ; help us manage the schedule, and all the other things associated with school-age care.

Our system which we call the Child Care Management System is set up so that we can implement school calendars. There is a school calendar feature. That school calendar allows us to attach to each child, a school-age child, a calendar of where they go to school. So, our management agencies, our CMAs must enter information obtained from the public school system at the beginning of each school year. That can be a time consuming process at the beginning of the year but it actually saves us so much time within a year and having those calendars allows the system to track and make changes related to closure days, summer breaks, and other holidays for school children. We are also able to utilize that same calendar feature for our head start children and our pre-K children who may not have a full day. We can attach a

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calendar for head start and Pre-K children so it allow us to do wraparound care for those children.

We all have some relief as far as the implementing or entering those schedules in that school systems actually put their schedule for the year on the Internet so it makes it much easier for those management agencies to get access to schedule for one particular organization or for one particular school system. Each school system is assigned a code and then that code is attached to the child's actual record in our management system. There is an automatic scheduling process that would change the child's schedule from part-time to full-time or from full-time to part-time based on when the school is actually close and when the school reopens. That automatic process will also allow us to pay for a full day when there is a school break or teacher conference and allow us to pay part-time for the other days in that week.

We also have a process so that the certificate that we issue to the parents and also the certificate and notices that we issue to the provider will allow them to know that there will be full-time days where we will pay full-time and then part-time days as well. the providers knows ahead of time that there will be some days when the school is closed or a teacher conference that we will pay full-time for that day, but if the child has attended before and after the school's day we will pay part-time for that day.

The school-age designation is also on the invoice or the bill that the provider submits to the agency for payment so they know which children or school-age children. That also gives them some information on how the payment will be made for those children. The system also does automatic fee changes. When we have children who are going into summer care, when summer starts, this system will automatically change the fee associated with their care. Not only does it change the care from part-time to full-time, it will also automatically make the adjustment to the fee.

In Alabama, we have a reduced fee for part-time care. It was not instituted for school-age care, but I believe that it benefits families greatly who have school-age children. This system will automatically do that for us. This system also automatically generates notices for parents and providers for summer care. It is the largest timeframe when we switch from part-time care to full-time care. Rather than a parent having to come in and fill out more information, fill out more paperwork, fill out changes, if they have notified us what provider they want for the full-time care then we automatically make those changes. We do send the parent and provider a notice so they are aware that the change has been made and then if there is something that they need to change they can let us know at that time.

In our fee reduction, one of the other things about the fee reduction that I believe helps our school-age children is that we apply...we have a sibling discount. If there is more than one child in care additional children receive a discount. They pay half of the applicable rate, and therefore, we apply that full-time fee to the youngest child. Therefore, or more often, our school-age children are receiving that lower rate or that part-time rate.

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We also implement suspension of care for summer time. If you do have a school-age child who does not need care during the summer they only need care before and after during the school year then we can suspend the care for those families, they do not lose their eligibility, and then they can come back on when they need full care. We also do the opposite. We would do summer only care. Some school-age children only need care during the summer. We can make them eligible in our system but only pay for child care during that summer time when the parent actually need that care for these children.

That is some of the ways that in Alabama we are dealing with school-age care and dealing with the issue around school-age care and hoping that it will make transitions and that kind of thing easier for our providers and for our families.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Thank you Jeanetta. That is extremely helpful, and it sounds like you have a very comprehensive system. Tell me, do you find that the quality dollars you receive from CCDF also aid at all the facilitation of care for school-age children?

Jeanetta Green – The Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources – Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy

Yes, we do. We really want our quality dollars to focus on school-age care and all forms of care in school-age, infant, toddler, as well as preschool care. A couple of ways that we are doing this is that, one of the extensive ways we do that, is that we use the quality dollars in an agreement with our State Department of Education. With our State Department of Education we were able to increase the quality atmosphere for those parents who select the afterschool extended-day programs through their local education agencies. Quite a few of our parents, as I said that is the third choice for our parents of where they will like their school-agers to go, and by that agreement with the State Department of Education we fund \$5,000 grants to local education agencies so that they can do innovative things that improve quality of their afterschool setting.

We also utilize our scholarship programs that are funded through quality dollars. We have one program at one of our community colleges in Jefferson County, Alabama at Jefferson State Community College. With Jefferson County being our largest metro area, it is also an area where we have the highest concentration of school-age programs and school-age children. Jefferson State Community College offers a degree with a concentration in school-age care, and through our scholarship dollars we were actually able to scholarship some child care providers to go through Jefferson State Community College and to receive that concentration of school-age care. They receive an A.A.S. degree with a concentration in school-age care.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Excellent. Thank you Jeanetta. I would now like to introduce Tamara Hall, Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services with Georgia's Department of Human Services. Tamara oversees the contract operations of Georgia's automated certificate system and will talk today about how this strategy has impacted subsidy administration for school-age child care in Georgia. Tamara.

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**Tamara Hall – Georgia Department of Human Services – Project Administrator
for Child Care and Parent Services**

Thank you, Dr. Stewart, greetings from Georgia. Again, my name is Tamara Hall. I just wanted to talk with you briefly about our process here in Georgia in terms of school-age children.

Over the past year in 2007, we served approximately 25,900 school-age children through our service using CCDF funds, and like in Alabama we offered our services through all different types of providers, whether it be center-based, afterschool care programs that are directly at the children's school, family daycare programs and our informal providers who are our family, friend and neighbors that also keep children in their home.

Basically through our automated system we have implemented what we call a Variable Schedule Certificate, where we are also able to utilize the school systems for each individual district within Georgia, input that information into our system and draw down information regarding school holidays, school breaks, summer breaks to assist the child in getting care when school is not in session. We have about 187 school districts within the 159 counties in Georgia so it is sort of time consuming as I am sure it is in Alabama loading that information into this system once per year, but it really helps out a lot along the way in connecting the child to the actual school system that they are attending. Basically, what happens when the children come into care, they go into one of our local DFCS offices in one of the 159 counties and they receive a certificate that can last for our certification period, which is for one year. That certificate is assessed as long as the child will be with the same provider for the school year, care for the school days which they receive before and after school care, any part-time days where they are out for a full day, for a teacher workday or inclement weather day, as well as full-week care.

We pay based on a week's worth of service from Sunday to Monday, so usually what happens is that if the child attends for one day during that week, they are paid for the entire week. However, with our Variable Schedule Certificate, if for example the child attends for three days before and after school and then they are out on Thursday and Friday or two days during that week the provider is able to mark that the child was in attendance for two full days and receive a part-time daily rate for those two full days. They are able to receive before and after school care for the portion that they were in school as well as the school days where the provider provided care for the entire day. They do have a maximum number of days for the certification period that the provider can claim for a part-time day, which should not exceed 30 and we take into account school holidays where there is a teacher workday and we also try to take into account any days where the child may be ill, so once they attend that provider for that day the provider is able to receive payment for the full day.

And also, during the summer, if the child does not receive services for the summer we are able to suspend care for up to 12 weeks to cover the summer portion that the child is not attending and they are able to transition right back into the service without losing any of their eligibility or having to reapply for this service.

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We also work with the school board in making sure that the schedules are updated as often as they make changes to the schedule. We have people that are here at the State level that update the schedule whenever they are needing to be updated. Basically what the provider see when they receive their certificate for that child is one certificate that has the before and after school rate that they will receive, the part-time daily rate that they will receive if they mark that the child was out within their care for a full day, and then the weekly amount that they will receive if the child was in their attendance for the entire week. Since we pay for the entire week it is very easy for us to have our system create at the bottom of the invoice and the certificate, all of the Mondays that will be considered a full week of service for the provider so that it automatically updates when there is a full week of service, whether it be spring break or summertime. The system will automatically update the amount so that the provider receives a full week's payment.

All the providers normally do on their invoices is check the attendance where they can just go in mark an "X" that the child was there and leave it blank if the child was not in attendance. Based on that service week and that school week, whether the child was in school or out of school or in school or receiving a full week's payment because there was a summer break, they will receive the appropriate rate.

As far as our fees are concerned we do not assess fees for any part-time care that we are providing authorization. So, if the child is receiving part-time care they do not have to pay the fees for the part-time care that they receive. They will have to pay assessed fees for any full weeks that they are in care whether it is before/after school or full time care. We have found is that many of our children that are in school have the younger siblings that are in daycare for a full-time week and in our policy we request that as certificates are created for the younger children, that the fees are placed on the certificates for the younger children first, since normally that child will be in care more, the cost of care will be higher and they can assume more of the cost of the fee. It is one family fee so once the fee is assessed to that first child, any additional children will not have to pay fees as long as the fee is paid for that first child. So, in assessing fees to the younger siblings, the toddlers, and the infants it normally takes away any fees that are assessed to the school-age children. So, in many circumstances the school-age children do not have fees associated with their certificates because the fees are associated with their younger sibling's certificates.

Providers submit their invoices via our payment system. They can either do it online or they can do manual invoices where they are able to write in the information on the manual invoice and mail it in. They are able to receive their payments usually, if completing it online, weekly. If they are doing via paper, they can request their payments every two weeks. So, it is usually a very quick turnaround for providers who have school-age children to receive their reimbursement. Basically that is our process with school-age children; we try to track them using the Variable Schedule Certificate to keep track of ins and outs and their changes. Usually, if the parent knows that is where the child is going to be for the entire certification period, they can just receive one certificate, which cuts down on a lot of having to change when school

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lets out and when school starts up again, but we do allow parents to come in of course and make any necessary changes that they need to. Thank you.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Thank you Tamara. If I am not mistaken, you also utilize a portion of your CCDF quality dollars for school-age initiatives. Can you talk about some of those efforts?

Tamara Hall – Georgia Department of Human Services – Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services

Yes. We work very closely with the Department of Early Care and Learning within Georgia who also is our licensing agency, and the 4% of our quality that we set aside from the CCDF grant we send directly to them in terms of quality because they are our “quality agency”. Some of the funding, that is used is for grants where they have special applications and requests for proposals to ensure that there is adequate training and mentorship with school-age consultants and resource and referral agencies in areas across the state to work on programs, such school-age programs. They work very closely with the National Afterschool Association Accreditation to make sure that some of the programs that are out there actually are accredited in afterschool programs. They also award mini grants for training. They also offer technical assistance and on-site assistance with different programs to make sure that their school-age classroom material and the professionals that work in those programs are trained to develop materials in educational programs directly geared for school-aged learning. They also work very closely with Georgia’s School-Age Care Association afterschool program improvement project which also provides a lot of training and on-site technical assistance to make sure that the child care providers that come through our program are trained in afterschool activities and activities that are geared towards school-age children.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay. Thank you so much Tamara. That was wonderful.

Tamara Hall – Georgia Department of Human Services – Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services

Thank you.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Just as an aside, I wanted to remind everyone that there will be an opportunity to ask questions following our final presentation. And our final speaker today is Rod Southwick, the Research Director of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Rod manages the collection of state and federal subsidy data and reports on the cost, use and demand for both subsidized child care and licensed child care in Massachusetts. Rod is joined today by Janet McKeon, Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance at the Department of Early Education and Care. Janet manages the subsidy system that serves low income and at risk children and families in Massachusetts. Rod and Janet.

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

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Thanks. The subsidy system in Massachusetts is pretty complicated. It is all administered through our agency, the Department of Early Education and Care. We fondly call ourselves EEC. You may hear us repeatedly saying EEC through our presentation. We came into existence in 2005 by combining the services at the former Office of Child Care Services and the Department of Education, Early Learning Services Division. Since that time we have been working to de-tangle the system and also build it at the same time, not an easy task. Currently EEC contracts with 14 child care resources and referral agencies across our state who manage the voucher system for us. We also contract directly for child care services with certain child care providers and administer grants on an annual basis to pre-K programs who are managed by community partnerships for children programs throughout our state. We are not going to talk about the community partnership programs today because they are pre-K programs. However, I just wanted to mention how our funding is currently working.

We serve approximately 22,700 school-aged children through our subsidies, and those children attend center-based programs, public school afterschool programs, drop-in programs, recreational programs, family child care, camps in the summer time and public school extended-day programs.

Rod Southwick – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Research Director

Okay, I am going to talk a little bit about our rate structure and the types of school-age care that we provide and the rates form, and how we arrived at that. We have a regional rate structure of six areas in the state and we conduct a survey or a rate survey every two years, as everybody does. We select programs and we gather information about afterschool prices and full-day prices at school-age programs and also summer prices as well, but we base our rates really on afterschool prices and then through incremental budgeting we update those rates. We also have a rate for summer camps and for before and after school and before school care. We have five different types of rates that apply for school-age, and one of the rates is the blended rate, which is primarily used by contracted providers. The blended rate is one rate that is charged per child throughout the year and it is based on part-time care during the school year and then full-day care during the summer. It is a lot more convenient for providers to get paid the same rate everyday because they do not have to budget differently across the year to provide for longer periods of time in the classroom.

The other policy I wanted to mention that both Alabama and Georgia mentioned was that the Massachusetts co-payment rate for school-age care or for any care is structured so that the first child in a family pays the full rate and the second child pays the half rate and the third child or any additional children pay a quarter rate. So, in our case since our, the other part is that school-age care is 60% of the rate for blended and 50% of the rate for part-time afterschool care. So, generally or always the first child to be included in the rate structure is the school-age child so that their rates are lower and their fee payments are correspondingly lower, and therefore, half of that or the full rate there is not as high for that child as with for the rest of the children in the family. I think that is really a quick overview of what we do and Janet can...

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**Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts –
Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance**

Go on with the policy.

**Rod Southwick – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts –
Research Director**

There you go.

**Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts –
Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance**

We have been working also over the past two years to streamline and simplify the subsidy policies, and some of the things that we have done are probably some of the things that other states have done but we think some of them are great for children and families.

We used to have a six-month reassessment for all families and we have moved to an annual reassessment for most families, which we think helps them a lot.

We also have continuity. The continuity policy is, I think, is really great for the children in school age programs. When a school-age child is turning age 13 during their academic year they can remain in their program. Previously, as soon as they turned 13 because of our federal regulations they had to terminate immediately. If they are in a school-age program over the summer and they turn age 13, during the summer they can remain in their program until the end of the summer, and we are using state dollars to fund this continuity policy.

Other continuity policies for school-agers – we have an academic year to summer camp continuity policy which enables families to move immediately from their academic year program to summer camp. In other words, they have immediate access if they are in an academic program and they want their child to attend the summer camp.

We also have summer only camp policy. Families that have enrolled their child in the previous year have immediate access to the camp program in the current year, and in addition, all their child care resource and referral agencies for this immediate access through vouchers send the parents a letter about the available camp funding so that the parents know that they have that funding available to them.

Also sibling continuity - if one child in the family accesses a subsidy, the other children are also immediately eligible.

Continuity when children age out of the program, (e.g. if they are in our preschool program and they become a school-ager) they have immediate access to another program.

If a child has a documented special need , they can remain in care up to age 16.

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We have had some disconnect between our welfare-to-work agency, Department of Transitional Assistance policies and our policies. This year we have put a policy in place to provide continuity for families who lose their DTA authorization as long as the family is eligible under our Income Eligibility Rules.

We also allow a full-time service need for parents in college who have 12 credits (at least four courses) and it does not matter what time of the day or evening or weekend that they are taking the courses as long as they courses equal at least 12 credits.

Maternity leave has been extended up to 12 weeks as approved by their employer.

I think Georgia mentioned this also - We allow a 12-week immediate return into care after leaving care.

Thank you.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Thank you Rod and Janet. You both provided us with a lot of useful information, but before we move on, can you tell me a little about your extended-day learning initiatives and how they impact school-age care in Massachusetts?

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

Sure. The extended learning time in public schools in Massachusetts - is really the first in the nation. I'm not sure, but I believe it is probably going to be expanded to other states. It affords children the opportunities to spend more time in more meaningful learning environments. Many, many moons ago a lot of the great programs, the arts, sports, music activities in schools in Massachusetts were eliminated. The expanded day learning programs provide these activities. These programs provide great opportunities for children, and give children hands-on experience or learning time to complement the theory that they are learning in the classroom. The Department of Education receives foundation funding through MASS 2020, and schools are using it to extend their school day to 4:15 in the afternoon. This however shortens the afterschool day to an hour and three-fourth. In 2006 there were 10 schools in six districts enrolling 4,700 students annually to their redesigned school days that increased learning time by 300 hours. There is an additional 13 million investment from our new Governor Duval Patrick and the legislature to fund nine more schools, and an additional 100 schools are studying their extended learning time options.

A positive outcome of this initiative is that afterschool programs and school districts are new and/or better partners. They have not partnered all that well in the past. So, this is a great opportunity for them to understand what both their programs can do for the children. The other part that works for these programs (that Rod spoke about previously) is the EEC blended rate. The blended rate allows the providers to maintain their same reimbursement rate throughout the year.

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Afterschool programs are worried, of course, about their funding. They are worried about how they pay for staff for an hour and three-fourth time and how they would retain the staff. Sometimes the coordination and the collaboration is difficult and if we went to an hourly subsidy rate it would be difficult for the afterschool program to maintain their current level of funding. The blended rate really is a plus for them.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay. Thank you Janet, and thank you to all of our speakers for sharing information about your experiences with strategies for facilitating the provision of school-age child care. We have learned a lot today from hearing about strategies for this facilitation for children in Georgia, Alabama and Massachusetts. Now is your opportunity to ask questions of our three speakers. I am now going to turn this call over to the operator who will manage the question and answer session.

Operator

[OPERATOR INSTRUCTIONS] Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now be conducting a question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please press “*1” on your telephone keypad. A confirmation tone will indicate your line is in the question queue. You may press “*2” if you would like to remove your question from the queue. For participants using speaker equipment, it may be necessary to pick up your handset before pressing “*” key. One moment please, while we poll for questions.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

While we are waiting I just wanted to let everyone know that I just found out that the publication is now available both online and in hard copy and will be mailed out to you all soon. Also please do not forget to fill out your evaluations after the event.

Operator

Dr. Stewart, we have no questions in the queue.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay.

Operator

I am sorry let us take our first question. It comes from Betty Medinger. Please proceed with your question. Hi Betty, your line is live. Is she on mute?

<Q>: Oh I am sorry, I was on mute. Okay, this is a question for Massachusetts. Primarily I think you said that you are using child care subsidy funds for the extended learning opportunities and afterschool care, and we do similar here, we ask that these providers get the license for child care if we are using the subsidy and I wondered if that question has come up in your state and how you answer that. We do have some group school-age provider that is saying they really want to be exempt from license here but still want access to the subsidy.

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

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Yes, licensing is interesting here in Massachusetts. I know I have said over the years that we just about license everyone.. School-age is really different because some of the drop-in programs and recreational programs are exempt from licensing. However, whenever any kind of program accepts a state subsidy, they also have to accept the licensing standards so they in effect meet them. Some of the public schools, of course, administer the public after school programs and that is just fine. Summer camps are licensed by the Department of Public Health, not EEC. Pretty much everyone is licensed or meets the licensing standards in Massachusetts.

<Q>: Okay. Thank you.

Operator

As a reminder ladies and gentlemen, it is “*1” to ask a question.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Well.

Operator

I am sorry. Our next question comes from Susan Just. Please proceed with your question.

<Q>: Hello. I am with the California Department of Education, and my question is regarding family co-payments and for all of the agencies there do you require families to pay their co-payments in advance of receiving the services?

Tamara Hall – Georgia Department of Human Services – Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services

This is Tamara from Georgia. Yes, we do. As part of our policy we require that the co-payment is paid directly to the provider no later than the Monday of the first of the week of service. So, they are required to pay prior to services being received. We also have part of our policy that whenever a co-payment is not paid after the third day that the provider will have to contact the Case Manager and inform the Case Manager that the parent has not paid the co-payment so that the parent can be called in to find out if there are any extenuating circumstances as to why the co-payment has not been paid.

<Q>: Okay. Thank you. How about for the other states that are there?

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

It is the same here in Massachusetts. They pay one week in advance. Also, if the family pays one week in advance the provider can hold back their pay. If the family does not pay their co-pay, we reimburse the provider one additional week. The provider is not really losing out because they need to give a two-week notice to the family when they are not keeping up with their co-pay. They have the one week they withheld and our one week of reimbursement. Parents also pay their co-pay directly to the provider.

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Jeanetta Green – The Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources – Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy

It is the same in Alabama and the co-pays we encourage for parents to be paid in the same schedule that they will pay their regular rate if they were a private pay. So as private pay, pay it is beginning on the weekday and the co-pays are also do as beginning of their week of service.

<Q>: Okay. Thank you.

Operator

Once again, it is “*1” to ask a question.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

While we are waiting for the next question, can you all tell me what some of the crucial lessons learned have been throughout the process of implementing some of your initiatives?

Tamara Hall – Georgia Department of Human Services – Project Administrator for Child Care and Parent Services

I think in Georgia one of our biggest lessons learned was how to not necessarily control but how to reduce some of the provider payment errors that have been suffered as a result of automation, and also, because we pay at a weekly basis, being able to set up certificates where the provider is able to bill for an entire week even when the child was out for a full day has really been a lesson learned. We were able to use our automation to kind of curb some of how the provider actually bills for payment and eliminate some of the ways where the provider could excessively bill for services. Also, we have been able to increase a lot of our communication with our providers in terms of letting us know if the child is in your care and not necessarily in school quite a bit so that we can contact the parent and find out if additional needs or a support need to be put into place for the parent.

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

I would say that here in Massachusetts it about checking back with families about how our policies are working. It has been quite interesting working with the Department of Transitional Assistance, our welfare agency to streamline our policies. We think that we have our policies in sync and then we realize from the families that they are not in sync at all. We think we are doing a fine job editing policy and then we find out that the new policy is not really working for them.

Operator

Our next question comes from Mary Stack. Please proceed with your question.

<Q>: This is Mary Stack from North Carolina. I am serious about extended-day program in Massachusetts and whether or not that program is strictly voluntary and if it caters mostly to working parents and then one follow up is, is the school transportation system part of that program as well so that at 4:15 when the children are discharged do they have school transportation to get home?

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Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

Yes, the families still need the afterschool programs because the school day only goes to 4:15. Some of the afterschool programs are located right in the school and others are not. The afterschool programs that have transportation for the children are typically reimbursed one way for their transportation. If there is an extraordinary circumstance we will reimburse two ways, but typically it is one way from the afterschool program to home. The Department of Education will in most cases transport the children one way from the school to the afterschool program.

<Q>: And those are state dollars that pay for that?

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

That is right, and our Child Development Block grant money also.

<Q>: So that your quality funds also contribute to that?

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

Yes.

<Q>: Okay. Thank you.

Operator

Once again, it is “*1” to ask a question. Dr. Stewart there are no questions at this time.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay. Jeanetta, can you talk about some ongoing challenges involved in the coordination of your system?

Jeanetta Green – The Child Care Services Division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources – Director of the Office of Child Care Subsidy

Yes. I think somebody thinks that we are looking at our challenges and things that we have to continue to work with, I think one of the things that we have learned from this is the importance of the notices to our providers so that they are aware of the changes. The policies we have are great for families, but we also need to make sure that the notices get out to the providers so that they understand that the changes and things that are happening with our school-age families. Also, I think consistency in payments across the state, with the system we are able to manage that much better than when we were not able to do things to this system. So, we are having consistency in a way that we implement calendars and the way that caseworkers implement the information into the system. So, we have to have training on a consistent basis in order for the caseworkers to actually utilize those features in the correct manner and that could be a challenge for us having agencies in so many



**Transcript:
The Financial Project
State Child Care Subsidy Administration
Policies for School-Age Care
January 31, 2008**

different regions, so many different schools associated. So, one of the challenge is to make sure that those additional caseworkers have the training that they need.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay. Thank you.

Janet McKeon – Department of Early Education and Care, Massachusetts – Acting Associate Commissioner for Financial Assistance

This is Janet McKeon again in Massachusetts. I just wanted to address the rest of the question from, was it North Carolina? She also asked if the extended day was voluntary. It is voluntary for the school. They can partner with an afterschool program and some other partners, and it is their money plus foundation money that supports the extended day. EEC is not paying for the extended-day learning in the public school programs. We are reimbursing the afterschool program. It is foundation money that they have coupled with the Department of Education money for the extended-day learning. Thanks.

Nichole Stewart – The Finance Project – Senior Program Associate

Okay, if there are no more questions, I would like to thank our speakers for participating in the call and to all of the participants for joining us today. Please see our project website for more information on Afterschool Investments. We would love to hear your feedback on this audio call and encourage you to fill out an evaluation form that you will be receiving by e-mail. Also this call has been recorded. If you have colleagues who would still like to listen, they will be able to access a transcript on our website in coming weeks. Thank you all, and have a great afternoon.

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