
Care 4 Kids Program

PROGRAM OPERATIONS TRANSMITTAL



DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES-CHILD CARE TEAM

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Care 4 Kids

From: Peter Palermind, Program Manager
Department of Social Services

cc: Program Operations Distribution List

Subject: Child Support

Program Issue: Section 17b-749-04(c) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies defines the child care assistance program's child support requirement. Over the last several months, because of the wide variety of family situations encountered, DSS has offered additional guidance to ACS on the application of the requirement. This transmittal formalizes that guidance and clarifies operational issues related to the child support requirement. References to child support in this document refer to monetary or financial child support.

Background: One of the guiding principles of DSS is to help families and individuals improve and maintain their optimum level of independence and quality of life. Recognizing the large body of research that supports the involvement of both parents in the lives of children and the fact that children do better in all areas of life as family income increases, DSS has included a child support requirement in the Care 4 Kids program. The requirement states that if a child on the program is deprived of financial support from a non-custodial parent, the family must cooperate with the DSS Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) to obtain child support. This is consistent with other DSS programs that serve families, such as the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program.

Implementation:

A. At Application

The Care 4 Kids Application Form, Section 4, introduces the child support requirement. The section asks families if they have a court order for child support, if they are pursuing a court order and if they have a good reason for not pursuing a court order. These questions guide Care 4 Kids as to the next action that must be taken by the program and the family. If the family indicates that a court order exists, the BCSE computer system is used to confirm the order. In cases where BCSE does not have a record of the court order, Care 4 Kids requests a copy of the order. Pursuit of court orders can be confirmed either by the BCSE system or by a formal letter from an attorney stating that the family is pursuing court ordered child support. Families who

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document domestic violence concerns that keep them from pursuing child support are exempt from the child support requirement.

Many families do not have valid court orders for child support and are not pursuing court orders when they apply for Care 4 Kids. At the time the child care case is granted, these families are referred to the BCSE to begin the process of obtaining valid child support orders. For these families, the Care 4 Kids Notice of Approval, which is sent when cases are first granted, is tailored to:

- Explain that to remain eligible for the program, they must seek child support from the non-custodial parent;
- Instruct families how to obtain the services of BCSE;
- Include a Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form for the families to take to their appointments with BCSE; and,
- Inform families that if they do not apply for and cooperate with the services of BCSE before their first redetermination, their Care 4 Kids assistance may be discontinued.

B. At Redetermination

Care 4 Kids redetermines each family's eligibility for child care assistance at six month intervals. To remain eligible for the program, families must be in compliance with the Care 4 Kids child support requirement by their first six-month redetermination and at each subsequent redetermination.

First Redetermination: In practice, many families are not addressing child support during the six-month period between the Care 4 Kids Notice of Approval and their first redetermination. As a result, Care 4 Kids must request proof of child support compliance as a missing item and reissue the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form, giving families fifteen days to comply. At that point, many families delay contact with BCSE, causing large numbers of referrals to BCSE without allowing enough time for BCSE to serve the families. The following steps modify current instructions to allow more time for BCSE to meet with these families:

1. The family's initial call to BCSE to request an application for their services or to schedule an appointment does not meet the Care 4 Kids support requirement. However, if the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form returns with a scheduled appointment or the family calls to report a scheduled appointment with BCSE, the redetermination can be completed, including issuing certificates, if appropriate.

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2. Care 4 Kids will contact the parent and explain that although the redetermination has been completed, to remain eligible, the family must keep the support appointment and file the support application.
3. Care 4 Kids will follow up to confirm that the family kept the support appointment and filed the support application. Care 4 Kids will make an entry in the CCMIS Tracker screen due 60 days from the date of the BCSE appointment. At that time, Care 4 Kids will check CCSES to confirm compliance.
4. After the 60 days, if there is no record in CCSES that the family has complied, Care 4 Kids will call BCSE. If BCSE confirms that the parent has not followed though, the case must be discontinued.
5. All of these actions will be recorded in the case history.

Subsequent redeterminations: Care 4 Kids will verify that the family remains in compliance with the child support requirement and address any new child support information provided by the family or by BCSE. An active Care 4 Kids family, who begins the child support process but then chooses to cease cooperating at any point before the establishment of a financial child support orders, no longer meets the child support requirement. BCSE will notify Care 4 Kids when a referred family ceases to cooperate. At their next redetermination, if the family is still not cooperating with BCSE, Care 4 Kids will refer the family to child support using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form. The children for whom child support is not being pursued will not be eligible for child care assistance until BCSE notifies Care 4 Kids that cooperation has resumed.

C. Verifying Compliance

1. The family meets the requirement by virtue of the child's active status on Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) or on State Administered General Assistance (SAGA Cash) since these programs have monetary child support requirements. Activity on TFA or SAGA is confirmed on EMS. A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.
2. The requirement is met for children in foster care by virtue of their status as foster children under the care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Foster child status is confirmed by documentation from DCF. The requirement is also satisfied for any child active in EMS on a DCF related medical assistance case (D01 or D02). A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.
3. Information on CCSES (the BCSE computer system) or on a returned Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form may confirm that child support is being pursued through BCSE.

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4. A copy of a valid court order that contains a specific dollar amount for child support confirms child support orders obtained through private legal means and meets the child support requirement. The order may be issued by Connecticut or by any other state, and may not be listed in CCSES. To be considered valid, a court order must: contain a docket number, specify a dollar amount for child support, be properly filed in a judicial district, and be signed by a judge, magistrate or clerk of the court. A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.

Note: If the order appears valid but does not specify a dollar amount for child support, the family must be referred to BCSE using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form.

5. A letter from a Connecticut or out-of-state attorney documenting representation of the family in a court proceeding that will lead to child support orders is acceptable. The letter must be on letterhead, signed and dated. A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.
6. A copy of a valid court order of a divorce decree that includes a specific dollar amount for child support confirms child support compliance. The order may be issued by Connecticut or by any other state, and may not be listed in CCSES. A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.
7. A letter from a Connecticut or out-of-state attorney documenting representation of the parent in a divorce proceeding that will lead to child support orders is acceptable. The letter must be on letterhead, signed and dated. A Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is not required.
8. Copies of court documents indicating that an individual is representing themselves (Pro Se) in court in a divorce proceeding may satisfy the Care 4 Kids child support requirement. Any such documents should be referred to the Care 4 Kids operations manager for review of compliance with the child support requirement. The manager will determine if a Care 4 Kids referral to BCSE is required.
9. Any exemption from cooperating in the pursuit child support granted by BCSE exempts the family from compliance with the Care 4 Kids child support requirement.
10. Care 4 Kids grants an exemption from the support requirement if the family submits a notarized statement to Care 4 Kids stating that there is a threat of domestic violence. Additional verification should be requested if there is reason to doubt the veracity of the notarized statement.

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D. Additional Guidance

1. Care 4 Kids can accept the information returned on a properly completed Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form from BCSE. Care 4 Kids is not required to confirm the information on the form unless there is reason to suspect that BCSE did not complete the form. Care 4 Kids can contact BCSE by phone if the information on the form is unclear.
2. Families who have a valid order for child support but indicate that the non-custodial parent is not making payments, should be referred to BCSE using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form. If the returned Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form indicates that the family is cooperating in the process to have the order enforced, the family meets the support requirement.
3. Families who indicate that a non-custodial parent is incarcerated must be referred to BCSE using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form.
4. Families claiming that a child was conceived by artificial insemination must be referred to BCSE using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form.
5. Families who claim to have obtained a court order for child support through private legal means but who do not provide a copy of the order must be referred to BCSE using the Care 4 Kids Child Support Referral form.
6. Families claiming that the non-custodial parent is deceased should not be referred to BCSE if their claim can be verified. Care 4 Kids should check EMS and CCSES for verification. If these systems do not contain the necessary verification, the family should be asked to provide verification, such as a copy of a death certificate, a notarized statement, proof of receipt of social security survivor's benefits for the child or other confirming document. Families who verify that the non-custodial parent is deceased have met the child support requirement.

Directive: Care 4 Kids is directed to use the guidance and clarifications contained in this transmittal to modify operational procedures and training materials. Further, Care 4 Kids is instructed to review the written materials that are routinely shared with families and providers and update materials as necessary to help families understand and comply with the child support requirement. DSS will work with Care 4 Kids to develop staff training, new written materials and outreach strategies.

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