
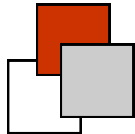


# Best Practices Manual for the North Carolina Community College Childcare Grant



North Carolina Community College System  
Student Development services

## Index

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- Introduction 3
- History 4
- Forms 5
  - Basic application information
  - Attendance for child
  - Attendance for student
  - Examples of forms
- Contracts 7
  - Acceptance letter
  - Denial letter
  - Between student and CC
  - Between provider and student
  - Three way agreement
  - Letter to provider
  - Between CC and provider/for provider only
  - Examples of forms
- Guidelines 10
  - Eligibility Criteria
  - Explanation of program
  - Allocation of money
  - Policies and procedures for providers
  - Policies and procedures for student/parents
  - Release of liability
  - Examples of forms
- Summary of college policy variations 13
- Frequently asked questions 15

## Introduction

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This is a document compiled from North Carolina Child Care Grant practices from community colleges around the state. Included in the manual are examples of perceived best practices, as well as the rationale behind the practice.

Each year, the North Carolina General Assembly allocates funds to assist student-parents enrolled in state community colleges. The funds allocated are distributed evenly among the 58 colleges in the NC Community College System (NCCCS), with further funding depending on FTE. In order to put together a 'Best Practices' manual for the NCCCS, forms of procedure and processes have been collected from colleges around North Carolina. This manual serves as a guide for those who may want to readjust their current programs and/or establish new procedures.

We would like to thank the following colleges for submitting information about the policies and procedures they employ:

- Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College
- Beaufort Community College
- Blue Ridge Community College
- Brunswick Community College
- Cape Fear Community College
- Caldwell Community College
- Carteret Community College
- Catawba Valley Community College
- Coastal Carolina Community College
- Craven Community College
- Durham Technical Community College
- Edgecombe Community College
- Fayetteville Technical Community College
- Guilford Technical Community College
- Mayland Community College
- Mitchell Community College
- Montgomery Community College
- Roanoke-Chowan Community College
- Southwestern Community College
- Stanly Community College
- Surry Community College
- Vance Granville Community College
- Wilson Community College

*Information for this manual was organized and drafted by Emily Clare Sharples, NCCCS Intern, under the supervision of Karen Yerby, Associate Director, Student Development Services.*

## Brief History

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In 1993 the North Carolina General Assembly appropriated \$1.5 million to assist student parents with the costs related to child care. As the September 17, 1993 press release announcing the allocation states, "...the appropriation clears the way for student parents and other individuals who have been unable to enroll in a community college to continue their education." In their September 1993 meeting, the State Board of Community Colleges determined that priority for the funds should be given to single parents who did not qualify for Carl Perkins funds. Funding was increased in 1994 to just under 2 million dollars and in later years the original priorities were broadened to be more inclusive.

In the past decade over 9,000 students have been NC Child Care Grant recipients. Many of these students credit grant funds for allowing them the financial flexibility to attend college. By providing child care opportunities and options for student parents, these funds have truly "cleared the way" for thousands of North Carolina Community College students to further their education.

## Forms

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In terms of initial forms to complete for childcare assistance under this grant, most colleges found it easiest to use a basic application form. To track the attendance of both the student-parent and his/her child or children, every participating college used an attendance sheet. Three documents appear in this section as examples of frequently used sources of recording the process of reimbursement. They are 1) a basic application form; 2) attendance sheet for child, or children; 3) attendance sheet for student.

- 1) The application form varied from college to college, at times having the same requirements, and at times emphasizing different things of import. Examples from Edgecombe, Fayetteville Technical, and Stanly Community Colleges included the following requirements:
  - A minimum GPA requirement
  - The minimum number of hours in which the community college student must be enrolled
  - Employment Information
  - Allocation of funds from grant; i.e. maximum amount of money allotted per month
  - Provide documentation of monthly income and the number of members in the family
  - Basic demographic information
  - An alternate plan if student does not get funding from the childcare grant
  - An essay stating reasons for applying for the grant.
  
- 2) Invariably each college includes a type of an attendance sheet for the child/children of the student. These attendance sheets are filled out by the childcare provider used by the student and are returned to the childcare grant coordinator at the community college. Examples from Carteret, Craven, and Catawba Valley Community Colleges:
  - Can be in form of an invoice to be sent from childcare provider to community college
  - Multiple children can be listed on one form
  - Number of days covered by the available childcare grant spaces, no specific days of month listed; i.e. if 20 days a month are covered, space available for twenty recorded days on attendance form
  
- 3) To verify and ensure student attendance, most schools require students to have the instructors of each of their classes sign an attendance sheet. Examples from Carteret, Catawba Valley, and Guilford Technical Community Colleges:
  - Basic attendance form – space for all classes and signatures from all instructors

## Examples of Forms

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### 1) Application forms

- Edgecombe Community College
- Fayetteville Technical Community College
- Stanly Community College

### 2) Attendance sheets for child

- Carteret Community College
- Catawba Valley Community College
- Craven Community College

### 3) Student attendance forms

- Carteret Community College
- Catawba Valley Community College
- Guilford Technical Community College

## Contracts

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As always, after the initial application has been completed and returned to the Childcare Grant coordinator at any given college, paperwork must be completed. The amount of paperwork varies from school to school, but most colleges are using the following forms of paperwork: 1) acceptance letters; 2) denial and explanation letters; 3) a contract agreement between the community college and the student; 4) a contract agreement between the childcare provider and the student; 5) a three-way contract agreement signed by the student, the childcare grant coordinator, and the childcare provider. Other forms of paperwork included for contracts are: 6) a letter to the childcare provider; 7) a contract agreement between the community college and the childcare provider.

- 1) Prime examples of acceptance letters are found at Cape Fear, Wilson, and Blue Ridge Community Colleges. The following can be included in the acceptance letters to applicants:
  - Due dates of attendance sheets/invoices
  - Explanation of allocation of funds
  - Requests that students look other places for funds so more students have the opportunity to receive grant money
  
- 2) Conversely, at a few colleges, most specifically Cape Fear, applicants who are not approved for the grant receive a letter explaining why they were not given the money.
  
- 3) The contract between the student and the community college is different than the basic application. This form allows the college to be very specific in what can/will happen with the childcare grant money. Example from Carteret Community College, specifications in the community college-student contracts can include, but are not limited to:
  - The specific amount of money the community college has agreed to pay for the student each month
  - The balance due each month for the student
  - Terms and conditions – contingent on college policies
  - Time limits as to when attendance forms can be submitted
  
- 4) Childcare providers are usually chosen by the student-parent and many must be approved by the community college as reliable. To ensure the explanation of the process and the program to the childcare provider, a contract between the student and the provider is filled out. As shown in examples from Mitchell and Wilson Community Colleges, these contracts often include:
  - Details on filling out the child/children's attendance sheet
  - Specific information on the children involved in the program

- Amount of money allotted each month by the community college
  - Compliance with rules of the community college; i.e. invoice and attendance sheet due dates, reasons for canceling funds to student-parents.
- 5) To ensure complete compliance and understanding from all parties involved, student, childcare provider, and community college, a three-way contract is often devised and put into use. These are often done in conjunction with the individual contracts signed by both the student and the childcare provider. Aspects of these contracts from Catawba Valley and Montgomery Community Colleges include:
- Explanation of student responsibilities
  - Explanation of childcare provider responsibilities
  - Payment/reimbursement process
  - Explanation of terms, guidelines, and policies of the program and the contract
  - A fixed payment/reimbursement amount that is not subject to change during the contract period
- 6) Edgecombe Community College (ECC) provides the childcare facility of the student-parent's choosing with a letter explaining the program and the amount of money that will be given to the facility. This document could be used in place of a contract, as it explains the program and the amount of money provided by ECC, as well as when forms are due and how long assistance is provided. This document is also signed by all parties.
- 7) In that vein, some colleges have the childcare providers fill out a separate contract for official use. These contracts often require specific information about provider services (licensed day care center or home day care), as well as a signed statement to report any problems with the student-parent. Brunswick, Blue Ridge, Carteret, Craven, and Fayetteville Tech, all include provider-specific contracts, these can serve as a liability release as well.

## Examples of Forms (*Contracts*)

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### 1) Acceptance letters

- Blue Ridge Community College
- Cape Fear Community College
- Wilson Community College

### 2) Program denial letter

- Cape Fear Community College

### 3) Contract between student and college

- Carteret Community College

### 4) Contract between student and facility

- Mitchell Community College
- Wilson Community College

### 5) Three-way contracts for student, facility and college

- Catawba Valley Community College
- Montgomery Community College

### 6) Program explanation letter to facility

- Edgecombe Community College

### 7) Contract between college and facility

- Blue Ridge Community College
- Brunswick Community College
- Carteret Community College
- Craven Community College
- Fayetteville Technical Community College

## Guidelines

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While there are few mandated guidelines by the state for the implementation and organization of individual childcare assistance programs, many schools have specific guidelines they set for their programs. The documents in this section are examples of guidelines used by various schools. They include: 1) eligibility criteria; 2) explanation of the childcare assistance program; 3) money allocation process; 4) policies and procedures; 5) release of liability.

- 1) Schools such as Brunswick and Cape Fear set eligibility criteria for their students to determine the best candidates to receive the grant money. Other schools include these requirements in the initial application, acquiring the same information, simply in a different process. Among the criteria:
  - GPA requirements
  - Full time standing – student must be enrolled in at least 12 credit hours
  - Childcare facility must be proven reliable
  - FAFSA forms must be completed before grant money can be disbursed
  - Part-time students are allowed to apply for the program. However, priority is given to full-time students.
  
- 2) The childcare assistance program is complex and involves much attention to detail. Because of this, a clearly stated explanation of what the childcare assistance program consists of is quite helpful for parents, providers, and the colleges. Examples from Mayland, Mitchell, and Montgomery Community Colleges included in these documents are:
  - Guidelines for determining eligibility
  - The application process and deadlines
  - Protocol for record keeping (student and child attendance sheets)
  - Protocol for student and child absences
  - Protocol for dropping courses or withdrawing from school for other endeavors
  - Procedures to be completed by student to receive funding
  
- 3) Surry Community College includes guidelines concerning the allocation of funds for the childcare assistance program. This includes student-parent criteria such as:
  - Having a FAFSA on file
  - Submitting a birth certificate for the child/children, along with any documentation of custody or paternity
  - Document is turned in with the selection of provider along with an agreement signed by the provider
  - Timeframe for availability of funds

- Explanation of when and how reimbursement checks will be mailed to the student-parent – done on a monthly basis
  - Statement clearly explaining that no payment will be issued until the student-parent provides the monthly attendance form, complete with instructor signatures.
- 4) Many schools include all-inclusive documents containing the policies and procedures specific to their programs. Vance-Granville produces a policies and procedures document for the childcare provider, which includes:
- Information about when payment is provided (the last day of every month during which services are provided)
  - To whom payment must go (always the provider, never the student-parent)
  - Details on when absences of child or children should be reported, and to whom (Financial Aid office)
- 5) Policies and procedures documents for a broader base, specifically student-parents, are found at Brunswick, Catawba Valley, and Edgecombe. These documents are very similar to the documents explaining the childcare assistance grant program, but include more information on specific aspects of the program such as:
- Application procedures
  - Contracts
  - Orientation - for certain schools
  - Maintaining eligibility including information on absences, retention, and academic progress.
- 6) Finally, two schools, Coastal Carolina and Durham Tech, require a release of liability document signed by the parent. This document illustrates the understanding that the college does not maintain or guarantee any legal responsibility with respect to the safety of the children placed into childcare on behalf of the assistance program.

## Examples of Forms (*Guidelines*)

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### 1) Eligibility criteria

- Blue Ridge Community College
- Brunswick Community College
- Cape Fear Community College

### 2) Explanation of program and procedures

- Mayland Community College
- Mitchell Community College
- Montgomery Community College

### 3) Allocation guidelines

- Surry Community College

### 4) All inclusive policies and procedures

- Vance-Granville Community College

### 5) Broader based procedures for student

- Brunswick Community College
- Catawba Valley Community College
- Edgecombe Community College

### 6) Liability waiver

- Coastal Carolina Community College
- Durham Technical Community College

## Summary of College Policy Variations ---

As colleges attempt to meet the needs of their students, utilize available community resources, and abide by individual college business practices, they may develop policies and procedures over and above the state guidelines for the NC Child Care Grant. Because of this, policies, requirements, fees, etc. can vary greatly from college to college. Below is a quick list of examples showing some of the individual program differences from across the system.

- **Eligible ages of children**
  - Ranged from 0 – 12yrs.
  
- **Fees**
  - The amount colleges paid either as reimbursement to the student or directly to the facility had a wide range and varied as to pay periods (weekly, monthly, or daily) - \$100/wk, \$60/wk, \$50/wk, not to exceed \$500/mo, \$30/wk for before and after school care, \$15/daily
  - Prorated for each additional child – the first child may be funded at \$100/wk and each additional child may be funded at \$50/wk or \$25/wk
  - Colleges prorated by the child’s age – ages 0-2 yrs. \$100/wk, ages 2-5 yrs. \$85/wk, ages 0-5 yrs. \$60/wk, ages 5-12 yrs. \$30/wk
  - Prorated by number of credit hours the student is enrolled – most common formula was full (12 hrs.), three-fourths (9 hrs.), or half (6 hrs.)
  - Prorated by other assistance the student received – Department of Social Services (DSS), additional financial aid, etc.
  
- **Student Eligibility**
  - Must demonstrate financial need
  - Must maintain 2.0 GPA, must be in good academic standing with the college, must show satisfactory academic progress (SAP) as it relates to financial aid
  - Although most colleges required the student to complete the FAFSA, a few colleges did not specify this as a criteria
  - Must be enrolled in a certificate, diploma, or degree program, some colleges did not accept certificate and/or diploma programs
  - Must have been denied services from DSS, must show they applied for DSS assistance, college will pay parent fee only
  - The student must be enrolled - at least 6 credit hours, 6-8 credit hours, at least 9 credit hours, must be enrolled full-time (12 hrs.)

- **Facility**
  - Most colleges required students use licensed facilities only
  - A few colleges did not specify whether the facility had to be licensed or not
  
- **Payment**
  - Colleges made direct payment to facility
  - Some colleges reimburse students for actual expenses

## Frequently Asked Questions

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- **Does the child care facility have to be licensed?**

No. Child care resources can vary dramatically across the state and in college service areas. Some service areas have numerous licensed centers while others may have very few. Colleges are encouraged to develop their own policy based on the resources available in their service area.

- **May college employees enrolled in college programs or classes use these funds for their children?**

No. The intent of the NC Child Care Grant is to assist student-parents with the financial responsibilities for child care expenses so they may stay enrolled and complete their educational goals. Therefore, with the exception of qualified “work study” students, no faculty, staff, or administrator employed by the college may receive or utilize funds from this grant.

- **May colleges develop their own policies and procedures for these funds?**

Yes, as long as state guidelines and the intent of the grant are maintained. Colleges are encouraged to develop policies and procedures that meet the needs of their students, consider area resources, and adhere to individual college policy. Proper business and ethical practices should always be observed.

- **If our college has a child care center on campus can we use these funds to help with the costs of administrative overhead?**

No. State funds cannot be used to support child care facilities or support child care staff positions. Funds may be used to pay child care fees for children of students in an on-campus child care facility.

- **What can we (colleges) do to help ensure the annual funding of this grant?**

Always encourage your student recipients to write their legislators and thank them for funding the NC Child Care Grant. Students might also want to provide personal examples of how these funds helped them remain in college.

- **What is the average amount spent per student, per semester on child care from this grant?**

The average amount spent per student, per semester for the past three academic years is \$1,282. Spending varies from college to college and in 2007-2008 amounts spent ranged from \$330.00 to \$3,250 per student, per semester.

- **Can a college require student-parents to use a particular child care provider?**

No. Due to liability issues students should always have the option to select the provider and sign any agreement concerning the care of their child. Colleges may provide a list of providers and counsel the student on the types of child care providers available. Colleges also maintain the right to develop written policy regarding the types of acceptable providers, i.e. licensed only.

- **If we spend our grant allotment, can we apply for more funds?**

All funds from the NC State Child Care Grant are allotted in late summer or fall depending on when the state budget is finalized. In January of each year the System Office (SO) sends out a questionnaire to determine if colleges have unutilized grant funds that can be redistributed. If funding is available the SO will send out a notice and colleges may request these funds on a first-come, first-serve basis. *(To send funds back to the SO for redistribution, child care coordinators will need to get approval from their business offices and administration. Because of administrative procedures, funds available after mid-March usually cannot be redistributed to other colleges.)*

- **What happens if we don't spend all of our allotted funds?**

If NC Child Care Grant funds cannot be fully utilized by a college, several possibilities could occur: 1) the funds allotted to that particular college for the following year by the General Assembly could be decreased by the amount not used, 2) the General Assembly could reduce the entire grant amount by all unused funds effecting every college's allotment for the following year, 3) colleges would be held harmless by the General Assembly.

- **What is the difference between sending unused funds back to the System Office for reallocation and reverting funds back to the State?**

Some colleges may use child care grant funds as part of mandatory reversions back to the State in order to help balance the state budget. When the System Office requests unused funds be sent back for reallocation, those funds are redistributed to other colleges for child care assistance on a first-come, first-serve basis.