



Steuben and Schuyler's most trusted child care resource.

## Understanding the Child Care Subsidy Program in Steuben County

**Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler**  
a department of Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc.

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8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday – Friday



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## INTRODUCTION

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The Child Care Subsidy Program was created to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. This handbook is designed to provide parents (caretakers) and the Child Care Program staff with an understanding of the Child Care Subsidy Program. We hope this handbook will be a helpful resource for the providers and families we serve.

The staff of Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler, as well as the Steuben Department of Social Services, is happy to provide any additional assistance needed. You may contact this staff at the Bath office at 1-800-553-2033 or 607-776-2126 at the following extensions:

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Family Services Manager    | x 245 |
| Subsidy/CACFP Manager      | x 247 |
| Subsidy Processor          | x 249 |
| Subsidy Processor          | x 218 |
| Subsidy Case Manager       | x 216 |
| Subsidy Case Manager       | x 239 |
| Parent Education Counselor | x 236 |

You may also visit our website at <http://www.proactioninc.org>

Please refer to the Definitions section in the back for terminology used in this handbook.

## **DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)**

DSS is the lead agency in child care subsidies at the state and county levels. They are responsible for receiving child care subsidy funds from the federal and state governments. DSS has contracted with Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler a department of Pro Action of Steuben and Yates, Inc to administer the majority of these funds. A close partnership has been developed between DSS and Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler on the management of the child care subsidy cases. DSS retains the final approval for opening and closing all child care subsidy cases based on New York State regulations.

## **PRO ACTION OF STEUBEN & YATES, INC.**

Pro Action of Steuben and Yates Inc., is a multi-purpose, private, not for profit human service agency assisting families since 1965. Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler is one of several of its departments.

### **Pro Action Mission**

Pro Action works to build a community of resilient individuals and families who can meet their basic needs, overcome adversity, and prosper.

## **CHILD CARE AWARE® OF STEUBEN AND SCHUYLER**

Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler has provided child care resource and referral services throughout Steuben County since 1985. It has four main departments:

- ❑ *Child Care Subsidy Department* - guides parents and providers through the application process and is responsible for processing subsidy and CACFP reimbursements to registered and licensed providers.
- ❑ *Quality Department* - provides technical assistance, training, CACFP sponsorship and supports all types of child care providers.
- ❑ *Family Services* - responsible for assisting and educating families in accessing child care.
- ❑ *Registration and Resource Development Department* - handles the recruitment and inspection of new family child care providers.

### **Our Mission**

Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler is a nonprofit resource and referral service dedicated to helping all parents obtain affordable care, which will benefit their child and meet complex family needs. We build the supply of various child care options throughout the county and improve the quality of care through community education and caregiver training, technical assistance and tangible supports.

## FAMILY ELIGIBILITY

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### QUALIFICATIONS

To qualify for assistance, families must be:

- ❑ A resident of Steuben County **and** working
- ❑ Document the need for child care
- ❑ Age guideline for children eligible for assistance is 6 weeks through 12 years old
- ❑ **And** meet the following income guidelines

### INCOME GUIDELINES (200%)

#### Current Annual Gross Household Income Guidelines (June 1, 2017)

| Family Size | Annual Gross Income Limit |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1           | \$24,120                  |
| 2           | \$32,480                  |
| 3           | \$40,840                  |
| 4           | \$49,200                  |
| 5           | \$57,560                  |
| 6           | \$65,920                  |
| 7           | \$74,280                  |
| 8           | \$82,640                  |

NOTE: For each additional family member add \$8,360.

Some families may be determined eligible for child care services without regard to income or their employment/schooling status **if** they have a special family need. For more information, contact Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler's Subsidy Department.

## PARTICIPATING PROVIDERS

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Families participating in the subsidy program may choose any of the following types of providers:

- **Registered/Licensed Child Care Providers (Required to comply with NYS regulations)**
  - Day Care Centers – care provided in a facility (not a home).
  - Group Family Day Care – care provided in a home, for no more than 14 children, by a caregiver with an assistant.
  - Family Day Care – care provided for up to six full time children and two school age children in the provider’s home.
  - School Age Child Care – a program for school-age children operated outside a home.
- **Legally Exempt (Informal) Child Care Providers (Exempt from NYS regulations)**
  - Family Child Care – care provided by a caregiver outside the child’s home.
  - In-Home Child Care – child care furnished in the child’s own home by a provider or relative within the third degree of consanguinity of the child.
  - Group Child Care – care provided by those caregivers that are not required to be registered/licensed with NYS but meet all applicable state or local requirements for such child care programs. Examples are pre-kindergarten and nursery schools.
- **Out of County Child Care Providers**
  - Providers legally exempt or registered/licensed, residing outside of Steuben County who care for Steuben County residents.

**NOTE: Child care providers are independent business individuals and are not employed by Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler, ProAction, or Steuben County DSS. They may have other requirements in their contracts, which may dictate additional charges.**

## APPLICATION PROCESS

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### OVERVIEW

To apply for the Child Care Subsidy program, a parent may contact Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler by phone, e-mail, or in person. This process will include:

- Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler – The Parent Education Counselor will send the application and checklist instructions to apply for child care subsidy after the initial contact. **During the application process, the parent is responsible for the full cost of care.**
- The parent must complete all required sections on the application and provide the required documentation identified in the checklist instructions. It is only necessary to complete one application per family even if using more than one provider.
  - The completed application and required documentation must be returned to the Subsidy Case Manager.
  - It is important that all documentation is received in a timely matter. A NYS regulation requires eligibility to be determined within 30 days from the date of the completed application.
- **Any application submitted incomplete will be held pending receipt of required documentation.**
- **To make the application process easier we have created an online orientation to walk you through the process. Do the orientation first, and then start on the forms. You can access it at <http://www.proactioninc.org/cca/> . If you do not have internet access at home, you can do it on your smart phone (usage rates apply) or use the computers at your local library or our office in Bath.**

### ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

- The Subsidy Case Manager will determine eligibility based on the annual gross household income and the need for care according to the NYS regulations.
  - The parent fee is also determined at this time according to the county's family share percentage.
- Once eligibility is determined, DSS has final approval for all requests for child care.

- ❑ Final approval or denial of an application normally takes less than 15 days but the process may take up to 30 days.

## APPLICATION PROCESS (CONTINUED)

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### NOTIFICATION

#### Approval

Once the documented request is approved by DSS it is sent back to Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler for the Child Care Certificate to be processed.

- ❑ Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler will print and mail the Child Care Certificate based on the approved information within 2 days.
- ❑ A copy of the certificate is mailed to the parent and child care provider(s)
- ❑ The Child Care Certificate should be carefully reviewed by the parent and child care provider. Any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler immediately:
  - **Authorization period**
  - **Hours of care (in school and no school)**
  - **Weekly parent fee amount (family share)**
- ❑ Eligibility may be authorized up to a six month period. Actual authorization may vary based on individual circumstances.

#### Denial

Denial of a subsidy application can occur including, but not limited, to the following reasons:

- ❑ The family's gross income exceeds the income eligibility guidelines (refer to page 2)
- ❑ Schedules do not justify the need for child care assistance

When any of these situations occur, Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler will notify the parent of the denial by issuing a legal State form ("*Action Taken on Your Application for Child Care Benefits*") indicating the date of the denial, reason, and the NYS regulation number for the decision.

**Fair Hearing:** If funding is denied and you do not agree with the decision made, or think you have been treated unfairly, you have the right to request a Fair Hearing. This can be done by phone or in writing to:

Office of Administrative Hearings

P.O. Box 1930

Albany, New York 12201-1930

Rochester (585) 266-4868

## PARENT COSTS

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### **RESPONSIBILITY**

The weekly parent fee (family share) is calculated at the time of determination of eligibility.

- ❑ The amount of the parent fee is based on the annual gross income and family size (not the number of children using care).
- ❑ The parent fee is to be paid directly to the provider each week as stated on the Child Care Certificate.
- ❑ If the parent is using more than one child care provider, the parent fee is paid to the provider that cares for the youngest child or the provider who provides the most hours of care.
- ❑ The parent is responsible for any additional provider fees (i.e. registration fee, supplies, etc.), if they are notified ahead of time.

### **DELINQUENCY**

Parents are required to pay their weekly family share to their child care provider in order to retain their eligibility.

- ❑ If at any time the parent fee becomes delinquent a delinquency letter (“Delinquent Family Share for Child Care Benefits”) will be issued to the parent and provider. Failure to make satisfactory arrangements for payment will result in action to discontinue (terminate) the child care benefits.

## ABSENCES

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The Subsidy Program in Steuben County allows a family to have 12 absent days per child (not to exceed in any calendar quarter), if the child was scheduled to attend but was not present. (For registered/licensed and group providers only) The parent may still be responsible for the weekly parent fee and non-reimbursable absences depending on the provider contract.

- ❑ Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler will not reimburse absences when a provider is closed for vacations, holidays, illness, etc. Some providers may have a policy to charge parents for such days and subsidized families may agree to pay this cost on their own as a condition of enrollment.
- ❑ Required notification of withdrawal outlined in agreements between parents and providers must be enforced through independent court action.
- ❑ If a parent leaves a program and does not give proper notification to the provider, the provider must pursue payment with the parent. Absences can not be claimed on timesheets for this situation.

## REDETERMINATION

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### CHANGES

- ❑ Regulations governing child care subsidy require parents (caretakers) to report any changes of their *circumstances immediately*. **Supporting documentation must be received within 10 days to ensure accuracy of eligibility decisions.**
- ❑ Changes in parent circumstances between authorization periods may require a redetermination of eligibility; potentially resulting in an increase, decrease, or ineligibility for child care subsidy.
- ❑ Parents may report changes by **phone, e-mail, in writing, or face to face.**

### RECERTIFICATION

Continuing eligibility for child care services in Steuben County must be re-determined every 6 months. This process of redetermination of eligibility is referred to as recertification.

- ❑ At the time of recertification the parent is responsible for completing the renewal application.
- ❑ **Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler is not responsible for any recertifications not received due to unreported address changes.**
- ❑ Families are required to update their documentation and return the application and supporting documents **before** the expiration of the existing authorization period. (See Chapter 8 (“Closure”) for failure to comply with the required documentation in a timely manner of submitting recertification’s.)
- ❑ When the recertification process has been successfully completed, a new Child Care Certificate will be issued.

- ❑ If a parent fails to meet recertification requirements, the case will be terminated on the expiration date of the previous authorization.

## DISCONTINUANCE OF CHILD CARE SERVICES

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Termination of a child care subsidy case can occur in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- ❑ The parent may request closure
- ❑ A case is terminated due to a completed training or educational program
- ❑ The parent's income exceeds the income eligibility guidelines
- ❑ Employment has ended
- ❑ The parent fails to recertify
- ❑ A parent does not comply with requested information

When any of these conditions occur, Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler will notify both the caretaker and provider. Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler will issue an "Intent to Discontinue Child Care Benefits" notice.

**Right to a Fair Hearing:** If you disagree with the decision made you have the right to request a fair hearing. This can be done by phone or in writing to:

Office of Administrative Hearings  
P.O. Box 1930  
Albany, New York 12201-1930  
Rochester (585) 266-4868

## FRAUD

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Parents and child care providers must ensure all information submitted is accurate.

***"It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation knowingly by means of a false statement or representation or by deliberate concealment of any material fact, or other fraudulent scheme or device, on behalf of himself or others, to attempt to obtain or to obtain payment from public funds for services or supplies furnished or purportedly furnished pursuant to this chapter."*** (Quoted from Social Services Law 145)

At anytime fraud is suspected, the relevant facts will be referred to the Department of Social Services Fraud Investigation Unit.

## DEFINITIONS

| <b>Word (s)</b>          | <b>Definition</b>  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Block Grant              | As a result of a welfare reform bill, the federal government provides money for child care to states in the form of a block grant.   |
| CACFP                    | Child and Adult Care Food Program  |
| Caretaker/Parent         | Includes the child's parent, legal guardian, caretaker relative or any other person in loco parentis to the child.   |
| Child Care Certificate   | A certificate that is issued directly to a child's caretaker which verifies that the caretaker is eligible for subsidized child care services which the caretaker arranges.                        |
| Child with Special Needs | A child who is incapable of caring for him/herself and has been diagnosed as having a condition to such a degree that it adversely affects the child's ability to function normally.               |
| Consanguinity            | Blood relationship or kinship.   |
| DSS                      | Department of Social Services  |
| Family Share             | The amount the child's family is required to pay towards the cost of child care. Also known as "parent fee".   |
| Family Unit              | This is the number of family members that should be considered in the family size. This would include all members, even if they are not within the age guidelines.                                 |
| Informal                 | Also known as "Legally Exempt".  |
| Legally Exempt           | Includes family, in-home and group child care providers that are not required to be licensed or registered with NYS, but meet applicable local or State requirements for such child care programs. |
| OCFS                     | Office of Children and Family Services – contact for Fair Hearing.   |
| Parent                   | Includes the child's parent, legal guardian, caretaker relative or any other person in loco parentis to the child.   |
| Parent in Loco Parentis  | The child's guardian, caretaker relative or any other person with whom a child lives who has assumed responsibility for the day-to-day care and custody of the child.                              |
| Recertification          | Continuing eligibility for child care services must be re-determined as often as case factors indicate. This process of re-determination of eligibility is referred to as recertification.         |

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

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- Q 1.** *If I live with my parents, does their income count in determining my eligibility?*  
**A 1.** No, the only incomes to be used in calculating the gross income are those applying
- Q 2.** *May I apply if I am in job search?*  
**A 2.** No.
- Q 3.** *Once I fill out my application does that mean I'm approved?*  
**A 3.** No, refer to the "Application Process" section. You are responsible for the full cost of care until you receive notification that you have been approved.
- Q 4.** *Am I required to come in for an interview to apply for child care subsidy?*  
**A 4.** No face to face interview is required, but may be requested to expedite the process. You may call to obtain the documents to apply and mail in the required documents/application once completed.
- Q 5.** *If I am approved, how far back will my child care expenses be paid?*  
**A 5.** Your eligibility will begin from the date we receive your signed and dated child care application. In order to protect this filing date, you **MUST** submit all of the required documentation by the due date.
- Q 6.** *How do I get reimbursed for what I have paid my child care provider once I'm approved?*  
**A 6.** If you are approved and Child Care Aware® of Steuben and Schuyler/DSS makes retroactive payment, these funds are paid directly to the child care provider. It is the responsibility of the child care provider to reimburse you less the weekly parent fee.
- Q 7.** *May I use two different providers?*  
**A 7.** Yes
- Q 8.** *What if my family share (parent fee) is higher than my cost of care for one week?*  
**A 8.** Parent is responsible for the actual cost of care up to the weekly parent fee amount.
- Q 9.** *Can my child care provider charge me for a registration fee?*  
**A 9.** Yes