



COUNTY OF ERIE

September 26, 2025

Dear Families and Child Care Providers of Erie County:

Erie County is currently reviewing the rate of spending as to the level of childcare assistance funds available. Our current allocation countywide is \$ \$65,962,691. The allocation received from New York State to support childcare will **not** be increased for the 2025-2026 Federal Fiscal year. Over the last few years spending on childcare assistance has increased by over 25% due to three major factors:

1. NYS changed the parent share obligation to 1%. In the past the parent-share was as high as 35%.
2. NYS raised the eligibility to 85% of the State Median Income leading to many more families being eligible for assistance.
3. NYS authorized providers to submit up to 80 absences per child per year if the child is enrolled. Also, if the child changes provider, that provider is eligible to submit up to 80 absences. In the past, counties had the authority to not pay absences. Erie County did not pay for absences prior to this change.

Based on these three factors, Erie County must start a waiting list for the first time in over 10 years. **This will start effective October 1, 2025.**

We will continue to authorize childcare assistance for temporary assistance families, but new applications for working families will likely be denied stemming from insufficient funding. It is imperative for families to apply and complete the eligibility to be considered for the wait list. ***Please note that only eligible applications or recertifications will be added to the wait list.*** We realize closing the application process and placing households on a wait list will be devastating for both working families and providers.

Erie County was granted a waiver from the New York State Office of Child and Family Services (NYS OCFS) to keep eligible cases open upon recertification if they meet one of the federal priorities: families experiencing homelessness, families with very low income (at or below 300% SIS) & families with children who have special needs.

The Erie County Department of Social Services understands that this situation may create challenges for our community's families and providers. We are committed to supporting you during this transition and will keep you updated on any developments. If you have questions, please contact our childcare assistance eligibility unit at 716 858-8953.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Karen M. Rybicki".

Karen M Rybicki, ECDSS Commissioner